

Bloom BOOM

Flower farms sow
seeds of connection

Page 8

Plus:

Christ of the Ozarks

Berry Best Recipes

Mountain Biking Levels Up



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CONTENTS JUNE 2026



KAYLA CROW

FEATURES

- 8 *Cover Story*
Bloom Boom
Flower farms sow seeds of connection.
By Rachel Blocker
- 12 **Leveling Up**
Arkansas' first bike lift changes the ride.
By Bob Robinson
- 16 *Uniquely Arkansas*
Standing Tall
Christ of the Ozarks celebrates 60 years.
By Chris Hooten
- 27 *Economic Sparks*
Meat of the Matter
Wild Pastures' delivery service lands strategic home in Clinton.
By JD Lowery
- 36 *Worth the Drive*
Visiting Lake June in June
Exploring the Stamps 'pond' of Maya Angelou's memories.
By Jack Schmedler



16

CHRIS HOOTEN



ON THE COVER

Sacred Hollow Farm proudly offers a retreat that allows the community to connect with nature.
Photo by Caleb Schoeppe.



DIANA OLIVA

28

IN EVERY ISSUE

- 4 Editor's Welcome
- 5 The Cooperative Difference
- 6 Currents
- 7 Where Is It?/Trivia
- 14 Arkansas' Great Outdoors
- 22 My Co-op
- 28 Reflections
- 30 Gardening
- 32 Recipes
- 38 Crossword Puzzle
- 40 Let's Eat
- 42 Around Arkansas



ROB ROEDEL

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Full Circle

BY JENNIFER CHRISTMAN CIA

In June 2016, an exuberant high school junior from Cabot boarded a plane for Washington, D.C., as part of the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas Youth Tour.

Her name: Caleigh Pickard.

Selected by First Electric Cooperative, Caleigh went on to serve as the state's Youth Leadership Council representative. She stayed involved with the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) Youth Tour for years on a broader scale.

This experience didn't just shape a summer. It helped guide a future, which is exactly what Youth Tour is designed to do.

Today, Caleigh is a website solution consultant with Powerful Web, serving electric cooperatives across the country. In 2023, she helped lead the redesign of ArkansasLivingMagazine.com — a full-circle moment that brought a former Youth Tour student back to help shape the magazine she grew up reading. That project went on to earn national and international awards.

And recently, her story came full circle again, this time on a national platform.

In May at NRECA's Connect Conference in San Diego, Caleigh invited Arkansas Living to join her for a presentation, sharing the story of our website redesign and rebrand. It was a meaningful moment for all of us, professionally and personally.

Because somewhere along the way, Caleigh became part of our family. And she's not the only one.

Caleigh's proud grandfather, Larry Glover, a familiar and welcome presence at co-op events, has become everyone's Papaw. He even flew out with part of the



Then: The August 2016 Arkansas Living cover features Caleigh Pickard (far right) as a Youth Tour delegate.



RACHEL BLOCKER

Now: Caleigh Pickard with her Papaw, Larry Glover, after presenting at the May NRECA Connect Conference in San Diego.

Arkansas contingent to San Diego, and was right there with us as we presented.

This is the power of Youth Tour and cooperatives investing in tomorrow's leaders.

Each year, Arkansas cooperatives send deserving students on an all-expenses-paid trip to our nation's capital, where they visit historic sites, meet our congressional delegation and learn about leadership, public service and the cooperative difference. This year's group will travel June 13-19, embarking on a meaningful and memorable experience.

And who knows? The next Caleigh (and Papaw!) might be in that group.

Ten years ago, she was a student from Cabot. Today, she's helping tell the cooperative story on a national stage — and reminding us why Youth Tour matters.

Tour on,

Jennifer
Jennifer Christman Cia
jennifer.cia@aeci.com

Bee-lieve It or Not

BY VERNON "BUDDY" HASTEN

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



It has been about three years since I last wrote about my adventures with beekeeping. Given that this month's cover story is about flowers, and that Pollinator Week runs from June 22-28, it seemed like a great time for an update.

However, credit for inspiring this article goes to Marilyn Sebourn, our front desk receptionist. Marilyn knows that I am a beekeeper, albeit not a great one. She watched National Geographic's documentary series, "Secrets of the Bees," executive produced by James Cameron and streaming on Disney+, and she thought I would enjoy it as well. I grabbed the grandkids one Sunday after church, and we sat down to check it out. It truly is an awesome show that I highly recommend. I learned quite a bit and finally saw some things I had only known in theory.

For instance, I knew that commercial beekeepers shipped bees to California, but I had no idea that it was the largest managed pollination event in the world. Each February, over 2 million bee colonies are sent to California on flatbed semi-trucks to support the two- to three-week almond tree bloom. This translates to somewhere between

30 billion and 90 billion bees. Why is this important? California produces 80% of the world's supply of almonds, and it takes two bee colonies to pollinate each acre of almond trees.

Bees are important to Arkansas, too. Bees directly and indirectly support about \$20 billion of Arkansas' agricultural economy. While soybean and cotton crops are self-fertile, they produce larger and higher

quality yields when visited by bees. Bees are responsible for 80% of the pollination required for Arkansas-grown tomatoes, berries, apples and watermelons. They also pollinate alfalfa and clover to support nutrient-dense food

for our dairy and beef cattle. Arkansas has 40,000 registered bee colonies managed by nearly 2,000 beekeepers.

Some more interesting facts: Bees' wings beat at approximately 200 to 230 times per second, creating that buzzing sound. Bees are completely red-blind but can see ultraviolet light, allowing them to see patterns on flowers that are invisible to humans. An individual bee's lifetime work is about 1/12th of a teaspoon of honey, and bees must visit about 2 million flowers to produce just 1 pound of honey.

Honeybees convert collected nectar into honey by mixing it with their enzyme-rich saliva and then evaporating the moisture. To do this, a bee releases a drop of nectar from its honey stomach, rolls it around to expose it to air inside the hive, and then places the partially dehydrated drop into a honeycomb cell. From there, the colony fans its wings to keep air moving and continue the evaporation process. The bees reduce the enzyme-nectar mixture from about 70% water to less than 18%, at which point, it becomes honey — ready to be capped and stored for the winter. The colony needs about 50 pounds of honey to survive winter, and excess honey is collected by beekeepers for everyone to enjoy.

Honey is naturally acidic, and with low moisture, it is resistant to bacteria, giving it a very long shelf life. Edible honey, over 3,000 years old, was even found in King Tutankhamun's tomb. So, if your honey looks crystallized and old, it is still good. Just put the bottle in some warm water and allow the sugar crystals to dissolve.

If you visit the Mayo Clinic website (tinyurl.com/mayoclinichoney), you can read about the medicinal properties of honey, including its potential to lower cholesterol, soothe coughs, support digestive health, ease seasonal allergies and even aid in wound and burn care. Proverbs 16:24 says, "Kind words are like honey, sweet to



Beekeeper and President/CEO Vernon "Buddy" Hasten labels honey with his Bud's Bees logo.

COURTESY OF VERNON "BUDDY" HASTEN



COURTESY OF VERNON "BUDDY" HASTEN

Free-bees! Vernon "Buddy" Hasten captured this swarm — one of three he collected this spring — from a peach tree.

BEES continued on page 6

Cooperatives head to The Hill

Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas representatives traveled to Washington, D.C., in late April for the 2026 National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) Legislative Conference. They joined cooperative leaders from across the country to advocate for responsible policies and engage with federal lawmakers.

Arkansas Congressman Bruce Westerman addressed the crowd of more than 4,000 cooperative leaders during the event, which focuses on supporting the needs of rural communities.

Cooperative leaders also met with Westerman, as well as Arkansas Sen. Tom Cotton, Sen. John Boozman and Rep. Rick Crawford. Other congressional delegates were represented by staff members.



Sens. John Boozman (left) and Tom Cotton meet with Arkansas cooperative leaders during the NRECA Legislative Conference.

Lawmakers form Electric Cooperative Caucus

Arkansas lawmakers made a historic move to establish the Arkansas Rural Electric Cooperative Caucus (ARECC), advocating for the interests of local cooperative members across The Natural State.



Rep. Jack Ladyman and Sen. Matt McKee, chairmen of the new Arkansas Rural Electric Cooperative Caucus, address members at the first meeting in April.

“The goal of this caucus is to make sure lawmakers have the information they need to make informed decisions about Arkansas’ energy future,” said Rep. Jack Ladyman, one of the four founding caucus chairmen.

The ARECC will focus on educating members about current energy sources, emerging technologies, industry trends and the growing energy demands facing Arkansas.

Ladyman will serve as House chairman of the ARECC, with Sen. Matt McKee serving as Senate chairman. Rep. Jason Nazarenko and Sen. Matt Stone will serve as vice chairmen.

McKee said, “I appreciate the cooperatives’ willingness to continue to educate members about the energy business as the Arkansas General Assembly looks for ways to support the production of more electricity while protecting ratepayers from rising prices.”

BEES *continued from page 5*

the soul and healthy for the body.”

How is my beekeeping going? It could be better. I had three active hives last year, but I only harvested about 3 gallons of honey from one. The other two produced none, and one hive didn’t survive the winter.

However, things are looking up. Most beekeepers love to catch swarms to expand their apiaries. With a 3-pound package of bees costing about \$150 and a nuc (five frames of bees with brood) costing over \$200, free bees are nice. This spring, God smiled on my paltry apiary and blessed me with three swarms of bees, which I was able to capture and transplant into hive boxes. For me, this was equivalent to winning the bee lottery, but just like all lottery-winner stories, it can complicate your life.

I only had enough hive boxes for two of the swarms and was forced to buy more equipment for the third. Given my poor honey yields so far, this was a bit of insult to injury.

However, I am an eternal optimist, so off I went to get more equipment. Lucky for me, I found the perfect place. I was fortunate to connect with John Smith at Central Beekeepers Supply in Russellville, and he was able to set me up even faster than Amazon Prime. I like to try new things, so I purchased a unique new hive from John called an ANEL hive, made in Athens, Greece. It has been in service for about a month, and I love it.

I list my hobbies on my professional bio as Reliability, Affordability and Responsibility of your electric power and services, which leaves little time for beekeeping. This may be a factor impacting my honey yield, but I suspect the real reason is lack of nectar where I live. At least, this is my best excuse. If any beekeepers reading this article want to share some best practices (via arkansaslivingmagazine.com/contact-us), I would be most receptive to the wisdom of a thriving hive mind. 🍯

Lineworkers celebrated at Capitol

The Arkansas General Assembly passed a resolution proclaiming April 21 as Lineworker Appreciation Day.

Arkansas lineworkers from different companies were recognized at the Arkansas Capitol for their professionalism and dedication to keeping the lights on for Arkansans.

“The Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas lineworkers are true professionals who are dedicated to ensuring that our members have reliable electric service,” said Arkansas Electric Cooperative Corporation/Arkansas Electric Cooperatives, Inc. President/CEO Vernon “Buddy” Hasten. “Today and every day, these brave individuals are always appreciated.”



Arkansas Lt. Gov. Leslie Rutledge (center) joins crews at the state Capitol during Lineworker Appreciation Day.

Where Is It?

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

In the May issue, we hid a graduation cap. Wrote one correct reader who found it in the headline on the SeaPerch Challenge story: “Dot your i’s and cross your t’s and aim for graduation. On page 15, the word ‘Innovation’ has the ‘i’ dotted with the graduation cap. Perfect placement on this page!”

Winners selected in our drawing to receive one of Arkansas Living mugs were:
Samuel Staal, Marmaduke (Craighead Electric Cooperative)
Robin Felts, Taylor (Southwest Arkansas Electric Cooperative)
Karen Ostlund, Fairfield Bay (Petit Jean Electric Cooperative)
Greg Piel, Fenton, Missouri (North Arkansas Electric Cooperative)

Royal Jones, Crossett (Ashley-Chicot Electric Cooperative)

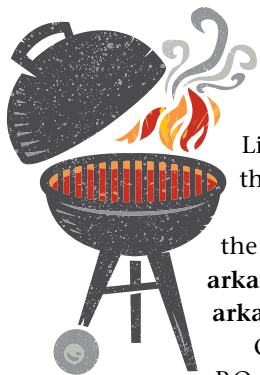
For June, in honor of Father’s Day and the start of summer cookout season, we’ve hidden this grill — a truly “rare” find. Spot it and you could win a new Arkansas Living insulated grocery tote, a cool companion when the season heats up.

June 15 is the deadline. To enter, click on the “Where Is It?” link on the homepage of arkansaslivingmagazine.com, or go directly to arkansaslivingmagazine.com/where-is-it-contest.

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

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

** If your magazine arrives after the deadline, submit your entry by the 15th of the following month. We’ll send a prize to a randomly selected latecomer. April’s winner was: Gracie Singleton, Watson (C & L Electric Cooperative).*



The Fugio cent, the first official U.S. circulation coin, carried the motto “Mind Your Business.”

- “Karaoke” translates to “empty orchestra” in Japanese.
- Watches are often set to 10:10 in advertisements because the position of the hands resembles a smiling face, subtly creating a more positive emotional response and making the product more appealing.
- Like grapes becoming raisins, many peppers get new names once dried.
- Nintendo’s “Super Mario” is named after a real man. Mario Segale was the company’s landlord.
- Sgt. Siwash, who served in the U.S. Marine Corps in WWII, was a female duck that earned a citation for bravery for her actions at the Battle of Tarawa in 1943, where she fought a Japanese rooster. She also liked to drink beer.
- The inability to remember a word is known as lethologica.
- President Andrew Johnson was buried wrapped in an American flag and with his head on the U.S. Constitution like a pillow.
- Vanuatu in the South Pacific Ocean has an underwater post office, where divers can send special waterproof postcards.
- Point Nemo, in the Pacific Ocean, is so remote that the nearest humans are aboard the International Space Station.
- Sharks can produce 20,000 to 40,000 teeth over their lifetime.
- “It is our choices that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities.” — J.K. Rowling, author



Bloom

BOOM



Flower farms sow seeds of connection

BY RACHEL BLOCKER

Flowers have always marked the moments that matter most: weddings, memorials, birthdays and everything in between. Across Arkansas, flower farmers are doing more than growing blooms. They are strengthening communities, practicing sustainability and fostering connections to nature. Arkansas growers are reshaping how local communities access and engage with flowers.

Rooted here

Kayla Crow, an Arkansas native, began dreaming of creating an oasis after stepping away from her career as a nurse practitioner in the wake of the pandemic. Crow and her husband, Kevin, wanted to use their land for the community and finally had the time to envision just how to do that. Crow enjoyed the peace that gardening brought her and began researching possible crops. She landed on a gap in the local market: flowers. With many flowers imported from other countries, Crow wanted Mount Olive Farms in Gravette to offer a more sustainable alternative. “And who doesn’t want to play in the flowers all day?” Crow jokes.



KAYLA CROW

Kayla Crow shows off a bouquet of flowers from Mount Olive Farms.

Mount Olive grows hundreds of varieties of cut flowers, everything from tulips to chrysanthemums. The business wholesales flowers for weddings and special occasions. To engage with the local community, they host seasonal workshops including evergreen wreath making, backyard cutting (which teaches attendees how to create their own do-it-yourself flower gardens), flower crown creating and cocktail mixing. They also grow edible flowers for local restaurants, adding a fun garnish to the growing culinary scene in northwest Arkansas.

Mount Olive Farms is a Certified Naturally Grown (CNG) farm. The certification ensures that the farm is sustainable and uses chemical-free practices that protect ecosystems, animals and soil health. “We want people to feel safe smelling our flowers and sticking their faces in them,” Crow shares. Mount Olive Farms values the ability to support community by “following people through their celebrations and to be a part of people’s occasions in a small way.”

Petals for the people

Founded in 2017, Bell Urban Farm, located in Conway, has quickly become a cornerstone of the local agricultural scene. Owners Kim Doughty-McCannon, and her husband, Zach McCannon, started out with vegetables and cut flowers, later transitioning to focus more on flowers after noticing the need in the local market. For the 2026 spring season, Bell Urban harvested 8,000 tulips.





Sacred Hollow Farm in Lowell offers you-pick flowers, date-night events and yoga.

CALEB SCHOEPPE

What's even more impressive, their farm is under an acre, located smack dab in the middle of Conway. Bell Urban Farm grows 15 to 20 varieties of flowers for their bouquets, supplementing what they do not grow with flowers from other local farmers. Like Mount Olive Farms to the north, Bell Urban is a CNG farm. They are also Homegrown by Heroes Certified, thanks to Zach's service in the National Guard. "We wanted to focus on flowers because we can really produce a lot in a small footprint," Kim shares.

In 2020, Bell Urban Farm opened their version of a seven-days-a-week farmers market, the Farm Stand. They sell products from over 100 Arkansas farmers, including eggs, bread, vegetables and meat. Bell Urban Farm and the Farm Stand offer the community access to fresh, local produce they would otherwise have to travel to more rural areas to acquire or outsource. "It is so important to support your local farmers. Being connected to who is growing your food and how is so fulfilling," Kim explains. Bell Urban's investment in the community is a key example of how Arkansas flower farmers are conducting business — because they live in the communities they serve.

Still in bloom

Twenty-one years ago, Jill Forrester asked for a flower plot for her birthday and her husband, Keith, delivered with a quarter acre of zinnias and sunflowers. Teachers by trade, the Forresters entered the flower world after a neighbor, facing drought, offered them his farmers market booth. ➤



KIM DOUGHTY/MCCANNON

Bell Urban Farm grew 8,000 tulips this spring.

After an astoundingly successful day, Keith decided to return to his roots as a fourth generation farmer, and pursue specialty crop farming full time, with Jill joining him full time two years later. The Forresters used the land that Keith inherited from his parents: 200 acres in Whitton — Jill clarifies that despite their Tyronza address, they live in Whitton. Previously pasture land, Whitton Farms evolved to something more colorful: 5 acres of flowers and 35 acres of a variety of vegetables and fruits. Whitton Farms uses high tunnels to cultivate thousands of chemical-free blooms, including delphinium, snapdragons and Iceland poppies. Other gardens on the property grow more than 3,000 peonies as well as over 200 hydrangeas.

“Sometimes, nature teaches us very tough lessons, but sometimes, everything clicks together and it’s magical,” Jill says.

Whitton Farms has spent two decades proving something that younger Arkansas growers are now building on: local flowers are always worth the effort.

A flowering devotion

Sacred Hollow in Lowell is owned by Sydney Sloan and her husband, Caleb Schoeppe. Originally from Oklahoma, in 2018, Sloan moved to Arkansas, where she met Schoeppe. They later bought the 5-acre farm that would grow into Sacred Hollow. The idea came to them following COVID-19 lockdown, to use their land to contribute to their community, to offer a space for people to come unwind and heal.

The farm is just the place for people to do so. “We have had people show up that didn’t want to be here, like their spouse dragged them along or something, but by the time they left, they were all smiling and laughing, having a good time.” Sloan jokes, “You just don’t see anybody mad when they are picking berries or flowers.”

Sacred Hollow Farm was created to be a place where people could see how things grow and live in natural habitats. The farm is a Certified Wildlife Habitat and Monarch Waystation, making it a place where everyone (and every critter) is welcome. The farm focuses on native plants and wildflowers, as well as traditional summer flowers like zinnias and cosmos.

Sacred Hollow offers a variety of experiences to enjoy their flowers. Customers can hang out in nature and pick their own flowers. The farm also offers coveted date-night events, complete with a mobile bartender, live music and flower picking. Customers can even catch a yoga or a sound bath healing session at Sacred Hollow Farm. Sloan states that she knew they were doing something right once a community member referred to the farm as a “love note to the community.”

Arkansas in bloom

Each of these farms began with a piece of land and a belief that they could offer something meaningful. And each of them found the same thing — land, tended with care and offered to a community, becomes something more than a business.

Flowers mark the milestones, heal the hard days and root people to the place they call home. In Arkansas, the flowers are local, and so is everything that makes them matter. 🍷

“You just don’t see anybody mad when they are picking berries or flowers.”

— Sydney Sloan, Sacred Hollow Farm



JILL FORRESTER

Whitton Farms, which grows thousands of peonies and other flower varieties, was named 2025 Business of the Year by Arkansas Business.



MEREDITH WASHBURN

Owners of Sacred Hollow Farm, Sydney Sloan and Caleb Schoeppe, display their Wildlife Habitat Certification.



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The ACA is a grassroots organization that fights for Arkansas cattle producers' way of life through legislation, education, advocacy and development. The ACA's strength comes from our members and their involvement.



Leveling UP

Arkansas' first bike lift changes the ride

BY BOB ROBINSON

Arkansas achieves another first on June 12, when the new OZ Trails Bike Park opens. Located in Bella Vista, just minutes from downtown Bentonville, the 200-plus-acre facility has generated massive attention within the mountain biking community.

A purpose-built bike park of this size is not that uncommon across the state these days. There are already numerous excellent bike parks in Arkansas. The feature that qualifies this as a “first” is the 2,600-foot-long, state-of-the-art, Poma-Leitner high-speed quad chairlift.

Yes, bicycle lift-assist has arrived in The Natural State, which means more exhilarating downhill runs and no lung-sucking uphill pedaling. Sweet!

“A gravity park was always part of the long-term strategy,” explains Gary Vernon, general manager of OZ Trails Bike Park. “Northwest Arkansas already had one of the most passionate mountain biking communities in the country and a top-tier trail network. What it didn’t have was pure gravity trails and a chairlift to service them. Now it does.”

Instrumental in making that happen was Carroll Electric Cooperative, says Scott Crowell, director of mountain operations at OZ Trails Bike Park.

“A one-year timeline is rather unusual for a project of this scope,” Crowell says. “Carroll Electric has worked

hand in hand with our two major contractors on this beautiful project. ... We are so grateful for Carroll Electric's involvement and cooperation. Without them, this project would not have come to fruition nor moved along as quickly as it has.”



Trails and techniques

Vernon is referred to as the “Godfather” of OZ Trails; his vision has helped bring more than 600 miles of mountain biking trails to life across the region.

“We have taken everything we have learned from all the bike trails we have constructed over the years, recruited the best trail designers/builders in the world and brought it all together in this park. With the goal to make these the best trails around,” Vernon says.

Recruiting the best talent included bringing in Dave Kelly, co-founder of Gravity Logic. He is renowned for designing and constructing Whistler Mountain Bike Park’s A-line Trail in British Columbia, Canada, arguably the most famous flow line trail in the world.

When Vernon first brought Kelly to the area, he immediately shared Vernon’s excitement about the project.

“Most places we work are ski areas, full of ski runs, full of snowmaking, full of infrastructure,” Kelly says. “And here we essentially have 200 acres of a blank canvas, on which we can design from scratch.”

What they designed at OZ Trails Bike Park was more than 20 varied miles of professionally crafted gravity trails. There’s the 2.3-mile chip and seal, which provides a stable surface that even the greenest and youthful mountain bikers will enjoy. And there’s the iconic big drop called the “Black Hole,” a roughly 30-foot gap drop for thrill junkies seeking some “air time.”

Social media has exploded with videos of the park’s trails featuring cyclists launching high into the air and gliding for unbelievable distances. Many who have seen these videos might conclude that all the trails are just for the highfliers. However, with 75% of the network rated as beginner/intermediate and 25% advanced/expert, there truly is something to satisfy everyone’s trail preference.



The Poma-Leitner high-speed quad chairlift opens on June 12 at OZ Trails Bike Park in Bella Vista.

OZ TRAILS BIKE PARK AND RUNWAY GROUP

And for those who prefer boots over knobbies, there is a hiking trail that loops around the entire park.

People and place

“It’s an incredible addition to what we already have here in northwest Arkansas,” says Anneke Beerten, Netherlands USA Cycling Skills coach and Crank It Up MTB coach. “It adds a whole new dimension to the riding experience.”


Harrison Leak, a mountain biker from Rogers, says, “I thought today’s ride was amazing! I was truly in awe getting to ride a bike lift in Arkansas — it didn’t feel real.”

Ginny Brady with the Women of OZ cycling group affirms, “There are options for all riders, whether you’re new to mountain biking or you’re a seasoned pro. With flow trails, jump trails, tech trails, along with the most incredible views of the Ozark landscape.”

At the base of the lift is a large, beautifully landscaped plaza that will showcase works of art from OZ ART NWA. This includes Gillie and Marc’s “The Majestic Bear” sculpture mounted at the peak of the lift.

The 15,000-square-foot OZ Trails headquarters building is also located at the base. The structure includes a restaurant, a retail store, a bike shop, bike rentals, an event space and plazas on the lower and upper levels. It’s an inviting setting to enjoy friends, food and drinks, along with a view of the chairlift and bike jumps — much like the warming huts located at ski resorts.

“The ultimate gathering spot,” as Vernon describes it, “where locals just want to come and see their friends, and visitors want to come and enjoy this space.”

Discover more about OZ Trails Bike Park at oztrailsbikepark.com. 



OZ TRAILS BIKE PARK AND RUNWAY GROUP

Not just for highfliers, the OZ Trails Bike Park in Bella Vista offers trails for beginners to experts.



OZ TRAILS BIKE PARK AND RUNWAY GROUP

More than 20 miles of gravity trails at OZ Trails Bike Park allow biking enthusiasts to enjoy “air time.”

FAIRFIELD BAY MARINA, FAIRFIELD BAY, AR



<p>Lion’s Pancake Breakfast 7:30 to 9:30 AM at the Lion’s Club</p> <p>Spirit Of America Parade 9:00 AM in Fairfield Bay Awards sponsored by FFB Chamber of Commerce</p> <p>BAR-B-QUE at the Marina Starting at 11:00 AM</p> <p>Kayaks and Boat Rentals Available</p>	<p>Sugar Loaf Shuttle Available</p> <p>Zac Dunlap Band 7:00- 9:00 PM at Marina</p> <p>Barge Ride to be Front and Center of Fireworks \$50 in advance includes BAR-B-QUE Plate</p> <p>Fireworks over the Lake 9:30-10:00 PM</p>
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FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL FFB MARINA 501-884-6030

Take to the Trails

Essential tips for happy hikes



BY CARLTON AND LEIGH WING

Longer days in June allow for more hiking time in Arkansas. As you prepare to hit the trails, we have gathered hiking tips over the years to pass along.

Time/Temp: As the temperatures climb, be sure to bring enough water to keep yourself hydrated. Early morning hikes are ideal to avoid the higher temperatures (and the evening mosquitoes).

Ticks: Speaking of bugs, tick and insect bite prevention is a must! Insect repellent becomes part of what you wear whenever you're in nature in Arkansas. Staying on the trail and continuing to move will help avoid most ticks, but ticks aren't just in the grass — they can also fall on you from above. Be sure to check yourself after the hike along your hairline, waistline, sock line and everywhere in between.

Terrain: When choosing which trail to hike, know your ability and respect your limitations and those of your group. A good 2- to 3-mile round-trip hike is a healthy length to start off! As your skills — and your children — grow, you can always plan for more. They say that the best hikes are the ones leaving you wanting more.

Toes: Make sure that your footwear is comfortable and appropriate for the terrain. Closed-toe shoes are the best, but if your feet need more air, opt for sandals built for hiking with sturdy straps and soles. Fashion sandals and beachwear don't offer the same quality of support and traction to keep you comfortable and steady on uneven terrain.



Prepare for your next hike with comfortable, closed-toe shoes, trekking poles — if needed for support — and a dependable leash for your four-legged friend.

Trekking poles: If you're debating whether or not to use trekking poles, know that they can offer additional balance support if that's a concern. The extra level of stability works best when you use them as they were designed. For example, trekking poles should be adjusted to a height that allows your elbows to sit comfortably at a 90-degree bend. As you walk, stab the poles into the ground before you as opposed to dragging them behind. If the hike is fairly steep and long, shorten the poles going up and lengthen them going down.



Before you hit the trail, apply repellent to keep ticks and insects from taking a bite out of your adventure.

Tails: When you bring your dog along, a solid, dependable leash is not only polite but a protection for your pet, yourself and others on the trail. Be sensitive to the ground temperature, which you can check with the back of your hand. Hot hand equals hot paws.

Happy trails to you!

Carlton and Leigh Wing host the "Arkansas' Great Outdoors" weekly television series. Visit facebook.com/arkansasgreatoutdoors.

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Standing Tall

Christ of the Ozarks celebrates 60 years



The Christ of the Ozarks statue in Eureka Springs turns 60 years old this month.

JEREMY SKEENS/SKEVE PHOTOGRAPHY

BY CHRIS HOOTEN

The front page of the Sunday Arkansas Gazette must have intrigued readers on June 26, 1966.

Four headlines referred to the war in Vietnam, where the number of American troops topped 280,000. French President Charles de Gaulle was a guest of the Russians when they launched an unmanned satellite from their secret space center in central Asia. Sammy Davis Jr. and Marlon Brando joined the Civil Rights “March Against Fear” in Mississippi. Rev. Billy Graham declined an invitation by British TV to appear with Playboy magazine founder Hugh Hefner, and President Lyndon Johnson signed a bill to raise the national debt limit to a record \$330 billion.

Just one photo appeared with a front-page story, a 5x7 shot of a new statue on Magnetic Mountain in Eureka Springs. Five hundred people attended the dedication of the largest statue of Jesus in the country, “The Christ of the Ozarks,” funded by the Elna M. Smith Foundation.

It towered 67 feet, weighed 525 tons and stood on a 320-ton foundation of concrete and steel. Emmet Sullivan, an apprentice of sculptor Gutzon Borglum at Mount Rushmore, applied 24 layers of white mortar to a steel frame to form a tornado-proof creation that then-Gov. Orval Faubus called “a noble and imposing structure.”

At the dedication, Eureka Springs Mayor Jan Bullock cast a vision for his town and its new statue surrounded by 167 acres with three mountaintops and seven known springs.



JO SPENCER PHOTOGRAPHY

“The Great Passion Play” depicts the last days of Christ’s life to thousands of visitors each year.

“We hope to become a mecca for people of all races to come and view the Christ of the Ozarks statue,” Bullock said.

Sixty years, 500 additional acres and more than 8 million guests later, that vision has been realized.

Main attraction

Debuting in 1968, “The Great Passion Play” depicts the final week of Jesus Christ’s life, death and resurrection in a 4,000-seat amphitheater under the stars and near the Christ of the Ozarks.

Director of Operations Kent Butler started working at “The Great Passion Play” when he was 16.

“I got my driver’s license and became a Roman soldier,” ➤

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quips Butler, now 37. "It has not been my only job, but I've been here ever since."

In his initial dress rehearsal in 2005, Butler envisioned the aging production with modern theater techniques to "focus on how the story was told."

By then, attendance to "The Great Passion Play" had fallen. For the first 24 years, hundreds of thousands of guests flocked to the outdoor drama with an all-time high of 292,000 in 1992. After that, Butler says, investments in the play waned due to heavy maintenance expenses elsewhere, including "The Christ of the Ozarks."

"When you stop investing in your core mission, it can lead to attrition," Butler says, "and that's what we experienced with attendance in the 1990s and into the 2000s."



CHRIS HOOTEN



CHRIS HOOTEN

Attendance at "The Great Passion Play" hit an 18-year high in 2025.

Time to upgrade

Over the past six years, Butler and his staff have invested \$1 million to enhance the production of "The Great Passion Play" while thanking God for His favor and financial partners for their generosity. That total includes \$310,000 last year for immersive Dolby surround sound, a modern theatrical score performed by the Budapest Scoring Orchestra and Choir, and a lighting system "that hits people in ways regular lighting simply cannot," Butler says.

Attendance surged in 2025 to an 18-year high, and Butler witnessed emotional outbursts after performances as he had never seen. For the first time, people bought tickets for an entire week so they could

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The iconic Eureka Springs landmark is 67 feet tall and weighs 525 tons.

experience the one-hour, 45-minute drama three times in five days.

“The way we are telling the passion story and lifting up Jesus is the ministry we

have been called to,” Butler says. “We want to make this the most phenomenal place and production people have experienced.”


A new season

More than 500 student volunteers on mission trips and 250 to 300 adult volunteers annually trek to Eureka Springs to make additional attractions possible for the nonprofit organization. Those include a Bible museum, Holy Land tour, a section of the Berlin Wall, an Israeli bomb shelter and Noah’s Ark Park Petting Zoo. Since 2018, guests have left more than 100,000 prayer requests at The Cross Prayer Garden.

In some ways, much has changed since 1966 in Eureka Springs, the town of about 2,400, once known as “the little Switzerland of the Ozarks.”

Atop Magnetic Mountain, Butler says the mission stands firm. The Christ of the Ozarks has his arms stretched wide with Jesus quoted at the base: “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.”

Butler says, “We just need to spread the light of Jesus, and we believe His power and His spirit will turn hearts and minds to Him. People who are searching will find truth here.”

Visit greatpassionplay.org for more details. 



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Zoe Simon

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Speaking Up to Save Lives

Miss City of Colleges' Teen Zoe Simon Promotes T.A.L.K. Initiative

In a world where teen mental health is often misunderstood or overlooked, one young Miss Arkansas Teen contestant is using her voice to make a life-saving difference. Through her platform, T.A.L.K — Tell, Ask, Listen, Keep Safe, Zoe Simon, Miss City of Colleges' Teen, is working to break the stigma surrounding suicide and ensure that no teen feels alone in their struggles.

Her mission is deeply personal. From sixth through eighth grade, Simon faced a dark period marked by isolation, self-doubt and self-harm. After losing a close friendship and navigating the loneliness brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, she began to believe she didn't deserve connection or support. Even with her mother serving as a school counselor, she found herself hiding her pain, which only deepened her struggle.

Everything changed when she reached a turning point and called 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.



That anonymous conversation gave her clarity, guidance and courage to seek further help. She entered a treatment program, began therapy and started the long journey toward healing, one she emphasizes is not immediate, but possible.

Now, Simon is turning her experience into purpose. By sharing her story openly, she connects with other teens facing similar battles. The T.A.L.K. approach, which she learned through a training her freshman year, empowers young people to act when they see a friend in crisis: tell someone you're concerned, ask direct questions, listen without judgment and keep them safe by connecting them with trusted support.

In addition, she has designed and distributed stickers promoting the 988 hotline, placing them in school bathrooms and public spaces across Arkansas, locations where teens are most likely to see them in moments of need. Her goal is to reach every secondary school in the state, ensuring that awareness meets accessibility.

Simon also hopes to educate parents and educators on the importance of recognizing behavioral changes, fostering open communication, and remaining non-judgmental. "Mental health struggles are real," she emphasizes, "and teens feel them just as deeply as adults."

Through courage, honesty and advocacy, she is not only sharing her story but also saving lives. Her message is clear: it may take time, and the journey may feel like a roller coaster, but it does get better, and no one has to go through it alone.

Youth Tour delegates announced

First Electric Cooperative is proud to sponsor outstanding students to represent our service area on the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas Youth Tour — an all-expenses-paid, weeklong leadership experience in Washington, D.C.

This year's delegates are:

- Kailyn Burroughs**, Mount Vernon – Mount Vernon-Enola High School
- Margaret Poteat**, Bryant – Pinnacle Classical Academy
- Maryn Harvey**, Bryant – Bryant High School
- Chloee Sims**, Perryville – Perryville High School



ANNUAL MEETING SCHEDULED

Notice is hereby given that the Annual Membership Meeting of First Electric Cooperative Corporation will be held on June 25, at First Electric Cooperative Corporation in Jacksonville, beginning at 10 a.m., for the following purposes:

1. To pass on reports for the previous fiscal year.
2. To elect two (2) directors for the cooperative, to serve a term of six (6) years; and
3. To transact such other business as may properly come before the meeting.

This will be a business-only session. Any member planning to attend the Annual Meeting who has special needs, please contact the cooperative at 800-489-7405 prior to the Annual Meeting for assistance.

Respectfully,
 Karissa Rushing
 Secretary-Treasurer

Nominating Committee Selects Board Candidates

On March 19, the First Electric Cooperative Nominating Committee met at the cooperative's office in Jacksonville to review and select member nominees for election to the board of directors for two positions – Benton District, Position 2, and Jacksonville District, Position 3. Directors will serve a six-year term.

The committee selected Karissa Rushing of Bryant as the nominee for the Benton District. For the Jacksonville District, the committee selected John Gaunt of Cabot, Larry Wood of Cabot, and Terry "Lucas" Minton of Ward. These candidates will be placed on the ballot for election by mail. Ballots will be mailed to all members on June 2.

BENTON DISTRICT BOARD CANDIDATE



KARISSA RUSHING

JACKSONVILLE DISTRICT BOARD CANDIDATES



JOHN GAUNT



LARRY WOOD



TERRY "LUCAS" MINTON

Nominating Committee members present for meeting included: Jimmy Hawkins, Carder Hawkins, Daniel Sanders, Tommy Majors, Mark Sandage, Dick Hoffman, Cody Calhoun, Dearl Dixon and Bryan Houghton.

**At press time, these were the candidates selected by the nominating committee for a vote by the membership.*



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Seal, Set, Save

Budget-friendly fixes boost comfort, cut waste

BY MIRANDA BOUTELLE

Saving energy doesn't have to be expensive or time-consuming. You don't need to spend thousands of dollars or get the newest technology to use less energy. There are several steps to lower energy use, even on a tight budget.

Here are some low- and no-cost ways to save energy around your home:

Adjusting the thermostat is an easy way to save. Nudge the thermostat a few degrees closer to the outside temperature, especially on extreme weather days. I often hear people say, "I didn't change anything, and my bill is higher." On the hottest and coldest days, your heating and cooling equipment must work much harder, and use more energy, to maintain the same temperature. Add an extra layer of clothes or some cozy slippers in the winter and lighter layers in summer.

Fix any hot water leaks or dripping faucets. Those tiny drips can add up to big energy waste, not to mention water waste. If you need to hire a pro to fix it, turn the shutoff valve under the sink to stop the leak until you can get it fixed.

Wash clothes in cold water to avoid using the energy required to heat it. Washing on hot or warm settings can really add up, especially if you have a top-load or older washing machine that uses more water.

Adjusting the water heater temperature can save energy and money, too. Depending on the water heater, this is either an easy adjustment or something a little more complicated that requires removing access panels. If you don't know how, consult a professional.

Air sealing is a do-it-yourself, beginner-friendly project that improves comfort and reduces energy waste. For around \$20 and a few hours of time, you can fill gaps, cracks and holes to prevent air from leaking in and out of the home. From the inside of the home, seal trim on windows and exterior doors with caulk for about \$4 a tube. Buy paintable caulk so you can touch it up when it dries, if needed.




Do-it-yourself, beginner-friendly projects, such as weatherstripping around doors, help lower energy use at home.

Consider using spray foam. It costs about \$5 per can and seals gaps around plumbing lines. It's great for sealing gaps around pipes under sinks and in the crawl space or basement. Cold air can travel up through those spaces, causing drafts and wasting energy. Air sealing these areas gets bonus points for stopping insects and rodents from using these gaps to enter your home.

Warning: Spray foam is messy and nearly impossible to get off whatever it touches, so wear disposable gloves and clothes you don't mind dirtying, and use drop cloths to protect finished floors. Be careful if you're working with spray foam overhead. If you get it in your hair, it's not coming out with anything less than a haircut. Move any items and clean surfaces of dust and debris in areas you intend to seal before cracking open a can. Put the can in a cardboard box to carry throughout the house so you don't leave a trail of spray foam.

Consider using weatherstripping. For \$10 to \$15, you can buy weatherstripping to improve the seal on exterior doors. If you can see light around doors or feel a draft between the door and the door jamb when the door is closed, weatherstripping will help.

Try these easy, low- and no-cost improvements to reduce energy waste and improve comfort in your home.

Miranda Boutelle writes on energy-efficiency topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing nearly 900 electric co-ops. 



Spray foam seals gaps around pipes to prevent cold air from traveling up through those spaces, causing drafts and wasting energy.



Weatherstripping helps seal drafts around exterior doors, which saves energy and improves comfort in your home.

MARK GILLILAND, PIONEER UTILITY RESOURCES PHOTOS

Three Smart Ways to Save Energy in June

As Arkansas temperatures begin to climb, your air conditioner is likely working overtime. A few simple adjustments can help you stay comfortable while keeping energy costs in check.

1. Keep your system running efficiently

Change your air filter regularly — at least once a month during heavy use — and make sure vents are clear of furniture or debris. It's also a good idea to have your HVAC system professionally serviced to ensure it's running at peak performance before the hottest days of summer arrive.

2. Block the heat before it gets in

Sunlight through windows can quickly heat up your home. Close blinds, curtains, or shades during the hottest parts of the day — especially on south- and west-facing windows — to help keep indoor temperatures down.

3. Set your thermostat wisely

For the best balance of comfort and savings, set your thermostat to 78 degrees when you're home and a few degrees higher when you're away. Even small changes can reduce cooling costs over time. A programmable or smart thermostat can make this effortless.

With just a few simple steps, you can stay cool and make the most of your energy use all summer long.

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Meat of the Matter

Wild Pastures' delivery service lands strategic home in Clinton



BY JD LOWERY

When Wild Pastures, a national grass-fed meat delivery service, announced a new Clinton distribution center in 2024, most of the attention went to the numbers: a \$13 million investment and about 20

new jobs. Numbers matter, but there is more to this story. For a rural community like Clinton, a facility like this is about getting a foothold in the way today's economy works, where products can be sold anywhere if you can move them quickly and reliably.

Proudly served by Petit Jean Electric Cooperative, Wild Pastures isn't operating like a traditional local processor. It sells direct to customers and ships frozen meat nationwide, which means the Clinton site becomes part of the cold-chain system that keeps food frozen from dock to doorstep. As online ordering keeps growing, that kind of behind-the-scenes logistics is becoming just as important as what's being produced. In practical terms, it means goods moving through Van Buren County don't have to stop at a regional market; they can go straight to homes across the country.

It also says something about what rural development can look like when communities make the most of what they already have. The Colorado-based processor moved into an existing industrial building and did not have to start from scratch. That's a reminder that "ready" often beats "perfect." If a town has usable space, dependable utilities and local partners who can move quickly, it can compete for projects that might otherwise pass it by.

And while 20 jobs won't transform the county overnight, they aren't nothing, especially when they're connected to a part of the economy that does not seem to be going away. Food distribution, particularly frozen shipping and subscription-style delivery, has been expanding with consumer habits. For Clinton, that's a chance to add steady work that doesn't depend on a single season or a one-time boom.


Projects like this can also spill over

in quieter ways. A distribution center needs trucks, repairs, refrigeration service, pallets, packaging and all the small, support jobs that keep a building running day

to day. Some of that business may come from outside the area at first, but over time, it creates openings for local companies — and it gives other employers a reason to take a second look at the region.

Wild Pastures is a good example of how rural Arkansas can grow without landing a mega-factory. Economic wins can come from smaller, practical moves. Getting products into modern distribution channels, reusing existing buildings and building a base of employers that adds up over time.

For Clinton, the takeaway is simple: Small towns can stay competitive when they focus not only on what they make, but on how they get it to customers.

JD Lowery is the director of community and economic development for the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas. 



WILD PASTURES



Wild Pastures' Clinton distribution center ships grass-fed meat directly to customers nationwide.

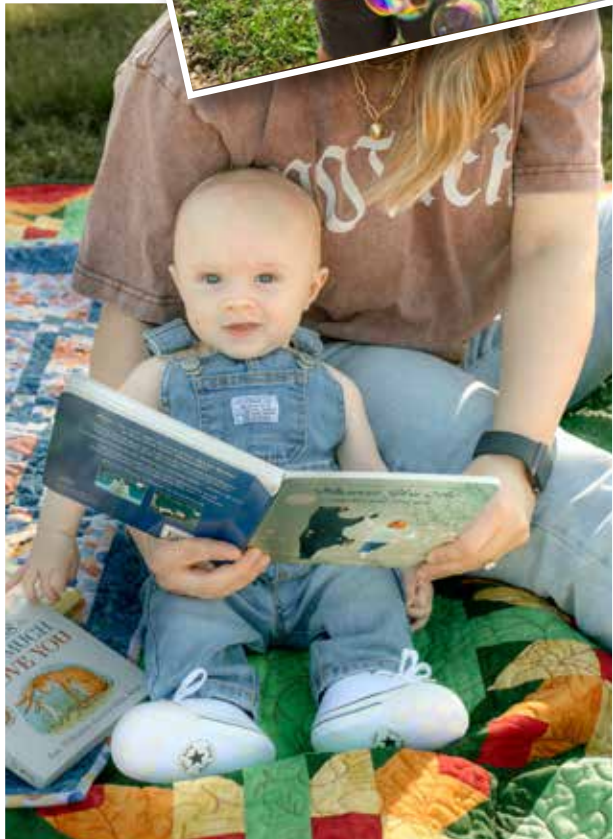
COURTESY OF WILD PASTURES

Snapshots from our readers

Lucas having fun with bubbles!
Diana Oliva, Fayetteville.



Ellyora's butterfly kisses.
Charish Mathews, Mountain Home.



Nolan settles in for storytime. Jennifer Leos Photography, taken at Two Rivers Park.



Case enjoying a ride in the wagon.
Jacey D. Photography.





Bennett says, "I'm gonna catch a big one, Nana!" Melinda Glenn, Lynn.



Kitty doesn't appear to be scared in the least. Susan Estes, Opal.



Caleb fishing with his fine, furry friends. Leeanna Williams, Warren.



Farmer Charli is ready for a new day! Angela Ulmer, Greenwood.



Oh no! The big one got away from Wade! Brenda Wiley, on the White River.

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.

Perennial Performers

Reliable plants return for summer comeback tour




Rudbeckia



BY JANET B. CARSON

Gardeners appreciate plants that can handle themselves — especially those that reemerge year after year after winter has left beds in disarray. As we head into early summer, Arkansas heat brings its own challenges, but plenty of perennial options can take full sun and keep going.

Perennial plants have a finite season of bloom and a green-growing phase. Some perennials bloom for a very short period, but many summer-blooming perennials can give us color for an extended time. New varieties of old favorites are always appearing in the market, so try some. 

PLANT	CHARACTERISTICS	BLOOMS
Agastache/Hyssop/ Hummingbird Mint	Wide array of colors. Very attractive to bees and butterflies. Deer- and drought-resistant.	18-24 inches tall. Blooms from early summer through fall.
Coreopsis	Single- and double-flowering varieties. Colors include yellow, pink, white, red and bi-colors. Drought-tolerant.	7-24 inches tall, depending on variety. Blooms from early summer to early fall.
Daylily	Hundreds of varieties. Grass-like foliage with many colored flowers. Long-lived plant.	Varies by variety. Blooms 6-8 weeks; repeaters last longer.
Echinacea/ Coneflower	Large, showy flowers in shades of pink, red, yellow, orange and white. Drought-tolerant.	18-24 inches tall. Blooms early summer until frost.
Gaillardia/Blanket Flower	Colorful, daisy-like blooms in shades of yellow, orange and red. Drought-tolerant and a butterfly favorite.	12-24 inches tall. Blooms early summer until frost.
Hardy Hibiscus	Dinner-plate-sized blossoms in shades of red, pink and white. Loves sun and moisture.	3-6 feet tall. Blooms late June through early August.
Monarda/Bee Balm	Member of the mint family with showy red, pink or purple flowers. Very attractive to pollinators.	24-48 inches tall. Blooms early summer through early fall.
Penstemon/ Beardtongue	Spikes of tubular flowers in shades of pink, red, purple and white. Favorites of butterflies and hummingbirds.	16-24 inches tall. Blooms early to late summer.
Rudbeckia/Black- eyed Susan	Daisy-like flowers in shades of yellow, orange and red. Some varieties are more aggressive than others.	24-60 inches tall. Blooms summer through fall.



Agastache



Coreopsis



Gaillardia



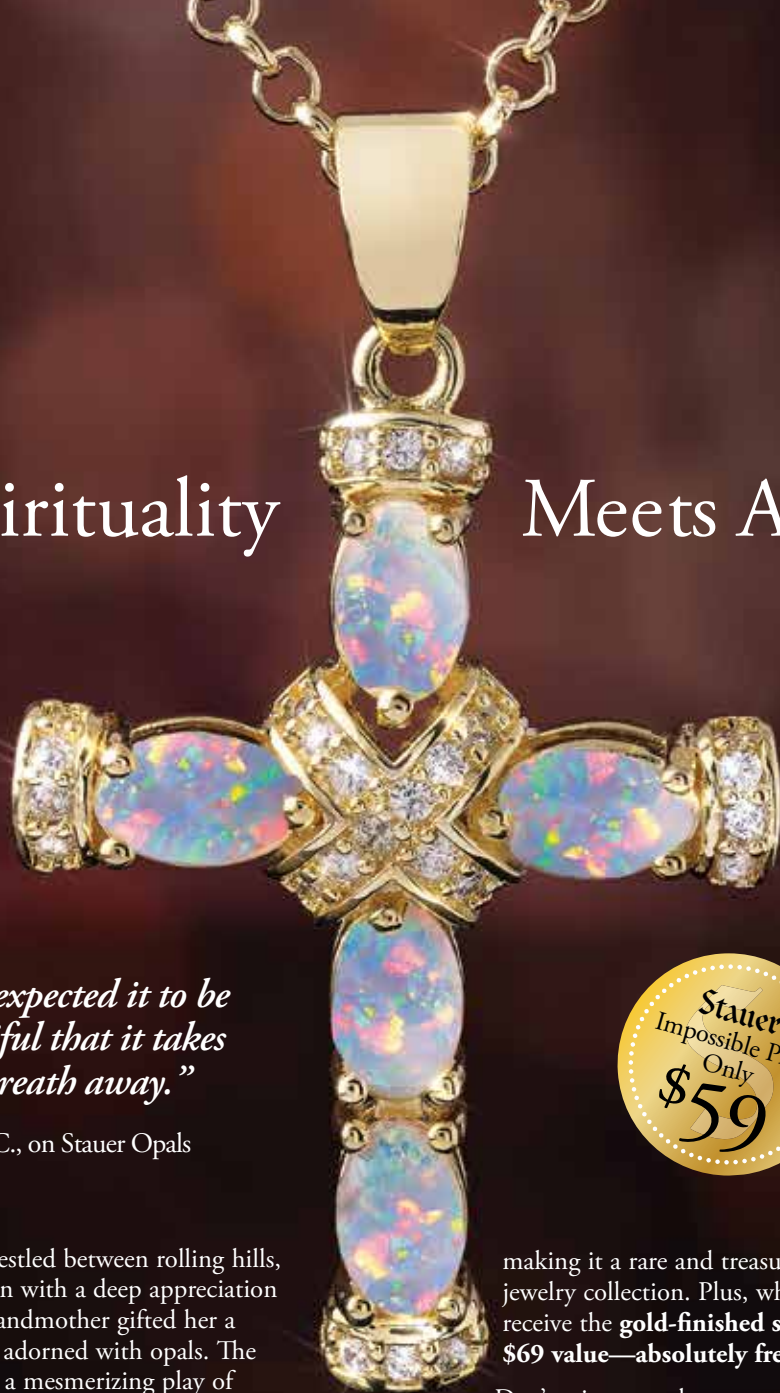
Monarda



Penstemon

BIGSTOCK.COM PHOTOS

Spirituality Meets Artistry



"I never expected it to be so beautiful that it takes your breath away."

— Kaya C., on Stauer Opals

In a quaint village, nestled between rolling hills, lived a young woman with a deep appreciation for gemstones. Her grandmother gifted her a delicate cross pendant adorned with opals. The opals shimmered with a mesmerizing play of colors, reflecting hues of blues, greens, and fiery oranges. Her grandmother shared the legend of the opals, believed to bring hope, purity, and luck to those who wore them.

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Wrap and Roll

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RECIPES AND PHOTOS BY JULIANA GOODWIN

Roast Beef Wraps

Makes 4 servings.

- 1 (8-ounce) package chive and onion cream cheese, softened
- 1 teaspoon dried rosemary
- 2-3 tablespoons horseradish sauce
- 1/8 teaspoon pepper
- 4 large burrito-size wraps (10-12 inches)
- 12-16 thin slices roast beef
- Chopped red onion
- Arugula
- Shredded iceberg lettuce

In a bowl, stir together cream cheese, rosemary, horseradish sauce and pepper.

Spread 1/4 of cream cheese mixture on tortilla, spreading all the way to edges. In center of tortilla, place 3-4 slices of roast beef. Add desired amount of red onion on one side of cream cheese. Add equal amounts of arugula and iceberg lettuce. Roll the wrap; repeat with remaining ingredients.

Ham, Turkey & Cranberry Wraps

Makes 4 servings.

- 2/3 cup cranberry sauce
- 2/3 cup mayonnaise
- 2 green onions, sliced
- 2 tablespoons dried cranberries, minced
- 4 large burrito-size wraps (10-12 inches)
- 8 slices smoked turkey
- 8 slices ham
- 8 thin deli slices cheddar cheese or shredded cheese
- Fresh spinach

In a bowl, blend together cranberry sauce, mayonnaise, green onions and dried cranberries.

Spread 1/4 of cranberry mixture on tortilla. Place 2 slices each of turkey, ham and cheese in center. Layer spinach next to chicken. Roll the wrap; repeat with remaining ingredients.

Notes: This wrap can get soggy if kept a long time. For best results, wrap in a paper towel and then aluminum foil.

Sun-Dried Tomato & Chicken Wraps

Makes 4 servings.

- 1 (8-ounce) package cream cheese, softened
- 1/2 cup sun-dried tomatoes, diced (packed)
- 3/4 teaspoon garlic salt
- 1 1/2 teaspoons Italian seasoning
- 1/2-inch piece red onion
- 1/3 cup feta cheese, crumbled, or Parmesan, shredded
- 4 large spinach wraps (10-12 inches)
- 16 slices deli chicken or thinly sliced rotisserie chicken
- 12 basil leaves, sliced
- English or mini cucumber, thinly sliced
- Shredded iceberg lettuce

Place cream cheese, sun-dried tomatoes, garlic salt, Italian seasoning, onion and cheese in food processor and pulse until smooth.

Spread 1/4 of cream cheese mixture on spinach wrap. In center, place 4 slices of chicken and top with three basil leaves. Layer cucumber on edge of chicken and add lettuce in a line. Roll the wrap; repeat with additional ingredients.

Note: English or mini cucumbers are best because they don't have big seeds and won't make wraps soggy.



Roast Beef Wrap

Sun-Dried Tomato & Chicken Wrap

Ham, Turkey & Cranberry Wrap

How to Roll a Wrap

Whatever spread you are using, make sure it goes all the way to the edges of the tortilla/wrap. This helps act as glue.

Place fillings in the center and avoid overfilling. Loose fillings, such as shredded lettuce, should be layered on the cream cheese or spread mixture to help hold them in place.

If the filling is unevenly distributed, start rolling from the side where the fillings are closest to the edge.

Fold the left and right sides of the tortilla/wrap inward. Then fold the edge closest to you over the filling, tucking it in tightly as you roll. Continue rolling as tightly as possible and place the wrap seam-side down.

Wrap in aluminum foil for storage. If the tortilla/wrap is overfilled, secure it with a toothpick.



The inside of the Ham, Turkey & Cranberry Wrap demonstrates the layering of ingredients before rolling.



This month's web exclusive recipe:
Buffalo Chicken Wraps

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.

From Patch to Plate

Berries make summer desserts and salad shine



JENNIFER CHRISTMAN CIA

Blueberry Yum Yum

Makes 15 servings.

Crust

- 1 1/2 cups self-rising flour
- 1/2 cup light brown sugar, packed
- 3/4 cup butter, softened
- 1 1/2 cups pecans, chopped

Filling

- 1 (12-ounce) container whipped topping, thawed
- 1 (8-ounce) package cream cheese, softened
- 3/4 cup powdered sugar, sifted

Topping

- 1 cup sugar
- 3 tablespoons cornstarch
- 1 cup water
- 4 cups fresh blueberries
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice

Heat oven to 375.

For crust: In a mixing bowl, stir together flour, brown sugar, butter and pecans with a fork until crumbly. Press into a lightly greased 13x9 pan. Bake for 15 minutes. Cool completely.

For filling: In a mixing bowl, beat whipped topping, cream cheese and powdered sugar with an electric mixer until smooth. Spread evenly over crust. Cover and chill.

For topping: In a saucepan on medium heat, stir together sugar and cornstarch, whisking in water until smooth. Add blueberries and lemon juice. Bring to a boil and cook for 2 minutes, stirring constantly. Remove from heat and cool. Pour over cream cheese layer. Cover and chill at least 2 hours before serving.

Note: This was one of my family's favorite desserts when fresh blueberries arrived in early June. It didn't take long for the whole pan to disappear!
Jean Rabalais, Norman

Blueberry Spinach Salad with Orange Poppyseed Dressing

Makes 4 servings.

Dressing

- 1/3 cup mayonnaise
- 2 teaspoons white wine vinegar
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- 1/4 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1/4 teaspoon ground white pepper
- 1/4 cup orange juice
- 2 teaspoons poppy seeds
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon garlic powder

Salad

- 5 ounces baby spinach, stems removed
- 1/2 pint blueberries
- 1 medium green apple, diced
- 2.25 ounces slivered almonds
- 1/4 cup feta cheese crumbles

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

For salad: In a mixing bowl, combine spinach, blueberries and apple. Top with almonds and feta cheese. Serve with dressing.

Note: To make an entree salad, add chopped grilled chicken, bacon crumbles and/or diced avocado.

Debra McAndrews, Hot Springs Village

Easy Lemon Berry Pie

Makes 8 servings.

- 1 (8-ounce) package cream cheese, softened
 - 1 (14-ounce) can sweetened condensed milk
 - 1/4 cup lemon juice
 - 1 pint assorted fresh berries, washed and dried completely (more for garnish if desired)
 - 1 (8-inch) graham cracker pie crust
- Mint leaves, lemon zest for garnish (optional)

In a mixing bowl, beat cream cheese and sweetened condensed milk with an electric mixer until smooth. Add lemon juice and mix for 1 minute.

Place berries into pie crust. Pour mixture over fruit. Chill at least 4 hours or overnight before serving. Top with additional berries, mint leaves and lemon zest if desired.

Notes: Can also make in parfait glasses by layering graham cracker crumbs, fruit and filling. Top with whipped cream if desired. Leave out graham crackers for a gluten-free dessert.
Kelley Cook, Wideman

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Online: arkansaslivingmagazine.com/submit-a-recipe

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

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Visiting Lake June in June

Exploring the Stamps 'pond' of Maya Angelou's memories

STORY BY JACK SCHNEDLER PHOTOS BY MARCIA SCHNEDLER

In "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings," Maya Angelou described the pleasure she gained from strolling to Lake June during her hardscrabble Arkansas childhood in Stamps.

"Each day, I found some time to walk to the pond where people went to catch sun perch and striped bass," Angelou wrote in her 1969 memoir. "The hours I chose to go were too early or late for fishermen, so I had the area to myself. I stood on the bank of the dark green water, and my thoughts skidded like the water spiders. Now this way, now that, now the other way. ... I couldn't decide on any move, so I recited a few Bible verses and went home."

That was one of 13 times Angelou mentioned Lake June (tinyurl.com/LakeJuneStamps), which she called "the pond" in the book that first brought her literary renown. Now the lake honors her memory. Its 80 acres south of downtown Stamps abut **Dr. Maya Angelou Memorial Park**, so named in 2014 and posted on a shoreline sign. The lake was placed on the Arkansas Register of Historic Places in 2017.

The sign identifies Stamps (stampsar.gov), population 1,206, as "The Childhood Home of Dr. Maya Angelou." Then named Marguerite Johnson, she lived mostly in the Lafayette County community with her loving grandmother, Annie Henderson, from ages 3 to 13.

Angelou worshiped with her grandparents at **Brown Chapel Christian Methodist Episcopal Church**,

still standing at 516 Oak Grove Road.



ABOVE Lake June in Stamps honors the memory of Maya Angelou, who grew up in the area and mentions the lake in her memoir, "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings."

LEFT A large mural at the corner of Main and Thomas streets in downtown Stamps honors Maya Angelou and her beloved childhood "pond," Lake June.

The church and its congregation appear frequently in her memoir. Her grandparents are buried in unmarked graves at **Lakeside Cemetery No. 2**, on a hill near Lake June.

Lumber and legacy


A large **mural** at the corner of Main and Thomas streets in downtown Stamps features a prominent portrait of Angelou. The outdoor art also shows Lake June, as well as Bodcaw Lumber Co., a major employer in Stamps from 1898 to 1931. At one time, its mills were said to produce the most yellow pine lumber of anywhere in the world.

The needs of Bodcaw Lumber led to the digging of Lake June, one of the oldest man-made lakes in southern Arkansas. It was created in the last decade of the 19th century as a mill pond called simply "the pond." Its purpose was to allow the transport of logs from offloading trains to the mill. Pushing floating logs across water was much easier than dragging them over dry land.

At its peak, Bodcaw employed about 3,000 workers. After the company closed during the Great Depression, the lake was sold to the city of Stamps in 1943 and became a municipal property given the name Lake June. The city later donated the surface area to the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, to be stocked with game fish.

After Lake June's spillway was damaged by flooding in 2014, its water was drained for a three-year renovation to revive the fish habitats. The lake is said to support healthy populations of channel catfish, largemouth bass, bluegills, redear sunfish and black crappie. The location is also popular for birdwatching.



Extending into the lake near the Angelou memorial sign is a **fishing pier**. During Angelou's childhood, there would have been one notable difference from today. In the racially segregated Arkansas of the 1930s, the shore closer to downtown was reserved for white fishermen, with Black fisherman relegated to the farther side. Now anyone can fish anywhere in Lake June. 

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CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Poem of the Month *By Victor Fleming*

ACROSS

- 1 Clinton or Murray
- 5 Guys' grp. on campus
- 9 Refuel
- 14 Boo-boo synonym
- 15 Uncool
- 16 Clear, as a blackboard
- 17 Start of a poem
- 20 Pay or play feature
- 21 Classic Jaguar model
- 22 Irish Spring alternative
- 23 Banks on runways
- 26 "Without further ____"
- 28 Part 2 of the poem
- 36 "If ____ be so bold ..."

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8		9	10	11	12	13	
14					15					16					
17					18					19					
20							21				22				
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52	53	54				55	56	57			58		59	60	61
62						63				64	65				
66							67					68			
69								70					71		

DOWN

- 37 Anthropologist Fossey
- 38 Chili con ____
- 39 Ellipsis element
- 40 Boast, after finishing a group project
- 42 Conger or moray
- 43 Botanical seed
- 45 In a ____ (agitated)
- 46 Fanatical
- 47 Part 3 of the poem
- 50 ____, Larry and curly
- 51 "Book of Days" singer
- 52 Asian language
- 55 ____ at (bothered)
- 58 Juniors' exams
- 62 End of the poem
- 66 Nixon's first veep
- 67 "Good heavens!"
- 68 Ending with Henri
- 69 Beach umbrella offering
- 70 Irish Spring, e.g.
- 71 Judge to be
- 31 Orono's state
- 32 Salad veggie
- 33 Fountain in Rome
- 34 "____ the loneliest number ..."
- 35 Fuses, as metal
- 40 "Here ____ again"
- 41 Highway through Houston
- 44 ____ Edition
- 46 Stored up
- 48 "Now, ____ this!"
- 49 "____ Blue" (ABC drama)
- 52 "Jabberwocky" start
- 53 Low opposite
- 54 "I" in "The King and I"
- 56 General ____ chicken
- 57 Alpine feedback
- 59 Betting beginning
- 60 Word with bag or board
- 61 Did laps in a pool
- 63 Baaing female
- 64 "... sat ____ tuffet"
- 65 Chop (off), as a branch

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CROSSWORD ANSWERS ON PAGE 39

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CROSSWORD ANSWERS
for puzzle on page 38

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

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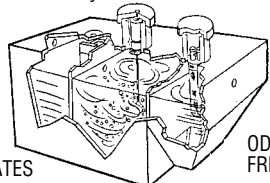
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STORY AND PHOTOS BY ROB ROEDEL

I have eaten at hundreds of golf course snack bars during my lifetime.

Erase any images that come to mind

when I tell you that Mystic Grill in El Dorado is on a golf course.

Mystic Grill's dining area has three walls of floor-to-ceiling glass that provide stunning views of the Mystic Creek Golf Club course. Originally from El Dorado, Executive Chef Lilli Ellen attended the Culinary Institute of America in San Antonio and worked at a number of restaurants before she was recruited to the

restaurant. She now showcases a wealth of international culinary expertise, from unique spices to traditional recipes.

The Tuna Tartare consisted of ahi tuna attractively topped with an avocado mousse and drizzled with a tasty ginger-soy glaze. The tartare was served with a crispy, golden-brown wonton that provided the perfect partner for the delicious creation. The wonton's crisp texture and taste enhanced the fresh flavors of the tuna and mousse.

Chef Ellen also prepared Thai Shrimp appetizers for me to try. This outstanding "shareable," featuring lightly breaded shrimp, drizzled with a Thai chile sauce with a sweet but spicy hint to it.

Mystic Grill has great salads, including my favorite, the Citrus Sunset, that featured mixed greens, navel orange slices, blood orange slices, grapefruit slices, green onion, crumbled goat cheese and mint with a pomegranate vinaigrette dressing. I added a grilled salmon filet; the combination made me smile with each bite.

Pizza at the golf course restaurant? Not the frozen kind. It's freshly made pizza with a crunchy, thin crust and several topping options. Chef Ellen displays her creativity with weekly special pies.

During my visit, I enjoyed a Ricotta Blackberry Honey Pizza. I have eaten many pizzas in my 59 years, but this one was among



The classic Club Sandwich at Mystic Grill is right on par with three layers of deliciousness and served with homemade onion rings.

the most unique with an outstanding flavor package. The ricotta cheese along with the beautifully arranged tangy, sweet blackberries atop a light layer of freshly made pesto delivered a diverse mix of tastes that led to me eating too many slices. But I don't regret it a bit, as I am craving it again while writing this review.

A good golf course restaurant must



Mystic Grill's Citrus Sunset Salad could have the best greens on the course, with grilled salmon, navel oranges, blood oranges, grapefruit, goat cheese and a pomegranate vinaigrette dressing.



A tropical hole-in-one! The Costa Rican Shrimp with coconut, mango and lime flavors is served with rice, black beans and fried plantains.



THE EATING ESSENTIALS

Mystic Grill

191 Club House Drive
El Dorado
(870) 312-0723
[facebook.com/MysticGrillElDorado](https://www.facebook.com/MysticGrillElDorado)

Hours of Operation

Tuesday-Thursday: 11 a.m.-8 p.m.
Friday-Saturday: 11 a.m.-9 p.m.
Sunday: 11 a.m.-2 p.m.



have a Club Sandwich, and Mystic Grill scores an ace with its version. I opted for marble rye bread to build a three-layer masterpiece with ham, turkey, bacon, lettuce, tomato, cheddar cheese, Swiss cheese and honey mustard. Homemade onion rings accompanied the beautifully presented sandwich.

Next, I tried the Surf and Turf, which included a choice of shrimp or scallops. I chose the scallops to go with the 6-ounce ribeye. The two proteins were accompanied with garlic mashed potatoes, grilled asparagus, fingerling potatoes and a warm yeast dinner roll. The flavors of the tender steak and delicate, succulent scallops made for a top-shelf entree. However, presentation of the plate followed suit.

The Costa Rican Shrimp was the final entree of my visit. The dish featured freshly breaded coconut shrimp with mango-tamarind chutney, cilantro-lime, coconut rice, black beans and fried plantains. Talk about a grand ending! Chef Ellen won the Mystic Club Championship with this offering.

For dessert, I tried the Lemon Blueberry Tiramisu. I fully intended to only eat a small sample of this sweet creation, but my willpower failed. Chef Ellen tempted me with a glass filled with lemon ladyfingers, blackberries, blueberries, mascarpone cheese, lemon curd and topped with crushed frozen strawberries. I loved it, and I am sure you will too. 🍷



One of Chef Lilli Ellen's weekly special pizzas, the Ricotta Blackberry Honey pie, delivers championship flavors.

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

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Calendar



River Cities Dragon Boat Festival

COURTESY OF RIVER CITIES DRAGON BOAT FESTIVAL



Buffalo River Elk Festival

COURTESY OF ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF PARKS, HERITAGE AND TOURISM



Juneteenth in Da Rock

COURTESY OF ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF PARKS, HERITAGE AND TOURISM



World Championship Running of the Tubs

COURTESY OF HOT SPRINGS



Firefly Fling

COURTESY OF EXPERIENCE FAYETTEVILLE

June 1

Arkansas Country Music Awards
Conway, arkansasmusic.org

June 5

Soma Mainstreet Mile
Little Rock, somalittlerock.com/mainstreet-mile

June 5-6

Lum & Abner Music & Arts Festival
Mena, facebook.com/LumandAbnerFestival

Lowell Mudtown Days

Lowell, facebook.com/mudtowndaysinlowellarkansas

River Cities Dragon Boat Festival

Maumelle, rivercitiesdragonboatfestival.com

June 5-7

Arkansas Free Fishing Weekend
Statewide, agfc.com

June 6

World Championship Running of the Tubs
Hot Springs, hotsprings.org

June 6-7

Arkansas Highland Games
Mount Vernon, arrenfest.com

June 12-13

Arkansas Lavender Festival
Hot Springs, facebook.com/arkansaslavenderfestival

Bradley County Pink Tomato Festival

Warren, pinktomatofestival.com

66th annual Poultry Festival

Rogers, thepoultryfederation.com

June 15-21

Bentonville Film Festival
Bentonville, bentonvillefilm.org

June 17-20

Petit Jean Swap Meet & Auto Show
Morrlilton, museumofautos.com

June 18-20

Rose Bud Summerfest
Rose Bud, facebook.com/cityofrosebud

June 19

Downtown Juneteenth
Russellville, mainstreetrussellville.com

June 20

Juneteenth in Da Rock
Little Rock, arkansasheritage.com/mosaic-templars-cultural-center

Freedom Festival

Springdale, musicmovesar.com/freedom-festival

June 21

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

June 22-28

National Pollinator Week
Statewide, pollinator.org/pollinator-week/activities

June 26-27

Buffalo River Elk Festival
Jasper, buffaloriverelkfestival.com

Red, White & Blue Festival

Mountain Home, redwhitebluefestival.com

June 27

Firefly Fling
Fayetteville, experiencefayetteville.com

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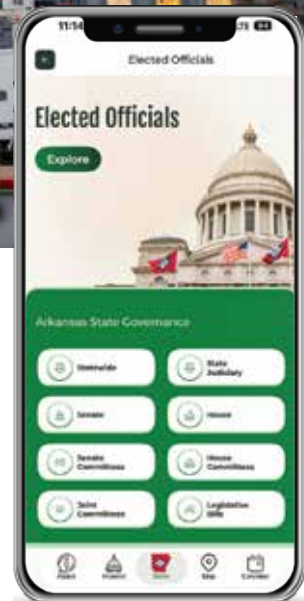


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