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# Hometown Reflections 2023

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## *Dear Readers:*

The Advance’s staff is delighted to welcome you to the 2023 issue of the Hometown Reflections. Over the past few months, we have been working diligently to create and design this publication highlighting just a handful of things that make Drew County/Monticello such a great place to live. We hope you enjoy this year’s edition.

*Sincerely, Advance Staff*





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# Vera Lloyd campus celebrates centennial

By: **ASHLEY HOGG**  
editor@monticellonews.net

youth and families in need is the ultimate goal of the Vera Lloyd Presbyterian Family Services campus in Monticello.

To heal, prepare and empower children,



Photo courtesy of Vera Lloyd

**DINNER BELL** The bell used to summon children for meal times remains on the campus today and was dedicated in 1994.



## Founded in Faith. Grounded in Love.

Founded in faith and grounded in love, the campus will celebrate its 100th year serving the community in 2023.

Vera Lloyd currently serves about 100 children and youth from all over Arkansas per year on the Monticello campus through residential programs. They also serve more than 300 nonresidential clients annually and employ approximately 45 people.

Although 2023 is the 100th year of operation, the origin of Vera Lloyd dates back to 1910 when a dedicated Presbyterian

churchwoman, Lulu Williamson, helped establish the Associated Charities of Monticello, a day nursery for the children of women working in the local cotton mill.

As the story goes, late one evening, the night marshal of Monticello found twin baby girls, frail and emaciated, abandoned in a battered suitcase near the railway station. He took them to the day nursery for care. Because it could not be proven that

See **VERA LLOYD** Page 14

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# New public servants hit the ground running in Drew County

By: **ASHLEY HOGG**  
editor@monticellonews.net

During the last election cycle, the voters voices were heard and a newly elected Mayor, Sheriff and County Judge took office on January 1.

Jason Akers, Tim Nichols and Jessie Griffin have begun their terms by continuing projects started by their predecessors and making plans for new ones.

The Advance-Monticellonian editorial staff met with each one of these men to ask a few questions about their plans and platforms. These were their responses.

Do you have any specific goals that you would like to achieve your first few months in office?

**Akers:** A. Craft and pass a city budget that meets our cities needs, but is fiscally responsible and streamlines city procedures and paperwork.

B. Working with both our public works crew and the Arkansas Department of Corrections, begin to work towards cleaning the overgrown out of ditches and drains. ADC paperwork has already been submitted to utilize inmate labor in conjunction with city labor. We are simply waiting to hear back from ADC.

C. Appoint subject matter experts to city commissions in need of appointments.

D. Utilizing the city ordinance officer, begin addressing the issues we face in our town, ranging from dilapidated structures and unkept locations that discourage outside investment. If we want to thrive like other cities, we have to look like other cities. And about a million more things.

**Nichols:** Prior to starting, my goals were just slightly different however, since starting, I have found various major issues in which need to be worked on such as training, training tools/essential products for the K-9, paper service, community relations, training, jail repairs, prison backlog and budget.

**Griffin:** As County Judge, my goals are to bring County and City departments together as a group of people dedicated to the citizens of Drew County.

What do you think will be the biggest challenge you will face while in office?

**Akers:** Two large challenges- one is financial; many of our infrastructure problems are very costly to fix. The other problem is progress involves change. People are naturally resistant to change. We will overcome both of these challenges. We just have to come to a consensus on what we want our future to look like in Monticello.

**Nichols:** I believe we can conquer any challenges we face however, I also know that it will not be easy. The jail is one of the biggest challenges I feel that we have to conquer due to its horrible shape and the past over budget spending. However, as I said, it will be con-



AKERS

quered.

**Griffin:** Meeting the needs of Drew County with the finances available. COVID hit the country, state and county very hard and the economy has made an impact on all areas.

How do you plan to address any previous administrations' lack of transparency?

**Akers:** I won't address or critique a past administration's behavior. The past is the past. Even as magnificent as an owl is with its rotating head, it still can't look backwards and forwards at the same time. We are examining current practices in every area and we will make them better if it's possible.

**Nichols:** The only thing we can focus on at this point is how we are going to handle the future. If we harp on the past, we can never move forward. However, we will be transparent and do everything we can to right the wrongs.

**Griffin:** The doors of our departments are open to the public. Phone calls or personal visits are welcome. As we are serving Drew County, the opinions of our citizens are of great importance to us. The needs of the people are our needs.

What do you want to see accomplished/completed by the end of your term?

**Akers:** As many Infrastructure projects completed efficiently as possible, a cleaner and more appealing town to potential economic investors, smooth, streamlined city services and the completion of the lake trail project.

**Nichols:** I want to see Drew County prosper and safe. I also want see the jail be self sustaining. I want to give all that I can to the people of Drew County.

**Griffin:** By the end of my term, I would like to see growth in communication between all elected officials and Drew County residents. Communication is of key importance.

What personal skills do you possess that will help you in your elected capacity?

**Akers:** A willingness to listen to others and open to alternative solutions. The ability to make decisions based on facts and not emotions.

**Nichols:** I am a law enforcement officer who is willing to put in the work to serve the



NICHOLS

people of Drew County. I have people skills, knowledge, people skills to effectively complete the task at hand but also know that I cannot do this alone.

**Griffin:** As a graduate of Sergeant Major Academy I will employ my leadership, counseling and budget skills to serve Drew County to the best of my ability.

How would you like the citizens to interact with you and your office to make Monticello/Drew County better?

**Akers:** I want to interact as Jason. I'm just a father, husband and citizen trying to make things better for the next generation.

**Nichols:** I want the citizens to know that they can trust us and know that we will be there for them and their families. I want us to earn their trust and confidence which I believe we can do with time.

**Griffin:** As stated earlier, communication between the citizens of Drew County and all elected officials is vital. We welcome input from all.

Describe the type of team you intend to build within your office.

**Akers:** A team where everyone attacks a project together, pooling expertise and knowledge with the success of our town as its first priority. Mission oriented, but recognizing the importance moving at a pace where mentoring the next generation of city employees can occur.

**Nichols:** Not a team, but a family! We want a family environment within the Drew County Sheriff's Office. By establishing a family environment there we can work on the family within the community.

**Griffin:** The team we have is dedicated to working for the public. Honesty and integrity are vital. A safe and conscientious environment are essential for the work force. The people we have in place work well together and are open to changes if those changes are for the good of the people.

Can we expect any major differences in how Quorum Court and City Council meetings are conducted?

**Akers:** I am examining the feasibility of having a working meeting in between the time that council members get their council



GRIFFIN

packets and the council meeting itself. This would enable city government to receive questions for research or answer any questions citizens or council members may have prior to the actual council meeting.

**Nichols:** I want to keep the Quorum Court and people of the county advised of things happening within the Drew County Sheriff's Office.

**Griffin:** No major differences. Meetings for the Quorum Court will be held same time and place. If there is a need to be addressed before the Quorum, citizens may contact me to discuss the issue and get put on the agenda for the court.

Is there anything specific you want people to know, any specific message you want to send to the public to set the tone from the beginning?

**Akers:** We have to seize the opportunities presented to us and I believe we have the citizens, the city council and the staff in place to do that. We have to work together and be positive about our town and future. We have to speak our great future into existence. We will have some wins and we will face some adversity. But we have to press the fight to make our town better. I'd ask that everyone please pray for our city and pray for our elected officials. It's a difficult job at times, but with prayer and encouragement, we've got this.

**Nichols:** I am thankful for each of you and the confidence you have entrusted within me and the Office as a whole. We are working day in and day out trying to rebuild and set the foundation needed to build a better and safer Drew County. As I have reminded myself and the staff, Rome wasn't built in a day and we must take it one day at a time, one step at a time and one breath at a time. We must keep the faith and remember why we do what we do and that is for you, the people of Drew County.

**Griffin:** Elected officials work for Drew County citizens. Needs, concerns and opinions are needed. We are working together to improve not only communication but road maintenance, garbage pick up and clean up. Again, doors are open for the public.

# Elected officials sworn in at Drew County Courthouse



Photos by Melissa Orrell

January 1, 2023 began a new term for many elected officials in Monticello and Drew County. Pictured here is Judge Gibson during the official swearing in of Drew County Sheriff Tim Nichols (top left), Monticello Mayor Jason Akers (top center), Drew County Clerk Stephanie Chisom (top right), Drew County Judge Jessie Griffin (left), Monticello Police Department Chief Carlos Garcia (right), Drew County Quorum Court members (bottom). These and other officials that were sworn in were featured on our website, [www.advancemonticellonian.com](http://www.advancemonticellonian.com).



# Building goodwill and better friendships

## Rotary Club of Monticello growing post pandemic

By: **ASHLEY HOGG**  
 editor@monticellonews.net

The Rotary Club of Monticello, an affiliate of Rotary International, is an organization of business and professional leaders united worldwide to provide humanitarian service, encourage high ethical standards in all vocations and help build goodwill and peace in the world.

The Monticello club was organized in 1923 and is one of the oldest civic organizations in Southeast Arkansas. Celebrating its 100th anniversary in 2023, the club is in the process of rebounding after the pandemic.

With the global shut downs and state quarantines, gathering together for the weekly meetings was halted in 2020. Though the club used modern technology and met via Zoom, attendance hasn't been at full capacity since pre-pandemic.

The current executive board is determined to change that with recruitment efforts, informative programs and new incentives.

On Tuesday June 13, the Rotary Club of Monticello will host its 100th Anniversary Banquet. The club will be inviting all past members, rotarians from across the state, along with all those from the local community that are interested in attending. The banquet will celebrate the Club's 100 years of service and feature stories and comments about the local club. The highlight of the banquet will be the keynote speaker, Houston Nutt. Coach Nutt is known for his time as one of the winningest head football coaches in the history of the Arkansas Razorbacks; leading the team to two SEC Title games, and numerous Bowl Games. Coach Nutt currently serves as a National College Football Analyst for CBS Sports. He has a heart for service, leadership, and encouragement and the local Rotarians invite everyone to this event to celebrate.

What does Rotary do and why is participation important?

Rotary members across the globe work to-



Ashley Hogg/Advance Monticellonian

**ROTARY WHEEL** was constructed in the early 1900's by local Rotarians and has been used in the past in parades and for other events.

See **ROTARY** Page 13




We 

our Pirates!

WE ARE



**Be a Pirate! Come Grow With Us!**

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[www.drewcentral.org](http://www.drewcentral.org) Pirate FB, Twitter and Instagram







Jimmy Jeffers presents to a local Rotary Club meeting in the early 2000's.

Photo courtesy of Jim Brewer

## ROTARY

Continued from Page 12

gether to promote peace, fight disease, provide clean water, support education, protect the environment and much more. Most notably, Rotary International has been an integral part of the 99.9 percent global eradication of the paralyzing and potentially deadly infection disease of polio.

Locally, the club has donated approximately \$100,000 in the recent past to various local charities, projects and scholarships.

“Recently, we did a series of annual 5K races that raised more than \$7,000 for Feed the Kids,” current club President Brandon Hogg stated. “Of that \$100,000, more than \$25,000 has gone towards scholarships to local high school students.”

The club has come a long way in its 100 years of operation. In the beginning, Rotary Club was only open to business men. It wasn't until 1989 that women were allowed to become members. Today, approximately 25 percent of Rotarians are female.

In the Monticello club, Mrs. Marjorie Bond was the first woman inducted into the club as an official member, despite serving as the club's piano player for many years prior. It is a Rotary tradition to sing at the beginning of each meeting. Mrs. Bond, who was the wife of

See **ROTARY** Page 14

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## To Be A Billie Is To Be A Champion.



Photo courtesy of Vera Lloyd

LULU WILLIAMSON

## VERA LLOYD

Continued from Page 9

the babies were true orphans, no state orphanage would accept them. Mrs. LuLu Williamson and nursery helpers assumed full-time care for the twins, whom Williamson named Martha and Mary at the nursery. Mary did not survive, but Martha lived and was eventually sent to Miss Berry's School near Rome, Georgia, where she was adopted by Miss Berry.

Eventually, Williamson and the other volunteers found themselves in permanent charge of other children whose parents, through sickness or poverty, were unable to care for them. Realizing the growing need for permanent care for these children, Williamson approached Presbyterian entities about taking on the establishment of a Presbyterian children's home.

It was in 1923 that the Presbyterian Syn-



Photo courtesy of Vera Lloyd

The Ouachita Men's Club held a fundraiser meal for Vera Lloyd in the 1960's.

od of Arkansas agreed to take on the project. Miss Annie B. Wells of Monticello, a lifelong friend of Lulu Williamson, died in 1915 and bequeathed her estate of 1,009 acres to be used for the care and support of needy or orphaned children. The wooded tract on the southwestern outskirts of Monticello was to be used as a site for a children's home. A few years later, Miss Vera Lloyd of Marianna left \$19,000 to build a Presbyterian orphan-

age in Arkansas upon the condition that it should bear her name. 100 years later, we celebrate the efforts of these caring women and are thankful for all the lives they have touched. Vera Lloyd has three residential programs on campus – Qualified Residential Treatment Program for foster children and youth (male and female homes); Therapeutic Group Home for juvenile adjudicates (male home), Emergency Shelter (female

home) and Supervised Independent Living Program.

Throughout 2023, the Vera Lloyd campus has various events planned in Monticello, Little Rock and Bentonville. The plan is to celebrate the rich history and all the children and families who have received hope and healing over the past 100 years, as well as those they serve today and will serve in the future.

## ROTARY

Continued from Page 13

Monticello Rotary member Clifton Bond, was a staple at meetings as she would accompany the song leader with piano music. In 2023, the practice of singing songs has become less frequent in some clubs and Jennifer E. Jones of Ontario Canada began her term as the first female president of Rotary International.

A modern day Rotary Club meeting in Drew County consists of friendly business owners, local elected officials, and representatives from some of the key companies that make Monticello and Drew County great. A meal is served at noon every Thursday in the Green Room in the Gibson Center at the University of Arkansas at Monticello.

The local club is happy to resume the hon-

oring of the Drew County Boy Scout of the Year this May, an award that was put on pause due to Covid. Also in May, a scholarship will be awarded to a graduating senior from Drew Central and Monticello High School. The deadline to apply is April 28 and the form can be found at [www.monticellorotary.org](http://www.monticellorotary.org).

"For 100 years, the Monticello Rotary Club has been force for charity, goodwill, and service for Monticello," John McClen-don, former President of Rotary said. "Our club has survived everything from the Great Depression in the late 20's and 30's to the recent COVID pandemic, and through it all we've maintained the club's motto of "service above self." It is my hope that the club continues to grow and continues striving to make our local community as well as our world a better place."

### PAST PRESIDENTS

23-24 Stuart R. Oglesby, Jr  
24-24 Stuart R. Oglesby, Jr  
25-26 R. Lee Hardy  
26-27 D. Ping Bodie  
27-28 Lamar Williamson  
28-29 Steve Ratliff  
29-30 Patrick Henry  
30-31 Adrian Williamson  
31-32 Frank Horsfall  
32-33 Dr. S. Hunter Leslie  
33-34 W.C. Whaley  
34-35 B.M. Collins  
35-36 Rev W.B. Sullivan  
36-37 Wilbur F. White  
37-38 J.H. Hutchinson  
38-39 Robert E Crump  
39-40 Dr. Stanley Gates  
40-41 Guy Stephenson  
41-42 Charles C. Remley

42-43 E.P. Connor  
43-44 Rev W.B. Healy and George White  
44-45 Clair M. Davis  
45-46 Rev. Coy E. Whitten  
46-47 Adrian Williamson  
47-48 C. Rush Stuart  
48-49 Harry J. McWhirter  
49-50 Dr. John P. Price  
50-51 Dr. Robert F. Hyatt  
51-52 James S. Hancock  
52-53 L.D. Griffin  
53-54 Dr. Lewis Hyatt  
54-55 James Jackson  
55-56 Henry H. Chamberlin  
56-57 Carl F. Mason  
57-58 Jeff D. Moore  
58-59 Ray Pledger  
59-60 Robert W.D. Marsh

See ROTARY Page 15



# UAM, NPC announce four-year business degree in Hot Springs

By: **ASHLEY HOGG**  
editor@monticellonews.net

National Park College (NPC) and the University of Arkansas at Monticello (UAM) announced a new bachelor's degree partnership Tuesday, January 24. The institutions will collaborate to bring a bachelor's degree in business administration to Hot Springs beginning in the fall of 2023. The degree was approved by the Arkansas Division of Higher Education (ADHE) in July and by the Higher Learning Commission in January of 2023.

All four years of the new Bachelor of Business Administration degree will be offered through the NPC University Center on the NPC campus. Students will complete the first two years of the degree enrolled as NPC students and the junior and senior years enrolled as UAM students.

Students will pay NPC tuition rates for the first two years of coursework and UAM tuition rates for the junior and senior year coursework. Students who participate will have access to all of the services and resources NPC offers, as well as those UAM offers. Students will earn an associate degree diploma from NPC and a bachelor's degree diploma from UAM upon graduation.

"This is such a unique partnership and has required some out of the box thinking," UAM Chancellor Dr. Peggy Doss stated. "A few courses will be taught online but a majority of the classes in this degree will be taught face to face by the very qualified staff at NPC."

UAM announced they will offer NPC students a \$3,000 per semester Nighthawk Transfer Scholarship to offset tuition costs, making the UAM Bachelor of Business Administration degree at NPC one of the most affordable bachelor's degrees in the state. Students will be required to complete 55 credit hours and maintain a 2.5 grade-point average to be eligible.

NPC President Dr. John Hogan said, "Increasing access to bachelor's degrees is critical to the economic growth of our region and critical to the personal growth of our students. It remains a top priority for us and today we are celebrating an addition to that goal. We appreciate UAM for this investment in our students. The generous transfer scholarships they are offering makes this one of the most, if not the most affordable bachelor's degree in the state."

"We are excited to announce our new campus within a campus partnership with National Park College," Doss added. "This model of strategic collaboration

and partnership is an effective and efficient approach to meet the workforce education needs of the state. We value the opportunity to work with NPC so the UAM Bachelor of Business Administration degree is affordable and accessible to students in this important region of the state. We look forward to many future collaborations between our institutions. By engaging in this program, we will be able to grow our enrollment and have more graduates. This is a wise use of our resources as it strengthens higher education relationships."

A public announcement for students was held on the NPC campus Tuesday following a press conference for media earlier that morning. Students, faculty, staff and community supporters gathered in the Student Commons to hear the news.

"This partnership has been supported by the University of Arkansas System," Vice Chancellor for Advancement Jeff Weaver added. "The students in this program will have resources from both campuses to help them succeed. We feel that this is a great way to expose students in a different part of the state to UAM and the Boll Weevil brand."

"This is yet another example of the outstanding leadership provided to UAM by Chancellor Doss and her team," Chair-

man of the University of Arkansas System Board of Trustees said. "This new strategic partnership between UAM and the National Park College of Hot Springs will make it possible for NPC students to have an opportunity to earn a bachelor's degree through UAM's business programs without having to leave Hot Springs, and shows how UAM and NPC are working together for the greater good of the People of Arkansas."

NPC Student Government President, Tyanna Lindsey said, "This is a great day for Nighthawk Nation. I'm proud to be a part of a campus that puts the needs of our students first and is always looking for ways to expand opportunities for us. We are grateful to our partners at UAM for extending such a generous scholarship package and we look forward to the impact this will have on our community."

"Our goal will always be to put students first," Doss noted. "In 1909, this school was founded as a fourth district Agriculture school to serve this part of the state. We will never forget that. Our mission is to help UAM grow and help every student succeed. Higher Education is different than it has ever been and this is a proactive approach to get students enrolled and enhance student success."

## ROTARY

Continued from Page 14

60-61 William B. Gosnell  
61-62 Earl Willis  
62-63 William K. Ball  
63-64 John Wishart  
64-65 Glenn Cooper  
65-66 Kermit C. Moss  
66-67 William L. Morrison  
67-68 Harvey W. Thomason, Jr  
68-69 Frank Carson Jr  
69-70 Clifton Bond  
70-71 Robert W. Leech  
71-72 Evert Twyford and Waymond Griffith  
72-73 James Abston  
73-74 Robert H. Burch  
74-75 Alton Boyd  
75-76 Earl Baxter  
76-77 Samuel N. Bird  
77-78 Cole Castellaw  
78-79 Charles E. Jackson  
79-80 William C. Bulloch  
80-81 John Fincher  
81-82 DeWitt Worrell  
82-83 James M. Eoff  
83-84 Hoyt Andres  
84-85 Bill Painton  
85-86 Robie Scott  
86-87 Bob G. Blackmon  
87-88 John A. McClelland  
88-89 Howard Woodall  
89-90 James Tumilson

90-91 William R. Daniels  
91-92 Richard A. Kluender  
92-93 Jack Lassiter  
93-94 Joe Fakouri  
94-95 John Smith  
95-96 Shannon Flemming  
96-97 Truman Hamilton  
97-98 Don Watson  
98-99 Beverly Hudson  
99-00 David Hoffman  
00-01 John McClendon  
01-02 Jonathan Davis  
02-03 Mark Tiner  
03-04 Jim Brewer  
04-05 Bobby Burch  
05-06 Paul Griffin  
06-07 Drew Echols  
07-08 Brian Montgomery  
08-09 Mike Wigley  
09-10 Mike Alexander  
10-11 Tom Wingard  
11-12 Lou James  
12-13 Tim Chase  
13-14 Brandon Hogg  
14-15 Carolyn Baughman  
15-16 Scott Kuttenkuler  
16-17 Virginia Ward  
17-18 Bonnie Hicks  
18-19 Michael James  
19-20 Ember Davis  
20-21 Rick Clubb  
21-22 John C. Davis  
22-23 Brandon Hogg  
23-24 Bryan Diffie



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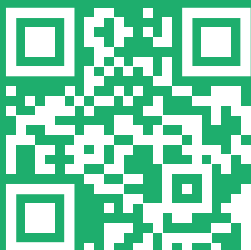
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# Drew Central Elementary teacher Emily Howard awarded Milken Educator Award

By: **ASHLEY HOGG**  
editor@monticellonews.net

Drew Central School was full of excitement Thursday, February 23, 2023 as elementary students filed into the basketball gym for a surprise presentation.

Faculty and staff had been given limited information about the event in order to keep the award presentation a secret.

Governor Sarah Sanders, along with Arkansas Secretary of Education Jacob Oliva and Dr. Joshua Barnett with the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching, presented Emily Howard, third grade teacher, with the Milken Educator Award and a check for \$25,000.

Barnett explained that the Milken Educator Award is unique because no one can apply or be nominated for the award. The foundation finds winners from across the country. Many Arkansas educators have received this award but Howard is the first from Drew County to be a recipient.

"In just six years as an educator, Emily Howard has demonstrated outstanding dedication to honing her craft, increasing student achievement and uplifting her peers," said Dr. Barnett. "Emily understands the unique educational needs of a rural community and works daily to strengthen the collective role of students, educators, parents and community members in building a culture of growth. The Milken Educator Award honors her service as a role model for the state and nation, and for her potential to impact the profession for decades to come. Congratulations."

Hailed as the "Oscars of Teaching," Milken Educator Awards inspire and uplift with the unique stories of educators making a profound difference for students, colleagues and communities. The specific states and schools on this year's winners' list remain a closely guarded secret until each Award is announced.

"We are always excited to celebrate excellence in teaching, and today we celebrate Ms. Howard," Oliva said. "Ms. Howard exhibits all the wonderful characteristics and traits of exceptional teachers. From her inviting classroom and student and parental engagement to using student data to guide instruction and student growth in key academic subject areas, Ms. Howard reflects the epitome of great teaching. Congratulations to her on this well-deserved honor!"

Along with the financial prize, recipients join the national Milken Educator Network, a group of more than 2,900 and growing of exemplary teachers, principals and specialists. The network serves as a rich resource



Photos by Ashley Hogg/Advance Monticellonian

for fellow educators, legislators, school boards and others dedicated to excellence in education.

The honorees will also attend an all-expenses-paid Milken Educator Awards Forum in Los Angeles, where they will network with their new colleagues as well as veteran Milken Educators and other education leaders about how to increase their impact on K-12 education.

In addition, they will learn about how to become involved in the Milken Friends Forever (MFF) mentoring program, in which new Milken Educators receive personalized coaching and support from a Milken Educator veteran on ways to elevate their instructional practice and take an active role in educational leadership, policy and practice.

"We find you. You don't find us!" Unlike most teacher recognition programs, the Milken Educator Awards initiative has no formal nomination or application process. Candidates are sourced through a confidential selection process and then reviewed by blue ribbon panels in each state. The most exceptional candidates are recommended for the Award, with final selection made by the Milken Family Foundation.



# MILKEN AWARD

Continued from Page 18

Veteran Milken Educators demonstrate a wide range of leadership roles at state, national and international levels.

The \$25,000 cash Award is unrestricted. Recipients have used the money in diverse ways. For instance, some have spent the funds on their children's or their own continuing education, financing dream field trips, establishing scholarships, and even adopting children.



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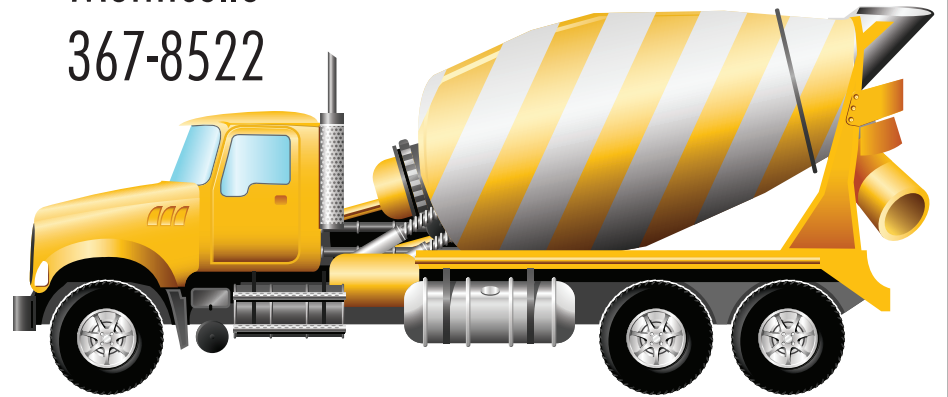
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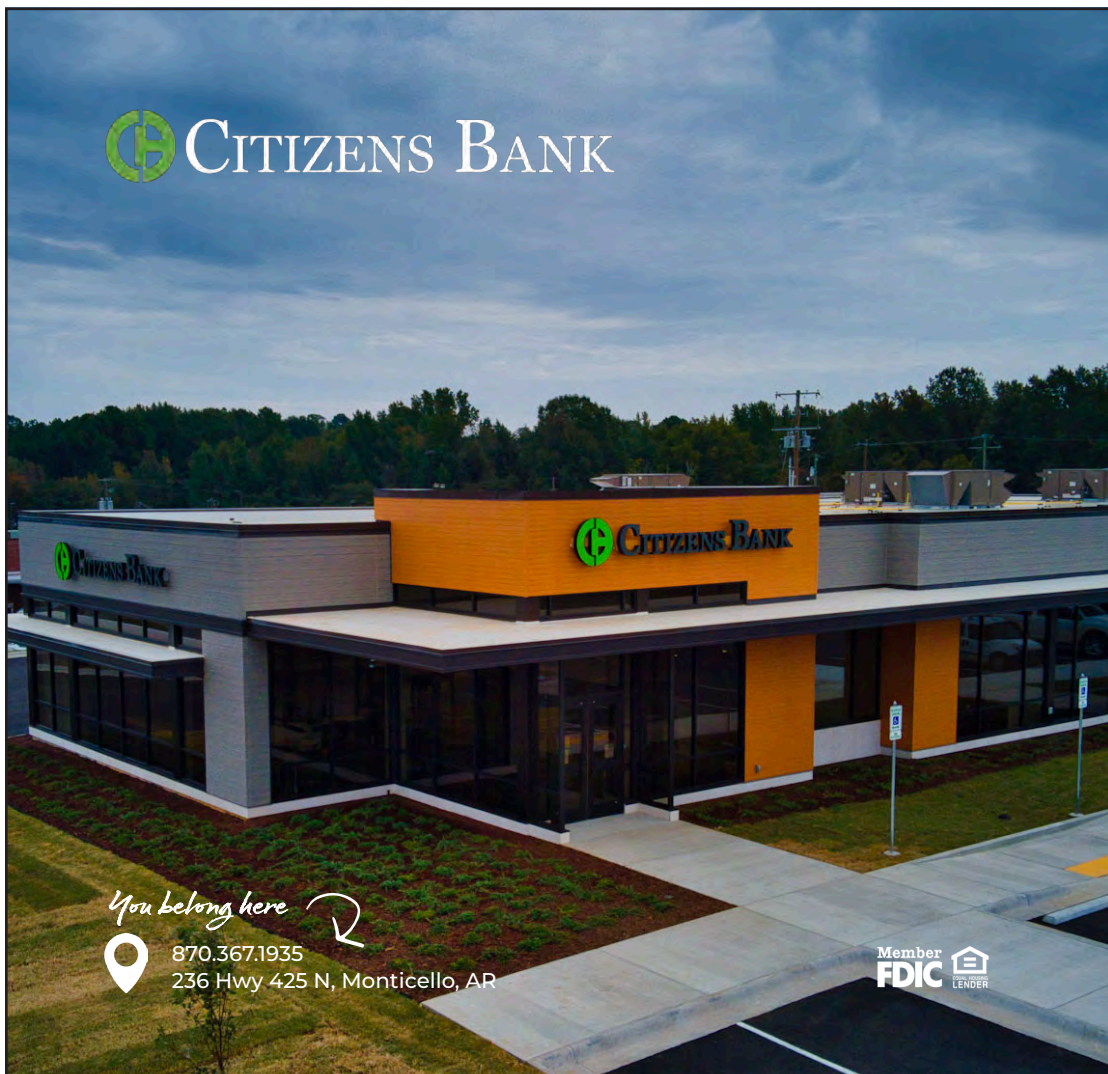
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# Beautification on Gaines St.

By **ASHLEY HOGG**  
editor@monticellonews.net

If you have driven East lately in Monticello, you have likely noticed activity on the shipping containers on Gaines Street.

Union Bank, the University of Arkansas at Monticello Art Department, and property owner James Gathings, have partnered to begin a beautification project creating original murals downtown.

Union Bank gave Richard's Art Practicum Class a list of quotes earlier in the semester. Students were to choose a positive quote from the list and design an original mural. Each student chose multiple quotes and did multiple sketches of each. The class then voted on the best designs for each quote.

Employees of the bank judged the final project and selected Alexis Rodriguez, a Junior Art Major from Monticello, as the winner. He chose the quote, "Reach for the Stars."

"This was a fun project that the entire class got to work on together," Rodriguez stated.

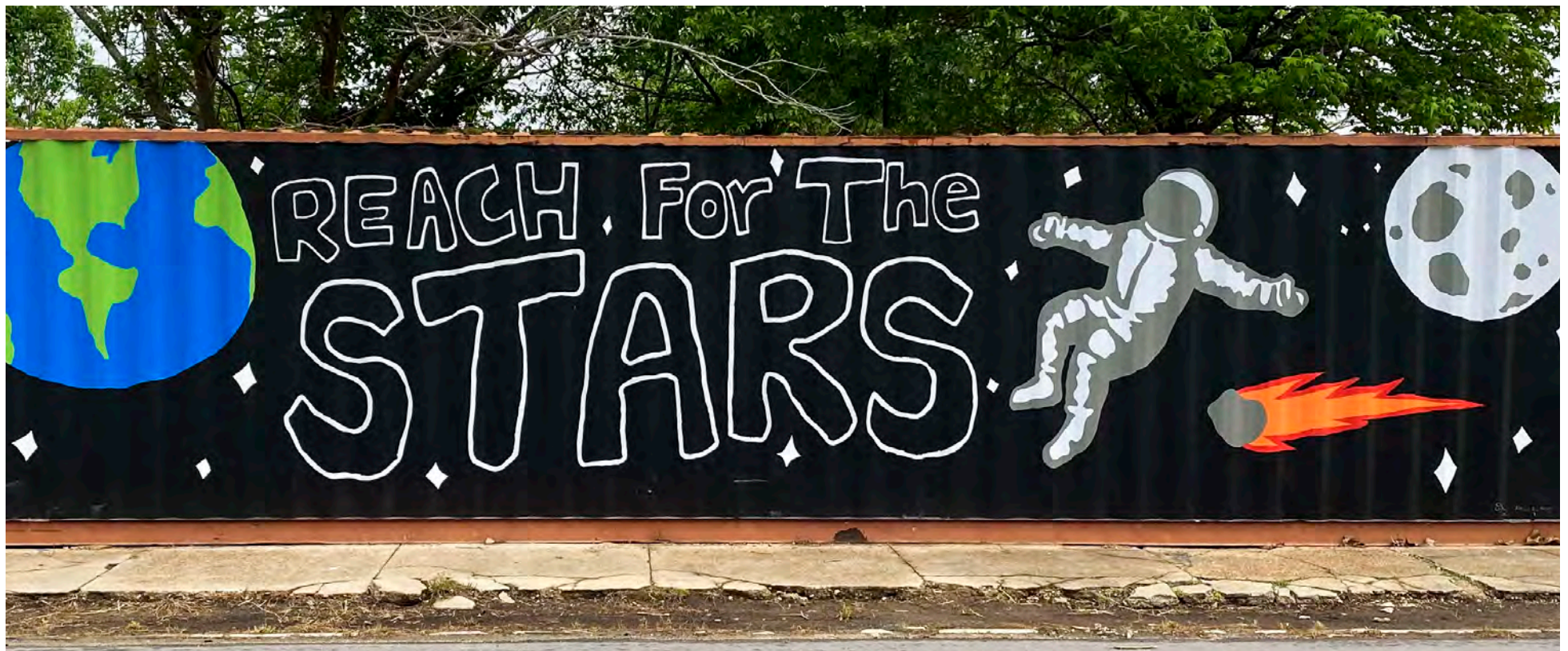
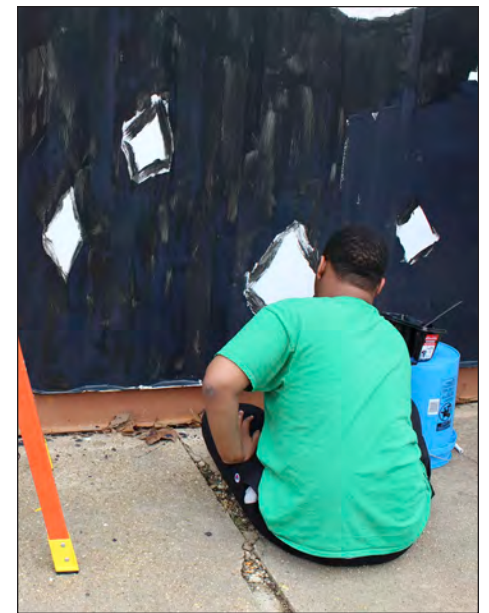
As weather permits, Richard and the students of the upper level art class can be seen on the sidewalk making the art come to life.

"As a hometown bank, Union Bank and Trust Co. searches for opportunities to invest in our community," Vice President and Trust Officer Gail Hooker said. "We

have partnered with Tom Richard with UAM's Art Department, James Gathings and Mitch Gathings to promote our mural competition this year. This contest was put together to provide a space for artists to share their talents, show how positive collaboration can work and use them to beautify a piece of our beloved downtown Monticello. Our goals are to promote engagement activities that are interactive and uplifting, to produce new murals that re-engage our community, and to enhance the streetscape in the downtown area."

"The UAM Art students were given guidelines and a list of inspirational quotes from Union Bank, to design a mural. The murals were then judged based on the creativity and originality of the mural, quality of artistic composition and design, and overall impression of the art. Union Bank provided the paint and other supplies and will pay the student artists for their time and efforts on this project. All UAM Art students will have the opportunity to participate in the painting of the chosen mural, which will be located on James Gathings' property east of the downtown square. The mural was completed at the end of April. Union Bank and Trust Co. would like to thank Tom Richard, James Gathings and Mitch Gathings for their cooperation and assistance in making this event a success."

Once the project is completed, the Advance-Monticellonian will run a photo of the final product.



Ashley Hogg/Advance Monticellonian

**COMPLETED WORK** The first installation of murals on Gaines Street is finished. University of Arkansas at Monticello art students, along with Professor Tom Richard, finished the mural, which was sponsored by Union Bank, at the end of April.



# Pirate Nation Foundation takes shape in 2022

By: **JEFF YOUNG**  
Advance Correspondent

In March of 2021, Drew Central Athletic Director Michael Goad was attending an Athletic Director's Conference when he began to ask questions as to why certain schools were able to get certain things done for their prospective programs while other schools were not able to get the funding or at least the means to get their own projects off the ground.

While discussing this topic with other athletic directors at the conference, the seeds of starting a Pirate Nation Foundation were born.

After returning from the conference, Coach Goad began discussing the idea of the foundation with Drew Central Superintendent Kimbraly Barnes, who had also been asking advice and sharing ideas from



other superintendents from around the state in conferences that she had attended.

The wheels had been put into motion for the creation of the Pirate Nation Foundation with both Mrs. Barnes and Coach

Goad in agreement. The question at this point was the steps to get the idea to become reality.

For Coach Goad, he began doing research on the foundation becoming a legitimate non-profit 501c3 tax write-off for people contributing to the foundation. Goad also began getting ideas from other athletic directors and coaches that had set up similar plans at their schools.

Drew Central has made many improvements to their campus over the years without the help of mileage increases and hopes to continue that trend as the foundation begins to grow.

"We are very excited about this investment in our school district," Barnes said. "This project will involve students and our community."

After presenting their plan to the Drew Central School Board, the board approved that they could begin the process of going out and talking to potential donors to see what the interest was to actually get the foundation going. In early September of 2021, the first project was put into action with a 52-week gun raffle where chances were offered for \$100 tickets to be entered into the contest for the chance to win a gun for 52 weeks with your name never

leaving the drawing pool even if you were lucky enough to have your ticket drawn.

The 52-week raffle was a huge success for the foundation, showing that the interest in supporting the program was high.

In January of 2022, the athletic department held a meeting to discuss what direction the foundation should take with their first project and at the end of the meeting it was determined that the first act should be to turf the football field.

Even when discussing how to increase enrollment and grow the school with other superintendents at a conference, Mrs. Barnes was being told the same thing, starting with turfing the football field.

With the direction of the foundation's first project decided, the project would not only include the turfing of the football field but also the baseball and softball fields as well.

"Another positive note about this project is the cost savings we will experience in the maintenance department," Barnes said.

Along with the turf, the football field will also be set up within specification dimensions to create a soccer field as well

See **FOUNDATION** Page 26



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# Ribbon cuttings held in Monticello/Drew County in 2022



Ashley Hogg/Advance Monticellonian

Kindred at Home became CenterWell Home Health at the official ribbon cutting ceremony by the Monticello/Drew County Chamber of Commerce at noon, Friday, September 2. CenterWell Home Health is located at 420 W. Gaines St., Ste. 2, with Registered Nurse Holli Pope serving as the branch director. CenterWell Home Health provides skilled home health services such as nursing, physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech therapy for all of Ashley, Bradley, Chicot, Cleveland, Desha, Drew, Lincoln, and parts of Arkansas, Calhoun, Dallas, Grant, Jefferson, and Union counties.



Photos by Ashley Hogg/Advance Monticellonian

**TOP LEFT PHOTO:** The Chamber of Commerce held a ribbon cutting for Monticello native, K.C. Knobloch at his new Edward Jones Financial Advising office. Knobloch is new to Edward Jones but spent the last decade at McQueen and Co. as a Senior Staff CPA.



**MIDDLE PHOTO:** Mainline Health System held a ribbon cutting for their new Women's Clinic on Tuesday, October 4. Dr. Kelly Shrum and Dr. Constance Chapman will provide a wide range of OBGYN services. The women's clinic is located inside the Mainline health center on Jordan Drive in Monticello.

**BOTTOM PHOTO:** SEArk Dumpster Rentals is a family-owned and operated business that began when Will and Brittainy Caldwell needed a dumpster to clean up around their farm. Quickly, they realized this was a service needed in the Southeast Arkansas area. A little over a year ago, they picked up their first three dumpsters and since then, they have slowly added to their beginning inventory of roll-off dumpsters to benefit others needing the same thing they were once looking for. SEArk Dumpster Rentals feels that being a small-town company allows them to be affordable, personable, and is an asset to their business. Will and Brittainy are deeply rooted in their community which grants them the opportunity to work with their customers on a more attentive level by providing on-call services, same day dumps and returns, and the flexibility to work with their customers to better fit their needs.



Ashley Hogg/Advance Monticellonian

Governor Asa Hutchinson spoke last week at UAM for the ribbon cutting of the Center for Forest Business. Pictured above, Hutchinson shakes hands with UAM Chancellor Dr. Peggy Doss and UAM Board of Trustees member Cliff Gibson and UAM forestry professor Dr. Matt Pelkki clap in the background.



# Ribbon cuttings held in Monticello/Drew County in 2022



Ashley Hogg/Advance Monticellonian

The Monticello-Drew County Chamber of Commerce held a ribbon cutting ceremony at 11 a.m., Monday, October 10 for the Martin Luther King, Jr. Commission. The Arkansas Martin Luther King, Jr. Commission is a division of the Arkansas Department of Education. The Commission hosted "The Delta Experience" economic development luncheon and discussed economic growth in Southeast Arkansas. Pictured above are members of the MLK Commission, local Chamber of Commerce and Monticello City Council members.



Ashley Hogg/Advance Monticellonian

**OPEN FOR BUSINESS** Main Street Art Gallery is now open for patrons to visit and view local art. The gallery is located at 112 N. Main St. and features Southeast Arkansas natives' original pieces.



Tom White/Advance Monticellonian

Gentiva Health held its official ribbon cutting ceremony on Thursday, Dec. 1. Formerly Kindred at Home, Gentiva provides hospice care to local residents. They are located at 420 W. Gaines St.

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## FOUNDATION

Continued from Page 24

as adding a walking track around the field that will provide not only faculty but also a safe environment for the community to use for exercise.

"We want the community to know that this is a partnership that will build a better culture and can allow us to better support each other," Goad added.

This project will be the largest investment in the Drew Central Football program since it began in 2007. With the new technology and engineering of turf, the hope is for less students to be injured while playing on the field and to allow the field to be used at all times, regardless of unpredictable weather.

With the turf project at the softball and baseball complex, the mound at the baseball field will be designed to be moved as far down as to provide little league play on the field as well as being able to remove the mound altogether to be able to host multiple softball games for tournament play.

The foundation has already made an investment in the school with the money raised from the gun raffle. With the money raised from the raffle, the school has been able to provide pre-game meals for all programs, purchase every athlete in grades 7-12 in every sports program

game shoes, provided catering for parent teacher conferences, sponsored a Special Olympics bowling trip, and also sponsored Girl's State participants during the summer.

In order to become a foundation sponsor, there are four levels with the Diamond plan being the highest level at \$5000 annual commitment, the Gold plan with a \$3000 commitment, the Silver plan with a \$1000 commitment, and the Bronze package with a \$500 annual commitment.

All packages are described in detail with a brochure that can be obtained at the school or can be viewed at [www.dcpirate-nation.com](http://www.dcpirate-nation.com).

One thing that may be noticed with the name of the foundation is that the word "athletic" is not found in the name. This is because the foundation is being set up not to only benefit the athletic programs at Drew Central but is designed to fund projects to help the entire student body and the community by improving different areas of the Drew Central Campus over time and providing activities that can be enjoyed by all students, not just the athletes. It will also help to benefit non-school sponsored events such as community pee-wee programs.

As of July 31, the foundation had met its financial goal that was set in place to get the turf projects started and the Drew Central School Board has approved the project to begin with the hopes of getting

the softball and baseball projects started in mid-fall in order to be ready for the 2023 season and with football turf project hoping to begin sometime in the spring.

The drive process for securing sponsors was hands-on with Coach Goad and others visiting area businesses, sitting with them discussing the foundations plans and going over in detail each tier of sponsorship all while getting to know the local businesses and people that are supporting the program.

During these visits with the businesses, Coach Goad has also learned of possible job opportunities with businesses that he has passed on to Drew Central graduates in order to help the former students find employment opportunities.

Both Mrs. Barnes and Coach Goad are very grateful to the businesses and individuals that have already sponsored the Pirate Nation Foundation. They wish to thank those participants as well as those that are considering making the investment in the foundation and to the Drew Central School District.

Committed sponsors to the Pirate Nation Foundation include:

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## Mainline Health Systems hires Shrum for women's clinic

### SPECIAL TO THE ADVANCE

Mainline Health Systems has hired Dr. Kelly Shrum, D.O., as a OB/GYN provider for its Women's Clinic location.

In his new role for the Women's Clinic, Shrum will work to provide care that embodies the patient-first values which are vital to Mainline Health's mission. He brings over two decades of experience with him, which will serve him well as he continues to provide OB/GYN services.

"We're excited to welcome Dr. Shrum to our team," said Ashley Anthony, Mainline Health Systems COO. "His experience in this field and ability to provide excellent patient care make him a great fit for the Mainline team."

Shrum previously owned his own private OB/GYN practice, the Arkansas Center for Women, in Pine Bluff from 1999 to 2009. He joined Drew Memorial Health System's staff in 2009, where he spent the last eleven years.

Drew Memorial Health System supports



SHRUM

Dr. Shrum's decision to transition to Mainline Health. "We are looking at this from a positive perspective because it is entirely beneficial to our community. Our OB/GYNs will not be separated, but united. Thankfully, Dr. Shrum will not be leaving an empty presence through our halls, because he will continue to utilize

our facility to provide surgical and obstetrical services," said Drew Memorial Health System CFO, Melodie Colwell.

Shrum is a Guyman, Okla., native who earned a bachelor's in zoology from Oklahoma University in 1990 and graduated from medical school at the Oklahoma State University College of Osteopathic Medicine in 1994. He is a member of the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Family Physicians and the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology.

Since 1978, Mainline Health Systems has served the residents of Southeast Arkansas with a compassionate approach and a commitment to the highest standard of medical

## mainlinehealth WOMEN'S CLINIC

and dental care. From its first office in Portland all those years ago, Mainline Health Systems has grown to 22 locations across Ashley, Bradley, Chicot, Cleveland, Drew, Grant and Lincoln counties.

Mainline Health System's mission is to provide the best care for everyone, regardless of their ability to pay. The staff has worked hard to create and maintain financial assistance programs to ensure all families receive the medical and dental treatment they need, when they need it.

To learn more about Mainline Health Systems, visit <https://mainlinehealth.net/about-us/>.

Drew Memorial Health System is a non-profit, 60-bed, community-owned acute care facility that serves a population of 200,000 in Southeast Arkansas. They have operated for over 35 years in our cur-

rent location in the City of Monticello, in Drew County.

At Drew Memorial, they strive to improve the overall quality of life in our community by employing a top-notch medical team, regularly advancing the equipment, trainings, and services offered, and by continually assessing how to best serve our patients and their families. Our community deserves access to professional, advanced care in a convenient location for Southeast Arkansas residents. They value the connections between our community members and organizations, which is why Dr. Shrum's transition will be one of ease.

Any patients desiring to transfer their care to Dr. Shrum at Mainline Health Systems or to another provider will be required to complete a medical record release.

# Local legacy takes opportunity to help build generational wealth

By **ASHLEY HOGG**  
 editor@monticellonews.net

Opportunities are available every day. Some are created out of necessity, some from tragedy, and some seem random. It is what we choose to do with those opportunities that defines us.

Katelyn Burch Busby is a product of several generations of family financial planning in Drew County and in her new role as an Edward Jones Financial Advisor, her goal is to help Monticellonians reach their financial dreams and build generational wealth.

Her father, the late Dr. Robert “Bobby” H. Burch Jr. and her grandfather, the late Dr. Robert “Bob” H. Burch Sr., served Drew County’s dental needs for decades. Her mother, LeAnne Burch, is a retired Brigadier General of the United States Army, former member of the Arkansas House of Representatives, and is retired from years of service as a Department of Human Services attorney.

Katelyn was born abroad while both of her parents served in the United States Army. The family returned home to Monticello when Katelyn was in the fourth grade. She is a graduate of Monticello High School and received her Bachelors Degree from the University of Arkansas and later, her Juris Doctor from the University of Arkansas at Little

Rock.

Katelyn married William Busby, son of William “Bill” Busby and Roselyn Grubbs Busby, all of Monticello, and after living in central Arkansas for a short time, the couple moved back home to Monticello to pursue their careers and start a family. William was employed as an Edward Jones Financial Advisor, following in the footsteps of his uncle and cousin, Kelton and Lee Busby.

Last November, William was tragically killed in an outdoor accident. His death left a space in local hearts and the growing financial community in Southeast Arkansas.

The opportunity arose for Katelyn to become a Financial Advisor for Edward Jones and she took it gladly.

“I am excited about the opportunity to help people in the community that I was raised in,” Katelyn stated.

Through her role with Edward Jones, it is Katelyn’s goal to help people reach their financial dreams with retirement investing, estate planning and much more.

For 100 years, Edward Jones has worked to create a better future for their clients and communities, one relationship at a time.

With a generational history in Drew County, Katelyn is proud to build personal and professional relationships with everyone she comes in contact with.



Ashley Hogg/Advance Monticellonian

Katelyn Burch Busby (right) happily welcomes clients into the Edward Jones office on Bolling Street in Monticello. Pictured with her on the left are Kelton and Lee Busby, fellow Edward Jones Financial Advisors.

She shares the company purpose of commitment to partnership for positive impact to improve the lives of clients.

Katelyn can be found in the Edward Jones office on Bolling Street with fellow financial advisor, Lee Busby.

“My primary goal is to help you develop an investment strategy geared toward your unique, long-term goals. Whether you need to save for a child’s college education, reduce taxes, or plan for retirement, I can help,” Katelyn stated.

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***Nita McDaniel,***

***Executive Director***

# Unity in the Community draws big crowd to park



By: **ASHLEY HOGG**

editor@monticellonews.net

Friday, July 1, McCloy Park was filled with people attending the Unity in the Community event hosted by the Arkansas Martin Luther King, Jr. Commission, a Division of the Arkansas Department of Education.

This event was free to the public and it included a ventriloquist act, musical guests, Covid screening, food trucks, financial literacy workshops and much more.

The stands were filled with citizens, young and old who laughed and interacted with the performers.





# Building community through art

By **ASHLEY HOGG**  
editor@monticellonews.net

Main Street Art held its grand opening Saturday, October 15, 2022.

The art gallery and studio space, located at 112 N. Main, is a long term retirement goal of manager Stephen Coburn.

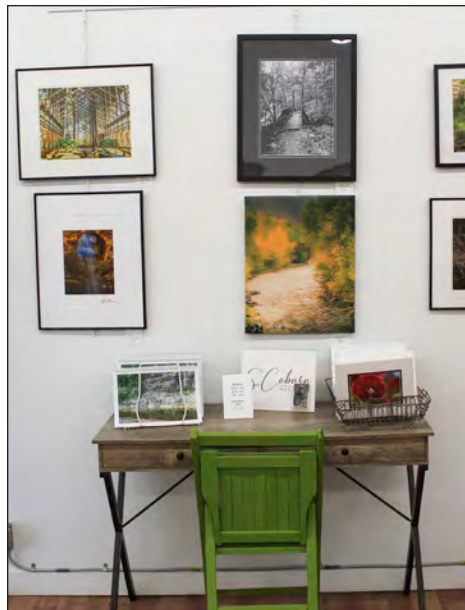
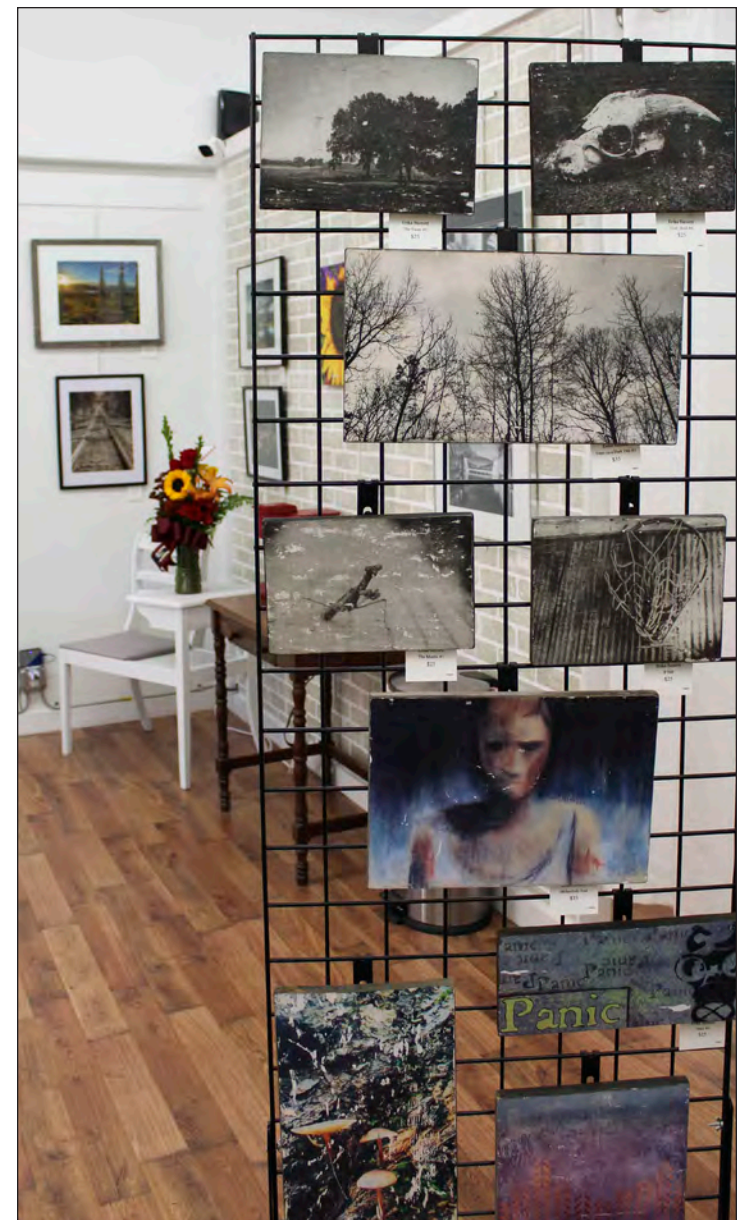
Some may recognize that name as being a Monticello native and one of the brave souls that hiked half of the Appalachian Trail in 2022.

Coburn, along with other local artists, have featured pieces displayed in the gallery.

Along with the opening of Main Street Art, Coburn has started a non-profit organization called Art Education Opportunities. The plan for the group is to provide a scholarship to a graduating senior from Drew Central and Monticello High School that want to study art in college.

The gallery is open for visitors and will host painting classes in the coming months.

For more information, visit Main Street Art on Facebook or email [arteducationopportunities@gmail.com](mailto:arteducationopportunities@gmail.com).





# Jefferson Regional Monticello Medical Clinic



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Michael Fakouri, MD



Garrett Krisell, APRN



Julia Nicholson, MD



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## Home Health

Offering nursing care, wound care, social workers, aides, IVs, injections, patient and caregiver education, and rehabilitation services in 7 Southeast Arkansas counties

## Laboratory

Lab results are typically available within 24 hours and can be easily shared with out-of-town physicians

## Nursing Services

Include the medical/surgical floor, Intensive care unit, emergency room, and anesthesiology

## Radiology & Imaging

Offering low-dose 80-slice CT scans, digital X-Ray, MRI, port placement & management, ultrasounds, nuclear medicine, fluoroscopy, and digital mammography

## Rehabilitation Therapy

Physical, occupational and speech therapy are available at home, inpatient, or outpatient

## Respiratory Therapy

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## Transitions

The outpatient geriatric psychiatry program offers group and individual counseling sessions to reduce feelings of isolation and disconnectedness

## Women's Services

OB/GYN physician providing comprehensive care for women of all ages

## Reflections

An inpatient program providing comprehensive, individualized care for patients to meet their psychological and physical needs.

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