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# Table of Contents

Quick Facts .....	3, 4
UAM aims to make higher education more affordable and easily available.....	Page 8
UAM upping their curb appeal.....	Page 11
Monticello lake trail progressing.....	Page 12
Come to the Show with SEARK Concert Association.....	Page 16
Head of the Class caring for children.....	Page 18
New health clinics coming to Monticello.....	Page 21
The Allen House's haunting tale .....	Page 22
Chamber of Commerce Members .....	32
Business & Industry .....	37
Community Service .....	37
Education .....	38
Health Care .....	38
Recreation .....	39
Religion.....	39
Entertainment .....	40
Real Estate.....	40

# Index of Advertisers

Advance Monticellonian .....	Page 31
Annswood Apartments Retirement Center .....	Page 29
Aqua Escape and More .....	Page 14
Arkansas Superior Federal Credit Union .....	Page 27
Baker's Electrical Supply.....	Page 30
Comprehensive Pain Care.....	Back Cover
Connelley Family Medical PLLC Copper Soul Tanning .....	Page 14
Delta Counseling Associates, Inc.....	Page 23
Discount Merchandise.....	Page 30
Drew Memorial Health System .....	Inside Back Cover
ESA Staffing & Screening .....	Page 27
Farm Bureau Arkansas .....	Page 16
Farmers Insurance, Michael James Agency .....	Page 26
First United Methodist Church .....	Page 14
Gamble Garage.....	Page 26

# Index of Advertisers (Continued)

GPlex Subcenter.....	Page 18
Griffin Heating, Air & Electric, LLC .....	Page 31
Head of the Class Childcare & Learning Center .....	Page 18
Hope & Co. Realty .....	Page 28
Hospice Home Care.....	Page 30
Interfor .....	Page 29
Jefferson Regional Monticello Medical Clinic.....	Page 19
Joe Miles Family Dentistry.....	Page 27
Majors Forest & Lawn.....	Page 20
Martin Collision & Classics .....	Page 28
Maxwell Hardwood Flooring.....	Page 22
Medders Funeral Home.....	Page 31
Metal Mart .....	Page 30
Monticello Ambulance Service, Inc.....	Page 15
Monticello Church of Christ .....	Page 14, 29
Monticello Coffee Company.....	Inside Front Cover, Page 17
Monticello Economic Development Commission .....	Page 12
Monticello Realty .....	Page 8
Monticello, City of .....	Page 9
Mullis Insurance.....	Page 30
Nichols, Tim, Drew County Sheriff .....	Page 11
North Hyatt Secure Storage .....	Page 28
O'Fallon Veterinary Service, Inc .....	Page 11
On the Fly Moving Service.....	Page 30
Patrick's Auto Wash .....	Page 10
Patrick's Spee-D-Lube .....	Page 10
Pleasant Springs Baptist Church .....	Page 14
Pomeroy's Hometown Ace .....	Page 31
Price Companies, The.....	Page 28
Ray's .....	Page 17
Razorback Body Shop .....	Page 23
Reinhart Family Healthcare .....	Back Cover
Ryburn Motor Company.....	Page 13
SEARK Children's Clinic .....	Page 26
Select Concrete Co., L.L.C.....	Page 10
Silvicraft, Inc .....	Page 23
South East Emergency Medical Service, Inc.....	Page 5
Stephenson-Dearman Funeral Home, Inc...Page 27	
The Ridge on Wilson Mill.....	Page 21
The Woods, A Nightingale Community .....	Page 8
Union Bank.....	Page 19
University of Arkansas at Monticello .....	Page 7
Vera Lloyd.....	Page 12
Weevil Run Apartments.....	Page 30

\*FRONT COVER PHOTO BY JEFF NEWTON\*



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My fellow citizens,

I must first tell you that it is a great honor to have the opportunity to address you and serve not only as Mayor, but more importantly as a your brother and fellow citizen of the great City of Monticello.

Monticello is home to the University of Arkansas at Monticello, a growing and expertly led University which is known throughout the State as an outstanding academic institution and known internationally for its contributions to forestry related subject matter. For academic endeavors, we lead the way.

Monticello possesses a blend of amenities ranging from parks to pools, biking and hiking trails, movie theaters, a sports complex and a blend of restaurants to choose from. Our churches are also active and involved in all aspects of our town. Socially and spiritually, we lead the way.

Our history runs deep, as the architecture displayed on our beloved town square shows. From the historic homes on Main Street to the Drew County Museum that holds irreplaceable pieces of American and Drew County history. Culturally, we lead the way.

We aren't perfect, but we have the privilege of waking up every day in a place that millions upon millions of people across the world would trade anything to have. What God has given us here in Monticello is a great gift.

Despite Monticello's amenities and attributes, what makes us different is our greatest asset.. and that is our PEOPLE.

We are a town filled with kind, compassionate, driven people who are sincerely committed to making our town better for our families now and generations to come.

While we are diverse with our views, opinions and pastimes, one thing is certain... when it matters most, we always come together. As we move towards the future and continue to harness our talents and resources, we WILL claim our rightful place as a leading City in the State of Arkansas.

God Bless each of you and God Bless the great City of Monticello.

Mayor Jason Akers





# Quick Facts

## **Emergency Room**

Drew Memorial Health System: 367-2411  
Emergency room is physician-staffed 24 hours a day

## **Water**

City of Monticello: 367-3415

County water service is provided by the following seven independent water associations: Green Hill-Brooks Chapel, Bowser, Barkada-Green Hill, Selma, Enon and Lacey-Ladelle. Each association services a different area of the county.

## **Ambulance - Call 911 or**

Monticello Ambulance Service Inc. (MASI)  
Southeast Emergency Medical Service (SEEMS)

Monticello Ambulance Service, Inc. operates two ambulances manned by paramedics and equipped to provide advanced cardiac life support. Yearly memberships are available. MASI is located at 325 West Shelton. Call 367-7384 for non-emergency business.

Southeast Emergency Medical Services operates two ambulances manned by paramedics and equipped to provide advanced cardiac life support. Yearly memberships are available. SEEMS is located at 503 West Gaines. Call 367-2300 for non-emergency business.

## **Cable Television**

Vyve Broadband: 367-7300.

The expanded basic cable rate is \$66.95 a month plus tax. Other premium channels are available for an additional cost per month. The offices are located at 1920 U.S. Hwy. 425 North.

## **Internet Service**

Available from several local providers.

## **Driver's Licenses**

Department of Finance & Revenue: 367-5226

The Arkansas State Police require that new residents acquire an Arkansas driver's license as soon as residency in the state is established.

## **Auto Tags**

Department of Finance & Revenue: 367-5226

The Arkansas State Police require that new residents acquire an Arkansas auto license and registration as soon as residency in the state is established.

## **Building Permits and Inspections**

Call 870-367-4400. Fees are project-related, with prices determined by the size of the project to be undertaken.

## **School Registration**

Monticello School District: 367-4000  
Drew Central School District: 367-5369

## **Trash Pickups**

City of Monticello: City owned and operated service. One weekly residential pickup, \$18.00 per month (per cart) for carts. Apartments are pro-rated per unit at \$18.00 per residential unit per cart. Weekly business pickups (6 or 8 yard dumpsters) are available for \$70 per month. To establish service or for special or larger pickups, call the city sanitation department at 367-3415, or go by the Monticello City Hall at 204 West Gaines.

In County: County-owned and operated service. One weekly pickup, \$46.50 quarterly. To establish service, and to secure a 911 address, call the Drew County solid waste/911 coordinator's office at 460-6293, or go by the Drew County Courthouse at 210 South Main.

## **Recycling**

The city of Monticello operates a recycling facility at 1466 Old Warren Road. Cardboard, aluminum cans, newspapers (not slick inserts), and plastic containers are accepted. Residents may also call the facility at 367-4407 to sign up for weekly curbside pickups each Wednesday. Participants in the curbside program are asked to separate cardboard from newspapers and to rinse out all bottles. Recycling center hours are 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday and 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. on the first and third Saturdays of the month.

## **Electricity**

Inside Monticello city limits: Entergy Corporation,  
1-800-368-3749  
In county: C & L Electric Cooperative,  
870-628-4221

## **Natural Gas**

Summit Utilities: 1-800-992-7552

## **Propane Gas**

Pinnacle Propane: (870) 412-2240

## **Telephone Service**

In Monticello: Southwestern Bell  
Residential Service: 800-464-7928  
Commercial Service: 800-499-7928

## **Voter Registration**

Drew County Courthouse: 460-6260  
Persons can also register when obtaining a driver's license at the Department of Finance & Revenue or at the Southeast Arkansas Regional Library, Monticello Branch (367-8583)



# Quick Facts

## **Population (According to 2020 Census)**

City's Count: 8,442

County's Count: 17,350

## **Climate**

Mean daily maximum temperature: 77

Mean daily minimum temperature: 53

Mean daily noontime humidity: 57%

Mean daily midnight humidity: 77%

Maximum temperature of 90 degrees and over: 96 days

Minimum temperature of 32 degrees and under: 41 days

Average annual rainfall: 42 inches

Elevation: 280 to 410 feet above sea level

## **Police Protection**

911 Service: Yes

Monticello Police Department

Number of officers: 16 Full-Time

Police Non-Emergency Number (870) 367-3411

Drew County Sheriff's Department

Number of paid deputies/officers: 12

Number of auxiliary members: 4

Sheriff Non-Emergency Number (870) 367-6211

## **Fire Protection**

City of Monticello

Number of paid firemen: 12

Number of firemen paid per call: 8

Fire insurance rating: Class 4

Fire stations: 2; training facility

Fire Non-Emergency Number (870) 367-5433

Service available to industry outside city limits, and various volunteer fire departments are located in the communities throughout the county.

## **Health Services**

Drew Memorial Health System (870) 367-2411

60 beds

24-hour emergency room

16 active and 74 consulting physicians

## **City of Monticello Elected Officials**

Mayor - Jason Akers, (870) 367-4400

City Clerk - Taryn Wigley, (870) 367-4400

City Attorney - Whit Barton, (870)367-6288

## **Monticello City Council Members**

Ward 1 - Al Peer and Cedric Leonard

Ward 2 - Craig McRae and Claudia Hartness

Ward 3 - Michael James and Clarissa Pace

Ward 4 - Mike Wigley and Mark Tiner

## **Drew County Elected Officials**

County Judge - Jessie Griffin, (870) 460-6200

Sheriff - Tim Nichols, (870) 367-6211

Tax Collector - Tonya Loveless, (870) 460-6220

Assessor - Cheri Adcock, (870) 460-6240

Circuit Clerk - Beverly Burks, (870) 460-6250

County Clerk - Stephanie Chisom, (870) 460-6260

Treasurer - Charles Searcy (870) 460-6225

## **Drew County Quorum Court Members**

District 1 - Orlando Jones

District 2 - Ben Higginbotham

District 3 - Roger Harris

District 4 - Shiela Maxwell

District 5 - Steve Pigott

District 6 - Donna Usry

District 7 - Joe Williams Jr.

District 8 - Frank Appleberry

District 9 - Zachary Hill

## **State Representatives**

Jeff Wardlaw - District 93, (870) 226-9501

Mike Holcomb - District 94, (870) 879-6135

## **State Senator**

Ben Gilmore - District 26, (870) 682-2902

## **U.S. Representative - Fourth District**

Bruce Westerman (R)

100 E. 8th Avenue, Room 2521

Pine Bluff, AR 71601

Phone: (202)225-3772

Fax: (870) 536-4058

[www.westerman.house.gov](http://www.westerman.house.gov)

## **U.S. Senators**

Tom Cotton (R)

500 Clinton Ave. Suite 401

Little Rock, AR 72201

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Fax: (501) 324-5230

Toll Free: 1-877-259-9602

[www.cotton.senate.gov](http://www.cotton.senate.gov)

John Boozman

1401 W. Capitol Ave., Plaza F.

Little Rock, AR 72201

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Fax: (501) 372-7163

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# Office of Drew County Sheriff

**Sheriff Tim Nichols**

Dear Readers,

I want to welcome you to Drew County which is the home of the Monticello Billies, Drew Central Pirates and the UAM Boll Weevils! I am proud of this place in which we call home and those who frequent it not only to visit but to shop and find entertainment. This is a special place in which family is important and your families are import to us.

As Sheriff it is my goal to provide a service to you and your families in which is second to none. So please, feel free to relax and enjoy all of the great things in which Drew County has to offer as we strive to make Drew County a better and safer place to live, work, visit but most importantly raise a family!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sheriff Nichols", written in a cursive style.

**Sheriff Tim Nichols**



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# UAM aims to make higher education more affordable and easily available

By **JEFF McDONALD**  
 editor@monticellonews.net

In a recent meeting with Dr. Peggy Doss, Chancellor of the University of Arkansas at Monticello, she discussed the fact that there is currently a nationwide decline in the number of students who are enrolling in colleges and universities. Around 2008 due to the financial crises in the U.S., people stopped having as many children as in the past. Due to the fact that the average American family size has been on the decline, higher education institutions have been heavily impacted. The recent COVID pandemic did nothing to help matters, and continued the decline in enrollment. Statisti-

cally, the death rate was higher than the birth rate at the end of 2020 leading into early 2021. UAM is currently seeing an increase in enrollment over the numbers that they had last year, and this could be due to the new recruitment campaign and revamped scholarship program.

UAM decided to revamp their scholarships to be as competitive as possible. UAM is one of the most affordable institutions in the state of Arkansas. They are also the only four year institution to also have two Colleges of Technology, located in Crossett and McGehee. This allows students to earn anywhere from a Technical Certificate all the way to a Master's Degree at UAM campuses. The Crossett

and McGehee campuses also allow students to complete adult education courses and earn their GED.

UAM offers many entry points and exit point to the university system. A student could earn their GED and then move to a technical certificate, or even go for a four year degree. This will be critical in the area of workforce development as it will allow students to get the education that they will need to work in their desired field without having to leave UAM.

"It is vital that we have a lot to offer," added Doss.

The scholarships needed to not only be competitive but also attractive to prospective students. One change was lowering the Grade Point Average

(GPA) requirement to 2.5 rather than the 3.0 that was previously requirement. This change will allow greater access to institutional scholarships than in previous years. Along with the GPA change, the scholarships that have been placed on a sliding scale that allows for lower GPAs if the ACT score is higher, or lower ACT scores if the GPA is higher, this will also allow more students the opportunity to earn an institutional scholarship. Doss also noted that on the federal level, such as Pell Grants, students will receive an additional \$500 this upcoming year.

Dr. Doss mentioned two additional scholarships that she is "particularly excited about".

See **UAM** Page 9

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# UAM

Continued from Page 8

The first of these is the Weevil Legacy Institutional Scholarship. This scholarship would be available for students who already receive an institutional scholarship, and have a parent or legal guardian who is a graduate of UAM. This scholarship would be for the amount of \$500 per semester. The second scholarship is a Housing Scholarship which is available to first time freshmen who hold an institutional scholarship, and choose to live in the residence halls. This will also be a \$500 per semester award.

“We feel like we are offering a great deal to our students to be able to make what is already an affordable cost of education even more affordable,” Doss said. “That is important to us.”

Approximately 28 percent of Arkansans have a Bachelors Degree, and that number is even lower when talking about the south-eastern portion of the state.

“If we want to continue to be an economic engine for southeast Arkansas we have to get students here, and then provide them

See **UAM** Page 10

## NEW SCHOLARSHIPS

COMING FALL 2023!

**WEEVIL LEGACY** NEW!  
**Institutional Scholarship**  
**\$500 per semester**

A first-time freshman student whose parent or legal guardian graduated from UAM with a technical certificate, associate degree, bachelor's degree or master's degree is eligible as long as the student qualifies for and retains a first-time freshman institutional scholarship each semester. Can be applied to tuition, housing or books.

**HOUSING** NEW!  
**Scholarship**  
**\$500 per semester**

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 SCHOLARSHIPS

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27-29 ACT 2.5+ GPA	<b>UNIVERSITY SCHOLARSHIP</b> <b>\$9,000 per year</b>
24-26 ACT 2.5+ GPA	<b>ACADEMIC SCHOLARSHIP</b> <b>\$6,000 per year</b>

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# UAM

Continued from Page 9

with the skills and resources necessary to enter the work force,” added Doss.

“We spent many hours trying to figure out how to position our scholarships to not only be lucrative for us, but more importantly, attractive to students,” Doss noted. “We feel that this has led to the uptick we are currently seeing in our enrollment number.”

When speaking about the recruitment efforts that have been going on at UAM, Doss said that to date there have been three direct mail campaigns which have been sent to over 40,000 high school juniors and seniors in Arkansas and parts of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas. These list of names was purchased from ACT, and UAM hopes to expand this list in the future to be able to target a wider array of

students. Doss credited Kelsey Englert, Director of Marketing and Public Relations, with the design for all of the marketing material that is going out, saying that Englert has done an exceptional job. The university is also taking advantage of social media by upping their presence on Facebook and Instagram. This campaign has also been under the supervision of Englert, and has seen success so far. One of the perks of using Facebook is that UAM is able to track who looks at their posts.

“This allows us to see where the most interest in UAM is coming from, and this allows us to make our posts target the areas that need it most,” added Englert.

Doss also mentioned a two day enrollment event last summer where the university offered \$500 to anyone who enrolled during the event. Around 400 people registered at this event.

UAM has also started email

and text campaigns to keep contact with students who have already applied. This allows the staff to work with the students in solving problems such as filing for financial aid if needed.

“All of us want to have a personal relationship with these students. We don’t want this institution to be just like all of the others,” Doss said. “When you enter the Student Success Center you will see a sign that says ‘You Belong Here’, we don’t just say it, we believe it.”

UAM is also running a campaign to reach out to students who were enrolled in the university but had to leave unexpectedly. Currently, advisors are reviewing 618 transcripts of students who had a 2.5 gpa and 90 hours who have left within the last five years. During this search they have discovered 11 students who could graduate immediately if they were to choose Interdisciplinary Studies as their minor.

The university is also looking to add more degrees to cater to a wider audience. A Forestry Technology degree is going before the Board of Trustees for approval, and should be approved for the upcoming fall semester. A Masters of Nursing and Public Health program started in January and is currently up to 25 enrolled students.

UAM is also looking to partner with other two year and four year institutions. There is currently a partnership with National Park College in Hot Springs. A Business Administration degree is being offered where students would complete the first two years as NPC students, and UAM would deliver the last two years to the NPC campus, giving these students a four year UAM degree without ever having to leave the NPC campus.

UAM is also currently working on obtaining a grant that

See **UAM** Page 11

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# UAM upping their curb appeal

By **HALEN MURPHY**

Dr. Peggy Doss, Chancellor at the University of Arkansas at Monticello, spoke on the campus improvements UAM has been working on recently. Doss recognized the impact UAM had on the area economically, and wanted to work towards growing it.

Doss explained that she wanted bring people in with what she called the "curb appeal".

"Before they meet anyone on campus, students judge by what they see", Doss said. Doss said UAM has been working on this through many methods including, renovating current buildings, adding new ones, and removing some old ones.

Among the new additions to be added to the campus is a new athletic performance center. UAM had been fundraising for the new athletic center for approximately 18 months and has raised approximately \$1,100,000. One of the primary donors mentioned was Kenneth Hunt, UAM's distinguished alumnus of the Spring 2023 semester. The center is going to be called The Kenneth H. Hunt Athletic Performance Center and will be located on

the end of the Steelman field house.

This will be used as an area for students to work out and receive sports related therapy. The athletic performance center is planned to be finished by the fall of 2023. Doss said she wanted to use this center to attract athletes to campus with a good place for them to exercise.

A future project Doss has planned is renovations of the Steelman Field House. She wants to do interior upkeep as well as add a covered entry way on the outside over the walkway.

The agriculture building was also renovated alongside the rodeo arena. The arena was used for many community events such as rodeos and shows but also used for larger agriculture lectures. The renovations done were to the lighting, flooring, and replacing seating in the arena.

The agriculture building was renovated with funding from the state. Doss said that the UAM staff wants to use the funding to upgrade the technology for the building and renovate the landscaping.

UAM has also been renovating buildings off campus,

such as the Trotter House. The renovations to the Trotter House and the 1937 House have been done with grants from the Arkansas National Cultural Resources Center. The grants amounted to approximately \$1,000,000. The first grant was approved for exterior renovations for both buildings and a second grant was recently approved for the interior of both buildings.

Many years ago, the 1937 House was in a bad state and needed to be either repaired or torn down.

"When an architect came to look at the house, he realized it had historical significance", Doss said. The architect told UAM faculty that the home was one of the first examples of art modern architecture in Arkansas. The 1937 House is

located next to the Chancellor's Home on campus.

The Trotter House was built in 1896 and once belonged to V.J. Trotter in Monticello. The Trotter House is now owned by UAM and is used as both a bed and breakfast, as well as a place to hold events such as weddings and other celebrations. The Trotter House is located on 404 N. Main St.

Among these renovations was a building Doss called "The Head House". The Head House is a brick building located near the greenhouses on Scogin Drive. The building is used as a soil lab, among other things. Doss said they are working towards renovating the lighting and roofing to make the building look better.

## UAM

Continued from Page 10

would allow them to work with area high schools to help interested students graduate with their Certified Nursing Assistant credentials.

Doss added that one of the things UAM has going for it is its size and the personal touch the students can expect to receive from the staff and faculty.

"With the way society has

shifted in the last few years I think people are starting to look for that little bit smaller school where they can still get a great education, and for some, stay close to home," Doss said.

"Our goal as a university is this: we want to look good, we want to offer economic opportunities, we want to help you earn the degree that you want, and we want to track your success as an alumni," Doss added.

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Drew County Sheriff

Tim Nichols



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# Monticello lake trail progressing despite obstacles


By ADVANCE STAFF  
 editor@monticellonews.net

The idea for the lake trail began in the spring of 2021 when Lake Monticello was still emptied due to the concerns with the invasive species of fish. Jeff Newton and University of Arkansas at Monticello professor Dr. Doug Osborne, took this opportunity to look around the lake while it was accessible by foot. It was then they had the idea of a multi-use trail that would go around the lake, allowing people to walk or ride their bike. The idea was proposed to give people access to parts of the lake that were previously only accessible by boat without the trail.

Newton is also the Vice President of the Trail Organization for the Arkansas Delta, or TOAD. TOAD introduced a program to Monticello School District in May to help kids learn to bike. The program, All Kids Bike, consists of a curriculum of eight lessons directed at kindergarten students, along with 24 specialized bikes made to teach kids to balance before they had to ride the bike. Newton explained that if these kids grow up learning to ride a bike, they may continue to on the lake trail.


See **LAKE TRAIL** Page 13





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**Nita McDaniel,**  
**Executive Director**



# LAKE TRAIL

Continued from Page 12

This idea was presented to both the Parks and Recreation Commission and the City Council after Progressive Trail Design from Bentonville was contracted to design the plan for approximately \$10,000. The \$10,000 was paid by left-over money from a certificate of deposit (CD) for the original construction of the walking trail according to Newton. The original estimated cost of construction was approximately \$1,500,000.

This project was awarded \$100,000 in grant funding by the Arkansas Department of Transportation, as well as \$30,000 from local private donors. The work on the trail began in the fall of 2021. The trail was originally designed in four phases with the entire trail planned to be 25.3 miles. In 2022, the trail was approved for another \$100,000 grant from ARDOT.

The contractor who has worked on the trail in phase one is Topp Trails, a division of Progressive Trail Design.

Originally proposed for the trail was a type of track with features such as banked edges, designed to be ridden without pedals by moving the body up and down to continue momentum, called a pump track.

The pump track was eventually removed and replaced with an additional 1.18 miles being added to the trail. As of March 2023, they planned to create a pump track within city limits at some point to offer kids an area inside town to use their bikes.

Newton and Mayor Jason Akers announced this change, as well as an addition of 1.4 miles to add to the track and, that phase one was nearing completion as of the end of March 2023. Newton said that he was working with the Advertisement and Promotions committee on getting signs around the trail at this time.

Akers and Newton talked about how the trail wasn't only for bike riding, but also for hiking, nature watching, and photography.

"This multi-use trail is a great source of fitness for those who aren't interested in traditional sports and want to do more than just walk on a track," Akers said.

On April 5, 2023, the Lake-woods trail Facebook page announced that they would have a grand opening on May 6 for the phase one part of the trail. The grand opening originally planned to have music and food as part of the celebration. This grand opening was later postponed due to weather and is being rescheduled for later in 2023.

As of June, 2023, Lake Monticello has been partially filled and stocked with fish. The lake is scheduled to be stocked with Bluegill, Red-ear Sunfish, Fathead Minnow, Golden shiner, Threadfin Shad, and Black Crappie by this fall. Arkansas Game and Fish Commission biologists have added 52,000 Bluegill and 989 Florida Largemouth Bass with more bass scheduled to come this summer.

Currently, the lake is filled up to 1,008 acres and when it is completely full, it sits at 1,510 acres. The water level still isn't high enough to launch boats since it is only within eight feet of the Hunger Run access. The lake however seems to be filling at a faster rate than it initially did because the spillway on the lake has only been closed for 19 months.

"I am excited about the progress on the trail, I think we have a lot of smart, forward-thinking people working on it and it's something to be proud of", Akers said.

Jeff Newton said that the plan is for bidding on phase two to start in July. Phase two will consist of approximately two and a half miles that will connect the south part of the trail to the side with the levee.



Photo by Jeff Newton

"With this connector, one could ride, walk, or run from the windy hills side to the dam," Newton said.

This part of the lake was only accessible by boat before the lake trail started planning around this. They are still working on rescheduling the grand

opening so that there are as few schedule conflicts as possible.

Approximately \$300,000 worth of the trail has been completed so far through grants and donations and they will be seeking more grants and donations until they are able to complete it.

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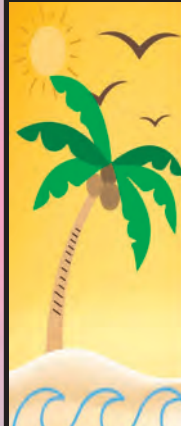
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# Come to the Show with SEARK Concert Association

By ADVANCE STAFF  
editor@monticellonews.net

If you have ever been to a concert in southeastern Arkansas, the SEARK Concert Association was likely involved.

SEARK Concert Association was founded in 1976, in partnership with the University of Arkansas at Monticello, and has been a part of the community ever since.

When the Fine Arts Center was built at UAM, Claude Babin asked James Ross Sr. to start an association to host events in the center.

After that, SEARK Concert has grown to serve Ashley, Bradley, Cleveland, Chicot, DeSha, and Lincoln counties as well as Drew county.

SEARK Concert hosts dance, theater, and music events and hold around six shows a year. These events are mostly

hosted at the UAM Fine Arts Center but on occasion events are held at schools with their Schools Majoring in the Arts, or SMARTS Program.

The SMARTS Program is their non-profit organization that was made to bring art experiences to schools at no cost.

SEARK Concert chooses age-appropriate shows for each grade level and brings them an artistic event.

The organization was created after Susan Akin, the current president of SEARK Concert, spoke with a Rockefeller family member who told her to "bring art to the children". After the conversation, she created SMARTS and the community theater they host every year.

SMARTS helps fundraise, book, and schedule performances for all grades in all seven counties they work within. They do this to improve the



child's school experience and growth by providing exposure and experience of the arts. Susan Akin sees the arts as the most endangered area of study so she decided to bring it to children to show the importance at a young age.

SEARK Concert hosts events to highlight local talent such as the yearly community theater

or the occasional Christmas Talent Show.

The community theater is made up of a cast of all ages from the counties SEARK Concert serves. Tryouts are hosted in January and anyone of any age is able to participate. The musical is hosted in March af-

See **SEARK** Page 17

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- Provide products and services which improve the quality of life for our members



# SEARK

Continued from Page 16

ter six weeks of rehearsal at the Fine Arts Center.

The Little Mermaid musical, Ballet Magnificat, and Master' Singers are just some of the professional events that they have hosted at the Fine Arts Center in 2023.

Becoming a member of the SEARK Concert Association

gives you a season pass to most of their shows. For every \$100 paid into your membership, you get a single season pass as well as reserved seats and recognition in the insert of events. You can become a member on SEARK Concert's official website.


SEARK Concert is the association for music and theater in Monticello.



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# A dream come true turns into 25 years of caring for our children

By JEFF McDONALD  
editor@monticelloneews.net

It is a momentous occasion whenever a local business celebrates certain milestones. It isn't uncommon for businesses to celebrate reaching productivity goals, new or advanced technology, and anniversaries. Monticello has one such business celebrating the milestone of a quarter century in business. Head of the Class celebrated 25 years of service to the children and families of Monticello and Drew County on March 13, 2023.

Head of the Class started as a dream that Sherrie Gillespie had long before it became a reality.

"It was always a dream of mine. I worked for Southwestern Bell, which became AT&T, for 33 years", said Gillespie. "This was always something I wanted to do. I feel like this is my purpose, my calling."

Gillespie stated that one of the things that truly peaked her interest in opening a child care facility was the fact that she had three children who all had different learning styles.

"It always seemed like the childcare places I had my children in tried to teach them all the same way, even though they learned in three different styles," Gillespie added.

Gillespie stated that she came from a family of 10 children where her parents, Henry and Vera Suber, instilled in them to do things right the first time. She said that has stuck with her throughout her whole life. The Subers felt that there was no reason for their children not to learn and do well. The expectation was always there to strive to do the best



that you possibly can. Gillespie says that this mindset is where she got her core value.

Gillespie stated, "I saw how they worked and cared for us. They made sure we had food, clothing, and shelter." Gillespie added, "We were considered poor, but I didn't realize it until I had worked at AT&T for about three years." She also noted, "We never felt poor. We were never dirty, hungry, or ever had our utilities shut off. I guess we were below poverty, but I couldn't tell because we didn't have a poor mentality." Gillespie said that this bled over into her mentality that every child is capable of learning regardless of their circumstances. "Some may learn in a different way," Gillespie added. "Some may take a little more time, but they are all capable of learning."

Gillespie and her late husband, Rev. Shay Gillespie, purchased the original Head of the Class building (the Blue Building) on March 13, 1998. At that time the facility was authorized to hold a maximum of

32 children. The Gillespie and staff have done two expansions

to this building over the years. See **HOTC** Page 19

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# HOTC

Continued from Page 18

They have also added several other properties throughout the years. Gillespie said, “Every two to three years someone would offer to sell me one of these surrounding properties.” She says that not once have they ever asked to purchase anything, it has always been the owners who have contacted her. 25 years later and basically an entire city block is property of Head of the Class.

In 2016, Gillespie and husband, Shay, built the G-Plex Subcenter. She said that this was a dream of her husband for a long time. The G-Plex is a multifunctional center with classrooms, a kitchen, and a basketball court.

The facility was named after Gillespie’s parents, Hank and Vera Suber.

“Our goal is to help these children be the best that they can be,” said Gillespie. She credits a great and strong staff to their continued success. In the past 25 years, she states that they have seen many children come through their doors, and now they are starting to see some of those children’s children come through.

When speaking about her staff, Gillespie stated that when Head of the Class opened, there were five total employees. Today, she says that she proudly employs 22 people, and has had as many as 30 in the past. It is a

good thing she has a large and competent staff since they are now licensed to have up to 166 children. Gillespie states that in the past they have stayed at capacity, but in the past few years their enrollment remains steady at around 125 children.

When asked if things had always been this good, or if their enrollment was full all the way from the beginning, Gillespie said that enrollment numbers were not near the 32 they were licensed for. It took several years before they cleared their first cent of profit. Gillespie added, “If I could have gotten out in the first five years I would have.” She further stated, “We just had too much tied up in it to walk away.” She stated that around the five or six year mark things started to turn around. When she reflects on the past, she said, “The first few years were up and down. Things were very unsteady. It hasn’t been easy, but it has been worth it.”

Gillespie said that a lot of her previous staff members have gone on to work in the public school system. She says that she does her best to always have certified teachers on staff to mentor other employees. She also added that any employees that were enrolled in school are not only encouraged to continue, but the staff will support them to get their education.

When discussing the footprint that Head of the Class has in the community, Gillespie got very reflective. “I think about



if often. Some days I get tired and want to throw my hands up and quit,” she said. “It always seems like God knows that, and someone will come through and tells us how we made a

positive difference in their lives or their kid’s life.”

Gillespie said she recently had a former student and his

See **HOTC** Page 20

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# HOTC

Continued from Page 19

family come by to tell her how much Head of the Class had impacted him. “It made me feel better, like maybe I can go on a little longer,” Gillespie added.

Jerrielynn Mapp, a retired school teacher after 38 years, said that one of the things that makes the job rewarding is whenever they can see the children and the progress they are making.

“It’s like we are doing something really great,” Mapp added. Mapp further said, “They get to school and the school systems call us to say our kids are very well behaved, and that they are scoring higher than other children. That gives us the boost or pat on the back that you need from time to time.”

Gillespie said, “I tell my staff that if you plan to get rich in child care you are in the wrong place, you have to love what you’re doing and really care about the children.” Gillespie added that it is fulfilling when you are able to help and make a difference in someone’s life, even though you may not realize it for 10 or even 20 years.

One rarity that was discussed was the unlikelihood of a childcare facility remaining open for 25 years. Most don’t last more than a few years, but Head of the Class is now seeing a second generation. Gillespie did note this and said that part of this comes from being consistent and showing a passion for the children.

When asked about something that set Head of the Class apart, Gillespie discussed the facility’s quality rating. She said that much like hotels and restaurants, child care facilities have a rating system.

Until January 1, 2023, the highest rank was a level three which Head of the Class has had for several years. As of

January 1, the rating has gone up to a maximum score of six. Due to the scores from the last assessment, Head of the Class was awarded a level five rating. Once they are reassessed in 2024, the staff has no doubt they will achieve the level six rating.

Gillespie was asked what services were offered in the beginning and she said that in the early years they only did childcare. Their main goal was to get employees that could understand the philosophy that all children can learn if they are consistently worked with. Since then, they have added the process to assess every child who enrolls to help determine what their individual needs are. They also previously offered a developmentally delayed program which ended in 2018. Head of the Class currently uses the Core Knowledge curriculum. They also work with Arkansas Better Chance Program (ABC) with the three to five year olds. The zero to three year olds are taught using Early Headstart materials.

Gillespie also said that she feels that interacting and building a rapport with the families is very important.

“It’s more than a business,” Gillespie stated. She added that the staff does not try to get into these family’s personal lives, but there are times the children need shoes or a jacket and the staff will handle it because they know the parents are unable. She also said that there is always someone on staff who can be reached if an emergency situation comes up.

“They know that we care,” Mapp said, “We also have the expectation that we want to see every one of our children be successful.”

Ashia Woods, Gillespie’s daughter, said of her parents, “I knew my parents weren’t ordinary parents whenever they were able to relate to not just adults, but also to the kids in the community.” Woods also



said that she saw how her parents showed their passion for helping people when they both spent time as members of the Monticello City Council.

“My parents were always involved in the community, and they have always set a good example,” Woods added.

Gillespie was asked if there was anything she wanted the citizens of Monticello and

Drew County to know about Head of the Class. She said that she wants people to know that they are open, and everyone is welcome.

“If you come here we are going to do our best to make sure that you learn something,” Gillespie added. “You will not leave like you came, you should be better.”



# New health clinics coming to aid Monticello

By ADVANCE STAFF  
 editor@monticellonews.net

The healthcare selection in Monticello is getting a little larger with the addition of multiple new clinics in the health and education district. Dr. Justin Atkins' new pediatric clinic, Seark Child Care, opened in June and the new Allegiant Medplex, ran in cooperation by Dr. Jeffery Reinhart, Dr. Jay Connelley, and Dr. Naudia Worku, is scheduled to open in early 2024.

Atkins grew up in Hamburg. After high school, he went to the Centenary College of Louisiana and continued his medical studies at University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences. It was while he was studying at UAMS that he decided to go on to pediatric care.

Pediatric care specializes in treating children from birth to

age 21, and can be used to help with injuries, diseases, growth disorders, and mental health in children. They can also give vaccines, prescribe medicine, or connect the parents with other pediatric specialists who can help keep their child healthy.

Pediatricians collaborate with other specialists whenever possible to provide the best care for children. Some medicine or medical treatment differs between children and adults. Pediatricians help parents find out what their kids need and provide it when possible.

"Kids are innocent and happy and I wanted a chance to keep them that way", Atkins stated.

After deciding to focus on pediatric care, he began interning at Arkansas Children's Hospital.

This new clinic in Monticello could be pivotal for parents in southern Arkansas since the

closest pediatric clinic before was in Little Rock.

Seark Childcare is open 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday as well as Saturday, 8:30-11:30 a.m. The new clinic is located on the corner of H.L. Ross Drive and Old Warren Road.

The other location being opened will be Allegiant Medplex which will be run together by Dr. Reinhart, Dr. Worku, and Dr. Connelley. The Allegiant Medplex will be three different clinics that are connected so patients and doctors can travel between them.

"Years ago, Dr. Tim Chase, Dr. Sidney Collins and I planned to build a medical office building," Dr. Jeffery Reinhart stated.

"Dr. Chase and I were born and schooled in Monticello and had a strong desire to build something nice for the commu-

nity. Dr Collins had family here as well. Unfortunately, that project did not materialize due to circumstances beyond our control. The opportunity arose once more after Dr. Jay Connelley relocated to my facility. We both knew it was not adequate for both of our practices and we quickly began brainstorming regarding a new facility," Reinhart added. "Then, Dr. Connelley was diagnosed with cancer, and plans were postponed. I have always had great respect for Dr. Connelley, a man of true integrity and devotion. Watching him battle and win his fight with cancer was inspiring. Upon his recovery we were more determined than ever. During this time a new physician specializing in pain management opened her practice. I quickly became acquainted

See **CLINICS** Page 22



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# CLINICS

Continued from Page 21

with her through referrals. Her practice grew and she was faced with the same issues regarding space. I came to respect and admire her as well, and now we had a third partner.”

“Dr. Connelley was looking to build a new clinic to practice in and when Dr. Reinhart talked to him, they decided to join together,” Karen Connelley said.

Dr. Connelley is a native of Malvern but moved to Monticello approximately 25 years ago. When he was young, his father told him to pick a trade so that he could work using his mind. Later in life, he decided to become a family medical practitioner. Dr. Connelley obtained his masters degree at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences College of Medicine. After four more years of residency, he interviewed at Monticello Medi-

cal Clinic and was able to own his own practice.

After 20 years, he decided he wanted to go out on his own and start a new clinic. His current clinic, located on Jordan Drive, is leased to him by Dr. Reinhart.

“I work very closely with the other doctors, so when I heard about this opportunity, I decided to go along with them,” Dr. Worku said.

Dr. Worku is originally from Ethiopia but moved to America for higher education. She had a passion for helping people which is what led her to become a doctor. She went to college in Denver, medical school in New Jersey, and did her residency in Arkansas. She has been working as a pain management physician for the last 10 years. She began practicing in Little Rock and White Hall before moving to Monticello. She specializes in multi-modal pain management.

Multi-modal pain manage-

ment is a type of treatment plan where multiple classes of medication are used to target different receptors. This can also reduce the harm from taking certain pain medication.

With the amount of people getting harmed by taking opioids, it can be worrisome to take this kind of medicine. Multi-modal pain management only uses minimal amounts of opioids when needed as well as involving the use of acetaminophen, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, gabapentin, serotonin inhibitors, and regional techniques to help alleviate the pain.

The doctors are very excited for this opportunity with the Medplex.

“My hope for our facility is simple,” Reinhart added. “I want to continue to provide great care to our community and surrounding areas in an aesthetically pleasing new facility with ample room and parking. For Dr. Connelley and

I, we will have space adequate to house additional providers. This is crucial in today’s medical environment as family physicians are on the front line to provide well care, not just sick care. Traditionally, we spend our time treating acute illness and managing chronic disease. The hard part is focusing on health span which is not just about living long but living healthily into our later decades of life. To do this we need help. Highly trained nurse practitioners or physician assistants are excellent in these roles, as well as handling acute non-complicated illness thereby freeing the physician to invest more time with more complicated cases. It’s my hope this new facility will aid in this endeavor.

Also, there will be unfinished space for additional services. We will announce more information about that in the future, for now, it’s a surprise.”

## Beauty and tragedy set the stage for Monticello’s most haunting tale

BY JEFF McDONALD  
editor@monticellonews.net

As you take a trip down Main Street in Monticello, you can catch glimpses of our city’s history. Many of the homes and their architecture speak of times long since passed. Whenever you reach 705 N. Main, you will experience one of the true gems of not only Monticello, but of south Arkansas.

The Allen House was commissioned to be built in 1906 by local entrepreneur, Joe Lee Allen for himself, wife Caddy, and daughters Lonnie, Ladell, and Lewie. The house was to stand as a monument to Allen’s success.

The Allen House was built by Barkley White and designed by Sylvester C. Hotchkiss. Hotchkiss was a well known architect in the Monticello area who originally came to Arkansas by way of New York. Hotchkiss is the only Civil War Union soldier who is buried in Oakland Cemetery.

Joe Lee was considered to be a very prominent and successful business man. He owned approximately 33 percent of all

rental properties in Monticello, and was the first president of Commercial Bank. His earliest business was a livery business

which was located just off of the square. He sold Dort and Buick automobiles at

See ALLEN Page 23



In 1824, a deputy surveyor named Charles Drury, used this beautiful majestic white oak tree in southern Arkansas as a “witness tree”. It was just 14 inches in diameter at the time. Today, at well over 200 years old and 48 inches in diameter, this historical Original Bearing Tree, which is a link to the beginning of the surveys of the Louisiana Purchase, is a great reminder of why we are so passionate about this natural renewable resource and about manufacturing solid wood flooring. There is no other building material on earth that is more environmentally friendly, durable, safer for your family, and economically sound than wood. Because of its beauty, strength, value, and performance, real wood flooring is highly sought after. Many products may mimic the look of real wood flooring, but none can come close to offering the benefits of a real wood floor.

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# ALLEN

Continued from Page 22

one point, and around 1905, he was appointed by Governor Jefferson Davis to be the county treasurer. Allen was also the president of the Southeast Arkansas Fair Association.

Another of Allen's business ventures was renting a horse drawn hearse to those who lost a family member. He also owned the first automobile taxi service from Monticello to Pine Bluff.

Joe Lee and his family also owned thousands of acres of timber land. The lumber used to build the Allen House was harvested from the family's land. The Allens definitely had a very diversified portfolio.

In 1917, Joe Lee spent the summer in Michigan, at the order of his doctor, to get away from the Arkansas heat, and to recover from some health issues, one of which dealt with

his heart. Upon his return in September of that year, there was a notice in the Advance Monticellonian that his stay seemed to have been successful, and Joe Lee appeared to be much improved. He would die just 3 weeks later, from a heart attack, while doing a demonstration of a vehicle with a potential buyer in Collins. Several of his friends retrieved his body and brought it back to the house for his funeral.

After Joe Lee's death, Caddy continued to live in the home until her death in 1954 at the age of 80. The Allen's eldest daughter, Lonnie, and her husband, Carl, lived in the house for a while. Carl worked at the theater that Caddy owned at the time.

Ladell would return to the home in the late 1920's, but would leave again to live in Memphis, Tenn. for a while. She would return to the family home for good sometime in the early part of the 1940's.

According to historical records from Monticello's Presbyterian Church, following Joe Lee's death, Caddy at least doubled the Allen family's fortune. On top of the rental properties, timber land, and movie theater, Caddy started renting rooms in the Allen House as early as 1920. She would even charge her daughter to live there.

In 2008, Mark and Rebecca Spencer became the fourth owners of the Allen House. They say that it is not uncommon for people to feel "creeped out" or want to leave shortly after arriving. The Spencers say that the house doesn't live up to the spooky expectations that a lot of people have.

"It's not like there is a portal opening up when you walk in the door," Rebecca said. "There is activity, but it is very rare. It's not like we're having to tell the ghosts to hide in the closet so we can answer the door. Nothing is going to jump

out at you. The really scary stuff happens in the Nightmare Maze, and that is intentional."

The Spencers stated that in 1986 the house was sold, and the new owners were the first owners who were not a member of the Allen family. When discussing the renovations needed to restore the house to it's original state after being used as apartments for more than 30 years, Mark said that there was little work that needed to be done in that area. He felt like the house was never converted to truly operate as apartments, that they just used the already existing rooms and made few if any structural changes. There was a lot of work done to the outside to restore the house and show it's true beauty, after years of neglect.

The Spencers stated that they have found many artifacts both in the house and on

See **ALLEN** Page 24

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# ALLEN

Continued from Page 23

the grounds. They were pretty much the first owners to explore the attic, where they found many old documents, toys, school books, and old trunks. Rebecca said that they have kept pretty much every artifact that they have found, and now have to keep them in locked displays due to things coming up missing during tours and investigations.

The Spencers came upon the Allen House almost by happenstance. Mark said that on his way to interview at the University of Arkansas at Monticello, he just started turning and ended up in front of the house.

"It was beautiful. It looked like it needed some love," Rebecca stated. "You could still see the beauty through all of the neglect, and we decided we wanted it to be our home."

The house was not for sale at the time, but that didn't stop the Spencers from trying, and in the end, they were indeed successful.

"Rebecca told me that I could take the job at UAM if I bought her this house," Mark added.

One of the surprises the Allen House held was a series of letters written to Ladell by Prentiss Savage. The story of how these letters were discovered is intriguing and fits perfectly with narrative of the home.

"I still don't understand how it happened," Mark said. "It was a Saturday morning in August of 2009, and the weather was hot. I woke up and immediately felt like I needed to go up to the attic. I really didn't want to because there were other things I wanted to do, and I put it off for about 30 minutes, but as I was eating breakfast the compulsion kept nagging me."

Mark said he found himself climbing the stairs to the attic. He went straight to a spot near



Jeff McDonald/Advance Monticellonian

the entrance to the South Turret Room.

"I stood there looking at the attic floor which is full of cracks and openings," Mark added. "There was one particular opening which I had seen many times, but this time I just felt the need to check it. It was like a voice was in my head telling me to go take a closer look. I peered into the opening and saw nothing at first, but on a second look I saw brown paper, similar to butcher paper, so I got a hold of it and pulled it out and found white envelopes postmarked 1948 with three cent stamps on them inside." Mark said that he opened one of the white envelopes and found a letter addressed to Ladell with the salutation "Dearest", and signed "Love". He realized that these were love letters written from Savage to Ladell just a few months before Ladell's death.

"I went back downstairs and found a claw hammer," Mark noted. "I ran back up there and started prying up the floorboard and found a total of 83 letters dated 1948, with the exception of two letters dated 1945. She obviously chose to hide them and leave them there."

The winter of 1948 was a cold one, there were plenty of fireplaces burning, including the one in Ladell's room, had she chose to collect them and

The Allen House's unique architectural style as seen from Main Street.



destroy them. Instead she left them there, and on Christmas night she took a plate of food and a drink to her room, and left the party that was being held in the house. While in her room, Ladell ingested Mercury Cyanide in an attempt to kill herself. After she was found, she was taken Mack Wilson Hospital. On January 2, 1949, eight days after ingesting the toxic chemicals, Ladell passed away after what must have been an extremely terrible experience.

One interesting thing to note is that after Ladell's suicide, Caddy locked Ladell's bedroom, sitting room, and bathroom with both the skeleton key, and padlocks. No one was able to enter these rooms for 37 years. The owners who purchased the house couldn't even view these rooms during their tour, it wasn't until they legally owned the house that they could enter Ladell's rooms,

and they had to break down a door to gain entry.

"The whole experience of uncovering the letters was uncanny," Mark added.

The day after discovering the letters, the Spencers discovered that Ladell's niece, Martha Jones, passed away at almost the same time he discovered the letters. Jones was mentioned in several of the letters. She was the daughter of Ladell's younger sister, Lewie. Mark added that it was easy to speculate that not only did Jones and Ladell have a close relationship due to the content of the letters, but that the two had a surrogate mother/daughter relationship as Lewie and Ladell's son, Allen Bonner, both died in 1944.

With the passing of Jones, there was no one still living who had actually known who Ladell really was. Mark said that the time of Jones' death

See ALLEN Page 25



# ALLEN

Continued from Page 24

definitely led to the mystique of finding the letters when he did.

"I wouldn't have ever found the letters if I hadn't been more or less led to them," Mark noted. "I can't explain it any other way.

On the day after discovering the letters, Mark spent the day reading through them and arranging them in chronological order. During his reading Mark discovered that these letters made for a rather poignant and tragic love story. He decided to write a book about the experience, as he was already an established and prolific author.

"I felt that this was perhaps a way to honor Ladell. Maybe me being a writer was a lucky coincidence," Spencer said.

Mark said that his discovery of the letters helped him to better understand who Ladell truly was. Over the years, she had become known simply as a crazy lady who took her own life. She had become dehumanized by a majority of people in the community. According to Mark, Ladell was a very complex and interesting woman. Her reputation was of being cheerful and optimistic, ironically. When people who knew her were feeling down, they would go see her and she would cheer them up. This made her suicide all the more shocking to those who knew her. The fact that she took her own life was no secret. Even though it wasn't reported as such in the Advance Monticellonian, people knew because word gets around in a small town.

In our conversation, we discussed how the Allen House and the history of Ladell's tragic demise have inspired artists and other forms of entertainment. Mark noted that the house was famous for decades before they ever bought it. One example of the house

inspiring art was Carolyn Wilson's novel *The Scent of Lilacs*. Wilson wrote her book in 1966, and it was based on her time as a tenant in the late 1950's. The house has also been featured in many articles and anthologies throughout the years. Several pieces were written in the 1970's and 80's. Mark Spencer himself has written several books about the Allen House as well.

There have also been at least five t.v. shows done about the house, including *Ghost Hunters*. There was also a movie, *The Perfect Host*, filmed in Monticello that was largely filmed at the house. Lisa Coon even has a song on streaming platforms, *The Tale of Ladell*, which is inspired by a visit to the house.

When talking about paranormal investigations, the Spencers said that they have had numerous investigations, to the point that they can't really put a number to it. When asked how many "paranormal house guests" they had, Rebecca said the according to these investigations, there are six.

"We consider them to be like invisible roommates or family," Rebecca said. "They don't really get in the way of anything at all. They just let you know they're here occasionally."

The Spencers said that they have decided to really cut down on the number of investigations. They said that a pattern began to emerge with the electronic voice phenomenon (EVP) that were coming in. For a while they were getting new bits which helped them learn the historical narrative. Eventually, all of the EVPs would say the same thing and contain the same voices.

"How many groups do we need to come through here and tell us our house is haunted," Rebecca mused. "It just became redundant, and when we put some much into getting the house ready for people to come in, it just wasn't really worth

it to hold investigations anymore."

The Allen House is a constant on "Most Haunted Lists". The Little Rock Historical Society has even come down to tour the house.

The Spencers said that Covid really made an impact on the house tours and other events. They shut down all activities during the peak of the pandemic. The October after the Spencers resumed operations at the house they saw approximately 1,500 people tour the Nightmare Maze, and another 500-600 in house tours.

This led to a topic which is very special to Rebecca, *The Nightmare Maze*.

"We started the Nightmare Maze because there were so many people who thought that they were going to get scared during house tours, that's why they came," Rebecca said. "Half of them came to be scared and the other half of the people who came just wanted to see the inside of the house."

By the second year of doing the tours, Rebecca and two other friends decided to "do something fun and scary", just not inside of the house. From that was born the idea to build a simple maze in the back yard. Everyone seemed to have a blast the first year, so they decided to keep going, and it is still going as of 2023.

"Starting out, we made it as cheap as possible because we didn't know if we would be any good at scaring people," Rebecca said. "People had fun and genuinely wanted to pay to be scared. People really look for that kind of thing."

The Spencers said that events inside of the house have lessened as they have begun to enjoy relaxing in their home, and not having to do all of the work to keep the house ready for tours. The Nightmare Maze on the other hand is going strong (this year's maze is already in the planning process, but no spoilers here, you will have to brave the maze on your



File photos

S.C. Hotchkiss' house (above), and Ladell Allen Bonner (below)



own to see this year's theme.)

"I love watching UAM football players come through the maze," Rebecca said. "They come through holding on to each other, looking like the 'Human Centipede'. There will be 10-12 of them in a group, and without fail, they will get scared and end up tearing up some of our walls trying to get away."

The Spencers make sure that all of the workers at the Nightmare Maze are taken care of. All of the actors and security workers get paid, unlike other similar attractions. They also try their best to help the younger workers out by giving job references and letters to universities and such. All supplies for the maze are also paid for through fundraising. They plan to set up at the Market in the Park this year to raise the

See **ALLEN** Page 26

# ALLEN

Continued from Page 25  
money they need.

In late July, the Spencers will be hosting a book signing in their home. This is a historic collaboration between Mark and Rebecca that will highlight Monticello "then and now". This is the second such book that Mark has done over the years.

There were no ghost sight-

ings or ethereal whispers during this visit to the Allen House, and truthfully none were expected. What did happen was a great conversation with a family who truly loves their home, and welcomed the Advance staff in with open arms. The amount of knowledge passed was nothing short of impressive. Thank you Mark and Rebecca for a wonderful evening in the most famous house in Monticello.


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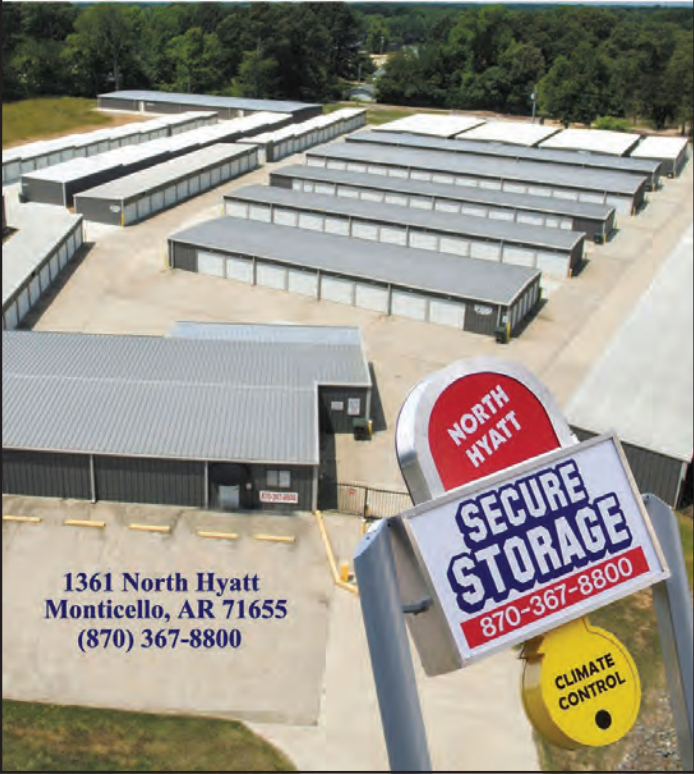
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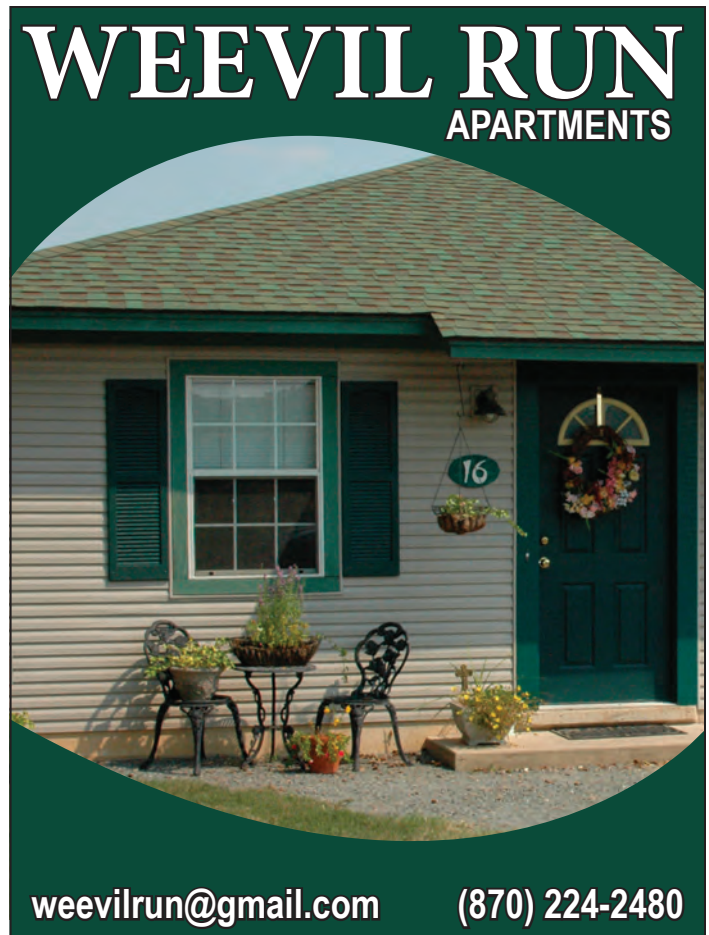


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### **Counseling**

Delta Counseling & Associates  
790 Roberts Drive  
Monticello, AR. 71655  
870-367-2461

Mainline Health Systems, Inc.  
535 Jordan Drive  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-367-6246

The Centers for Youth and  
Families  
P.O. Box 251970  
Little Rock, AR 72225  
501-660-6801

### **Credit Union**

Arkansas Superior Federal  
Credit Union  
1090 Old Warren Road  
Monticello, AR. 71655  
870-460-9080

### **Dentists & Orthodontists**

Monticello Dental Center  
511 N Hyatt St.  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-367-6453

### **Department Stores**

Walmart Supercenter  
427 Hwy. 425 North  
Monticello, AR. 71655  
870-367-0409

### **Dumpster Rental**

Seark Dumpster Rental  
(870) 866-9545

### **Economic Development**

SEAEDD  
721 S. Walnut Street  
Pine Bluff, AR 71601  
(870) 569-1971

### **Employment Service**

#### **& Contractors**

Arkansas Department of  
Workforce Services  
477 South Main  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-367-2476

Employers Service of America  
P.O. Box 1050  
Monticello, AR 71657  
870-367-2727

### **Entertainment**

Malco Monticello Cinema  
120 Dearman Drive  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-367-2219

### **Equipment Rental**

AM Rental & Sales  
1016 Hwy 425 S.  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-367-3715

### **Farm & Ranch Supply**

Atwoods of Monticello  
202 Hwy 425 S  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-460-4744

### **Financial Planning**

Edward Jones, Jay Jones  
975 Hwy 425 N  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-367-4358

Edward Jones, KC Knobloch  
109 Westgate Dr., Suite C  
Monticello, AR 71655  
(870) 367-4256

### **Fitness & Weight Loss**

Alltime Fitness 24/7  
Wal-Mart Access Road  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-367-0676

### **Florist**

Town & Country Florist  
957 Hwy 425 North  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-367-6241

# Monticello-Drew County

## Chamber of Commerce Members

### **Forestry**

Kingwood Forestry Services  
145 Greenfield Dr.  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-367-8567

Price Land Company  
218 Midway Route  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-367-9751

Silvicraft Inc.  
2118 U.S. Hwy. 425 N  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-367-8564

### **Funeral Home**

Stephenson - Dearman  
Funeral Home  
943 Hwy. 425 North  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-367-2451

### **Furniture Dealers**

Discount Merchandise  
206 N. Main  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-460-0038

### **Gift Shop**

City Drug  
201 East Gaines  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-367-5301

The Prescription Pad Pharmacy  
539 Hwy 425 S  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-367-4227

### **Government**

Arkansas Department of  
Workforce Services  
477 S. Main St.  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-367-2476

Arkansas Game and Fish  
Commission  
Southeast Regional Office  
771 Jordan Drive  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-367-3553

Drew County Courthouse  
& Elected Officials  
210 S. Main Street  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-367-6200

### **Grocery Store**

Cash Saver  
345 S. Main  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-367-6231

### **Hardware**

Pomeroy's Hometown Ace  
500 Hwy 425 N  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-412-4680

### **Hardwood Flooring**

Maxwell Hardwood Flooring  
Manufacturing  
190 Wilson Mill Road  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-367-2436

### **Health Care**

Arkansas Hospice  
224 Hwy. 425 S.  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-367-3212

CHI St. Vincent Heart Institute  
766 H.L. Ross Drive  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-412-4302

Comprehensive Pain Care  
West Gaines  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-224-4545

Hospice Home Care  
990 Hwy 425 N  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-367-9008

LifeShare Blood Centers  
2909 Kilpatrick Blvd.  
Monroe, LA 71201-5120  
318-651-4404

Mainline Health Systems, Inc.  
535 Jordan Drive  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-367-6246

Mainline Health Women's  
Clinic  
535 Jordan Drive  
Monticello, AR 71655  
(870) 367-6246

Reinhart Family Healthcare  
777 Jordan Drive  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-460-9777

### **Hearing Center**

Natural Hearing Centers  
127 N Park Drive  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-460-9889

### **Home - Children**

Arkansas Baptist Home for  
Children  
P.O. Box 427  
Monticello, AR 71657  
870-367-5358

Vera Lloyd Presbyterian Home  
745 Old Warren Road  
Monticello, AR. 71655  
870-367-9035

### **Home - Elderly Care**

Belle View Estates  
Rehabilitation and Care Center  
1052 Old Warren Road  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-367-0044

Gentiva Health Community  
Home Care  
420 W. Gaines  
Monticello, AR 71655  
(870) 412-4611

The Woods of Monticello  
A Nightingale Community  
1194 North Chester Street  
Monticello, AR. 71655  
870-367-6852

### **Hospitals**

Drew Memorial Health System  
778 Scogin Dr.  
Monticello, AR. 71655  
870-367-2411

### **Hotels**

Days Inn  
317 Hwy. 425 North  
Monticello, AR. 71655  
870-367-1881

Economy Inn Express  
617 W. Gaines St  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-367-8555

Hampton Inn  
480 Hwy 425 N.  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-367-6600

Holiday Inn Express  
146 Dearman  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-460-0100

Super 8  
306 Hwy. 425 North  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-367-6271

### **Housing**

Drew County Public  
Facilities Board  
444 Hwy 425 North  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-367-3973

### **Hunting & Fishing Supply**

Atwoods  
202 Hwy 425 S  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-460-4744

Walmart  
427 Hwy 425 N  
Monticello, AR 71655  
(870) 367-0409

### **Individuals**

Anderson, Bruce (Dist. Judge)  
Bridewell, Laurie (Circuit Judge  
Div. II)  
Dancy, Felicia  
Harris, Gloria  
Jackson, Curley  
James, Birdie  
Jordan, Alonda  
Koonce, Kelly & Anna  
Nichols, G. Allan  
Nichols, Glenda  
Wells, Ralph

### **Industries/Manufacturing**

Alleguard Construction, Cold-  
Chain, & Packaging Foam  
Solutions  
144 Industrial Drive  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-367-6245



# Monticello-Drew County

## Chamber of Commerce Members

Hood Packaging  
1829 Hwy. 35 E  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-367-8000

Maxwell Hardwood Flooring  
Manufacturing  
190 Wilson Mill Road  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-367-2436

### **Insurance**

James Insurance Agency  
613 W. Bolling St  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-367-6623

Drew County Farm Bureau  
224 South Main  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-367-8585

Merchants & Planters Insurance  
Robert Hargis, Agent  
539 W Gaines  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-460-9090

Mullis Insurance  
209 North Church  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-367-2431

State Farm Insurance,  
Mark Gray  
372 Hwy 425 North  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-367-6261

### **Lawn Mowers & Tractors**

AM Rental & Sales  
1016 Hwy. 425 South  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-367-3715

### **Lending**

Supreme Lending  
497 Hwy-425 North  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-367-6400

### **Logging**

L.D. Long, Inc.  
941 Hwy. 278 East  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-367-5881

### **Lumber**

Interfor  
211 Old Troy Road  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-224-7138  
www.interfor.com

### **Media**

Advance Monticellonian  
advancemonticellonian.com  
314 North Main  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-367-5325

MonticelloLive.com  
Joe Burgess, LLC  
Monticello, AR 71655

Pines Broadcasting, Inc.  
279 Midway Route  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-367-6854

### **Medical Supplies**

United Way - Heart of Arkansas  
United Way  
P. O. Box 798  
North Little Rock, AR, 72115  
501-376-4567

### **Newspapers**

Advance – Monticellonian  
314 North Main  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-367-5325

### **Nutritional Drinks**

Monticello Nutrition  
1011 Hwy 425 S  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-723-4596

### **Office Equipment & Supplies**

El Dorado Printing & Office  
Supply  
Robert Cavaness  
robert@eldoradoprinting.com  
113 East McCloy Street  
Monticello, AR 71655  
(870) 417-4029

South Arkansas Business  
Solutions, Inc.  
3801 Camden Rd.  
Suite 23 (Chapel Village)  
Pine Bluff, AR 71603  
870-879-6400

### **Oil**

O & M Oil Company  
700 East Gaines  
Monticello, AR. 71655  
870-367-6537

### **Optometrist**

SEARK Eyecare  
Drs. Barrett Brown  
and Walker Jarrett  
408 W. McCloy Street  
Monticello, AR 71655  
(870) 367-8511

### **Organizations**

AR Martin Luther King, Jr.  
Commission  
www.arkingdream.org  
(501) 683-1300

Arkansas Heart & Sole  
Therapeutic Equine Center  
1314 Old Warren Rd  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-814-1958

Better Business Bureau  
(501) 664-4888

Drew County Democratic  
Committee  
P.O. Box 103  
Monticello, AR 71657

Historic Preservation Alliance  
of Arkansas  
P.O. Box 305  
Little Rock, AR 72203-0305  
501-372-4757

Miracle League of Southeast  
Arkansas  
P.O. Box 680  
Monticello, AR 71655  
miracleleaguear@yahoo.com

The CALL of Drew County  
P.O. Box 464  
Monticello, AR 71657  
870-308-9502

### **Paint-Retail**

Paint & Lighting Plus Inc.  
528 West Gaines  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-367-3491

### **Pest Control**

Mr. Bug Pest Control  
2021 Hwy 83 North  
Monticello, AR. 71655  
870-367-7889

### **Pharmacy**

City Drug  
201 E. Gaines St.  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-367-5301

The Clinic Pharmacy of  
Monticello  
535 Jordan Drive  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-224-0650

The Prescription Pad Pharmacy  
539 Hwy. 425 S.  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-367-4227

Walmart Pharmacy  
427 Hwy. 425 North  
Monticello, AR. 71655  
870-367-3559

### **Printers**

Drew County Newspapers  
314 North Main  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-367-5325

James Quick Print  
112 East Gaines  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-367-2365

### **Public Library**

Monticello Branch Library  
107 East Jackson  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-367-8583

### **Real Estate Agent**

Bulloch Real Estate  
224 Hwy 425 S.  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-367-6806

Cass Martin Realty  
625 W. Bolling  
Monticello, AR 71655  
(870) 367-6125

# Monticello-Drew County

## Chamber of Commerce Members

Monticello Realty, LLC  
107 Hwy 425 S  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-224-4040

Ray Ryburn Real Estate  
537 W. Gaines  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-367-5524

### **Rehabilitation**

Arkansas Rehabilitation Services  
989 Hwy 425 North  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-367-9669

South Arkansas Rehabilitation  
1200 Old Warren Road  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-367-1548

### **Retail-Store Space**

Cooper Realty Investments  
4332 Central Avenue  
Hot Springs, AR 71913  
501-525-7271

### **Restaurants**

Ameca Mexican Restaurant  
149 North Park Drive  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-460-9348

Bella Luna  
200 N Main St.  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-367-3370

Off the Square Bakery & Grill  
201 E. Gaines St.  
Monticello, AR 71655  
(870) 460-5661

Coffee & Cakes  
292 Hwy 425 S (inside  
Marketplace II)  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-308-6248

Dairy Queen  
266 Hwy 425 N  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-460-9009

Domino's Pizza  
512 Hwy 425 S  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-662-6606

Huddle House  
910 Hwy 425 N.  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-367-8888

Mazzio's Pizza  
509 Hwy 425 North  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-367-6100

Monticello Coffee Company  
316 S Hwy 425  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-412-4574

Popeye's Chicken & Biscuits  
431 Hwy. 425 North  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-367-7393

Ray's Restaurant  
718 Hwy 278 W.  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-367-3292

Sonic Drive-In  
337 U.S. 425  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-367-6476

Taco Bell  
177 Hwy. 425 South  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-367-9229

### **Restaurant Management**

LEESCO  
149 Greenfield Drive  
Monticello, AR 71655

### **Schools**

Advantages of Southeast AR,  
Inc.  
P.O. Box 359  
Monticello, AR 71657  
870-367-6825

Monticello Christian Academy  
P.O. Box 1004  
Monticello, AR 71657  
870-460-0829

UAM  
P.O. Box 3596 UAM  
Monticello, AR 71656

870-367-6811  
UAM School of Business  
P.O. Box 3616  
Monticello, AR 71656  
870-460-1041

UAM College of Technology  
Crossett  
1326 State Highway 52 W  
Crossett, AR 71635  
870-364-6414

UAM College of Technology-  
McGehee  
609 East Ash  
McGehee, AR 71654  
870-222-5360

### **Sports**

UAM Sports  
346 University Drive  
Monticello, AR 71656  
870-460-1026

### **State Agencies**

Arkansas Department of  
Human Services  
Division of the Blind  
P.O. Box 8063  
Little Rock, AR 72203-8068  
501-682-0363

Arkansas Game and Fish  
Commission, Southeast  
Regional Office  
771 Jordan Drive  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-367-3553

### **Surveying**

EFS Geo Technologies  
360 Airport Road  
P.O. Box 90  
Monticello, AR 71657  
870-360-9994  
870-460-9996 (fax)

### **Tax Forms Preparation**

H&R Block  
514 W Gaines St.  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-367-5042

Tierra's Tax Service  
536 Florence Rd.  
Monticello, AR 71655  
(870) 723-5214

### **Truck Stop/Convenience Store**

Patriot Fuel Stop  
821 Hwy 425 S  
Monticello, AR 71655

### **Utility**

Summit Utilities  
1-800-992-7552

AT&T Communications  
1-800-283-2020

### **Veterinary Services**

Monticello Animal Clinic  
831 Hwy 278 W.  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-367-1500

O'Fallon Veterinary Services  
1011 Hwy 425 S.  
Monticello, AR 71655  
870-367-5242

### **Youth Organizations & Center**

Boys and Girls Club of Drew  
County  
175 Henley Dr.  
Monticello, Ar 71655  
(870) 367-2334

Mookadee's  
2624 Hwy 278 W  
Wilmar, AR 71675  
870-224-3350

**Got a  
business?  
Thinking about  
joining a business  
group?**

Call Glenda Nichols,  
Executive Director of the  
Monticello-Drew County  
Chamber of Commerce at  
(870) 367-6741.





# Business & Industry

Monticello is known as the "Hub of Southeast Arkansas" and the businesses and industries that have chosen to locate or remain in Monticello are the key to the city's success in keeping that designation. The city's retail and industrial base has remained stable and strong in recent years, and the key roles that forestry and agriculture play cannot be underestimated. New businesses have continued to locate here, previously-existing businesses have expanded and a number of services and support businesses have sprouted up to help serve the needs of local companies.

City leaders and government officials have done their best to provide a welcoming climate to business, focusing on ways to attract new industries and take advantage of new opportunities. Tenants are already established in the industrial park on Arkansas Highway 35 East, and rail access is in the works to add to the existing utilities on site.

The need for adequate infrastructure and the ability to easily move goods in and out of this area are at the forefront of community leaders' minds, and have led to work on a number of different transportation initiatives. Work is continuing on the forerunner to Interstate 530 in this part of the state, with the first and second legs completed.

Ground was broken in 2011 on the first local segment of Interstate 69, which will eventually cross the United States in a north-south route, linking Canada to Mexico and opening up more trade in this area. The interstate runs just south of Monticello; workers continue to make progress.

Highways are not the only area of infrastructure to which local, state and federal leaders have turned their attention. The Southeast Arkansas Intermodal Authority continues to build on their facility located just west of town across from the Monticello Sports Complex. The governing bodies of Drew County and Monticello have joined with their counterparts in Bradley County and Warren in building this facility which can be utilized to coordinate the moving of goods into and out of this area by several different means of transportation—highway, rail, air and water.

The Intermodal facility, located off U.S. Highway 278 West near the

existing railroad and the connector highway, will join with the nearby Yellow Bend Port on the Arkansas-Mississippi rivers to open up trade with the Port of New Orleans. An access road has been completed, water and sewer projects have been completed as well as the installation of rail siding. The project will receive a major boost as Arkansas Midland Railroad uses a federal grant money to replace its track in the area.

The Monticello Economic Development Commission operates a Workforce Training Center, which has been used to provide a number of classes, including Microsoft programs, Spanish for business and law enforcement, orientation-to-work and Certified Nurse's Assistant courses. The WTC has also offered special training courses to teach employees a particular skill at the request of a local business or industry.

The local adult education program is also housed in the Workforce Training Center, enabling persons to take their General Equivalency Diploma (GED) test there, and the WTC acts as a "one-stop" center for persons wishing to access employment and education services.

Industries like Interfor Corporation, a growth-oriented lumber company with operations in Canada and the United States; Correct Craft, the world's leader in tournament inboard, freshwater fish and utility and recreational boats (and the parent company of Monticello's own SeaArk Boats); and Starko, Inc., a construction company that specializes in the installation of towers, plastic machinery, silos and resin systems, call Monticello and Drew County home. The MEDC is continuing to search for more businesses like these that will bring jobs and stability to the area.

The Monticello-Drew County Chamber of Commerce works hard at promoting the area, stressing the outstanding quality of life, and the county's economic opportunities, educational offerings and recreational activities available in the area.

The chamber also promotes the town's sense of pride and celebrates its history with a nighttime Christmas parade, the annual "Weevil Welcome" cookout for University of Arkansas at Monticello staff and faculty members.

# Community Service

When people live in a community, they often take a personal interest in making that community the best it can be, whether that means aiding the city's less fortunate residents, helping students succeed in school, volunteering time and effort to benefit the local hospital, or participating in a recycling program. Many Drew County residents do some or all of those things, and our community is better for it.

The Monticello Junior Auxiliary sponsors a number of projects which benefit the children of Drew County, including providing backpacks and school supplies for dozens of needy children, collecting clothing and toys for Christmas boxes, purchasing diapers and formula and providing emergency assistance with utility bills to families referred by the Department of Human Services and other non-profit organizations. JA also offers low-cost swimming lessons each summer, and gives a college scholarship to a deserving high school graduate each year.

A number of churches in the area operate food pantry programs, collecting and distributing food for those in need.

Holmes Chapel Presbyterian Church offers an after-school tutoring program, and the Friends of the Library Board helps raise funds to purchase new materials and operate a summer reading program.

The Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) program provides volunteer advocates for children involved in the court system, and the Drew County Fair Board helps sponsor the annual county fair each year.

Dozens of members of the Drew Memorial Health System Auxiliary provide invaluable service to the local hospital, assisting with filing, operating the gift shop, giving directions, and bringing juice, soda,

magazines and newspapers to patients. Auxiliary members also help with infant immunization and assist in the cafeteria. The auxiliary sponsors a number of events each year to raise money to help buy needed equipment for the facility.

The Drew County Log A Load for Kids Committee raises money for the Arkansas Children's Hospital. Log A Load, which is celebrating its 26th year, has raised more than \$7 million for the ACH, and Drew County alone has contributed more than \$1 million to the cause. In 2012, ACH honored Log A Load's efforts by naming the new emergency department after Log A Load For Kids of Arkansas.

The local Rotary Club takes donations for various non-profit organizations throughout the year for children's items, paper goods and more. To contribute to the latest cause, visit their Facebook page.

In recent years, many Monticellonians have begun participating in a voluntary recycling program which has a two-fold goal—keeping garbage out of the landfill and providing job training. The program has enjoyed great success. The items are picked up, sorted and prepared, then sold. Persons in the training program learn job skills as they work at the city's recycling center, which prepares them to move on to jobs in the private sector.

The groups mentioned above are just a few of the clubs, churches, nursing homes, schools and civic organizations providing opportunities for community service for those residents wishing to better the lives of others in Drew County.

# Education

As our world becomes more complex, one thing has become undeniably clear: Only those who are equipped with a strong educational background will be ready to take their part in the next generation of leaders and make the tough decisions in the future.

The strong educational programs offered in the area will equip students to do just that, and are one of Monticello's most tempting incentives to families thinking about relocating here. There are two public school systems. When students complete their high school educations, they can remain here and pursue a degree at the University of Arkansas at Monticello, a four-year college offering a variety of undergraduate degrees and several master's programs.

The Monticello School District educates children from the county's largest city. It has a student population of more than 1,900, with approximately 184 faculty members and 126 support staff. Grades K-12 are housed in one central location between Jordan Drive and Old Warren Road.

Students at Monticello can take a wide range of challenging classes and participate in extracurricular activities including football, basketball, baseball, softball, tennis, golf, cross country, track and field, gymnastics, pom squad and cheerleading. Exposure to the fine arts is an important component of the Monticello School District, with band, choir and art programs attracting many students.

College-bound students can prepare while still in high school by taking Advanced Placement (AP) classes, allowing them to forgo college entry-level English, math and science courses. The AP classes give students credit for college hours and a better chance for scholarships.

The Monticello school district offers students a chance to take classes at its occupational education center, where they have hands-on instruction to learn welding, auto repair, drafting

and health care skills. The district is one of 15 in Arkansas which offer a vocational-technical program.

Each classroom in the Monticello district is equipped with at least one computer and students start using them in kindergarten. An EAST (Environmental And Spatial Technology) lab at the high school requires students to use computer skills and software to complete projects, all of which must have a community-service component.

The Drew Central School District serves students whose families live outside the Monticello city limits and in the unincorporated areas of the county. It has a student population of approximately 1,110, with 77 faculty members and 71 support personnel.

Through the Freedom of Choice Act, parents and children can exercise their option to attend whichever district they feel best meets the needs of their children.

Drew Central also has an EAST lab, and many of the same extracurricular activities offered by Monticello.

Both school districts offer small classes and dedicated teachers and administrators. Both offer band and choir, football, basketball, track and field, tennis, baseball, softball and cheerleading.

Educational opportunities for Monticellonians don't stop after high school. The city offers post-secondary education through the UAM. The institution employs more than 160 professional faculty and staff members with a variety of geographical and ethnic backgrounds and offers both bachelor's and master's level degrees. It also has two satellite campuses in the nearby communities of McGehee and Crossett.

# Health Care

There are few things more important than quality health care, and receiving it can mean the difference between life and death, whether that care comes in the form of critical treatment in an emergency or in the form of routine screenings and tests which catch diseases or problems early.

Visitors and those who have recently moved to Monticello will be pleased to find that the quality of health care available locally is among the best to be found in any area of this size, and the number of procedures that can be done without leaving Drew County is substantial.

A person's first exposure to medicine in Monticello may be a routine checkup to establish a new relationship with a family practitioner, or an unplanned visit to the emergency room as a result of illness or an accident.

If that first exposure is indeed a routine visit, there are multiple general practitioners who operate clinics in Monticello to diagnose and treat the basic health care needs of patients. They treat a broad spectrum of ailments and conditions, and offer some in-house screenings, as well as referrals to specialists in the event one is needed. Monticello is also home to two full-time

OB/GYNs, as well as a general surgeon.

If a health care need arises as the result of a sudden accident or illness, however, residents can be assured of receiving first-class care at DMHS, a 60-bed facility located on Scogin Drive.

Additionally, the labor, delivery and recovery unit was relocated and expanded to three times the size of the current unit. The main entrance and the auxiliary-operated gift shop was also expanded in size.

Drew Memorial's emergency department is designed to provide privacy and security for patients utilizing it, and features a number of treatment rooms, including ones devoted to trauma, cardiac events and casting of broken limbs. The ER is staffed 24 hours a day.

DMHS also operates an outpatient clinic which offers a variety of specialists in such areas as gynecology, cardiology, podiatry, orthopedics, urology, nephrology and ophthalmology. The hospital is further equipped with an a chemotherapy clinic, a sleep center, a rehabilitation facility and an intensive outpatient psychiatric center used for group therapies.



# Recreation

Hunter. Fisherman. Runner. Golfer. Walker. Swimmer. Committed spectator. No matter which of those categories you fall into, Monticello is able to supply the means to satisfy your leisure time desires.

In 1997 and 2007, Monticello voters approved a special one-cent sales tax, a portion of which was dedicated to creating more recreational facilities, with an emphasis on the community's youth.

A significant amount of the revenue from the sales tax was used to purchase land and build a sports complex approximately four miles west of town, headed toward Wilmar on U.S. Highway 278. The complex currently offers nine soccer fields, which draw hundreds of children and parents to the site every fall to compete in the Monticello Youth Soccer Association. The complex is equipped with six baseball and softball fields as well as a large, centrally-located concession stand. Recently, the Miracle League of Southeast Arkansas added a field there to afford disabled children and adults the opportunity to play baseball.

However, baseball, softball and soccer are by no means the only leisure choices available for area residents. The city of Monticello operates three parks, a public swimming pool and several lighted tennis courts.

McCloy Park, which is found on the south side of the city, features two large pavilions that serve as gathering places for many community events and family celebrations. The park includes several groupings of playground equipment, a popular public swimming pool, three baseball fields, lighted tennis courts, basketball courts and a well-used walking track.

The Monticello Marlins' youth swim team practices and competes in meets at the city park pool during the summer, and dozens of Drew County children take advantage of low-cost swimming lessons provided by the Junior Auxiliary of Monticello at the pool each year.

Finally, the park is also home to Hyatt Field, where hundreds turn out to watch the Monticello junior and senior football teams each fall. The field has been renovated in recent years (now including a turf field), and the stadium is often home to tailgate parties or other pregame activities prior to the Billies' and Junior Billies' matchups against rival teams from throughout the southern part of the state.

Jordan Park, located on the east side of the city, has a pavilion, community center, basketball courts, baseball fields, playground and splash pad. The Western Pines Mini-Park, located in the Western Pines subdivision, also has tennis courts, basketball courts, a playground and a pavilion.

The University of Arkansas at Monticello's Weevil Pond is also home to a walking track which provides walkers with a scenic route around the water's edge where they can observe the ducks, which inhabit the pond, as they take in the college atmosphere and activities. The Monticello School District's track on Old Warren Road is also available for use by the public.

Monticello's 1,550-acre lake, located north of the city, has become a recreational refuge. Lake Monticello offers a place to water ski, jet ski, swim, fish, picnic and fly radio-controlled aircraft. New to the lake site is the Lake Woods Multi-Use trail. Biking, walking, nature watching and more can be experienced at the state of the art trail in Southeast Arkansas.

The construction of a new library was completed in 2016 and is located at the north end of Main Street. It features lots of computers, beautiful reading spaces and a walled garden, as well as a place for children's activities.

Drew County is also home to some of the nation's finest deer hunting, and sportsmen also enjoy duck hunting at Seven Devils Swamp each winter.

# Religion

Finding a religious home is another aspect of life that must be considered when residents choose to make the move to a new community. There are many such "homes" to be found in Drew County, with more than 300 churches and religious communities found here.

Those churches and communities come in all denominations: Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopal, Catholic, Church of Christ, Mormon, Assembly of God, African Methodist Episcopal, Seventh Day Adventist, Jehovah's Witness, Pentecostal—and more.

Persons of the Jewish faith can also find a welcoming congregation in a synagogue in a nearby community. Special efforts are being made to reach out to Spanish-speaking Christians in the area, with a program devoted to helping them assimilate and improve their English skills housed at First United Methodist Church.

The busy schedule of church programs, revivals, musical concerts, vacation Bible schools and youth activities are evidence of the support local church members show for their houses of worship. They are also eager to share their faith with others, inviting new friends to attend services with them and including them in fellowship activities.

A group of local churches are also attempting to combat local hunger by operating food pantry programs, which collect and distributes food for those in need on a weekly basis.

Churches in the smaller communities outside Monticello often serve a dual purpose—acting as both social and religious gathering places for the residents.

Continuing church traditions in the next generation is an important focus, and during the summer, children may take part in many religious activities, attending vacation Bible schools and participating in other church-sponsored programs. Several churches also offer Approved Workmen Are Not Ashamed (AWANA) Bible-centered clubs for their younger members during the school year.

Youth groups and special services targeted for their demographic provide good reasons for teenagers to be active in their church. Many local congregations sponsor special events, youth ministries and after-school tutoring programs.

Drew County's churches offer something for everyone in any age group. Several offer nurseries and day cares, while others have groups or activities for senior citizens, often sponsoring meals or trips. Marrieds and singles are both encouraged to participate in church activities, and those who are hurting because of death or divorce can find solace in grief and divorce recovery classes.

A series of "Shepherd's Center" classes alternates a couple of times a year between different churches and offers fun courses in such subjects as bridge and knitting, along with book reviews, history discussions, exercise and fellowship.

# Entertainment

Monticello may be a small town, but the number of fun things to do here is big.

Let's start with going to the movies. Cinema buffs can view first-run films at the six-screen Malco Hollywood Cinema. The 1,056-seat cinema, the only theater within a 50-mile radius of Monticello, draws thousands of moviegoers from throughout the region, as well as providing entertainment opportunities for those traveling through Monticello on business. It has full digital sound and was the first theater in the United States to use all Klipsch speakers, widely regarded by experts as some of the best in the world.

The movie theatre has recently undergone exterior renovations and there are plans for interior renovations in the coming months.

The University of Arkansas at Monticello also offers a variety of activities for the community. Each semester, the music department presents a musical theater production, and there are seasonal concerts, senior recitals, and guest artists.

The art department holds regular exhibitions at the Fred J. Taylor Library and Technology Center, drawing works from regionally famous artists as well as UAM students.

The college also sponsors the Governor Winthrop Rockefeller Distinguished Lecture Series.

For more than a quarter of a century, the Southeast Arkansas Concert Association has provided cultural activities for the area. The concert association has hosted performances of Shakespearean plays, ballet and modern dance, and well-known recording artists such as legendary soul singer Percy Sledge and country favorite Collin Raye.

The group aims to include something for everyone in its offerings each year, from classical and instrumental music to swing and big band

sounds.

Season tickets are available, or may be purchased individually for each event. From more information contact the Southeast Arkansas Concert Association at 870-460-1060.

The G.O.A.T is one of the newer entertainment hubs in Drew County, Offering pizza, skating, pool and axe throwing, there is something for the entire family at The G.O.A.T.

Food Truck Friday has been a social sensation in Monticello since it's beginning. Food vendors from all across the state come to Monticello to let residents try new, fun foods. Locations and vendors rotate. Check Monticello Food Truck Friday's Facebook page for the next time, date and place.

The local Veterans of Foreign Wars chapter sponsors a dance each Friday night, with live music at the VFW building located in McCloy Park.

The Drew County Historical Society operates the Drew County Museum, housed in the beautiful two-story former home of Garvin Cavaness on South Main Street.

Bowlers can find a welcoming community at Timberlodge Lanes, which hosts several different weekly leagues and the building has recently undergone significant upgrades.

The Monticello Riding Club sponsors a rodeo each year in conjunction with the Drew County Fair, as well as "playdays" and regional high school rodeo competitions.

Seasonal entertainment includes the annual Christmas parade, sponsored by the chamber of commerce; the Possum Valley Fun Day held each October, and the Drew County Fair and Livestock Exhibition, held each fall.

# Real Estate

The average sale price of a home in Monticello is around \$140,000, with the starter homes selling for around \$100 a square foot and upscale homes—those larger than 2,500 square feet—selling for around \$125 a square foot. Whatever a person or family's price range, Monticello and Drew County offer a housing choice to fit it—whether the family is one person or a dozen, of moderate means or wealthy, and oriented toward neighborhood life or preferring acreage in the country.

Different sizes, different types. Dwellings here cover the full spectrum, from small efficiency apartments for singles and young professionals to big family homes with spacious lawns and even guest quarters. There are single-family homes, duplexes, condominiums and townhouses, as well as individual apartments and complexes with their own amenities such as swimming pools, business centers and gymnasiums.

There are older homes in long-established neighborhoods, and new homes in recently-built subdivisions that have covenants regulating issues of concern to property owners.

Several of the homes in Monticello have been placed on the National Historic Register and the Main Street Historic District provides a number of outstanding examples of different styles of architectural design. The owners have worked diligently to maintain the charm and value of those houses.

A safe, kid-friendly neighborhood in which to raise children is of paramount importance for many families. There are many such neighbor-

hoods in Monticello, with easy access to parks and other recreational facilities such as walking tracks, the municipal pool and baseball fields.

Because Monticello is a college town, apartments and patio homes have sprung up in several areas around the city to accommodate the student residents who live here most or all of the year during their school tenure.

Efforts are also being made by the city to tear down and clean up abandoned homes and vacant lots in an effort to encourage redevelopment in older parts of the city.

In the summer of 2011, renovations were completed on the old Ridge-way Hotel, once a showplace but long abandoned, and it reopened to provide 32 units of housing for low-income senior citizens. The hotel and two adjacent buildings have transformed an entire city block, and brought a neglected area to life again.

Monticello offers several options for the senior citizen population. Annwood Apartments, located on Conrad Street, provide independent housing for seniors within a community environment.

Grand Manor is also available for senior living. They offer communal living with a full service medical and hospitality staff and patio homes.

Many people in Drew County prefer the charm of country living, and have chosen to build homes outside the city limits. These dwellings offer the peace and serenity of the country, but are located near enough to the conveniences of town to combine the best of both worlds.

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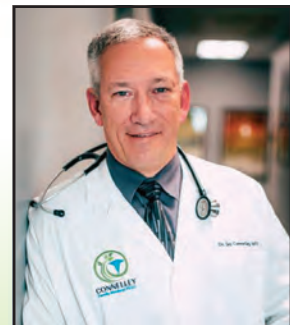
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