

# Arkansas Living

MAY 2025



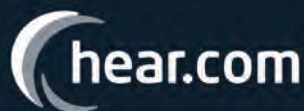
## SPARKING SUCCESS

Electric cooperatives  
power youth programs  
*Page 8*

*Plus:*

Covered Bridges  
Farmers Markets  
A Lineworker's Heroism





# This is not your grandpa's hearing aid

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**Bowl Us Over!**  
Enter our new recipe contest for a chance to win one of four 4-in-1 colander/bowl sets.



## ON THE COVER

The Grant County Baby Sharks compete in the Junior Stock division at the Arkansas 4-H SeaPerch Challenge, one of several youth programs sponsored by the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas.

*Photo by Jennifer Christman Cia*



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**Arkansas Electric Cooperatives, Inc.**

**President and CEO**

Vernon "Buddy" Hasten

**Chief External Affairs Officer**

Bill Gossage

**Senior Director of Corporate Communications**

Rob Roedel

**Editor**

Jennifer Christman Cia

**Associate Editor**

Nancy Moore

**Advertising Coordinator**

Lana McCleod

**Graphic Designer**

Dixie Rogers

**Copy Editor**

Denise Dorton

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**CONTACT INFORMATION**

Arkansas Living  
1 Cooperative Way, Little Rock, AR 72209  
(501) 570-2311 Email: arkansasliving@aeci.com  
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 510, Little Rock, AR 72203  
Advertising Department, Lana McCleod  
(501) 570-2312 Email: advertising@aeci.com

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# Tasty Tales

BY JENNIFER CHRISTMAN CIA

We'll continue our Arkansas Living contributor Q&A series

dishing with Rob Roedel, our longtime Let's Eat restaurant columnist (see page 40). Roedel, senior director of corporate communications for the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas, has enjoyed the sweet gig of serving up features about family-owned restaurants since 2013.

**How do you decide which restaurants to feature?** As

always, Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas lineworkers know the best local places to eat. I also rely on recommendations from the loyal readers of Arkansas Living.

**What's your personal favorite type of cuisine?** My favorite is definitely Southern comfort food, but I have never met a cuisine that I didn't like.

**What's the best dish you've had that you still think about?** Easy. Nima's Pizza & More in Gassville. The owners served me a creative pizza that earned them second place in the International Pizza Competition. But, as I always tell people, my favorite restaurant is the last place that I visited, as the owners are always salt-of-the-earth

people who truly care about their communities.

**Can you recall dishes that really pushed your culinary boundaries?** Avocado fries and fried cauliflower. However, once I tried them, I loved them.

**Is there any food — no matter how well it's prepared — that you just can't bring yourself to enjoy?** I have eaten many, many slices, but I don't care for carrot cake. Also, I am among the 1% of the world's population with a gene that makes cilantro taste like soap. While doing mission work in Guatemala, I have eaten many bowls of soap soup as to not offend the residents.

**How do you think the Arkansas food scene has evolved over the years, and where do you see it heading next?** Arkansans love local, family-owned restaurants and are trending back to wanting to know where their food is grown. People still want to socialize, and a local, family-owned restaurant is the best place to hang out. Locally owned restaurants are just like local electric cooperatives, as they truly care and work for the residents of our communities.

**When you're not eating out, what's your go-to dish to cook at home?** Whatever my wife and daughter-in-law want. Typically, something grilled or smoked, but both of my grandmas taught me how to cook just about anything.

Make it a mouthwatering May!

*Jennifer*

Jennifer Christman Cia  
jennifer.cia@aeci.com



ROB ROEDEL

Nima's Pizza & More in Gassville won second place in the International Pizza Competition and first place in Rob Roedel's heart as a most memorable dish.



# Legislation Revelation

BY VERNON “BUDDY” HASTEN

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



Every other year, the state Capitol fills up with senators and representatives from across our state, working hard for months to propose and debate bills that determine the laws in Arkansas.

Some bills pass, some bills go back for more study, and some bills fail. It is

truly democracy at work in Little Rock, and it is tough work for these legislators. I have seen it firsthand. I am always impressed with the sheer number of topics our legislators must get up to speed on — and with their dedication to understanding these bills and getting them right.

This session included SB307, the Generating Arkansas Jobs Act of 2025, a significant piece of legislation related to energy infrastructure. I have published numerous articles highlighting the need for a Balance of Power and the need for reliable and dispatchable power plants. Power shortages during Winter Storms Uri (2021) and Elliott (2022) that resulted in rolling blackouts provide a clear case to support this position. For years, the only power generation that has been built has been intermittent wind and solar while coal and nuclear plants have been shut down. Initially, this replacement strategy appeared to work, however, the grid reached a tipping point.

In addition to this already tenuous situation, America is experiencing historic levels of power demand due to load growth from new manufacturing plants, data centers, artificial intelligence (AI) and electric vehicles. Arkansas is in an even more stressed position because we are facing the closure of two large coal plants and the accompanying loss of their dispatchable energy. The White Bluff Steam Electric Station is scheduled to close in 2028, and the Independence Steam Electric Station is scheduled to close in 2030. Arkansas Electric Cooperative Corporation (AECC) is a co-owner of these plants, and Entergy Arkansas, LLC is the operator. These plants represent 3,200 megawatts (MW) for Arkansas and 1,168 MW for the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas that AECC serves. For reference, 1 MW will power about 750 to 1,000 homes. It will take more than three years to build the facilities necessary to replace the 1,168 MW lost by the closure of these plants.

This was the reality that legislators faced when they came to Little Rock this year. Arkansas must not only replace

a large amount of dispatchable coal generation, but even more dispatchable generation is needed to supply the power required to support economic development opportunities presented by load growth. I am proud of the work our legislators did to address this need by passing the Generating Arkansas Jobs Act of 2025.

The Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas' mission is to provide reliable, affordable and responsible electricity and services to our members. It is always a balancing act. We must replace the generation that we are losing with the coal plants closing, and this puts a lot of pressure on affordability. My best analogy is the difference in cost between operating an old car that is paid off compared to



CHANCE ALLMON

Sen. Jonathan Dismang introduced the Generating Arkansas Jobs Act of 2025 at a packed press conference in February, saying, "With your support and the passage of this bill, we will create a new avenue for energy production that promotes faster, more efficient energy development while ensuring high levels of accountability that take care of our ratepayers, all while maximizing the goal of our state's economic potential."

the cost of a new car. The cost of a loan, interest on that loan, higher cost of insurance and higher taxes all make the new generation more expensive.

In terms of a power plant, it costs somewhere between \$1 million to \$1.5 million for every megawatt of generation that must be replaced. What does that mean for the cooperatives? Given that we must replace 1,168 MW of coal generation with new generation, and the fact that we are already facing an energy shortage, we must build nearly 2,000 MW of new generation to have adequate power supply in 2030. This is before you factor in any new manufacturing plants, data centers or other new electrical ➤

LEGISLATION continued on page 6

## Lineworker Appreciation Day recognized at Capitol

On April 9, Lineworker Appreciation Day was recognized by proclamation at the state Capitol. The resolution recognized their bravery and hard work in ensuring safe and reliable power for all Arkansans. Lineworkers from the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas and other utilities were honored guests.



Lineworkers from the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas and other utilities (joined by Attorney General Tim Griffin, center in group photo) visit the state Capitol to be commended for their service and bravery.

### LEGISLATION *continued from page 5*


load that comes with economic development and jobs for Arkansans. In short, we need to invest nearly \$3 billion in new dispatchable generation.

I am asked often why these coal plants are closing if their remaining useful life is projected to be until about 2045. The short answer is that in 2018, Sierra Club and National Parks Conservation Association sued Entergy over alleged environmental issues associated with the coal plants. Entergy determined they would need to spend about \$2 billion to add new environmental controls, potentially reduce operations and possibly later require additional costly environmental controls through 2045. Given the uncertainty of these coal plants' longevity, it was nearly impossible to justify this investment. Entergy entered into a settlement agreement with Sierra Club and National Parks Conservation Association, which included a requirement that Entergy cease burning coal at these plants in 2028 and 2030, respectively. The settlement was approved by a federal judge in 2021, resulting in what is called a Consent Decree. A copy of the Consent Decree can be found here: [tinyurl.com/SierraConsentDecree](https://tinyurl.com/SierraConsentDecree).

Additional dispatchable generation is needed to maintain the status quo and to meet the demand for new opportunities. But, bankers will not loan us 100% of the money to build, just like they will not loan you 100% of the cost of your home. You must put some money down or, in the case of an electric utility, have enough equity to cover the loan. It is this fact that has caused the need for recent rate increases: The Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas need to generate revenue to build the equity needed to allow these new power plants to be financed. I highlight this fact because I have heard legislators

getting negative feedback that their support for the Generating Arkansas Jobs Act of 2025 would cause rate increases. The fact of the matter is that rate increases were a certainty before this bill ever saw the floor of the house or the senate.

The goal of the Generating Arkansas Jobs Act of 2025 is to reduce the impacts of these new generation builds on members. It also accelerates the timelines for review and approval of these new projects to ensure that we can get the new assets online in time to meet demand and to take advantage of economic development opportunities available to the state. While it is true that building more power generation to support new economic development will cause more pressure on rates, the bill allows new ways for us to contain those costs and provide some relief for existing members. This legislation also allows the ability to collect revenue for these new resources as we are building them, so that less money is needed for financing, resulting in less interest, easing our balance sheet and ultimately smoothing and eventually lowering the resulting rate impact.

The Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas are not-for-profit. There is no profit motive to build new generation. Our only motive is to provide you reliable power as affordably as we can. While there is no silver bullet, I appreciate the flexibility that our legislators provided us with the Generating Arkansas Jobs Act of 2025. I want to thank the bill sponsors, Sen. Jonathan Dismang and Rep. Les Eaves, and our eight senate and 20 house co-sponsors for their work on this. I also want to thank all our senators and representatives who supported this bill and made the best decision they could to ensure that Arkansas has reliable and affordable power into the future. 



## Arkansas Agriculture Hall of Fame honors six

On March 28, the Arkansas Agriculture Hall of Fame inducted six new members at a ceremony at the Statehouse Convention Center in Little Rock.

This year's class inductees are: Aubrey Blackmon of Houston; Carl Brothers of Stuttgart; Chuck Culver of Fayetteville; Mike Freeze of Little Rock; the late Jack Reaper of Albion; and Frank Wilson of Rison (who also is a member of the C & L Electric Cooperative Board of Directors).

The Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas are proud to sponsor this program — which seeks to build public awareness of agriculture and to recognize past and current leaders — with Arkansas Farm Bureau and Farm Credit Associations of Arkansas.



COURTESY OF ARKANSAS FARM BUREAU FEDERATION

Honorees inducted into the 2025 Arkansas Agriculture Hall of Fame are (from left) the late Jack Reaper (accepting on his behalf are grandson Jack "Trey" Reaper III and son Jack Reaper, Jr.), Aubrey Blackmon, Frank Wilson, Carl Brothers, Mike Freeze and Chuck Culver.

- Overeating and weight gain can temporarily dull your sense of hearing. High food intake can affect your auditory function due to increased blood flow in the digestive system.
- Only 30%-50% of the population has an inner monologue.

- Cat bunting or headbutting is a sign of showing trust.



- Sandwiches taste better when made by someone else. When you make your own, you anticipate the taste and become less hungry for it.

- Known as a calming signal, dogs sneeze to tell other dogs they're friendly.

- The odds of having red hair and blue eyes are 0.17%.

- Fried dill pickles were first sold in 1963 at The Duchess Drive-In in Atkins for 15 cents an order.



- A penny doubled every day for 30 days grows to \$10,737,418.24.
- Until 1964, employers were under no legal obligation to retain pregnant employees. Pregnant women didn't have complete protection and access to benefits until the 1978 Pregnancy Discrimination Act was passed.

- "Just don't give up trying to do what you really want to do. Where there is love and inspiration, I don't think you can go wrong."  
— Ella Fitzgerald, singer

## Where Is It?

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

In the April issue, we hid bunny ears for Easter. One correct reader joked they appeared in the Editor's Welcome Q&A with columnist Janet B. Carson, "hiding behind the hedge in the photo of Scotland's Drummond Castle gardens on page 4. I enjoyed the 'rabbit hunt.'"

In a random drawing of correct answers, five winners were selected to receive Arkansas Living insulated grocery totes:

**John and Kaye Johnson, Williford (North Arkansas Electric Cooperative)**

**Keith Mitchell, Benton (First Electric Cooperative)**

**Richard Rohrscheib, Poplar Grove (Woodruff Electric Cooperative)**

**Chayta Mills, Texarkana (Southwest Arkansas Electric Cooperative)**

**Taylor Smith, Tyronza (Craighead Electric Cooperative)**



For May, we've hidden this cookie for Chocolate Chip Day (May 15) and World Baking Day (May 18). Keep looking and you'll find it — "dough" not worry!

For a chance to win a tote, enter by May 15 via the "Where Is It?" link on the homepage of [arkansaslivingmagazine.com](http://arkansaslivingmagazine.com), or visit [arkansaslivingmagazine.com/where-is-it-contest/](http://arkansaslivingmagazine.com/where-is-it-contest/).

Or mail in entries to: Where Is It, Arkansas Living, P.O. Box 510, Little Rock, AR 72203.

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

*\* If your magazine arrives after the deadline, submit your entry by the 15th of the following month. We'll send a prize to a randomly selected latecomer! March's winner was: **Floyd Tye, Magnolia (nonmember)**.*



Sara Chen, a sixth grader from Pulaski County, wins the 2025 Arkansas State Spelling Bee.

PHOTO BY JENNIFER CHRISTMAN CIA

# SPARKING SUCCESS

## Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas power youth programs

From spelling champions to aspiring engineers and future leaders, the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas are lighting the way for the next generation.

Through support of programs like the Arkansas 4-H SeaPerch Challenge, the Arkansas State Spelling Bee and 4-H Tech Changemakers, electric cooperatives are empowering young minds to excel, innovate and make a difference — equipping them with skills they can carry into their futures.

“The Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas are committed to improving the quality of life in the communities that we serve,” said Rob Roedel, senior director of corporate communications for the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas. “The cooperatives make significant investments in the youth, as they represent the future. Our longstanding partnerships reflect our unwavering commitment to fostering growth and opportunity across the state.”

The cooperatives’ mission extends beyond keeping the lights on today — it’s about building a brighter tomorrow.

## MAKING WAVES

Arkansas 4-H SeaPerch Challenge a test of tech and teamwork

BY REBEKAH HALL

Arkansas 4-H teams from across the state gathered at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock’s Donaghey Student Center Aquatic Center for the 2025 SeaPerch Challenge, remotely navigating submersible robots through obstacle and mission courses.

Two hundred and twenty-six Arkansas 4-H members from 16 counties participated in the March 14 event.

Fifty-four teams worked to build remotely operated vehicles, or ROVs, using pieces of pool noodles, electrical tape, 3D printed parts, PVC pipe and other supplies. They then steered the ROVs through an underwater mission course and obstacle course, both designed to mimic undersea exploration or deep-sea missions. Teams were also judged on their technical design reports, where they documented the construction and engineering design process for the robots.

Michelle McVay, extension STEM instructor for 4-H and Youth Development



JENNIFER CHRISTMAN CIA

The Grant County Swim Shadys compete in the Junior Stock division.



for the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture, said the SeaPerch program is a great example of how 4-H helps participants learn by doing.

“Instead of just reading about engineering, they actually get to build and test underwater robots, figuring things out as they go,” McVay said. “This hands-on experience makes learning more fun and memorable. STEM programs like SeaPerch are super important because they teach problem-solving, teamwork and real-world skills that kids can use in school, their careers and beyond.”

The Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas take pride in working closely with the Cooperative Extension Service and Arkansas 4-H.

Roedel said, “The values of Arkansas 4-H, the Cooperative Extension Service and the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas closely align, as we all exist to serve. The SeaPerch program is just another example of a service that our partnership provides to The Natural State.”

The overall winning Junior and Senior Stock teams, Open Class team and High Score Overall team will compete at the International SeaPerch Challenge May 31-June 1 in College Park, Maryland.

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



CHANCE ALLMON

**Winning Open Class Team:**  
Aquanauts from Grant County:  
Eli Watson, Priyam Laxmi and  
Garrett Key.



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**Winning Senior Stock Class Team:**  
DeepWater Vanguard from Grant  
County: Callen Shaw, Gavin McGinley  
and Gracie McGinley.



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**Winning Junior Stock Class Team:**  
Hydro Rappers from Grant County:  
Jackson Knight, Priyesh Laxmi, Cooper  
Henderson and Abby Martin.



CHANCE ALLMON

**High Score Overall Winner\*:**  
Sea-Cret Agents from Grant County:  
Luke Douthit, Jaxson Andrews, Ella  
Daniels and Sarah Daniels.

*\*The Sea-Cret Agents had the next highest overall score after the Aquanauts.*

## BEE-YOND WORDS

State's top spellers compete in championship showdown

BY DAVID COPELAND

On March 8, the C.A. Vines Arkansas 4-H Center in Little Rock was abuzz with anticipation as Arkansas' top young wordsmiths faced off at the Arkansas State Spelling Bee.

This linguistic showdown was more than just a contest — it was the gateway for one speller to advance and represent Arkansas at the renowned Scripps National Spelling Bee, which celebrates its 100th anniversary, May 27-29.

The spellers, from 55 Arkansas counties, navigated a labyrinth of tricky terms, amazing everyone with their spelling finesse.

The Bee featured a lexicon to make even the most ardent logophiles' heads spin — words like “rond de jambe,” “kathakali,” “whydah,” “Apabhramsa,” “bhikshuni” and “incunabula” challenged the competitors' mental dictionaries. ➤



KITL DOLLARHITE

The 2025 Arkansas State Spelling Bee final four (from left): fourth-place finisher Karthik Dalai of Sebastian County; third-place finisher Bryce Harris of Benton County; first-place winner Sara Chen of Pulaski County; and second-place finisher Molly Isbell of Washington County.

After 21 intense rounds of spelling mastery, Sara Chen, a sixth grader from Pinnacle View Middle School in Pulaski County, rose to the top. The final flourish came when Sara confidently spelled the tongue-twister “Zdarsky tent,” sealing her victory and earning the title of champion.

Arkansas, “Bee” ready to cheer on Sara as she takes her talents to the national stage later this month.

*David Copeland is the Arkansas State Spelling Bee coordinator.*

Molly Isbell of Washington County finishes in second place at the Arkansas State Spelling Bee.



CHANCE ALLIUM

## CONNECTING GENERATIONS

Tech-savvy teens empower adults with essential skills

BY MARINE GLISOVIC

Since the Arkansas 4-H Tech Changemakers program started in 2021, more than 10,000 Arkansans have been taught basic technology skills, including using cellphones and setting up email accounts.

The community-centered Tech Changemakers program trains and equips teens to bring transformative digital skills to their communities. Tech Changemakers can be found in at least 30 counties in Arkansas.

“There is a huge gap. People must work in a world full of technology, and many did not grow up with technology or have access to internet,” said Arkansas 4-H Tech Changemakers program technician Cindy Dabbs Phillips.

Tech Changemakers is made up of 12- to 19-year-old students with backgrounds in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). “It has also grown to encompass children involved with agriculture, as technology is so prevalent in everything that you do,” Phillips said.

The Changemakers travel across the state teaching at events and community colleges.

Phillips continued, “I live on a rice farm and my cousin irrigates (his crops) with technology from his phone. He controls the water on the farm with his phone. We’re testing out drones to spray the crops. If you have livestock, there are drones that you can use to check on your cattle. There are ways to make almost every aspect of farming computerized, but you must know how to use it.”

And while they’re teaching others, these students are also learning.

“Life skills they learn include public speaking and organizing meetings in the community,” she said. “It’s amazing what it does for their level of confidence when they walk into a room full of adults, and they teach them how to place apps on their phones or how to fly a drone.”

Phillips reflected on some of their stories. “A student told me, ‘We had to help them get an email account before we could teach them email basics, because they do not have email.’”

She added, “I had a teenage boy with tears in his eyes ... he said, ‘I helped them. They needed help and I helped them.’ So, it’s more than just winning awards. They understand that they’re important — what they have to give is important.”

What they gain is also important.

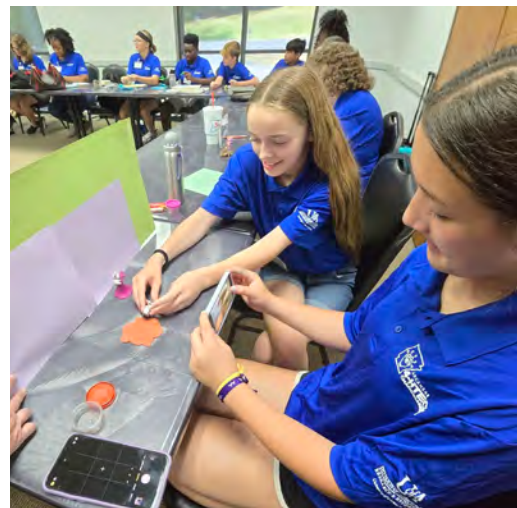
Phillips said, “They become confident public speakers. Regardless of your career path, if you can be comfortable in front of the room, that’s going to be good for your career.”

Roedel said, “The Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas became ‘changemakers’ in Arkansas during the 1930s and 1940s thanks to University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension agents’ willingness to help the pioneers of rural electric cooperatives.”

Students interested in becoming Tech Changemakers — or adults wishing to enlist their help — can contact Phillips by calling (870) 672-2972 or emailing [cdphillips@uada.edu](mailto:cdphillips@uada.edu).

Once a changemaker, always a changemaker.

*Marine Glisovic is corporate communications manager for the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas.* 



COURTESY OF ARKANSAS 4-H TECH CHANGEMAKERS

Arkansas 4-H Tech Changemakers master digital skills to be able to teach adults across the state.



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# Spanning Time

*The enduring charm of Arkansas' covered bridges*

BY JACK SCHNEDLER PHOTOS BY MARCIA SCHNEDLER

Tracking down one of Arkansas' two dozen covered bridges is a nostalgia trip that can take the imagination of visitors back as far as the horse-and-buggy era.

The one-lane wooden spans evoke "what we think of as a simpler and slower-paced style of life before the Automobile Age," says Bill Caswell, president of the National Society for the Preservation of Covered Bridges ([coveredbridgesociety.org](http://coveredbridgesociety.org)).

He adds, "For photographers and artists, it may not be solely the bridge, but also its setting as part of the surrounding landscape that provides creative inspiration."

The first U.S. covered bridge was built in 1825 near Cooperstown, New York. The earliest such structure in Arkansas likely was the Washita Bridge, erected in 1846 to span the Ouachita River at Rockport in Hot Spring County.

## Archways to the past

According to the Encyclopedia of Arkansas, the **Washita Bridge** resulted from an 1837 General Assembly act empowering county courts to let entrepreneurs construct toll bridges on public roads. Built by Little Rock Bridge Co., it was "a lattice type bridge built of wood." It was washed away by a flood the following year.

Benton County has five standing covered bridges on the list of enthusiast Dale Travis, who tracks them nationwide at [dalejtravis.com/cblist/cblistus.htm](http://dalejtravis.com/cblist/cblistus.htm). That's the most in the state, followed by four in Garland County and two each in Independence, Newton, Pulaski and Washington counties. There is one apiece in Boone, Crawford, Marion, Montgomery, Pike, Poinsett, Saline, Sharp and Stone counties.

Most of these bridges cross creeks or other small streams of water in secluded sites. So, some can be a challenge to locate. The directions

posted on Travis' website are a starting point, augmented by tracking with a smartphone.

It is unknown how many covered bridges were built in Arkansas during the 19th century. References to others in historic documents include Two Bayou Bridge south of Camden; Spadra Creek Bridge in Clarksville; and one span west of Little Rock.

"Historically, Arkansas never had a lot of covered bridges," Caswell says. "I am not sure why, because other Southern states like Georgia and North Carolina had hundreds, although few remain. Missouri had 139, of which only four still stand."

A number of reasons have been given for covering bridges, according to Caswell, "including shelter during inclement weather or keeping horses from being afraid to cross the water. But the real reason is to protect the structure supporting the bridge. Without protection from rain and snow, the wooden timbers would decay and collapse.

Keeping them dry lets them last much longer."



Garfield-Lime Kiln, Benton County



Goshen Vineyards, Benton County



Fletcher Creek, Pulaski County



Crystal Springs, Garland County




In Arkansas as elsewhere, covered bridges survive mainly on less traveled rural roads and sometimes on private property. Many deteriorated over time from lack of maintenance until they were abandoned or replaced by uncovered spans. Caswell says that bridges on more heavily traveled roads “tended to be replaced first. Most were one-lane structures that can’t handle large volumes of traffic.”

Many of the standing Arkansas covered bridges went up in the last half-century or so to evoke the legendary good ol’ days. One of the most photogenic spans **Fletcher Creek** in far west Little Rock, nestled among forested terrain. Set a few hundred yards off Kanis Road, it is a stringer truss structure dating to 1998. On sunny days, photos of the bridge reflected on the water are picture-postcard gems.

Pulaski County’s second covered bridge graces North Little Rock’s **Burns Park**. Painted red, it was built in 1972 across a fork of White Oak Bayou. At 85 feet, it is said to be the second longest such bridge in Arkansas. It escaped damage in the 2023 tornado that ravaged some of the park.

At **Magic Springs Theme and Water Park** on Hot Springs’ outskirts, the covered bridge is an artifice built in the mid-1970s. The setting spanning a man-made lake seems apt, given the park’s function as a tourist attraction.

The afterlife of a covered bridge can be seen in a weed-lined patch along U.S. 270 in rural Garland County. The span, stretching across the water of Spring Branch, carries the sign “**Crystal Springs Co.**” in huge letters. It was enclosed at some point to become a tiny dwelling. Visitors can peer through a window to see debris probably left when the residents moved out.

Visitors to the bridge across **Otter Creek**, northwest of Garfield in Benton County, may be greeted by a friendly dog from a home across the way. He adds a lively accent to photographs of the span, enhancing the pleasure of journeying to an imagined past. 



Burns Park, Pulaski County

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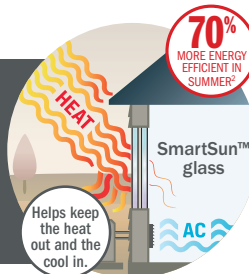
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\*Using U.S. and imported parts.

# Stronger than the Storm

*Arkansas  
lineworker who  
loses home in  
tornado finds  
joy in job*

North Arkansas Electric Cooperative lineworker Clint Ray continued to work 16-hour days to restore power to their community after losing his own home in a mid-March tornado that tore through the area.

TORI MOSS/NAEC

BY ERIN KELLY

With a tornado speeding straight for their home in Ash Flat, lineworker Clint Ray and his wife gathered their two children and fled to safety, just 30 minutes before the March 14 twister tore their house to pieces.

An hour later, with his family safe at the house of his sister-in-law and brother-in-law, Clint headed off to his job at North Arkansas Electric Cooperative (NAEC), stopping at the wreckage of his home just long enough to shut off the water and electricity.

The 33-year-old lineworker said that restoring power for his fellow co-op members brought him peace, despite his own enormous loss. He worked 16-hour shifts as a “bird dog,” leading a crew of lineworkers from Carroll Electric Cooperative’s Berryville and Bentonville offices, who rushed in to help NAEC.

“It’s a joy to be able to spread light to a dark world,” Clint said. “I’m blessed to be able to do that as my job, and I try to also do that by staying positive. I hope it will help show other people going through disasters that we are stronger than the storm.”

## Helping hands

Clint said it’s also his way of giving back to a community that has rallied around him and his family in the wake of the tornado, which ripped through the co-op’s territory as part of a devastating storm system that brought twisters, fierce rains and windstorms.

Clint, his wife, Hannah, 8-year-old son, Baylor, and 7-year-old daughter, Haisley, have been living in a two-bedroom, one-bath trailer home donated by a couple who stocked the place with provisions and told the family they could stay there for free as long as it takes to rebuild their house.

Other members of the community — including members of the church where Clint serves as assistant pastor — helped Hannah gather clothes and other belongings from what was left of their flooded house, which is near the Ash Flat office of the Salem-based co-op. Volunteers even handled the family’s laundry, Clint said.



COURTESY OF HANNAH RAY

Hannah Ray, wife of North Arkansas Electric Cooperative lineworker Clint Ray, and the couple’s children have adopted the attitude of this sign (given to Hannah by a friend) after their home was destroyed by a tornado. On the left is 7-year-old Haisley with her mom and 8-year-old brother, Baylor.



The co-op has also stepped up. Employees have donated to the Ray family, and NAEC created a GoFundMe page to raise money from a wider audience to help the Rays rebuild their home and replace their possessions. Clint said he'll take only what the family needs and pass on any excess donations to other people in the community who need help.

"It's unreal how kind and generous people have been," he said. "We have really felt so loved and cared for. That's why I want to keep working to help others. I want to go make a difference in somebody else's life when so many people are making a difference in mine."

That doesn't mean there haven't been moments of heartbreak. At one point, Clint said, he and Hannah hugged each other and wept while looking at the debris from the home they built with their own hands and the labor of family and friends.

"I stopped by for a few minutes to see the house for the first time in the daylight," he said. "My wife was there with a bunch of other people, working to save what



COURTESY OF HANNAH RAY

A tornado that tore through Arkansas destroyed the home of Clint Ray, a lineworker for North Arkansas Electric Cooperative. The home and garage were a total loss, but the fishing boat survived.



COURTESY OF HANNAH RAY

Lineworker Clint Ray and his family fled to safety while a tornado devastated their home.



COURTESY OF HANNAH RAY

Hannah Ray (far right) and her family clean salvaged clothes alongside three women (left) from another family whose home was destroyed.

possessions they could. My wife has been so much stronger than me, but when she saw me, she lost it. We kind of had a moment just crying together."

But they both know how blessed they are, Clint said.

"It could have been so much worse," he said. "Everything at our house with a heartbeat survived, including our three dogs and my daughter's two kitties. That's all that really matters. God has been good to us."

### Power in purpose

Clint has no doubt that any lineworkers who found themselves in the same situation would stay on the job, just as he did.

"I'm nobody special," he said. "I'm not doing anything they wouldn't do."

Clint said his spirits are raised every day by co-op members who thank him and the rest of the crew for restoring their power.

"Yesterday, as we were finishing up in the dark, the lights kicked on in the area we had spent the day working," he said. "We were driving down the road, seeing the lights on in all the houses because of what we did together. That's the most satisfying feeling there is."

*Erin Kelly is a staff writer for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.*



TORI MOSS/NAEC

Lineworker Clint Ray has worked for North Arkansas Electric Cooperative for 13 years.





Farmers markets often sell a variety of items including plants, herbs, honey, jams and jellies.

ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF PARKS, HERITAGE AND TOURISM

# Root of the Matter

*Local farmers markets cultivate community*

BY KAT ROBINSON

Farmers markets have always been part of the fabric of Arkansas rural life. From the early settlement days when families would bring their wares to market to trade, to today's renewed interest in farm-to-table fresh produce and products, these gatherings are an important part of small-town life.

Over the course of the past 20 years, farmers markets have bloomed all across the state. While some, like the venerable **Fayetteville Farmers Market** in northwest Arkansas, are decades old, more than half have come together in the past decade. Many were established in the past few years, such as the **Emmet Farmers Market** in southwest Arkansas, which was founded thanks to a grant that funded a new pavilion for farmers and vendors. Others, like **Greenwood Market** in

western Arkansas, have recently moved to the town's square and come closer to the heart of the city. A growing desire for fresh, local goods and stronger community ties statewide has helped these newer operations blossom.

The **Sheridan Farmers Market** in central Arkansas "was founded in 2019 as an initiative brought about through Kick Start Sheridan, Inc.," Sarah Ottens shares. She's with the Kick Start Sheridan program, which helps develop community programming. "It continues to be a popular seasonal activity for our growing small town."

Traditional farmers markets were places where produce, eggs and other commodities were sold. Today's farmers markets are usually more multifaceted, allowing in other vendors such as those with cottage industry goods like bread,



COURTESY OF GREENWOOD MARKET

In addition to fruits and vegetables, the Greenwood Market in Greenwood has food trucks available.



jams and jellies and pastries. Others also offer products from clothing to crafts being offered alongside cantaloupes and corn.

"I think our market is unique based on our variety of vendors," says Casey Craig, who works with Greenwood Market in downtown Greenwood. "We have folks selling meat, honey, sourdough bread and vegetables. We also have some young entrepreneurs selling handmade jewelry. We have a very diverse group!"

These gatherings have become hub activities for small towns across Arkansas — not just as a place to shop, but a weekly event that brings in people to experience more of what those towns have to offer.


"We are a very new market," offers Dee Clark, market manager at the Emmet Farmers Market. "Our market asks vendors to donate an item (not required) to our giveaway basket. We have all the customers sign up, and we draw a name at the end of the market. This has been a huge success; everyone has loved receiving an item from each vendor."

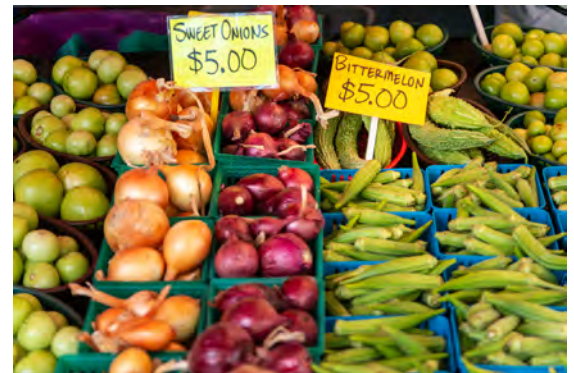
Ottens says, "We often try to pair community activities around the courthouse square with the farmers market to make it a larger event, keep things interesting and fun for the family. Activities can vary from Junkin' on Main Downtown Flea Market pop-ups to pancake breakfast on the courthouse lawn, to health fairs or art shows. At least one Saturday a month we try to have local live music on the courthouse square. ... You come for the farmers market and then go visit the local shops and boutiques, grab a bite to eat at the food truck or visit one of our downtown restaurants, then visit the vintage arcade located on the courthouse square. Make a day of it!"

They've also become popular stops for tourists. The **Bentonville Farmers Market** in northwest Arkansas, which runs from April to October each year, saw more than 200,000 visitors in 2023, according to Downtown Bentonville, Inc. Other larger cities, like Rogers and Little Rock, also see folks from out of town coming in — and that sometimes draws in vendors from further away, too.

Smaller markets have also seen an uptick. Kaylynn Toombs and her husband, Jon, set up their operation, Homestead Farms, with **A Cup of Love Ministry's Farmers and Friends Market** in Eureka Springs a few years back. They offer seasonal vegetables like cabbage, kohlrabi and carrots alongside A&A Orchards' apples and ciders and other local products, like Pleasant Valley Farms' pork, McCloud Farms' eggs and sourdough bread, Rockin' N Ranch's beef and Davis Farm's produce. The Toombses also offer online ordering, which helps ensure consumers are able to pick up the vegetables they need. For vendors, farmers and communities alike, farmers markets are a big win.

"It is a great feeling to see your hard work payoff," Clark says, "and to see the community come and enjoy the fellowship and support the farmers and vendors."

Find farmers markets in your area at [arkansasgrown.org](https://arkansasgrown.org). 



ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF PARKS, HERITAGE AND TOURISM

FROM TOP Many farmers markets are open from spring through autumn. Find a variety of fresh vegetables at farmers markets throughout the state. More than 200,000 visitors came to the Bentonville Farmers Market in 2023. Farmers markets sell delights like Arkansas heirloom tomatoes in the summer.

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

# Heavenly Hikes

*Exploring the state's scenic trails*



STORY AND PHOTOS BY CARLTON AND LEIGH WING

Moderate temperatures and sunshine make May a beautiful time for a hike!

**Mount Magazine State Park** boasts the highest point in Arkansas at 2,753 feet, offering stunning views of

the Petit Jean River Valley and Blue Mountain Lake below. The Lodge offers climate-controlled rooms, but there are also cabins and campsites to allow you to rough it as much as you like!

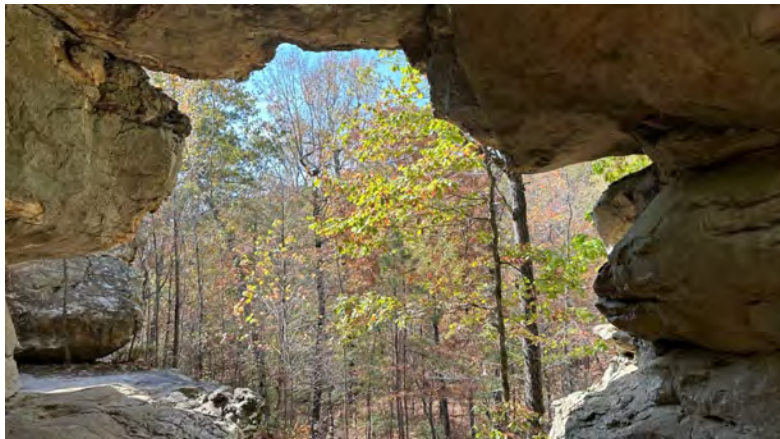
Several miles of trails meander around the mountain. Mossback Ridge Trail, which connects to other trails, takes about two hours to hike. Since most of the walking is on top of the ridge, the climbs are not too steep.

**Petit Jean State Park** charms visitors with waterfalls, Native American rock art and the popular Turtle Rocks (rocks that literally look like turtles). If you're looking for a shorter, easier hike with the children, Rock House Cave Trail will take you right past the Turtle Rocks to a large cave (actually more of a "rock shelter"), where the Native American art can still be seen. Bring a flashlight to better view the art (a little hard to see without one). Signage near the cave highlights the designs inside, which are all over the ceiling of the cave!

If you are bringing children to either park — or even if you're not — definitely check the state park website for activities led by park interpreters. They work hard to educate the public and provide information and guidance to make the most of your time in the area. They frequently have special projects and adventures for children complete with booklets, stamps and badges.

## Tick tips

Remember that tick season starts early in Arkansas, so it's wise to bring an insect repellent. While repellents with DEET provide proven protection, more natural repellents are available as well. Kinfield Golden Hour Mosquito Repellent smells better than most and contains citronella and vanilla (natural repellents). You might want to try natural repellents in a controlled setting first to make sure they work with your body chemistry before hitting the trails.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP

The Rock House Cave Trail at Petit Jean State Park is an easy hike with a rock shelter cave to explore.

Carlton and Leigh Wing enjoy the heavenly views from the top of Mount Magazine State Park.


Find a forest and take a hike! From strenuous to easy, there's a trail for every level of hiker.

## Park interpreter notes:

1.) Ticks can fall on you from above as well as climb from below, so it's a good idea to spray repellent on your hat in addition to your ankles and open skin.

2.) Be sure to carry a map, water and snacks on your hike to keep yourself hydrated and fueled.

Enjoy the beautiful weather and views of the forests coming to life!

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





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## Round-Up for Good: Small Change, Big Impact

Enrolling in Operation Round-Up is a great way for First Electric members to make a positive impact on their communities. Here are a few reasons why it's beneficial:

**Support Local Charities and Community Projects:** Operation Round-Up pools contributions from members, which are then donated to support local charities, community programs, scholarships and other initiatives. These contributions can make a significant difference in improving the quality of life in our communities.

**It's an Easy Way to Give Back:** The program works by rounding up your monthly electric bill to the nearest dollar, with the difference being donated. For example, if your bill is \$79.45, it would round up to \$80, and the extra 55 cents would go to the fund. The amount is so small that members often don't even notice, but it adds up to a large collective contribution over time.

**Transparent and Accountable:** The funds raised through Operation Round-Up are administered by a board of trustees, ensuring that donations are spent responsibly and on projects that directly benefit the communities.

**Building Stronger Communities:** By participating, members contribute to the overall well-being and growth of their communities, helping fund local initiatives such as school supplies, emergency services and community development projects.

Overall, it's a simple yet impactful way for cooperative members to contribute to positive changes and strengthen the bonds within their communities.

To enroll, call 800-489-7405 or visit [firstelectric.coop/community/programs/operation-round-up](https://firstelectric.coop/community/programs/operation-round-up).

During the April Operation Round-Up board meeting, \$30,500 was donated to nonprofits within First Electric's service territory, thanks to the generosity of our members!

### Arkansas County

Imagination Library of Arkansas County	\$2,000
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### Cleburne County

The Genesis Project	\$2,000
Breakin Bread Community Kitchen	\$2,000

### Conway County

Arkansas Single Parent Scholarship Fund of Conway Co.	\$500
Morrilton Human Relations Council, Inc.	\$1,500

### Garland County

The Literacy Council of the Ouachitas	\$1,500
Arkansas Single Parent Scholarship Fund of Garland Co.	\$250

### Grant County

Arkansas Single Parent Scholarship Fund of Grant Co.	\$250
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### Independence County

Old Independence Regional Museum	\$1,000
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### Lonoke County

Arkansas Single Parent Scholarship Fund of Lonoke Co.	\$1,500
Beyond Boundaries, Inc.	\$2,000

### Pulaski County

AR Kids Read	\$2,000
Arkansas Single Parent Scholarship Fund of Pulaski Co.	\$1,500
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Pulaski Co. Council for Communities Children and Youth	\$1,000
Providence Park	\$1,500
North Pulaski Community Complex	\$2,000
Our House, Inc.	\$2,000
Here to Help Foundation	\$2,000

### Saline County

Salt County Lacrosse	\$250
Arkansas Single Parent Scholarship Fund of Saline Co.	\$1,500

### Yell County

Arkansas Single Parent Scholarship Fund of Yell Co.	\$250
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## Home for Healing receives Operation Round-Up donation

Shanika's journey into motherhood took an unexpected turn when her son, Jamari, was born prematurely at 27 weeks due to preeclampsia. Over the past 10 months, Jamari has faced numerous challenges, but soon, he'll be heading home from the hospital!

Shanika has found peace and comfort at Home for Healing, a no-cost lodging facility for patients and caregivers. The calm, tranquil environment has given her the space to rest and focus on Jamari's well-being and recovery.

Thanks to the generosity of our members enrolled in Operation Round-Up, Home for Healing in Pulaski County received a \$2,000 donation to help patients like Jamari and his mom.



Jamari was born prematurely.



Shanika, Jamari's mother.



# May is Electrical Safety Month!

When it comes to electrical safety, it's essential to follow proper guidelines to prevent accidents, injuries or even fatalities. Here are some key electrical safety tips for members to ensure their safety:

## 1. Know Your Electrical System

Familiarize yourself with the electrical system in your home or workplace. Understand how circuit breakers or fuses function and their locations.

## 2. Inspect Electric Appliances

Regularly inspect all electric appliances for signs of wear and tear, such as frayed cords or exposed wires. Replace any damaged or faulty appliances immediately.

## 3. Avoid Overloading Circuits

Plugging too many devices into a single outlet can cause overheating and potentially lead to fires. Use appliances according to the manufacturer's instructions.

## 4. Keep Electric Devices Dry

Never use electric devices with wet hands or near water (e.g., sinks, showers, bathtubs). Ensure outlets and power strips are kept dry to avoid short circuits or electric shocks.

## 5. Use Proper Extension Cords

Always use extension cords rated for the specific device you're using. Never daisy-chain extension cords and unplug them when not in use.

## 6. Turn Off Power Before Working on Electrical Equipment

Always disconnect the power supply before repairing or maintaining any electrical equipment. If possible, switch off the main power at the circuit breaker.

## 7. Install Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Detectors

Ensure your home or workplace has working smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors in place. Test them monthly and replace batteries at least once a year.

## 8. Hire a Professional Electrician

If you encounter serious electrical issues, such as sparking outlets or constant circuit breaker trips, call a licensed electrician. Avoid attempting to fix complex electrical problems yourself unless properly trained.

## 9. Educate Children About Electrical Safety

Teach children not to play with electrical outlets or plugs. Use outlet covers and childproof electrical devices in homes with young children.

## 10. Recognize Warning Signs of Electrical Issues

Watch for signs of electrical problems, such as flickering lights, unusual odors (including burning plastic or metal), or circuit breakers frequently tripping. Address these issues immediately to prevent further damage or danger.

Following these electrical safety tips can help prevent accidents, keep your space safe and ensure that you're prepared for potential electrical hazards.



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# First Electric's low-cost energy-efficiency tips!

Reducing energy use not only helps save money but also contributes to environmental sustainability. Here are some free or low-cost tips you can implement to reduce your energy consumption:

## 1. Turn Off Lights When Not in Use

- Always switch off lights when leaving a room, even if you're only going for a short time.
- Consider using natural daylight during the day instead of turning on lights.

## 2. Unplug Devices When Not in Use

- Many electronic devices and chargers continue to draw power even when turned off. Unplug devices when they are not in use or use a power strip to disconnect multiple items at once effortlessly.

## 3. Use Energy-Efficient Light Bulbs

- Replace incandescent bulbs with LED bulbs, which use less energy and last longer. Although this may require a small initial investment, it pays off in the long run.

## 4. Adjust Thermostat Settings

- In Winter: Lower your thermostat by a few degrees (aim for 68 degrees when you're at home) and wear warm layers to stay comfortable.
- In Summer: Raise your thermostat by a few degrees (aim for 78 degrees when you're at home) and use fans to help circulate air.

## 6. Seal Gaps and Insulate Windows

- Check windows and doors for drafts. Use weatherstripping or inexpensive foam tape to seal gaps and prevent heat or cool air from escaping.
- Consider using heavy curtains or blinds to keep heat in during winter and out during summer.

## 7. Use Appliances Efficiently

- Washing Machine: Wash clothes in cold water whenever possible. This reduces the energy used to heat the water.
- Dishwasher: Run your dishwasher only when it's full and use the air-dry setting instead of the heat-dry setting.
- Cooking: Cover pots while cooking to retain heat and use the microwave or toaster oven for smaller meals to save energy.

## 8. Wash Full Loads

- Always try to run your laundry and dishwasher with full loads to maximize

efficiency. Washing partial loads wastes both water and energy.

## 11. Use Fans Instead of Air Conditioning

- Ceiling fans or portable fans can effectively cool a room for significantly less energy than air conditioning. Ensure the fan blades are spinning in the correct direction for the season: clockwise in winter and counterclockwise in summer.

## 12. Use Smart Power Strips

- Power strips with automatic on/off features can help reduce the energy consumed by idle electronics.

## 13. Lower Your Water Heater Temperature

- Lower your water heater's thermostat to 120 degrees to save energy. This still provides adequate hot water for most household tasks.

## 14. Air Dry Clothes When Possible

- Hang clothes to air dry whenever possible instead of using the dryer. This saves on both electricity and wear and tear on clothing.

## 15. Use the Microwave or Slow Cooker

- Microwaves and slow cookers use far less energy than ovens. Use them when preparing meals to reduce energy use.

By incorporating these simple, cost-effective habits, you can lower your energy consumption without a significant financial investment. The best part is that many of these tips can become automatic habits, helping you save energy every day.

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## NEW RECIPE CONTEST: BOWL US OVER!

For our next recipe contest, we're giving away four 4-in-1 colander/bowl sets. Each set features: a stainless-steel colander, a plastic mixing and serving bowl with a nonslip bottom, a removable center lid and three attachments for grating, shredding and slicing.

**To enter:** Submit any personal fall favorite recipe (think pumpkin spice, apple delights, casseroles, comfort food, soups, sheet-pan or one-dish dinners, slow cooker sensations, pasta dishes, baked goods and autumn holiday fare) by July 15 to: [arkansaslivingmagazine.com/submissions/submit-a-recipe](http://arkansaslivingmagazine.com/submissions/submit-a-recipe).



## Spice Up Your Summer Winners

In our February issue, we announced the Spice Up Your Summer Recipe Contest to win four rechargeable electric salt and pepper grinder sets! To be entered in the drawing, readers submitted one favorite personal recipe to [ArkansasLivingMagazine.com](http://ArkansasLivingMagazine.com).

The winners were:

Wayne Harris, Rogers (Carroll Electric Cooperative)

Ashley Jones, Rector (Clay County Electric Cooperative)

Laura Krause, Hot Springs Village (First Electric Cooperative)

Ann Edwards, Fort Smith (Arkansas Valley Electric Cooperative).





# Snapshots from our readers

Porter is the sweetest little crawfish in the pot! Lindsey Holtzclaw, Taylor.



Naomi with a winning smile, among beautiful spring flowers. Dakota Henslee, Ash Flat.



Max and Harlan with their collection of friends on the farm. Tina McCain, Beebe.



Kenzie Mae holding her new blue heeler puppy. Sammie Henderson, Jasper.





**Ellie fishing for the big one on the Little Red River in Pangburn.** Malinda Noel, Dierks.



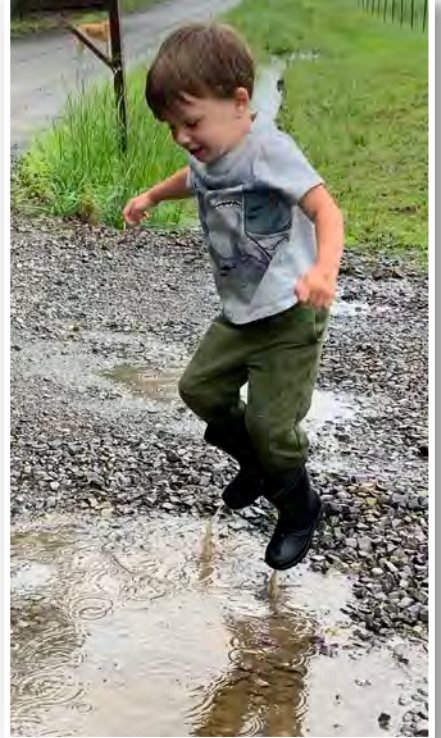
**Brexlea Kay is wondering exactly what this critter, Lucky, actually is!** Wanda McCurry, Mena.



**Cale is so proud of his Pop's carrots.** Sherry Grounds, Ashdown.



**Ruthvika on an enchanting spring evening.** Adit Dutt Bulusu, Bentonville Square.



**Kolt making a literal "splash."** Julie Turney, Wilburn.

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).

# Cucurbit Craze


*Plant a gourd smorgasbord from pumpkins to pickles*



BY JANET B. CARSON

The cucurbit or gourd family is diverse and encompasses a lot of familiar vegetables that we love to eat and that can be easily grown. From cucumbers and squash, to watermelons, cantaloupes, pumpkins and gourds, there are many types to try. May is a great month to get planting.

Some members of the cucurbit family are considered short-season plants, with quick seed to harvest rates, while others like pumpkins, winter squash and gourds have a long growing season. Planting season starts in April and May, with second plantings later on. Cucurbits can be grown from seed or from transplants. All need at least 6 hours of sunlight a day, and many need ample room to grow.

All members of the cucurbit family need pollinators. They produce separate female and male flowers on the same plant. While the blooms may look alike, look behind the flower to determine if it is male or female. A male bloom will have pollen in the flower and a stalk behind the bloom, while a female bloom will have a small fruit behind the flower (the ovary) which will enlarge and grow into a vegetable if it is pollinated. 



Cucumbers are one of many popular vegetables in the cucurbit family.

PLANT	TYPES	CULTURE
Cucumber	Burpless, bush type, pickling, slicing	About 50-70 days from seed to harvest. Cucumbers are typically vining plants, except for the space-saving bush types. Vining plants benefit from a trellis to keep the cucumbers growing straight. Watch out for cucumber beetles, which can spread diseases.
Summer Squash	Yellow squash (crookneck and straightneck) and zucchini are most common. Patty pan, scallop, eight ball	Can be grown from direct seeding or transplants. Typically, 50 days from seed to harvest. You can have multiple crops per year. Most form a mounding, bushy plant. During periods of heavy rain and high humidity, thinning out some leaves can help with air circulation and prevent rotting.
Winter Squash	Acorn, butternut, spaghetti squash, Hubbard, delicata	Hard rinds develop over a long growing season. Usually, 90-100 days from seed to harvest. Long storage life. Plants are vigorous vining plants, so need room to grow. Can be trellised.
Melons	Cantaloupe, honeydew	About 70-90 days from seed to harvest. Vigorous vines. Moisture is important early in their growth, but too much moisture close to harvest can cause less sugars, so not as sweet.
Watermelon	Icebox type, standard, giant	About 80-90 days from seed to harvest. The curly tendril near the stem will turn brown and the outer rind will take on a dull color when ripe. Small-fruited forms take up less space than large-fruited forms, but all need room to grow.
Pumpkins	Many varieties from miniatures to giants and all colors and forms in between	About 90-120 days from seed to harvest. Long growing season and plants need a lot of space to grow. Typically plant 2-3 seeds per mound in late May through June for a fall harvest. Mulching helps conserve moisture and helps with weed prevention.
Gourds	Miniatures, luffa, birdhouse, bottleneck, dipper, Turk's turban, apple	About 110-120 days from seed to harvest. Best grown on a trellis or fence. Usually harvest before a killing frost. After curing, they can last for years.



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# Fired Up!

*Get grilling with fresh, flavorful recipes*

RECIPES AND PHOTOS  
BY JULIANA GOODWIN

## Grilled Chicken Caesar Salad

Makes 4 servings.

### Chicken

- 12 chicken tenderloins
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic salt

### Dressing

- 1/2 cup light mayonnaise
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 1 teaspoon fresh minced garlic
- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice

- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- 1/3 cup Parmesan cheese, shredded (fresh, not canned)
- 3 tablespoons chicken broth or water (or more to thin out dressing)
- Salt to taste

### Salad

- 2 large heads romaine
- Olive oil
- Pepper to taste
- 2/3 cup croutons
- Parmesan cheese, shredded (optional garnish)

Heat grill to 400.  
**For chicken:** Drizzle tenderloins with olive oil, and season with salt, pepper and garlic salt. Set aside.

**For dressing:** Place all dressing ingredients in a food processor, and pulse until smooth. Add broth or water to thin it out, as needed. Set aside.

Place chicken on hot grill, and cook for 5 minutes on first side and 4 minutes and 45 seconds on second with lid closed. Remove and immediately cover with foil.

**For salad:** Slice each head of romaine in half longways. Rub with olive oil. Place cut side down on grill and, using tongs, hold down on grill for 90 seconds or until char marks appear. Remove.

Slice chicken, drizzle lettuce with dressing, and plate together, seasoning with pepper and adding croutons. If desired, add extra shredded Parmesan cheese and serve.



## Grilled Filet Mignon with Vegetables

Makes 2 servings.

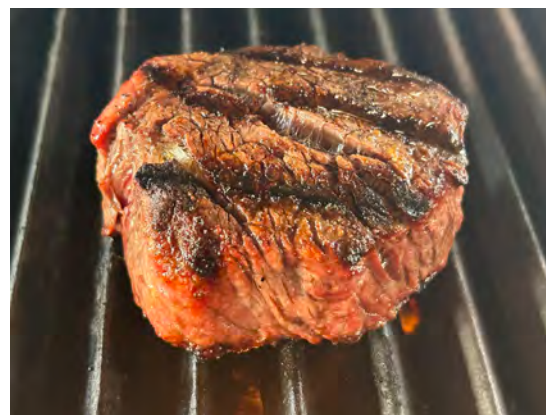
- 2 (6-ounce) filet mignon steaks
- Olive oil
- Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste
- 1 zucchini
- 1 yellow squash
- 2 teaspoons butter

Allow steaks to sit out about 30 minutes before grilling.

Heat grill to medium-high, or about 400 degrees. Rub olive oil on steaks, and season with salt and generous amount of pepper.

Slice zucchini and squash vertically in semi-thick slices. Drizzle with olive oil, toss with your hands, then add salt and pepper.

When grill is hot, place steaks on one side and vegetables on the other. Cover and cook for 4 minutes. Flip vegetables first, then flip steaks, topping with 1 teaspoon butter to each. If meat does not easily release, close grill, and cook for 1 more minute. After 3 more minutes, remove vegetables. Cover and cook steaks 1 additional minute for medium rare or 2 minutes for medium. Remove and cover with foil for 5 minutes to allow steaks to rest before cutting



into them.

*Notes: Do not turn off grill until you have cut into your steak. If you are not sure how long to cook steak, remove before you think it is done. You can always throw it back on grill, but you can't make it more rare.*





## Grilled Asian Ahi with Slaw

Makes 2 servings.

### Slaw

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 2 teaspoons rice wine vinegar
- 1 teaspoon sesame oil
- 1 teaspoon soy sauce or tamari
- 2 cups coleslaw mix
- 1 green onion, sliced
- 1/2 cup cucumber, diced

### Sauce

- 1 teaspoon soy sauce
- 1/2 teaspoon sesame oil
- 1 teaspoon water
- 1 1/2 teaspoons ginger, freshly grated

### Ahi

- 2 ahi tuna fillets (fresh or frozen and thawed)
- Olive oil
- 1 teaspoon salt
- Freshly ground pepper to taste

**For slaw:** In a small bowl, whisk together olive oil, sugar, rice wine vinegar, sesame oil and soy sauce/tamari to make a dressing. In a large bowl, combine coleslaw mix, green onion and cucumber, and toss with dressing.

**For sauce:** In a small bowl, combine all sauce ingredients.

**For ahi:** Heat grill to high, about 500 degrees. Rub ahi with a little olive oil, and generously season fillet with salt and pepper.

Add ahi to hot grill, and cook with lid down for 1 minute and 45 seconds per side.

Remove from grill, and brush each piece with sauce. Immediately serve over slaw.

*Notes: Don't overcook fish or it will dry out. Ahi is served rare, so this will be rare to medium-rare when you cut into it.*



*This month's web exclusive recipe:*

## Gourmet Sliders with Fig Jam and Herb Cheese Spread

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).*

# Pepper Power

*Jalapeños kick up flavor, heat*

## Corn & Black Bean Salad

Makes 10-12 servings.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 (15-ounce) can black beans, rinsed and drained  | 1/3 cup red onion, chopped                   |
| 9 ounces roasted corn, fresh or frozen and thawed | 1 scallion, chopped                          |
| 1 jalapeño, diced                                 | 1/4 cup cilantro, chopped (or more to taste) |
| 1 medium tomato, chopped                          | Salt and pepper to taste                     |
|   | 2 limes, juiced                              |
|   | 1 tablespoon olive oil                       |
|   | 1 medium avocado, diced                      |

In a large bowl, combine all ingredients except avocado. Allow to marinate in refrigerator for 30 minutes. Add avocado just before serving.

*Heather McCurley, Mountain Home*



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## Grilled Poppers

Makes 5-10 servings.

- 5 jalapeños
- 4 ounces cream cheese, softened
- 4 ounces shredded cheddar cheese
- 1/2 teaspoon chili powder
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/2 teaspoon cumin

Cut jalapeños in half and remove seeds.

In a medium bowl, mix all remaining ingredients until well-combined. Fill each pepper half with cheese mixture.

Place on a grill-safe pan, and cook on grill (indirect heat) until bubbly and browned.

*Note: These can also be baked in an oven at 350 for 20 minutes.*

*Tina Solari, Horseshoe Bend*

## Jalapeño Bacon Deviled Eggs

Makes 12-24 servings.

- 12 hard-boiled eggs
- 3 tablespoons pickled jalapeños, chopped (adjust for desired spiciness)
- 1/2 cup mayonnaise (adjust for desired texture; I use Duke's)
- 8 slices cooked, crisp bacon, crumbled

When eggs are cool, peel and slice in half. Remove yolks and mash in a medium bowl with pickled jalapeños and mayonnaise to taste.

Fill egg white halves with yolk mixture. Top eggs with bacon.

*Notes: Best eggs ever! My family loves these!*

*Shawna Sewejkis, Mountain Home*

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## CROSSWORD PUZZLE

### Fifth Month By Victor Fleming

#### ACROSS

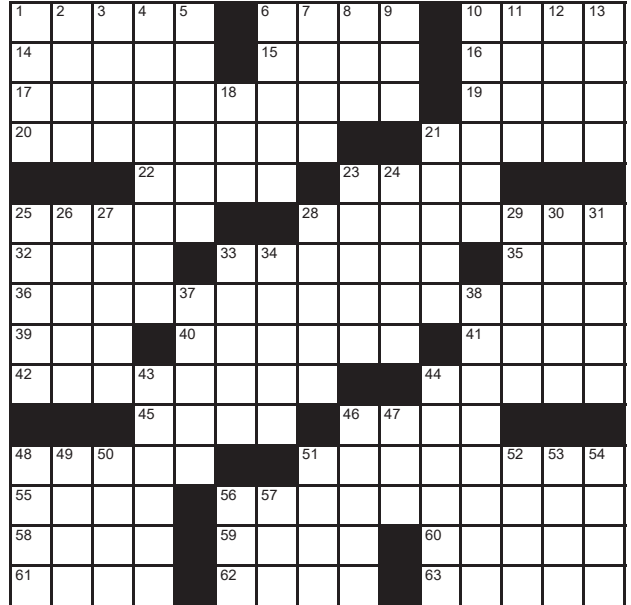
- 1 Seem appropriate for
- 6 McEntire of music and TV
- 10 "... best \_\_\_ schemes of mice and men"
- 14 Rice-\_\_\_
- 15 Whitish gem
- 16 Big hairdo
- 17 What April showers bring
- 19 Letters, postcards, etc.
- 20 State of mind
- 21 Bible division
- 22 \_\_\_ a one (none)
- 23 Frat letters
- 25 Aboveboard, informally
- 28 Remove, as garbage
- 32 "I smell \_\_\_!"
- 33 Ethically indifferent
- 35 "I" trouble?
- 36 This month's birth flower
- 39 Off-torn knee part, in brief
- 40 Major natural disaster, slangily

- 41 River of Spain
- 42 "So?" equivalent
- 44 Bottomless pit
- 45 Iowa city
- 46 And
- 48 Taco topper

- 51 So to speak
- 55 Home of the Jazz
- 56 The eleventh of this month this year
- 58 "Me neither!"
- 59 Pennsylvania port or lake
- 60 "[62-Across] Go Fly \_\_\_"
- 61 Breadth
- 62 See 60-Across
- 63 Lo-cal brews

#### DOWN

- 1 The Crimson Tide, by another name
- 2 Part of QED
- 3 Race car driver A.J.
- 4 There's no end to it



- 5 \_\_\_ windmills (charge imaginary foes)
- 6 Behaving like a ruffian
- 7 Fencing blade
- 8 Block, as someone's passage
- 9 Capone and Pacino
- 10 City east of San Diego
- 11 "It's \_\_\_ cry from ..."
- 12 "Bearded" flower
- 13 1996 White House candidate
- 18 "... \_\_\_ flag was still there"
- 21 Country estate
- 23 ) or (, briefly
- 24 Urbane
- 25 1980s NBC drama
- 26 "Love Story" author Segal
- 27 Big name in California winemaking
- 28 Alternatives to Twinkies
- 29 "Marcus \_\_\_, M.D."
- 30 Golden \_\_\_ (seniors)

- 31 Duncan toys
- 33 Blazing
- 34 Docs that convey liens on real estate (abbr.)
- 37 Barack or Michelle
- 38 "Big" name in a 1998 comedy crime movie
- 43 Get dollars for chips
- 44 Of the stars
- 46 Barbecue leftovers
- 47 Tell a whopper
- 48 Phoenix NBA team
- 49 Situated above
- 50 "Tomb Raider" Croft
- 51 "Have \_\_\_!" ("Knock yourself out!")
- 52 Work on, as a manuscript
- 53 Assess
- 54 "For Your \_\_\_ Only" (1981 James Bond movie)
- 56 Brooks, Gibson or Rosen
- 57 Smeltery input

CROSSWORD ANSWERS ON PAGE 39

Email feedback to [judgevic@gmail.com](mailto:judgevic@gmail.com)

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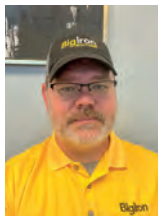
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**CROSSWORD ANSWERS**  
for puzzle on page 38

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# Sam's Pizza Pub: A lakeside slice of history



STORY AND PHOTOS  
BY ROB ROEDEL

Located in what was once a bait shop, Sam's Pizza Pub in Hot Springs was established in the 1980s as a popular lakeside restaurant.

Nestled in a residential area with scenic views of Lake Hamilton, it offers boat-up parking and spacious indoor and outdoor dining. Inside, the warm, dark-wood décor includes horse racing memorabilia and local mementos, making it a charming Arkansas gem.

On the day of my visit, I enjoyed

talking to a family of four visiting from Minnesota. The two young daughters enjoyed adding a pin to indicate their hometown location to a wall-mounted U.S. map that illustrates the homes of visitors. Their dad was parking their boat while mom was ordering lunch.

My host for the visit was Brad

Lovell, assistant general manager of Sam's Pizza Pub, who worked at the restaurant while he was in high school. The current owner is Landan Mitchell, with Bill Marsh serving as general manager. I enjoyed learning about the decades of memories that customers have shared with Brad along with some history of the pub.

Brad fixed me up with a tasty basket of hand-breaded dill pickle chips and jalapeños. The basket of fried goodness

provided a little heat and a little sweetness with a sour tang.

I enjoyed the flavor addition of using a side of house-made ranch dressing as a dip.

Sam's menu states that the restaurant offers, "Arguably the best thin-crust pizza in Hot Springs!" So, I ordered the Super Sam pizza to



Loaded with toppings, the Super Sam is lauded as the "best thin-crust pizza in Hot Springs."

judge for myself. The Super Sam pie was topped with cheese, beef, sausage, pepperoni, mushrooms, green peppers, black olives and onions. The 14-inch pizza was cooked perfectly with cheese on the brim of the crust that showed an extreme attention to detail. The crust recipe is a Sam's secret, and I will attest that the pizza is among the best



The Sam's Pizza Pub team serves up hot pizza and local favorites on Lake Hamilton in Hot Springs.



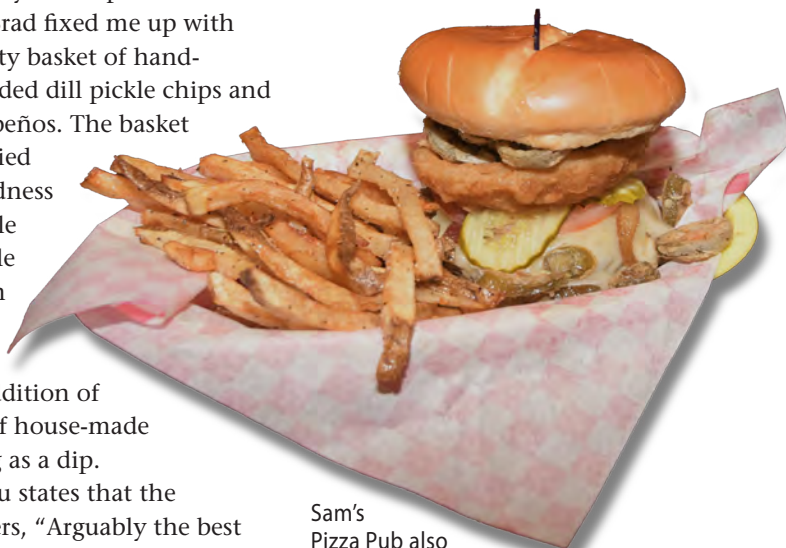
## THE EATING ESSENTIALS

### Sam's Pizza Pub

401 Burchwood Bay Road,  
Hot Springs  
(501) 525-0780  
[samspizzapub.com](http://samspizzapub.com)

### Hours of Operation

Sunday-Thursday: 11 a.m.-9 p.m.  
Friday-Saturday: 11 a.m.-10 p.m.



Sam's Pizza Pub also serves great burgers like the Billy Burger and fresh, hand-cut fries.



that I have had in Arkansas.

A burger at a pizza place? Not just any burger, but a Sam's Billy Burger. It includes a 6.5-ounce ground chuck patty on a toasted bun with bacon, pepper jack cheese, fried jalapeños and an onion ring with lettuce, tomato and pickle. What great flavor combinations with each bite. Be hungry if you order this one, and be prepared for a bit of heat. There are no frozen fries at Sam's, as only fresh, hand-cut potatoes are served. Freshly prepared chips and onion rings are also available.

There are many sandwich and salad selections. I enjoyed the Cobb Salad, which scored a 10 out of 10 for presentation as well as taste. The chef, once again, showed great attention to detail, as the turkey, sliced boiled eggs,

mozzarella cheese, crispy bacon and tomato were arranged in precise rows atop a bowl of iceberg lettuce. The fresh ingredients with homemade dressing made for a lighter option on the warm day of my visit.


The Pub offers vegan options that include Buffalo Cauliflower Bites, Vegan Cheese Fries, Beyond Meatless Chicken Tenders, a Meatless Chicken Sandwich, a Beyond Meatless Philly and a Beyond Meatless Brat.

Desserts include Mini Key Lime Pie, Chocolate Molten Lava Cake served with ice cream and Fried Burrito Cheesecake. I loved the cheesecake, a novel variation with delicious chocolate sauce drizzled on top.

I asked Brad who Sam's is named



The Fried Burrito Cheesecake is one of several delicious dessert offerings.

after. He smiled and pointed to a large photograph on the wall by the entrance. It turns out that Sam was a dog that liked to hang out at the bait shop back in the day. What better way to honor a man's best friend than to name a cool restaurant after him? 

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

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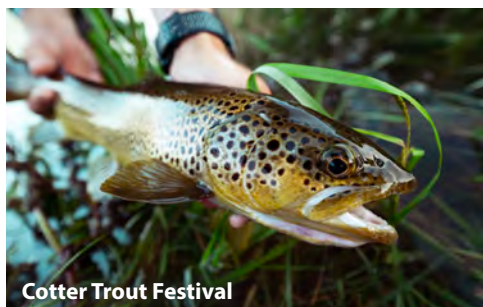


# Calendar



**Cabot Strawberry Festival**

COURTESY OF CABOT STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL



**Cotter Trout Festival**



**Toad Suck Daze**



**Magnolia Blossom Festival and World Championship Steak Cook-off**

COURTESY OF ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF PARKS, HERITAGE AND TOURISM



**Eureka Springs Blues Party**

## May 1-3

### **Cabot Strawberry Festival**

Cabot, facebook.com/  
StrawberryFestivalCabot

## May 2-3

### **Mountain View Iris Festival**

Mountain View, mountainviewirisfest.com

## May 2-4

### **Arkansas Pottery Festival**

Fayetteville, experiencefayetteville.com

### **Toad Suck Daze**

Conway, toadsuck.org

## May 3

### **Cotter Trout Festival**

Cotter, facebook.com/  
CotterGassvilleChamber

### **Mayhaw Festival**

El Dorado, soarkhistory.com/  
mayhaw-festival

### **World Championship Chocolate Gravy Cook-off**

Searcy, experiencesearcy.com

## May 8-10

### **Airing of the Quilts**

Greenwood, facebook.com/  
GreenwoodQuilts

## May 11

### **Mother's Day at the Little Rock Zoo**

Little Rock, littlerockzoo.com

## May 16-17

### **Crawdadd Days**

Harrison, crawdaddays.net

### **Magnolia Blossom Festival and World Championship Steak Cook-off**

Magnolia, blossomfestival.org

### **Osceola Heritage Music Festival**

Osceola, osceolaheritagemusicfestival.com

### **Picklefest**

Atkins, facebook.com/  
peopleforabetteratkins

### **Norfolk Pioneer Days**

Norfolk, facebook.com/  
NorfolkPioneerDays

## May 18

### **Fayetteville Strawberry Festival**

Fayetteville, downtownfay.org/strawberry-festival

## May 24-26

### **Red, White & Zoo: Memorial Day**

Little Rock, littlerockzoo.com

## May 25

### **Memorial Day Fireworks**

Lake Hamilton, hotspings.org

## May 26-31

### **Old Fort Days Rodeo**

Fort Smith, oldfortdaysrodeo.com/

## May 29-31

### **Farm Fest**

Wynne, facebook.com/wynnefarmfest

### **Mosquitofest**

McCrory, facebook.com/mosquitofestival

## May 29-June 1

### **Eureka Springs Blues Party**

Eureka Springs, eureka Springs bluesparty.com

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Submit events at [arkansaslivingmagazine.com/submissions/submit-an-event](https://arkansaslivingmagazine.com/submissions/submit-an-event).



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Jerald Baker

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Laryssa Calley  
Matt Steele

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