

PHOTOS: FREEDOM RINGS IN MONETT — PAGE 8-9

CUBS READY TO ROAR INTO NEW SEASON >>>

Monett enters 3rd year under Mauk with considerable firepower. — PAGE 2

MONETT



Monthly

AUGUST 5, 2026 | FACEBOOK.COM/MONETTMONTHLY



Pollution, industrial ag decried at Monett meeting

Speakers focus on
CAFOs, data
centers posing local
threat

BY MURRAY BISHOFF

Special to the Monett Monthly

More than 50 people attended a public meeting on July 19 at the Scott Regional Technology Center in Monett to hear a variety of state leaders and experts discuss environmental threats they perceive stemming from concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs), data centers and sludge tanks proposed in southwest Missouri.

The meeting was organized by Protect Our Water and Environmental Resources (POWER). A large percentage of those attending were landowners. Among public officials in attendance were Presiding County Commissioners Bob Senninger from Lawrence County and Steve Blankenship from Barry County, and State Senators Mike Moon and Jill Carter, in addition to several candidates for the state legislature.

Leah Heidlage, with POWER, opened the meeting by noting plans for poultry farms on Sarcoxie Prairie had been

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6



Speaking before the meeting in Monett on pollution concerns due to industrial agriculture and data centers were, from left: moderator Ashlen Busick, Jasper County rancher and realtor Richard Jones, Kim Prince with Protect Our Water and Environmental Resources, and reporter Sheila Harris. Murray Bishoff/Special to the Monett Monthly

MONETT CAVES

What: Presentation held at Monett Historical Society

Who: Mike Randall headed the group that included main contributors Robert Painter and Rusty Morris

More: Monett's caves, according to old newspaper accounts, are very different and seem to have been discovered at different times

100 attend program on Monett caves

Legends, memories
point to underground
features

BY MURRAY BISHOFF

Special to the Monett Monthly

The Monett Historical Society heard its first presentation on Monett's caves at its July membership meeting.

A group of enthusiasts who launched the "Monett Muddy Cave" Facebook page has stimulated interest and discussion about reopening the known cave at South Park.

Monett's caves, according to old newspaper accounts, are very different and seem to have been discovered at different times. Hardware dealer W.H. Floreth told the Monett Lions Club in 1947 about a sinkhole that opened on Broadway around Eighth Street around 1900 that led into a massive underground lake that the city tapped as a water source for several years.

The park cave seems to have been connected to a rock quarry dug into the hillside to extract limestone. Around 1908, a workman inside the quarry followed fissures that led to larger spaces. General use of the quarry ceased in 1918, according to a notice in The Monett Times, but was reopened in 1931, and its hole in the northeast hillside turned into the city dump until Mayor V.B. Hall had it closed in 1947. It is now believed to be under the park sledding hill.

Many stories have circulated about another entrance over the eastern edge of the park hill, close to the Boy Scout pavilion near the Kiwanis Club's Kiddie Playground. Fencing for years warned parkgoers to avoid that location. This spot matches photos shared by the enthusiasts with old Scout photos believed to be by the entrance. Reports of cold air emerging from the ground by a rock-covered vertical section of the hillside have circulated as well.

Mike Randall headed the group that included main contributors Robert Painter and Rusty Morris, both frequent online contributors. Morris said the group's

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

CITY OF MONETT

What: Held regular Council meeting on July 9

New: City adds first K-9 unit to police ranks

More: Police Chief George Daoud retired, Dennis Camp named interim chief

K-9 hired, Chief Daoud retires

City approves
agreement securing
dispatch services

BY JESSICA BREGER

Special to the Monett Monthly

Monett City Council began its meeting on July 9 with the swearing in of a new addition to the Police force.

Officer Thor was sworn in as the city's first K-9 unit. Thor was sworn in using his "translator" and handler Officer Blake Sperry.

The pair completed the "Patriot K9 Training" program in May and are fully NAPWDA (North American Police Work Dog Association) certified.

Other department changes were announced at the meeting, as it was the last Police Chief George Daoud would attend in his position.

Daoud retired effective Aug. 3 following over 25 years with the Monett Police Department.

Daoud began his career in December of 2000 as a patrol officer and rose through the ranks, serving nine years as a detective and 10 years as police chief.

The city announced the appointment of Monett Police Captain Dennis Camp as interim police chief following the retirement of Daoud July 31.

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Monett Balloon Glow lights up dusk



Propane was used to warm the air inside the hot air balloons to make the rise, creating a striking sight against the darkening evening sky. Three balloons lifted south of the Monett Regional Airport's terminal on July 10 for the first Balloon Glow. **More on Page 3.** Murray Bishoff/Special to the Monett Monthly

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CUBS READY TO ROAR ON THE GRIDIRON



Monett's Carson Nestleroad skirts past a Nevada defender in a game last season. MSL Photography/Special to the Monett Monthly

Monett looks to build on momentum in Year 3 under Mauk

BY JARED LANKFORD
monettsports@gmail.com

The foundation has been laid — now, the Monett Cubs are looking to take the next step.

After improving to 5-6 a season ago and earning a district playoff victory, third-year head coach Ben Mauk believes the program is headed in the right direction. More importantly, he says the culture inside the program has changed.

“Last year’s team took a big step in returning Monett football back to where it should be,” Mauk said. “We play in the toughest football conference in the state of Missouri, and every week will continue to be a challenge for us.”

Monett finished seventh in the rugged Big 8 Conference before defeating McDonald County, 36-28, in the opening round of the district playoffs. The Cubs’ season ended with a 39-26 loss to West Plains, but the experience provided valuable momentum heading into 2026.

That optimism is fueled by experience. The Cubs return 11 starters and 18 lettermen from last year’s squad, including five starters on offense and six on defense.

Few teams in southwest Missouri will feature as much returning firepower as Monett.

Senior quarterback Dylan Washick is back after one of the finest passing seasons in school history. The 6-foot-4 signal caller completed 371-of-554 passes for 4,433 yards and 44 touchdowns while leading an offense that averaged 45 points and more than 517 total yards per game.

Washick won’t lack targets.

Senior Carson Nestleroad returns after hauling in 93 receptions for 1,324 yards, while fellow senior Brayden Seitz added 61 catches for 829 yards and 11 touchdowns. Veteran receivers Michael Diaz, Dante Ungeni and Jaxon Stout provide additional depth in a passing attack that should once again rank among the area’s most explosive.

The offensive line also brings valuable continuity with seniors Jose Garcia and junior Luis Serrano returning alongside



Monett quarterback Dylan Washick lets a pass go in a contest against Mt. Vernon last season. MSL Photography/Special to the Monett Monthly

junior Karsen Madrid.

Mauk believes experience isn’t the offense’s only strength.

“Many returning starters in key positions, but our overall depth and team chemistry,” Mauk said. “These kids love to be around one another and have great senior leadership.”

While Monett’s offense drew headlines in 2025, the Cubs know defensive improvement will determine how far they can go this fall.

The defense returns six starters led by senior linebacker Aiden Rivera, who recorded a team-high 122 tackles and 45 assists last season. Fellow linebacker Henry Reed contributed 73 tackles, 33 assists and 3.5 sacks, giving Monett one of the conference’s most experienced

linebacker duos.

The defensive front features seniors Kelton Carr and Chris Calhoun, while the secondary returns experienced defensive backs Kasen Carr, Chris Spears and junior Ben Tate.

Like the offense, Mauk points to chemistry and senior leadership as defining strengths on the defensive side.

For Mauk, however, wins and losses aren’t the only measuring stick.

Entering his third season, the veteran coach says the Cubs have embraced a culture built around four standards: Character, unity, bravery and service.

“I am excited about the 2026 season,” Mauk said. “Our kids have embraced our standards. They have really come

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

LADY CUBS SOFTBALL

What: Season opens Sept. 1 at Marshfield
Returning: Four varsity starters from last year’s 17-10 team
More: Coach Kaesha George, Monett alumna, enters second season

Youthful Lady Cubs eager to grow

George ready for the opportunity that await the team

BY JARED LANKFORD
monettsports@gmail.com

Entering her second season at the helm of the Monett Lady Cubs softball program, head coach Kaesha George knows this year’s team will rely heavily on youth. Rather than viewing that as a challenge, she sees it as an opportunity.

“We’re going to be a young team this season, but that’s something I’m excited about,” George said. “We have a lot of players who are eager to learn, compete and prove themselves.”

Monett returns four varsity starters from last season’s squad that finished 17-10, giving the Lady Cubs a solid foundation while several newcomers compete for everyday roles.

Leading the way is senior catcher Emma Velten, who earned unanimous First-Team All-Conference honors as a junior. George believes Velten’s presence behind the plate gives Monett confidence every time it takes the field.

“We have a lot of confidence in her behind the plate,” George said. “She did a phenomenal job last year both defensively and offensively. We look forward to having her for another year.”

George points to Velten’s softball IQ as her greatest strength.

“She understands the game at a high level, controls the defense from behind the plate and consistently puts herself in position to help the team succeed,” George said. “She also brings a calm, confident presence that our players feed off.”

Freshman Davynn McCollough is expected to provide depth at catcher while gaining valuable varsity experience throughout the season.

The Lady Cubs will feature a youthful pitching staff led by sophomore Gianna Cavnar and freshman Kyra Garner. George expects both to continue developing as they gain varsity innings.

Cavnar’s ability to throw strikes, change speeds and keep hitters off balance gives Monett a dependable competitor in the circle, while Garner’s confidence, energy and willingness to learn should allow her to make an immediate impact early in her career.

Around the diamond, first base is expected to be anchored by returning player Kamilla Rodriguez. McCollough and freshman Bailynn Reed will also compete for infield opportunities, while several other young players are battling for starting positions.

“We’re still evaluating what our infield will look like,” George said. “We have several talented young players competing for spots, and we’re excited about the depth and potential this group brings.”

In the outfield, junior Kenzi Waterman returns after starting in center field a year ago. Her experience and ability to cover ground give the Lady Cubs stability, while the corner outfield

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NEWS BRIEFS

100+ Women third quarter meeting on Aug. 6

The 100+Women of Barry and Lawrence Counties will meet on Thursday, Aug. 6, from 6-8 p.m. at the Barry-Lawrence Regional Library, located at 2200 Park St. in Monett. Social hour is from 6-7 p.m., and at 7 p.m., voting members (those who donate \$100 or more) can nominate a charity from Barry or Lawrence counties to receive fourth-quarter meeting funds. People may donate online at cfozark.org/100monett, or by mail to Community Foundation of the Ozarks, Attn: 100 Women Monett, PO Box 8960, Springfield, MO 65801.

Trivia on Aug. 6

The Monett Senior Center, located at 405 Dairy St., will host Trivia on Aug. 6 from 11:45 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. Prizes are provided by Gentiva Hospice, of Neosho. All ages are welcome, and there is no charge to play.

Bingo at Senior Center Aug. 14

The Monett Senior Center, in partnership with Access Family Care, will host free Bingo on Friday, Aug., from noon to 12:30 p.m. The Center is located at 405 Dairy Street in Monett.

Blood Drive on Aug. 17

The American Red Cross will host the Monett Area Blood Drive on Monday, Aug. 17, from 1-6 p.m., at First Freewill Baptist Church's Fellowship Hall, located at 107 West Sycamore in Monett. People may call 1-800-733-2767 or visit RedCrossBlood.org and enter "MONETT" to schedule an appointment. Donors will receive a \$20 Amazon gift card by email. All presenting donors will also receive a free commemorative St. Louis Cardinals Blood Drive T-shirt while supplies last.

Public Safety Day at Farmer's Market Aug. 18

The Monett Area Farmer's Market will be held on each Saturday in August from 9 a.m. to noon at Glen and Sharon Garrett Pavilion, located at Front Street between 4th and 5th streets.

Publisher's note: Do you have an event coming up? Publish it free in news briefs by emailing: monettmonthly@outlook.com



Three balloons lifted south of the Monett Regional Airport's terminal on July 10 for the first Balloon Glow. Pictured, from left, are Bill Lynch's balloon Citrus, Kiman Kingsley's balloon Juici Fruit, and Jim Ballard's balloon Katnip. Murray Bishoff/Special to the Monett Monthly

Monett Balloon Glow lights up dusk

3 balloonists bring colorful passenger-capable sky ships

BY MURRAY BISHOFF
Special to the Monett Monthly

The Monett Regional Airport hosted its first Balloon Glow on July 10 at sunset, attracting a large crowd and three balloons.

Airport manager Steve Burnett invited friends from the aviation community to share their ballooning skills and equipment. Kiman Kingsley, who runs the Airport Kafé in Miller, veteran aviator Jim Ballard from Neosho, who has been flying for 30 years, and Ballard's younger colleague Bill Lynch, also from Neosho, brought their balloons. As the sun set, they fired up propane torches to warm the air inside their balloons to ready them for flight.

Lynch said his balloon, Katnip, was 77,000 cubic feet in width, or would hold 77,000 basketballs. The amount of propane needed to raise a balloon, he observed, depends on air temperature. Typically, on a summer evening, he would burn between 20-25 gallons of propane to heat the air inside his balloon to 220 degrees to lift off the ground.

Kingsley, set up between his two colleagues, invited some of the crowd to climb into his balloon's gondola for a photo.

Ballard unfortunately burned a hole in the side of his balloon, a first for him, suspending his hopes for a more extended show. He said he would take it to Albuquerque, N.M., for repairs. He and Lynch frequently attend the Balloon Fiesta in Albuquerque.

Monett Fire Chief Brandon Pennington estimated around 2,000 people turned out to see the event. Vehicles lined the inner taxiway west of the airport's southernmost hangar, as well as the grounds east to Hwy. 97 and along the highway.



Monett airport manager Steve Burnett took photos of spectators who climbed aboard Kiman Kingsley's balloon during Balloon Glow on July 10. Murray Bishoff/Special to the Monett Monthly

Council: First reading for vacant building registry

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

A lifelong Monett resident, Camp has served over 25 years with the Monett Police Department.

Camp attended the Missouri Southern State University Law Enforcement Academy where he earned both an Associate of Science in Law Enforcement and a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice from MSSU.

In other business, the council proceeded to address several general maintenance issues ranging from 9-1-1 dispatch to future city planning.

Council approved an intergovernmental agree-

ment to secure 9-1-1 dispatch services from Barry/Lawrence County for fire and police emergency dispatch.

This is an existing arrangement being renewed for continuity. The contract would take effect immediately, as the renewal was set for July 1. The contract allows the Lawrence County portion of Monett to be covered by Barry County 911 for both fire and police services.

SIMCOG representatives were in attendance and presented the draft comprehensive plan, describing it as a community-driven, 20-year roadmap with a pri-

oritization matrix to guide budgeting and implementation.

"I particularly like the prioritization matrix that you all put in there just recently because when we go through and start looking at the budget; that's something we can refer to on what we can and cannot do," said Randy Burke, mayor. "It gives us a road map."

Council invited public review and comment before the second reading and planning-and-zoning hearing the following week.

Burke said that while this is a 20-year plan, there

is room for adjustments over that time as city needs change.

A first reading was done for a proposal to introduce a vacant building registry modeled on Springfield's ordinance but scaled for Monett. This would be a non-voluntary registry limited to properties with code-enforcement concerns.

If approved, the motion would have 365 days to take effect, plus another 365 days to register once the registry is active. This is a longer timeline than the Springfield model. Additionally, the fee would be a fraction of

the Springfield model to fit Monett.

The purpose is to bring vacant spaces into safety compliance and reduce vagrancy and debris issues.

The council also approved a resolution to form a gateway-sign committee to examine a larger welcoming sign at the intersection of Highway 37 and Highway 60.

Regular City Council Meetings are held on the second Thursday of each month at 6 p.m. at the Monett City Annex located at 100 South Maple St., with video available on the city's website the following day.

CORRECTIONS

Monett Monthly corrects factual errors or clarifies information promptly and courteously. If you have a correction or clarification, please email Publisher Kyle Troutman at monettmonthly@outlook.com.

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ABOUT

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LOCAL

Barry County Health Corner

Back-to-school immunizations available

Did you know that immunization programs are considered one of the most important public health achievements in the world? Together with clean water and improved access to health care, immunizations have contributed to most countries' life expectancy.

According to data from the World Health Organization, vaccination campaigns prevent 4 to 5 million deaths annually worldwide. The Barry County Health Department offers all required vaccinations for school on a walk-in basis from Monday through Thursday until 5 p.m.

Most eighth-grade students will require Tdap and meningitis vaccines, seniors will need meningitis vaccines, and kindergartners will need Dtap, Polio, MMR and Varicella vaccines. We offer combination vaccines for students who are previously up to date on their vaccinations.

We also now have a combination vaccination for teens 16 years and older that protects against 5 different bacterial strains of meningitis (A,C,W,Y, and B). These are the most common strains that can be fatal, according to CDC (Centers for Disease Control).

Back to School will be here before you know it, so beat the rush and come in for your vaccinations today. You can do your part in keeping our community healthy by vaccinating yourself and your children against vaccine-preventable diseases.

Publisher's note: This article is courtesy of Barry County Health Department, located at 90 Barry County Drive in Cassville. The Department may be reached at 417-847-2114.



Monett lockers, furniture and clothing are always on display at the Monett Historical Society and Museum.

Jessica Breger/
Special to the Monett Monthly



Browse Monett Schools yearbooks and fashion at the Monett Historical Society and Museum.

Jessica Breger/
Special to the Monett Monthly

Walk down memory lane back to school

Monett Museum hosts display with historic photos, yearbooks, more

BY JESSICA BREGER
Special to the Monett Monthly

Welcome the new school year with a walk down memory lane at the Monett Historical Society and Museum.

Guests at the Museum are encouraged to explore school years past by browsing old photos and

year books and immerse themselves in the past with Monett school displays.

The museum plays host to not only photo displays but artifacts from Monett schools throughout the years.

Guests can see in person the clothing, including school jackets, and tools and supplies used by Montt teachers and students.

Past lockers, uniforms and school house items are on display just past the main room in the museum.

As guests venture to the school displays, they can

see a map displayed on the wall. The map points out where Monett students have moved from over the years adding diversity to the Monett schools.

Aside from the main floor display of school day memorabilia, the museum also hosts a section dedicated to Monett sports.

Guests are invited to peruse old news articles, school photos and school artifacts that take adults back to their school days and show children the similarities and differences between their Monett schools and theMonett schools their parents and

grandparents attended.

From the town's first school building in February 1888 to the establishment of Central School in the early 1890's and the three following high schools, guests can see the growth of education in the town.

The Museum is open five days a week, Tuesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Admission is free.

The Monett Historical Society monthly membership meetings are also open to the public and are held on the third Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. at the Museum.

Visit us online at:
<https://www.cassville-democrat.com/monett-monthly/>

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The purpose of the Commentary page is to provide a forum of various opinions, and we highly encourage letters to the editor. The opinions of columnists are not necessarily shared by *Monett Monthly* or its staff. If you have an opinion, send a letter to Kyle Troutman, Monett Monthly, P.O. Box 486, Cassville, MO 65625, email kttroutman@cassville-democrat.com or scan the QR code to the right to submit a letter online.





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Local Death Notices

Mark “Tony” Anthony Kelley • Monett • Aug. 5, 1957 – June 21, 2026

Carl Larry Barker • Monett • April 22, 1937 – July 1, 2026

Eldred Holle • Monett • Dec. 1, 1932 – July 6, 2026

Marion Bernadette Dohmen • Monett • Aug 15, 1933 – July 7, 2026

Claud E. Hutchings • Joplin • Feb. 26, 1929 – July 9, 2026

Jack T. Smith • Monett • Sept. 4, 1945 – July 9, 2026

Leona W. Pascale • Monett • Feb. 5, 1939 – July 9, 2026

Robert W. Stribling • Monett • July 2, 1932 – July 11, 2026

Catherine Gail Gunter • Monett • July 24, 1962 – July 11, 2026

Dr. Thomas McClure • Monett • Feb. 11, 1929 – July 13, 2026

Sylvester Layne • Springfield • Dec. 5, 1989 – July 15, 2026

Timothies Lee Hoffman • Granby • Aug. 10, 1951 – July 17, 2026

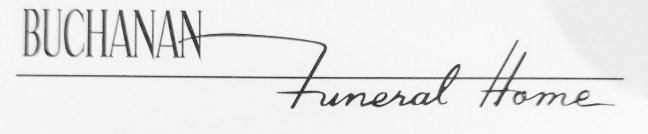
Don Gates • Aurora • Dec. 5, 1936 – July 24, 2026

Alvah “Al” Cassity • Purdy • July 13, 1944 – July 25, 2026

Annie Sperandio • Kremmling, Colo. • March 4, 1978 – July 26, 2026

Jerry Gaines • Monett • May 14, 1950 – July 26, 2026

Judy Guthrie • Columbia • Jan. 2, 1947 – July 29, 2026



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Here is the historic photo of leading Monett citizens, believed to be exploring the cave connected to the quarry at what is now Monett's South Park. Contributed photo

Caves: Plans to investigate with ERT and GPR

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Facebook page presently has 808 followers. Elisabeth Hilton, who wrote the book “Beneath Missouri” about caves, also offered comments.

Stories about the caves are legion. The presentation focused on the South Park cave as potentially accessible. Randall admitted no eyewitnesses remain. Some, like self-styled historian Roy Howerton, said the cave was “nothing.” Others, Randall said, described “10-foot dropoffs that descended down a couple hundred feet at a 45-degree angle.” He showed a 1909 article from the Monett Star newspaper with a description of the “rock quarry cave.”

An undated photo, believed to have been taken between 1905 and 1909, showed Monett Times publisher D.A. Peters, pharmacist Logan McKee, and others identified as Will Dennis, Homer Counts and Fred King, exploring with a candle. These were leading citizens of the day, placing the legitimacy of the existence of the cave in their hands.

Other stories cited included William Bolton from 1941, retelling an event from his youth when he entered the cave, had his candle blown out, and only found his way out with the help of an Eveready-powered flashlight. Eveready used his letter in a national promotion. One audience member recounted stories shared by Monett's Ford dealer, Les



Pictured are the presenters at the Monett Historical Society on Monett's caves. From left: Author Elizabeth Hilton, Mike Randall, Robert Painter, City Commissioner Darren Indovina (at front) and Rusty Morris, at far right. Murray Bishoff/Special to the Monett Monthly

Mason, in his later years, vividly describing exploring the park cave as a Boy Scout with a Rev. Trotter.

While archeologist Lee Adams omitted Monett's caves as locations of habitation by prehistoric settlers, Rex Mourglia commented he had found artifacts such as arrowheads in the adjacent creek bed. The farmer who plowed the nearby field, now part of the Windmill Ridge golf course, reported finding many similar stone artifacts over the years.

The most fantastic stories, long in circulation, described Logan McKee taking a boat into a cave and emerging somewhere east of Pierce City at a distance of several miles. It was noted that this story possibly conflates the downtown cave, known for holding water, with the park cave, which is not known for having a water source, though some

have suggested a spring that originally filled the city park lake proves the cave had water. The water tower built in 1938 in the park, it was noted, had no well but was constructed as storage to fill the adjacent city swimming pool.

The park cave, as the city dump, is believed to hold the remnants of Logan McKee's famous DeChenne airplane. Rod Anderson, a friend of the V.B. Hall family, recounted how Hall kept McKee's plane hanging in the produce broker's warehouse for years until the Hall's youngest son, Ben, became old enough to gain an interest in aviation. At that point, Mrs. Hall told her husband to dispose of the plane, and it is believed to have ended up in the dump.

Morris offered photos showing school groups and families congregating

near the quarry for picnics. Another spoke of finding tin cans and other debris in 1951, as a boy, near the dump entrance.

Hilton observed Missouri has 7,900 caves and listed the state's 10 major caves considered major tourist attractions. She noted caves with sightless fish reflect pure water, whereas the lake under downtown Monett was abandoned as a water source when sewage from surface outhouses penetrated into it, threatening a typhoid outbreak.

City Commissioner Darren Indovina said the city would like to know more about what Monett's caves have to offer.

“This is just the beginning,” Randall said. “Our vision is we hope to investigate with ERT [electrical resistivity tomography] and GPR [ground penetrating radar]. We want to go at it responsibly. We hope to map the cave system and create partnerships. We're hoping to form a 501(c)3 [not-for-profit corporation] for this.”

“I think we have an opportunity to put another star on the map for Monett,” Anderson added.

Monett Historical Society President Jeanne Ann Camp invited the presenters to return for another round at a future date. Their program attracted around 100 visitors for the evening. The society will hold its next membership meeting on Tuesday, Aug. 18.



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Sooter Scoops proving to be teacher fave at Monett School District

Monthly treats open lines of communication, collaboration

BY MELONIE ROBERTS
Special to the Monett Monthly
Isaac Sooter, assistant superintendent of curriculum at Monett School District, introduced board members to a teacher favorite — Sooter Scoops — ice cream treats dispensed monthly among educators as he and instructors have a casual visit concerning educational methodologies that seem to be successful among students, and discuss ways to improve student success.
The frozen delicacies, from Dairy Queen, are incentives to listen, connect and celebrate achievements by teachers as they communicate strategies that seem to be working well.
“We do this monthly to connect with all the teach-

ers,” Sooter said. “Last year we bought 500 [treats], and I think I gained about 12 pounds after they were all finished.”
The strategy seems to be working well, as educators praised strong grade level teams, collaboration and team planning and supportive colleagues among the district’s assets.
A list of teacher needs, as compiled through feedback that was organized by Sooter and Board Secretary Ana Espinoza, found more time needed as a critical concern, one that was supported by Sooter.
“Every minute of their day is structured,” he said.
Other concerns included more instructional support, more opportunities to learn from each other, protocols for stronger student accountability, consistent expectations and, “more food and ice cream,” Sooter laughed.
Sooter also noted that a program of teacher recognition had been implemented.

“We are finding ways to recognize teachers monthly,” he said.
Among the several recognition methods were Cubbies of the Month, Excellence Award Winners and Teacher of the Year.
Test scores and other data are showing the success of the first year trial.
“We had a 63.1 percent qualifying score on college and career ready assessments,” Sooter said.
With a goal of 71.5 percent, Sooter indicated the district was making progress.
“We have 55.6 percent of graduates receiving advanced credits, and a 90.6 percent attendance rate,” he said. “We also have the Highest STAR reading and math proficiency scores to date.”
Sooter said four questions he had asked educators in previous discussions were: What was working for students? What do students struggle with most? What gets in the way of your best work? and What would

you change?
Instructors identified student motivation, academic stamina, self-regulation, technology distractions and transition readiness as identified areas where students seem to struggle.
Overall, he said, the first year of the newly implemented program proved the “direction was right, and execution is the next step.”
“Thank you for listening to the voice of the teachers,” said Ken Gaspar, board president.
In other board business, members heard facility and grounds updates, with Superintendent Mark Drake detailing ongoing concerns with the air conditioning units at Monett Middle School.
“We’ve been trying to get them corrected for three years,” he said. “So far, we are over six figures, over \$100,000, in labor costs. The parts have all been under warranty.”
Drake also noted improvements at Monett

Early Childhood Center (MECC) including new cabinets in the teachers lounge, replacement of damaged flooring, electrical rewiring in three classrooms, and painting at both Monett High School and Monett Elementary School campuses.
In addition, Drake informed board members of unexpected costs connected with a parking lot located just south of the administrative offices at 710 Ninth Street.
“We’ve had to have the parking lot mediated,” he said. “It was an additional \$13,000 to compact the soil,” because the ground did not meet construction standards. We still have two weeks before teachers arrive to continue progress on these projects.”
Board members approved other program evaluations, including the board’s professional development plan, the assessment plan, the literacy plan, and the board governance plan which outlines the Comprehensive

School Improvement Plan (CSIP).
Contracts approved at the meeting included Jennifer Garner, pediatric therapy services; Carrie Zahn, speech pathologist; Cronin Communications; LL Vision Services; and Compass Therapy Solutions.
Other agenda business included approval of student handbooks, GO CAPS sending school contracts, and memos of understanding from GO CAPS Historical Society and Southwest Research Center.
Important upcoming dates include: Aug. 17, Opening meeting for all staff from 9 to 11 a.m. at the Performing Arts Center; Aug. 20, board meeting and facilities walkthrough; Aug. 25, first day of classes; Aug. 26, the annual board retreat; Sept. 8, the Missouri School Boards Association Regional meeting in McDonald County; and Sept. 17, the monthly School Board meeting.



Monett's Brayden Seitz finds running room in a contest against Strafford last season. MSL Photography/Special to the Monett Monthly



Monett's Gianna Cavnar connects on a pitch during action against Nevada last season. MSL Photography/Special to the Monett Monthly

Softball: Strong, experienced returners

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

positions remain open to competition among several athletic newcomers.
George expects Velten to headline the team's leadership group, but she also anticipates others emerging as the season progresses.
“I’ve seen a lot of improvement from all of our players,” George said. “Their growth has been evident in footwork, fundamentals and their approach at the plate. They’ve put in a lot of work to become more confident and consistent players.”
That continued development will be critical for a team blending returning experience with a large group of underclassmen.
George believes Monett’s willingness to compete and improve every day will become its greatest strength.
“We have some strong returning players who bring experience, along with a lot of young talent that adds energy and athleticism,” she said. “Our ability to work together and support one another will be a major strength

throughout the season.”
With so many young players stepping into expanded roles, consistency and experience remain areas the Lady Cubs must develop.
“We’ll need to continue improving our fundamentals, understanding the game at a higher level and learning how to handle different situations throughout the season,” George said.
Above all, George hopes her team establishes an identity built on effort, resilience and teamwork.
“I want this team to be known for competing, working hard and playing for each other,” she

said. “We may be young, but we want to be a team that shows up every day ready to get better, supports our teammates and never backs down from a challenge.”
While Monett’s youth may bring growing pains early, George believes the Lady Cubs possess the talent and attitude to improve throughout the season. If that development comes as expected, Monett could become a dangerous team by the time postseason play arrives.
The Lady Cubs open the season on Sept. 1 at Marshfield. Monett’s home opener is slated for Sept. 8 against Seneca.

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Football: Season opens at Cassville

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

together this off-season and started to communicate and care about one another.”
He also praised the team’s commitment away from the football field.
“The amount of community service they have put in here in Monett has been remarkable, and they truly want to make Monett proud this fall.”
Mauk added that competition remains fierce throughout the roster.
“We are going to play as fast as we possibly can and get as many kids on the field as possible,” he said. “Every position is open this fall, and our kids are all pushing each other to reach their full potential.”
The senior class has echoed that message throughout the offseason.
Washick said the team’s

focus has been restoring Monett football’s tradition.
“We have been working hard to take the next step towards restoring the tradition and excellence of Monett Football,” he said.
Nestleroad praised the senior leadership, while Rivera said the team has embraced the history of the program.
“Our team has studied the legends of Monett past, and we look to carry on the tradition and restore the excellence that is Monett Football this year,” Rivera said.
Kelton Carr offered perhaps the simplest message of all.
“This is our time,” he said.
True to Big 8 tradition, the Cubs won’t have much time to ease into the season.
Monett opens Aug.

28 with a road trip to Cassville before hosting Mt. Vernon the following week. The Cubs also face conference powers Seneca and Lamar later in the schedule. Mauk said his team isn’t looking beyond Week 1.
“Our first game is at Cassville, so that is our biggest game right now,” He said.
With an experienced quarterback, veteran playmakers, and a senior class determined to restore one of southwest Missouri’s proud football traditions, expectations are rising in Monett.
If the Cubs can pair last season’s explosive offense with improvement on defense, Mauk’s third season could mark another significant step forward in the program’s resurgence.

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LOCAL

Reed to give service



Porter Reed, Monett, son of Jim and Mary Reed, will be serving for two years in the Philippines Tacloban Mission for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, beginning in August. Reed graduated from Monett High School in 2025, where he participated in football, wrestling and powerlifting. Speaking to the Monett Young Single Adult Branch, Reed was happy to be there. He had just moved back into his home from Springfield, where he had been on his own for a year. Being on his own taught Reed to value his home and the teachings of his parents. He was looking forward to serving a mission because, “Everything Heavenly Father does is out of love.” Contributed photo

Vanderpool returns from serving



Allyson Vanderpool, granddaughter of Teresa and Kevin Lucas, Monett, recently returned from serving 18 months in the California Arcadia Mission for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Vanderpool graduated from Logan-Rogersville High School in 2021, where she participated in choir. After she graduated, she and her grandparents moved to Monett for better work opportunities. Allyson loves to read and crochet. She plans on attending Brigham Young University – Idaho Campus, where she will major in Special Education. When asked how she came closer to Jesus Christ on her mission, Vanderpool said, “I was able to lean on Jesus Christ rather than on the world.” Contributed photo



A panel focusing on the political roots of unregulated pollution and industrialization at the Monett meeting were, from left: Rebecca Collins with the Joplin Sustainable Technology Alliance, Maxine Gill with the Missouri Coalition for the Environment, and attorney Steve Jeffery. Murray Bishoff/Special to the Monett Monthly



A view of the room during the meeting on CAFOs, data centers, and sludge held July 19 at the Scott Technology Center in Monett. Barry County Presiding Commissioner Steve Blankenship and Lawrence County Presiding Commissioner Bob Senninger are seated at front center. Murray Bishoff/Special to the Monett Monthly

CAFOs: Calls to repeal Senate Bill 392 and House Bill 1713 draw applause

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

approved by the Missouri Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The proposed poultry operation supporting 1.3 million birds, according to research, would require the use of 25 million gallons of water and significantly impact landowners for many miles.

“Water is our primary interest,” Heidlage said. “Extraction of our resources is why we’re here. Water is what unites us. Our land is the legacy we plan to leave to our children. Existing regulations do not protect it. We should leave this land better than we found it.” Several speakers pointed to action by the Missouri

General Assembly in 2019 as the immediate cause for the current struggle. Senate Bill 391 and House Bill 1713 had the effect of both removing local control over the use of land plus replacing commissioners on the Missouri Clean Water Commission, which oversees DNR. This meant counties and

municipalities could not pass agriculture-focused ordinances that regulated issues such as setbacks between properties, control over water bodies, and the land application of waste. As Maxine Gill with the Missouri Coalition for the Environment noted, the Clean Water Commission oversees sludge and industrial agriculture operations. Gill claimed the commission has been “captured by industrial agriculture. Even public interest seats have been taken over. They want to protect the bottom line of industrial agriculture.”

Unregulated pollution
Sources of concern surfaced in the discussion. Sheila Harris, a reporter with the Monett Monthly, reviewed her coverage of permitted plans to build sludge storage tanks northwest of Cassville. Harris noted the sludge planned is “raw meat processing parts” that are “thrown onto fields.” Such a source, she said, is “a vector for disease and odor.”

Moreover, she noted the recharge area for Roaring River has been traced to more than 47 square miles. Such a practice could not only endanger drinking water but also threaten the integrity of Barry County’s recreation and tourist industry.

Harris further recounted how C&H Hog Farms was shut down by Arkansas officials, but contracted to bring its waste material to Missouri. Citizens sued DNR and waste contracting companies, prompting a change in legislation. Harris noted Missouri laws only apply to surface distribution of waste material. The karst topography in southwest Missouri, with fractures in the bedrock, allows land-applied substances to seep into the underground water table, which is not protected by law.

Harris and Kim Prince, speaking for POWER in Newton County, pointed out that Iowa is No. 2 in the nation for cancer rates. A recent study by the IEC-Harkin Institute credited the cancer rate to water nitrite contamination due to fertilizers in particular, a disbursement that accesses drinking water. Prince added that a Class 2 poultry farm can receive a per-

mit from DNR without any notification to neighbors, leaving those nearby “helpless.”

Steve Jeffery, an environmental attorney with the Jeffery Law Firm in Chesterfield, noted that DNR will not regulate Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), commonly known as “forever chemicals,” nor does the agency monitor for the presence of veterinary medicine in waste material from farms. Both seep into the water table and risk widespread contamination of public water sources.

Land value concerns
Richard Jones, a rancher and realtor from Sarcoxie, pulled statistics from the construction of data centers in Virginia, Oregon, Arizona, and Illinois. He found the closer a property is located to a data center, the greater the impact on property values. While land purchased by data centers sells for 20% above normal prices, land within three miles of a data center drops in value by 20%.

Susie Crutchfield, with the Socially Responsible Agriculture Project, identified herself as a contract poultry grower for Tyson Foods for 25 years. She was among the growers impacted by “integrators” who dictate terms to growers. The integrators, since 2012, have systematically demanded growers undertake “massive” upgrades. Her husband calculated that he would not be able to pay off the debt to upgrade until he was 80, so the Crutchfields withdrew.

The integrator “has all the control,” she continued, extending to “the meat factory industry.” The upgrade would have boosted her monthly electric bill three to four times. She asserted integrators have pushed to shut down older farms that have a lower paper value so that they can build newer farms with a greater portfolio value. Crutchfield also related that flushing water lines as instructed with iodine for 17 years resulted in her contracting thyroid cancer. She is now cancer-free, but was never warned about the danger.

Strategies for change
Several strategies were suggested for fighting these issues.

Rebecca Collins, with

the Joplin Sustainable Technology Alliance, said companies come to towns with business proposals and are told, “You must accept unregulated growth or nothing. We don’t have to accept that.” A Community Benefit Agreement, dictating standards for businesses to meet, including local employment and regulation, can be pursued.

Attorney Steve Jeffery pointed out a “common playbook” by data centers involves promises of benefits to the community at the price of governments signing non-disclosure agreements. “Big city lawyers overwhelm rural county commissioners by promising big money,” Jeffery said. Governments should refuse. In Festus, he noted, the public recently voted out four city council members for their involvement in a data center deal and is now going after others.

“If I could be blunt, the reason DNR does a crappy job is because people like to do the right thing, but are told not to because of policy makers,” Jeffery said. “In 2009-2010, people lost the right to file nuisance suits. The Republican super-majority caused it. If you continue to vote red in every election cycle, this is on you, unless you want to vote against your own self-interest. The power in Jefferson City is from the lobbyists all up and down High Street. The solution to all these problems is political. The person who looks back at you from the mirror is the one who can cause change. It starts with you.”

Jamie Blair, with the Missouri Rural Crisis Center, injected that some Republicans have been good allies. “Sometimes all they need is political cover.” Several added that showing up for hearings, talking to legislators, and presenting a unified front has an impact on lawmakers.

Kim Prince’s call to repeal Senate Bill 391 and House Bill 1713 drew applause.

Heidlage wrapped up the program by noting, “Lasting change happens whenever we all work together. We want change and we want it today. We are the Show-Me State. Show us we care. Together we can all make a difference.”

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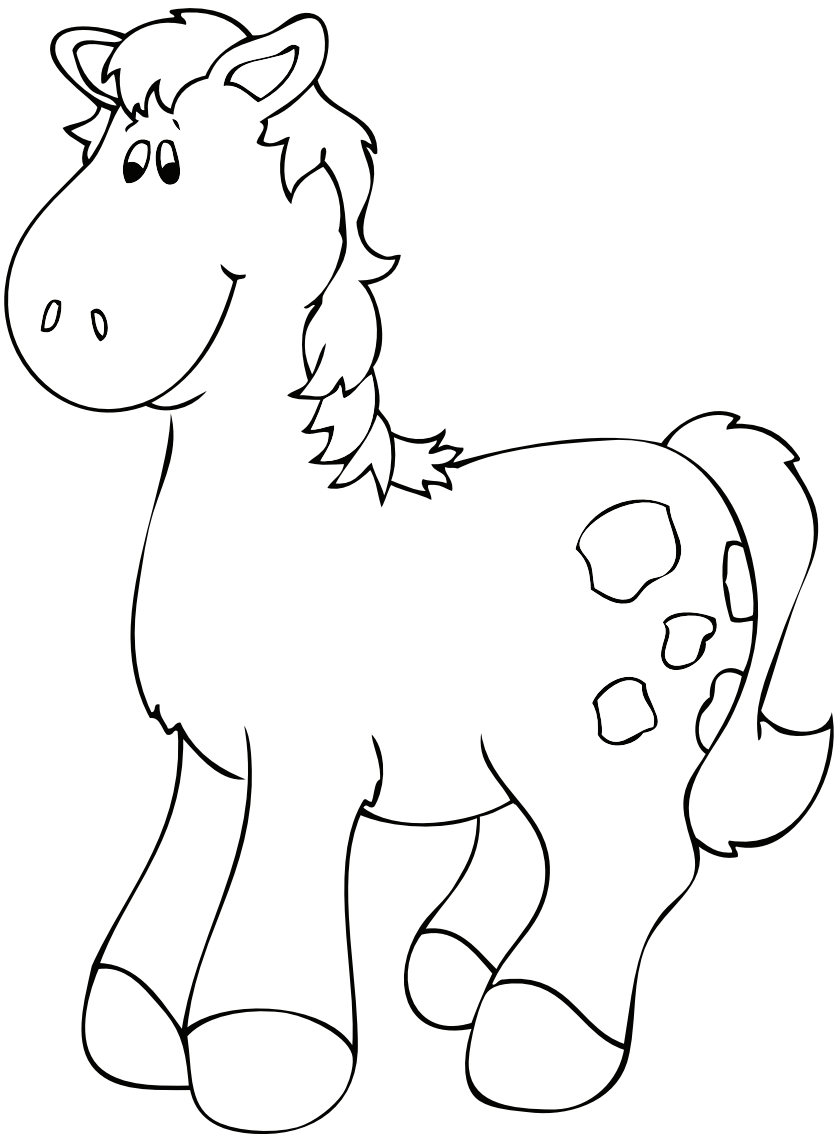
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Q: What do you call someone who is afraid of Santa?
A: Claustrophobic.



JUST kidding

Q: What sound do porcupines make when they kiss?
A: Ouch!



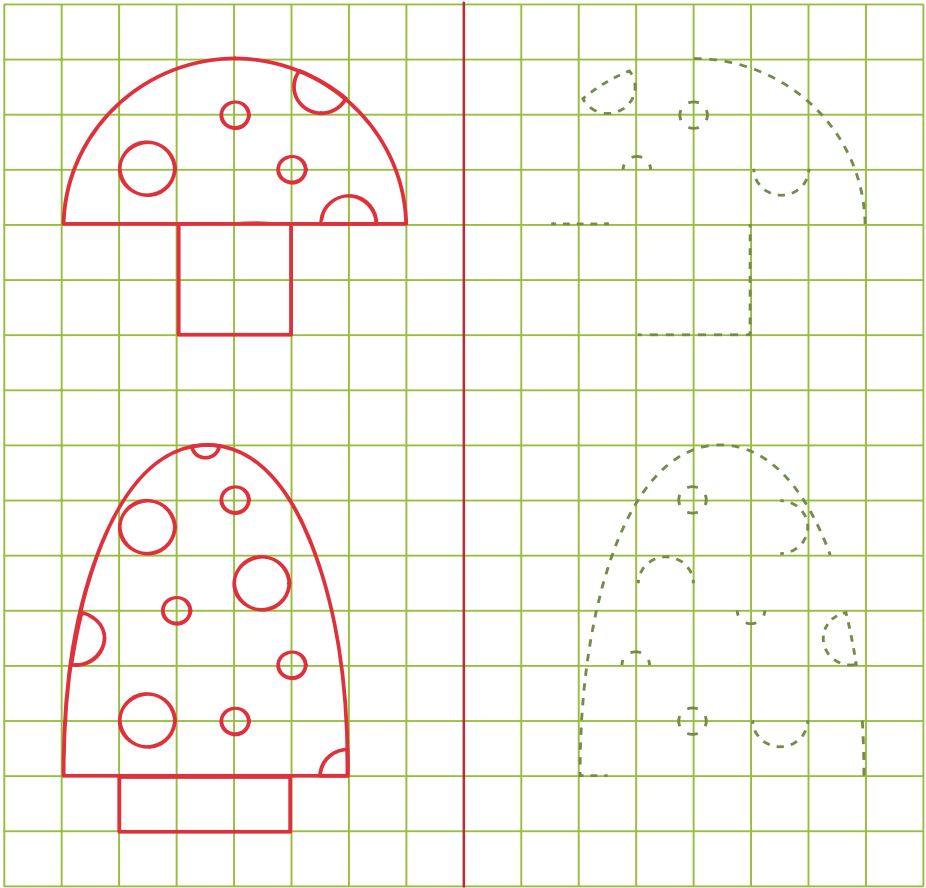
JUST kidding

Q: Why was the guy looking for fast food on his friend?
A: Because his friend said "Dinner is on me."



MIRROR IMAGE

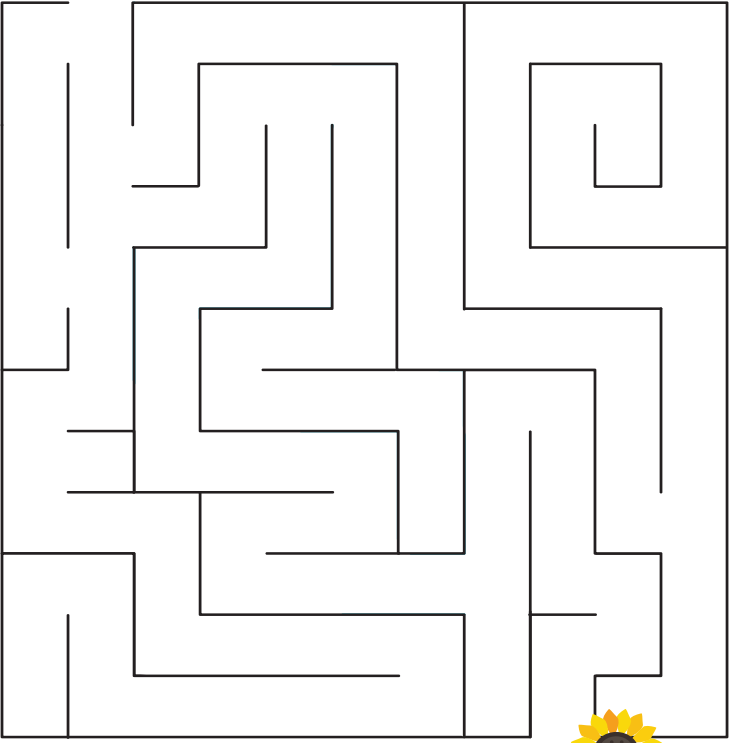
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Freedom rings in Monett



A foam cannon was introduced as a new tool to pump up the fun for children at the splash pad by Monett's Downtown Pavilion on July 4. Murray Bishoff/Special to the Monett Monthly



Headline artist Kenny Ray Horton performed at Monett's July 4 celebration. Murray Bishoff/Special to the Monett Monthly



Monett Police Sgt. Paul Ferguson sang the National Anthem to begin the fireworks on July 4 in Monett. Murray Bishoff/Special to the Monett Monthly



The main field of Monett's South Park filled with revelers as the evening progressed on July 4. Murray Bishoff/Special to the Monett Monthly



Beretta Coward, 8, of Monett, climbed the rock wall, one of many attractions for kids of Monett's July 4 celebration at South Park. Murray Bishoff/Special to the Monett Monthly



Monett Main Street held downtown activities on the morning of July 4. The Farmer's Market in the Downtown Pavilion was especially busy not only with shoppers but also with participants in the Pancakes for Parkinson's fundraiser. Live music by the duo Royal Heliions also enhanced the gathering. Murray Bishoff/Special to the Monett Monthly



David Compton, Monett emergency management coordinator, showed off the new command truck, part of the Monett Fire Department's fleet, that will become a regular part of the response to emergencies wherever crews work. Compton pointed to the map of the park, broken into zones, showing where police and firefighters were assigned for the day. Murray Bishoff/Special to the Monett Monthly



Monett Main Street offered a car show as part of its July 4 morning activities, set up between Fourth and Fifth streets on Broadway. Murray Bishoff/Special to the Monett Monthly



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LOCAL



Fireworks provided by Display Pyrotechnics of Joplin concluded Monett's July 4 event. Dalton Burton will be the shooter. Murray Bishoff/Special to the Monett Monthly



Fireworks provided by Display Pyrotechnics of Joplin concluded Monett's July 4 event. Dalton Burton will be the shooter. Murray Bishoff/Special to the Monett Monthly



The Monett Area Chamber of Commerce's tent at Monett's July 4 event stayed very busy selling wristbands for kids to play on the bounce house attractions. Murray Bishoff/Special to the Monett Monthly



Monett's July 4 celebration is widely known and attracts people from across southwest Missouri. From left, Bonnie, Joey, and Jerry Medina, all of Springfield, made the hour-long trip to enjoy the festivities. Murray Bishoff/Special to the Monett Monthly

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Waldensian Church hosts ice cream social



On June 25, the Waldensian Presbyterian Church in Monett hosted its annual ice cream social on the grounds of the church, south of Monett. A break in rainy weather offered perfect conditions for the popular event, drawing crowds for the hamburgers, Sloppy Joe's, and homemade ice cream. There was no live music this year, but the audience did not mind, having more opportunities to chat and enjoy the evening. Murray Bishoff/Special to the Monett Monthly

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Important Dates

Open House Dates		
MECC	Aug. 20	4:00-6:00 pm
MES	Aug. 20	5:00-7:00 pm
MIS	Aug. 20	4:30-6:30 pm
MMS	Aug. 18	6:00-7:30 pm
MHS	Aug. 18	6:00 -7:30 pm
MRLC	Aug. 18	4:00-6:00 pm

Schedule & Device Pick-Up		
MMS	Aug. 10-12	10:00-2:00 pm
MHS	Aug. 4-5	8:30-11:30 am & 12:30-2:30 pm

Athletic Meetings		
MMS	Aug. 10	6:00 pm - MMS Gym
MHS	Aug. 3	6:00 pm - PAC

FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL
Tuesday, August 25, 2026

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The shield is a symbol of **achievement, tradition, legacy, and safety**, representing the values that define our schools and our community. It joins our beloved Cub Bear as part of our district family, bringing a polished and unified look across all campuses.

Monett Schools Shield

As our district continues to grow, it is important that our visual identity reflects who we are today. The Monett Schools shield helps unify our campuses under one look while honoring our history, our values, and our commitment to excellence.

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The Cub Bear remains an important part of who we are. The shield works alongside our existing symbols to bring a more polished, professional, and consistent look to Monett Schools.

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