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SCAN ME





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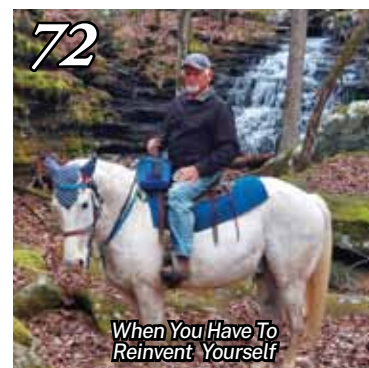
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Top Photo by  
Autumn Swain Photography

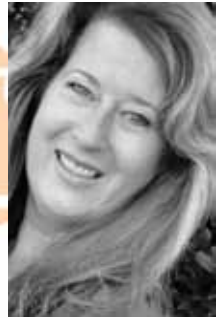


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# He Brought Us Crawfish



By Christine Walker Faith

**M**OST DAYS THE FAMILY DOG comes with me to the office. On one such day a few months ago, she looked out the front door and started growling. I could not imagine what was triggering this good natured dog. I looked around the parking area and then I saw the source of her aggravation in the front ditch; she was growling at a large water fowl bird in the flooded ditch.

We are loving the new building, but as with most any property, it has a few things to be desired. The culverts are completely buried by a ton of mud and totally stopped up, flooding the property when it just minimally rains. We have made the best of this problem and have only had to close a few times due to the extreme levels of water in the parking area.

I called the city and we are on the list to have the culverts maintained, but their list is long and they are pretty short handed. So as we patiently [for the most part] wait, some interesting things have unfolded. One day, I noticed that there were probably 100 little mud towers all over that part of the property. Our Art Director, Garrett Johnson, told me they were Crawfish towers. I had never heard of such a thing, so I could not help but research it. I ran across this information from the Missouri Conservation website:

*"Burrowing crayfish also provide services that more directly benefit their human neighbors. One study showed that prairie crayfish burrow to depths greater than 3 feet, while other species' burrows extend to 15 feet. This deep digging improves subsurface waterflow and soil structure by mixing and moving nutrients closer to the surface where they can be used by many plant species."*

*"And with their enhancement of subsurface water flow, our burrowing neighbors have created natural irrigation systems that operate both horizontally and vertically."*

So did God send us temporary help in the form of Crawfish? It may have not eliminated the problem but the temporary help of any kind is appreciated. Sometimes you have to look for blessings in unexpected



places. I hope you find the small blessings in the most unusual places today. And as always, thank you for reading Searcy Living.

*~Christine*



## *Adventures with Faith*

I hope to see you at the next Representatives concert! They are booked for a ton of shows throughout the area over the next few months. I never get tired of hearing them lead others in praising the Lord. Life is good with Donnie Faith:)



You are free to  
choose, but you are  
not free from the  
consequence of  
your choice.

“ We have the power to choose what we do. I am free to choose, for example, whether to jump from the roof of my house. But here’s the thing: if I jump, I am not free to choose what happens next.

I can’t choose not to fall. I can’t choose not to hit the ground hard. I can’t choose whether or not I will break my leg – or my neck. Once

I go airborne, those things are out of my hands. The only way to avoid any of the unpleasant results of jumping is ... not to jump.

Written by  
Jeff Himmel

”



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*Heart Disease survivors join at the end of the Unity Health Cardiology Clinic, Heart to Heart Fireside Chat, held at Harding University Cone Chapel, Feb. 24. In addition to giving information about heart health, the luncheon also celebrates those who have survived heart disease.*



## Heart to Heart Event Educates and Empowers Women

**THE ANNUAL UNITY HEALTH** Heart to Heart Fireside Chat event was held recently at Harding University Cone Chapel and more than 180 were in attendance. Educating women on the importance of heart health, the event featured a vendor fair of informational and retail booths, a luncheon and a personal story from a Unity Health patient. Christina Muñoz Madsen, of Muñoz Pugh marketing and advertising firm, served as emcee for the event. A special presentation was given by Unity Health cardiologist, Katherine Durham, M.D. Fellow cardiologist, Ethan Munzinger, M.D., held the fireside chat with Unity Health Cardiology Clinic patient, Mandy Heaton.

Together, they discussed Heaton's diagnosis and treatment for Pulmonary Embolism and blood clots and how it reflects several of the same characteristics that the cardiology team see in many of their patients. Attendees were educated about signs and symptoms of Pulmonary Embolisms and blood clots.

Vendors provided materials for education on heart health and medication, and local businesses offered information about living healthy lifestyles. Sponsors included event title sponsor

- Medtronic, platinum sponsor - Abiomed, gold heart sponsor - Zoll LifeVest, silver heart sponsors - Pruitt Agency Insurance and Edward Jones, and heart-felt sponsors were ARcare, The Shops at Unity Health, Simmons Bank and NorthStar EMS.



*Cardiologist, Ethan Munzinger, M.D., shares a fireside chat discussing blood clots and Pulmonary Embolism with cardiology patient, Mandy Heaton.*



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**CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR NEWEST OFFICERS!** Alyson Slaughter (L), Remington Shoemaker and Adam Lamont (R) graduated from Central ALETA and will be assigned to the Patrol Division to complete Field Training. Slaughter was 2nd in Academics, Shoemaker was 1st in Physical Fitness and 2nd in Firearms, and Lamont was 3rd in Firearms. Slaughter also received the Bernie Mosley “Sheepdog” award for her fight & determination.



*Happy 6th birthday Ryder!*





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**Recently, Harding Place** celebrated their 26th Anniversary with the theme “There’s No Place Like Home!” Throughout the week, the Residents enjoyed whimsical events that brought joyous smiles each day! We kicked off the week-long celebration by riding in a tethered hot air balloon. Only one Resident and four staff members had previously been in a hot air balloon. We love doing “firsts” with our Residents. Activities also included watching the classic movie *The Wizard of Oz* while eating popcorn and drinking bottled cokes. We also enjoyed *Lions & Tigers & Bears*, *Oh My BINGO* with the characters from *Oz*. HU freshman Emma Hatfield played a beautiful piano concert of rainbow inspired songs. The finale of the event was a delicious Chef-prepared dinner in The Emerald City while listening to a string quartet under the direction of Harding University’s Alicia Walls. These nostalgic activities took flight into memories for the Harding Place residents and their families for years to come! Plans are already in progress for our 27th anniversary in 2024.





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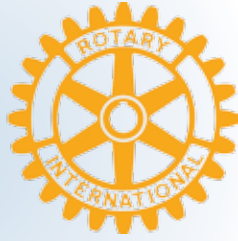
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**Correction:** Debbie Higgs is the Curator of the Searcy Art Gallery and recently spoke about the many benefits of the arts for the community.



**Dan Newsom** receives a donation check for the Single Parent Scholarship organization which provides scholarships to the single parents which helps them to further their education.



**Q. Hite**, Sr. Vice President of Bryce Corporation spoke to our club Tuesday, April 25th. He gave some history of Bryce Corporation as they recently celebrated 100 years in business, discussed their current leadership and operations, and provided an update on the new Searcy expansion that is in progress.





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## Searcy Art Pop Up Shop

**TWICE A YEAR**, the home of Kelly and Rick VanHook turns into a gallery, filled with paintings, jewelry, wood works, leather handbags, and pottery, all handmade from Arkansas local artists.

The first pop-up shop was held in December of 2017. After traveling throughout the state participating in art shows, the VanHooks, both abstract painters, and jewelry artist, Christie Young, came together all with a desire to show their work locally in their hometown of Searcy, Arkansas. The three artists set up shop in the VanHook home and invited all their friends. The event was created with the intention of being a fun, relaxed atmosphere filled with locally made, one of a kind art.

Since that first pop up, it has become a regular event twice a year and has opened up to the public. The annual Holiday show is held in December and early April for the spring. The artist lineup has grown to include Misty Osborne, painter and her husband, Gary Osborne, woodworker from Searcy. Guest artists have included Matt Blansett, woodworker from Searcy, Bryant Phelan of O'Faoláin Leather from Little Rock, Beau Jones of Beautox Art from Jonesboro and Chris Swasta, Rolling Hills Pottery from Sherwood.

Local Searcy Food Trucks have also participated in this event including Joyful Baking Company, Savory Mobile Cafe, and most recently Wild Flour Bakery.

This year's Spring Pop Up Shop included the hosts Kelly and Rick VanHook who both are abstract artists. Misty Osborne from Searcy, paints abstract as well. Misty's husband Gary works with wood specializing in charcuterie boards. Christie Young, a Searcy native from North Little Rock, makes hand crafted jewelry using precious metals and natural stones. New to the pop up this spring was Chris Swasta from Sherwood owner of Rolling Hills Pottery. Introducing her new business Boujee Hen, Micah Gooch decorated the Pop Up with balloon arches. For a sweet treat, The local Food Truck, Wild Flour Bakery was on site to sell their handmade cupcakes, macarons, and signature tea and coffee drinks.

A fundraiser was also held for the Humane Society of Searcy in honor of Kathy Lightle, a dear friend of the animals and all of us! We invite you all to join us in December for the next show and so appreciate all the support. ♦







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*Klara Warren, Lynnlee Morrison, Carleigh Cooper, Representative Cameron Cooper, Madison White, and Caitlin Cooper*




*Madalyn Johnson and her State Representative Wayne Long at the Arkansas Capitol*



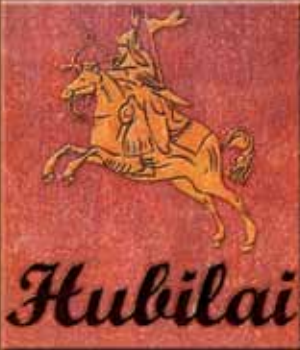
*White County youth (L-R Madalyn J, Lynnlee M, Carleigh C, Caitlin C, Klara W, and Madison W) met with Governor Sarah Sanders while paging at the Arkansas State Capitol for State Representative Cameron Cooper (pictured) and State Representative Wayne Long (not pictured)*



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- ANN LANDERS

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“

All life demands struggle. Those who have  
everything given to them become lazy,  
selfish, and insensitive to the real values  
of life. The very *striving and hard work*  
that we so constantly try to avoid is the  
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- POPE PAUL VI

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**NOT.  
ONE.  
HOOOF.**





**BY JESSICA JECKER**

**I****N THE BOOK OF EXODUS**, after many plagues had befallen the land of Egypt, Pharaoh calls Moses before him and tells him that the Hebrew people can leave Egypt but there is one stipulation, the livestock must remain. Moses, understanding that the Hebrew people would need their livestock for burnt offerings to God, tells Pharaoh their livestock must go with them, that not even one hoof should remain in Egypt.

It would have been easy for Moses to agree to Pharaoh's terms, after all, his people would finally be free. But Moses understood that even one thing left in Egypt would be a stronghold for his enemy. Moses wasn't willing to leave even one thing behind, he wasn't willing to concede even a little. Not one thing should remain in the enemies camp. Not even one hoof should remain in Egypt.

*Compromise, even in the smallest degree will allow Pharaoh to continue to bind you.* You can march out of Egypt, shouting and clapping your hands, but if you have compromise in your life, you will still belong to Egypt. It's the small foxes that spoil the vine, it's the small compromises that spoil the victory. Leave not one hoof in Egypt.

One door left open will allow the enemy full access. He is waiting, he is watching, he is calling you back to Egypt. That door left standing open will slam the shackles of bondage over you again. You cannot allow one point of entry to the enemy. You cannot allow any door from the past to be ajar. Leave not one hoof in Egypt.

**Free men don't wear chains.** If you have walked out Egypt you can't allow Pharaoh to continue to rule over you. You don't belong

to him anymore. You have to drop the slave mindset. Continuing to allow Egypt to define you will keep you bound. Leave not one hoof in Egypt.

When you come out Egypt, take everything with you. ***Shut every door, shake off every chain, pack up all your things and march out completely free. Whatever you allow to remain in Egypt will be a stronghold for your enemy.*** Everything must be laid on the

altar before your God. The enemy will try to get to leave just one thing... just one little compromise... leave just one door open... Leave not one hoof in Egypt.

#### **ABOUT THIS WRITER/BLOGGER:**

*Hello and welcome to "Simply Jecker" my name is Jessica! You know that saying "a little bit of coffee and a whole lot of Jesus," yeah that pretty much sums up who I am. My life is full of chaos, love, noise and Jesus. I am a wife to a fiery evangelist and a mom to three wild Jecker boys and one feisty Jecker girl (which is why I need alllll the coffee). I homeschool my kids and am a stay at home wife. My husband is a bricklaying instructor by day and evangelist by night. My boys are full energy, big personalities and about as different from each other as can be. My daughter is only a few months old but already rules the roost. She is a redhead and so far is living up to the stereotypical red headed temperament (pray for me). This blog is dedicated to all things motherhood and ministry. Won't you join me as I navigate the waters of Motherhood and as my husband and I pursue the call of God on our lives? ♦*





# OVER THE COUNTER

## Hitting a Nerve: An Introduction to Neuropathy

Katie Willard, PharmD Candidate 2023; Melissa Shipp, PharmD, BCPS; Lana Gettman, PharmD

**N**EUROPATHY IS MOST COMMONLY DEFINED as damage to nerve cells in the peripheral nervous system, the part of the nervous system that spans outside of your brain and spinal cord. People with neuropathy may feel weakness, numbness, tingling, or pain in the hands or feet. They would commonly describe it as a feeling of pins and needles on the skin. Neuropathy occurs in approximately 8% of people over the age of 65 years old. Other than age, individuals with diabetes, people who have experienced trauma, and those who have a high alcohol intake are at an increased risk of developing neuropathy.

Diabetes is the leading cause of neuropathy. According to a study completed by the Journal of Diabetes Education, over half of people with diabetes will experience neuropathy at some point in their life. Diabetic neuropathy is caused by high blood sugar levels that results in nerve fiber damage in the hands, legs and feet. Trauma is also a common cause of neuropathy. Injuries from falls, car accidents, bone fractures, and sports injuries can result in neuropathy. Autoimmune disorders such as Guillain-Barre syndrome, lupus, rheumatoid arthritis, and some infections, including chickenpox, shingles, HIV, syphilis, Lyme disease, and Hepatitis C can be the cause of certain neuropathies. Neuropathy may also result from kidney disorders, liver disorders, and people with an underactive thyroid.

Symptoms of neuropathy vary depending on the cause and location of the nerves involved, and may be short-term or long-term. Common symptoms are:

- Tingling or numbness
- Muscle weakness
- Sharp burning or throbbing pain
- Muscle twitching, cramps or spasms
- Extreme sensitivity to touch
- Paralysis
- Falling or loss of coordination
- Loss of muscle control, dropping things
- Loss of feeling in extremities
- Low blood pressure or abnormal heart rate

*Neuropathy symptoms typically progress in four stages:*

**STAGE ONE** is categorized as numbness and pain. In the beginning, patients typically become aware that something feels “off” in their hands or feet. The problem may not seem too severe at this point, and patients likely continue on in their daily life without seeking medical attention. These symptoms then progress into stage two, a constant pain.

**STAGE TWO** is when the pain becomes more apparent and harder to endure. It is generally at that point when patients decide to seek medical help. Please know that the sooner patients seek treatment, the higher likelihood of reversing any nerve damage.

**STAGE THREE** begins when pain progresses to an intense level. These patients will experience pain daily, and will likely have issues completing tasks that they used to do without hesitation, such as walking barefoot.

**THE LAST STAGE**, stage four, is a complete numbness or loss of sensation. If people do not receive medical attention for neuropathy, they will eventually lose feeling in their lower limbs. This loss of feeling will likely lead to injury and amputations.

If neuropathy does occur, there are several treatment options available, and some cases of neuropathy may be easily treated or even cured. The main priority in managing neuropathy is to identify and treat any underlying medical problems, such as diabetes or an infection. If neuropathy cannot be cured, the goal of treatment is to manage and control symptoms to prevent further nerve damage. Medications can be used to control neuropathic pain. These medications include some antidepressants, anticonvulsants, and topical patches and creams containing lidocaine. Narcotic drugs like opioids are not recommended for the treatment of neuropathy, as they have not been proven effective in managing neuropathic pain. Physical therapy can aid in neuropathy management by using a combination of focused exercise, massage, and other treatment methods that help increase patient strength, balance, and range of motion. Occupational therapy is an adaptive treatment used to help patients cope with pain and loss of function, as well as teach new skills to make up for this loss. Medical aids, such as braces, specially designed shoes, casts, and splints may be used to help reduce pain by providing support and keeping damaged nerves in proper alignment to prevent further damage. The most beneficial way to reduce your risk of developing neuropathy is by properly controlling your existing medical conditions and implementing a healthy lifestyle.

*Here are some tips to help prevent neuropathy:*

**MANAGE YOUR DIABETES** properly and try to keep your blood sugar levels within the ranges recommended by your doctor.

**TAKE PROPER CARE OF YOUR FEET.** If you have diabetes or poor blood flow, it is important to perform a daily self-foot exam. Look for sores, blisters, redness, calluses, or dry or cracking skin.

**DECLUTTER YOUR FLOORS.**

**QUIT SMOKING.**

**TAKE STEPS** towards adopting a healthy lifestyle. Eat a balanced diet, maintain a healthy weight, exercise regularly, and minimize alcohol intake.

**LASTLY, REVIEW YOUR MEDICATIONS** with your doctor or pharmacist about all prescription and over-the-counter medications that you take. ♦



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## Snicker Dates

(no chocolate and no processed or artificial sweetener)

BY TANYA LECKIE



**DATES**  
10 whole



**PEANUT BUTTER**  
¼ c, with NO SUGAR  
(contains just peanuts!)



**PEANUTS**  
¼ c, dry roasted  
(halves and pieces)



**COCONUT OIL**  
2 tsp, (enough just to  
make it spreadable, then  
crisp when chilled)



**CAROB POWDER**  
2 Tbsp,  
(use cocoa if you want)



**HONEY**  
2 Tbsp



**SALT**  
A pinch and additional  
for sprinkling on tops

**1.** In a small non stick skillet (ceramic or a well seasoned cast iron pan is ideal) over VERY low heat, combine the coconut oil, carob powder, and honey and stir with a rubber scraper/spatula until it's all mixed well and is shiny and spreadable.

**2.** Meanwhile remove seeds (and any stem caps) from the dates by making a lengthwise slit in each, prying it open a bit and removing the large seed.

**3.** Fill cavity of date with enough peanut butter to almost full then top the sticky peanut butter with a coating of dry roasted peanuts.

**4.** Once all the dates are seeded, filled with peanut butter and topped with dry roasted peanuts, spread a teaspoon size dollop of the carob/honey mixture on each date, covering the peanuts.

**5.** Place dates on a tray and chill until ready to serve. Enjoy!

\* If there's a peanut allergy concern, almond butter and toasted almonds, chopped, can be substituted for the peanut butter and the dry roasted peanuts.



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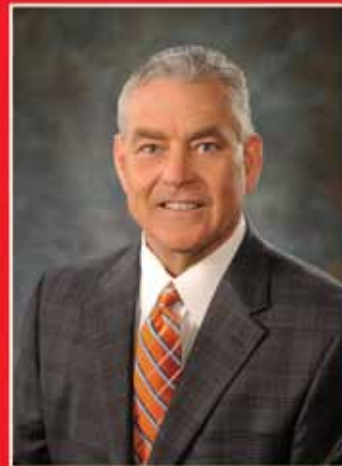
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## A Life That Reflects

# HOLINESS



By Chuck Hicks



**I** listened to a podcast on the drive home from North Carolina. It was about grasping God's holiness. I was humbled as I listened. Understanding God's holiness, even in a small way, puts my unholiness in perspective. When I sin it is because I don't trust God to do what He says He will do. If I don't trust God to help me survive I'll try to fix everything myself.

There's a song that comes to mind titled What Do I Know of Holy. It's lyrics say; "I guess I thought that I had you figured out. I knew all the stories and I learned to talk about how you were mighty to save. But those were only empty words on a page.

Then I caught a glimpse of who you might be, the slightest hint of you brought me down to my knees." I guess my prayer today is, "Lord, teach me to pursue your holiness, so that I might live a life that reflects holiness." ♦

*"If I don't trust God to help ME survive  
I'll try to fix EVERYTHING MYSELF."*

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*Rees & Mandy Lloyd*



# WHAT IS **MEDIGAP** Medicare Supplement

**By Denise Morton**

**MEDIGAP (also known as Medicare Supplement) plans pay IN ADDITION to Medicare.**

Plans are standardized and identified by a letter, so all Plan A benefits are the same with any company offering a Plan A. Depending on the plan you choose, you may or may not have any out-of-pocket costs. Plan F is the most comprehensive plan – it pays 100% of the costs for all Medicare-approved services after Medicare. Plan F is only available to individuals who turned 65 prior to January 1, 2020. Plan G is also a very comprehensive plan. It pays 100% of the costs for all Medicare-approved services after Medicare, EXCEPT the Part B deductible (\$233 for 2022). Medigap plans do not include outpatient prescription drug coverage. The monthly premium varies by company. You continue to pay your Medicare Part B premium in addition to the Medigap premium.

Medigap has an initial guaranteed issue enrollment period called Open Enrollment. This normally occurs the first month you are enrolled in Part B and are age 65. The Open Enrollment Period will last for 6 months. After the Open Enrollment Period, carriers have the right to deny you coverage based on medical conditions. Outside of the Open Enrollment there are certain scenarios that may still allow you to qualify for coverage regardless of health.

There are programs to help those who have a lower income. If you have full Medicaid coverage, get help from the state Medicaid program paying your Part B premiums or you get Supplemental Security Income benefits, you will automatically qualify for Extra Help. If you do not automatically qualify for Extra Help, you can apply any time: visit [socialsecurity.gov/i1020](https://www.socialsecurity.gov/i1020) to apply online or call Social Security at 1-800-72-1213.

We have attempted to give you the basic information on the options available to you. If you have questions or would like to meet with one of our representatives to discuss your specific situation, please contact the professionals at Haymond Insurance – Denise Morton, Cindy Dixon or Denise Drye. ♦







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# The House That Searcy Built

BY JENNIFER WEBB

**CHRIS HEARD A LOUD SNAP.** Suddenly, he was falling. He landed hard on the ground. When he looked at his legs, they pointed in a different direction than he thought. “Not good!” his mind screamed. He tried to move his feet. No response.

January 25, 2021, had started like any other day for builder and carpenter, Chris French. Footwork, framing, and trim were his specialties and after 15+ years he did it well. Even with all the shortages of building supplies, he had been very busy.

He remembered being up on scaffolding supported by ladders, bent backward, nailing a 2 X 6 board on the edge of the rafters, prepping for decking a house. In a freak accident, the new ladder had broken.

The first responders came quickly. A surgery team stood prepped and waiting by the time they got to the hospital. “Now what?” thought Chris. He knew he’d never be able to get back into his own house. There’s no way he could get around in there. He also knew he had a long road to recovery.

But God was working behind the scenes in mighty ways that Chris didn’t know about at the time.

His brother, Tony, reached out to Rick Eichhorn at Habitat for Humanity. The board of directors looked at his situation and quickly voted to move forward to help. They had never built a fully ADA-compliant house before, and it presented some unique challenges. One of those challenges was the astronomical rise in the price of building supplies. They had to economically build a small house that was ADA-compliant, and keep the cost as low as possible.

In the building community, news of Chris’s accident spread like wildfire. The people at Habitat for Humanity knew Chris already because of his volunteer work on Habitat houses in the past. Lots of other people knew Chris as well, and they all pulled together to help.

**“If it wasn’t for the donations and the support from the donors we couldn’t have done it. There was an outpouring of donations, help, and labor; primarily from construction industry.”**

**– RICK EICHHORN,  
Executive Director, White County Habitat for Humanity**

Hoffmann Architectural volunteered their design services. The Duncan family donated the lot for the house to be built on. It was the perfect place since it was close to family. Tree Amigos came and trimmed the trees and one of the Habitat board members, Adam Quattlebaum, did the survey for the lot.

Tony reached out to other builders that he and Chris had worked for before including Patrick Connell and Scott Coleman. The city of Searcy and all the code enforcers bent over backward to help them as well, giving advice on how to do things to meet all the requirements.

On a hot day in August, approximately 7 months after Chris’s accident, Austin Riley came out with his son and daughter, marked the house off, and dug the footing. As he worked he told them how Chris had done all the trim work on their house. Chris’s new home was officially started!

Things started happening fast after that. The more people heard about the project the more they wanted to help with both labor and materials. It became a true community project and a labor of love for Chris to show him how much the whole community cared.

Austin Ready Mix donated all the concrete for the house, which for a fully ADA-compliant house included lots of ramps and sidewalks. ABC Block donated the mortar, blocks, and sand, while Larry Steele donated his time and expertise doing all the blockwork. Vulcan Quarry donated all the rock and gravel needed.

It was not just expert builders that came either. Chris’s church, Highway Church of Christ showed up in force with a large group. Ron Smith, a Harding University professor brought a large group from Harding. As they worked, he told his students how he had been Chris’s childhood math teacher when his family had been stationed overseas in Turkey.

**“It was a God thing. The right people would show up. We had great volunteers. Lots of Harding students showed up. They had lots of energy, but maybe not so much skill. However, we had a lot of pro builders to mentor them. Retired folks and Harding students worked together.”**

**– RICK EICHHORN,  
Executive Director, White County Habitat for Humanity**

Building experts were matched with young people ready to work and willing to learn. Together, they assembled joists and subfloor, followed quickly by the wall frames. Bryan at Ridout donated all the lumber. Then the trusses went up, donated by A & R Trusses, and Jim and Karin Burrell of Absolute Roofing took care of the roof. Then the siding went up, donated by James Hardie Company.





Now Chris's house was officially in the dry and the interior detail work started. By this time, Chris had moved to rehab at TiRR in Houston, TX; one of the best facilities for spinal cord injuries. People were texting him pictures of his new house and communicating with his case manager about what he would need. Since so many people working on the house knew Chris, they wanted to put in special surprises that they knew he would appreciate. They went the extra mile, putting personalized finishing touches on whatever they could think of.

The outpouring of support continued with the interior work. It seemed to Rick that people were coming out of the woodwork to help. Southern Pipe & Supply and Winsupply Plumbing donated all the plumbing pipes and fixtures. Ryan Ingram of Ingram Plumbing installed it all. Taylor Insulation donated all the insulation for the house, Ferrell Stokes of Stokes Electric donated all electrical equipment, and electrical supply houses donated all wire, which had skyrocketed in price. McKenney Electrical Supply donated all of the electrical boxes that were nowhere to be found at the time.

There was a 1-year waiting list for an electrical service panel to go outside. When Elliott Electrical heard about Chris's accident and was approached for help, he remembered falling out of his deer stand 2 years before. "It could have been me," he said and donated the electrical panel.

Jason at Command Construction did all the concrete work, building the sidewalks and ramps that Chris would need to access everything around his home. Lowes donated all the appliances and Wagner Construction built Chris a beautiful custom shower. Doug Leckie contacted Mark Eaton with Air Care. He and all his guys put in a nice heat and air unit.

White River Flooring donated all the flooring and Homer's Ace Hardware donated all the paint. Robert Ross of Edward Jones took a whole day off work and brought his staff out to caulk and paint. Home Hardware Center (formerly McCoy's) donated all wood for a back deck and covered porch, which Chris had never had before.

The house was almost done, but then, they heard about something they hadn't expected or accounted for - Chris was learning how to drive!

To keep costs low, most Habitat Houses do not have garages, so they started with the idea of a carport. But once again, God showed up in a big way and the generosity of the people of Searcy came through with brilliant colors.

James Hardie Company offered more siding for an outside covering, Jim and Karin Burrell agreed to extend the roof to cover it, Taylor Insulation also donated more insulation for the garage, and Andy Sills with Garage Door Services donated a garage door and garage door opener. Before Rick knew it, they had all the pieces for a full-out garage instead of just a carport!

The Habitat for Humanity Restore also plays a large part in this whole process. Habitat for Humanity's goal is to provide decent and affordable housing to homeowners that pay an affordable mortgage. The upfront money to build the house comes from the earnings of the Habitat for Humanity Restore. That money is paid back in affordable payments by the homeowner. Every time you donate or buy from the Habitat for Humanity Restore, you are a part of that.

Chris left the hotel rooms and rehab facilities that he had lived in for over a year behind and was able to move into his new home in March of 2023. It was a long journey, but now he has a place that he's able to call home. There are still a few finishing touches, such as the sod from Double Springs Sod. Chris also hopes they can build a few raised bed gardens for him as well, so that he can explore a gardening hobby. Lincoln Lawn Care was quick to offer to help.

**"They really spoiled me with a lot of this stuff. I've Never even had a garage before or a dishwasher. Everything else is nicer than I've had before."**

**— CHRIS FRENCH**

There have been a few hiccups along the way, like Chris getting stuck in his custom-built shower; unable to get out. Habitat was there for that too. They tore out everything, jackhammered it to the ground, and built a new one.

When Habitat for Humanity builds a house for someone, it's not just about building a house, it's about building long-lasting relationships. Getting affordable housing is a great step towards a better quality of life for anyone. Now that Chris has a comfortable and functional place to call home he can focus on whatever is next in his life. ♦











# CHRIS FRENCH HABITAT FOR HUMANITY HOME BUILD

## List of major donors and volunteers that Chris would like to thank:

Duncan Family - Lot Donation

Clay and Barry Hoffmann

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French family and friends and all the  
numerous volunteers that showed  
up to "Help Build It"





## Are your goals

### ‘MUST HAVE’ OR ‘NICE TO HAVE’?

**LIKE EVERYONE**, you may have a lot of financial goals. But are they all of equal importance? Probably not. And do they share a similar timeline? Again, it's unlikely. So, your first step may be to prioritize your goals — and then follow a process that can help you achieve them.

*This process should include the following steps:*

- **IDENTIFY YOUR GOALS AS “MUST HAVE” OR “NICE TO HAVE.”** Making sure you can retire comfortably and won't outlive your resources is a “must have” goal. For this goal, you can't compromise — you need to be certain of achieving it, or at least as certain as possible. But if you want to someday own a vacation home by the beach, and you can't ever quite afford it, you might find an acceptable substitute, such as renting. So, it seems fair to say that achieving this goal would be “nice to have.”

- **PRIORITIZE YOUR INVESTMENT DOLLARS.** Unless you have unlimited sums to invest — and very few of us have that luxury — you'll probably need to prioritize where your investment dollars are going. For your main “must have” goal — retirement — you'll be helped by the ability to automatically invest through your 401(k) or other employer-sponsored retirement plan. If you're on track toward this goal, and you budget carefully and potentially receive salary increases over the years, you may also find space to keep contributing toward the “nice to have” goals.

- **PUT “PRICE TAGS” ON YOUR GOALS.** You need to know what your goals will cost. Of course, you may need to estimate the costs for some goals based on different factors. For example, when you think about your goal of retiring comfortably without outliving your money, you'll need to consider some key questions, including these: *When do you want to retire? What sort of retirement lifestyle do you envision? Do you see yourself downsizing your living arrangements?* For other goals, though, such as purchasing a vacation home, you could get more specific on how much money you'll need.

- **FOLLOW AN APPROPRIATE STRATEGY.** The nature of your goals, and their estimated cost, along with your appetite for risk, should drive your investment strategy — but another key factor is *time*. So, for a long-term goal like retirement, you'll likely need a reasonable amount of quality growth-oriented investments in your portfolio. While these investments — such as stocks and stock-based mutual funds — will fluctuate in value over shorter periods of time, your hope is that, over several decades, they will ultimately provide the growth you need to meet your retirement goal. However, to achieve a goal you want to meet in a year or so — perhaps you're paying for a wedding or planning a long vacation — you may want to consider more stable investments, such as certificates of deposit (CDs), short-term bonds or even cash or cash equivalents. They may not provide much in the way of growth, but you can essentially count on them to provide the amount you need when you need it. You'll need to regularly review the performance of your investment strategy for each goal to assess your progress.

Achieving any goals — whether they're “must have” or “nice to have” — can be challenging. But by identifying and prioritizing these goals, following an appropriate strategy to meet them, and consistently reviewing your approach, you can help yourself get to where you want to go. ♦

*This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor. Edward Jones, Member SIPC*





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## RECOGNIZING SGT. MATT HIGGINS

BY JENNIFER WEBB

**M**ATT HIGGINS WATCHED as the State Troopers walked in. He was always struck by their appearance and professionalism when they came in to eat at the restaurant where he worked. He was only a teenager, but his experience at his first job, along with some very personal reasons, led him to his future career.

The restaurant offered free meals to police officers as a thank-you for their service. Many were regulars and Matt always looked forward to when they came in. It is also where he met his wife, Alyssa.

When 9/11 came, like the rest of us, he was transfixed by the situation. He watched not only as the twin towers fell, but as police, firefighters, and first responders did everything they could to help people. They were doing all they could to help keep people safe, rescue them, and provide assistance, even at the risk of their own lives. He wanted a job like that - something that really mattered where he could serve and keep people safe. He wanted to be Chris Amoroso. Not actually him, but his spirit.

He married Alyssa in 2008 and started at the Searcy Police Department shortly thereafter. His first job was patrol. He learned all that he could, and tried to have his hands in a little bit of everything to find out what he loved the most. In the process, he became a drug recognition expert and found what excited him the most was keeping bad guys off the street. Overseeing the department's Special Response Team allows for that. It offers a direct role in putting the most dangerous to society behind bars.

**"Tom Long has a book based on the quote by Isaac Newton 'If I have seen further, it is by standing on the backs of Giants'. I've had several 'Giants' that have helped me along the way. They know who they are..."**

**- SGT. MATT HIGGINS**

Other, older officers mentored and taught him, and he learned more each day he went to work. Just as iron sharpens iron, he



surrounded himself with people that hold themselves to the highest standards. Full of energy, and fiercely determined to succeed at making Searcy a safe place to live, he rose through the ranks and gained more responsibility.

With more responsibility, his role gradually changed from mentee to mentor of younger officers. He still considers himself a hard charger, but he quickly shines the light on the officers under his command.

**"I have a great crew. They work their butts off for me and make me look a lot better than I am. They are the best dudes that you'll ever meet and have an absolute passion for helping people."**

**- SGT. MATT HIGGINS**

His crew affectionately calls themselves "The A Team" since they are the A Squad of the Patrol Division. Serving right under Sgt. Higgins is Corporal JL Tillett, who was recently awarded officer of the year. It's not just a "crew" or a group of co-workers. They are family. They spend as much time together on duty and off duty as they can. Their kids grow up together, they go camping together, and generally enjoy one another's company. They know that each of them have the other's backs.

**"Firearms and Training are my passions!"**

**- SGT. MATT HIGGINS**

For the past several years, Sgt. Higgins has also overseen the department's firearms training. He has a cadre of about 10 instructors that plan the curriculum and conduct the training for the department. The Searcy City Council recently approved the purchase of a red dot handgun platform, putting Searcy PD on the leading edge. He and the rest of his cadre of instructors oversaw that transition.

Sgt. Higgins runs the firearms program for the Central Arkansas Law Enforcement Training Academy with his good friend, Sheriff Chris Brown of Cleburne County. He, along with Sheriff Chris Brown, have designed an entire curriculum that takes young cadets that have never handled a weapon before through the process of becoming firearms proficient. They also have a private company that trains civilians and law enforcement in a number of areas. They specialize in firearms training, but also can provide Arkansas Concealed Handgun Licensing training and self-defense.

When Sgt. Higgins is not on duty or at the range, he's with his family. He and Alyssa have an 8-year-old daughter named Matylee. His great-grandparents were big into family and relationships. That core value has been passed down to him. He tries to do everything he can to develop good relationships. He believes life is about the people.

**"My family is my motivation.  
I live for my wife and kid."**

**- SGT. MATT HIGGINS**

Sgt. Higgins also loves hunting, camping, boating, and the outdoors. He practices Jiu-Jitsu at Ru-Jitsu MMA on West Pleasure. He loves coaching and watching Matylee play softball. He delights in his family and loves them just as vigorously as he works at the Searcy Police Department.

► *Continued on next page*







Time flies and life happens fast, he says. "It seems like yesterday, I was the new guy trying to find my way." It makes him feel a bit strange, to be the one behind the sergeant's desk now with his own squad, but also good to know that he is in a position to pass down some hard-won knowledge to the next generation.

**"Live your life in service to your people (Tecumseh). My wife and I try to embody that idea and pass it down to our daughter."**

**- SGT. MATT HIGGINS**

His role now is not to be a hard charger but to lead the hard chargers. That includes not only their career as police officers but also as men and women as well. He strives to take these young men and women, some of whom are barely 21 years old, and give them everything that he wishes he had at that age. His goal is to allow everyone to grow into their own. His hope is that the future generations of Searcy Police Department officers will continue to get better and better and the department will grow as a result.

**"I love this place and the people. The city will only be as good as we leave it."**

**- SGT. MATT HIGGINS ♦**







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Many times it's the little things in life that mean the most. When many of my clients start their fitness journey, they describe wanting to just keep up with their grandchildren or go on a vacation that requires a lot of movement. Unfortunately, due to chronically sedentary lifestyles, these precious moments unnecessarily seem

overly exhausting and uncomfortable. Or perhaps, like many of my other clients, you suffer from arthritis, osteoporosis, CKD, high blood pressure, etc.. Fortunately, ALL these uncomfortable circumstances, from exhaustion and impaired mobility to high blood pressure, can be prevented or treated with healthy and functional lifestyle habits supported by Ageless Fitness programming

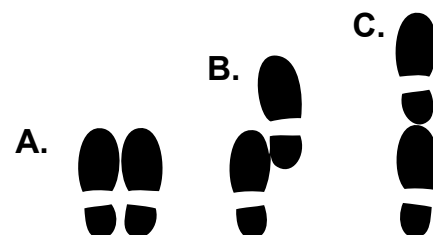
We would love for you to join our 30-minute training classes, covering every fitness area your body needs to be its best. Bring a friend along for the ride. Together move toward better health and functional living. Sometimes the hardest step of a fitness journey is opening the door and walking through! Determine to take that first step today! I'll meet you at the door and take it with you. ♦

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***PS: Here are three exercises you can also work on at home  
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## 1. Tandem/Semi Tandem Stance

The balance exercises start with placing the feet in a series of positions that gradually reduce the base of support, holding the stance for 10–30 seconds. **B.** Semi-tandem (one foot ahead of the other as if taking a step) **C.** Full tandem (heel of one foot directly in front of the toes of the other foot)



► *Continued on next page*

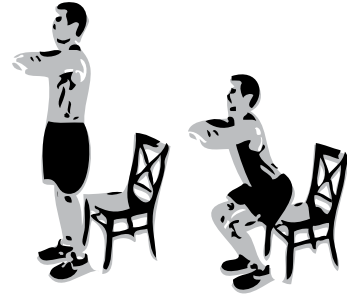


## 2. Sit Down to Stand Up

**Step 1:** Start by sitting in a chair with your arms crossed.

**Step 2:** Stand up and then sit down slowly with control back onto the chair.

*Note: This can be made easier and more difficult by changing the height of the chair.*



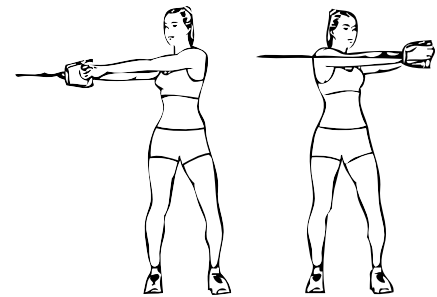
## 3. Banded Door Oblique Twists

**Step 1:** Attach the band to a doorknob or handle.

**Step 2:** Use your inside arm (the arm nearest the door) and grasp the band in your hand.

**Step 3:** Rotate outward (away from the door) with your arm and torso as far as you can rotate. Breathe normally and keep control of your body and movement.

**Step 4:** Return to the start position (hand near the door) and repeat for 3 sets of 15 reps.



***“Sometimes the hardest step of a fitness journey  
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# The HOMETOWN BLOGGER

## The Hidden Historian of Searcy & White County

Article submitted by Valerie Smith Canepa of Searcy

**You may not know her by name, but you've seen her face at the corner of Booth Road and South Main Street in Searcy.**

Barbara S. Duncan, Executive Broker for RE/MAX Advantage, has a billboard there. And not everyone knows that she is Searcy's hidden historian – a prolific online blogger of White County history, with 1,950 posts to date.



*The billboard at the corner of Booth Road and South Main.*

Google long-gone Searcy favorites like Headlee Drug Store, White House Café, Bill's Grill, Roseann Motel, Ideal Shop, Pastime Pool Hall. Look up news events like the Judsonia tornado of 1952 or an arson fire that destroyed Searcy Junior High in 1980.

At or near the top of the search results will be a Barbara Duncan blog on the subject, with historic photos, dates, details

– and bonus features added by readers in the Comments section.

Her followers include local historians, journalists, city leaders, and White Countians who have moved hither and yon. Arkansas Business magazine gave her a mention a few years ago, saying she has a “quasi-cult following.”

“She always has something going on,” said Shelly Churchwell, president of the White County Historical Society. “I really like it when she lets me borrow her historical finds.”

Many find Barbara Duncan's Blog by accident on Google, either while researching genealogy or conducting research on the old days in White County, Arkansas.

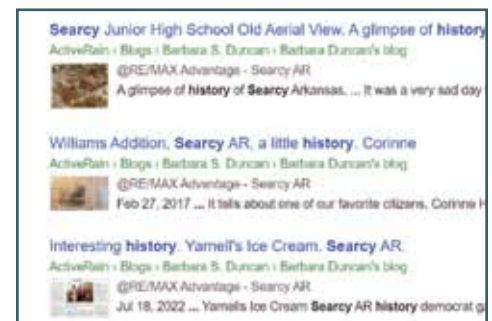
Mike S. Allen, a Harding University graduate, co-authored “A Murder in Searcy,” a book about the notorious 1974 murder of Fern Rodgers (wife of Dr. Porter Rodgers). He gave Barbara Duncan's Blog credit in the book even though they had never met.

“When I was conducting research for the book, I would search online for names or places in Searcy from the 1970s. Very often I would come across a post [by Barbara Duncan] that would provide good context or a photo of what I was looking for,” he said.

I should tell you now that Barbara Duncan is my mother. I'm a retired newspaper reporter and editor, and she has

outwritten me for 17 straight years. Her energy is tireless!

Her blog started 17 years ago as a marketing strategy on ActiveRain, a social network for the real estate industry. (It stands for Active Real Estate Industry Network). She used big photos, not too many words, lots of names, dates and places. As social media has taken over, she has adapted a tiny bit. She shares to Facebook now, but not to Instagram, TikTok or YouTube. She doesn't use video or music. She doesn't pay for marketing. Still, it gets around.



*The index of Barbara Duncan's Blog is searchable on ActiveRain.*

A decade ago she was designated a “rainmaker” on the network for logging more than 500,000 “points” through posted public comments. Currently, based on the same criteria, she is ranked #2 in the state of Arkansas – higher than bloggers in all the large cities.



"The story really comes out in the comments," Duncan says about her blogs, which typically are short. "Since I didn't grow up here, I post what I know and ask for information about what I don't. When I have a photo with people in it, I naturally want to know who they are. I just put it out there and let the readers do the rest."

She frequently calls on her "Searcy Sleuths" for names, dates, details. The same names come up over and over again, like Don Thompson, who lives in California now, and Anita Hart Fuller, who has since been promoted to "Super Sleuth" and become a close personal friend.

Followers find the blog's tone as inviting as the subject matter. Duncan writes with the enthusiasm of the forever young (even though she's well beyond retirement age), with lots of exclamation points and humor.

It is not uncommon for her to blog about a giant tree, or freshly painted barn, or a random encounter. She has been an observer of the world since I was little, and I'm used to her slamming on the brakes when she sees something interesting, like the time she spotted men in medieval costumes practicing for the Renaissance Faire in Berryhill Park.

Her blog is based on the belief that others are curious about things in their community, too.

"I just get so distracted," she explained in a blog from 2011. "I go on to the computer and plan to do some really important things and then WHAM! I see some fascinating picture on my computer that I've saved from somewhere."

In 2009, on a vacation to Florida, she posed with a statue of the World's Tallest Man at Ripley's Believe it Or Not Museum. Little did she know that the man, Robert Wadlow, 8 feet 11 inches tall, had visited Searcy twice in the 1930s, on a



*Duncan and some Searcy friends with history.  
From left: Duncan, Betty Robbins, Anita Hart Fuller and Karen Fuller.*

promotional tour for International Shoe Company.

The post and its comments now serve as the online record on the subject, complete with photos. She sees her role as a discussion starter. She'll throw out a photo or clipping from a point in time, and the public does the rest. Most comments remain unedited.

Just because she wrote about a topic once, doesn't mean Duncan won't write about it again. Her repeated posting about landmarks and beloved places has served as historical layering, completing the picture of a town's evolution.

Take for example Morris School for Boys, which operated on 200 acres about 8 miles from town. It had no formal ties to Searcy, and the students and teachers all came from elsewhere. When it closed in 1993, the details of its very existence faded over time.



*Submitted photo from the blog of Morris School library. Her blogs about the old school brought former students and staffers together online and ultimately led to a reunion.*

Her first blog about Morris School in 2012 drew 106 comments from across the country, including some with links to Facebook pages and by people who wanted to track down former classmates

at the school. She let commenters share as much as they wanted, and posted anew every time she found a new photo or had a document. She brought together so many people, through the blog alone, that she was invited to the school's reunion at the old site in 2014.

Barbara Duncan's Blog is not a diary. If you want her life story, you can find it there, but it will take a while. She gives snippets of her personal life and family, but they are hidden among standard posts about architecture, local history, and other people.



*A clipping from Duncan's personal scrapbook that shows her as a young girl working at a tobacco farm.*

In one post from 2011 she shared a yellowed newspaper photo and wrote about working in the tobacco fields of South Georgia as a child. Another tells of her childhood home, which lacked indoor plumbing and a proper lock on the door.

In others she writes about her parents, husband, children and in-laws. She wrote about the time I attempted to print out hard copies of all the blogs (and public



*The blog on the World's Tallest Man and comments submitted by readers reveal an entire story on Wadlow's travels with the shoe company.*





*Barbara and Rodger Duncan  
at their home in 2019.*

comments) she had produced in her first few years. The effort claimed six 3-ring binders, and I gave up.

Duncan initially moved to Searcy in the mid-1960s as Barbara Smith, the young wife of a career U.S. Air Force officer, Capt. William Ward Smith. Her in-laws were Martin Paul Smith, a retired men's shirt salesman, Baptist deacon and Searcy Alderman, and Madge Smith, who worked part-time at the Ideal Shop.

She was settling into a rent house for her husband's tour of duty in Vietnam, when Capt. Smith, 32, was killed in action in the war. He was Searcy's first Vietnam War casualty. She was a 28-year-old widow with two small children.

Searcy folks came to her aid. Someone encouraged a newly divorced car dealer named Rodger Duncan, whose family business was four blocks away, to reach out to the young widow.

She remarried, returned to college (graduating with an art degree from Harding), taught public school for 12 years and then switched to real estate as a career. She has been a full-time real estate agent for more than 40 years.

She launched Barbara Duncan's Blog when she was in her 60s.

Barbara and Rodger Duncan were married for 54 years until he died in 2022. He was a third-generation Searcy resident, and his family had a truckload of history to share. His grandparents' house still stands on Holmes Road, and the Duncan family car dealership building showroom still stands on Race Avenue next to College Church of Christ. It's leased to the Four Seasons nursery now.

As a married couple, their shenanigans would come up occasionally in the blog, from dancing to the legendary Sonny Burgess at the Searcy Country Club, to backyard gardening. She called him "Hubby" in the blog.



*Photo from a 2009 blog about her husband  
putting human hair from the barber shop on  
the ground near his tomato plants,  
to ward off animals.*

"He's going to put hair on his tomato plants???" she wrote in 2009, when Hubby decided that human hair collected from the barber shop floor would protect his tomato garden from predators. The photos served as proof.

After a few years of general interest blogging, she began to focus on history, and that has become her calling. The Historical Society added a link on the home page to her blog a few years ago, because she was so prolific at gathering unreported information.

Most of her posts start with clippings or photos from school yearbooks, old newspapers, or submitted content. She throws out a subject, and the readers do the rest. Her fans have learned that the blog post needs time to fully develop, like a Polaroid print. So they share it widely and return later, to enjoy what's in the frame.



*The blog keeps track of demolition in Searcy.*

Duncan has a soft heart for old buildings, and she tries to post every time an aging structure falls to the wrecking ball. She keeps the score with a series called "Another One Bites the Dust" that has accidentally made her the darling of preservationists.

"Better call your mother!" jokes Charles Braswell, an old-house fanatic who lived for more than a decade in the historic Kerr-Booth House at the corner of Center and Pecan.

Racing to the scene to beat the excavator, she shows photos of before and after, explaining that she wants to provide

"a death notice" for every lost building. Over time, the teardowns reveal patterns of growth and change. Through her blogs, you can see the old houses that once stood where Legacy Park is, and dressed-up couples in the banquet rooms of the long-ago Rendezvous, which now houses Hart Construction.



*The IDEAL SHOP has the finest in women's fashions  
and smart accessories to highlight every wardrobe.*

*Photo from the blog (clipped from an  
old yearbook) about The Ideal Shop in  
downtown Searcy.*

But Duncan brings balance with blogs on the new. Recently, she shared a photo of a shiny new fire hydrant in the dirt of a new housing development planned for the west side of town. No houses yet, but it was her second post on Belmont Estates, which she said has a "grand sounding name." In 50 years, someone searching Searcy's "Belmont Estates" will likely find Barbara Duncan's Blog as the first public record of it. ♦

## LINKS TO BARBARA DUNCAN BLOG

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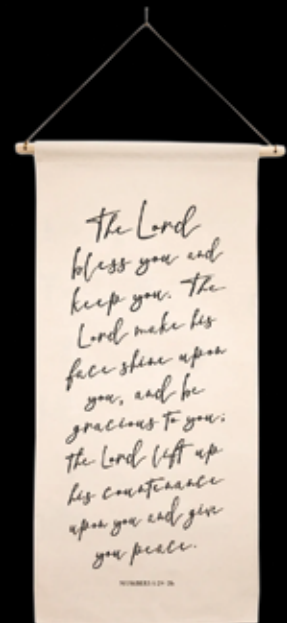




*A photo from Barbara Duncan's latest blog,  
on a new subdivision going up on  
Searcy's west side.*



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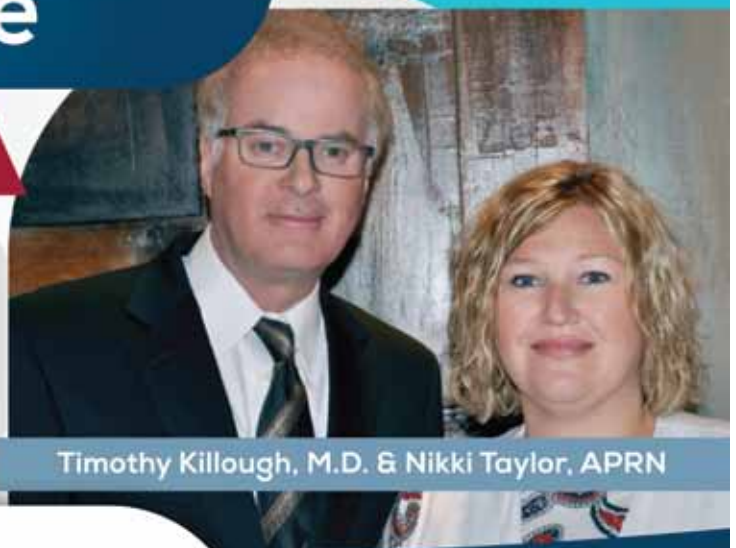
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# A BLESSED DAY

## *The Hannah & Cristian Perez Wedding*

WRITTEN BY JENNIFER WEBB

PHOTOS BY AUTUMN SWAIN PHOTOGRAPHY





**H**ANNAH HAD BEEN AROUND WEDDINGS for as long as she could remember. They had always been a part of her life. Her Mom, Jennifer Hamilton, worked at Ann's Bridal as a wedding planner since before Hannah was born. When she was a little girl, her mom even let her and her sister tag along on less busy days. She formed a fast friendship with the owner's daughter while playing dress up with the dresses and shoes at the shop.

It was funny how long ago that seemed when she was in college at ASU Beebe, majoring in Health Sciences. She met Cristian through a mutual friend. He was funny and sweet, if a bit quiet. But he was a great listener for an outgoing girl like Hannah. She was drawn to him, but only as a friend at first. Their friendship slowly grew and turned into more and they started dating in February 2019.

For their 3 year dating anniversary, they planned a trip to Hot Springs. While walking through Garvin Gardens, they stopped to take pictures. She was setting up the tripod for her phone, and when she turned around, he was on one knee!

After an engagement dinner at her Mom and Mark's house, the wedding planning started. With her Mom's background, Hannah knew her wedding was in good hands. She let her Mom, Jennifer, and older sister, Katelyn Bell take the reins. She gave them ideas on what she wanted and they took it and ran!

Jennifer knew exactly where she wanted the ceremony to take place - the Old Box Factory in Judsonia that had recently been turned into a wedding venue. But first came the dress!

Since Hannah's sisters, Katelyn, and McKenna along with her lifetime best friend, Allyson Dunn were all involved in the wedding planning too, everyone came for dress shopping. Since there was a limit on how many people could come at once, they ended up smuggling in McKenna. Hannah tried on several dresses, but knew exactly when she had found "the one."

Hannah knew she wanted an outdoor Boho-style wedding with Pampas Grass and beautiful fall colors. They toured the Judsonia Box Factory and though Jennifer could clearly see how her ideas could all come together, Hannah took a bit more convincing. Rick, who owns the venue, and is a close friend of the family, promised her that he would have the outside beautiful by the time her wedding came.

The inside was roomy with tall rafters, a stage, a dancefloor, and space to accommodate up to 500 guests. There was no question that it would be a great place to host the reception inside. Hannah agreed and Jennifer got to work making her daughter's dreams come to life. But having been through her oldest daughter's wedding, she knew she needed a wedding coordinator as well. She hired Karmen Caylor, a friend's daughter, who had just moved in from Nantucket.



Flowers were an integral part of the outdoor wedding of Hannah's dreams. Luckily, Jennifer's specialty was floral design. Jennifer contacted Artistic Florist & Gifts, where she had been a floral designer for several years before she resigned so she could help her husband Mark start his metal company, but still helps on holidays along with Hannah. Mark, Jennifer's husband, and Hannah's stepdad, also played a huge role in Hannah's life since age 9. He wanted her and her sisters to have their dream weddings. Their Artistic Florist family supplied and helped Jennifer with all the flowers. Jennifer's sister, Andrea played a huge part in designing as well.

The night before the wedding at the rehearsal dinner, Cristian's Mom, Maribel Suarez made all the food herself. She shined with homemade tamales and Hannah's favorite rolled chicken tacos. She knew just how to make everyone feel welcome and loved.



**"She is so sweet and always makes me feel so welcome as a part of their family. It was such a fun night and a great start to the wedding weekend!" - HANNAH PEREZ**

When the big day finally arrived it was beautiful but windy. Most of the flowers were already done, but Jennifer was putting the finishing touches on the arch. She had just finished placing the last flower and carried the ladder away when she heard a crash behind her. The arch had fallen to the ground, face first, crushing all the beautiful flowers and hours of labor.

Jennifer, not sure whether to cry or to freak out since it was crunch time, walked inside to her sister Andrea and told her what had just happened. "Take a deep breath. Take a minute to gather your stuff and your thoughts and then come back and do what you need to do," her sister wisely counseled.

By the grace of God, Jennifer was able to go to Artistic, get more flowers, put them on the arch, and recruit the girls from Artistic

► *Continued on next page*





*“It was a beautiful night and one that everyone would remember...”*



to finish up the reception and get ready in time. Andrea helped her with everything. The wedding coordinator’s stepdad, who was the officiant, ensured the arch stayed. He went to his truck and hammered in t-posts to secure it. The arch was firmly anchored and stayed in place throughout the ceremony.

Cristian had requested that they follow the tradition of not seeing each other on their wedding day. Hannah did a first look with her bridesmaids and groomsmen but stole a few moments away to herself to read the letter that Cristian had written to her before she walked down the aisle. She had written one to him too. She imagined him reading her letter and feeling just as she did when her eyes took in all the loving words that he had poured out on the page for her.

When the music started to play, and Cristian saw her for the first time, he smiled as he had never smiled before. Her smile matched his and they locked eyes. It was a magical moment where they both knew that today was the start of their forever. The outdoor wedding was just as beautiful as Hannah had always pictured it, with the Judsonia bridge in the background.

The catering provided by El Valarte, served amazing street tacos in a tribute to Cristian’s family’s Hispanic heritage. Hannah’s uncle served as the DJ with CS Perfect Mix Entertainment Mix and Wedding Services and played a perfect mix of songs everyone loved.

The reception captured the rustic boho look Hannah wanted. The stage was decorated with a double diamond metal arch made by her family’s business, White County Metal & Fabrication, and a cowhide rug, and completed with tall glass cylinders of pampas grass and candles: perfect for a picture backdrop. The tables were covered with beautiful floor-length rose gold satin tablecloths borrowed from Jennifer’s cousin Shawna, who was also an amazing help setting up all the tables and helping anywhere else needed! The tables were draped with terra cotta runners and topped with tall fresh floral centerpieces on gold harlow stands rented from A Perfect Bloom.

But one of the most special parts of the night was when Hannah’s sister, Katelyn sang. Her husband had gotten her a guitar a few years before. Katelyn practiced for months, and wouldn’t let anyone else listen. But when the time came to perform, Hannah’s shy sister blew everyone away! She didn’t make one mistake, and everyone was so touched they were fighting back tears. When the song ended and Katelyn started to walk across the dance floor to give Hannah a hug, her husband met her halfway and proudly proclaimed “That’s my WIFE!”

It was a beautiful night and one that everyone would remember for a long time to come. As for Hannah and Cristian, may God continue to bless them as they live out their Happily Ever After! ♦







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# When We Becomes Me

BY JENNIFER WEBB

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20 YEARS AGO, GOD PLANTED A SEED. LIKE ALL SEEDS, IT STARTED SMALL BUT CONTAINED ALL THE POTENTIAL TO GROW INTO SOMETHING MAGNIFICENT.

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**T**hink about a cherry seed - a pit, something we usually throw in the trash and think nothing more about. But when you plant that seed - you see nothing at first. You have to wait for all the conditions to be right. You can fertilize and water it, giving it all the nutrients that it needs to grow, but until the season is right, it won't sprout.

When it does sprout, it's tiny; usually just a little twig with a few leaves, but after that, it grows steadily and fast until it develops into a cherry tree with beautiful flowers that bring forth fruit. And it all started with one tiny little seed.

Lisa Todd knew when God planted that seed in her heart, but just like natural seeds, it didn't start to grow until the conditions were right. Yet, when she looked back, she could see all the watering, fertilizing, pruning, and nurturing that had transpired along the way.

Lisa and her family moved to Searcy from El Dorado in the summer of 1990. Her husband, David, had accepted a coaching job at Harding University. They left in 1993 but returned back to Searcy in 1998. David coached college basketball for sixteen years. He had grown weary of the recruitment trail and time spent away from his family. At forty years old, he made the decision to take his coaching in a different direction. He applied and was accepted into Harding University's Marriage and Family Therapy program.

**"PRAYING AND LISTENING  
TO GOD BECAME SPIRITUAL  
DISCIPLINES."**

In early spring, David and Lisa attended a marriage conference in Dallas, TX. One of the guest speakers, Becky Tirabassi, shared how a dramatic encounter with God transformed her spiritual life. She had renewed her diminishing faith with enthusiasm by dedicating one hour a day with God. In order to keep herself accountable and organized, she published a notebook. Lisa purchased *"My Prayer Partner Notebook"* and returned to Arkansas with renewed excitement; eager to dive in! She had been praying for ways to be more intentional and accountable in her daily walk with Christ.

Her desire was to develop a fresher, stronger and deeper relationship with Jesus.

Within days, Lisa began making a daily appointment with God. Praying and listening to God became spiritual disciplines. **PSALMS 25:14** says, *"The Lord confides in those who fear him; he makes his covenant known to them."*

There was a section in the book about praying for what your life would look like 10-20 years down the road- when kids are grown and retirement is on the horizon. How would God use you? That question made Lisa pause, and that's when she felt the Holy Spirit plant a tiny seed in her heart. She had always felt a desire to serve widows and orphans. Her grandmother had been orphaned at eight years old and spent 8 years in an orphanage. She had also been widowed after 55 years of marriage.





**IN SUMMER OF 2006,** while visiting Hot Springs, her husband was reading the local newspaper and stated, “**Lisa, I found you a dream job!**” While it was the job of her dreams, she wasn’t interested in moving...but God had other plans. David encouraged her to apply and two weeks later she was packing up her classroom in Rose Bud and headed to Hot Springs. The move was a leap of faith, but Lisa knew this was God’s plan, she was trusting Him and He didn’t disappoint!

Lisa loved her new job as a gifted and talented teacher at Lakeside School District. David landed a job as a Licensed Professional Counselor at Hillcrest Children’s Home...an orphanage! **JAMES 1:27** says:

*“Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to take care of widows and orphans in their distress and keep oneself from being polluted by the world.” (NIV)*

There it was, the Word said it plain as day. Lisa had a heart for widows and now David had a job providing mental health counseling to children who were without homes...orphans!

Interesting fact, Lakeside Schools and Hillcrest Children’s Home are located about a mile apart on Malvern Ave. Before David went to work for Hillcrest, he would tell Lisa, “They need me,” when they drove by the campus. It was like a magnet drawing him to the children. Before he had the chance to inquire about an opening, Lisa’s dad mentioned that his new neighbor was the executive director at Hillcrest. Her dad was new to the neighborhood and they had met each other at the mailbox. Her dad mentioned that his son-in-law was a Christian counselor and had just moved to Hot Springs. A meeting was set up and within a short time, David was hired at Hillcrest. They did need him after all! Look at God... again he had the perfect plan!

Hillcrest Children’s Home is located on a 52-acre campus that is owned and operated by the Assemblies of God. It was founded in 1944 in obedience to the scripture mandate to care for orphans. It began as a vision of a woman who was disappointed that she was unable to serve on the foreign mission field. As a young woman, Gladys Hinson was inspired by another missionary to open a home for orphaned and abandoned children. She welcomed three children who had lost their parents and five children who had been abandoned in a cold abandoned house in another state. That’s how the Hillcrest Children’s Home started and it is now one of the largest Christian organizations involved in the compassionate care of children and families.

David loved his work at Hillcrest and Lisa planned to join him as a part-time caseworker after her retirement from teaching in 2013. However, later in the fall, Lisa’s dad was diagnosed with a brain tumor that required major surgery. Complications ensued and she would become his primary caregiver in the year to follow. During one of his extended hospital stays, Lisa met Peaches, a lady whose husband was a patient across the hall from her dad in the hospital. They formed a fast friendship and kept in touch after her father was discharged from the hospital.

Several months later, Peaches’ husband died and she became a widow. After the funeral, Lisa noticed her friend withdraw from life. Her normal outgoing personality was quenched with grief. Peaches was devastated and depressed having lost the love of her life. Lisa wanted to help and reached out to her new friend. Not realizing at the time, the Lord was preparing her for ministering to widows. Over time, Peaches began to slowly heal. Grief has no timetable. It’s different for everyone but as a Christian with great faith, Peaches began to pray with Lisa and attend Bible Study Fellowship. At the time, they were studying the book of Ruth. Peaches knew the timing was perfect and that it was God’s way



of confirming that she too had a “kinsman redeemer.” For several years Lisa and Peaches both served as volunteers at BSF. Together, they prayed regularly and those prayers led to the birth of When We Becomes Me, a widows ministry. Lisa lovingly calls Peaches her #1 widow.

In February of 2017, Lisa’s dad passed away. No longer having the caregiver responsibility, she began looking for ways to serve widows and orphans. The seed that had been planted years earlier began to spring forth. On a Sunday morning in the late summer of 2017, she was sitting in church and noticed three widows sitting on a pew directly in front of her. She felt the Holy Spirit’s nudge reminding her of that seed that had been planted almost 20 years ago. “Invite them to join you for a meal and share what I planted in your heart.” After church, Lisa was obedient and invited them to have breakfast with her the following Wednesday. After talking with them it became painfully clear that there was still a lot of grief and that there was very little support for these widows. People that were there to support them initially returned to their daily lives. Former friends of the couple stopped inviting them over or out to eat as in the past, it was awkward now. Often they felt like “a third wheel,” isolated and lonely. They were left with feelings that no one seemed to understand and grief that was pervasive. A few stated that at times God even felt distant. Once regular Bible reading and prayer was now sometimes impossible. Lisa listened intently and wanted somehow to find a way to ease their pain of grief and loss.

One of the ladies, Lana, mentioned that she felt like widows needed a safe space where they could share their hearts and tell their stories without any judgment or guilt. Family and friends often don’t understand and well-meaning folks often give advice that comes across to widows as hurtful and cruel.



*“A safe place where women experiencing loss could be ministered to on a regular basis.”*



**LISA, LANA, AND PEACHES began to plan and pray.** Less than a week later they were contacted by an organization that hosted retreats for bereaved parents. “While We’re Waiting” had a beautiful new 12000 sq foot retreat facility and were offering the use of it at no charge. Wow, who does that? God!

From August 31 to November 6, 2017, all the pieces fell into place and eight desperate widows arrived looking for hope for their shattered hearts. Lisa, Lana, and Peaches welcomed these ladies and allowed them to rest, relax and share their stories of grief and loss.

Each weekend retreat hosts eight widows. They share delicious meals, music, stories, and laughs as well as shed some tears. After sharing, they have opportunities to visit, take nature walks, craft, nap, or feed the resident donkey, J.D. They talk about topics like graveside visits, handling holidays, birthdays, and anniversaries. They discuss how to deal with hurtful comments made by well-meaning friends and family. Many come to the retreats not knowing anyone but leave having a common bond and a new set of friends.

Since the fall of 2017, almost 100 widows have attended these widows retreats in Hot Springs. It’s a beautiful and transformational weekend for these precious ladies.

However, God was just getting started and the seed that was planted in Lisa’s heart was about to become a full-grown tree loaded with blooms and about to start bearing fruit.

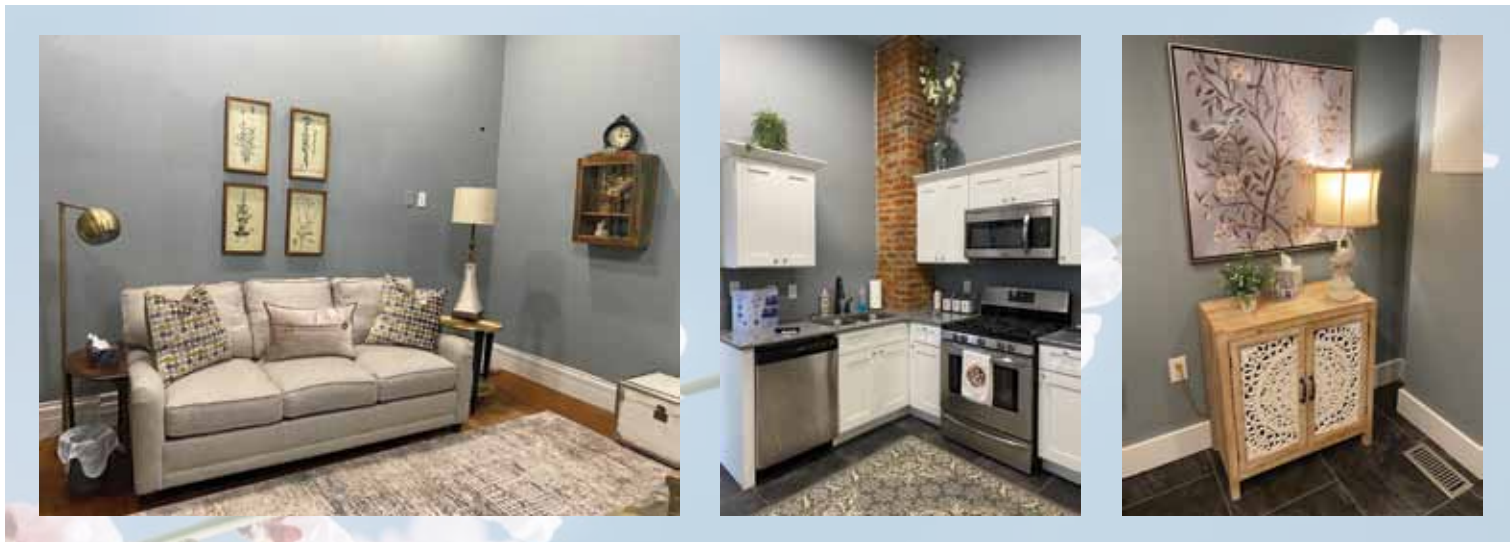
Lisa and David, now both retired, had moved back to Searcy in August 2018.

As amazing as the retreats were in Hot Springs, not everyone can get away for a weekend. Oftentimes these widows had children at home. What if there was a permanent home for When We Becomes Me? A safe place where women experiencing loss could be ministered to on a regular basis. A space that could host one-day retreats, lunches, brunches, Bible studies, Friday night gatherings, and celebrate holidays, the possibilities were endless!

Once again, Lisa prayed and God answered big time!! On her way to take a local widow to the grocery store, she noticed that a historic home on the corner of West Race and Fir Street was for sale. She had passed it many times and always thought how perfect it would be for the ministry. It was a beautiful home built in the late 1800s. The house had been bought at auction, undergone renovation, and was being used as a commercial office space. Lisa knew it had potential and was excited to take a look. Such a convenient location with plenty of room to grow!

► *Continued on next page*





She felt that same now familiar voice directing her to call and inquire about the property. She made an appointment to see the house. Upon entering, she and her husband fell in love and knew immediately it was “heaven sent!”

Still, she wanted to be sure that this was God moving and not her own desires. She walked circles around the property, praying with each step. She asked God to show her a sign if this was His plan. Knowing we don’t always “get a sign,” she prayed in faith and trusted God. During one of her prayer walks, she counted the number of marked parking spaces - there were twelve, the exact number of people that attend a retreat! There’s one sign... On another prayer walk, she noticed what looked to be an old lamp post located in the side yard. The glass was cracked and she wondered if the light was original to the house. Did it even work? As she was leaving at dusk one night, the light came on... “thank you, Jesus,” she whispered! The next day the Todds’ offer was accepted and in less than thirty days When We Becomes Me had a permanent home in Searcy, Arkansas.

But God wasn’t finished... the recently remodeled house had several rooms that had been used as office space, Lisa wondered how they might use these rooms. Her husband suggested they would make perfect counseling offices for himself and their daughter, Marcy Todd Mercer. Both are licensed marriage and family therapists and have a private practice.

After much thought and prayer, the beautiful historic house built before the turn of the 19th century has been named, The 600 House. Marcy designed the logo and the number has reference to the physical address, 600 West Race, as well as several references to the number 600 in the Bible.

Recently, Growing Hope Counseling therapist Winter Yielding, LPC, LMFT began seeing clients at the office. She specializes in adult and child mental health counseling as well as child play therapy.

**THE 600 HOUSE** has plenty of room to expand and the Lord keeps putting people who need his love and healing in the right place at the right time. It’s a beautiful example of how God can take a tiny seed, and when the timing is right and all necessary water, fertilizer, pruning, and prayer have been added, a tiny sprout can grow into a beautiful creation bearing the fruit of His creation.

The Bible says in **JAMES 4:2** “*You do not have because you do not ask God.*” Prayer is a tool the Lord has given us to use to seek his will and direction. He may not answer immediately, but rest assured he will in his perfect timing. Lisa gives the Lord all praise, honor, and glory for the prayers He answered after planting the seed of a widow’s ministry in her heart over twenty years ago.

He is doing amazing things and healing people of all ages at the When We Becomes Me widows ministry and the counseling taking place at The 600 House. It’s a beautiful example of how God’s perfect timing can plant a tiny seed, and with prayer, faith, and obedience cause the seed to sprout and grow into something more wonderful and bigger than we ever could have ever imagined.

If you would like to know more about the When We Becomes Me widow’s ministry, you can visit their website at [www.whenwebecomesme.com](http://www.whenwebecomesme.com) or email Lisa Todd at [info@whenwebecomesme.com](mailto:info@whenwebecomesme.com) If you have experienced loss of any type and need support, Lisa and David host a faith-based grief and loss group. Email them for more information and visit their Facebook page for daily encouragement at [facebook.com/whenwebecomesme](https://facebook.com/whenwebecomesme). ♦



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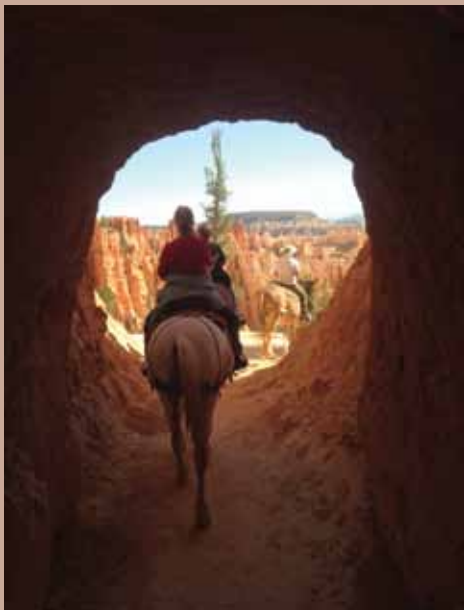
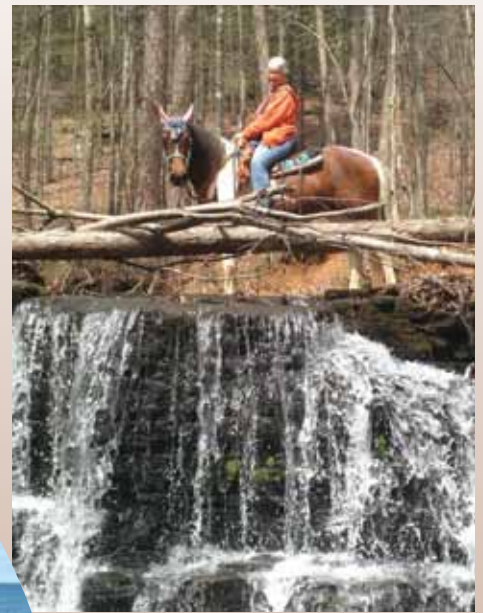


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# When You Have To Reinvent Yourself

BY JENNIFER WEBB

**“Wow! They really know how to live,” I thought to myself as I waved at the truck that drove by my house, horse trailer in tow. I knew exactly who it was- the patriotic paint job and the words “Love to ride” set it apart from all the other white trucks in the community. Lee and Cindy Fonken were off to do what they did nearly every day since Lee retired- they were off to one of the many horse trails in the state. They were one of those couples that just loved being together. They thrived in each other’s company. They were not only husband and wife, they were best friends as well.**

**T**hey had worked hard to get to this point in their lives. Both had worked for the US Postal Service, Lee was a veteran, and they had raised 2 boys, Matt and Nick, (both Eagle Scouts) along with hundreds of the best Missouri Foxtrotter Trail horses in the nation.

They were the kind of people that gave generously and loved like they had never been hurt - friends, family, neighbors, and community. If anyone had earned this period of doing what they loved and were passionate about together, it was them.

They rode so much that Cindy accumulated 39,591 miles and her horse, Kate’s 007 was named Missouri Foxtrotting trail horse of the year in 2016, 2017, and 2018. He was the first to win the title 3 years in a row and is in the Missouri Foxtrotter Hall of Fame at Ava, Missouri. Lee came in second place with his horse Granite and at the time, had accumulated 27,363 miles.

They decided that 2019 would be Lee’s year to get first and she’d take second. They rode all year in all kinds of weather, but at the Pink Ribbon Ride at Pine Grove in October 2019, Cindy had a hard time getting on her horse on the second day. They laughed and joked about it, but deep down, Lee knew something was wrong.

He took her to the doctor and the next 2 months turned into a heart-wrenching nightmare. Cindy had stage four brain cancer. Lee cared for her at home. They celebrated Thanksgiving, Christmas, Cindy’s 69th birthday, and their 37th wedding anniversary on December 28th. She passed away peacefully at their home on December 30th.

Before she passed, Lee promised her two things. He would keep playing his fiddle at church, and he’d keep riding.

Lee came in second place once again for trail miles in 2019. He couldn’t ride after October because he was taking care of Cindy. His competitor beat him by 50 miles, but by that point, it was no longer important to him.

He felt like he’d lost his right arm. It was a grief and sorrow that few understood. He still took care of the four horses they had left, but riding wasn’t the same without Cindy.

He started going to grief share at church, and that helped.

**“When your spouse dies, it’s not like losing anyone else like your Mom, Dad, or Grandparent. It affects everything you do; all your routines. You’ve got to change them all and reinvent yourself or it will kill you.”**

- LEE FONKEN

He explored other interests and hobbies, including fishing, playing his fiddle, attending Bible Study at church, and even bought an original 1925 model T car.

He still went on some trail rides, including two yearly memorial rides in honor of Cindy in Louisiana and in Tennessee. He would usually take Granite and one of his sons would ride Seven. But aside from the organized rides that he wanted to attend in honor of her or the ones that he felt obligated to attend as part of his role on the trail committee for the Missouri Foxtrotter Horse Breed Association, Granite and Seven spent a good chunk of time as pasture ornaments.

God has a funny way of working both ends of something together, and that was certainly the case with myself and my neighbor, Lee.

I had ridden since I was a kid. Mom instilled a deep love of horses in me. First, there was a big Appaloosa mare, named Sis, that was my childhood horse and one of my best friends. Then, Dusty, a Missouri Foxtrotter gelding that taught me that I could love another horse again after I lost Sis and how to ride a gaited horse. My mom owned both of these horses, and is gracious enough





to share them with me. Horseback riding has always been the place that we connected, no matter how cross-ways we got, as mothers and daughters are prone to do. She also told me 2 things:

1. **"If I die with some horse-related accident or riding a horse, I want you to know that I died HAPPY.."**
2. **"You'd BETTER take care of my horse!"**

We saw Lee at the local fire department smoke-off competition in May of 2022. I saw Lee visiting with my husband, Shanon, but didn't think anything of it. Lee approached me later and said something that I did not expect. I don't think either of us knew at the time what was coming - but that's how God's blessings work sometimes. "Why don't you come ride Seven?" he asked. "Just consider him yours to ride. He needs ridden and he's getting fat just sitting out in the pasture."

Cindy had offered to let me come ride before, but I never took her up on it because it felt awkward to me. Now, after her passing, I sorely wished I had taken her up on the invite, even if I didn't quite know how to go about it. I wasn't going to pass up the opportunity again! What better way to honor Cindy than by playing a small role in taking care of her beloved horse? I told him I'd be by a few days later.

### **That was the day that the magic started to happen.**

I remember going out to the pasture with Lee to get Seven for the first time with his halter on my shoulder. I slipped the halter over his nose and gazed into those big liquid brown eyes and felt something clench in my chest. My eyes spilled over and I felt a place in my heart heal that I didn't even realize was still broken. "I think this is gonna work." I heard Lee say behind me. I don't think either of us knew how right he was.

It didn't happen overnight. It took time and a summer of riding Seven in the pasture, but we bonded to each other. Then, in September of 2022, Lee took me to my first organized National Trail Ride at King's Ranch. I was nervous, but when Seven turned his head to look me in the eye and gently blew air through his nose twice into my hand, I knew he was going to take care of me.

Seven crossed terrain that I didn't even know horses could cross, without a flick of his ear. Though I had ridden a lot, I had never ridden like this.

I wasn't sure how the other riders would receive me. That was wasted worry. I introduced myself to a lady named Sherry that was keeping paperwork straight and instead of taking my offered hand for a handshake, she wrapped me in a warm, motherly hug. At the age of 41, I was the "baby" of the trail ride. Most of the other riders were retired with kids my age.

But I was hooked. Those 12 miles through rugged terrain may have left my body thankful for the alive I had taken earlier in the day, but I felt like a kid at Christmas. It was the same excitement and anticipation, and it did not leave me disappointed.

Lee talked me into joining a few organizations to keep track of my hours and miles. I enjoyed the hours spent both on the trail and in the truck as he drove the trailer to various destinations around the state. He told me stories of his and Cindy's rides - including taking a friend with their family (including kids) on a mule ride to the bottom of the Grand Canyon for her 70th birthday. They also rode the Peekaboo Trail in Utah and took their horses to an American Heart Association Ride on Myrtle beach. The pictures show a smiling Cindy on Seven with the ocean waves crashing on the beach behind them.





Perhaps one of the most amazing ones was the “Shore to Shore” ride in Michigan that spans 250 miles in 10 days. It goes from the shore of Lake Michigan to Lake Huron, with primitive camping at the end of each day. They rode that one with their kids, who were camp favorites since they could start a fire no matter how fierce the wind was.

They broke ice off the water buckets to allow the horses to drink in the morning and were sweating in 98-degree heat by the afternoon. Even more amazing is the “Double Cross,” which is the same as the Shore to Shore ride except you turn around and go back, making the ride 500 miles. Lee put brand new metal shoes on his horse, Granite at the beginning of the ride. By day 10, they broke in half, eroded away by all the miles.

I’m not sure that Lee knew what he was getting himself into when he told me that I could ride Seven, but we’ve started exploring a lot of the places that he and Cindy used to ride around the state. We’ve also started trimming trails on the back part of his property to clean them up for a future memorial trail ride in honor of Cindy. He’s not riding alone anymore, and I get the opportunity to see spectacular sites that I had no idea were this close. I’m learning a lot, with Lee’s and Seven’s gentle teachings. I know that each ride is a gift and I greet each one with child-like enthusiasm. I know better than to take it for granted, and I thank God for each and every one. ♦



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# Young Entrepreneurships



By Melissa Cooper

**ON A COOL SPRING SATURDAY MORNING, I wake up lazily at dawn to the sweet smell of the soft beeswax candle beside me.** I slip on a pair of velvet like slippers and stroll leisurely toward my kitchen. After I start a pot of coffee, I head into the bathroom, where I wash my face gently with a fragrant bar of lavender goat's milk soap nestled inside a soft crocheted soap saver. Fully refreshed, I return to pour myself an invigorating cup of coffee. I make my way to my porch swing to sit for a while and set my cup atop a beautiful wood burned coaster. I pause to admire the ornate design on the coaster before I set the cup fully down. The roosters are crowing, and the goats are imploring for my attention. They will get it soon enough, but for now, I want to dive into my new book and immerse myself, if even for a short time before my day really begins.

Wouldn't that be an ideal way to wake up every day? While that is not the reality of day to day life for most Arkansans, the products mentioned in my dream morning are. Products, not only made in America, but made in White, and Lonoke County, right here in Central Arkansas. In this article you will meet five local entrepreneurs. What makes these entrepreneurs unique? This amazing group of talented entrepreneurs' range in ages between 10 and 15 years old! Enjoy their stories about what led them to be entrepreneurs, then help support their businesses by visiting their websites, getting goats milk soap at The Faded Rose in Rosebud, or purchasing any of their products together at their shared booth in The Artistry in Searcy. As for the books, we may have to wait a little longer, but I can't wait to read them.



► Breanna, 15

## BREANNA BLACKWOOD

**Q: What got you interested in wood burning?**

A: I saw it on Pinterest and it looked cool and wanted to try it.

**Q: How did you learn to Wood burn? And how long have you been doing it?**

A: Just lots of practicing on my own. I got my first wood burning tool August 2022.

**Q: Have you always enjoyed artistic type projects?**

A: Yes! I took art classes when I was younger and have been drawing for as long as I can remember.

**Q: What made you want to do it as a business?**

A: My mom posted a picture of something I did on Facebook and it got a lot of interest. There was a craft fair coming up so I set up a table and a Facebook page- Black Wood Creations was created.

**Q: What have you learned with creating your own business?**

A: It's pushed me out of my comfort zone and made me talk to people more.

**Q: What's the most fun thing about having your own business?**

A: It gives me something to keep busy.

**Q: What's your favorite thing that you have wood burned?**

A: A decorative plaque of a wood duck or a turkey.

**Q: What's your most requested design?**

A: Sunflowers and Bees





## CAITLIN COOPER



▲ Caitlin at The Faded Rose with her products.

**MY NAME IS CAITLIN COOPER I am 15 years old and live on a ranch in west central White County.** My family has always owned cattle and poultry, until recently when I got my first dairy goat. Ever since I can remember I have showed poultry at the White County fair through 4-H, however a few years ago I decided I wanted to show livestock. I talked to my parents about possibly getting goats, and they said yes, as long as I bought my own doe. So, I saved up my money and bought my first Purebred Nubian Dairy Goat in 2021 out of Missouri. I started my own business with the name Twisting C Ranch once my doe kidded in 2022 and I started milking her. Two years after I got my first goat, I now own a small herd of Registered Purebred Nubians.

My business Twisting C Ranch specializes in farm fresh goat milk soap. I also provide a variety of other bath products including bath salts, sugar scrubs and bars, lotion bars and other similar products. I started out selling by word of mouth, deliveries and

selling by booth at a few different events. I now have booths where I sell my bath products located at The Faded Rose in Rose Bud, and The Artistry, located in Searcy. I provide a variety of different scents and some seasonal ones as well. I use natural oils, lye, and my farm fresh goat milk as the base. I then customize each batch with a scent and corresponding mica color.

As a young entrepreneur, I have learned a variety of different skills that will benefit me throughout my life. I have learned time management through soap making, each batch of soap may take up to two-weeks to cure. I have also learned how to promote my self and business, how to make connections and how economics works. Young entrepreneurs are the future of Arkansas business. We are your future ranchers, small store owners, row croppers, and business owners. Without us there is no future in Arkansas business, and we want to get a head start. So, give us a hand, and support your local Young Entrepreneur!

## CARLEIGH COOPER



► Carleigh and her bath salts.



**HI, MY NAME IS CARLEIGH COOPER, I am 10 years old, and live on a ranch in western White County.** I got interested in selling bath salts when I decided to make homemade gifts for some of my family for Christmas when I was nine. I really liked the way they turned out, and my sister had started a goat's milk soap business, so I thought, why not start my own business with my bath salts? So, I made my business name, CC Farm and Ranch, and started posting my bath salts on Facebook and selling them at a few local events. Now, I have started selling them at the Artistry in Searcy!

I am about to start also making candles, one day I want to try making candles from bees wax from our own beehive. I am also currently writing the 5th book in a 7 book series and hope to soon get my books published. I started writing my books one day when I was seven years old and me and my daddy were coming back from

deer hunting. When we were about to get in the Ranger and drive away, daddy spotted two bald eagles stuck in our pond! Daddy called my mamma and sister to come and see and then called the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission to come get the Bald Eagles. While we were waiting, I sat down on a pile of gravel and started writing a story about a raccoon and a dog in my notebook. After I finished the story and showed it to my parents and they said that I should type it out on the computer. That was three years ago, so I will have to go back and make the story a little longer and fix some grammar in it before I get it edited and published.

One thing I have learned making my baths salts is that you can't do everything on your own. Sometimes you need help and suggestions. So, I ask you to support local businesses. Thank you.

► Continued on next page



## LILY CATLETT

**MY NAME IS LILY CATLETT. I am 14 years old and I'm in 9th grade.** I started crocheting when I was twelve back in 2021. The reason I decided to crochet was because I saw a cute bumble bee plushie that I really wanted, so I decided to make it. I didn't plan on crocheting anything other than the bee, but I had extra yarn and looked up a bunny pattern and my passion for crocheting began.

Crocheting was new to me, so I had only made a few smaller items, but for Christmas I decided to crochet a giraffe stuffed animal for my little cousin. I was very satisfied with how it came out, and I continued to challenge myself with new projects. Over the next few months, I crocheted different plushies and novelties. I had a bountiful number of items starting to accumulate in my room and asked my mom if I could start my own business, and she said yes.

I created a Facebook page for my business (LCcrochetsHooks&Yarn) in April of 2022. I only had a few items of what I had been creating, so I offered to take in special orders, and business started to kickoff. Every week I posted a new creation to display what I had to offer. After a few months, I started to vendition my crocheted items at a couple of events and gained more customers.

► Lily

Not only do I crochet toys and plushies, but also useful items such as dishcloths, bookmarks, hair ties and many other pieces of work. Being an entrepreneur has been a great way to learn about business management. I love crocheting as a side job, it has taught me how to work arduous, keep things organized, use customer service and communication skills.



► Abby

## ABBY

**MY NAME IS ABBY, and I am 15 years old.** I love writing and I dream of becoming an author one day, even though I struggle with dyslexia.

I first started writing a story based off of my favorite TV show at the time because I wanted to know more about the characters I loved. I did not get very far before forgetting all about my old journal where these characters lived. Late summer of 2018, I picked up writing fanfiction again, then fast forward two years later, I came up with an original book idea about a rescue dog and since then I have had many more ideas which I write down in my Story Idea notebook.

I have written a total of eight books, twelve short stories, and still dozens of unfinished works waiting to be completed. I have learned so many things just by reading books by amazing writers and researching all kinds of little things from facts to questions. I also had the first book in my five-book series looked over and reviewed by another author.

When I write, I want my characters to speak for the unheard voices that are just waiting for their chance because so many people can relate to an author's fictional characters made up of just symbols of ink on a piece of paper.


My next goal is to research how young authors, like me, take the big step into publishing their work.

Even though I may not be your typical entrepreneur, I have created a product which I intend to publish. I will learn how to market, promote, and sell my creation. When I was asked to participate in this article, I was not convinced that an author could be considered an entrepreneur. But I decided to let you, the reader, come to the conclusion. Is an author an entrepreneur? ♦



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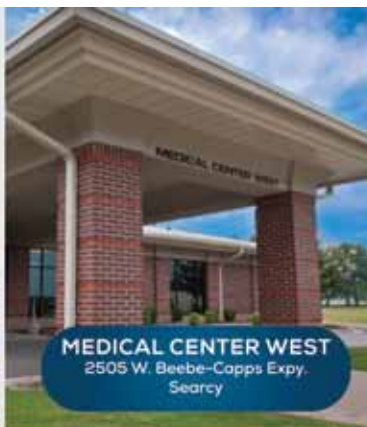
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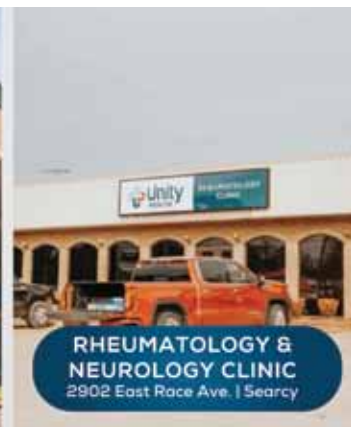
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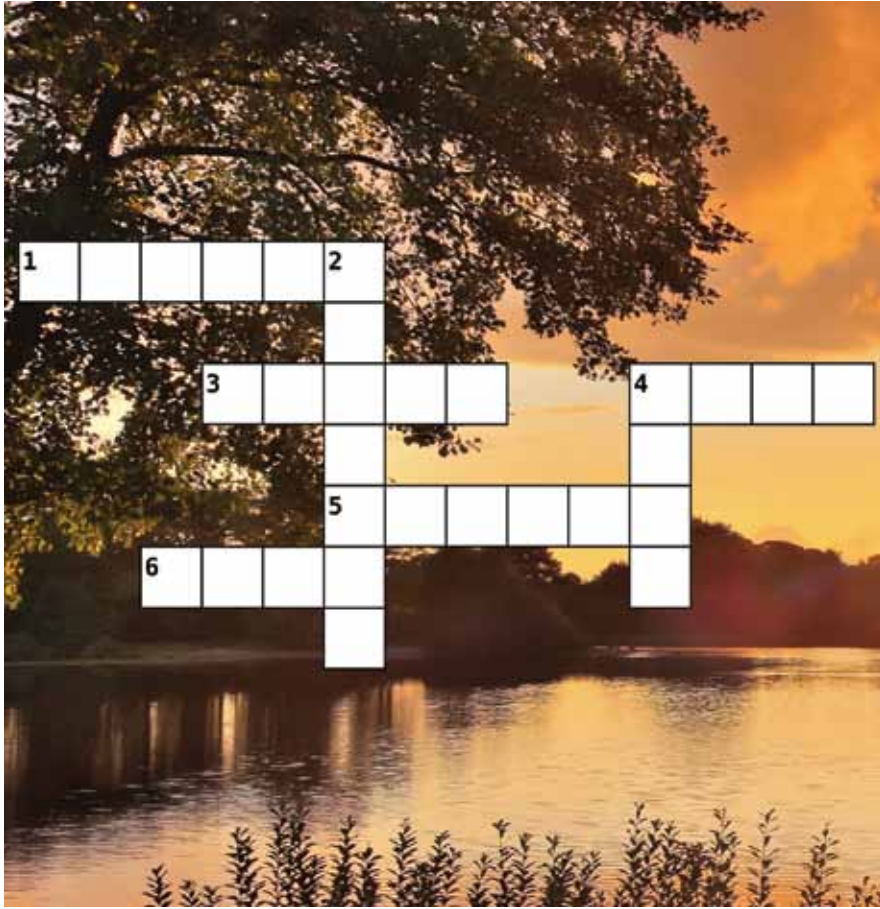


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## Crossword



### ACROSS

1. Sgt. Matt Higgins explains that he has had several “\_\_\_\_\_” that have helped him along the way.
3. But Moses understood that even one thing left in Egypt would be a stronghold for his \_\_\_\_\_.
4. But one of the most special parts of the wedding was when Hannah’s sister, Katelyn \_\_\_\_\_.
5. The 600 House has \_\_\_\_\_ marked parking spaces.
6. God has a funny way of working \_\_\_\_\_ ends of something together...

### DOWN

2. Barbara Duncan frequently calls on her “Searcy \_\_\_\_\_” for names, dates, details.
4. Sometimes the hardest \_\_\_\_\_ of a fitness journey is opening the door and walking through!

FIND THE ANSWERS *SearcyLiving.com*



## Riddles

Can you guess the word or phrase?

1. **Purpose  
Purpose  
Purpose**

2. **DUTY**

3. **noon good**

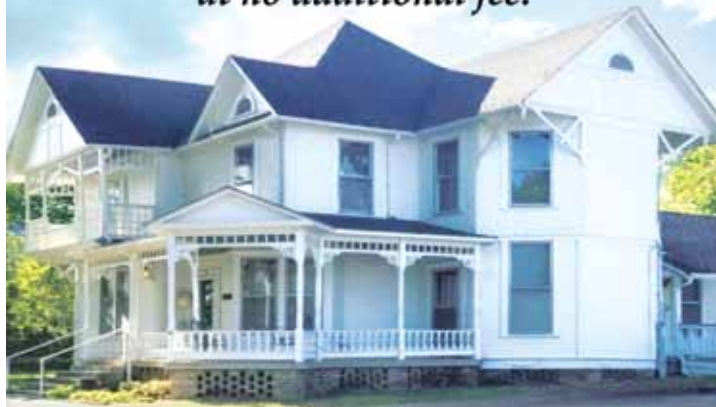
4. **+verb**

5. **league**



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# The Power of Working Together to Love & Support Foster Children & Their Foster Families

By Sarah Knight

► Sarah volunteering at the Imagine & Believe Dessert Auction



**M**y name is Sarah Knight and I am 17 years old. I moved to Searcy in August 2021. This was a complete change for me, since I had lived on a farm in Kentucky since I was 6 months old. *Searcy Living* was helpful in getting to know my new surroundings.

The first time the magazine was dropped off at my new home, I was pleasantly surprised when I began to page through it. Everything about it made it obvious that this was a Christian magazine, created by a Christian producer, and from a fairly conservative town. The list of the 10 Amendments from the Bill of Rights of the United States Constitution caught my eye. This was a refreshing sight to come across during this time when some are trying to rewrite and misinterpret the Constitution. Paging further, I discovered the span of two pages taken up with a flag and caption that read “Please pray for America and for those left behind in Afghanistan.” This further revealed the Christian nature of the magazine. From an article about the Christian Motorcyclists Association to an article about Life in Victory, a Christian organization which helps men through various struggles—I was increasingly impressed and encouraged.

I first became aware of the Imagine and Believe Foundation through this magazine. Even in the first article of *Searcy Living* that I saw, I was intrigued by the information about Imagine and Believe. I always anticipated the arrival of each new magazine and I would find myself being drawn to the end of the magazine where the information and latest stories about the Imagine and Believe Foundation were printed. The more I read about the Foundation, the more I wanted to know about it. I soon was convinced this was something I wanted to work with and support. My heart has always gone out to foster children and adoption, and I have always wanted to help in these areas somehow. Imagine and Believe was a door that suddenly opened to me, providing a way to fulfill my dream, even in just a small way. I am blessed to now be volunteering there once a week.

For my first volunteer project with the Foundation, I had the privilege of being able to help at the annual Imagine and Believe Dessert Auction Extravaganza this past April. Being there most of the afternoon, I got to witness over 100 desserts coming in from so

many donors. All of the proceeds from the auction went directly to the Imagine and Believe Foundation. It was amazing to see so many people from all over Searcy, donating desserts to support this cause. My job was to check in every dessert that was donated and get a tag, name, and dessert description recorded, so I was able to have first hand experience of all of the desserts and those that brought them. The care that went into making these desserts was outstanding. They weren’t just something from Wal-Mart (not that there’s anything wrong with that) but were actually fancily decorated and obviously made with much time and effort.

Sure, it was very busy and I was a little tired by the time I left, after checking in desserts nonstop during the drop off hours from 1-4, but I left feeling very energized from seeing so many people work together to support such a great cause. This really inspired me. It reminded me how people from all backgrounds and all areas of life

can pull together and unite through a good cause. That reminded me of the biblical truth that we are all the same and equal in God’s eyes and just as loved as anyone else; no one is more deserving of God’s love and grace than another. Children who are in the foster care systems need to be treated that way too. They need to know that they matter just as much as everyone else in the world and that they are not looked down upon because they are in foster care and have had unfortunate circumstances happen to

them. They need to feel the love! That’s why I am so impressed with and thankful to the Imagine and Believe Foundation. They are making this happen. They are partnering with foster families so that these foster children can feel loved, accepted, and well cared for. The donors are supporting this and playing a big part in this ministry, because by donating items or their time, they are empowering Imagine and Believe to help more people and make the foster children feel how special and loved they truly are.

To me, this is what is really important: Make those around you feel loved! After all, that’s the greatest commandment. **“You shall love your neighbor as yourself”** – MATTHEW 22:39. It’s pretty amazing to realize that we have such power to help those around us in less fortunate situations, by combining our efforts to help a great cause and support the foster children and their foster families. ♦

**“Imagine and Believe was a door that suddenly opened to me, providing a way to fulfill my dream, even in just a small way.”**



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## **DONATIONS ARE WELCOMED & APPRECIATED**

---



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#### **Donation Drop-off**

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Searcy, AR 72143

#### **Volunteer Opportunities**

#### **Charitable Giving**

Imagine & Believe Foundation  
P.O. Box 2042  
Searcy, AR 72145

#### **Community Support**

Our dream is that no foster or adoptive family will ever walk the journey alone.

---

## **ABOUT US**

**We are here to serve ALL adoptive and (non-relative) foster homes IN THE STATE!**



**The Imagine & Believe Foster Care & Adoption Boutique** is simply a place dedicated for use in helping foster & adoptive families, and sometimes emergency situations. Our awesome Searcy Living readers bring in donations, enabling foster/adopt parents to be able to 'shop' for what they need for foster and adopted children **at no cost**.

Our office is the drop off location and is located at 1308 S. Benton Ave. in Searcy. We welcome gently used or new items. Thank you, Searcy, for your generosity and time spent to support the Foster/Adoption Care Boutique!



**We need your financial support to keep this ministry going.**



## **OUR PURPOSE:**

- ▶ **WE PROVIDE** the Foster Care Boutique, which is where your donations of clothing and diapers are connected to foster parents.
- ▶ **WE CONNECT** seasoned mentors (former foster parents) to new foster and adoptive parents, giving them a resource to ask questions and glean wisdom from someone who truly understands their journey.
- ▶ **WE HELP** new foster homes get set up with things such as play pens and child safety gates. We help fill in the gaps. There are so many things to get and do to prepare to be a new parent of a child or children of varying ages.
- ▶ **WE KNOW** the journey of fostering and adopting is very rewarding, but it can also have great times of discouragement and loss. We try to be an encouragement system and reminder that this community really does care about the orphans and the caretakers of the orphan ministry.
- ▶ **IF A FOSTER FAMILY** does not have the time to come by the Foster Care Boutique, we deliver the clothing and diapers to them. This service is needed, for instance, when a foster family takes in a foster child at 3AM and has to be at work by 8AM the next morning.



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Thank you to all who made  
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# Dessert

.... AUCTION ....

## EXTRAVAGANZA











Thank you to these hard working ladies who gather together in their church kitchen to make freezer meals for foster and adoptive families. The freezer that was donated to Imagine & Believe by Chris and Ashley Cifreo is kept stocked by them.



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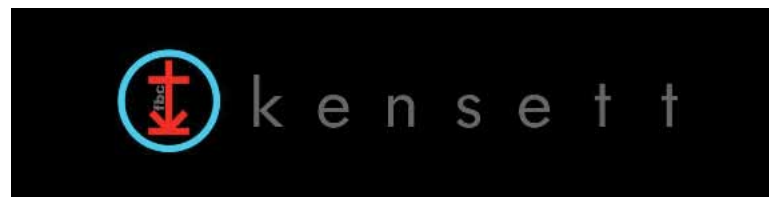
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S**





## **Thank You Volunteers!**



**"Being a foster parent is like playing on a sports team. Your team is only as strong as the players. To get stronger requires practice...lots of practice. You must have an "I won't quit attitude" with a good amount of determination and understanding for the "game". And finally you have to be patient in reaching the final goal—the goal of what is in the best interest of the child. This may not always feel like a win to you, but it is win for the child."**

**~ TRINA HOOFFMAN**  
**Former long time foster parent**





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thankful to be able to contribute needed items to the Imagine & Believe Boutique who then makes them available for the foster care families to pick up free of charge as they are needed. ♦







# HOW COULD I HAVE NOT SEEN THIS?

Now that I am a foster parent, the world looks so different...

**FOSTERING IS FULL OF UPS AND DOWNS, but so is life right?** Thank you to the people in our neighborhood that brought us supper. We didn't catch their names as our bonus teen was running through their yard! Thank you! I was emotionally done up and to bring supper was the greatest gift after a long day. Imagine & Believe Foundation thank you for supper tonight, such a blessing you are to my life, It truly takes a village! As the calls and texts continue to roll in from DCFS for kids needing a place today, I pray anyone reading this would get connected. Maybe you can't bring 6 kids in your home or even one. But maybe you could take supper, pray, or even play catch with some kids at the house of your foster parent friends or neighbors. So many ways to serve. There is a crisis! 4,700 plus kids in the state of Arkansas. 4,700 plus broken parents. Caseworkers, and lots of other state workers burning the candles at both ends. Pray for the DCFS workers! Pray for bio parents to seek Jesus and do what's needed to reunify. Pray for foster parents as they try and stay refreshed and love without boundaries. **I say on a regular is this for real? How could I have not seen this?** All day I've prayed Jesus show me how to explain to Christians they are needed. Please ask me how you can help. Please gather your friends and let's have coffee and let me explain the real crisis! Ask me all the questions you want. I will be super up front with you. *Let me speak to your lifegroups, small groups, churches or anything where people want to serve Jesus and want to make a difference! More foster homes are needed.*

**~ SHIANNA COWELL**  
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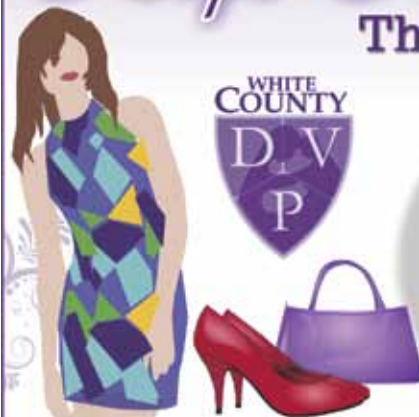


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