

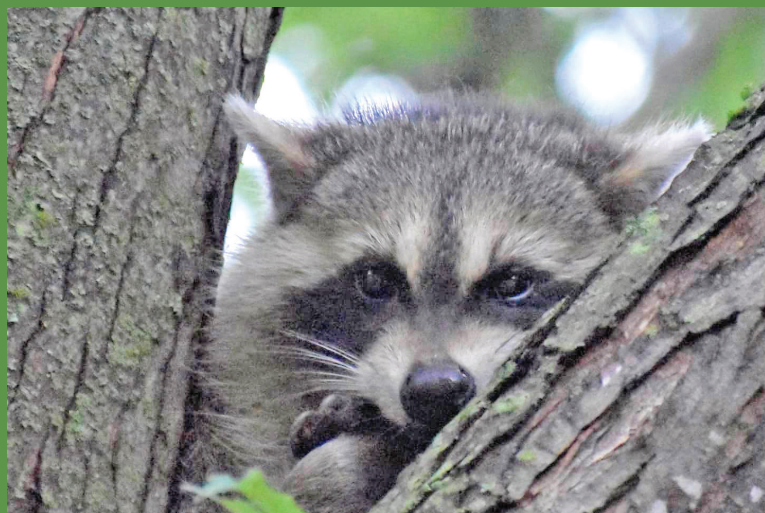
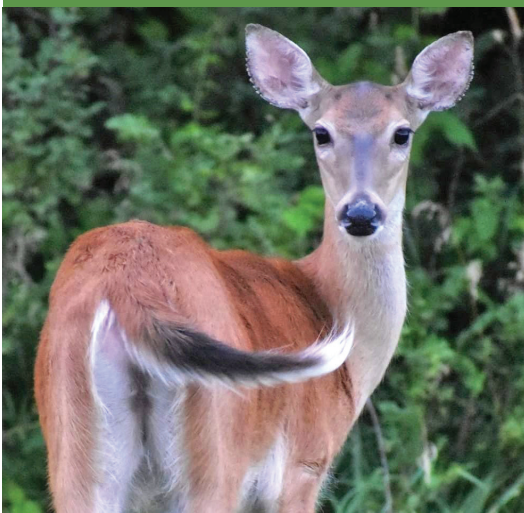


Country Neighbor

Agriculture and Rural Living Quarterly

Capturing the outdoors, Page 9

Polk County Sheriff's Office employee Mike Kootz finds stress relief in photography, and he shares many of his stellar images on social media forums to help brighten others' days.




Preserving trails, Page 3

Back Country Horsemen of Missouri volunteers help maintain numerous public paths throughout the state, which benefits not only equestrians, but also all outdoor enthusiasts.



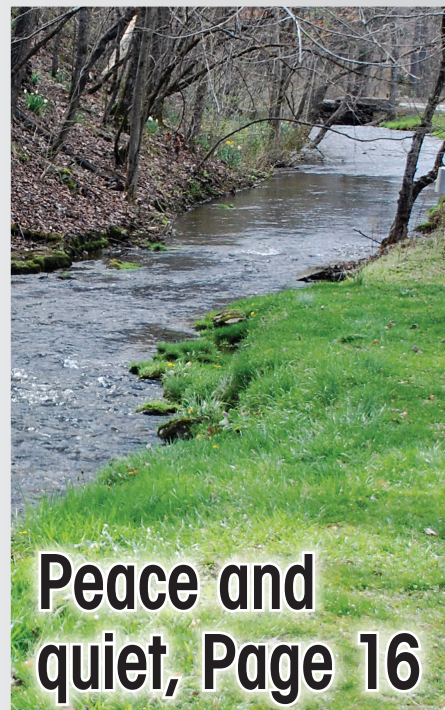
Saving the bees, Page 6

Webster County resident Terry Wayne Hardy does his part to care for honeybees, insects that are intrinsically linked with humans' survival and well-being.



Plants galore, Page 12

The owner of Rovensine Greenhouse in Stockton shares his story of how a gardening FFA project in high school ultimately turned into a successful business that draws crowds from across the region.



Peace and quiet, Page 16

The city of Ozark's recent purchase of the Garrison Spring property will provide future generations a serene, somewhat secret place where they can escape the hustle and noise of the world.

Also featured in this issue: Countryside Kennels near Buffalo offers retreat for pets; Painted Hooves animal rescue opens in Bolivar; Bull family of Marshfield balances life, work and sports; Furry Hearts animal rescue in Cedar County helps fill the gap; Lindenlure lawsuit regarding access to Finley River moves forward; and columns by Jim Hamilton and Slim Randles.

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Christian County Headliner News and The Marshfield Mail

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JIM HAMILTON • OZARKS RFD

Grandpa's big, red handkerchief

My grandkids know Grandpa is seldom without a big, red handkerchief.

Call it a handkerchief, bandanna or just a nose rag, it makes no difference. I almost always carry one in the right back pocket of my blue jeans, overalls or dress pants. Sometimes I have one in a coat pocket, too.

Its primary purpose is to stem the flow of a running nose, but that large swatch of cotton cloth bordered with distinctive paisley designs is handy for a host of chores — nigh essential as a pocketknife or ballpoint pen. I might even go so far as to declare the best reason for wearing pants or shirts with pockets is to carry that trio of indispensable accoutrements.

For years I had only common white cotton handkerchiefs, and seldom enough of those. I still have a few in the back of a dresser drawer, a couple even monogrammed. I'm not sure why. All date to a time of life when I thought only traditional white cotton handkerchiefs were appropriate to carry to church or work. I never carried a red handkerchief in my U.S. Air Force uniform, for example, or when I was going to college. But, that was years ago when propriety seemed more important than practicality.

Seldom is a little, white hankie actually practical for the intended purpose of a handkerchief. It just looks nice when a body doesn't really need one.

A big, red handkerchief, however, is the epitome of practicality and usefulness — not only for repeatedly staunching the flow in cold and allergy season, but for sopping sweat from the brow in summer and drying hands after a washing.

That swatch of paisley-bordered cloth is much more than a mere handkerchief. It can be a shop rag for wiping my greasy hands, a mop cloth for sopping up my kitchen or coffee spills, an oven mitt for handling hot pans or utensils, or a bandage when I have a too close encounter with new barbed wire.

Other times I use one as a dust rag to clean a workbench or a towel to clear fog from my truck windshield. I've used my bandanna when law required a red flag on lumber too long for the pickup bed, and I've folded it to make a dust mask when mowing autumn weeds. I've improvised "do-rags" and sweatbands when working in summer heat, and dipped the same rag in cold tap water to cool my head. At the onset of the COVID-19 threat, my red handkerchief sufficed before I could get a proper mask.

Of course, when not required



for any other function, my big, red handkerchief is great for blowing a nose. That's why I tend to carry an extra or two when I have grandkids in tow. Everyone knows grandpa has a handkerchief handy when no one else does — not just for noses, but for properly outfitting cowboys when the stick horses come out.

Better save one for me, too, pards.

Lots and lots of uses I've found for big, red bandannas, but unlike in the movies, I've never worn one while robbing a bank. COVID masking showed me right away the kerchief doesn't hide more than whisker stubble. Everyone still called me by name.

I reckon it was the same for Jesse James. Makes me wonder how he ever got away.

Maybe red handkerchiefs were a mite bigger in Jesse's day.

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SLIM RANGLES

The Ides of April



"Isn't it great?" Doc asked the assembled tailgators in the Mule Barn truck stop's parking lot. "It's April. It's spring. The crocuses are croaking, the flamdoodles are flamdoodling."

"There's no such thing as a flamdoodle, Doc," said Bert.

"They musta crocused, too," Steve threw in.

"Facts ... just facts. You can't ruin spring with just facts. April brings the sun down on our shoulders and warms things up and makes people feel kindly toward one another."

The steering committee of the vaunted world dilemma think tank was drinking coffee in the parking lot on socially distanced tailgates because of the pandemic, of course.

"Actually, Doc," said Bert, "history doesn't back you up on your opinion of April. You know ... mathematicians and statisticians are still trying to see if April 15 isn't the most tragic date in all (he spread his arms wide) history!"

"That there's the Ideas of April, ain't it?" added Windy.

"I don't know if April has Ides, Windy, but that's the right day."

"I know why," Dud said, "Tax deadline."

"That doesn't even start to cut it, Dud," said Bert in his most professional tones. You can always tell when Bert's been reading. "That's

a mere blotch on an evil day in history."

He waited and sipped. He knew it was coming. It fell to Steve.

"OK, Bert. What bad stuff happened on April 15?"

"Well, Lincoln was assassinated ... 1865."

"That there's one," Windy nodded.

"The Titanic sank ... 1912."

"That there's ..."

Bert whipped out his hand and counted on his fingers. "Notre Dame Cathedral caught fire and burned up a bunch of stuff ... That Hillsborough Stadium thing in England collapsed during a soccer game and crushed 90 people ... and those two brothers blew up the finish line of the Boston Marathon and killed three people."

Heads nodded sagely.

"You know what else?" Bert said.

"Gunny died on April 15. R. Lee Ermey himself."

"Dang!"
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Contributed photo

John Waitman and Larry Dishman clear storm damage from a trail.

Back Country Horsemen of Missouri chapters' efforts benefit all outdoor enthusiasts

By Andrew C. Jenkins

ANDREWJ@BUFFALOREFLEX.COM

Hikers, bicyclists and other outdoor enthusiasts in the state have many miles of trails to utilize thanks to the efforts of Back Country Horsemen of Missouri chapters.

The 12 Missouri chapters of the organization have a shared mission: To protect, maintain and develop Missouri's equestrian trails through service, education and advocacy. Improving trails not only benefits equestrians who enjoy riding on them, but also anyone who uses the paths reaps the rewards of BCHMO's work.

HISTORICAL MILESTONES

BCHMO is the Missouri division of Back Country Horsemen of America, a federation of 32 state equestrian groups. BCHMO's origins date back nearly 50 years ago to 1973 in Montana. Missouri joined the federation in 2003 and was the first state east of the Rocky Mountains to join, said Marsha Copeland, a founding member of BCHMO and a member of the Tri-Lakes Chapter of BCHMO. In 2010, Missouri was also the first state east of the Rockies to host a national meeting of BCHMO. (Missouri would have hosted another national meeting in 2020, but COVID-19 nixed those plans. The 2021 national meeting was scheduled to be April 26-28 in Kansas City, but it, too, will be virtual again.)

Starting in 2003, the Tri-Lakes Chapter itself was also one of the earliest chapters in Missouri, said Copeland, who resides in Long Lane in Dallas County. The Tri-Lakes Chapter includes members from Dallas, Polk and Webster counties and other nearby areas. The chapter has national recognition, as another member

BCHMO AND TRI-LAKES CHAPTER 2021 SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

- May 15, Hulston Mill Work Event. Stockton Lake. 9:30 a.m. Camping weekend.
- June 5, National Trails Day (NTD), Lead Mines CA Work Event. 9 a.m. Camping available.
- June 10-11, BCHMO Ed Copeland Memorial Work Event. Brushy Creek Resort. Call for reservations, 573-269-4600.
- June 12, BCHMO Membership Appreciation Ride. Brushy Creek Resort. Call for reservations, 573-269-4600.
- July 24, Bolivar Landing workday. 9 a.m.
- Aug. 21, Ice Cream Social and Pie Auction. Elkland Lions Club. 6 p.m.
- Sept. 25, National Public Lands Day (NPLD) Lead Mines CA Work Event. 9 a.m. Camping weekend.
- Nov. 6, BCHMO Annual Membership Meeting. The location has not yet been determined.

Compton Hollow and Pleasant Hope Conservation Areas will be maintained by Kelly Sisco and Vicki Clark.

of the chapter, Sherry Copeland — who is Marsha Copeland's daughter — also serves as vice chair of the national organization.

Marsha Copeland said she first became involved with BCHMO after she had heard of the group and because there was not another organization at the time addressing trail preservation.

"I got involved over the issue of losing trails in the state and no one to speak up about it," she said.

VOLUNTEER-LED GROUP

BCHMO is a grassroots organization. The 12 state chapters can mostly function as they see fit, as long as they follow the organization's overall mission of ensuring access to equine and stock on public lands.

"We'd love to have a lot more chapters because there are a lot of trails in the state that don't have representation,"

Marsha Copeland said.

The chapters almost always work on public lands rather than private, and they advocate for trails to be multiuse, which benefits equestrians, hikers, bicyclists and others. Chapters look after the trails in their home area where chapter members ride locally, though chapters do help one another with trail work, and the state organization coordinates fun rides and larger projects.

Marsha Copeland said the volunteers track their hours of work, and just the BCHMO group has contributed millions of dollars in labor to various projects. Marsha Copeland, herself, has held just about every position possible in the local chapter, and she currently is the education chair for the state.

The Tri-Lakes Chapter focuses on maintaining trails at five public land management areas — the Lead Mine



Photo by Andrew C. Jenkins

Marsha Copeland

Conservation Area in Dallas County, the Bolivar Landing in Polk County, the Pleasant Hope Conservation Area in Polk County, the Compton Hollow Conservation Area in Webster County and the Hulston Mill Historical Park near Stockton Lake. The chapter has also performed work at Berry Bend near Truman Lake and Busiek State Forest south of Springfield.

In addition to local projects, the chapter also assists with statewide events across Missouri, such as at Ozark National Scenic Riverways on the Current River. Chapter members have also volunteered at historical sites near the Current River for the L-A-D Foundation, a private foundation that promotes sustainable forestry.

"If the Missouri group hadn't started when it did, we would've lost horse trails," Marsha Copeland said, emphasizing the importance of the volunteers' efforts.

BCHMO also has partnered with Missouri State Parks to create a resource of all horse-riding trails in the state.

HOW TO HELP

Anyone is welcome to join a BCHMO chapter, and members do not have to own horses, Marsha Copeland said. She estimated that the Tri-Lakes Chapter has about 30 to 40 members and that the BCHMO organization has about 400 to 500 members.

"We appreciate all members, whether they can help on workdays or



Kelly and Tim Sisco return to the horse trailers after picking up trash from the trails.

Contributed photo



Sherry Copeland and John Waitman helped clean the Lead Mine Conservation Area campground.

Contributed photo

not," she said.

Marsha Copeland said horsepeople have at times been stereotyped as irresponsible and running wild on trails because of a few bad apples. But she said that bad reputation is undeserving for most equestrians. She said there is a changing attitude among state agencies regarding horsepeople because organizations such as BCHMO have saved those agencies money by putting in many man-hours and trail amenities.

Tri-Lakes Chapter members take multiple trips to the local focus areas yearly, including reconnaissance rides. Marsha Copeland said the human trash along the trails used to be awful, but more recently it has not been as prevalent.

"Maybe people are less likely to litter in already clean areas," she said.

Even without human litter, though, trails often need to be cleared of weather debris, such as fallen limbs, Marsha Copeland said.

The organization promotes "Leave No Trace" ethics and provides training about the principles that advocate taking care of the land.

Some specific examples of projects the Tri-Lakes Chapter has spearheaded are hitching rails, high-line poles (which can be used when camping overnight or to contain the horses), mounting blocks and fire rings at Lead Mine Conservation Area, as well as cleanup there. Most all of the chapter's focus areas have been provided with hitching rails, mounting blocks, and kiosks with maps and riding ethics. The chapter members pick up branches and dead trees on the trails, too.

In the past, the chapter has held youth days to teach ethical trail use, horse language and other skills to young people. Marsha Copeland said the chapters in the state need younger horse enthusiasts to get involved.


In addition to education programs for young people, the organization stresses safety and trail ethics to people of all ages, so everyone respects one another on the trails. BCHMO teaches nonriders about horse behavior and how to approach horses when on a trail. Marsha Copeland said there used to be some people concerned about horse manure, but the organization has taught them that the manure is simply grass, nothing pathogenic.

Because it is no longer safe to ride horses on gravel roads, Marsha Copeland said, the organization is adamant and passionate about preserving trails on public lands, as those are largely the only places to ride now. She said the goal for the chapter is to grow and get more people involved, as well as making people aware of this vital issue.

"We want the organization to be seen as a service organization, a positive thing and an accepting organization," Marsha Copeland said. "We are for multiuse — it's a win-win situation for the community."

She said cooperation is key. BCHMO

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chapters work with government land management agencies — but not for them — to keep open access for horses and even to work to expand the trail system.

“We’re a very positive influence,” Marsha Copeland said. “It’s not us vs. them. We work with land management agencies, not against them. They have to work within the laws, and we respect that. We want the best for our land and the environment, like they do.”

PERSONAL CONNECTION

Marsha Copeland has devoted many years to BCHMO and the Tri-Lakes Chapter. Like herself, her late husband, Ed Copeland, was a founding member of BCHMO and was instrumental in getting the organization up and going. At one time, the Copelands had 100 head of horses, including a stallion and 24 broodmares.

“If you have that horse gene, you can’t help it,” Marsha Copeland said. “What we do is not a hobby — it’s a lifestyle.”

Currently, she has three fox trotters, and Maggie is her main rider.

She has held most all positions in the Tri-Lakes Chapter. Currently, the two co-leaders/trail bosses of the chapter are Larry Dishman of Strafford and Leroy Raymond of Osceola, and the secretary is Vicki Clark of Fair Grove. The chapter is currently in the process of erecting kiosks at Bolivar Landing and updating the kiosks at the Lead Mine Conservation Area.

Marsha Copeland said her favorite part of volunteering with the group is sharing the trails with friends who have the same values and love for nature as she does.

“It is a gift to have a horse and ride it out there,” she said.

She said she enjoys helping people understand that it is their responsibility to care for the land.

“You can’t just ride and not take care of the trails,” she said.

As for the most challenging part of the group’s work, Marsha Copeland said it is difficult to get people involved, take on leadership roles and actually serve. She said it is more and more challenging to get young people involved, which means

“If you have that horse gene, you can’t help it, ... What we do is not a hobby — it’s a lifestyle.”

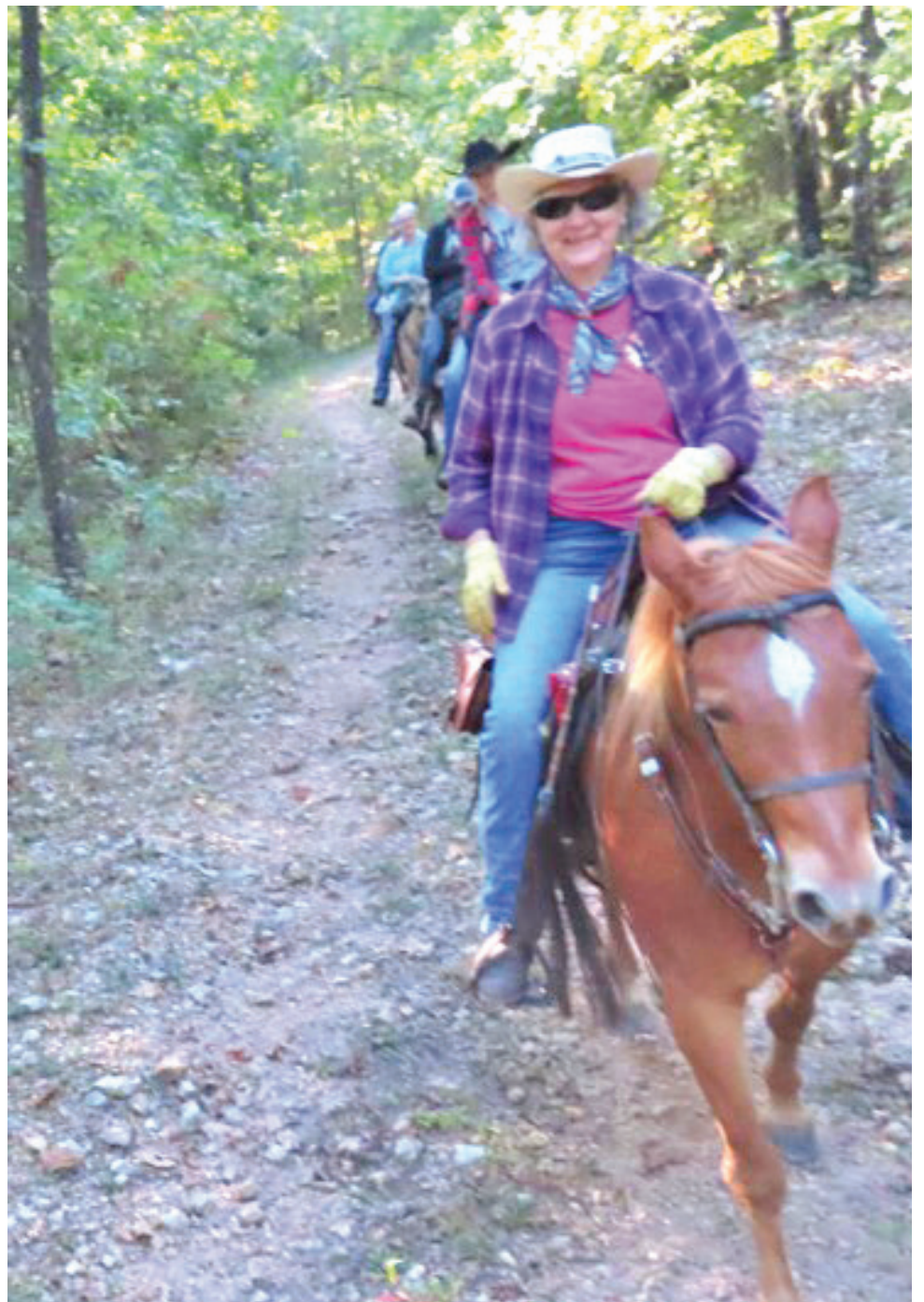
it is a challenge to keep everything going with so few people to serve such a broad area of the state.

Marsha Copeland said the requirements to join the group are simple: people just have to have an interest and believe in the organization’s mission. She said anyone can show up to help during the workdays. Anyone interested can contact the chapter to be provided with directions and a welcome packet.

The chapter’s only annual fundraiser is an ice cream social and pie auction in the summer. Marsha Copeland said the chapter has plans to try a pace race this year for all horse riders.

Anyone interested in BCHMO or the Tri-Lakes Chapter is encouraged to call Marsha Copeland at (417) 345-5753. For more information about BCHMO, go to bchmo.org or the group’s Back Country Horsemen of Missouri Facebook page. For more information about BCHA, go to bcha.org.

“We’ve always said it is the best kept secret because a lot of people don’t know about us,” Marsha Copeland said. “We would like to see people keep the tradition of horseback riding alive. We will lose trails if no one takes care of them.”



Contributed photo

Marsha Copeland rides Maggie while joined by other equestrians.



Contributed photo

Volunteers build a kiosk at Busiek State Forest.



Contributed photo

Marsha and the late Ed Copeland at the BCHMO annual membership meeting.

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SAVE THE BEES

By Shelby Atkison

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Terry Wayne Hardy has been beekeeping for two years now. He said he's always been mesmerized by the decline in the number of bees despite how vital they are to our survival. About a third of our food is produced by their pollination.

"Growing up I was like most folks and wanted to get into beekeeping, and I thought about it for 10 years or so before I got my first batch of bees," he explained. "Beekeeping is what the word says — bee keeping. They require a lot of care, and you get out what you put into it. Find a mentor. Someone that can walk you through the steps of it, it works so much better if you've got someone you can sound off of."

For Hardy, it was a gentleman at his church who offered to help him get into the hobby. He found out right off the bat that he's allergic to bees.

Photos by Shelby Atkison
Terry Hardy pictured between his two nucs in his backyard in Marshfield.

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Although Terry Hardy will often tend to his bees without a suit, he tries to always wear a masked hood to avoid stings to his face.



The bees are calm and composed as he removes a frame from the nuc to display the girls' hard work.



Pictured are octagon-shaped honeycomb, which hold more honey than a regular circle would. Bees are fascinating, intelligent creatures that have perfected the most efficient way of producing liquid gold.

"I swelled up quite a bit the first time," he laughed. "When I got to urgent care, they gave me a prescription for EpiPens ... but every time I get stung, my body reacts less and less. Your body will fight it off, and your allergies actually get better over time. It's also done wonders for my arthritis."

Hardy said the last few times he's been stung haven't bothered him much at all, but joked it was kind of a bad way to find out you're allergic to bees. Keepers have to be in the hive every two to three weeks, at least, to monitor changes. It's important to check on the queen bee to ensure the bees stay at their nuc, treat for parasites such as mites and other environmental factors.

"I have had one hive die from mites because they had infiltrated my nuc, and I had no idea they existed in our area," he said. "The first hive that I lost I was out about \$600, it can be expensive but also very rewarding."

A nuc is what the bees live in. Each one contains a queen, drones workers, baby bees, nectar and honey.

Currently, Hardy has two hives behind his house and sells his honey to folks he knows.

"It goes really quick," he smiled. "All I have to say is mention I have honey at work or at church, and it'll be gone by the end of the day."

To those who have thought about beekeeping, he says spring is a great time to start. Hardy insists

bees are a great hobby due to the rewarding feeling it gives keepers when they produce a successful hive, as well as all of the things you learn while keeping.

Hardy has learned the inner workings of the hive and how the bees interact throughout the seasons. He explained that a drone's only purpose is to mate with the queen, which happens once before it dies.

"A queen bee is really incredible — she can lay up to 1,200 eggs a day which could last her whole life," he explained. "And they live longest out of all the bees in the hive. A queen will live in a colony for up to three years before they die and you have to replace her."

According to Hardy, a honeybee's lifespan is about 28 days and she will produce about 1/12 of a teaspoon of honey in that time. It takes a lot of bees to sustain a healthy hive.

"I've had 100,000 bees come through here in the last year, and I'm down to one hive," he said. "One thing we don't do around here is spray pesticides. We don't kill weeds either. All of our honey around here is clover honey ... real light-colored. So it really bugs me when people cut down timber or spray pesticides because my bees could bring 'em back to my hive, and it contaminates the product or kills the bees."

With spring warming up, it's getting closer and closer to "swarm season." Every year hundreds of

folks in the Ozarks deal with swarms of honeybees popping up in unexpected places. The thing to remember is that there are keepers everywhere who would love to save the bees.

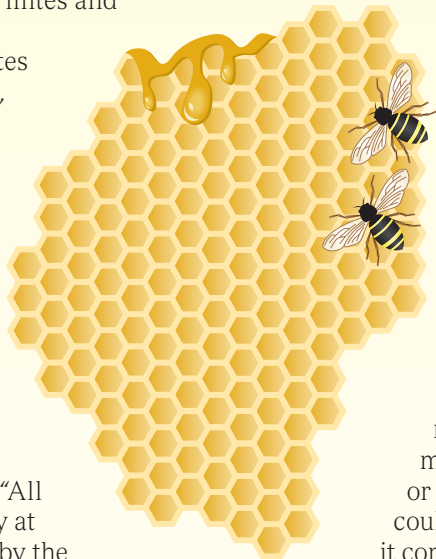
"Don't call exterminators. Call a beekeeper," Hardy said. "I've rescued swarms, and it's not much of a challenge for keepers. You physically just scoop them and get them in the box, once you get the queen, it's like a magnet."

Those who are interested in becoming a beekeeper are encouraged to start sooner rather than later in the year and find a seasoned mentor. The first year is the hardest, according to Hardy. Keepers must check on them often and can't harvest honey from them the first year because they need 50 to 60 pounds to get them through their first winter.

"If you take too much off of them or take it too late in the year, they can't replenish it and you risk losing your hive," he said. "Go ahead and bite the bullet — give it a try. [Beekeeping] is so important because they're so fragile and such a necessity."

Hardy said those who have questions about beekeeping or who are interested in organizing a club can contact him on Facebook. While there's not a beekeeping club in Webster County at the moment, Hardy would support the formation of a new one.

"Since there's not a large mentor program in our area, I recommend if you're on Facebook to join groups like Ozarks Beekeepers," he added. "That's what I've done, and it's a great community of people with common goals. I would love for there to be a club local to Marshfield or Webster County again ... Feel free to contact me because we do need to get a bee club together again."



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Lindenlure lawsuit moves forward

By Rance Burger

RANCEB@CHEADLINER.COM

Property owners put up gates to keep out visitors. A civil court case will determine who ultimately gets the gate.

A Christian County judge denied four of the seven points of a motion to dismiss a lawsuit in which the plaintiffs seek to restore public access to Lindenlure, a place north of Sparta that was once a popular swimming hole and an important place in Christian County's history.

A set of pipe rail gates and concrete barriers at the end of Canyon Road stop cars from driving farther onto the gravel banks of the Finley River. The gates, which were first reported sometime between March 7 and March 9, 2020, are there to prevent people from accessing a portion of the river below the Lindenlure Dam, a Christian County landmark off Mo. 125 between Sparta and Rogersville.

Christian County is one of the defendants in the lawsuit, along with Lindenlure property owners Mike and Carla Adams and Michael and Sherri Frazier. The plaintiffs are David Romano, Adams Evans, Stephen and Joan Thornton, and James R. Belk.

The plaintiffs seek for the court to make a declaratory judgement that Canyon Road is a public road. The lawsuit also seeks for the court to grant an access easement from Canyon Road to the river, and for the Lindenlure access to have "implied public dedication," due to its history of serving as an access point for the public at large for years.

In the lawsuit, the plaintiffs allege that they have accessed the Finley River from "Canyon Road from State Highway 125 to the water and along the Finley River as a public road with parking on or along the Finley River," for more than 30 years.

The lawsuit points out that taxpayer dollars and other resources from Christian County have been spent to maintain Canyon Road.

The defendants asked the court to require formal acceptance of public dedication of Lindenlure by the Christian County Commission. In her order issued March 3, Christian County Presiding Judge Laura Johnson denied this part of the defendant's motion to dismiss based on prior case law.

"Missouri cases are clear that such acceptance is not required if the other three elements are proved with strong, cohesive evidence," the judge wrote in her order.

Those elements are that the owner intended to dedicate land to public use, that land was accepted by the public and that the land is used by the public.

Belk, one of the plaintiffs in the law-

suit, owns property that is "landlocked" from all surrounding roads at Linden except for Canyon Road. Christian County assessor's office data shows Belk owns 18.5 acres of land situated west of the Adams property with the Finley River on the south edge of the land.

In 1996, the Christian County Commission considered a petition to close Canyon Road, according to the court documents. The commission, records show, voted to keep the road open, but set a curfew for people to be on Canyon Road up until a certain time of the day. The lawsuit also points out that in 2015, the Christian County government, "interpreted and applied public use on Canyon Road to be and include along the Finley River up to the high water mark of the Finley River along Canyon Road as the appropriate dimensions for public use along its navigable waters."

The judge found that the plaintiffs adequately stated a claim that Canyon Road is public, and opted not to dismiss that count of the lawsuit.

Plaintiffs Stephen and Joan Thornton also claim that they have been denied access to their "landlocked" property since the gates were placed at Lindenlure in 2020. The Thorntons' land sits just off Mo. 125 on Canyon Road, and measures 57.75 feet by 132 feet, according to the assessor's office record.

Romano, a college professor and a hobbyist outdoorsman, seeks to restore public access to the Finley River near the Lindenlure. Romano is also one of the administrators of an online group called "Lindenlure Finley River for the Public."

The Facebook group has more than 3,000 members. A corresponding effort to raise money to fund any legal action on the GoFundMe online platform has more than \$8,000 in donations.

Romano found that there were others from his previous trips to Lindenlure, including groups that do organized trash cleanup events, who shared his views when it came to an emotional attachment to Lindenlure and a desire to see others enjoy it.

"This isn't right — 100 years, people have been going here. I'm not a lawyer, but I've got some sense of public access rights established over time," Romano said in a previous interview with the Christian County Headliner News. "I started talking to some people."

Along what was a gravel road that river visitors used to take canoes and other provisions to the water, several "No parking" signs have been hung on trees on the uphill side of the river bank. From photographs, the gate appears to be on private property owned by Mike and Carla Adams at the end of Canyon Road. The Headliner News' efforts to



Headliner News file photos

A sign warns against trespassing on a gate on Canyon Road at Lindenlure in eastern Christian County on the Finley River.



Gates and barriers stretch across a point on Canyon Road where river-goers once flocked to the Finley River at Lindenlure.

contact the property owners have been unsuccessful.

The land that the gate crosses over appears to be part of a 48.7-acre tract that the Adamses acquired in 2009, according to records from the Christian County assessor's office.

Romano and the Lindenlure Finley River for the Public Group say they want to find solutions that everyone, namely the neighboring property owners and visitors, can agree on.

"We don't want to be the landowners' enemies," Romano said in the previous interview.

Lindenlure, as recently as the fall of 2019, was a destination for hundreds of people each year. The area on and below Lindenlure Dam was a popular spot for swimming, fishing, picnics and other methods of enjoying the outdoors.

It sat deserted through the summer of 2020, when Missourians were eager to spend time outdoors in order to break free of the confines of stay-at-home orders associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Lindenlure had a reputation for unruly behavior, including fights, public intoxication, illegal drug use and sexual

assaults. In recent years, the atmosphere mellowed. Sheriff's deputies patrolled the neighborhood and some grassroots efforts to clean up the river.

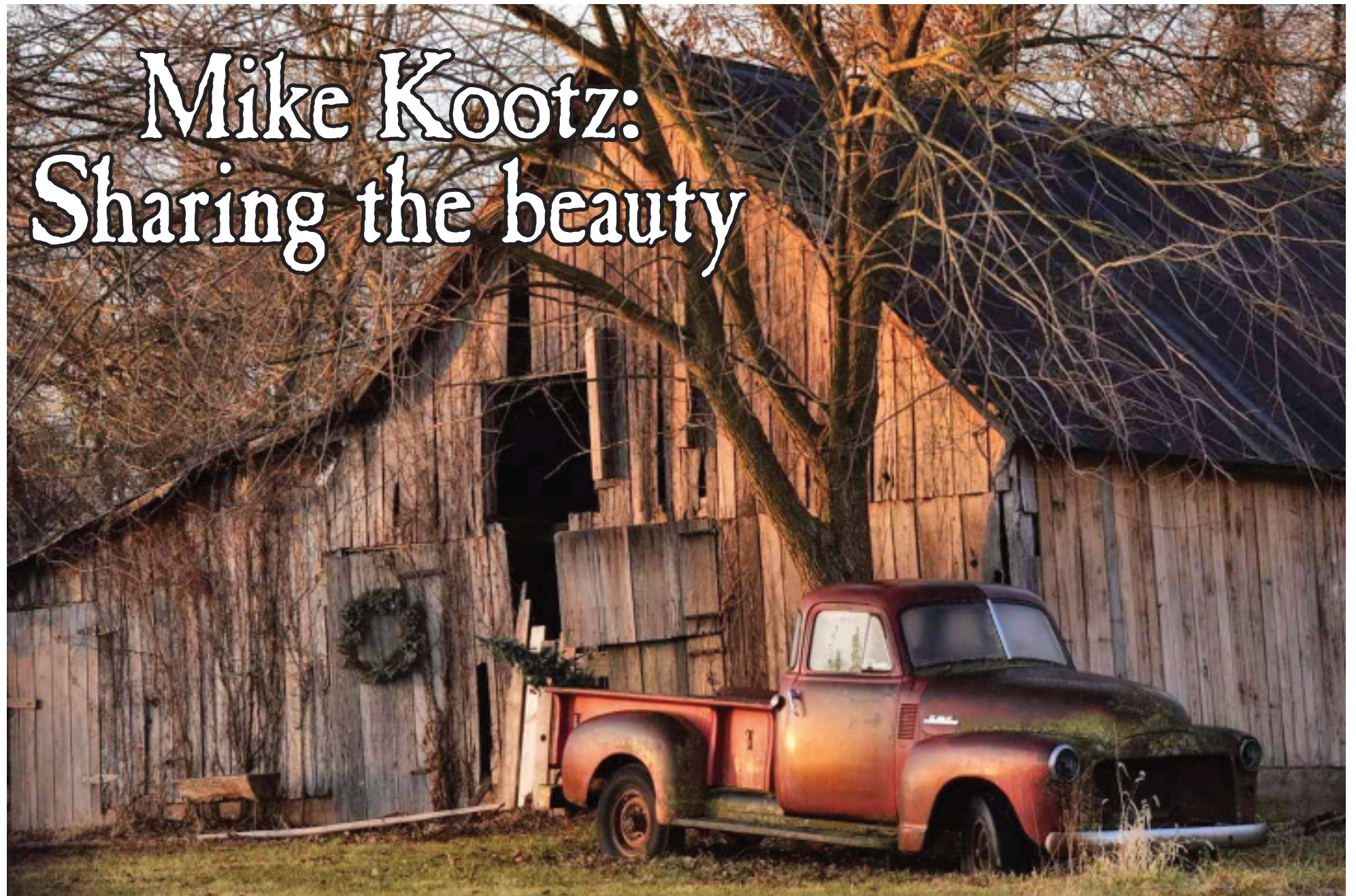
In 2017, a group of neighboring property owners approached the Christian County Commission about increasing deputies' presence at Lindenlure. In the past, residents had hired Christian County sheriff's deputies to work overtime and provide extra security, but that agreement with the sheriff's office eventually ended and the funding for extra patrols stopped.

In the past, Christian County was the site of a dispute over the legal opinion surrounding a law called the Equal Footing Doctrine, which allows people to move as they please along any federally navigable waterway. They may stay below the high-water mark on a river, provided they don't cross above the high-water mark and onto private property. Much of the past argument on the Finley River involved the location of the high-water mark, and exactly where on the river bank a person would be allowed to walk, and at what point they would be trespassing on private land.

The next motion hearing in the civil case is scheduled for May 24.



The dam at Lindenlure was a destination for swimmers and public recreation for many years, as recently as the summer of 2019.



Mike Kootz: Sharing the beauty

Photo courtesy of MIKE KOOTZ

CAPTURING NATURE'S FINEST

By Linda Simmons
and Jill Way

NEWS@BOLIVARNEWS.COM

On any given afternoon, when he's not busy at work with the Polk County Sheriff's Office, you can find Mike Kootz with his camera in hand at Dunningan Memorial Park in Bolivar, capturing the beauty the park has to offer. Then, later that evening, you might find Mike at Pleasant Hope High School, grabbing photographs of athletes competing with a hometown team.

Photography isn't just a hobby in Mike's mind — it's his passion. Capturing the moments and beauty around him is important to Mike, and he loves sharing his photographs with others. In fact, he's made a name for himself as a talented photographer on social me-

dia forums, such as Love My Ozarks.

And while wildlife is one of Mike's main subjects, when asked about a recent favorite photo, he said one of an old barn and pickup is right at the top of that list.

Mike recently sat down with the Bolivar Herald-Free Press and talked all things photography. This interview has been edited for clarity and length.

1. Why did you get involved with photography? I have always enjoyed taking photos, but now it's a chance to escape reality for a while as a sort of therapy and stress reliever. It's also an opportunity to see and share the beauty around us.

2. What's your favorite subject to shoot? I really enjoy taking photos of all kinds of things and occasionally people. But my real love is shooting

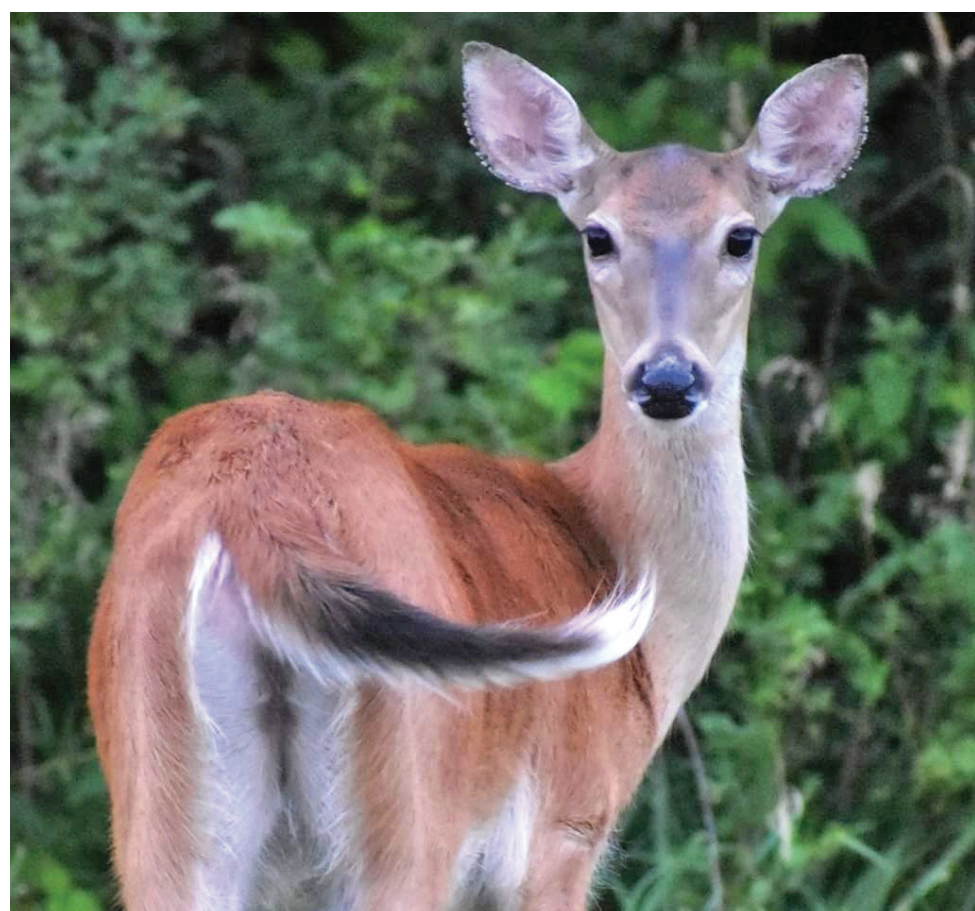


Photo courtesy of MIKE KOOTZ



Photo by Linda Simmons

Mike Kootz wears his favorite shirt while doing his favorite thing on a beautiful afternoon.



Photo courtesy of MIKE KOOTZ

“Not only do I love capturing the beauty around us, but I want to share them with those that can’t get out and experience it for themselves.”

wildlife, not only because of my love for animals, but I find it challenging.

3. What do you find most challenging to photograph? Getting the wildlife picture that you want has to be the most challenging. I have missed just as many photo opportunities as I have successfully captured.

4. Any tips on getting great wildlife photos? I’m not sure if I have ever taken a photo that would qualify as great, but it helps to be extremely quiet and patient. Luck plays a part, as well, being in the right place at the right time.

5. Most interesting photo you’ve ever taken? I took a shot of the sky one morning, and when I got back home to go through my daily shots, I observed what looked like a human figure standing in the sky. I found that very interesting.

6. What type of camera do you use? I started out with a Nikon D3200, and now I shoot with a Nikon D3500 with a 55-300 mm lens. I just recently purchased a 50 mm lens for the occasional portrait for friends and family.

7. Have you always loved taking pictures? I have always liked taking pictures, but it did grow into a love when I started using my Nikon DSLR camera. And now I never go anywhere without it!

8. Craziest story behind one of your photographs? A while back, I was sitting in Dunnegan Park and was watching the lake as usual when I noticed a strange thing pop up and



Photo by Linda Simmons

Swans are among Mike Kootz’s favorite subjects to photograph, and they seem to be proud to pose for him.

disappear. I watched this go on for quite a while before an otter pops up on a piece of ice with a fish — mystery solved.

9. Best place in Polk County for scenery photos? We live in a beautiful county, and I am proud to be a part of it. It is hard to pinpoint one place

over another, but I always find myself at Dunnegan Park, which is never a disappointment.

10. Why is it important to document the people and places that we love? Unfortunately, none of us will be here forever, nor will the old barns, historic sites, etc. Our grandchildren

and their children will have photographs to look at, the things or people they never got to experience.

11. Why do you share your photos on social media forums, such as Love My Ozarks? Not only do I love capturing the beauty around us, but I want to share them with those that can’t get

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out and experience it for themselves. I have had several people thank me for posting my photos and telling me they were unable to go out but did have access to the Internet. It's heartwarming to hear this from our elderly or disabled people. It's my way of making them happy or even cracking a smile, bringing the outside to them.

12. Have you ever sold any of your photos?
I have had individuals ask me if I sold my photos and if I ever decided to, to let them know. I haven't attempted to sell any of my photos yet, maybe because I want to get better before I go that route. Maybe someday!



Photo courtesy of MIKE KOOTZ



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Mike Kootz sees the world through a lens.

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Ted and Stephanie Rovenstine, pictured in the front of their business, Rovenstine Greenhouse.

Photos by Aaron Pyle

ROVENSTINE GREENHOUSE FINDS SUCCESS IN STOCKTON COMMUNITY

By Aaron Pyle


AARONP@CEDARREPUBLICAN.COM

As the spring as well as the summer season approach, many area residents will be looking to decorate their homes with annuals, perennials, vegetables plants or any other kind of plant.

Rovenstine Greenhouse in Stockton has you covered. The idea of the business came about when owner Ted Rovenstine began a gardening FFA project at Fair Play High School. Rovenstine quickly fell in love with dealing with flowers and plants.


Following graduation, Rovenstine went out on his own, where he worked between two jobs, an electrical company and the maintenance department at Southwest Baptist University.

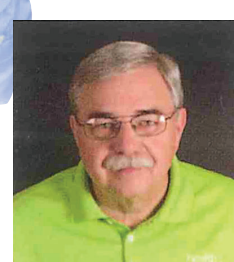
Soon following, Rovenstine decided to go into the retail market business, where he found a location in



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Cedar County. 2021 marks the 25th year the company has been in business in Stockton.

"That's all I've ever done," Rovenstine said. "I've expanded it one time to three locations in Bolivar, El Dorado Springs and of course Stockton. Then the economy slowed down in 2008, so I decided to downsize to just the Stockton location."

When asked what he enjoys about the job so much, Rovenstine stated he enjoyed the challenge of growing flowers.

"I really enjoy the flowers," he said. "I still enjoy it. It's had its ups and downs over the years ... It's a feel-good type of business."

Rovenstine then explained the profession was all self-taught. He also mentioned he has had to throw away many flowers in the process of learning how and when to properly grow it all.

Rovenstine stated 75 percent of the flowers provided at Rovenstine Greenhouse are grown by himself. All trees and shrubs are ordered elsewhere.

Rovenstine Greenhouse offers all kinds of annual bedding plants, perennials, hanging baskets, trees, shrubs and potting soils.

The greenhouse also offers landscaping, which is done through Rovenstine's son, Devon.

Devon does all kinds of landscaping, from retaining walls to irrigation systems to lighting.

"He has grown up in the industry," Rovenstine said. "I have landscaped myself, but he has taken over that part of it."

The business is open seasonally as they do sales in the fall, spring and summer. It opened in mid-March and is expected to close for the season around November.

In his free time, not during the season, Rovenstine works on his farm with the family where he tends to cows regularly.

"I start growing in January," he added. "So, I am really not off."



Rovenstine Greenhouse also offers all different types of mulch and varieties of crab apple plants.

Rovenstine added there is a current trend that started up last year with the flower business.

In the past, many people were very into the hobby of gardening or planting. As years went along, the trend went on a decline. But in recent years, Rovenstine has seen an increase in purchases as the company had one of its biggest and best years last year and as this year has been going great.

"For a while, the younger generation



was not into it as much," Rovenstine added. "But now, with COVID and everything, the younger generations have picked it back up."

As many businesses have struggled during a time with COVID-19, Rovenstine and the staff at Rovenstine Greenhouse have seen an increase in business.

Since the pandemic, the greenhouse has seen more sales overall. Rovenstine has seen a change in the industry, as well, with items such as potting soils,

Customers look upon the wide array of items at Rovenstine Greenhouse.

some flowers, tree and shrubs being on a short supply.

"Inventory on shrubs and trees are as low as it has ever been," Rovenstine added. "Same way with potting soils ... a lot of it has to do with increased demand."

On the topic of what sets Rovenstine's apart from the competition, Rovenstine mentioned the quality of the product, as well as the layout of the property.

When speaking on the community support, Rovenstine added, "Stockton has always accepted us ... We also get people from Joplin, Springfield or Pittsburg. Lots of Kansas City people, as well."

At 701 South St. in Stockton, check out Rovenstine Greenhouse for all your plant needs. Rovenstine is open from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday through Sunday, or give them a call at 417-276-5977.

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Time for a 'doggie vacation' for pets and owners

Photos by Jim Hamilton
 Countryside Kennels owner Bobbie Rotramel visits with canine guests in the gravelled common play area outside the large dog pens.

By Jim Hamilton

JHAMILTON000@CENTURYTEL.NET

Pet owners in Dallas and surrounding counties have a clean, safe and convenient option when they or their pets need a “doggie vacation,” or simply a day off.

Countryside Kennels, at 104 Candlewood Lane south of Buffalo and visible from U.S. 65, offers both long-term and day care pet boarding, as well as professional grooming for all types and sizes of dogs. Additionally, they can care for almost any type of small pet — cats, caged birds, waterfowl and miniature pigs.

Owned and operated by the Rotramel family — David, Bobbie, Eric and Chasedy Ainley — Countryside Kennels provides individual daily attention in both indoor and outdoor kennels, as well as “private luxury rooms.”

A state-licensed facility, the kennel has large, gravel play yards and a 7-acre grass area for pet workouts, as well as climate controlled indoor work areas. Dogs are typically outside three to five times every day.

Started about 15 years ago by Steve and Lenora Erb, Countryside is in its fourth year of ownership by the Rotramel family, who bought the home, kennel and cattle farm.

A union electrician on commercial jobs outside the county, David said the farm and kennels “gave us a way to be back in the community.”

Chasedy, professionally trained and licensed in dog grooming, started with the kennel under the previous ownership.

“I grew up with the business,” she said.

Arguably the “old pro” in the kennel, young Chasedy said she loves “being around the dogs, relating with the people and getting to see the dogs grow up.”

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Working with both boarded and non-boarded dogs, Chasedy is joined by Tara Smith in grooming “every kind of dog.” With the start of spring, she encourages dog owners to call well in advance to schedule a grooming. “It will be busy.”

On the boarding side, David said the kennel averages 20 to 30 dogs a day, with weekends the busiest. Numbers have been down during the COVID pandemic, but they’re now seeing an increase.

“Throughout COVID we’ve not seen as many people who travel for work and need to board their pets,” Eric said.

“In the past, we have kept up to 85 at one time,” Bobbie added. Numbers are typically greater during holidays.

Pet owners are asked to call or stop by in advance to make reservations, but the kennel can usually take pets in on short notice in case of an owner emergency.

Eric also noted they have facilities to handle “intact” (not spayed or neutered) dogs.

Additionally, the kennel staff can administer certain medications, such as insulin for diabetic dogs, if the pets are otherwise in good health. Complete vaccination records are required of all pets.

To summarize Countryside’s philosophies and services, Chasedy said, “We try to be home for the dogs when they can’t be at home.”

To that end, owners can bring their pets’ own food, familiar toys or whatever makes the pet comfortable. Otherwise, the kennel can provide what’s needed.

“We try to be flexible to work with people, either for boarding or day care,” Bobbie said. “I think of it as a ‘doggie vacation’ for the dogs and their owners.”

For more information about Countryside Kennels, call 417-345-0422, email cskboarding@gmail.com or go to countrysidekennels.us.

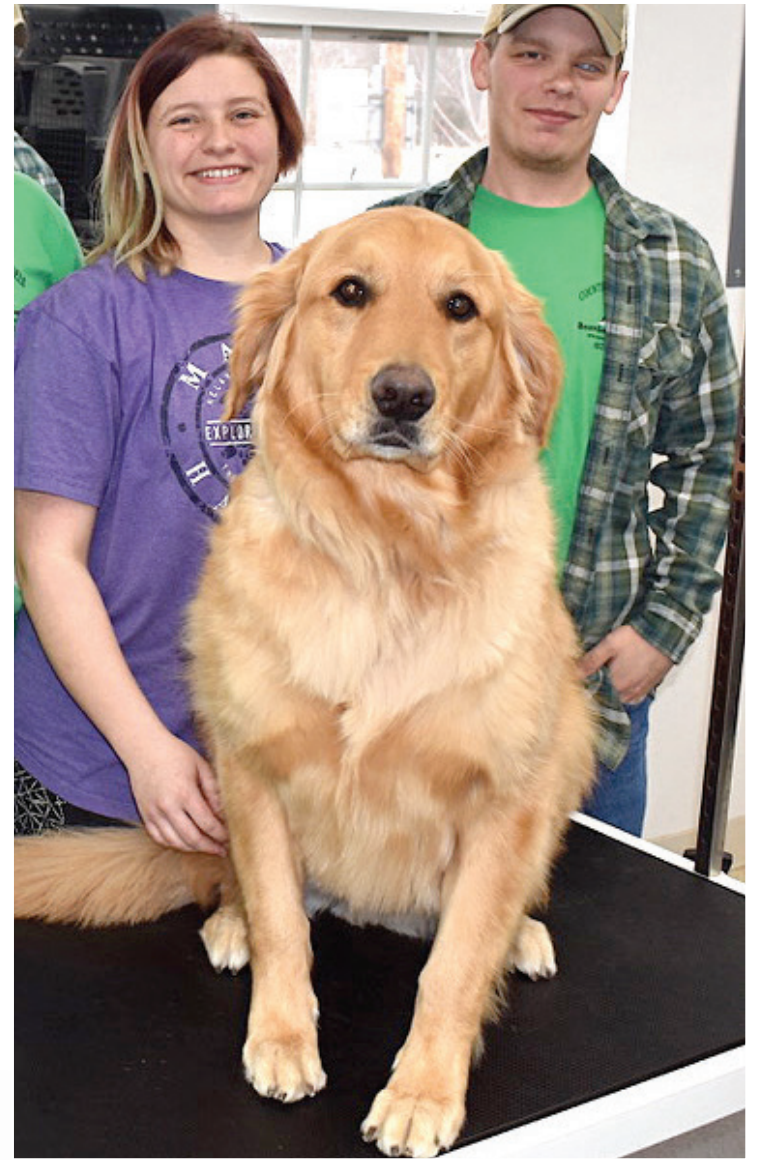
Business hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, and 9 to 10 a.m. and 4 to 5 p.m. both Saturday and Sunday.



Constantly cleaned and main spacious gravel play areas are on each side of the main kennel building, while Countryside’s 7 acres of fenced grass lots offer room for pets to run and exercise, when appropriate.



Well-lit, climate-controlled and with floors almost “clean enough to eat off of,” these large dog pens open into a gravel play area.



A regular boarder at Countryside Kennels, “Ranger,” a locally owned golden retriever, poses with kennel owners Chasedy Ainley, lead groomer, and Eric Rotramel.



Kennel owners, from left, Chasedy Ainley, David Rotramel and Bobbie Rotramel welcome canine guests and their owners in the front office of Countryside Kennels.



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Peace and quiet by the spring

Photo by Rance Burger

Garrison Spring will become more accessible and Americans With Disabilities Act-compliant once it undergoes the improvements necessary for its conversion into the Ozark city park system.

OZARK'S PURCHASE OF FUTURE FARM PARK FINALIZED

By RANCE BURGER

RANCEB@CCHADLINER.COM

The deal for Garrison Spring is done. The city of Ozark closed on the property March 16, which means the somewhat secret place of peace east of the historic downtown district is now a community park.

The Ozark Board of Aldermen voted 6-0 on each of a series of three bills to finalize negotiations on buying 9 acres commonly known as Garrison Spring.

The garden is situated at the end of East Jackson Street, where the blacktop narrows to a gravel road. Guests travel under a canopy of trees and past some pasture land with cows to reach a secluded spot, where people come for a moment away from the hustle and noise of the world.

Ozark Assistant City Administrator Sam Payne noted that negotiations for the city to buy Garrison Spring and turn it into a park were lengthy and arduous at times.

"A lot of my staff put some time and effort into this," Payne said. "This will really move our parks department along."

Ward 2 Alderman Bruce Galloway was thankful to be part of the final vote on the land purchase.

"There were a lot of hours and a lot of effort put into this project, and I'm glad to see it come to this conclusion. I could not

have imagined it would have been executed so well," Galloway said.

The Ozark Board of Aldermen also voted 6-0 to accept a request for proposal (RFP) agreement with James River Basin Partnership. The JRBP is a nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting and improving the quality of the James River watershed. The JRBP won a \$6,100 bid to create a forest plan for the Garrison Spring property. Ozark Environmental Resources Coordinator John McCart said the organization's experience and expertise will be valuable in determining the long-term future of Garrison Spring as a park.

"That community forest plan will help us determine how we're going to utilize those buildings on the property, as well as the forest, what vegetation can be cleared out, bank stabilization on Garrison Spring, providing amenities to the public and things like that," McCart said.

McCart requested that the Board of Aldermen hold first and second readings so that the bill containing the RFP would be adopted and finally passed on March 15. The quick vote will help Ozark and the JRBP meet some deadlines for the federal grant tied to Garrison Spring.

"Everything has to move very quickly with this grant process, and we have a limited time to get this done and get it back to the federal government," McCart said.

Ozark Mayor Rick Gardner was happy for the end of a chapter in the story of Garrison Spring.

"This Garrison Springs project has been going on for years and years. We have gone back and forth with Ms. Braswell, her family and her realtor — in a friendly way," Gardner said. "With a lot of work through Ms. Payne getting these grants, we are finally able to get an agreement on a price."

Gardner said that negotiations had been uphill at times, but that the Braswell family negotiated on good terms with Ozark throughout the dealings. The mayor hopes Garrison Spring will be well-preserved for Ozark residents and guests to enjoy for decades to come.

"This is a really big deal, because it's not a national treasure, but it's certainly a local one. This needed to remain in the control of the Ozark parks department and certainly in the city," Gardner said.

Ozark agreed to a buying price of \$380,000 with the Mary Lou Braswell Family Trust.

The Missouri Department of Conservation will provide funds up to \$178,278 for the purchase of the land, which will not exceed 50 percent of the overall cost of the purchase of land belonging to the Ernest and Mary Lou Braswell Trust, commonly known as Garrison Spring.

Mary Lou Braswell still lives in the house on the property. For this reason, Ozark city officials ask that visitors to Garrison Spring continue adhering to the signs posted on the property, avoid parking in a way that blocks the driveway, and be courteous to Braswell's home and property.

The land includes three springs and a cave. According to the agreement documentation between the Department of Conservation and the city of Ozark, the land is a tenth of a mile downstream from a "species of conservation concern."

The agreement calls for the property to be maintained for public use, "providing the public with a place to enjoy nature, while at the same time protecting the property from residential and/or commercial development." Public uses such as hiking, wildlife viewing, nature photography and conservation education will be allowed.

Ozark then received a grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service Community Forest Program. The funds from the Missouri Department of Conservation will be used to match that grant, at a ratio of 50/50. The money is awarded retroactively as of Oct. 15, 2020, and the agreement ends May 31, 2021. The city applied for and received a grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service Community Forest and Open Space Program for \$184,000.

The idea is for Garrison Spring to continue to work as a tucked-away destination, with some more permanent preservation and protections in the future. There will be opportunities for residents to be involved and to provide some input on the future development of the park. Many of the plans are still in the early stages.

"We are still fundraising. There is a group that is getting together, and we'll start announcing that as we get the group together, but we're really excited," Payne said.

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HELPING OUT

ANIMAL RESCUE OPENS IN BOLIVAR

By David Talley

DAVIDT@BOLIVARMOONNEWS.COM

Briannah Swope said it all started at a young age when her father brought home a horse she said was near death. Swope, who was born in Wyoming and most recently lived in Colorado, helped tend to the animal, kick-starting an internal drive to care for animals in need.

Swope opened Painted Hooves Rescue, Rehabilitation and Training when she lived in Colorado and has since opened it in Bolivar after moving to Polk County about a year ago.

"I noticed there was a high need for somebody around to care for dogs and cats and horses that are in need in this area," she said.

She said she's working to complete the requirements for forming a 501(c)(3) nonprofit.

The rescue base of operations hosts several of the dogs and cats, she said.

She also rents a barn in Fair Grove for horse rescues.

Swope said animals come to the rescue in different ways.

Some are surrendered, she said, and some dogs and cats are picked up off the street, too.

"We see dogs, people giving them away or stray dogs that are emaciated," she said.

Swope said six dogs have come through the rescue.

Some animals, deemed unadoptable, might stay with Swope, whereas others, after overcoming health and behavioral issues, are able to join new families.

That fits a niche not necessarily covered by normal shelters, she said.

"How we approach an animal depends on the animal itself," she said. "We've had a couple of horses that have come through haven't been touched a day in their life. That's going to take some time to socialize them and get them where they can be handled."

Swope said she and a partner named the nonprofit Painted Hooves when it was based in Colorado, with the intent that it would primarily handle horses.

"It just stuck," she said. "But here, we've mostly dealt with dogs and cats."

Swope is currently the rescue's only employee.

She said she picked up most of her training by shadow-



Photos courtesy of Briannah Swope

Briannah Swope with Painted Hooves Rescue, Rehabilitation and Training helps care for a horse recently brought to the rescue.

ing veterinarians and working with animals firsthand. That's helped her work in multiple ways, she said.

"We're not here to just take animals, we're here to answer questions if people need it," she said.

The rescue can be reached at 970-281-9736 or at equinelesstraining@gmail.com.

The community can help in a number of ways, she said.

Volunteers are needed to help dogs socialize and take them on walks, she said.

"A lot of times, it's that easy," she said. "We just need people to come out and play with us."

Donations can also be helpful, she said.

Cat carriers are in particularly high demand, she said, because the rescue sometimes has to catch cats.

"That takes effort," she said. "We've had a carrier that has been broken while catching a cat."

Animals being adopted are sent home in a carrier, too, she said.

"If a dog or cat gets adopted, we want them sent with everything necessary for them," she said. "That's because we care about how that animal does in the long term. We want to make their lives better."



A dog enjoys its time outside at the rescue.



Briannah Swope works with a horse she described as the rescue's most challenging resident. The horse hadn't been regularly handled, had undergone eye surgery and was deaf.

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Bullpen

MARSHFIELD FAMILY EXEMPLIFIES COMMUNITY'S EFFORTS

By Bryan Everson

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Sons Bryant and Caleb are asleep in the car as Cody Bull is driving back from Texas. The three were in Dallas for the Gunslinger QB Challenge that Bryant, who started at the position last fall as a sophomore for Marshfield, participated in at AT&T Stadium, home of the Cowboys.

"It was the golden age of Dallas Cowboys football as a kid, so that was pretty neat to me," said Cody, head football coach at Marshfield the past four seasons.

Back home, Marshfield's senior class wanted to play in one last volleyball tournament together. Needing another player, seventh-grader Gracelyn participated, while Sara, assistant coach for the Lady Jays varsity team and Cody's wife, helped out Saturday and Sunday.

From a distance, the Bull family's life that is ingrained in the city's athletics plays like a no-huddle offense that drives year-round.

With a father who worked in the natural gas pipeline industry, it meant moving around for Cody as a youngster before eventually attending Chisholm High School in Enid, Oklahoma. A smaller high school, he lettered in four sports, including football, where he started like Bryant at QB as a sophomore.

The sport has been in Cody's family's blood. His dad played at Texas A&M-Kingsville, while uncle Ronnie was an All-American running back at Baylor and then 1962 NFL Rookie of the Year after being drafted by the Chicago Bears.

"We were kind of a football family growing up," Cody says. "My dad would run routes for me in the yard so I could throw extra."

Sports played a major part in Sara's life as well. Her dad, Carl Hunter, scored the first touchdown in Camdenton football history, and later returned to the city as a teacher and coach, including the 1973 track team that won a state title.

In high school, Sara ran track for the Lakers, and also played basketball, as well as volleyball, the sport she played at Southwest Baptist University in Bolivar, where Cody played football and the two met.

Together in the same class one semester, Cody says, "I found a way to get into a group with her, and she had no choice but to hang out with me a little bit [laughs]. We talked that whole semester and started dating at the end of the year, and through that summer it was one of those things where you've found the best person you're ever going to meet and it's awesome. People always ask how you know [they're the one], and it's pretty easy."

The two married in 2003, and it was the first seeds of a family that's become part of the fabric of the town's sports.

Prepared to start a family, Cody became a real estate appraiser while Sara got a job with the Missouri State auditor's office. A window into the coaching business came through the family after Cody's brother-in-law was named defensive coordinator at Fair Grove, allowing him to help for several days a week. That appeared in jeopardy when most of the staff left for Aurora, but Cody stayed on under Fair Grove AD Tim Leeper and head coach Jason O'Neal (current Logan-Rogersville assistant superintendent).

"I figured out how to get into a program that gave me a temp [teaching] certificate while I worked on my master's degree," said Cody, the Eagles' defensive coordinator until 2013. "There's no question those doors opened for a reason because those jobs don't grow on trees."

Cody came to Marshfield for a year after that under receiver coach Nick Codutti, then followed his brother-in-law to Millsap, Texas, just outside Fort Worth, where the latter had been hired as a varsity head coach.



Photos courtesy of Cody Bull

The Bull family gathers for a photo at R.A. Barr Stadium, home of the Blue Jays.

The family returned to Marshfield in 2017 when Cody was hired back as a physical education teacher and head coach of the Jays, and involvement in sports has ramped up since, with no bigger impact coming through the Edge summer conditioning program that started with his football players and now is a staple for all aspiring Jays athletes.

For Sara, now in her third year teaching in Marshfield and a big contributor to athletics in her own right, the time needed to be right to join the coaching ranks.

"I stayed home for 14 years with our kids, so I was the true coach's wife," she says. "I took care of the kids and went to everything, then we couldn't see him a lot, so we'd go to practice. I think he knew he wanted to do it, but I needed a little persuading. I love it, it's in my blood, but I also know how much it takes from families, so I think I drug my feet a little bit. It's been great, though. At the small schools we've been at, they've all been family-oriented. Wherever you go, they want your family involved, especially in Marshfield."

That coincided with Quinn, the couple's youngest child as a second-grader currently, heading off to school and thus providing Sara more time to lend. But the helping hand is one that extends mutually nonstop.

Bryant is a three-sport athlete who also is qualifying for track events. Gracelyn plays basketball and runs track on top of volleyball, while Caleb, a fifth-grader, wrestles on top of three other sports. The list of parents who've helped make coordinating schedules possible and getting kids to and from locations is extensive. With similarly-aged children of their own in the same activities, trading and combined drop-offs help make it all possible.

"It really does [take a village], and not just our village; my mom and his mom have helped a lot," Sara says. "It's a lot of our parents of student-athletes who are part of that village, taking care of the kids. I

couldn't even tell you all the people who have helped us be able to do what we do ... it says a lot about this community."

Not that there's never little reminders of the nature of the frantic pace.

"During volleyball season this year, one game Quinn ran out [on the court] to ask Sara if she could get something from the concession stand during a game [laughs]," Cody says. "It's one of those things, it's pretty constant."

The busy lifestyle has meant narrowing down hobbies for Cody, who used to golf more often, but enjoys fishing, and hunting with the boys. Sara enjoys going up to her family's farm to visit her mother; she's headed there on an upcoming weekend to help her mother on the flower bed.

When it's not visiting family not too far away, time spent in and around the house in the neighborhood is cherished. That means playing cards with other coaches' families — something that helped with socializing safely outside during quarantine — and activities outside that are aided by more friendly hands.

"One of the best things when we came to Marshfield is the house we bought. [Lady Jays soccer coach] Paul Lewis lives across from us, and I couldn't tell you the number of times Paul with a new lawn mower would look over. He'd see that Cody hadn't mowed our yard, but he'd hop on and say, 'It's a new toy, I want to do it,' and he'll mow it. Mark Messick leaves a path mowed between our house and ours so the kids can go back and forth without having to go through an overgrown bush. Marshfield is full of people like that."

Looking back, Cody recalls his days in real estate — good hours, good money — but the love for coaching was his true calling. He views Marshfield, where he and Sara impact the lives of so many student-athletes, as a hidden gem, and one that gives as much as it gets from the Bull family.

"I love watching kids making progress and seeing



Quinn, the youngest of the Bull children, tops a pyramid of Lady Jays volleyball players during the 2019-20 season.



Cody and Sara Bull share a hug on the field.

the lights flip on when they do something special," Cody says. "It gets me excited and is a pretty easy thing to get up and go to work for even when you're tired. Doing it in Marshfield -- it's already one of the best places in southwest Missouri, just nobody knows it

yet -- it's an awesome town and school system we have here. We want people to be proud of where they are and where they came from, and to do everything we can to make everything the best and our kids to have the best chance to do well."



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PHOTOS by KATHRYN SKOPEC

From left, El Dorado Springs animal control officer Tanya Mendelsohn and Furry Hearts founder Lynne Cox load up dogs in Furry Hearts' van for a transport.

Bridging the gap

WHEN ANIMAL RESCUES PLAY BIG ROLES IN RURAL AREAS

By Kathryn Skopec

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Where do homeless dogs go when there's no local animal shelter to put them up for adoption?

This question is relevant to many rural counties in southwest Missouri.

Although most Missouri municipalities and counties have animal control and dog pounds, many in southwest Missouri don't have animal shelters.

The closest animal shelter to Cedar County is next door in Polk County, but the other counties surrounding Cedar County are without animal shelters, as well.

Cedar County's Stockton and El Dorado Springs have animal control departments, which pick up stray dogs only within city limits.

This is where Furry Hearts, a local Cedar County animal rescue, steps in to fill the need.

Lynne Cox, Barbara Jenkins and Becca Loane are members of the Furry Hearts team — a not-for-profit animal rescue organization that rescues, networks and transports dogs in need.

Cox and Jenkins started Furry Hearts together officially in 2018 after Cox's previous animal organization — "Cause for Paws," which was based at Stockton's pound — was disbanded.

Now, when a stray dog is picked up in Cedar County by animal control, Furry Hearts is usually the first to receive a call by animal control.

These women get "all kinds" of dogs, Cox said.

"You see some wonderful dogs who you don't have any idea how someone could have lost a dog like that," Cox said. "They'll come in neutered, housebroken, shaved and clean."

Other dogs, however, can come into the hands of Furry Hearts after enduring obvious physical abuse or enduring a battle of survival against the elements, especially dogs that have been dumped on rural roadsides and left to fend for themselves in the woods.

Networking and transporting is a major facet of



Ready for new travels, an adorable dog prepares to be transported by Furry Hearts, a not-for-profit animal rescue organization based in Cedar County.

Furry Hearts for getting these dogs new homes.

"We send them all over," Jenkins said.

Loane said that as of the interview, there were dogs set to be transported to Indiana, Virginia, Illinois and Minnesota. The Furry Hearts team typically meets other rescues halfway during the transportation of animals.

Cox is typically the team member who networks with other rescues across the country.

"She is only dealing with the very best of the best," Jenkins said, speaking on the rescues Furry Hearts

works with. "Rescues are approved before we send them."

Last year, Furry Hearts transported a total of 310 dogs. This year, the team has transported a total of 145 dogs just by early April.

"All of the rescues across the board are slammed," Loane said.

It is a lot of work to do in the hands of three women, but this is a passion that draws deep from their hearts.

"I've been about dogs my whole life," Cox said, noting she used to be a veterinarian technician and a large-animal humane investigator.

Jenkins and Loane also expressed their lifelong passions for animals.

Once the women get to see their dogs move into the hands of a new rescue, knowing these dogs will soon have a new healthy and happy home, the moment feels like simply "relief," Cox said.

"Another one made it out," Cox said. "They're headed to a good life."

However, Cox stressed the importance of how Furry Hearts can continue to do what they do for a while, but without help, the team is "pretty stretched."

Foster homes for dogs are always welcome and needed, as well as volunteers who can help transport dogs to halfway points.

"People always say, 'Somebody should do something,'" Cox said. "You're somebody. Every person has the ability to do something."

To keep up with Furry Hearts, check out their Facebook page for updates as the team continues working diligently to help animals in Cedar County and assist with finding animals' forever homes across the country.

Additionally, contact Furry Hearts at P.O. Box 540, Stockton, or through email at info@furryheartsinc.org. Donations can be made via the P.O. box, the organization's Venmo @Furry-Hearts, PayPal account furryhearts2018@gmail.com, or through AmazonSmile at Furry Hearts Inc.