

The Murfreesboro Diamond

Wednesday, July 8, 2026
Issue 1 • 1 Section • 6 Pages

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Unearth a Story this summer at library

MURFREESBORO -- The Murfreesboro chapter of the Pike County Library will host “Unearth A Story” summer reading program events this July on Tuesdays and Fridays at 1 p.m.

The library will host a dinosaur scratch art program on Friday July 10.

Dinosaur sand art will be the feature on Tuesday, July 14, with the Arkansas Game and Fish holding a program on Friday, July 17.

The Dolly Parton Imagination Library program will be held on Tuesday, July 21, with colored sand art held on Friday, July 24.

No registration is needed for any of the events.

For more information, contact the library at (870) 285-2575 or e-mail murfreesboropubliclibrary@gmail.com. The library is open on Tuesdays-Friday from 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. and closed from noon-1 p.m. for lunch.

New book arrivals to the library may be viewed at www.facebook.com/Murfreesboro.Library.



Submitted photos/PC4-H

FOR THE COMMUNITY ... Pike County 4-H Teen Leaders recently spent a weekend afternoon sorting and delivering food to several blessing boxes in the county, and also visited the recycling dumpster to do their part in keeping our community clean and caring for the environment. “We are so proud of these young leaders for giving up part of their weekend to serve others. Their kindness, hard work, and willingness to help are making a real difference in Pike County!” said Pike County 4-H Program Assistant Shannon Ballard.

Town Hall over ATVs on city streets July 13

MURFREESBORO -- The City of Murfreesboro will host a town hall meeting on Tuesday, July 13 at 5:30 p.m. over the the topic of ATV use on city streets.

The city is considering a pending ordinance to allow the issue.

The city council will hold their July meeting following the town hall at 6 p.m.

4-H continues summer cereal drive

MURFREESBORO -- Pike County 4-H is seeking to provide children out of school with the most important meal of the day.

As such, the effort is seeking non-perishable and kid-friendly breakfast items such as cereal, oatmeal, toaster pastries and granola bars from June 1-July 31.

“This is for children and families in the county who might otherwise go without,” said Pike County 4-H assistant Shannon Ballard.

Items may be dropped off at either the Pike County Extension offices in Murfreesboro or at the Bainum Library in Glenwood.

Benefit for Woods to be held July 25 in Delight

DELIGHT -- A benefit for Delight resident and city council board member Keith Woods will be held on Sunday, July 26 at noon in the Delight School Cafeteria.

Woods recently underwent surgery to remove a tumor, which was cancerous, and is now at the beginning of a long and difficult road of treatment.

Event creators said that “this is one of the hardest battles Keith and his family has ever faced. They are holding tightly to their faith, believing in the power of prayer and trusting God every step of the way. We would be grateful for your continued prayers, love, and support as we walk this journey together. Thank you for standing with Keith and the family -- every prayer, donation and act of kindness means more than words can express.”

The event will serve pulled pork dinners with all the trimmings. An online silent auction will be held the week prior to the event and will end on July 25.

A utility trailer donated by Diamond City Trailers will also be raffled off.

Anyone who would like to help is asked to contact Debbie Nash (870) 230-3641 or Stephanie Ivy (870) 260-8409.

Submit Your Local News to the Diamond!
mdiamond@windstream.net
Call (870) 285-2723 For More Information

Alcohol effort enters final month to try to make ballot

Local businessman says change needed with Murfreesboro ‘diminishing and going away’

MURFREESBORO -- With August 1 as the deadline to turn in petitions to the Pike County Clerk, the Vote Pike County Wet Committee (VPCWC) is asking for help from all the county registered voters in effort to achieve a ballot spot on this November’s election.

The group currently has 600 petitions and must collect around 1,800 more in the remaining time. A hot dog benefit was held last weekend in Murfreesboro and collected around 30 petitions.

By signing a petition, it will permit the issue to go to a ballot referendum for the voters to approve or disapprove of alcohol sales in Pike County, the group must collect the signatures of 38% of the county’s registered voters -- 2,291 to be exact -- to clear the legal hurdle for countywide consideration. The group currently sits at about 26% of their goal.

“If you have ever wanted to do even a small part to help Pike County grow, there is simply no easier way than to sign one petition,” said Lisa Harvill. “A growing community creates opportunities. A declining population can mean fewer businesses, amenities, recreational activities, reduced tax revenue, lower school enrollment, workforce shortages, and fewer services like healthcare. Strong communities thrive when they attract new residents, jobs, and investment for future generations.”

Local businessman Jack Bonds said the math is simple.

“If 1,000 Pike County residents purchase an average of \$20 worth of alcohol a week, that is over one million dollars in taxable expenditures over the course of a year. If Pike County can draw the same revenue from Montgomery and Howard Counties, then it is three million dollars a year of taxable expenditures ... and that’s not including what we would get from tourists visiting our area. The county and municipalities can certainly use that extra boost.”

Ultimately, Bonds said it is up to the people to make this happen or not.

“This is your moment to make a difference in sales, taxation, revenue and job opportunities, and all it requires today is your signature. This is it, and by August 1 it will be gone. We’re working toward big things for the county from a tourism standpoint. Bottom line, if you don’t sign a petition and we fall one short, you can’t complain in the future. Alcohol is part of tourism infrastructure across the nation, and it is the single best thing we can do to affect that industry here. All future growth of the county is tied to it.”

“Since the last election, four years ago, we have had a continued population decrease. We have attempted change this with building the grocery store and continued growth with community leaders. The whole point of it is that this decline in population reflects in our communities through businesses, schools and churches. We must take steps to grow ... people tell me all

the time that they like Murfreesboro the way it is, but it’s not the way it is -- we are diminishing and going away. I want to see Murfreesboro back to 1,700-1,800 people the way it was when I moved here -- that’s the way it was. The election allowing alcohol sales in the county is not just a monetary decision, but a decision for community growth.”

And for those against the issue, Bonds said simply that “if you can show me a better way, I’ll hold the flag with you ... but all we have is tourism, and it’s hard to have expanded tourism numbers without alcohol.”

For more information on the group, visit Facebook page 2026 VOTE PIKE COUNTY WET.

For more information or questions on the effort, call Lisa Harvill at (870) 557-1860. Those interested in signing a petition can visit:

- Chimney Rock Grocery, Murfreesboro
- Harvill Insurance, Murfreesboro
- Gypsy Underground Flea Market, Murfreesboro
- OK Café, Glenwood
- Tobacco Store, Glenwood
- Langley Store, Langley

Residents can also look for popup “Sign The Petition” tents, or call the number above to verify the location of volunteers at locations across the county.

Local business closed following inspection

BY JOHN BALCH
Nashville News-Leader staff

MURFREESBORO -- Murfreesboro business KMB Fuel Stop & Nanny’s Kitchen was shut down last week for state fire code violations, according to John Hogue, fire marshal inspector with the Arkansas State Fire Marshal’s Office.

Hogue issued stop work orders on Thursday, July 2 stemming from an inspection conducted specifically on the fuel dispensing portion of the business.

Hogue wrote in his inspection report obtained by this newspaper that he had contacted business owner Henry Ward on May 6 to set up a May 8 inspection date which centered on the above-ground fuel tanks.

Hogue reported that during the inspection Ward informed him that he had contacted the local fire department and state fire marshal’s office and “was advised that he did not need any permits or inspections to install the above ground tanks.”

Hogue told this newspaper Monday morning that the state has no record of being contacted by Ward concerning permits or inspections of the fuel tanks and that Ward did not provide any record of the contact. Murfrees-

boro Fire Chief Ricky Branch told the newspaper last week that the only city permit required involved the awning covering the fuel tanks on the parking lot.

On May 13, Hogue spoke with Branch and advised him of the situation and the violations that were noted. Branch requested that Hogue

and the state fire marshal’s office “make the notification of the violations and the stop work

BUSINESS

Continued on Page 2



Staff photos

CLOSING ... Gas was removed from the tanks at KMB Fuel Stop following orders from the state last week for the business to cease sales.

BUSINESS Continued from Page 1

order due to a conflict between him and Mr. Ward.” On that same day, Hogue spoke with the City of Murfreesboro’s attorney, Aaron Brasel, and advised of him of the situation involving the conflict and that “a stop order was appropriate for the violations noted at the time of the inspection.”

The violations involved permits for the tanks and the lack of construction documents required to be submitted for review and approval prior to the installation.

On June 15, Hogue was notified by a letter from Murfreesboro Mayor Jim O’Neal that granted the state agency jurisdiction over the city to proceed with all matters at the business, specifi-

cally the alleged noncompliance with the fuel tanks.

Plans were for only the fuel portion of the business to be shut down July 2, but Hogue confirmed Monday that he conducted another inspection that day involving the eatery and the building, which was damaged by fire in December 2023, and stop orders were issued for that portion of the business.

“This is an ongoing investigation,” Hogue said.

This newspaper issued a request Monday for the second inspection report, under the provisions of the Arkansas Freedom of Information Act. As of Tuesday morning’s deadline, the report had not been provided.

When contacted Tuesday morning, Ward said he questions the “spur of the moment” shut down and that he is “waiting to get some answers.”

“If it was such a public safety risk, why has it been open for a year?” Ward said.

Ward added that he was told by Hogue during the initial inspection only about a lock issue where fuel is loaded and how it could possibly be remedied. When he received a copy of the inspection report, he said he was surprised to see the long list of violations noted by Hogue.

Ward said he is unsure of his plans and that he is still very angry about the situation. The day the business was shut down the closure was initially announced on the store’s roadside sign that read: “Closed Due to Cowards in Our Town.” Ward said the sign was his idea and that he still stands by the statement.

The sign has since been changed and now reads: “Thank You Customers.”



Staff/Submitted photos

SIGN CHANGES TONE ... After being closed, the sign at KMB Fuel/Nanny's Kitchen read “Closed Due To Cowards In Our Town,” but was changed a few days later to read “Thank You Customers.”

Back to School Bash, clothing drive aim to have kids ready for upcoming school year

GLENWOOD -- The Pike County Hometown Coalition, in conjunction with Pike County 4-H, will host a Back to School Fair on Sunday, July 26 at the Pike County Fairgrounds in Glenwood from 2-4 p.m.

Activities will include bouncy houses, free clothes, a petting zoo and free groceries (while supplies last). Also included will be arts and crafts, face painting, hair stylists, school supplies, books, snacks, music, health checks, sports and community resources.

The free event invites all school aged children and parents to attend to get a “great start to the school year.”

4-H HOLDS CORRESPONDING CLOTHING DRIVE

Pike County 4-H is holding their fourth annual clothing drive this summer.

“Have clothes you’re not sure what to do with? Let 4-H take them off your hands! This year we will have our 4th annual clothing drive in conjunction with the Back-To-School Fair spon-

sored by the Pike Hometown Health Coalition in Glenwood on July 26,” said Pike County 4-H Program Assistant Shannon Ballard.

Under the motto “let’s clothe our community with kindness,” the event will accept donations of clothing at the Pike County Extension Office in Murfreesboro prior to the July 26 deadline.

“Your donations help make a big difference,” said Ballard.

Man charged with break-ins, allegedly seen running from scene while shooting

MURFREESBORO -- A Bonnerdale man has been charged in connection with Pike County break-ins that took place in May and June.

Robert Arther Patton, 50, was charged June 30 with felony breaking or entering and theft of property.

According to case information, the Pike County Sheriff’s Department began investigating thefts on May 29 from a residence on Highway 70 West that also involved a “shots-fired compli-

ant.”

The victims advised their van had been broken into the previous night and that they suspected Patton due to a prior interaction with him. Patton had reportedly accompanied his girlfriend to the home in question for her to provide home health services. For an unknown reason, Patton was no longer allowed at the home and he then allegedly made repeated phone calls and threatening statements to one of the victims.

One of the victims said he personally saw Patton with two large bags while running from the area of his property to a maroon Jeep parked along Highway 70 West. A neighbor also observed Patton caring the two bags and running toward the Jeep and fired his 9mm four times trying to hit the Jeep’s tires. The neighbor was unsure if he hit his mark.

On June 2, one of the victims reported that more items had been stolen from their property valued at more than \$5,000.

AGFC taking applications for 2026 alligator hunting season through July 31

LITTLE ROCK -- Applications for the 2026 Arkansas alligator hunting season are available at www.agfc.com until midnight July 31. Anyone interested in pursuing alligators on public land in Arkansas must apply for one of the nine hunting locations within Arkansas’s three open Alligator Management Zones.

The following locations have been allotted public hunting permits for the 2026 alligator hunting season (Sept. 18-21 and Sept. 25-28). The local zone includes:

- Alligator Management Zone 1
- Millwood Lake — 13 permits available (harvest quota of 9 alligators)

- Dr. Lester Sitzes III Bois D’ Arc Lake — 5 permits available
 - Little River WMA — 2 permits available
 - Lake Erling — 1 permit available
- Millwood Lake again will have a harvest quota instituted in addition to a permit draw.
- “We are allowing more permits on Millwood, so more people have an opportunity to hunt, but as soon as the quota of nine alligators is reached, the hunt will end,” AGFC Herpetologist Amanda Bryant said. “We are hoping people will be more incentivized to harvest their alligator instead of waiting too long and wasting the tag. Most cases of unfilled tags aren’t that the

hunter didn’t have opportunities at legal alligators, but that they held out for something bigger until it was too late and the hunt ended.”

Murfreesboro Diamond

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Located in the County Seat of Pike County • Murfreesboro, Arkansas

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Any erroneous statement published in the newspaper

will be gladly and promptly corrected if called

to the attention of the management.

SUBMISSION DEADLINE

FRIDAYS AT 3:00 P.M.

PUBLIC NOTICE

SOUTH PIKE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

ATTENTION PARENTS:

The state and federal guidelines require that all Special Education due process records are destroyed within six years after a students leaves the special education program. You have the right to review and pick up your child’s due process records. You may call the local Special Education Administrator’s office between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. to make arrangements to pick up the records.

Records that are not picked up will be destroyed July 30.

These records are NOT your child’s permanent school records. These records contain special education due process forms and evaluation.

If you have any questions you can contract the Special Education Administrator at 870-285-2313.

(s.p.c.s.d., 121w., 1,2)

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October 22-29, 2026 • 8 days/7 nights • \$2055

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Twinkling Lights & Delights:

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Dec 3-8, 2026 • 6 days/5 nights • \$1260

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December 5-12, 2026 • 8 days/7 nights • \$1799

Price based on double occupancy per person & includes all transportation, hotels/cruises, many meals, all admissions & all taxes. In-route pick ups available.

LETTER TO EDITOR POLICY

All letters to the editor must be signed, along with a phone number (that will not be published) provided for confirmation purposes. The Murfreesboro Diamond reserves the right to edit letters for length and clarity. Letters must not be libelous or contain any profanities.

Send Letters to P.O. Box 550 • Murfreesboro, AR 71958 or e-mail to mdiamond.editor@windstream.net

PUBLIC NOTICE

Reminder: Per Ordinance No 2026-2

Starting August 1, 2026

Sewer will increase to a Base Rate of \$15.55 and a Usage Per 1,000 gallons of \$8.10

This publication was paid for by the Murfreesboro Water Deptmartmenet. The amount paid for this publication is \$ 25.00

(m.w.d. 1)

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Submitted photo/PC4-H

JAR-IFFIC JOB ... Last week, Pike County 4-H'ers made their own closed terrariums during the Jarrassic Gardens workshop. Youth learned about fossils found in the Pike County area, made their own plant fossil imprints, and made flower bouquets. They also learned about soil types and what plants need in order to care for their very own closed terrariums. Closed Terrariums are a self sustaining eco-system typically housed in a glass or plastic jar. The water cycles continuously through evaporation, condensation, and precipitation, while plants and soil recycle nutrients. Once these eco-systems are established, it requires almost zero maintenance and rarely needs watering. Pike County Extension Agricultural agent Codie McAlister said that any children interested in learning more about Pike County 4-H or making your own terrarium can contact the Pike County Extension Office at (870) 285-2161.

Safety tips to determine if your child ready to stay home alone

BY REBEKAH HALL
University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture

LITTLE ROCK — To help parents determine if their child is ready to stay at home alone, an extension family life expert says it is critical to focus on maturity, emergency preparedness and teaching children age-appropriate independence.

Brittney Schrick, extension associate professor and family life specialist for the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture, said today's generation of parents has been handed a "really difficult task."

"Parents today are expected to be there all the time, to be constant shepherds of their children, and to focus on their physical safety to a degree that often causes guilt in the grown-ups and delays development of independence and life skills in kids," Schrick said.

Schrick said that though it can be intimidating for parents, teaching a child the skills needed to stay home alone — and then letting them use those skills and build on them over time — shows children several important things.

"This shows your child that you trust them to take care of themselves and your shared space, that you believe they can make good decisions, and that they are worthy of that trust," Schrick said. "Equipping a child to complete a task helps them build confidence that they can do things and do them well. If grown-ups are always around, kids can't gain the confidence to make mistakes and learn how to fix them."

ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

Schrick said she suggests parents start by asking their children how they feel about staying home alone.

"If they are uncomfortable or afraid of staying home alone, they will have a harder time making safe decisions, and they may have more difficulty wanting to stay home when they are older," Schrick said.

For children who say they are up to the task, Schrick said she suggests "letting kids gradually stay home for a little longer as they get older."

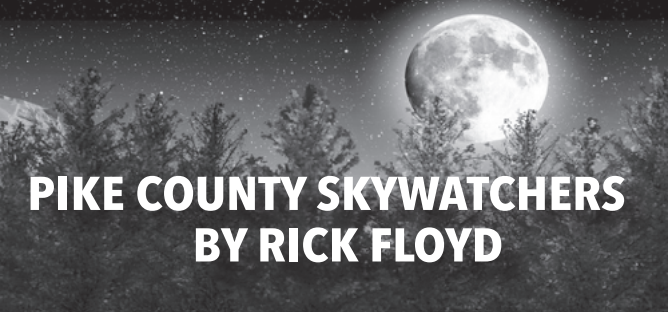
"This lets the child get used to staying alone, and it lets the grown-ups get a good idea of how their child will behave," Schrick said.

Schrick said parents should consider the following questions to help determine if their child is ready to stay home alone, and for how long:

- Does your child have a way to contact you, another adult, or first responders in case of an emergency? "If not, they should not be left alone," Schrick said. "Ideally, they would have a phone that does not rely on internet access to work; however, if internet access is reliable in your area, an internet-based phone, tablet or other device can be used."
- How does your child respond in a crisis? "Does your child get nervous or easily panicked?" Schrick said. "Do they have a hard time remembering what to do if something out of the ordinary happens? If they don't handle emergencies calmly, they should probably not be left alone for a very long time."
- Do you trust your child to follow house rules, handle things around the home safely, and avoid dangerous situations? "If not, they are likely not mature enough to stay home alone," Schrick said.

In general, Schrick said children should be able to do the following:

- Read well enough to follow simple instructions.
- Understand what to do in an emergency, such as a fire or storm.
- Know who to call in an emergency and have a way to make that call.
- Be able to feed themselves simple snacks and meals.



African dust returns locally

It is back. A cloud of dust from the Saharan desert has moved over Arkansas having traveled over the Atlantic Ocean to spread a thin blanket not just over us but over a wide area of our region as well.

The high atmosphere dust will make for colorful sunrises and sunsets, and the daytime sky will often have a milky tint. The enhanced colors at both ends of the day are one of the positive effects of this cloud. A downside might be increased respiratory problems for some people, or at least runny noses for others. The bigger picture of pros and cons include concerns about an increase of algae blooms along the shores of the ocean and the gulf due to the high iron content in the dust feeding the blooms. There are, however, other nutrients that settle from the cloud, and over the years they add up to a considerable boost to our soil.

It is no surprise that this annual dust cloud also has an impact on weather. The sunlight shielding dust cover actually cools the waters of the Atlantic enough to cause a temporary pause in tropical storm formation which often lead to hurricane formation.

This brings up another aspect to the Saharan dust story. Since 2007 twenty African nations along with the United Nations have been engaged in a massive effort to control erosion and to inhibit the formation of the windblown dust clouds by planting trees and other plants that are suited to the environment of the region. The project, The Great Green Wall, will hopefully reverse desertification and return green to that vast area. The positive aspects of this are not completely without concern. Obviously, less dust cover will allow more heating of ocean waters, and places on our side of the Atlantic will possibly see an increase in tropical storm formation. Time will tell if the reforestation will be a success, and if there are less than desirable consequences elsewhere.

A while back a few words were mentioned that referred to phobias people might have for certain sky related things. Helio-phobia, for example, is a fear of The Sun, sunlight and such.

There are of course words for positive feelings that a person might have for sky events. Those words often end in "phile" or "philia" which are derived from the Greek word "phila." It is one of the four main Greek words for love. Phila usually means a great affection for something or someone. So, if you love the night you could have Nyctophilia, and you could also simultaneously be a Selenophile or lover of the Moon. A lover of the night could also be an astrophile, one who loves stars in their night sky.

More down to Earth words describe a person who has cere-unophilia (seh-rawn-oh-fil-ee-uh) as one who is deeply drawn to thunderstorms. Arguably, most people love a psithurism (sith-ur-iz-um) defined as the sound of a gentle wind moving through trees. Of course, if you have dendrophobia, the fear of trees, you are not likely to enjoy a psithurism.

Obituaries

George Larry Graves, 86

George Larry Graves, age 86 of Murfreesboro, Arkansas, passed away on Wednesday, July 1, 2026 at his home. He was born on August 23, 1939 in Norman, to the late Benjamin and Jewell Howard Graves.

Mr. Graves was a member of the First United Methodist Church in Murfreesboro. In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his loving wife of sixty-five years, Ella Patricia Buck Graves; and his brother, Howard Graves.

Those left to cherish his memory include his three children and their spouses, Pam Pipkins and John of Mayflower, Gary Graves and Patti of Murfreesboro and Penny Lamb and Randy of Murfreesboro; three siblings, Ralph Graves of Norman, Linda Mitchell of Fort Smith and Stan Graves (Paula) of Norman; his brother-in-law, Andy Buck and Karen of Pea Ridge; Four grandchildren; Four great-grandchildren; one great-great-grandchild; as well as a host of nieces, nephews, other relatives and friends.

The family received friends on Sunday, July 5, 2026 at Latimer Funeral Home in Murfreesboro.

A funeral service was held to honor Mr. Graves' on Monday, July 6, 2026 in the Latimer Funeral Chapel in Murfreesboro. Interment followed at the Shockey Chapel Cemetery near Norman, under the direction of Latimer Funeral Home of Murfreesboro.

You may send an online sympathy message at www.latimerfuneralhome.com

- Know what to do if someone knocks on the door.

AGE GUIDELINES

Schrick said Arkansas does not have a specific age at which it is legal for a child to stay home alone.

"Some school districts may have specific limits for a child to get off the bus alone, but there is no statewide mandate," she said.

Schrick said children under the age of 9 should generally not be left alone for longer than 20-30 minutes, though she said that "every child is different, and every situation is different."

An older child, between ages 9-11 or so, should not be left alone for more than a couple of hours, Schrick said.

"Boredom can sometimes get the best of them, and they may end up getting into things that can cause safety hazards, damage or embarrassment," Schrick said.

Young teens, aged 12-14, can generally be left alone for longer periods, but they need to be given clear rules about what is acceptable for them to do and not do.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Schrick said that when it comes to emergencies, preparing a child to respond to unlikely but dangerous situations, as well as more likely but less severe ones, is essential.

"Focus on the 'what to do' rather than the emergency itself," Schrick said. "If you live in a neighborhood where certain types of emergencies may be more likely — such as power outages, flooding or violence — be sure to keep those things in mind when choosing what to prepare your child for."

"If they are common, they may have watched you deal with those things before, so you can use examples from previous experiences," Schrick said.

Schrick said children should be taught to respond to the following situations:

- Fire: "This includes a small fire, like a popcorn bag in the microwave, and a large fire they might need to leave the house and call the fire department for," Schrick said. Keep a fire extinguisher, smoke detectors and a fire blanket in the house in accessible locations. While older children may be taught how to put out small fires, children should understand that their first

HOME ALONE Continued on Page 5

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UAMS

HOUSE CALL

Dr. Bala Simon is an associate professor in the Department of Family and Preventive Medicine in the College of Medicine at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences.

Q: What is sarcoidosis?

A: Sarcoidosis is an inflammatory disease in which red and swollen lumps or nodules known as granulomas form. The condition is mostly commonly found in the lungs but can occur in other parts of the body. The American Lung Association estimates that sarcoidosis affects between 150,000-200,000 people in the United States.

The cause of sarcoidosis is unknown. While the condition does involve the immune system, sarcoidosis is not considered an autoimmune disease. Sarcoidosis cannot be inherited, but the risk of developing it increases if a close relative is affected. Many cases of sarcoidosis are diagnosed in those between the ages of 25 and 40. It occurs in women slightly more than men.

Symptoms of sarcoidosis include fatigue, fever, kidney stones,

swollen lymph nodes, and night sweats. Sarcoidosis in the lungs can result in coughing, chest pain, shortness of breath, and wheezing. Skin sarcoidosis symptoms include small bumps on the face or neck, discolored nails, light or dark patches, or raised patches that can be smooth or scaly.

Treatment for sarcoidosis includes managing symptoms and preventing organ damage. Corticosteroids, immunosuppressants, or nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medications may be recommended. Sarcoidosis is not generally a life-threatening condition. See your healthcare provider if you experience symptoms.

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Staff photos

COURTHOUSE IMPROVEMENTS ... Via a County Courthouse Restoration Grant -- an annual grant that has existed since 1988 by the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program and the Arkansas Natural and Cultural Resources Council (ANCRC) using Real Estate Transfer Tax funds -- the Pike County Courthouse is currently having new windows installed. The purpose of the County Courthouse Restoration Grant program is to encourage and promote the preservation and continued use of Arkansas' historic courthouses by providing financial assistance for restoration, selected maintenance, and accessibility projects to help restore historic courthouses across the state

Tracing Arkansas threads through America 250

BY JOHN BOOZMAN
U.S. Senator, Arkansas

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Arkansans and Americans from coast to coast have excitedly celebrated Independence Day and the added significance it carries this year. We have so much to take pride in as the greatest country on earth marks two and a half centuries in existence. Amid all the fanfare and festivities, it is worth reflecting on the distinct role our state has played in the American story. From the earliest days of European exploration and settlement, our land was central to the nation's expansion. Early in the republic, the land sur-

vey baseline was established near Brinkley in 1815 to map out the territory gained under the landmark Louisiana Purchase. Afterward, it continued to transform from a frontier outpost to become the 25th state in 1836 with ongoing contributions to U.S. history and culture that have helped mold our national identity. There is no shortage of examples that demonstrate this fact. They range from courageous civil rights leaders and talented artists to esteemed scholars and public figures. Our geography and landscape have also featured prominently, from the majestic Buffalo River to the thermal waters of Hot Springs and scenic Petit Jean Mountain.

In Washington, D.C., the halls of Congress showcase two remarkable Arkansans whose stories mirror America's experience with struggle, reinvention and triumph. The National Statuary Hall Collection features monuments to Johnny Cash, whose music connected with multiple generations for its representation of American life, and Little Rock Nine mentor Daisy Bates. Cash was not the only Arkansas native to leave his mark on American pop culture; in fact, he often described how fellow Arkansan Sister Rosetta Tharpe, who laid the foundation of rock and roll, inspired him. Tharpe's influence extended to many other

legendary acts including Elvis and Little Richard. Meanwhile, Bates' statue personifies her palpable spirit and confident leadership as she strides forward, advancing both Arkansas and the cause of civil rights. Beyond the nation's capital, many others have illustrated our exceptional leadership. Carlisle native Fotsie Britt excelled in athletics and served our nation honorably in World War II, earning the Medal of Honor along with every top award the Army could bestow. Our state has also produced outstanding medical and scientific minds such as Dr. Samuel Kountz, a pioneering kidney transplantation doctor, in addition to NASA testing engineer Ed Jeter who contributed to the Apollo 11 lunar

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TUESDAY, JULY 14 Lasagna, vegetable blend, roll, chilled peaches	<i>Lunch served at 11:30 a.m. For more information (870) 285-2312. Open Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday at 8 a.m. Carry out is available for \$6.00</i>

‘Dear Preacher’

By Buddy Ray, Murfreesboro Church of Christ

ARE YOU STRIVING DAILY

In order to be pleasing to God on a daily basis we must sacrifice, and we must closely follow Him. Daily service requires us to have a healthy prayer life and to bring praises to our God.

In Luke 9:23 we read these words: If anyone desires to come after ME, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow ME.

Following Christ requires action on our part. We must faithfully serve in order to grow and to have a hope of heaven after this life.

Many times, we look to Bible characters for inspiration to help us day to day in our earthly lives. A great example



for us to look at in this case is David. He was described in scripture as a man after God's own heart. He teaches us about praying and praising through his writings. We should study and adhere to David's love for praying and praising.

Psalm 116:1-2 – I love the Lord, because He has heard

my voice and my supplications. Because he has inclined His ear to me, therefore, I will call upon Him as long as I live. David loved to praise God.

Psalm 119:164 – Seven times a day I praise You, because of your righteous judgments.

Each and every day we should follow and live these two scriptures. I Thessalonians 5:17 – Pray without ceasing.

Psalm 147:1 – Praise the Lord! For it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant, and praise is beautiful.

May God continue to richly bless each for us, and may our days be happy ones.

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AR THREADS Continued on Page 6

WATER SAFETY Continued on Page 6

Sun still rises on our democracy after 205 years

BY BRUCE WESTERMAN
U.S. Representative, Arkansas

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Partisan disagreements are not new to our country. From the very beginning, our nation has wrestled with compromising ideas or priorities, differing regional interests, and deeply held beliefs. Even in 1787, when our Constitution was drafted and signed, representatives from every colony were present, advocating for what they believed best served their states. During the tense debating at this historic gathering, Benjamin Franklin reflected on the uncertainty of the moment. Would they be successful in drafting a Constitution? As he let his eyes wander the room, they landed on the ornate chair President George Washington had settled into. A beautiful, stately chair with carved details drawing the eye upward to its crowning feature: a half sun with its beams stretching outward with strength and confidence. With the tension in the room, one thought came to his mind: was this a rising or setting sun? Was this a beginning or an end? At the end of the convention, Franklin acknowledged the imperfections of the proposed Constitution but urged his fellow delegates to move forward with humility, compromise, and ultimately unity. He appealed to his fellow delegates, "I cannot help expressing a wish that every member of the Convention, who may still have objections to it, would with me, on this occasion, doubt a little of his own infallibility, and to make manifest our unanimity, put his name to this instrument." He reminded them that when a number of men come together to govern, they also bring with them their own biases, opinions, passions, and interests. But progress always heavily depends on the willingness to rise above them. The next 250 years would be marked by legislators continuing that work of creating a more perfect Union, passing laws and advocating for priorities that best benefited their states – all with ultimately the same goal in mind. As the final delegates' names were being signed to our nation's founding document, Franklin determined that this was not a setting sun that was depicted in Washington's ornate chair; it was rising. It was a symbol of hope for the future of our nation, our democracy, and our self-governing system.

Remember safety this summer

LITTLE ROCK -- Not only over the recent Independence Day festivities, family as families hold gatherings and outdoor activities throughout the summer, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Little Rock District, is urging everyone to prioritize water safety while enjoying the region's lakes and rivers. With an increase in recreational water activities during this holiday, it's crucial to ensure that safety measures are in place to prevent accidents and injuries. Expect more boats and swimmers on the water and maintain a safe speed and be vigilant for swimmers if you are boating. Remember to always wear your life jacket when on or near water, don't drink alcoholic beverages and operate a boat, never swim alone and stick to designated swim areas.

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317 Facts About The BIBLE BY JOHN LEHTI

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A BRIDE FOR ISAAC
ELIEZER ABRAHAM'S STEWARD HAVING REACHED THE LAND OF HIS MASTER'S BIRTH, THE LAND OF THE CHALDEES, IS NOW READY TO SEEK A WIFE FOR ISAAC, ABRAHAM'S SON....

YONDER IS THE TOWN, WELL!

...IT HAS BEEN A LONG, DRY, JOURNEY AND WATER IS THE FIRST CONCERN, FOR BOTH MAN AND BEAST...

...THE CARAVAN HALTS AT THE WELL OUTSIDE OF THE CITY OF NAHOR....

O LORD, I WAIT AT THE WELL... SOON, MAIDENS OF THE CITY WILL COME TO DRAW WATER. LET IT BE A SIGN THAT THE DAMSEL WHO GIVES ME WATER, AND MY CAMELS ALSO, BE THE ONE THOU HAST ALREADY APPOINTED AS ISAAC'S WIFE!

ELIEZER AND HIS PARTY WAIT WITH PATIENCE FOR THE WOMEN TO COME AND DRAW THE EVENING WATER FOR IT IS STRICT ETIQUETTE OF THESE ANCIENT DAYS THAT A STRANGER NEVER TAKES WATER FROM A WELL THAT DOES NOT BELONG TO HIM, BUT WAITS UNTIL IT IS OFFERED TO HIM AND HIS ANIMALS!

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ACROSS

1. Anti-seniors sentiment

6. Ingested

9. "Lights out" tune

13. *'"Sweet" villa (2025)

14. Leo, in Moscow

15. Mood disorder

16. Blooming bulb

17. *It happened on how many nights? (1934)

18. Follow up on (2 words)

19. *Sleepless where? (1993)

21. *Certain London Hill (1999)

23. " ____ Te Ching"

24. Future J.D.'s hurdle, acr.

25. Chips accompaniment

28. Tibetan monk

30. Celebrity

35. Please do not delay, acr.

37. S.A.T. section

39. Polynesian island country

40. Scarlet O'Hara's home

41. Singing femme fatale

43. Rig or truck

44. Artist's support

46. Italian money, 1861-2002

47. Petri dish gel

48. Like a longer route?

50. ____ Scotia

52. RNs' org.

53. Morally reprehensible

55. Ensign, for short

57. *Not a wedding (1994)

61. *They were reaping benefits (2011)

65. Silly

66. Gone by

68. Generational divide

69. Oodles

70. Each one for himself?

71. Ouzo flavor

72. A whole lot

73. Pertinent

74. Not rights

DOWN

1. Without further ____, pl.

2. Departed

3. Hip bones

4. *Actor Foley of #13 Across

5. Kind of block

6. Healing gel producing plant

7. *How many days to lose a guy? (2003)

8. 0 and 2, e.g.

9. Diplomat's forte

10. ____-perspirant

11. One quark plus one antiquark

12. Spilled the beans

15. Dull surfaces

20. Fertile topsoil, pl.

22. Boat propeller

24. Army bathroom

25. *Fifty of these, to jog her memory (2004)

26. Newton of science

27. Dissect

29. *AOL delivery (1998)

31. Org. with a mission

32. Last letter, to Homer

33. *Pretty one (1990)

34. Nigerian money

36. Part of a hammerhead

38. Villain's rival

42. *When has she been kissed? (1999)

45. Books, in Paris

49. Langley, VA org.

51. Fauna member

54. Peruvian beast of burden

56. Rive Droite and Rive Gauche separator

57. Hand-to-hand combat weapon

58. Unconstitutional and uncommon have it in common

59. Indian flatbread

60. Odds' partners

61. Arial, e.g.

62. Naive, alt. spelling

63. Olden days "do", second person singular

64. Files suit

67. Fall into it

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HOME ALONE Continued from Page 3

priority is to get out of the house.

- Severe weather: “Where do they need to go if the tornado sirens go off?” Schrick said. “Do they have a flashlight available if the power goes out?”
- Household dangers: “They should know how to turn off the water in a toilet or sink that is overflowing, what natural gas smells like and when it can be dangerous, and how to open and close windows,” Schrick said.
- A knock on the door: Children should know what to do if someone knocks on the door and is insisting on being let in, Schrick said.

Especially for younger kids, it is important to find a balance

between preparation and not overwhelming them, Schrick said.

“Most families have a fire plan and know what to do in a storm, so make sure to remind them of those things or to make a plan if you haven’t done so,” Schrick said.

Schrick said older kids and teens, especially if they are also caring for siblings, should be prepared to handle emergency situations the way an adult would. If they cannot do that, they should not be put in charge of younger children.

TEACHING TELEPHONE SKILLS

Schrick said that children today are less likely than previous generations to have answered a telephone call from a stranger or made a telephone call on their own.

“Because of this, it is important to help children know what

information they would need to share with someone they might need to call in an emergency,” Schrick said. She suggested contacting the local non-emergency number and asking if a child can call 911 to practice in case of an emergency.

Teaching a child what to do before they need to do it helps them build a toolkit of skills they can call on when needed, Schrick said.

For more information and resources, check out the extension Home Alone Handbook or the Personal & Family Well-Being page on the Cooperative Extension Service website.

To learn about extension programs in Arkansas, contact the Pike County Cooperative Extension Service at (870) 285-2161 or visit uaex.uada.edu.

Umfleet becomes first female to graduate from UCA’s aviation academy

CONWAY -- Rhiannon Umfleet, a native of Prairie Grove, Arkansas, has become the first woman to graduate from the University of Central Arkansas (UCA) Aviation Academy with her Private, Instrument, and Commercial Pilot certificates. She is now pursuing certification as a Certified Flight Instructor (CFI) with plans to work as a pilot instructor for UCA.

“Rhiannon was one of our first students,” UCA Aviation Academy Director Brad

Teague said. “She has always been fully engaged in everything we do at the academy.

“She started with no background or experience in aviation and has thrived. I am thrilled that she is one of our first graduates and the first female.”

As the only woman in the first cohort of the UCA Aviation Academy, Umfleet has embraced her role as a trail-blazer. She was honored with the Annie Fitzgerald Award in 2024. This scholarship was

named in honor of a retired Southwest Airlines pilot who now partners with the Aviation Academy to recruit future pilots.

“At first, I shied away from focusing on being the only woman in the program,” she said. “But, Miss Annie showed me the importance of embracing it and being a role model for young girls who may want to do this one day.”

Umfleet, a finance major in UCA’s College of Business, moved to Northwest Arkansas at a young age and initially planned on becoming an aerospace engineer. After high school, while working full-time and taking community college classes, she realized a desk job wasn’t for her.

“I didn’t want to be in a space like that for the rest of my life,” she said. “I wanted a job where I could move, grow, do different things and be outside.

“I thought, ‘ Might as well fly the things. That sounds a lot cooler.’”

When her mom sent her a Facebook ad about UCA’s new aviation program, Umfleet jumped at the opportunity. A month later, she told her parents she had signed up and would be moving to Conway to start ground school. By June 2024, she had piloted her first solo flight.

“I was in the downwind, and I was finally able to fully look up and take it all in,” Umfleet said. “Just to look over and see that right seat empty, I felt pure excitement coursing through my body like ‘I can’t believe I’m up here, 1,500 feet in the air by myself.’”

As is customary in all flight training, Umfleet completed the Private License first, then moved to the Instrument Rating, which allows the holder to fly by sole reference to the aircraft’s instruments. This teaches a greater mastery of aircraft control, systems and instrumentation. It also permits flights under Instrument Rules (IFR). This rating takes a minimum of 35 hours.

She also completed the Commercial License, which allows the recipient to fly for hire under certain conditions. The FAA requires a minimum of 190 hours of accumulated flight time, including specific hours of experience in several areas such as night flying, cross-country and enhanced maneuvers.

For those considering aviation, Umfleet’s advice is simple: “Don’t be scared of how hard everyone says it is. It’s challenging, but the rewards are worth it.”

Beyond the classroom and cockpit, Umfleet has found a welcoming aviation commu-

nity at UCA and in Conway.

“Brad Teague, the aviation director at UCA, Annie Fitzgerald, and Mark Valenzuela, the chief flight instructor at Central Flying Service, they have all been so kind and welcoming,” she said. “They’ve truly made Conway feel like home.”

She is excited to see the growth of UCA’s Aviation Academy, providing students with more resources and connections, including a new hangar and collaborative relationships to build a strong aviation community.

“I never imagined I’d be here,” Umfleet said. “Now, I can’t picture myself doing anything else.”

The Aviation Academy was announced in November 2023 and launched in March 2024. The program selects 15 students for each cohort with three private pilot classes starting each year. More than 400 applications are on file at present. The academy uses three Tecnam P-Mentors and one Cessna 172, and eight instructors work with students.

The UCA Aviation Academy offers new classes every three months. Multiple pilot certifications are available, including Private, Commer-

cial, and Instructor licenses, Instrument and Multi-engine ratings. Discovery flights are available for those considering enrolling in the program.

More information, including how to apply, is available at uca.edu/aviation or by contacting Brad Teague, director of UCA Aviation Academy for UCA Outreach and Community Engagement, at (501) 450-5244 or bteague@uca.edu.

UCA AVIATION ACADEMY

The Aviation Academy at University of Central Arkansas is a highly certified pilot training program. The student will obtain the knowledge, skill and aeronautical experience necessary to meet the requirements for pilot certification through training provided by Central Flying Academy, under their FAA approved Part 141 certificated training programs. The academy is partnered with Central Flying Academy out of Little Rock and is located at Conway Regional Airport, a new facility, with an uncontrolled field, therefore no FAA Control Tower. Training will take place in brand new Tecnam planes with all glass cockpits and the newest technology.

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AR THREADS Continued from Page 4

mission, Hubble Telescope project researcher Dr. Jennifer Wiseman, and trailblazers like Dorothy McFadden Hoover and Raye Montague — Arkansas’s very own hidden figures.

Literary icon Maya Angelou spent her childhood in Stamps. Charles Portis penned the seminal novel “True Grit,” and its Wild West setting near Fort Smith was also the backdrop that cultivated prolific U.S. Marshal Bass Reeves and, later, founder of the modern elite Army Rangers, Brigadier General William O. Darby.

I am grateful for how Gov. Sanders and her administration have worked to highlight other important milestones and personalities. The 250 Commission has deployed new historical markers to honor other Arkansas titans like Sam Walton and Hattie Caraway – the first woman elected to the U.S. Senate – as well as unique Natural State sites including Crater of Diamonds and Bauxite. And the participation in the Great American State Fair on the National Mall is showing people from all across the country what makes our state great.

As we all join to celebrate 250 years of the United States, we are proud to reflect on Arkansas’s people, places and events that have helped shape it. There can be no doubt that we are a vital part of America’s heritage, as well as its exceptionalism, which will continue in the years ahead.

WATER SAFETY Continued from Page 4

USACE also reminds visitors that some lakes are still experiencing high water conditions. Floating logs, trash and other debris create serious hazards for boaters and swimmers. And in some areas, rising water may submerge picnic tables, grills and parking lots, making parts of the shoreline unsafe or inaccessible. Check local lake conditions before visiting and follow any posted warnings or closures.

Stay weather aware. Summer storms often build quickly, especially in the afternoon. Check the forecast before heading out, monitor weather apps while on the water and identify shelter options in advance in case of lightning, strong winds or severe weather.

Recreation information can be found on the Internet at www.swl.usace.army.mil, on Facebook at www.facebook.com/littlerockusace and on the USACE Little Rock water level mobile app at www.swl.usace.army.mil/Home/water-control-app/.

SNAP issues changes to allowable products

STATE CAPITOL WEEK IN REVIEW
State Senator Steve Crowell

LITTLE ROCK -- A major change to the Arkansas Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) took effect this week, removing candy, soda (including diet and zero-calorie varieties), and fruit or vegetable juices containing less than 50 percent natural juice from the list of eligible purchases. The new SNAP Nutrition Waiver aims to promote healthier eating habits and reduce long-term health risks for Arkansas families.

State officials say the transition has been months in the making. The Department of Human Services (DHS) has worked with retailers, community partners, and SNAP participants to ensure families understand the new rules and have tools to help them adjust. More than 2,500 retailers across Arkansas have updated their checkout systems to comply with the policy.

Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders, speaking at a press conference announcing the rollout, said Arkansas was among the first states to signal to the Trump administration that it wanted to pursue this change. “We won’t wait around while our people get less and less healthy and we spend more and more taxpayer dollars trying to fix the problem,” she said.

The governor noted that chronic diseases such as obesity, diabetes, and heart disease continue to strain both families and the healthcare system. “Sadly, Arkansas’s statistics are even worse than the nation as a whole,” she said. “One third of our state is diabetic or pre-diabetic. On one floor of DHS, our state has been approving food stamp purchases for soft drinks and candy, while on another floor, our state’s Medicaid program is paying to treat the chronic diseases those products can help create.”

Under the new rules, which took effect July 1, SNAP benefits can no longer be used to buy candy, soft drinks, or beverages with less than 50 percent natural juice. Milk, baby formula, nutritional supplement drinks, and juices that meet the 50-percent requirement remain eligible. Ingredients used for home baking, such as flour, sugar, icing, and baking chocolate, continue to qualify, even though ready-made confections do not.

To make the transition easier, DHS has launched the AR SNAP Companion mobile app, available on Apple and Android devices. Shoppers can scan product barcodes in the store to instantly determine whether an item is eligible for purchase with SNAP benefits. Officials encourage families to use the tool to avoid surprises at checkout.

DHS is also urging participants to ensure their contact information is up to date on the Access Arkansas website so they can receive program updates. Additional details and full lists of eligible and restricted items are available on the DHS SNAP Nutrition Waiver webpage.

As part of the broader effort to support healthier choices, DHS has partnered with the UAMS Culinary Medicine program to create a new recipe video series called “Make It Snappy.” Hosted by Chef Alyssa Frisby, the series highlights simple, affordable, and nutritious meals that families can prepare at home. The first episode is available on the AR SNAP Companion app and at ar.gov/SNAP, with more videos scheduled to be released on those platforms and on the DHS Facebook page in the coming weeks.

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

JULY 11 -- Antoine Cemetery Potluck will be held on Sunday, July 11, starting at noon, at the Antoine Community Building. Donations for the cemetery are appreciated.

JULY 31 -- The Pike County 4-H is offering a Livestock Mini Series entitled Raising the Steaks, Cattle Exploration workshop on July 31, starting at 1 p.m. at the Pike County Extension office, 100 Court Street in Murfreesboro. Dive into the bovine species with hands on activities including dissection, learn about the digestive system, where the meat comes from, also learn what’s that cow.

JULY 24-26 -- The itinerary for the 2026 Bullock Family Reunion Weekend has been set with the event scheduled for July 24-26 and to include a full day in Howard and Pike counties. After events on Thursday and Friday in Little Rock, the family will caravan to Muddy Fork, home of the Bullock Historic Memorial Garden located within the Polk Cemetery, Saturday for a headstone unveiling ceremony at 9 a.m. At 11:00, the group will travel to the former Bullock plantation house in Pike County before heading to the Crater of Diamonds for a family picnic.



Staff photos

JUST HORISING AROUND ... The Pike County 4-H program congratulates Kali Turner and Savannah Hewitt as their representatives at the recent state 4-H Horse Show. “Their hard work, dedication, and sportsmanship truly reflect the values of 4-H, and we are very proud of them,” said 4-H program assistant Shannon Ballard. Turner was awarded the Junior High Point Performance Champion, Junior Barrel Racing Champion, Open Reining Champion, second place Junior Western Pleasure, third place Junior Trail, fourth place Junior Stakes & Hunt Seat Equitation, sixth place Junior Showmanship and Hunter Under Saddle and seventh place Junior Poles. Hewitt finished in third place in Junior Poles and Junior Flags, sixth place in Junior Ranch Trail and seventh place in Junior Barrels. “Congratulations to both of these outstanding 4-H members on an amazing State Horse Show! Your dedication, perseverance, and love for your horses have paid off, and Pike County 4-H is proud to celebrate your accomplishments.”

State AG files suits against two popular websites

Snap built its fortune on messages that disappear without a trace. But the permanent damage to Arkansas children ... will not fade away Roblox left the front door unlocked, and Discord handed predators a private room. Arkansas children paid the price. That stops now

LITTLE ROCK – Attorney General Tim Griffin has filed a pair of lawsuits against popular websites claiming they are unsafe for children.

The first lawsuit is against Snap, Inc. (Snap), the parent company of the popular social media platform Snapchat. The lawsuit seeks to hold Snap accountable for engaging in deceptive and unconscionable trade practices, creating a public nuisance that is negatively impacting the health and safety of Arkansans, and unjustly enriching itself at the expense of the health and wellbeing of Arkansas kids. Griffin issued the following statement:

“Snapchat is one of the most popular social media platforms in the world and is especially popular among teens. Millions of minors, including thousands of kids in Arkansas, use the platform every day. In building its platform, which includes core features such as disappearing messages, cosmetic filters, and curated content, Snap exposed minors to a variety of foreseeable harms. These harms have included sextortion rings, predatory grooming, violent content, illegal drug marketplaces, unrealistic beauty standards, and an untested My AI chatbot that delivers dangerous and inappropriate advice.

“These dangers were amplified by some of Snapchat’s core features like disappearing messages and automatically vanishing content. Such features gave kids the illusion of protection and facilitated them making impulsive decisions about what to share online.

“Because of key features that Snap designed, predators, traffickers, drug dealers, extortionists, and other offenders have repeatedly used Snapchat to contact, groom, monitor, and coerce children. These threats are not abstract or theoretical. Arkansas law enforcement, parents, and educators have consistently identified Snapchat as a primary tool used by adults seeking to exploit minors.

“These design features also replicated the kind of dopamine feedback loops present in slot-machine mechanics, pushing young people to stay on the platform to chase the next dopamine hit. And none of this was by accident. Snap’s design choices were calculated to leverage the developmental vulnerabilities of minors. Snapchat’s designers exploited teens’ craving for social approval, their sensitivity to exclusion, and their susceptibility to impulse-driven reward systems. Snap knowingly built its platform to create addiction in our children to maximize profits over people, all the while marketing Snapchat to parents as being safe and ‘family-friendly.’

“The harm to teens is bad enough, but Snapchat hasn’t even effectively enforced its own age restriction, meaning children under the age of 13 are being exposed to addictive features and lurking threats. Snapchat’s age-verification system relies entirely on self-reported birthdays with guardrails that any child with a cursory understanding of online systems can bypass.

“With this lawsuit, I am seeking to hold Snap accountable and am seeking all remedies available, including, but not limited to, injunctive relief, civil penalties, damages, restitution, and abatement. Snap built its fortune on messages that disappear without a trace. But the permanent damage to Arkansas children—and Snap’s responsibility for that damage—will not fade away. Snap must answer for these harms.”

DISCORD SUIT

Attorney General Tim Griffin has also filed suit against Roblox Corporation and Discord Inc., two of the most-cited platforms in federal child exploitation prosecutions, for years of deliberate deception and reckless product design that transformed the internet’s most popular children’s gaming site into one of the most dangerous places online. Griffin issued the following statement:

“These companies didn’t stumble into a child safety problem. They engineered one. Roblox built a platform with no age verification, no meaningful parental consent, and an algorithm that routed children directly toward the spaces where predators were waiting. Discord built a platform that lets children override parental monitoring with a single tap and hands anonymous strangers direct access to kids. Both companies knew exactly what was happening on their platforms. Both companies chose profit over the safety of Arkansas children. Both companies told parents — repeatedly and falsely — that their platforms were safe. Roblox left the front door unlocked, and Discord handed predators a private room. Arkansas children paid the price. That stops now.”

Background

Roblox, which reports 144 million daily active users with about 40% under age 13, has for years assured parents that its platform is the “#1 safe gaming site for kids.” That is simply not true. Roblox deliberately withheld age-verification technology it already possessed, rejected employee proposals to warn children of grooming behavior because such warnings would reduce engagement metrics, suppressed safety costs as its revenue grew, and paid over \$900 million annually to the developers who built the sexually explicit “experiences” that pervaded

the platform. Roblox’s own mandatory reports to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children documented 675 instances of suspected child sexual exploitation in 2019 alone. By 2023, that number had climbed to more than 13,000 — a nearly twentyfold increase that Roblox’s alleged safety investments did nothing to reverse.

Discord, with over 200 million monthly active users and an average user age of 16, has served as the escalation platform in the predatory pipeline. Discord deliberately engineered its product in a way that exposes children: it designed its “Family Center” to put children, not parents, in control of whether any monitoring occurs at all; it set its default message-filtering settings to allow adult “friends” to send unscreened content directly to children; and it made “zero-tolerance” safety representations that it knew to be false. Discord’s own transparency reports document that child safety violations on its platform increased 150% in a single quarter.

Roblox and Discord function together as a two-stage predatory pipeline: Roblox serves as the point of first contact, where predators pose as children, build trust, and groom victims. Discord serves as the escalation environment, where predators solicit explicit images, conduct sextortion, and, in dozens of documented cases, arrange in-person meetings that resulted in rape and other violent sexual assault. Both companies are fully aware of this pipeline. Rather than stop it, they have created software that more fully integrates the two products: Roblox permits Discord server links in game pages, allows Discord usernames in user profiles, and Discord enables Roblox account linking. Roblox’s own 2017 developer communications acknowledged the danger of linking children to Discord, then reversed course and actively permitted the integration.

The lawsuit is brought under the Arkansas Deceptive Trade Practices Act, Arkansas’s public nuisance law, and common law unjust enrichment. The State seeks injunctive relief, monetary damages, and the return of each company’s wrongful profits derived from Arkansas consumers.

“I want to thank the men and women in Arkansas law enforcement who are fighting on the front lines every day to protect children from the kinds of behavior Roblox and Discord have facilitated,” Griffin added. “And I especially thank the staff of my Consumer Protection Division for their work on this case.”



Submitted photo

CELEBRATING FREEDOM ... Pike County Judge Eddie Howard and Junior Miss Pike County Carsyn Ballard were part of the “Star and Stripes” parade held by the Glenwood Regional Chamber of Commerce on Tuesday, June 30 in downtown Glenwood.