Jonesboro CCASIONS

THE CITY MAGAZINE

JULY 2025 VOL. XXI NO. 12

Z2ND ANNUAL Readers' Choice AUAARDS

SPECIAL SECTION: SELLING JONESBORO

jonesborooccasions.com

Thank you for voting!



Dr. Scott Hoke - Best Family Practice Physician Finalists:

Dr. Jason Brandt - Orthopedic Surgeon Dr. Norbert Delacey - Best OB/GYN Dr. Matt Haustein - Best Cardiologist Dr. Carrol Scroggin - Best Oncologist Dr. Thomas Nix - Best Opthalmologist

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Thank you to Chris and Jamie Fowler for their commitment to our community and contribution to the Chris and Jamie Fowler Family Physician Recruitment Fund.

We would also like to thank all the members of the NEA Baptist Founders Circle including Haag Brown, First National Bank, Danny and Gail Ford and Marian and Andy Peeler along with countless other community leaders who have provided generous gifts for this fund.

This fund will revolutionize physician recruitment in Northeast Arkansas.





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IN THIS MONTH'S ISSUE ON THE COVER: The 2025 Readers' Choice Awards photography by Brittney Osborn

Jonesboro OCCASIONS July 2025 Vol. XXII No. 12

4 : EDITOR'S LETTER

6

8

15

29

98

100

102

COVER FEATURE 22nd Annual Jonesboro Occasions Readers' Choice Awards

ARTS & CULTURE BAM Opens New Exhibitions

10 LOCAL FLAVOR *A Cookbook for a Cause*

12 DEDICATED Flags Across Jonesboro

> OCCASIONS EVENT SPOTLIGHT Photos from Jonesboro's Top Events

SPECIAL SECTION 22nd Annual Jonesboro Occasions Readers' Choice Awards

93 SPECIAL SECTION Selling Jonesboro

- **FROM THE CARDIOLOGIST'S WIFE** Understanding Menopause
- **OCCASIONS DATEBOOK** July Calendar of Events

DINING GUIDE Jonesboro Restaurants

104 THE OCCASIONS LADY AND... The Art of Slow Travel



Quality early care and education is vital to your child's future. **Discover what** quality looks like.

Written by Kelli Hilburn, Better Beginnings Program Administrator

Research tells us the most effective learning happens through play and positive interactions with family and educators.

Positive interactions and learning through play

Your family creates positive interactions when you hold your child and talk to them, play and read to them. When you focus your attention on your child, you help them learn and show them how important they are to you.

Your quality early care and education program

Children should enjoy warm, positive interactions with other children and staff. Quality early care teachers respond to your child's needs. They play with, talk to and read to the children in their care much like you do at home.

The facility provides active play areas indoors and outdoors, and areas for quiet play and rest.

Better Beginnings is administered by the Arkansas Department of Education.



Interactions and discoveries go together. Quality early care and education provides opportunities for both.

Early science learning may include hands-on sensory play with child safe playdough. When the teacher says, "You can squeeze it through your fingers or make it look like a worm, or a pie," your child discovers the power to use their own imagination to create something new and understand another part of their world.

Scan the code to find your early care and education partner at Better Beginnings.





Your older toddler may discover the science by making playdough. Talk about a discovery – a toy made from salt, flour, and a little oil and water.

Interactions between your child and their teachers lead to a desire to explore and learn.

Be part of the experience. Ask your child's teacher what they learned today. They're happy to share the recipe for fun learning!

Find your quality early care and education partner

Click the orange banner at ARBetterBeginnings.com to find star-rated quality early care and education providers who can help your child start school with confidence.

The first five years build the foundation for your child's future. Give your child the best start with Better Beginnings quality early care and education providers.







his July marks the 22nd consecutive year for *Occasions*' Readers' Choice Awards, so we are diving in and making a splash with this year's theme as we celebrate the winners and finalists of our 2025 contest.

For more than two decades, *Jonesboro Occasions* has invited readers to vote for their favorite foods, people, places, artists, businesses, restaurants and more. Our readers begin voting online in May, and after all votes have been tallied, winners are notified in June. Winners and finalists are revealed and celebrated in the July issue.

The *Occasions* staff has been honored to be a part of recognizing local businesses, services, venues, events and individuals who help make Jonesboro a better place. Whether you are in search of the best taco in the city, the best local park for a family outing or the best person to book for that much-needed massage, our readers have weighed in, and we are pleased to announce this year's winners.

In celebration of this year's award winners, *Occasions* Art Director Brittney Osborn chose a summer pool vibe for this issue. She and graphic design intern Victoria Mantz spent several weeks putting a summer vibe spin on the cover and inside the Readers' Choice section. Together, we chased dozens of floats and props around the pool in the heat of an Arkansas summer to make it happen.

In addition to the complete list of winners in our 2025 Readers' Choice section, you'll find stories about local people, businesses and events in this issue. Read about three new art exhibitions opening this month at Bradbury Art Museum; discover the heartfelt story behind Flags Across Jonesboro as we prepare for Independence Day; and find out how employees of a local hospital are raising funds to honor one of their own.

We are thankful for those who continue to invest their time, effort and resources in Jonesboro and hope you will find old favorites, as well as new places to try, among our list of Readers' Choice winners. As you read through the many winners and finalists recognized inside this issue, please remember to continue to support locally-owned businesses whenever possible.

Congratulations to our 2025 winners and finalists! You have made a big splash with our readers, and we are diving in to celebrate you.

Undrey L.

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PRESIDENT & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER AUDREY LOTT POFF

OUR MISSION: Occasions Publishing Group is a people-focused, purpose-driven organization committed to reaching, inspiring and informing readers across Jonesboro and Northeast Arkansas.

If you've got a career, you have something important to share with Jonesboro's kids.



That's the mission of the Jonesboro Business Association (JBA), a nonprofit mentoring program focused on building a 10-year path from adolescence to adulthood for local students ages 14 to 24. JBA equips these students with the tools they need to succeed: academic support, mentorship, life skills, community engagement and career preparation.

JBA begins by helping students develop the right mindset one of ambition, growth and service to others. Then they are provided with what many don't have access to: test prep, goal setting, tutoring,

mentorships, motivational speakers and exposure to realworld business experiences.

As students graduate high school, JBA stays with them, offering resumé coaching, mock interviews, job shadowing and direct connections to business leaders and entrepreneurs. Whether they

We're calling on Jonesboro's business leaders, entrepreneurs, and professionals to be a voice in the village.

choose to launch their own business or contribute their talents to a local company, they're equipped to hit the ground running.

How can you help? Tell our kids your story.

We need speakers, mentors and story-sharers from Jonesboro businesses and entrepreneurs — people who remember what it was like to be young and uncertain, and who are willing to offer wisdom and encouragement.

There are more than 600 students in three local schools currently involved in JBA. They are eager, focused and ready to grow. What they need now is you. Because every entrepreneur's story begins with: "When I was a child..."

Join us. Speak to a classroom. Share your path.

Help a student discover theirs. Be a voice they remember.



JONESBORO BUSINESS ASSOCIATION











To volunteer or learn more about JBA, email jonesboroba@gmail.com or visit jonesborobusinessassociation.com.

2025 READERS CHOICEADARDS Let the Celebration Begin!

BY AUDREY POFF PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRITTNEY OSBORN

t's that time of year again—when the spotlight shines on the local favorites that make life in Jonesboro unique and give the city character. After weeks of voting and days of tallying, we're proud to officially announce the winners of *Jonesboro Occasions*' 2025 Readers' Choice Awards.

Each July, we turn to the people who know this city best—our readers—to help us recognize the standout businesses, restaurants, services and experiences that define the heart of Jonesboro. From your go-to brunch spots and coffee shops to the best places to shop, celebrate and unwind, this list is full of hometown heroes chosen by you.

A big thank you to everyone who cast a vote and shared their love for all things local. Whether you're looking for a new place to try or simply want to support your favorites, we hope this guide helps you make the most of all that Jonesboro has to offer.

Congratulations to all of this year's winners and finalists—you've earned it!

The complete list of 2025 Readers' Choice Award recipients begins on page 29.



ARTS AND CULTURE



Brad Benefield and Natausha Light, "Ruffled Stoneware Vase," 2023, stoneware



Nathan Pietrykowski, "The Sleight of Hand: Everything is Made by Hand," 2025, screenprint

New Exhibits Open at Bradbury Art Museum

Inaugural 'Gathering' Exhibition and Solo Exhibits To Be Featured

STORY AND PHOTOS SUBMITTED BY ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY

"Gathering: At the Kitchen Table," a juried exhibition of regional Arkansas artists, opened June 28 at Bradbury Art Museum (BAM) on the campus of Arkansas State University. Also opening will be "Breaking Binaries: Hybrid Processes" and "Bridging Geographies of Labor," solo exhibitions from Hannah Keats and Ebenezer Nketsiah Mensah.

All three exhibitions were set in motion by open call processes: one for artists living in 25 Arkansas counties in Northeast Arkansas and the Delta and one for artists around the country who recently graduated from Master of Fine Arts (MFA) degree programs. From the submissions, MFA studio art graduates Hannah Keats and Ebenezer Nketsiah Mensah were selected by BAM staff.

The 26 artists included in "Gathering: At the Kitchen Table" were selected by juror Andrew Fernandez, who serves as visiting professor of sculpture at Arkansas State University.

This marks the inaugural opening for "Gathering," which will be an annual juried exhibition of artists from NEA and the Delta. Each year, an individual from the regional arts community will be selected to serve as the juror for the exhibition; their task will be to closely examine the entries and select the pieces on exhibit — along with the first, second and third place, and juror's merit awards.

The theme for the exhibition will be selected annually by a member of the BAM staff. This year's theme, chosen by assistant director Madeline McMahan, was "at the kitchen table," showcasing artwork the same size or smaller than a standard kitchen table.

"In speaking with community artists, so many of us are making work alongside full-time jobs and in our own homes," said McMahan. "I wanted this year's exhibition to honor the dedication and perseverance of these artists who are making their work even when it means working at the kitchen table."

The selected artists are Matt E. Ball, artist couple Brad Benefield and Natausha Light, Jordan Blake, Deb Peregrine Callahan, Dylan Carter, Angela Castro, Tami Chandler, Aaron Conger, Danyelle Schwarz Hutton, Evka JG, Amber Jones, sister duo Nicole Jones and Marissa Russell, Irina Khramtsova, Shannon Lamb, Victoria Mantz, Jennifer Masley, Cheryl McMickle, Nathan Pietrykowski, Anna Rafalowski, Stephanie Ramirez, Tom Richard, Sara Sills, Sharline Vanpelt and Michael Whiteside. Awards will be announced at the opening reception.

"On the BAM team, we talk a lot about using a 'whole body approach' to supporting the arts; we try to launch projects that support our artists from more than one angle," said McMahan. "We want to be a platform for our community to experience contemporary art without having to leave the region, and we want to provide professional development opportunities for regional artists, as well. We want to want to support arts engagement in the region, and we want to provide support for artists."

On view alongside "Gathering" will be "Breaking Binaries: Hybrid Processes" and "Bridging Geographies of Labor" from recent MFA graduates Hannah Keats and Ebenezer Nketsiah Mensah. All three exhibitions were the result of discussions about how to use this 'whole-body approach' with the BAM exhibition schedule.

"Arkansas State University has an incredible BFA studio art program, of which I am a very proud alumna," McMahan added. "Although we do not offer an MFA studio art degree, our hope was that this call would provide exhibition opportunities for graduating MFA students as they're in the early stages of launching their creative careers, and we also want to give our own local emerging artists—if they are interested in pursuing an MFA—some insights into the programs that exist."

Solo Exhibitions

Hannah Keats holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) degree from the University of North Florida, and she received her MFA in studio art from Florida State University in May 2025. An interdisciplinary painter, she creates biomorphic artworks inspired by nature and science fiction using materials that range from paint to velvet flocking to digital and lenticular prints.

Ebenezer Nketsiah Mensah received a BFA in painting and sculpture from Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, and he was awarded his MFA in studio art from the University of Florida in May 2025. He is a multidisciplinary artist whose work explores identity, labor, memory and power. His practice dwells on his experiences as a worker in Tarkwa, Ghana.

Admission to the exhibitions, which will continue through July 30, is free. For more details about Bradbury Art Museum, call (870) 972-3434 or visit bradburyartmuseum.org.



Nketsiah Mensah, "Remnant Rumination II," 2024, discarded found objects from construction space



Hannah Keats, "Spawn," 2024, laser cut lenticular print on acrylic and wood panel



BY AUDREY HANES PHOTOGRAPHY BY NICOLE FRAKES, NEA BAPTIST CLINIC

very year, NEA Baptist Charitable Foundation encourages its employees to invest in all that the nonprofit does for the community through its Day of Giving fundraiser. This year, a cookbook comprised of 105 recipes submitted by primary care and urgent care staff raised funds for NEA Baptist Charitable Foundation's ShareHope Family Fund in loving memory of William Clayton Collins.

"Each spring, we invite team members to donate through various fundraising campaigns or by payroll deduction to support the free programs and services the foundation provides," said NEA Baptist Charitable Foundation Events Manager Rhonda Parker. "Ambrea Owens is our director of clinical operations. She had the idea to create a cookbook filled with recipes from our clinic team members and providers to raise money for our ShareHope Family Fund. ShareHope cares for families after the tragic loss of an infant, providing memory boxes, financial support and grief support through our licensed therapists at NEA Baptist Center for Good Grief.

"The cookbook idea was a huge success, and Ambrea collected over 100 recipes from NEA Baptist clinics. She then spent hours and hours formatting the recipes to put them into a book form. We created a giving page where people could purchase either a digital copy of the cookbook or a printed copy, raising \$3,140 to support ShareHope."

Owens, who has been with NEA Baptist for 14 years, said she was inspired by a cookbook that her church's youth group had put together to raise money for a mission trip.

"ShareHope is such a worthy cause because it helps families in times of loss and crisis when they are unsure what to do," said Owens. "This program provides them the support they need to navigate an incredibly sad and challenging time in their lives. It gives them the necessary resources they need to lay their lost baby to rest with the dignity and love they deserve. It provides them with tools to cope and try to move forward with their lives in the aftermath of such loss."

In honor of one of their own, the cookbook was dedicated to William Collins, the son of Clay and Tyler Collins. Tyler began working at NEA Baptist in 2019 and has held a variety of positions since, including working for Owens for three years. When Owens decided on the ShareHope fundraiser, she reached out to Tyler and asked if she could honor William in the cookbook. Owens wanted to share William's story and how ShareHope played a role in that.

"William's mother, Tyler, worked for two of our primary care clinics," said Owens. "She is an incredibly sweet and giving person who deserved to have her sweet William remembered in a big way. Our team felt that honoring William with this cookbook was the right thing to do. It was our pleasure to give this family a voice to tell their story."

The Collins' journey began when they arrived at the hospital on Sept. 9 for Tyler's routine cesarean section. Despite a typical appointment the previous Thursday, the nurses could not find a heartbeat, and the family was left to figure out what to do in the wake of their loss. They are thankful that ShareHope helped them navigate that heartbreaking situation.

"At this moment, we were completely in shock and had no clue what our next steps were," said Tyler. "Our nurse, Kelly, broke everything down to us and helped every step of the way. This is when she explained all the resources and items provided to us by ShareHope. She took his hand and footprints for the Mamie's Poppy Plate. as well as placing them in a Bible. She showed us the cuddle cot, Bridget's Cradle, and how it worked and explained that it allowed parents to stay with their babies as long as they would like. She even told us they had burial gowns if we needed one. After our families came in to visit William, we scheduled a photo shoot with a local photographer, Melissa Donner. She came that day and took photos of us and William, all provided by the hospital, as well.



Ambrea Owens, Tyler Collins

"Before we left, we were given a beautiful memory box with information, a teddy bear, a children's book to help explain the event to our son Jackson, the blankets and hat he used, and information on the Center for Good Grief. Along with that when we were planning the funeral, we learned that ShareHope also helps financially with funeral costs."

Tyler says her family is so thankful that proceeds from the cookbook go to such an important cause.

"You never think it's going to be you until it is," she said. "When something like this happens, the parents and family are not prepared. Having the staff trained for these events and having these resources available means the world when everything is falling apart. They truly have thought of everything you could ever need during this time of immeasurable loss.

"For us, the biggest impact ShareHope made was getting to spend extra time with William. Saying goodbye is never easy but getting to dress him and hold him for as long as we wanted was the biggest blessing I could ever asked for. This was the first time I have ever used a program like this, and it's amazing how compassionate and thoughtful others can be. They truly have thought of everything you could ever need during this time of immeasurable loss. Looking back on that day I truly believe every single person was God sent. They were all so caring, and even though this was the hardest day of my life, they all made it so much easier."

To honor William and so many others, Owens collected 105 recipes from 68 different team members. The categories of recipes include: Appetizers and Beverages; Soups, Salads, Stews and Chili; Vegetables and Side Dishes; Main Dishes; Breads, Baked Goods, and Rolls; and Desserts.

"You can tell by some of the names or stories that come with the recipe that they are family favorites that have been passed down through the generations," said Owens. "There is everything from high-protein, low-calorie recipes to recipes that likely contain all of your calories for the day. The book hosts a huge selection of recipes, from quick and simple to complicated, and everyone is sure to find some new favorites. ...

"I would like to give another shout out to our Windover team for providing 100% participation and submitting 41 of the 105 recipes. Dr. McGrath (Paragould Clinic) submitted an especially tasty recipe called Gooey Skillet Cake that's at the top of my list to try, but then again, I'm looking forward to making darn near every recipe in this book. I've received messages from employees who have made the high protein bagels and one of the cheeseburger slider recipes, both of which received rave reviews."

In honor of this story running in *Occasions*, the foundation has opened the cookbook back up for a one-time only opportunity for more people in the community to purchase it and support the nonprofit's ShareHope program.

"We are so proud of the cookbook and want as many people as possible to have a copy," said Owens. "Our hope is that this will become an annual tradition for our primary care team to create a new one each year to support ShareHope. Please consider purchasing a copy of this cookbook to support such a worthy cause."

SCAN HERE TO PURCHASE A COOKBOOK BENEFITTING SHAREHOPE



Flags Across Jonesboro

MEMORIAL FUNDRAISER BENEFITS ST. BERNARDS NICU

BY AUDREY HANES PHOTOGRAPHY BY MELISSA DONNER

s Americans proudly celebrate their independence this month, the Fourth of July, along with several other significant days throughout the year, marks a day for the country to revere the American Flag. One local couple is using a patriotic fundraiser, Flags Across Jonesboro, to raise money for The Luke Kellums NICU

Fund benefiting St. Bernards NICU in honor of their late son.

Luke and Kate Kellums were born prematurely at 33 weeks at St. Bernards on July 8, 2020. Although the babies were originally doing well, a week after their birth, Luke got sick with bacterial meningitis and was airlifted to Arkansas Children's Hospital in Little Rock. He fought for a week before his family had to say their earthly goodbye. Several months later, his parents, Dustin and Callie Kellums, set up the Luke Kellums NICU Fund through the Arkansas Community Foundation for St. Bernards Medical Center. To raise money for their hometown NICU, the couple started Flags Across Jonesboro.



Callie, Kate, Ben and Dustin Kellums

DEDICATED

DEDICATED



Proceeds from Flags Across Jonesboro benefit St. Bernards NICU and help other families that have babies in the unit. At right: David Alexander Shannon, son of Scotti and Erica Shannon, is pictured during his previous stay in the NICU. "Luke's NICU Fund, and the Flags Across Jonesboro fundraiser specifically, give us a way to remember our precious boy. It gives us an opportunity to do something positive with our grief and help other families that have babies in the NICU." - Callie Kellums

"I got the idea for Flags Across Jonesboro from my friend who was doing this fundraiser in Magnolia," said Callie. "They were raising thousands of dollars every year, and I felt like it could be really successful here in Jonesboro."

For \$100 per year, donors rent an American flag from Dustin and Callie. The Kellumses set out the flag at the donors' house or business for around a week at a time for specific holidays, then pick it back up. Flags are out for the following holidays: Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day through Patriot Day in September, and Election Day through Veterans Day in October. Thanks to the help of the couple's families and friends, the group currently puts out more than 250 flags each holiday.

"I was still pretty stuck in my grief, but Dustin pushed us to start in May 2021, and I am so thankful he did," said Callie. "Luke's NICU Fund, and the Flags Across Jonesboro fundraiser specifically, give us a way to remember our precious boy. It gives us an opportunity to do something positive with our grief and help other families that have babies in the NICU. Having a child in the NICU is difficult in itself, but if you have other children at home or don't have enough leave from work to stay with your child all the time or have to drive from another city, that makes it even more difficult. We aim to help St. Bernards care for as many babies as possible here so that families don't have to travel any farther for care.

"Some neighborhoods have been super engaged and supportive. It is incredible to see flags lining the streets. They look beautiful and, of course, so patriotic. We love being able to drive around and show (7-year-old Ben and 5-year-old Kate) Luke's flags."

To date, The Luke Kellums NICU Fund benefiting St. Bernards has donated more than \$136,000 to the St. Bernards NICU. The first \$36,000 of the funds raised was for items specifically requested by the NICU, such as a specialized mattress, a Bili Blanket machine, a supply cart, two cribettes, bereavement kits and a NICU-specific ventilator. Most recently, the nonprofit donated \$100,000 to help fund a four-bed expansion to the NICU that is designed as a step-down room for babies who don't need to remain in the NICU but aren't ready to go home.

"This expansion, in particular, makes us so happy because it means we have helped more families keep their babies close to home," said Callie.

St. Bernard Foundation President Lydia Parkey has worked closely with the family and says St. Bernards is honored that the family chose to partner with them and memorialize Luke as they have.

"It's encouraging, and it's something we love to see," said Parkey. "When donors have a passion or a dream, we love to be able to meet them and make that happen. The need is always there. Labor and delivery can be beautiful and joyous, but it can also be heart wrenching; not everyone has the same outcome. Dustin and Callie are so inspiring. They are heroes to so many families, heroes in people's lives they don't know and who might ever know who they are but are impacted by their selflessness and generosity."

St. Bernards Medical Center is currently in the middle of an expansion and a reworking to meet the needs of not only the NICU, but the labor and delivery floor, as well. The St. Bernards NICU, which was originally established in 2012 with 12 beds, has grown to 19 beds and is continually adapting and updating to meet area needs.

"The funds from Dustin and Callie have allowed us to meet a need we have here," said Parkey. "St. Bernards is always growing to meet needs, and they help us do that. That fund will always continue to help serve families at St. Bernards."

For those interested in supporting Flags Across Jonesboro, please send an email with a home address to lukesnicufund@gmail.com and make a tax-deductible donation at arcf.org/luke. The prorated rate for the rest of the year would be \$60. More information can also be found on Facebook by searching for The Luke Kellums NICU Fund Benefiting St. Bernards.

OCASIONS

EVENTS & NEWS SPOTLIGHT

- 18 THE 2025 SKIRMISH: A DELTA GRAVEL FESTIVAL
- 20 NEA BAPTIST ART SLAM
- 22 THE FOUNDATION OF ARTS BEHIND THE RED
- 24 JUNIOR AUXILIARY OF JONESBORO PASSING OF THE CROWN TEA
- 26 NEWS: THE CLYDESDALES ON MAIN STREET
- 28 NEWS: FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OZARK MISSION PROJECT

EVENT SPOTLIGHT TRIPLE SWING TAKES GUESTS BACK TO THE '80S

The 35th annual St. Bernards Triple Swing fundraiser kicked off June 20 at St. Bernards Auditorium. Guests enjoyed dinner and dancing to the music of Boom Kinetic, a live auction, an '80s-themed arcade, games and more. This year's Triple Swing events raised funds for St. Bernards Heart and Vascular programs. *For more event photos, visit jonesborooccasions.com and click on Event Pics.*

- 1. Leann Morrow, Stacy Hindman, Caitlyn Sauseda
- 2. Alden Weeks, Mark Morrow, Lydia Parkey
- **3.** Billy and Cody McKenzie
- **4.** Polly and Chris Harrell
- 5. Selena Barber, Laura Pickens
- **6** Lisa Tedder, Beverly Parker, Beth Murff
- 7. Greye Winningham, Sandra Wiggins
- 8. Rodney and Deania Vanhoozer, Julie and Kyle Cook
- 9. Justin Parkey, Andy Shatley
- **10.** Dr. Roger and Connie Hill, Jamey Wallace
- **11.** Lauren McClain, Mallory Hurst
- 12. Lindsey Wingo, Brandon Stevens
- **13.** Kim Futrell, Brandon Stevens, Audrey Poff
- Ryan and Erin Gibson, Andy and Ashley Snider, Megan and Gabe Roberts





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EVENT SPOTLIGHT

The Skirmish, a Delta Gravel Festival, brought more than 200 cyclists from 15 states to Jonesboro for the inaugural event held May 29-June 1. Participants explored stunning gravel routes in the area as a celebration of the rugged beauty, rich culture and the tight-knit community of the Delta region. Cyclists participated in a variety of rides ranging from 100-, 63-, 43- and 24-mile routes to a family-friendly four-mile Slow Roll. Vendors and entertainment were set up in Downtown Jonesboro during the main event on May 30. *Photos by Audrey Poff. For more event photos, visit jonesborooccasions.com and click on Event Pics.*

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Dan, Krewe, Casey and Isla Johnson
Lori Poston, Christie Loberg
Ricardo Quintero, Daniel Lester
Just Emerson
Jamal and Dr. Asad Khan
Greasy Tree band
Participating cyclists
Greasy Tree band
Laura and Paul Pickens
Michael John Rickert
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JULY 2025 JONESBORO OCCASIONS 21

EVENT SPOTLIGHT

NEA Baptist Charitable Foundation hosted its annual Art Slam on June 5 at the Niell Estate. Nearly 90 artists donated artwork to be included in the auction, with proceeds from the event benefiting NEA Baptist Charitable Foundation. This year's signature artist was Sean Shrum, who donated artwork titled "Wild & Free" for the benefit. (*Photos by Emily Merrell.*) For more event photos, visit jonesborooccasions.com and click on Event Pics.

- 1. Robbie Johnson, Tara Ferguson, Rhonda Parker
- **2.** Annika and Holly Acebo, McKenzie Marie,
- Kristin Austin
- 3. Chaney and Sam Lynd
- **4.** Dalanie Taylor
- 5. Suzy and Jim Schrantz
- 6 Kim Provost, Marian Peeler
- 7. Angie Ford Jones, Melanie Edens, Nicole Frakes
- 8. Erica Huffstetler, Rhonda Parker
- 9. Randy Loyd, Pam Field
- 10. Cathy Mackey, Lynn Parker
- 11. Misti Valentine, Lisa Moore, Mary Ann Ray
- **12.** Holly Beverly, Norman Meklakov
- 13. Lydia Strickland, Raylee Wallace





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EVENT SPOTLIGHT

The Foundation of Arts hosted Behind the Red on June 5 at Stage, Too. The event provided guests with a sneak peek at the FOA's 2025-2026 season and the opportunity to see its newly reinvented Stage, Too venue. The new season kicks off in August with "The Savannah Sipping Society" to be staged Aug. 22-30 at Stage, Too. For a complete look at the upcoming season, visit foajonesboro.org. (*Photos by Brittney Osborn.*) For more event photos, visit jonesborooccasions.com and click on Event Pics.

Stephanie Epps, Cori Kidder
Anna King
Silas Shackelford, Jessica Maddox
Anna King
Silas Shackelford, Jessica Maddox
Kasen Ericksen
Stephanie Epps, Cori Kidder



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JUNIOR AUXILIARY **HOLDS PASSING OF** THE CROWN TEA

The Junior Auxiliary of Jonesboro Provisional Class of 2025 was recently welcomed during the Passing of the Crown Tea held June 3 at the Cooper Alumni Center on the campus of Arkansas State University. The new slate of Junior Auxiliary officers was also introduced at the tennis-themed event. Hosted by the 2024 Provisional Class, the event also honored members of the JA Class of 2009, who were promoted to life status, and members of the Class of 2019, who were promoted to associate status. Members of the 2025 Provisional Class include: Hannah Little, Olivia Smith, Catherine Norvell, Megan Turner, Denise Strickland, Sonya Sanders, Shalen Gorman , Destiny Hillis, Dr. Cherisse Jones-Branch, Sydni Stanley, Ryanne Richardson, Shelby Tripod, Lexi Lee, Bethanie Phillips, Micah Childers, Latasha Pye, Talya Farris, Kasey Carter, Lexi Johnson, Courtney Patterson, Caroline Jay and Kacie Adkerson. (Photos courtesy of Elizabeth Tate) For more event photos, visit jonesborooccasions.com and click on Event Pics.

- 1. Haley Thomas, Jennifer McGinnis, Melissa McDaniel, Lauren Lance, Sarah Gifford, Jessica Blackburn, Brittney Osborn, Bobbi Hydrick
- 2. Sarah Gifford, Brittney Osborn, Cynthia Teague, Bobbi Hydrick, Melissa McDaniel, Lauren Lance, Halev Thomas
- 3. Aarika Thompson, Kasey Eakins, Abby Husband
- 4. Jessica Nadzam, Veronica Trimarchi
- 5. Kara Keith, Destiny McGee
- 6. JA Class of 2024
- 7. Sarah Dawson, Jessica Baker, Kelsey Markum
- 8. Provisional Class of 2025









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DOWNTOWN JONESBORO HOSTS PATRIOTIC TRIBUTE

Main Street was lined with spectators as the Downtown Jonesboro Alliance (DJA) hosted a patriotic tribute on June 14. The event featured a March on Main by the Budweiser Clydesdales, with a special presentation from Folds of Honor. The ceremony recognized and honored the families of fallen and disabled service members. The event was presented in partnership with Folds of Honor. *Photos by Caroline Brodell.*





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JULY 2025 JONESBORO OCCASIONS 29



More than 150 youth and adult volunteers convened in Jonesboro in June as part of the Ozark Mission Project. Hosted by First United Methodist Church of Jonesboro, the volunteers completed a variety of projects in service to community members including painting, yardwork and small construction projects.

OZARK MISSION PROJECT PROVIDES WEEK OF SERVICE IN JONESBORO

STORY SUBMITTED PHOTOS BY AUDREY POFF

irst United Methodist Church of Jonesboro hosted the Ozark Mission Project (OMP) from June 8-13, welcoming more than 150 youth and adult volunteers from across Arkansas for a week of hands-on mission work and community outreach.

Volunteers from United Methodist Churches across the stateincluding Pulaski Heights UMC (Little Rock), FUMC Conway, Cabot UMC, FUMC Hot Springs, FUMC Texarkana, and the host church, First United Methodist Church of Jonesboro have come together to serve neighbors in need throughout the Jonesboro area.

Under the guidance of trained college staff and volunteers, the youth completed a variety of projects ranging from painting and yardwork to building wheelchair ramps and offering companionship to local residents. Their week of service was a key part of OMP's mission: to transform lives through worship, fellowship and hands-on mission.

One example is a partnership with Deliverance Family Worship Center in Jonesboro to build a wheelchair ramp outside their Community Outreach Center to make it easier for them to serve the community. "Our church is thrilled to welcome these students and support the life-changing work of OMP," said Dr. Michael Roberts, senior pastor at First United Methodist Church of Jonesboro. "This is faith in action—young people living out the call of Christ by serving with love, humility and joy. Their presence here is a blessing to our neighbors and to our congregation."

Jonesboro resident Charlie Page praised the youth and their leaders for their service to others. While in Jonesboro, the volunteers power washed his home, trimmed shrubs and removed debris, among other tasks.

"They're a blessing," said Page. "They really are. I see God's work being put into action."

Founded as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit of the Arkansas United Methodist Church, Ozark Mission Project organizes summer mission camps for youth. These camps engage students in acts of compassionate service, addressing the needs of the elderly, disabled and low-income families while fostering spiritual growth through shared meals, storytelling and devotions.

For more information about OMP, contact Michael McMurray at (501) 516-1995. To learn more about First United Methodist Church of Jonesboro, located at 801 S. Main St., contact Holly Hall at (870) 243-9631 or visit fumcj.org.



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OVERALL RESTAURANT WINNER: JTOWN'S GRILL Finalists: 501 Steakhouse, Omar's Uptown

AMERICAN FOOD RESTAURANT WINNER: THE SOCIAL Finalists: JTown's Grill, Fat City Steak and Grill House

DELI/SANDWICH SHOP WINNER: MUNCHY'S Finalists: Potbelly's, Newk's

ITALIAN RESTAURANT WINNER: LA BOCCA ITALIAN RESTAURANT & PIZZERIA Finalists: Lazzari Italian Oven, Pastaria 49

CHINESE RESTAURANT WINNER: DRAGON CITY Finalists: Oriental Express, Chin Chin

JAPANESE RESTAURANT WINNER: BAMBOO Finalists: Sumo, Fuji

MEXICAN RESTAURANT WINNER: LOS ARCOS Finalists: Casa Blanca, Peppitos

BEST TACOS WINNER: LOS ARCOS Finalists: Tacos for Life, Casa Blanca

THAI RESTAURANT WINNER: MAI PAI THAI Finalists: Mammasang, Spice Girls

GREEK/MEDITERRANEAN RESTAURANT WINNER: ATHENS Finalists: Pella, Partovi's

DONUT SHOP WINNER: SHIPLEY DO-NUTS Finalists: Dunkin' Donuts, Jonesboro Donuts

DESSERT SHOP WINNER: SOUTHERN CONFECTIONS Finalists: DESO Chocolate, Abby Cakes

FROZEN DESSERT WINNER: LOCAL CULTURE Finalists: Andy's Frozen Custard, Cold Stone Creamery

32 JONESBORO OCCASIONS JULY 2025

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At La Bocca, our journey began with a simple dream and a big passion for Italian cuisine. In 1998, our founders, Rinor and Tony, moved to Jonesboro from a small village in Tuscary, bringing with them generations-old family recipes and a deep love for authentic Italian cooking. What started as a cozy, six-table trattoria quickly became a local favorite, known for its fresh, handmade pastas and Tony's signature marinara sauce.

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BBQ RESTAURANT WINNER: BLUE EMBER SMOKEHOUSE Finalists: Demo's Smokehouse, Que 49

FAMILY FRIENDLY RESTAURANT WINNER: FAT CITY STEAK AND GRILL HOUSE Finalists: The Social, JTown's Grill

ROMANTIC RESTAURANT

WINNER: THE LOUNGE Finalists: Omar's Uptown, 501 Steakhouse

NEW RESTAURANT WINNER: LA BOCCA ITALIAN RESTAURANT & PIZZERIA Finalists: Lebowski's Brewing Co., Blazin' Buffalo

COFFEE HOUSE WINNER: SHADRACHS COFFEE Finalists: IV Kings, Starbucks

BREAKFAST WINNER: FAT CITY STEAK AND GRILL HOUSE Finalists: Eggcellent Café, JTown's Grill

BRUNCH WINNER: THE RECOVERY ROOM Finalists: The Parsonage, JTown's Grill




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LABOGGA ITALIAN RESTAURANT & PIZZERIA best italian restaurant best new restaurant





BUSINESS LUNCH WINNER: GINA'S PLACE Finalists: Native Brew Works, JTown's Grill

PLATE LUNCH WINNER: GINA'S PLACE Finalists: Chef's In, Sue's Kitchen

BUFFET WINNER: CHEF'S IN Finalists: Ron's Catfish, Golden Corral

FAST FOOD/QUICK SERVICE WINNER: CHICK-FIL-A Finalists: Newk's, Freddy's

FOOD TRUCK WINNER: PARTOVI'S Finalists: Daisy's Taco, Spice Girls

BAKERY WINNER: SANDY'S MEXICAN BAKERY Finalists: Southern Confections, Abby Cakes

CANDY SHOP WINNER: CARROLL'S CANDY Finalist: Candy Craze

BURGER WINNER: JTOWN'S GRILL Finalists: Native Brew Works, TJ's Burgers

FRENCH FRIES WINNER: JTOWN'S GRILL Finalists: Fat City Steak and Grill House, TJ's Burgers

WINGS WINNER: JTOWN'S GRILL Finalists: Wings to Go, Buffalo Wild Wings

CHICKEN/CHICKEN STRIPS WINNER: SLIM CHICKENS Finalists: Southern Chef, JTown's Grill

BBQ SANDWICH WINNER: BLUE EMBER SMOKEHOUSE Finalists: Demo's Smokehouse, Southern BBQ

BBQ RIBS WINNER: BLUE EMBER SMOKEHOUSE Finalists: Demo's Smokehouse, Que 49

38 JONESBORO OCCASIONS JULY 2025



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STEAK WINNER: OMAR'S UPTOWN Finalists: 501 Steakhouse, Texas Roadhouse

SEAFOOD WINNER: PIER 88 Finalists: Delta Crawfish, 501 Steakhouse

PIZZA WINNER: LOST PIZZA CO. Finalists: Upper Crust, Pastaria 49

SALAD WINNER: NEWK'S Finalists: Salad Station, Lost Pizza Co.

SUSHI WINNER: BAMBOO Finalists: Sumo, Hiro

CATERER WINNER: BISCUITS & GRACE Finalists: All Events Catering, The Parsonage

CHEF WINNER: OMAR BARRY (OMAR'S UPTOWN)

Finalists: John Myers (The Parsonage), Chef Tony Avanzare (La Bocca Italian Restaurant & Pizzeria)



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Whether pursuing my social work degree, raising two young men, or operating a successful cleaning business, I am always working hard for my Lord Jesus Christ.

-Bertha Solorzano



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WEDDING REGISTRY WINNER: FULL SUN GIFTS Finalists: Dillard's, Target

WEDDING CAKE WINNER: ABBY CAKES Finalists: Here We Crumb, Sandy's Mexican Bakery

WEDDING VENUE WINNER: HOUSTON'S Finalists: The Silos, Harmony Gardens

WEDDING DRESS STORE WINNER: JESSICA'S BRIDAL Finalist: Emma & Kate's

TUXEDO SHOP WINNER: MEN IN BLACK Finalist: Men's Wearhouse

WEDDING RINGS WINNER: SISSY'S LOG CABIN Finalists: Pagan's Jewelry, Georgeous Custom Jewelry

WEDDING PHOTOGRAPHER WINNER: JAMES BICKHAM VISUALS Finalists: Ryanne O'Donnell Richardson, Amy Reeves

WEDDING VIDEOGRAPHER WINNER: JAMES BICKHAM VISUALS Finalists: Knight Productions, Grant Keller

WEDDING PLANNER WINNER: SAMANTHA MCFADDEN (PLANNED BY SAM) Finalists: Betsy Smith (I Do Wedding Planner), Silk & Thistle

PET BOARDING WINNER: HOUNDS HIDEAWAY Finalists: Magnolia Dog Ranch, Pawliday Inn

PET GROOMING WINNER: HOUNDS HIDEAWAY Finalists: Scallywags, Bonesboro

PET FOOD/SUPPLY WINNER: HOLLYWOOD FEED Finalists: Petco, Petsmart

DOGGY DAYCARE WINNER: HOUNDS HIDEAWAY Finalists: Magnolia Dog Ranch, Bonesboro

42 JONESBORO OCCASIONS JULY 2025

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AGRICULTURAL EQUIPMENT SUPPLIER WINNER: GREENWAY Finalists: Quality Farm Supply, Tractor Supply

AGRICULTURAL LENDER WINNER: FARM CREDIT MID-AMERICA

Finalists: First National Bank, Rabo Agrifinance

CHIROPRACTOR WINNER: DR. DANIELLE CRAIG (HAVEN CHIROPRACTIC) Finalists: Dr. Amy McKee, Dr. Jason Sherrod

GENERAL DENTISTRY WINNER: DR. SHANE SMITH

Finalists: Dr. Troy Bartels, Dr. Damon Wright

COSMETIC DENTISTRY WINNER: DR. JOHN ROWE (ROWE AND ROWE SMILE STUDIO) Finalists: Dr. Shane Smith, Dr. Emily Gairhan



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Finalists: Dr. James Phillips, Dr. Bryan Darling

PEDIATRIC DENTIST

WINNER: DR. JENNIFER DANIEL (LEAP) Finalists: Dr. Summer Tyson, Dr. Ken Wood

ORTHODONTIST WINNER: DR. KELLY-GWYNNE FERGUS (FERGUS ORTHODONTICS)

Finalists: Dr. Kolin Weaver (Weaver Orthodontics), Dr. Savanah Stewart (Stewart Orthodontic Studio)

DERMATOLOGIST

WINNER: DR. ADAM SILLS (SILLS DERMATOLOGY) Finalists: Dr. Mallory Hurst (St. Bernards), Dr. Colton Nielson (St. Bernards)

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WINNER: VISION CARE CENTER Finalists: Southern Eye Associates, Arkansas Eye Site





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50 JONESBORO OCCASIONS JULY 2025

MENTAL HEALTH/COUNSELING SERVICES WINNER: RENEW MENTAL HEALTH

Finalists: Families Inc., St. Bernards Behavioral Health

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST

WINNER: JENNIFER GARNER (JUMPING JELLY BEANS PEDIATRIC THERAPY) Finalists: Brandy Stelle (Playtime Therapy), Teddy Dodd (St. Bernards)

PHYSICAL THERAPIST

WINNER: CARLY SWAIN (ST. BERNARDS SPORTS MEDICINE) Finalists: Jason Garner (Jumping Jelly Beans), Tracy Jones

SPEECH THERAPIST

WINNER: MARY HANNAH PULLIAM (MIRACLE KIDS) Finalists: Rachel Johnson (KidSpot), Lori Malone (Sensational Kids)

CARDIOLOGIST WINNER: DR. DEVI NAIR (ST. BERNARDS HEART & VASCULAR)

Finalists: Dr. Brian Bailey (St. Bernards Heart & Vascular), Dr. Matt Haustein (NEA Baptist)

photo by Brittney Osborn







LEAP KIDS DENTAL BEST PEDIATRIC DENTIST



OPTOMETRIST WINNER: DR. COURTNEY HOFFMAN (VISIONARY EYE CARE)

Finalists: Dr. Matt Hoffman (Visionary Eye Care), Dr. Jerry Young (Vision Care Center)

OPHTHALMOLOGIST WINNER: DR. THOMAS STANK (SOUTHERN EYE ASSOCIATES)

Finalists: Dr. Thomas Nix (NEA Baptist), Dr. Matthew Margolis (Southern Eye Associates)

ONCOLOGIST WINNER: DR. ISAM ABDEL-KARIM (ST. BERNARDS)

Finalists: Dr. Carrol Scroggins (NEA Baptist), Dr. Mazen Khalil (St. Bernards)

ULTRASOUND CLINIC WINNER: SNEAK A PEEK ULTRASOUND Finalists: St. Bernards Imaging Center, Peek-A-Boo

OB-GYN WINNER: DR. SERENA VANCE (OB/GYN & ASSOCIATES) Finalists: Dr. Jackie Conger (OB/GYN & Associates), Dr. Norbert Delacey (NEA Baptist)

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Finalists: Dr. Brian Dickson (JOSM), Dr. Jason Brandt (NEA Baptist)

FAMILY PRACTICE PHYSICIAN WINNER: DR. SCOTT HOKE (NEA BAPTIST WOODSPRINGS)

Finalists: Dr. Darrel Ragland (St. Bernards), Dr. Craig McDaniel (Family Physicians)

PLASTIC SURGEON WINNER: DR. TOMASZ MAJEWSKI (MAJEWSKI PLASTIC SURGERY) Findlist Dr. Brian Fanarson (AMMC)

Finalist: Dr. Brian Epperson (AMMC)

PEDIATRICIAN WINNER: DR. KRIS NWOKEJI (KION PEDIATRICS) Finalists: Dr. Jane Sneed (The Children's Clinic), Dr. Kevin Rouse (The Children's Clinic)

PHARMACY WINNER: GARNER FAMILY PHARMACY Finalists: The Medicine Shoppe, Camp's Medical Pharmacy

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JULY 2025 JONESBORO OCCASIONS 55

JONESBORD ORTHOP/NEDICS SPORTS MEDICINE BEST PHYSICAL REHAB SERVICES



HOME HEALTH AGENCY WINNER: ST. BERNARDS HOME HEALTH Finalists: AllCare Home Care, 1st Choice Home Care

HOME HEALTH SUPPLY STORE WINNER: SOUTHERN HOME HEALTH

Finalists: Delta Medical Supply, Woodsprings Pharmacy & Home Medical

HOSPICE AGENCY WINNER: ST. BERNARDS HOSPICE Finalists: Dierksen Hospice, Elite Hospice

PHYSICAL REHAB SERVICES WINNER: JONESBORO ORTHOPAEDICS SPORTS MEDICINE Finalists: St. Bernards Sports Medicine, Encompass

ASSISTED LIVING CENTER WINNER: ST. BERNARDS VILLAGE Finalists: St Bernards Villa, Grace Ridge Inc.

WEIGHT LOSS CENTER WINNER: DOWNTOWN MEDICINE AND SPA

Finalists: McClurkan Clinic, St. Bernards Weight Loss

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Finalists: The Trim Gym, AR Muscle

YOGA STUDIO WINNER: NIRVANA Finalists: Soul Shine, Eastern Livity

YOGA INSTRUCTOR WINNER: AMY MCKEE (SOUL SHINE)

Finalists: Holland LeDelia Taylor-Steinberg (Eastern Livity), Jamie Couch (Soul Shine)

AMBULANCE SERVICE WINNER: EMERSON Finalist: Medic One

NEW CAR DEALERSHIP WINNER: CENTRAL CHEVROLET Finalists: Cavenaugh Ford/Lincoln, Honda of Jonesboro

USED CAR DEALERSHIP WINNER: NEBO AUTO Finalists: Bayird Pre-Owned, Central Chevrolet







58 JONESBORO OCCASIONS JULY 2025



JULY 2025 JONESBORO OCCASIONS 59

GATEWAY TIRE AND SERVICE GENTER BEST AUTO TIRE SERVICE BEST AUTO MAINTENANCE & CARE BEST OIL CHANGE



AUTO BODY REPAIR WINNER: XTREME AUTO REPAIR & SALES OF NEA Finalists: Collision Repair, Joe Hudson Collision Center

AUTO TIRE SERVICE WINNER: GATEWAY TIRE AND SERVICE CENTER Finalists: Plaza Tire, Joe's Tire & Auto

AUTO MAINTENANCE AND CARE WINNER: GATEWAY TIRE AND SERVICE CENTER Finalists: Auto Clinic of Jonesboro, Joe's Tire & Auto

CAR WASH WINNER: TOMMY'S EXPRESS CAR WASH Finalists: Tidal Wave Auto Spa, Rhino Car Wash

AUTO AND HOME GLASS REPAIR/ REPLACEMENT WINNER: UNION GLASS Finalists: S&S Glass, The Glass Shop

OIL CHANGE WINNER: GATEWAY TIRE AND SERVICE CENTER Finalists: Express Mobile Lube, Mr. Fast Lube





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TRUCK ACCESSORIES WINNER: RUSSELL'S TRUCK ACCESSORIES Finalists: NEA Performance, Parrish Automotive

WINDOW TINTING WINNER: SUPERTINTS Finalists: The Tint Shop, Eclipse Tinting

ATTORNEY WINNER: LANCE OWENS Finalists: Mark Rees, Chad Oldham

LAW FIRM WINNER: OMG LAW FIRM Finalists: Rees Law Firm, Gardner Milner PLLC

BANK WINNER: FIRST COMMUNITY BANK Finalists: Signature Bank, Centennial Bank

BROKERAGE FIRM WINNER: BENJAMIN EDWARDS Finalists: Stephens Inc., Merrill Lynch





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At **OMG Law Firm**, we relentlessly prepare because our clients matter most. Our **talented** and **diverse** team of trial lawyers are all bulldogs in the courtroom, primarily due to our *passion* for our clients. We strive in *every* case to get our clients the *success* they deserve. We also excel in personal injury, family law, probate, estate planning, and elder law. Our experienced attorneys are here to help everyone through any stage of life. We are grateful to have been voted **Best Law Firm** and **Best Family Law Firm** for the last 10 consecutive years.

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FINANCIAL PLANNER WINNER: BRYAN MCCORMICK (EDWARD JONES)

Finalists: Clay Young (Merrill Lynch), Kevin Pulliam (Sharp Financial)

MORTGAGE LENDER WINNER: ADDI BERGI (MOTTO MORTGAGE)

Finalists: Jelena Veteto (First Community Bank), Mary Tucker (First Financial Mortgage)

TITLE COMPANY

WINNER: NIX TITLE Finalists: Professional Title, Lenders Title

TAX SERVICE WINNER: THOMAS, SPEIGHT & NOBLE Finalists: The Ledger Company, Garland and Greenwood

CPA/ACCOUNTANT WINNER: BRENT G. CASSIDY

Finalists: Jeff Wicker (Thomas Speight & Noble), Matt Clark (Goad & Company)

INSURANCE AGENCY WINNER: FARM BUREAU

Finalists: Goosehead Insurance, The Pruitt Agency





JULY 2025 JONESBORO OCCASIONS 65



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INSURANCE AGENT WINNER: DAVID KERLEY (SHELTER)

Finalists: Johnny Sweet (Pruitt Agency), Dylan Green (Goosehead Insurance)

EMPLOYMENT AGENCY WINNER: AID TEMPORARY SERVICES Finalists: Express Employment Professionals, Productive Staffing

BEST EMPLOYER (FEWER THAN 50 EMPLOYEES) WINNER: RENEW MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS Finalists: Tekla Research, OMG Law Firm

BEST EMPLOYER (MORE THAN 50 EMPLOYEES) WINNER: ST. BERNARDS HOSPITAL Finalists: Gearhead Outfitters, Hytrol

MARKETING/AD AGENCY WINNER: THE SOLUTIONS GROUP

Finalists: Enhanced By Ellie, Polish







BEST SPA BEST WEIGHT LOSS CENTER BEST AESTHETICIAN KELSEY OWENS

BEST MASSAGE THERAPIST STACI DICKSON



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SIGN COMPANY WINNER: GIBSON'S SIGN MART Finalists: Jonesboro Sign Company, Crenshaw Signs

EVENT PLANNER WINNER: SAMANTHA MCFADDEN (PLANNED BY SAM) Finalists: Betsy Smith, NEA As You Wish

HEALTH CARE APPAREL

WINNER: HEALTHWEAR INC. Finalist: NEA Uniforms, Running Threads

FLORIST WINNER: BEARDED BOUQUET Finalists: Posey Peddler, Generations Floral Company

DRY CLEANERS WINNER: WEST'S DRY CLEANING Finalist: Magic Touch

FUNERAL HOME WINNER: EMERSON FUNERAL HOME Finalists: Gregg-Langford, Roller Farmers Union





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TRAVEL AGENCY WINNER: JONESBORO TRAVEL, CRUISE AND TOUR

Finalists: Simply Magical Vacations by Kasey Braswell, Take the Vacation (Van Provence)

WINNER: DISCOVERY ISLAND Finalists: Kids Kingdom Child Care Center, Miracle Kids Success Academy

BARBER SHOP WINNER: SPORT CLIPS Finalists: Black Rose Barber Shop, Ideal Barber Shop

HAIR SALON WINNER: BODY INDULGENCE Finalists: Beautiful You, Jagged Edge

NAIL SALON WINNER: NAILHOLIC Finalists: Amy Nail, Diva Nails

TANNING SALON WINNER: GLO TANNING Finalists: Palm Beach Tan, Club Tan

BODY INDULGENCE SPA & BOUTIQUE BEST HAIR SALON



70 JONESBORO OCCASIONS JULY 2025





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The Gardner Milner law firm and Professional Title Services of Arkansas would like to thank each of our respective clients and customers for their outstanding support in making each firm a finalist in *Jonesboro Occasions*' 2025 Readers' Choice Awards ...

AND ... We are so excited to announce that on January 1 of this year, Chris & Shelly Gardner (pictured) acquired Professional Title Services of Arkansas with Chris as its new manager. As a part of this strategic move, both Gardner Milner and Professional Title are now under one roof.
 This new endeavor will allow Chris Gardner, Drew Milner, and their teams in both firms to continue serving Northeast Arkansas with high quality legal services as well as real estate title insurance, closing, escrow, 1031 like-kind exchange, and land surveying services, all under one roof.
 THANK YOU, NORTHEAST ARKANSAS!

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GARDNER MILNER, pllc



DOWNTOWN MEDIGINE AND SPA BEST SPA, BEST AESTHETICIAN, BEST MASSAGE THERAPIST, BEST WEIGHT LOSS CENTER



SPA WINNER: DOWNTOWN MEDICINE AND SPA

Finalists: Body Indulgence, Eden Medical Spa

AESTHETICIAN WINNER: KELSEY OWENS (DOWNTOWN MEDICINE AND SPA)

Finalists: Addie Arnold (Renewal Beauty), Karen Griffin (Body Indulgence)

MASSAGE THERAPIST WINNER: STACI DICKSON (DOWNTOWN MEDICINE AND SPA)

Finalists: Stascha Imhoff (Mohsta Lyfe), Lisa Vest (Body Indulgence)

PERSONAL TRAINER

WINNER: CALLIE TALLEY (GRIFFIN TRAINING CENTER) Finalists: Price Harrell (The Trim Gym), Breanna Hamilton (The Trim Gym)

TATTOO ARTIST WINNER: LUKE COMBS (WILD ROSE TATTOO)

Finalists: Freddie Bowers (Ritual Arts Tattoo), Shannon Caples (Wild Rose Tattoo)


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HOTEL WINNER: EMBASSY SUITES BY HILTON JONESBORO

Finalists: Hilton Garden Inn, The Hotel at Huntington Square

PAWN SHOP WINNER: UNITED PAWN BROKERS Finalists: Express Pawn, Jim's Pawn

APARTMENT COMMUNITY WINNER: URBAN LOFT COMPANY

Finalists: The Reserve at Sage Meadows, The Landing at Greensboro Village

RETIREMENT COMMUNITY WINNER: ST. BERNARDS VILLAGE

Finalists: Southwind Heights, Liberty Park

GOLF COURSE WINNER: SAGE MEADOWS GOLF COURSE Finalists: Jonesboro Country Club, Ridgepointe Country Club

LAWNCARE AND LANDSCAPING WINNER: TOSH LAWNCARE Finalists: Bennett's Landscaping, Ground Crew





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COMMERCIAL/RESIDENTIAL CLEANING SERVICE WINNER: SOL'S ENTERPRISES Finalists: Swept Away, Jonesboro Cleaning Service

NURSERY AND GARDEN CENTER WINNER: MID-SOUTH NURSERY

Finalists: Bennett's Landscaping, All Scapes Irrigation and Lawncare

PEST CONTROL WINNER: ADAM'S PEST CONTROL Finalists: ACME Pest Management, Superior Termite and Pest

ROOFING COMPANY WINNER: ROOF RAIDERS Finalists: Jonesboro Roofing Company, Redmond Roofing

FENCE COMPANY WINNER: DACUS FENCE Finalists: Round Tuit Fencing, Red Beard Fencing

CARPET CLEANING SERVICE WINNER: WASHED NEW

Finalists: Jim Heath Floor Care, Wooldridge Floor Cleaning

Thank you for voting us BEST PET BOARDING, BEST PET GROOMING and BEST DOGGY DAYCARE!



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FLOORING STORE WINNER: LAW'S FLOORING & RUGS Finalists: Ajax Floor Center, Barton's

A/C AND HEATING SERVICES WINNER: MOHR AIR CONDITIONING Finalists: Holladay Air Conditioning, Temp Docs

PLUMBING SERVICES

WINNER: CHRIS WEST PLUMBING Finalists: Adams & Cooper, Professional Pluming Solutions

ELECTRICIAN SERVICES WINNER: OWENS ELECTRIC

Finalists: Mink Electric, Springle Electric

GARAGE DOOR COMPANY WINNER: JONESBORO OVERHEAD DOOR/TRI COUNTY Finalists: Ditta Door, Diagnostic Overhead Door

INTERIOR DESIGNER WINNER: KERRI FELTS (INTERIOR DESIGN PLUS) Finalists: Kim Biggs (The Vibe), MG Meyering (Interiors by Design)

MOVING COMPANY WINNER: SMITH MOVING COMPANY Finalists: The Moving Company, Harring Enterprises



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COMMERCIAL/RESIDENTIAL PAINTER WINNER: BIBIANO'S PAINTING Finalists: Bethune Painting, Frank's Painting

HOME FURNITURE STORE WINNER: GAMBLE'S HOME FURNISHINGS Finalists: Harris Furniture, Hank's Fine Furniture

COMMERCIAL FURNITURE STORE WINNER: ALLIED CORPORATE FURNITURE Finalists: Gamble's Home Furnishings, Office Max

Office Equipment WINNER: FORREST OFFICE MACHINES Finalists: RJ Young, Office Max

INTERNET PROVIDER WINNER: RITTER/RIGHT FIBER Finalists: Empower (Craighead Electric), Optimum

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TECH SUPPORT/IT WINNER: KALMER SOLUTIONS

Finalists: Pinnacle IT, K13 Computers

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PACKING/SHIPPING STORE WINNER: PAKMAIL

Finalists: UPS, Pack & Ship

PRINT SHOP WINNER: PAKMAIL Finalists: Passmore Printing, Art Advertising

REAL ESTATE FIRM WINNER: CENTURY 21 PORTFOLIO

Finalists: Jonesboro Realty Company, New Horizon Real Estate

REALTOR WINNER: ABBY LEE (ERA DOTY)

Finalists: Josh Olson (Jonesboro Realty Company), Jordan Nunnally (Century 21 Portfolio)

HOME INSPECTOR WINNER: DANIEL ENGELKEN (EAGLE EYE HOME INSPECTIONS)

Finalists: Kyle Franzen (Pillar to Post), Derek Lawson (Cornerstone)

ARCHITECT WINNER: TIM COOPER (COOPER MIXON ARCHITECTS)

Finalists: John Mixon (Cooper Mixon Architects), Kyle Cook (Brackett-Krennerich & Associates)

HOME BUILDER

WINNER: DEREK DANIELS Finalists: Mark Morris, Homes by Matt & Casey Jones



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Best School Administrator Finalists



Superintendent Dr. Kim Wilbanks



Athletic Director Trey Harding





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TALLULAH POOLS BEST POOL/SPA BUILDER BEST POOL SUPPLY/MAINTENANCE



COMMERCIAL BUILDER WINNER: CONSTRUCTION NETWORK INC.

Finalists: Ramson's Construction, Bailey Contractors Inc.

POOL/SPA BUILDER WINNER: TALULLAH POOLS INC. Finalists: Aloha Pools, Jacuzzi Hot Tubs of Jonesboro

POOL SUPPLY/MAINTENANCE WINNER: TALULLAH POOLS INC. Finalists: Aloha Pools, Environments

SELF-STORAGE WINNER: DACUS MINI-WAREHOUSES Finalists: All Climate Self Storage, Strawfloor Self Storage

APPLIANCE REPAIR WINNER: STRONG ARM Finalists: Sergeant's Appliance Repair, Appliance 911

APPLIANCE RETAIL STORE WINNER: TUCKER'S APPLIANCE Finalists: Metro Appliance, Lowe's





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84 JONESBORO OCCASIONS JULY 2025

BEST EYE SURGERY CENTER





ANTIQUES STORE WINNER: THE FANCY ATTIC Finalists: Fabulous Finds (49 South), Double B Vintage Market

THRIFT STORE WINNER: ABILITIES UNLIMITED Finalists: Goodwill, Second Home Shoppe

GIFT SHOP WINNER: FULL SUN GIFTS Finalists: June's Hallmark, Bearded Bouquet

BABY REGISTRY WINNER: LIVI LITTLES Finalists: Cutie Patootie, Target

MUSIC SUPPLY STORE WINNER: BACK BEAT MUSIC Finalists: All-Star Music, Mr. Crisso's Music Shop

TROPHIES AND AWARDS WINNER: CROWN TROPHY Finalists: Mr. Trophy, NEA Trophies/Lyons Engraving

JEWELER WINNER: SISSY'S LOG CABIN Finalists: Pagan's Jewelry, Georgeous Custom Jewelry

BATTERY CENTER WINNER: BATTERY OUTFITTERS Finalists: Interstate All Battery, Battery Warehouse



photo by Victoria Mantz





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stablished in Blytheville in 1979, Thomas, Speight & Noble has expanded its practice over the years to include offices
 in Osceola, Pocahontas, Caruthersville and Jonesboro.

In 2023, Thomas, Speight & Noble merged with JW Stafford & Associates, LTD., which opened its doors in Jonesboro in 1977 and built their firm along with the growth of Jonesboro. The merger expanded Thomas, Speight and Noble across five locations with more than 64 current staff members, expanding its range of new services and areas of expertise for clients in the growing Northeast Arkansas market.

Thomas, Speight & Noble continues to provide quality, personalized financial guidance to local individuals and businesses with expertise ranging from basic tax management and accounting services to more in-depth services such as audits, financial statements and financial planning. The firm strives to make sure every client receives the close analysis and attention they deserve. The dedication to high standards, hiring of seasoned professionals, and work ethic is the reason for the firm's success and will continue to drive the growth of Thomas, Speight & Noble in the future.

Jeff Wicker, serves as Thomas, Speight & Noble's managing principal, along with other partners Sandra Schwarz, CPA, Melissa Harrison, CPA, and Angel Farmer, CPA.

RUNNING THREADS BEST SCREEN PRINTER/SHIRT DESIGNER



EYE WEAR WINNER: HILLTOP EYECARE Finalists: Elite Eye, Vision Care Center

HOME DÉCOR WINNER: GAMBLE'S HOME FURNISHINGS Finalists: HomeGoods, Kirkland's

MATTRESS STORE WINNER: GAMBLE'S HOME FURNISHINGS Finalists: Mattress King, Hank's Fine Furniture

FASHION ACCESSORIES WINNER: HONEY & HOPE BOUTIQUE Finalists: The Refinery, Dillard's

WOMEN'S CLOTHING WINNER: BACKROAD SOCIAL TRADE CO. Finalists: The Refinery, Steamroller Blues

WOMEN'S SHOES WINNER: DILLARD'S Finalists: Honey & Hope Boutique, The Refinery



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LIVI LITTLES BEST CHILDREN'S CLOTHING/BOUTIQUE BEST BABY REGISTRY



MEN'S CLOTHING WINNER: GEARHEAD OUTFITTERS Finalists: Dillard's, The Buckle

MEN'S SHOES WINNER: GEARHEAD OUTFITTERS Finalists: Dillard's, Academy Sports

CHILDREN'S CLOTHING/BOUTIQUE WINNER: LIVI LITTLES Finalists: Cutie Patootie, Once Upon a Child

CHILDREN'S SHOES WINNER: CUTIE PATOOTIE Finalists: Livi Littles, Dillard's

RESALE/CONSIGNMENT CLOTHING STORE WINNER: TALK OF THE TOWN Finalists: Once Upon a Child, Plato's Closet

SCREEN PRINTER/SHIRT DESIGNER WINNER: RUNNING THREADS Finalists: Elite Graphics, Fat City Apparel

Best Veterinarian Finalist! Thank you for voting Dr. Sarrah Owens.





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Winner: Best Shipping/Packaging - Best Print Shop



photo by Brittney Osborn

SPORTING GOODS STORE WINNER: ACADEMY SPORTS

Finalists: Brooks Golf, Play it Again Sports

OUTDOOR/HUNTING STORE WINNER: DNW OUTDOORS

Finalists: Academy Sports, Gearhead Outfitters

MOTORCYCLE/ATV STORE WINNER: JONESBORO CYCLE & ATV Finalists: Harley Davidson of Jonesboro, Big Bore Bikes

FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT VENUE WINNER: HIJINX Finalists: Divots Golf, Ultimate Air

CHILDREN'S BIRTHDAY PARTY VENUE WINNER: JONESBORO GYMNASTICS ACADEMY Finalists: Hijinx, Little Lattes Play Cafe

SIONS

SPORTS TRAINING PROGRAM FOR KIDS WINNER: RALVIS TRAINING CENTER

Finalists: Jets Aquatic Club, Shark Wave Aquatic Team (SWAT)

Thank you to our patients and staff for voting for us! BEST GENERAL DENTISTRY FINALIST 2025



DANCE STUDIO WINNER: ERIN'S DANCE ACADEMY

Finalists: The Foundation of Arts, CMDS Collective

TUTORING SERVICE WINNER: CLARK'S TUTORING Finalists: Apple Group, TLC

LIVE ENTERTAINMENT VENUE WINNER: BRICKHOUSE GRILL

Finalists: First National Bank Arena, The Lounge

ART GALLERY WINNER: SARA HOWELL ART STUDIO Finalists: Bradbury Art Museum, The Foundation of Arts

ARTIST WINNER: SARA HOWELL Finalists: Braden Walls, Angela Jones

BAND/MUSICIAN WINNER: GREASY TREE Finalists: Delaney Taylor, Don Howard

RADIO STATION WINNER: 107.9 KFIN Finalists: 104.9 The Fox, 95.9 The Wolf

RADIO PERSONALITY WINNER: ELLIE STAFFORD SMITH (JONESBORO RADIO GROUP)

Finalists: Brandon Baxter (EAB), Trey Stafford (Jonesboro Radio Group)

TV STATION WINNER: KAIT 8 Finalist: KJNB

TV PERSONALITY WINNER: RYAN VAUGHAN Finalists: Diana Davis, Aaron Castleberry

PHOTOGRAPHER WINNER: MELISSA DONNER PHOTOGRAPHY

Finalists: James Bickham Visuals, Amy Reeves Photography



Lance Owens Owens, Mixon, Heller & Smith, P.A.

I am honored and grateful

to the readers of Jonesboro Occasions who have chosen me as **Best Attorney** for the **7th consecutive year!**

Thank you for your trust and confidence.





Pance

EMAIL YOUR EVENT DETAILS to Audrey Poff at audrey@jonesborooccasions.com and we will consider it for coverage or inclusion in our calendar of events!



ELECTED OFFICIAL WINNER: MAYOR HAROLD COPENHAVER Finalists: Judge Cindy Thyer, Chris Gibson (Councilman)

PRIVATE SCHOOL WINNER: BLESSED SACRAMENT SCHOOL Finalists: Ridgefield Christian School, Montessori of Jonesboro

PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT WINNER: JONESBORO PUBLIC SCHOOLS Finalists: Valley View Public Schools, Nettleton Public Schools

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR WINNER: SANDY MCCALL (BROOKLAND ELEMENTARY PRINCIPAL)

Finalists: Trey Harding (JPS Athletic Director), Dr. Kim Wilbanks (JPS Superintendent)

TEACHER WINNER: SHELLIE MCMORRIES (BROOKLAND)

Finalists: Regina Wagster (Blessed Sacrament), Breigh Earnhardt (Westside)

COACH WINNER: RYAN SALAMI (ASU CHEER) Finalists: Brandon Charitat (Jets Aquatic Club), Bobby Gross (Brookland)

LOCAL FESTIVAL WINNER: OASIS ARTS & EATS Finalists: Downtown Jonesboro BBQ Fest,

Finalists: Downtown Jonesboro BBQ Fest, Blessed Sacrament Fall Festival

LOCAL PARK WINNER: CRAIGHEAD FOREST PARK Finalists: Miracle League Park, Joe Mack Campbell Park

NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION WINNER: MAGNOLIA MENTAL HEALTH Finalists: CASA, NEA Humane Society

FUNDRAISING EVENT WINNER: JUNIOR AUXILIARY OF JONESBORO CHARITY BALL

Finalists: CASA Golf Tournament, St. Bernards Triple Swing **SPECIAL SECTION**

SELLING JONESBORO

An inside look at real estate in Jonesboro and the surrounding area



This month's featured home: 537 Warner Avenue

Listing courtesy of Stephanie Stank, Century 21 Portfolio.

To schedule an appointment to view this luxury listing, contact Stephanie Stank, Century 21 Portfolio, at (870) 974-3777 or Audrey or Rodney Poff, Century 21 Portfolio, at (870) 926-4726 or (870) 926-5224.



lux ury listing \$659,000 537 Warner Avenue, Jonesboro

WELCOME TO 537 WARNER – A HOME WITH A SOUL, ROOTED IN HISTORY.

Step into a story more than two centuries in the making. Nestled beneath the graceful canopy of three towering trees – each estimated to be more than 200 years old – this home is a rare blend of enduring craftsmanship, character and quiet legacy.

From the moment you enter, the warmth of history greets you. The main floor is heated by charming and highly efficient radiators, offering a cozy, consistent warmth that modern systems simply can't replicate. Built with old-growth wood you simply can't find anymore, this home is a testament to an era when building materials were chosen for strength, longevity and beauty.

The baseboards, ceiling trim and window and door moldings are all constructed of real wood that has been remarkably preserved. It's the kind of craftsmanship that only deepens with age, impossible to replicate with today's mass-produced materials. The hardwood floors are original – their grain and patina bearing the marks of time and care.

Look closely and you'll see the same attention to detail in the cedar lined closets, each of them carefully designed to preserve and protect – just as the home has done for generations.

A story whispered through the bricks: When the kitchen was added, the owners couldn't bear the thought of mismatched materials. Instead, they made the extraordinary decision to rubric the entire house – layer upon layer, so the addition would blend seamlessly. The result? A double-bricked marvel, built not just to stand, but to endure. In the heart of the kitchen sits a true treasure – the original sink. One of fewer than 20 known to still exist intact in the United States, it is both a functional centerpiece and a conversation starter – a piece of living history.

Just outside, the beauty of this historic property continues. Brick walkways elegantly wrap the home, enclosed by a striking brick fence that offers privacy without sacrificing charm. Step into the courtyard where a garden sanctuary blooming with azaleas, hydrangeas and heirloom roses awaits. At its heart, an outdoor fireplace beckons for quiet evenings or gatherings under the stars. Look closely at the top of the fireplace, and you'll discover a small gem – an original brick from the historic Jonesboro Brick Company is embedded like a signature from the past.

The legacy doesn't stop there. This home comes with its original abstract, a rare document that chronicles every chapter of the property's journey, offering a deeper sense of connection for those who value heritage and authenticity.

This historic structure at 537 Warner isn't just a house. It's a home with roots, resilience and remarkable stories waiting to be continued.

Will yours be the next chapter?



To schedule an appointment to view this luxury listing, contact Stephanie Stank, Century 21 Portfolio, at (870) 974-3777 or Audrey or Rodney Poff, Century 21 Portfolio, at (870) 926-4726 or (870) 926-5224.



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MIS

Understanding Menopause and Hormone Replacement Therapy

BY LISA TEDDER

ore than half the population undergoes a life-changing event called menopause, and yet women are woefully uneducated about what is happening to their own bodies. Instead, women suffer in silence, never imagining that the various things that seem to be going "wrong" are all connected to the powerful hormonal changes that can begin as early as our 30s. Understanding what happens during perimenopause and post-menopause will empower women to make better health care decisions.

Hormones are a complex topic, but every woman should have a basic understanding of the role estrogen, progesterone and testosterone play. Estrogen stimulates the development of sexual characteristics like breasts, regulates the menstrual cycle and prepares the uterus for pregnancy. It also plays a key role in proper bone growth, optimizes brain function and regulates mood. Progesterone prepares the uterus for implantation of a fertilized egg and supports pregnancy. It is also necessary for maintaining the nervous system, kidney function, bone health, heart health, the immune system and regulating mood.

Both women and men make both these hormones, as they are important for one's health. We think of testosterone as fueling male sexual development and characteristics, but both men and women need it. It is important for libido, sexual function, bone density, muscle mass, regulating mood and maintaining brain function, as well as many other vital functions in both sexes.

The transition from perimenopause to post-menopause typically starts in the 40s and takes many years. Perimenopause is the time when your ovaries are running out of eggs and start to shut down, ending your reproductive years. The hormones estrogen and progesterone fluctuate wildly, trying to prepare the body to release an egg in anticipation of fertilization as it has done since the start of menstruation. This fluctuation triggers a cascade of symptoms. Menopause is the point at which you've gone 12 months without a period; after that you are considered postmenopause. Women's hormone levels fall drastically during this time, but as they age, men's hormones decline more gradually and they notice changes more slowly.

There are estrogen receptors all over your body, which means the loss of hormones can affect your whole body in many ways. Not everyone experiences the same symptoms or the same severity; some women don't notice much at all. For others, these symptoms can be very distressing and disruptive, impacting how a woman feels about herself and making daily life difficult. Symptoms may improve after menopause for some women, but for others, not so much.

Some common symptoms of perimenopause and/or postmenopause are as follows: irregular menstrual cycles, brain fog or memory problems, low libido, dental issues, hot flashes, night sweats, heart palpitations, mood problems like anger, anxiety, depression or memory lapses, insomnia, breast soreness or tenderness, fatigue, skin problems like acne or dryness, sagging, facial hair, urinary incontinence, overactive bladder or increased urinary tract infections, vaginal dryness, weight changes, joint pain, hair loss, and gastrointestinal issues like constipation, bloating, acid reflux.

Many other conditions share these symptoms, so check with your doctor if you have concerns.

Post-menopause sounds great – no more periods, no worry over getting pregnant, and saving money on contraception and period products. But following menopause, your hormone levels will remain low for the rest of your life unless you receive hormone replacement therapy or HRT, and the loss of estrogen and progesterone has several potential health consequences.

Twenty percent of women will develop osteoporosis after menopause, which significantly increases the risk of hip fractures. Fifty percent of people with a hip fracture die within two years. (Note: More women die from hip fractures than from breast cancer.) Estrogen plays a key role in heart health, so women are at increased risk of developing high blood pressure, high cholesterol and triglycerides, all of which can lead to heart attacks and strokes. Estrogen maintains the tissues of the urethra and bladder; after menopause these tissues can thin, increasing incidences of UTIs or urinary incontinence.

UTIs in older women can be harder to diagnosis and lead to complications, hospitalizations and even death if not treated quickly. Low estrogen leads to a decrease in metabolism, so women burn fewer calories, causing weight gain. Along with low libido, women may experience dryness and painful intercourse. Many women struggle with insomnia and mental health issues like depression, anxiety and loss of self-confidence. The risk of dementia and Alzheimer's is higher in women, likely due to the sudden loss of hormones.

A study known as the Women's Health Initiative was published in 2002; it was designed to investigate the effects of HRT on heart disease, breast cancer, osteoporosis and colon cancer. The results of the study, which were misinterpreted, led to fear among women and a decline in the use of HRT.

The good news is there are many evidence-backed treatment options available that can significantly improve your life postmenopause. Focus on lifestyle changes like a healthy diet and doing weight-bearing exercises to keep bones and muscles strong. If you have concerns or questions as you approach perimenopause or menopause, The Menopause Society is a good resource and includes a list of certified providers and specialists in menopause care. Talk with your doctor and ask, "How can the quality of my life improve with hormone replacement therapy?"

(Editor's note: This is the first in a two-part series on menopause by Occasions' columnist Lisa Tedder. Next month, she will continue the discussion as she focuses on Hormone Replacement Therapy.) 08.30 vs. SE MISSOURI

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Thursday, July 3

EAB Media Group invites the community to celebrate Independence Day at the annual 4^{TH} FEST at Joe Mack Campbell Park, with festivities kicking off at 9 p.m. The event includes an evening filled with patriotic music, family-friendly fun and a spectacular free fireworks display. Admission is free, and concessions will be available on-site. Info: Visit kfin.com or email mattstolz@eabjonesboro.com.

Friday, July 4

EAB Media Group will host the **RED**, **WHITE & BLUE COLOR RUN** at Joe Mack Campbell Park, with the race starting at 9 a.m. and registration beginning at 8 a.m. The entry fee is \$20 for adults and \$10 for children under 12, with a portion of the proceeds benefiting the JC Cox family. Participants can expect a fun, colorful run filled with patriotic spirit and community support. Info: Visit kfin.com or email mattstolz@eabjonesboro.com.

Jonesboro Media Group and KAIT-TV will present **FREEDOM FEST** at the Southside Softball Complex, featuring one of Northeast Arkansas's biggest fireworks displays. The show will be

synchronized to music broadcast across all six Jonesboro Media Group radio stations: EZ 92.7, 98.5 The Outlaw, 100.5 The Eagle, 104.9 The Fox, Mix 106.3, and Hot 107.5. Admission is free, and parking opens at 6 p.m. at the complex. Info: (870) 933-8800 or visit thefox1049.com.

Monday, July 7 – Tuesday, July 8

The Foundation of Arts in Downtown Jonesboro will host a **WONDERLAND ART CAMP** daily from 2:30-3:30 p.m. This creative art camp invites kids ages 5–8 to explore imaginative art projects. Campers dive into painting, crafting, and whimsical creations inspired by a "wonderland" theme. Tuition is \$115 for the full week. Info: (870) 935-2726 or visit foajonesboro.org.

Tuesday, July 8 – Friday, July 11

The Forrest L. Wood Crowley's Ridge Nature Center, located at 600 E. Lawson Rd., will host the **REEL GIRLS FISH CAMP** daily from 1-3:30 p.m. Girls ages 10–15 can learn casting, tackle setup, fish ID, cleaning and even try on-site fishing. The camp is free, but registration is required. Info: (870) 933-6787 or visit register-ed.com.

Thursday, July 10

The Craighead County Jonesboro Public Library will host a **STARRY NIGHT COOKIE DECORATING EVENT** from 3–4 p.m. in the Round Room. Designed for children in grades 3–5, this fun, hands-on activity includes cookies, icing, sprinkles and plenty of supplies—enough to take extras home and share with the family. Info: (870) 935-5133 or visit libraryinjonesboro.org.

Monday, July 14 – Friday, July 18

The Bradbury Art Museum, located on the campus of Arkansas State University, will host the **ABSTRACTION SUMMER CAMP** daily from 9 a.m. to noon. Kids ages 11-15 will create unique works using paint, beads, stickers and more. The cost is \$25 for the week, and snacks will be provided. Info: (870) 972-3687 or visit bradburyartmuseum.org.

The Foundation of Arts in Downtown Jonesboro will host "ALICE IN WONDERLAND" CAMP daily from 9 a.m. to noon. This camp, designed for ages 7-11, will combine aspects of theater and art, with participants performing before the FOA's "Alice in Wonderland" show on July 18. The cost is \$215, with snacks provided. Info: (870) 935-2726 or visit foajonesboro.org.

The Foundation of Arts in Downtown Jonesboro will host the **PRINCESSES DANCE CAMP** from 10:30–11:30 a.m. each day, designed especially for little princesses ages 5–6. Campers will learn the basics of grace, poise and movement in a fun, encouraging environment. The cost is \$115 for the week. Info: (870) 935-2726 or visit foajonesboro.org.

Thursday, July 17 – Sunday, July 20

The NEA GAME FEST will be held at the Embassy Suites Red Wolf Convention Center, located at 223 Red Wolf Blvd. This four-day tabletop gaming event features board games, RPGs, miniatures, cosplay, vendors and tournaments—all to benefit the Craighead County Public Library. Tickets are \$50 in advance (\$60 at the door), with daily passes available. Admission for children ages 11–15 is \$10, with those under 11 admitted free. Info: Visit neagamefest.com or call (870) 619-4482.

Thursday, July 17 – Saturday, July 19

The Foundation of Arts in Jonesboro will host an **ADULT BALLET INTENSIVE**. Adult ballet lovers can take part in a technical balletintensive held evenings 5:30–7:30 p.m. (July 17–18) and a full-day session 9:30 a.m.–3:30 p.m. on July 19. At \$175, this camp includes a pre-show performance for the "Alice in Wonderland" production on July 20. Info: (870) 935-2726 or visit foajonesboro.org.

Thursday, July 17 and Thursday, July 24

The A-State Speech & Hearing Center will host LANGUAGE PLAY DATES on July 17 and July 24 from 9:30–10:15 a.m. Designed for families with children ages 1–5, these free sessions include handson activities to support early language development and practical tips for parents. Each child may attend one session only. Spots are limited. Call (870) 972-2665 or (870) 972-3106 to register.

Saturday, July 19

The Craighead County Jonesboro Public Library will host **GENEALOGY NIGHT** from 5-8 p.m. This hands-on genealogy program helps both novice and seasoned researchers navigate ancestry databases, archival records and local history resources. The event is free, but registration is required. Info: (870) 935-5133 or visit libraryinjonesboro.org.

Friday, July 18 – Sunday, July 20

The Foundation of Arts will present **"ALICE IN WONDERLAND JR."** at The Forum Theatre in Downtown Jonesboro. Performances are set for Friday, July 18, and Saturday, July 19, at 7 p.m., with a matinee on Sunday, July 20, at 2 p.m. Tickets are available online or at the box office. Info: (870) 935-2726 or visit foajonesboro.org.

Monday, July 21 – Friday, July 25 The Foundation of Arts in Downtown

Jonesboro will host the **BEHIND THE CURTAIN TECH CAMP** from 2-4 p.m. This camp invites ages 12-18 to learn stagecraft—lighting, set design, backstage tech—while supporting the production of "101 Dalmatians." The cost is \$250, with performances in early August. Info: (870) 935-2726 or visit foajonesboro.org.

Friday, July 25

The Craighead County Jonesboro Public Library will host a **MASTER GARDENERS PRESENTATION** from noon to 1 p.m. in the Round Room. The presentation of native plants offers practical tips—cutting, division techniques and seed-starting methods—to help attendees multiply plants at home with confidence. Info: (870) 935-5133 or visit libraryinjonesboro.org.

Saturday, July 26

Ag for Autism of Jonesboro will host the **AG FOR AUTISM COMMUNITY FEST** at The Gardens at Harmony, located at 4517 East Parker Rd)., from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. This free, family-friendly event brings the community together to support autism awareness and local families. Enjoy food trucks, bounce houses, resource booths, and a heartfelt grant presentation to families impacted by autism.

Info: (870) 886-0585 or visit agforautism.org.

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The Occasions Lady and...

The Art of Slow Travel

BY AUDREY POFF

arlier this year, Rodney and I took our first vacation as empty nesters. Following a difficult season which included the loss of both of my parents, as well as the wedding celebrations of our four children in four years, we were a little spent. So, the kids helped plan a trip to our favorite beach as a Christmas gift.

It was a different kind of trip. Our itinerary had nothing on it. We planned to sleep late, eat out, walk on the beach, read and ring in 2025 with an early dinner at a favorite restaurant on the bayfront. That lasted about 24 hours.

By the second day, I had managed to crack a rib but didn't know it until we got back home. In hindsight, I'm not sure that I would have ventured out of the condo all week if I had known the source of my pain. Breathing was difficult and I shrieked every time I sneezed, hiccupped, tried to sleep or when we hit one of a thousand speed bumps between Florida and Arkansas. I scaled back a bit, convincing myself that it was another kidney stone wreaking havoc.

Somewhere along the way, travel for many of us became a competitive sport. When the kids are vacationing with us, we try to do all of the things. From deep sea fishing and bike rides on the beach to pickleball and marathon shopping, we play until we drop. By the time we get home, we need a vacation from our vacation. That's where slow travel rolls into play. Think quiet, chill and possibly wearing linen as you sip tropical drinks, enjoy fine dining and stroll through art galleries.

I think the slow travel trend is perfect for empty nesters, and with a cracked rib, I had all the incentive I needed to embrace slowing down.

Simply put, slow travel is the radical idea that maybe you

don't need to see all of Italy in six days. Maybe you can sit at a café for two hours drinking overpriced coffee that comes with a tiny biscuit. Or perhaps you rent a small vacation home in the mountains and visit off-the-beaten path venues that are favorites among the locals, rather than attempting to hit every ski resort in the vicinity.

The slow travel movement is about digging deeper instead of racing faster. It's about experiencing one place fully—tasting, listening, wandering around new places without Google Maps, and perhaps even getting lost without having a meltdown. Instead, you simply embrace it and perhaps make new discoveries along the way.

Slow travelers are committed. They rent cottages. They shop at local markets. They make friends with cheese mongers. They take naps—the intentional kinds of naps, not the jet lagged kind where you crash in an airport before the next flight.

Slow travel is more of a mindset. Some say it's also a form of rebellion. You are telling the world: "I could rush, but I won't. I could do it all, but I'd rather sit here sipping something warm while my itinerary gathers dust in my laptop bag."

As long as there are children and grandchildren in the mix, we will likely continue to go at warp speed to do whatever is on the itinerary. Frequently for our family, however, that results in at least one trip to urgent care as part of our excursions. It's all fun and games until someone cracks a rib or slices their foot on an oyster bed.

As empty nesters, Rodney and I look forward to every family vacation we can manage, but we also look forward to embracing the art of slow travel in the future.

Summer vacation is here. Why not savor a slower pace? Bon voyage and don't hurry back.

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