



Country Neighbor

Agriculture and Rural Living Quarterly

Conservation agent's best friend, Page 7

Even though Astro might look like any given Labrador, soaking up the attention showered on him, he has an important and specialized job. He assists Cpl. Susan Swem in her role with the Missouri Department of Conservation.



A new calling, Page 3

Longtime coach and administrator Jason O'Neal, who has served at numerous schools in southwest Missouri, recently accepted a position as state director of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes.



Big business, Page 4

Newly legalized medical marijuana is a burgeoning industry in Missouri. In Dallas County, the Percy family, including Hayden, pictured, operates Heartland Labs, which produces medicinal food products.



Storied career, Page 10

Ken White is Cedar County's own Forrest Gump, at least according to his wife. Being in the right place at the right time gave the fishing aficionado opportunities to meet famous people, such as Roger Maris and President Harry S. Truman.



Back in the saddle, Page 12

After more than a year of pandemic-related restrictions, many people are eager to resume favorite pastimes, such as riding and showing at area saddle clubs, including the Urbana Saddle Club.

Also featured in this issue: study-abroad student from Turkey returns 40 years later to his alma mater, Bolivar High School; innovative, community-oriented Kinfolk Market grocery store fills a need in rural Stockton; and a column by Jim Hamilton.

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JIM HAMILTON • OZARKS RFD

Still foresting the prairie

I can't imagine what Dad would think. Earlier this year I planted a row of sumac seedlings along my front field fence.

Sumac — “shumake” in our native tongue — was once the bane of our efforts to turn 39 brushy acres into a productive farm. From the time we began clearing fields in 1957 until I left home a decade later, I joined Dad and my younger brothers in a continuous assault on sumac, persimmon trees, cedars, multiflora rose and other woody pasture pests.

Over time our chopping, grubbing and mowing transformed our long-neglected Dallas County acreage into a picturesque paradise for a small herd of Jersey milk cows, and thus it remained as long as we remained vigilant in guarding against the seeds and roots of those ever-present pests.

In short, we paid for every acre of open pasture and hayfield with hours of sweat and toil. That in mind, I'm a little surprised, myself, that I would choose to introduce sumac to my few acres of Buffalo Head Prairie. In fact, not many years ago, I cut the last vestiges of that very species from my fencerows; but I find, now, I miss the fiery red foliage of sumac in the fall. Why not bring 'em back?

Considering all else I've added to the landscape in the past 25 years, they'll be no trouble at all. Thanks to the plethora of native trees and bushes available each spring from the Missouri Department of Conservation nursery at Licking, I have added windbreaks, shade trees and landscape foliage over about half of my 5 acres.

Some things have worked, and some haven't. Only a couple of the sweet gums from more than two decades ago remain, most of my first planting destroyed by cattle. But river birch

border my yard, vigorous swamp oaks screen the noise of passing traffic, bald cypress thrive below my pond and near the corner of my front field. Hawthorns boast showy white blossoms each spring, as do the wild plums, dogwoods and elderberry. Birds love the hedge of deciduous holly in our backyard, as well as the red berries in winter. Just a few years old, a row of spicebushes and others I can't recall the name of border my front yard, while arrowwood and a bush-type dogwood thrive in a fenced “wild” area below the pond. I also have buckeye trees and hopefully a pawpaw tree still hidden in the weeds.

I tried a row of loblolly pine, but they didn't make it in my wet soil. I had a good bit of false indigo, but took it out when I read it was toxic to cattle.

Along with my recent planting of sumac, I've put in redbuds along part of the fence line, Washington hawthorns along another stretch and rose mallow in a couple of places. I could also have persimmon trees, if I wanted them, because a sole tree near the road blesses me with seedlings galore.

Now, I'm sure I've left something out, because hardly a year passes without a shipment of something from the George O. White Nursery. I don't know what I'll do when I run out of room on my few acres — I still have to keep pasture open to graze two steers every year.

I reckon, as with this season, I'll just buy smaller and fewer trees.

I have a few ratty-looking willows I could replace, too; but I hate to — the red-winged blackbirds love 'em.

Copyright 2021, James E. Hamilton; email jhamilton000@centurytel.net. Read more of his works in “Ozarks RFD 2010-2015,” available online or from the author.



Contributed photos

One of a short row of smooth sumac seedlings promises a colorful fall display in coming seasons.



Directly behind me, a bald cypress started several years ago as a seedling from the MDC nursery at Licking. The quadruple tree trunks just behind the cypress are river birch planted at the same time, and the row of trees in the background are swamp oaks intentionally planted close (anticipating thinning in time) when a Walmart store was planned a quarter-mile east.



▲ A two-tailed swallowtail butterfly feeds on one of the flowering buttonbush “buttons.”

Tiny, green orbs ▶ on this buttonbush will mature into showy, white blossoms.

Country Neighbor

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FORMER COACH, ADMINISTRATOR turns to ministry

FAIR GROVE ALUMNUS IS STATE DIRECTOR OF FELLOWSHIP OF CHRISTIAN ATHLETES

By Bryan Everson

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This isn't what he planned, but there are no doubts from Jason O'Neal that this is where he wasn't meant to end up.

A leader of men and youngsters for several decades, O'Neal, assistant superintendent of Logan-Rogersville Schools for seven years, is trading one educational hat for another. Recently, he accepted a position as state director for the Fellowship of Christian Athletes.

"All I wanted to do was to be a teacher and a coach," O'Neal said. "I've had opportunities for leadership positions at the building and district level. It's something I never expected going into this field, but I've been honored and blessed. My wife and I have always talked about the possibility of some sort of ministry opportunity and have talked about what we're going to do when we retire from public education. We've done a lot of short-term mission trips and been involved with our church, but when this opportunity came along, it just seemed right.

"It was unexpected, but one of those stories ... the only explanation is the Lord."

O'Neal has roots planted in numerous communities throughout the area, though perhaps has been integral nowhere else more than in Fair Grove, where he was an impact player. An All-Stater for the boys in purple in 1991, when the Eagles started 10-0, he went on to be a three-year starting linebacker at Southwest Baptist University from 1992-95. He stayed on one year after that and worked as a graduate assistant and began work on his master's degree while also serving as a teacher's assistant.

Afterward, he took the head coaching job at Osceola for a year, and though he had no plans to leave, a friend who worked in El Dorado Springs led him to take the defensive coordinator job there under (current Branson athletic director) David Large. His next step led him back to Bolivar with wife Mikelle — they met at SBU, where they were married before finishing school — where he began as a teacher and assistant football coach, but halfway through the first year he applied and was hired as assistant high school principal, prompting him to step out of coaching and into administration.

Again, O'Neal had no plans to leave the Liberators, but after six years, Fair Grove's head football coach resigned, and Eagles AD Tim Leeper told O'Neal to come home.

"About a week later, I re-



Photo courtesy of Missouri Sports Hall of Fame
Jason O'Neal, left, accepts his Elite 11 plaque from Missouri Sports Hall of Fame Chairman Kris Conley at a football luncheon in 2020.



Photo courtesy of Jason O'Neal
Family has been a driving factor in career decisions for Jason O'Neal, who recently assumed the position of state director for the Kansas City-based Fellowship of Christian Athletes, which has more than 2,300 full-time employees doing ministry in more than 100 countries.

signed at Bolivar and decided it was right," O'Neal said.

The six-year stint proved to be highly successful.

"From the second I walked into our first player meeting [I knew it]," O'Neal said. "I knew we had kids coming back when I took the job, but that had nothing to do with it. It wasn't about how good we might be, it had to do with ... it was the right thing at the right time and about being willing to say yes to the opportunity. But when I saw the kids working, the commitment level, and that we had a handful

of really special athletes, I knew we could be pretty good."

There were certain fortunes in having players such as Caleb Schaffitzel, a two-time All-State player who broke state records for touchdowns and all-purpose yards before becoming a first-team All-American at Missouri State. Just as important, though, was a coaching staff that included Jeremy Faubion, as well as Mark Talbert and Cody Bull, who've gone on to now become head coaches at Logan-Rogersville and Marshfield, respectively.

"I was blessed with this incredible coaching staff that was a big part of our success there," O'Neal said. "A lot of head coaches talk about having a great staff, and I'm sure it's true, but I'm not exaggerating. These guys had a wealth of knowledge, and they were kid magnets. Jeremy is probably one of the smartest I've coached with. When we had a very good offensive series, he was calling the plays, and when it was bad, it was probably me [laughs]. Cody and Mark, those guys have gone on to be very

successful in their own right. When you look at those guys, how could we not have won? The ingredients were there for a lot of success, I just got to benefit from a great situation."

In 2008, O'Neal's first year as coach, the Eagles went to the state semifinals. The next year, they reached the quarterfinals, and the 2011 team also hit double-digit wins and made sectionals.

It was a difficult decision in 2014 when O'Neal took off his headset and accepted the position in Rogersville.

"When I left, it was the hardest thing I've done in my life," he said. "But things in my personal life had changed. Our family had grown. At that time, we had seven kids. We were foster and adoptive parents, so our family had gotten large and busy. By the time I left, I was head football and track coach, assistant principal, A-Plus director and AD. I loved every bit of it, but naturally, my time and focus had moved away from part of the reason I was there, which was to coach football. I felt like we needed a life change."

And though he's never anticipated leaving many of his posts, Mikelle encouraged him to apply for the FCA post recently.

"Not a lot of wives would encourage [their husbands] to take a pay cut and turn away from a career like this, but she did it because she has a heart for the Lord. I'd told her I was excited about the opportunity and wished it would come open five years from now when I retire from education, but she looked me in the eye and said, 'Why five years from now and not now?' I didn't want to regret looking back and wondering, so I interviewed and was offered the job."

An interdenominational Christian sports ministry based in Kansas City, FCA has been part of O'Neal's life since he was a high school student. Now, he'll oversee support for all nine regions within the state, working in areas with local staff to support them in fundraising efforts and board developments.

Said O'Neal, "I truly believe all these things ... this is the way life works, right? On the front end, you may look and say, 'How does that work, why's it go together like that?' But looking back, the old saying about hindsight being 20/20 or whatever, there's no doubt in my mind, all these things were pivotal moments throughout my life that were setting the stage for what's next, which is this opportunity in ministry. It has nothing to do with me, but everything to do with what God has in store for my life and my family."



Medical marijuana

GROWING 'WEED' INTO MISSOURI BIG BUSINESS

By Joy Beamer

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Missouri's top business is dominated by industry, including transportation equipment, food products and fabricated metals. However, agribusiness remains vitally essential in this neck of the woods, boasting over 100,000 farms across the state.

In rural Dallas County, Heartland Labs (HL) adds to the growing number of businesses in the Ozarks. HL is combining agribusiness, providing regionally grown cannabis and producing a pure medicinal food product. HL has a solid business plan that includes a quality product, excellent medical outcomes, compliance and safety, making a robust and sustainable business platform.

The family-owned lab includes Hayden Percy, lab manager, son; Michael Percy, managing partner, father; and Maddi Percy, director of operations, daughter, all from Springfield. They built the facility in Buffalo because of the central location where the roads lead to everywhere they need to deliver the product. Plus, the rural workforce is honest and dependable people who work a solid day for reasonable wages.

Initially, Buffalo housed one of five labs in the state. Kansas City and St. Louis each have two facilities. The Heartland facility is south of Buffalo on Ash Street, past Route F.

Flora Farms (FF)*, a cannabis cultivator in Humansville, provides the raw cannabis product to HL. In addition, FF also operates three dispensaries in the region, including Humansville, Springfield and Neosho, and stocks HL edible medical products.

Flora Farms' 55,000-square-foot



HEARTLANDLABS™

The family stands next to their "still" — a slight upgrade of equipment than the nation saw on "M*A*S*H." Left to right: Hayden Percy, lab manager, son; Michael Percy, managing partner, father; and Maddi Percy, director of operations, daughter, all Missouri natives.

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grow facility is north of Humansville on Mo. 13 for the specific purpose of growing medical cannabis. The indoor growing facility is nearly 60,000 square feet for medical marijuana. The company collaborates between two firms awarded state medical marijuana licenses last year — Erba Holdings of Joplin and BD Health Ventures of Springfield. In addition, HL has a positive and trusting partnership with FF’s ability to provide high-caliber cannabis for all HL products.

The medicine starts with a hearty raw product, which FF delivers each time. Upon opening, delivery to 40 dispensaries launched with the expectation of growth as more dispensaries are opened in the future. Sales are expected to gain ground as patients feel the positive effects of the edibles, lessening their pain.

HL uses hydrocarbon extraction equipment with lab-grade, high-purity solvents for the concentrate line. Edibles are infused with distillate providing consistent, quality medicines for the patient. Everything produced is tested twice, ensuring potency, dosing and quality meets HL standards, state-regulated standards and the patient’s standards. Flora’s partnership with HL provides that southwest Missouri will

Definitions

Marijuana: psychoactive dried resinous flower buds and leaves of the female hemp or cannabis plant that contain high levels of THC and are smoked, vaped or ingested for their intoxicating effect.

Medical marijuana/cannabis: marijuana that is available only by prescription and is used to treat a variety of medical conditions; cannabidiol extracted from marijuana.

Hydrocarbon extraction: a method used to extract cannabinoids such as tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), cannabidiol (CBD) and terpenes from cannabis plant material.

Edibles: any of various food items containing THC.

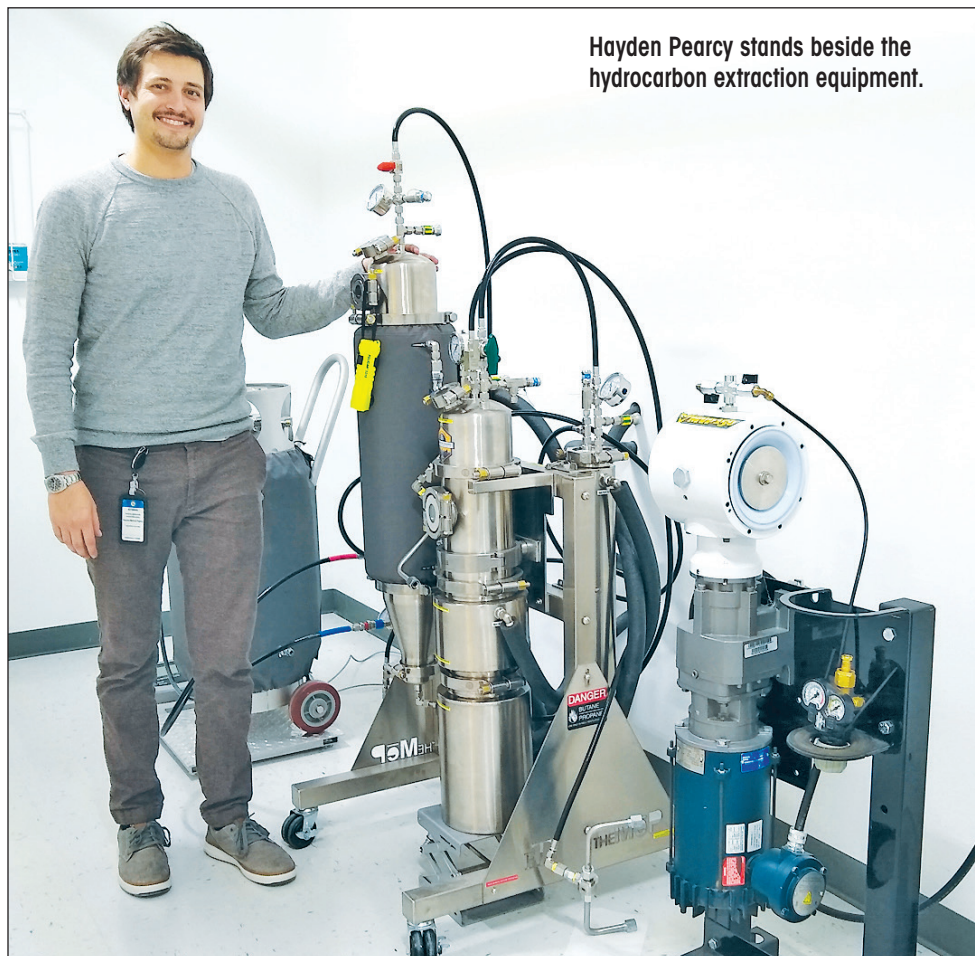
Infused: to be permeated with something that usually alters for the better.

Distillate: a liquid product condensed from the vapor during distillation.

Cannabis cultivator: to prepare for use, the raising of cannabis.

Dispensary: a place where medical marijuana is dispensed with a prescription.

Medical marijuana is available in Missouri and is used to treat various medical conditions, including pain, anxiety, nausea and glaucoma. In addition, substances lacking psychoactive properties are extracted from the flower buds of marijuana and are used medicinally.



Hayden Percy stands beside the hydrocarbon extraction equipment.

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have access to a large variety of locally infused medical marijuana products.

HL is dedicated to providing effective, safe and delicious cannabis-infused edibles to the medical marijuana patients of Missouri. HL does it all tucked off the road in rural Dallas County, from using the raw material to delivering edible products. As a result, the medical effectiveness of the HL brand is becoming well-known in southwest Missouri.

Sweet Stone is HL's cannabis-infused edible line. By using distillate, a pure, tasteless and odorless concentrate, in Sweet Stone products, customers can try effective and safe products that taste good in various edibles, including cookies, gummies and infused honey.

The lab offers cookies, bars, honey, vape cartridges, gummies in several flavors, along with a pill. So there is something for every patient in a delivery method that suits specific needs.

For instance, diabetic patients can opt for tablets, no sugar used. Some patients in pain lose their appetite. Those patients might opt for using the vaping method. Tea drinkers can use honey. The most popular during trials and projected to become the favorite are the cookies, bars and gummies, all feeding the sweet tooth.

A family recipe from the Pearcys helped to develop the cookies. All the edibles are odorless and THC tasteless. Unlike CBD products, edible food created at Heartland Labs does not leave an unpleasant aftertaste, according to HL.

Medical patients can be confident the product they buy with the Heartland label is pure from established production methods. The marijuana labs are under strict rules and regulations. The products are tested regularly. If one batch falls below the standard, the entire run is thrown out.

Hayden explained if anyone has



Tea drinkers love Sweet Stone Honey.



Patients can cut the disc-shaped gummies into pieces or use whole.

a friend or family member suffering from cancer or living with chronic pain, edible cannabis is a way to help ease the suffering. Medical marijuana cards' qualifying medical conditions include cancer, epilepsy, glaucoma,



Cookies are a delicious way to take medical marijuana to control pain.



Vaping is popular with patients when appetite is low.

chronic pain, anxiety, persistent pain, muscle spasms, psychiatric disorders, PTSD, HIV-AIDS, terminal illnesses, chronic conditions and many others.

The Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services has licensed 375 facilities to cultivate, manufacture, test, transport and dispense medical marijuana to Missouri patients. As of the end of June, 201 facilities received state operating approval, including five testing labs, 23 cultivators and 32 manufacturers of infused products. In addition, patient enrollment continues to rise, passing 120,000 medical

Steps to medical marijuana card

Step 1

Patients need the Physician Certification Form completed by an MD or DO in good standing in the state of Missouri. The standard recommended dose is 4 ounces per month. Patients 18 and younger need to complete and submit a Parent/Legal Guardian Consent Form with their application.

Step 2

To complete an application, patients will need to register with the Complia application portal. Click on the Patient/Caregiver Application Registration blue box under the photograph to apply for an identification card. Only applications submitted through the online registry will be accepted.

Step 3

Once registered, complete an application by logging into the Complia portal, clicking "+Create Application" and "New Patient Registration." Note: Allow 30 days to process.

For more information, go to health.mo.gov/safety/medical-marijuana/how-to-apply-pi.php.

marijuana users. Sales through June are expected to surpass \$70 million, according to MoCannTrade, an association of business owners, health care providers, professionals, patients and residents responsible for helping to implement a successful, safe, compliant medical marijuana program in Missouri.

Interested patients should contact their physician or a doctor who specializes in medical marijuana practices. For more information, go to health.mo.gov/safety/medical-marijuana. In addition, patients must have a medical marijuana card to purchase Heartland Labs products at a dispensary.

**Contributions regarding Flora Farms with David Talley, Bolivar Herald-Free Press*



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Paws on the ground in Missouri



Photo by Linda Simmons
Cpl. Susan Swem and Astro.

CONSERVATION DEPARTMENT HAS NEW K-9 UNIT

By Linda Simmons

NEWS@BOLIVARMOONNEWS.COM

Cpl. Susan Swem of the Missouri Department of Conservation thought she was probably getting close to retiring, after 32 years with the department, until the opportunity came her way to become a K-9 handler with the department.

"I should have retired, but I'm having too much fun, and having this dream come true changed my thinking on that," Swem said.

The Bolivar Herald-Free Press sat down with Swem to find out about the new K-9 unit and how Astro became her partner.

How did it come about that you were able to become a K-9 handler?

Our department came to the decision that they wanted to utilize a K-9 unit and got it approved through the state, then I had to apply and go to Jefferson City for interviews to be accepted into the program. They were hiring five in the state; we were part of the first of this type of program in the state.

What did the training consist of?

We were required to take our dogs to be trained and certified in tracking. The dogs are gotten from a kennel where

that is what they do, raise dogs for police work, border patrol and ATF. Then we were required to do the training with our dog, consisting of nine weeks of training — three weeks on and three weeks off. We started in February and graduated in May. The training facility is in Indiana; we focused mostly on tracking, doing over 100 tracks. Some tracks were done on their campground, some were in town. We tracked at night under a lot of different conditions just trying to get the dog exposed. They are like a 'diamond in the rough,' and the trainers say it usually takes up to three years before the dogs become top-notch; they are learning all the time. At graduation the dogs are certified in tracking, as well as article search. With the article search, they are trained to find anything with human scent or firearm scent, specifically gunpowder. Along with wildlife detection, which we hope to utilize with detecting invasive species.

How was Astro chosen to be your partner?

I got to go to the kennel, along with the other four that were choosing their dogs. There were 70 Labs, and I had told them I wanted a male. They gave us each an envelope with badges in them, and we got to choose according to what number the badge was — mine was No. 5. They



Photo by Linda Simmons

Astro is a working dog, but he still enjoys a good game of fetch, especially when it involves his favorite toy — reward.



Photo by Linda Simmons

Cpl. Susan Swem and Astro are always ready to demonstrate what they do. Some of the kids and counselors at the Bolivar Recreation and Aquatic Center were happy to be an audience.



Photo by Linda Simmons

Paisleigh Pauley isn't worried about Astro being so much bigger than she is.

Paws with a purpose

Department mission: Our mission is to protect and manage the fish, forest and wildlife resources of all the state, to facilitate and provide opportunity for all citizens to use, enjoy and learn about these resources.

Currently there are 36 states that utilize K-9 units.

K-9 functions: tracking, evidence recovery searches, wildlife detection, public demonstrations.

- Tracking – non-aggressive tracking, the dog utilizes the scent of the person, as well as other factors, such as damaged vegetation, to track the

subject. At the end of the track, the dog will not attack, it will want a reward.

- Evidence recovery/search – the dog is searching a designated area for evidence.

- Wildlife detection – the K-9 is trained to detect a select type of wildlife, such as deer, turkey, waterfowl, etc.

- Commercial wildlife – utilized in airport inspections. Highly successful in detections of all types of contraband.

- Public demonstrations/education – outreach and education typically accounts for the highest percent of usage of the K-9.

brought the dogs out, there were eight males and they demonstrated for us how they worked. I really liked Astro's brother, but when they threw his toy in the brush pile, he acted kind of afraid to go in the brush, and I knew that wouldn't be good with the type of work we would be doing. Astro was just more 'crazy' and ready to do what I needed, so that was why he seemed like the best fit. He gets to live with me, and when the time comes, we will get to retire together.

What have you enjoyed the most about this dream coming true?

It has been so much fun working with him and seeing the improvement in both of us as we go along. One day it might be so frustrating because it seems like we aren't really getting anywhere, then the next day it's like a light switch comes on and he just 'gets' it! It's amazing to watch him grow and learn, and I'm learning so much, as well.

What have you found to be the most challenging?

Learning to trust the dog that his 'nose knows.' People don't realize when a dog is smelling something, he isn't just smelling one thing, not like a person. If a person walks in the room and smells pizza, they smell it as a whole; when a dog smells it, he smells the tomato sauce, the oregano, the onions, each specific meat and cheese – each individual ingredient. The training course was also a challenge; it was a 400-hour course in Indiana, so I was away from home for that. And being my age, the physical challenge was a little more for me than the others that were there. One of the other handlers that was training had been with his department for 15 years, so most of them were like kids to me. Running and tracking was a challenge for sure, and the first week we were there, it was snowing, so that added to the challenge for sure.

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Photo by Linda Simmons

Astro demonstrates his detection skills. With four boxes, each with a different item inside, he is to find the one with venison in the box. When he finds the right one, he sits in front of it and watches it, signaling Cpl. Susan Swem that this is the one.



Photo by Linda Simmons

Addox Gardner was excited to get to watch Astro and then get to pet him, too.


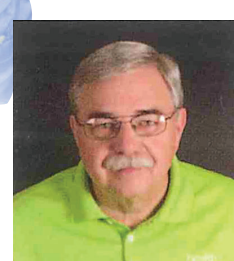


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Astro not only detects things on the ground; sometimes the scent takes him in a different direction.

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'Right place at the right time'

OUTDOORSMAN KEN WHITE LOOKS BACK ON STORIED CAREER

By Aaron Pyle

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Many people have heard the phrase, "right place at the right time." Luckily for Cedar County resident and outdoor columnist Ken White, the term has encapsulated his illustrious career.

Much like Forrest Gump, White has had the chance to meet countless celebrities and former presidents, such as Harry S. Truman, Lyndon B. Johnson and even The Beatles.

White especially developed a relationship with Truman and his wife, Bess.

"I was an aerial photographer in the Navy," White said. "When I stationed down in Key West when Truman came down, he asked for a photographer from Missouri, and I was the only Missourian there, so I got to go with him by default."

After Truman was out of office, Harry and his wife, Bess, returned to their home in Independence. Then home from the war, White received a job opportunity as a photographer for the Independence Examiner newspaper. White noted that Truman's recommendation helped him obtain the offer.

Ever since he took the title, White remained close to the former president and first lady. On many occasions, White often brought the Trumans fresh crappies for dinner, and he took Bess fishing regularly.

White also noted a humorous story from his experience fishing with Truman and his wife, Bess.

"One time, I asked Bess to pose for a picture with a stringer

of trout she caught," White said. "Harry said, 'Good idea,' then grabbed the stringer of trout."

"They sent the photo to their daughter, Margaret, and she wrote back, 'I know dad didn't catch those fish.'"

While at the Independence Examiner, White began his outdoor writing — which he still does to this day. Ever since 1960, White has been writing an outdoor column for various newspapers along the western side of Missouri.

Also, while at the Examiner, White developed his own outdoor television show at 7 p.m. Thursdays in prime time from 1969-70.

Not only has White had the chance to meet countless celebrities and presidents, but also he had been known as one of the best fishermen in the world at one point.

He noted that the inspiration for his involvement in fishing came from his father.

"My dad fished quite a bit," White said. "But he never owned a rod or reel in his life. He never used lure. He used cane poles with bobbers and went and dug for worms and crawdads. So that's how I got started."

As a professional fisherman, White accumulated an extensive amount of trophies as he won 17 major tournaments during his competitive career. In addition, White is regarded as one of the first master anglers in Missouri.

Awards for White include first place at Jacomo Lake in 1960, grand award at Katz Tournament in 1960, first place in Jacomo Bass in 1960, eighth place World Series of Sport Fishing in 1961, first place Trail of Lakes Contest in 1965, third place



Cedar County Republican file photo

Ken White, right, was congratulated by former President Harry Truman, middle, and baseball legend Roger Maris after winning the World Series of Freshwater Fishing in 1963.

World Series of Sport Fishing in 1966, first place Border Cup in 1967, first place in the Missouri State Tournament in 1968, first place in the 1968 United States Open and the 1968 Fresh Water Fisherman of the Year.

White is also a member of the International Bass Anglers Hall of Fame.

With the success White had, he garnered national attention. White guest appeared on shows such as "To Tell the Truth" and the "Today Show with Dave Garraway."

White also had the chance to meet celebrities such as Steve Allen and Betty White.

"My wife called me Forrest Gump because I happened to be at the right place at the right time," White jokingly said. "Timing was just right."

At the age of 92, White is still active outdoors.

He commented on some of the changes he has seen throughout the years regarding fishing tournaments and how the game has changed in terms of boats and equipment.

"In a boat now you have a screen as big as a television you can see what's underneath the

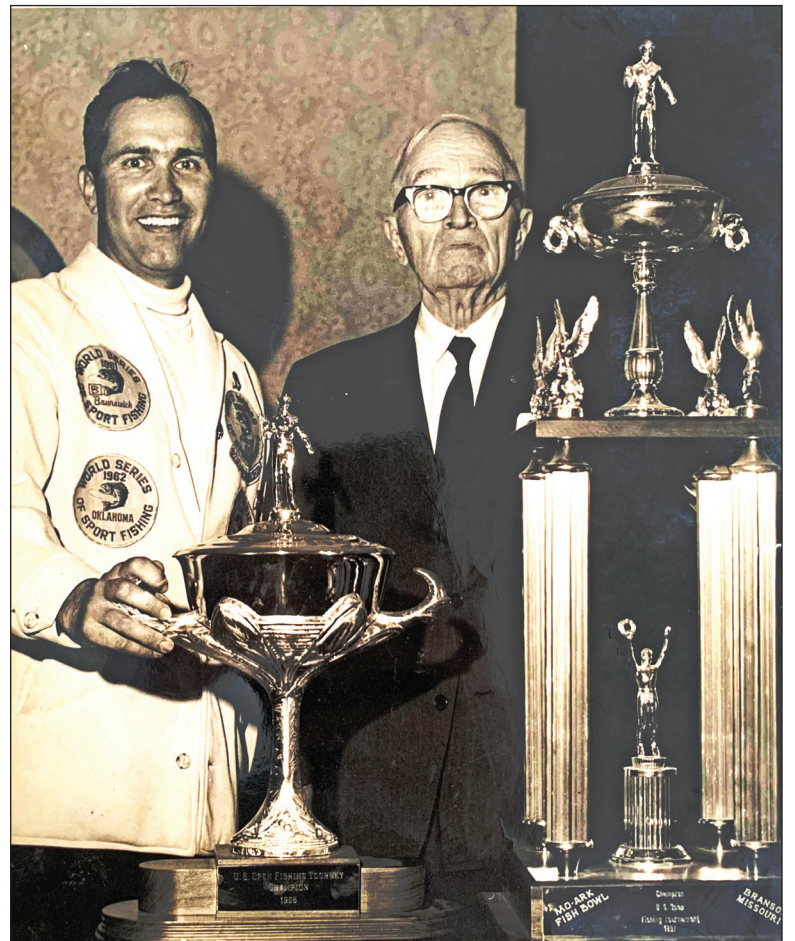


Photo courtesy of Ken White

Ken White, left, is pictured with former President Harry Truman as the two pose with White's World Series of Freshwater Fishing trophies in Truman's home in Independence.

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Cedar County Republican file photo
Winners of the men's and women's 1963 World Series of Fishing are Ken White and Mrs. Buddy Mangold with some of their catch.

water," White said. "When I was fishing tournaments, if I had a 50-horse power motor, then I was the king of the hill. Now, if you don't have a 250 or 300 horse-power motor, you are down the line. It's been better in most respects."

White added, "We went from a cane pole to all this new stuff on the topic of equipment changes. Everything from rods, reels to the line has changed. There's always a new lure every year that's going to catch all the fish. Then the next year, there's one that comes along and then the other one is obsolete."

White noted the increase in tourna-

ments where competitors must catch a single type of fish.

"The tournaments have really changed," White added. "Back then, all game fish counted. Now, it's all specialized fish, such as bass tournaments or crappie tournaments. You even have carp tournaments in some places. It's a whole different thing."

Aside from the changes, White noted he goes fishing "several times a week" and even more in the springtime. White is also an avid collector of morels, which is an edible mushroom. The morel is known to be prized by gourmet and ama-



Cedar County Republican file photo
Ken White sports morels he found in the woods.

teur cooks.

Along with his hobbies mentioned, White is an avid turkey hunter. This turkey season marked his 103rd opening day.

When asked what drives him, White added, "Because I enjoy it all. I enjoy the

outdoors and hunting, fishing, camping and all the things related. It's just natural."

Be sure to check out Ken White's weekly "Outdoor Life" in the Cedar County Republican and other Phillips Media Group newspapers.

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Photo by Monica Stewart
Brayden Gruben shows her skills during the May 1 Ranch Series show at the Urbana Saddle Club.

URBANA SADDLE CLUB OFFERS SOCIALIZATION CENTERED AROUND HORSES

By Andrew C. Jenkins

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After a year of quarantines, social distancing and masks, many people are eager to reconnect with friends and acquaintances through cherished hobbies and pastimes. One such endeavor that is a favorite in the Ozarks is riding and showing at area saddle clubs.

Dallas County's Urbana Saddle Club,

south of Urbana on U.S. 65, has been a gathering place for decades. Horse enthusiasts from across the area have enjoyed making friends there through a shared passion — horses.

The Urbana Saddle Club was started in 1962, according to current Treasurer Nancy McCowan. McCowan, herself, has been involved with the saddle club for 38 years. She said she was initially invited to come to the saddle club by friends. Since then, she has served in various roles.

McCowan, who said she has always loved horses, said she first started out cleaning the outdoor toilets, as everyone pitched in to help with all duties. In addition to serving as treasurer off and on for 20 years, she has also been secretary, vice president and president of the organization.

She said the saddle club offers a way for people to pursue their passion for horses while building friendships with like-minded others. The benefits of par-

ticipating in saddle club events are not only physical, but also mental, social and emotional.

The obvious physical pluses are that riding and showing horses builds strength in people and gives both riders and horses a workout. But riders also can receive a mental and emotional boost through interacting with the horses themselves, as well as fellow horse enthusiasts. Bonds between riders and their horses are quite strong, as both parties

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Photo by Monica Stewart

In addition to the obvious physical benefits, saddle clubs — such as the Urbana Saddle Club — offer socialization, as horse enthusiasts of all ages can gather to visit and have fun.



Photo by Monica Stewart

Pictured is Sue Webb at the May 1 Ranch Series show at the Urbana Saddle Club.



Photo by Monica Stewart

After a year of quarantines, social distancing and masks that stemmed from the COVID-19 pandemic, many people are ready to get back to a sense of "normal." One such outlet might be participating in saddle club events, such as at the Urbana Saddle Club.



Photo by Monica Stewart

Here is May 1 Ranch Series show participant Tim Scott at the Urbana Saddle Club.

Top 15 Benefits of Horseback Riding

From the Certified Horsemanship Association

1. Positive character traits.
2. Physical health.
3. Problem-solving.
4. Psychological health.
5. Companionship.
6. Socialization.
7. Competition.
8. Transportation.
9. Seeing the world from horseback.
10. A return to nature.
11. Relaxation.
12. Unique lifestyle.
13. Career possibilities.
14. The human-animal bond.
15. Fun.

need to be "tuned in" to each other, in order for the horse to be guided in a particular direction, at a particular speed and in a particular manner. At their best, the rider and horse work in unison, almost as though they are one unit. Both riders and horses need to be mentally acute to quickly plan a next course of action and accurately predict what will happen next (and how the other will respond).

Horseback riding can sharpen people's physical and mental responses; in addition, the emotional connection formed with horses is a strong one. The average lifespan of a horse is 25 to 30 years, so it is not uncommon for a horse to be a person's companion for at least a third of that person's life. Horses are expressive creatures, and like humans, can show emotions. Because of the nature of domesticated horses — i.e., they often perform directly with humans via agriculture, therapy, sports, entertainment or

police work — humans' connection with horses is a long and storied one. (Their domestication is thought to have started about 4000 BC.)

Lastly — and perhaps most importantly after the COVID-19 pandemic — saddle clubs like the one in Urbana offer social interaction and health benefits among people. Horse enthusiasts and their friends and family can gather to chat, play games, eat and have fun at the Urbana Saddle Club.

"You get out in the fresh air, and you get to visit with people and ride horses," McCowan said about the benefits of participating in saddle club events.

She said her favorite part of being involved with the saddle club is watching the youth show and learn to ride better.

"It's really all about the kids," McCowan said, as the future of the saddle club depends on young people getting involved.

She said the saddle club is always looking for new members and new volunteers. Everyone interested is invited to come and join in the fun.

The Urbana Saddle Club's upcoming events include Ranch Horse Series shows on July 24 and Aug. 7.

"We always enjoy our time with one another," McCowan said. "Especially after COVID, we need to get out and have fun."

For more information about the Urbana Saddle Club, contact Nancy McCowan at 417-993-5550 or Mike Lewis at 417-733-2956.

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The best of both worlds

PHOTO by KATHRYN SKOPEC

Angela DiGiovanni, manager and part owner of Kinfolk Market in rural Stockton, poses for a photo in the store's produce section. The unique, recently opened store offers more convenience for rural residents and offers spaces for local vendors.



PHOTO by KATHRYN SKOPEC

Angela DiGiovanni checks out garlic that has been uniquely braided by a local vendor in Kinfolk Market, 7475 S. 1875 Road in Stockton.

By Kathryn Skopec

KATHRYNS@CEDARREPUBLICAN.COM

It's not every day that folks can find an innovative, community-oriented grocery store in the outer city's neck of the woods. But Kinfolk Market, a new grocery store in rural Stockton, is making a name for itself and bringing more flair to the back roads.

Angela DiGiovanni, part owner and one of two managers for Kinfolk Market, said Kinfolk's owner and founder Dustin Williams decided to build a grocery store on his property for convenience.

Kinfolk, which is at 7475 S. 1875 Road in Stockton, has been open for more than two months, with 24-hour membership access just recently opening up.

"It's turning out to be a great success," DiGiovanni said of the store's run so far.

DiGiovanni said customers appreciate the convenience of the grocery store. Before its opening, folks in the area typically had to drive many miles to Stockton or Bolivar for groceries.

In fact, according to research by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, many

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“People love that we source so many local products and local vendors ... Both consumers and suppliers are getting an opportunity here that they wouldn’t otherwise have ... Our local vendors have some of our best-selling items.”

areas of Cedar County are considered “food deserts” — regions where people have limited access to healthful and affordable food, which might be due to having a low income or having to travel farther to find healthful food options.

Additionally, the store’s inclusion of local vendors — which include the likes of food such as bread, produce, take-and-bake meals and keto-friendly desserts, as well as pottery, health products, crochet critters and more — is a win-win situation for both customers and suppliers.

“People love that we source so many local products and local vendors,” DiGiovanni said. “Both consumers and suppliers are getting an opportunity here that they wouldn’t otherwise have. ... Our local vendors have some of our best-selling items.”

“At the end of the day, if we can be kind of an interdependent community, we’ll have a stronger footing and security if things go haywire with supply chains and prices,” DiGiovanni added.

Additionally, the store is innovative in the way some customers may implement their shopping. The store just recently launched 24-hour access for members. Although Kinfolk’s public hours are noon to 5 p.m. Mondays through Saturdays, anybody is welcome to get a membership at Kinfolk that essentially “pays for itself,” DiGiovanni said.

Memberships cost \$100 for a year or \$60 for six months, with the option of getting reimbursed every month for the cost. Members who spend \$150 per household adult and \$50 per child living in the home each month receive that month’s membership credited back to their Kinfolk account, making membership free.

“The other thing that really makes us unique is that we really pay attention to customer suggestions,” DiGiovanni said. “We have fulfilled easily over 50 customer suggestions in carrying products.”

DiGiovanni said that personally, Kinfolk has made an impact on her.

“Living here, I know the inconvenience of having to drive to Bolivar to get good prices,” she said. “For me, at least, with my toddler, it’s a three-hour minimum trip ...



Angela DiGiovanni peruses the aisles of Kinfolk Market.

PHOTO by KATHRYN SKOPEC

The time savings, the fuel savings is huge. It’s so nice to be able to just grab what you need for the next couple of days and know that you can come right back when it’s so close.”

Not only does the store offer local items, but it also

offers customer favorites from bigger markets, such as Costco and Sam’s Club.

Speaking about future goals for the store, DiGiovanni said Kinfolk is in the works of expanding with a boutique area, as well as a lounge area with coffee.

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BACK IN 'BOMO'

TURKISH AFS STUDENT REVISITS MISSOURI

By David Talley

NEWS@BOLIVARMONNEWS.COM

Thirty-nine years ago, Bilen Bozkurt, a Bolivar High School student studying abroad from Turkey, walked across the stage at BHS to graduate with the class of 1982 before taking a plane back home to the city of Izmir.

On Wednesday, May 5, Bozkurt crossed the stage for the second time as part of a tour of the campus and community he called home during the 1981-82 school year.

The Bolivar High School campus Bozkurt attended is now the middle school campus and district administration building.

The football field where Bozkurt served as the Liberators' kicker is now host to just sub-varsity and middle school games.

The stage he crossed during his graduation ceremony has now been converted into a classroom.

"It's very different now," Bozkurt said. "But some of it is still the same."

Bozkurt was hosted by the Hendrickson family on their Bolivar farm.

He said he'd been excited to visit the United States, to learn about its culture and people firsthand, and to share information about Turkey.

First, though, he had to learn English.

Bozkurt said he had taken English classes and had a small dictionary that he carried everywhere, but he wasn't ready to have full conversations.

"It was terrible," he said. "But after some time, it got easy. At first it was so hard."

Lessons on the farm started immediately, with the Hendricksons also bringing in a teacher to

get Bozkurt up to speed.

He worked at it constantly, he said, making time between farm chores and football practice.

"It took about two months," he said. "In school, so many friends helped me, and teachers helped me understand."

Once he could speak the language, he said talking kept him busy.

"As an exchange student, people here wanted to know about religion and geography. I had to go to many places and tell them. I was the first exchange student from Turkey to come to Bolivar, and there were so many people who wanted to learn about my country."

Bozkurt, who practices Islam, said he also celebrated Christmas with his host family.

There are similarities to the way both cultures value family and togetherness, he said.

"It was really nice," he said.

"We have days like that for Ramadan," he said. "It was nice to see that people also care about their families here. They like to get together with them."

Bozkurt said after returning to Turkey, he went to college and got a job at a bank. He worked there for 30 years, and served the last 15 years as its manager, retiring in 2014.

After two years of retirement, he went back to work in the aviation industry for a company based in Turkey that has production facilities in North America.

A business trip brought him to the United States, where he said a slight detour and some vacation time gave him the opportunity to visit Bolivar for the first time in nearly four decades.

I never thought I would be able to come back," he said. "I am so happy. I am emotional, really. I am so glad I made this trip, and I hope we can do it again."



Photo by David Talley

Bilen Bozkurt looks through a collection of photos from his time studying abroad in Bolivar.



Photo by David Talley

Bilen Bozkurt poses for a photo with his host family on the track at Bolivar Middle School.



Photo by David Talley

Bilen Bozkurt hold up a photo of him and his family.



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