



<<< CUBS LEARNING MORE THAN A GAME

Mauk building Cubs program around life after football. — PAGE 3

MONETT



Monthly

OCTOBER 7, 2026 | FACEBOOK.COM/MONETTMONTHLY

STORAGE TANKS

What: Leak at gas station in Monett
Impact: Possible groundwater contamination
More: Case at convenience store at Hilltop three decades ago revisited

Rapid Roberts reports fuel release

Fuel tanks have been in the ground since mid-1980s

BY SHEILA HARRIS

sheilaharrisads@gmail.com

The DNR is overseeing an active investigation in Monett after a release of approximately 50-gallons of premium, unleaded gasoline at Rapid Roberts prompted a call to the DNR's Environmental Emergency Response (EER) Spill Line on June 17.

According to the EER's Incident Report, gasoline was discovered coming up in cracks at the edges of the parking lot after traveling below the concrete from Dispenser One. Bobbi Koepke, with Environmental Works in Springfield (a contractor for Rapid Roberts), was onsite when the release was discovered, and shut off the fuel line before placing a call to the EER.

Steve Makoski, Director of Compliance for Rapid Roberts' corporate headquarters in Springfield, said that a [distribution] line to one of the gas dispensers appeared to be the source of the fuel release.

"Before we started any excavation work to discover the source of the release, we alerted nearby neighbors and drilled monitoring wells to determine whether gasoline had impacted the groundwater," Makoski said.

Makoski said that the two, 10,000-gallon fuel tanks at the convenience store had been in the ground since the mid-1980s, but they didn't appear to be leaking.

According to industry sources, the average lifespan of many of the underground fuel storage tanks (USTs) used before 1988 is 30 years.

"With the cathodic protection we use, tanks can last as long as 40 or 50 years," Makoski said.

Cathodic protection (CP) involves creating a protective shield for steel tanks using energized ions, Makoski said.

Angela Oravetz, Environmental Program Manager for the DNR's Environmental Remediation Program, states that there is contamination in the ground at the Rapid Roberts site.

"Water sampling is occurring at the facility as well as at sur-

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9/11 CEREMONY RECALLS FIRST RESPONDERS



A color guard from the Scott Technology Center's JROTC unit presented colors for the 9/11 memorial service at the Freedom Silo on Sept. 11. Kyle Troutman/ktroutman@cassville-democrat.com

Special bell rings in memory of those lost on Sept. 11, 2001

BY MURRAY BISHOFF

Special to the Monett Monthly

An early morning program in remembrance of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks was held on Sept. 11 next to the Freedom Silo, hosted by the Monett Area Chamber of Commerce.

The event had a color guard from the Scott Regional Technology Center and participation by city officials and the Monett Fire and Police Departments. Cheryl Caraway, the executive director of the Monett Chamber, offered welcome comments. The color guard presented the US flag and Sgt. Paul Ferguson sang the National Anthem. The audience of around 50 faced the flags and recited the

Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Randy Burke, a retired Naval commander, served as one of two speakers. Burke noted occasions such as the assassination of President John F. Kennedy and the landing on the moon immediately bring to mind where a person was at the time. Sept. 11, 2001, was another such event. He noted he lost a schoolmate on the 88th floor of one of the Twin Towers that day, and another friend from the Naval Academy at the Pentagon.

Recalling how the first responders put themselves in danger trying to help people, like members of the military running toward the guns, Burke observed, "Freedom is not free. This is for all those we

lost. This is a day for remembrance and what we stand for."

Capt. Clell Maples, with the Monett Fire Department, then spoke about the national reaction to the attacks.

"Many of us are angered, many are saddened, many want revenge, and many want answers," Maples said. "Three hundred forty-three firefighters and 60 police officers that went there trying to save a life no matter the cost plus the thousands of folks just going to work that day, plus the 40 that decided enough was enough and brought Flight 93 down, perished. The problem is if all of those things were

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LIBERTY UTILITIES

What: Has submitted large-load plan to Missouri Public Service Commission
Company: Provides electricity to residents in northern Barry County, including Purdy and Monett
More: MCE said data center developers can work around the PSC's large-load descriptions by building multiple faller facilities

Liberty Utilities submits large load plan

MCE: Developers can work around the PSC's large load descriptions

BY SHEILA HARRIS

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The Empire District Electric Company, doing business as Liberty Utilities and headquartered in Joplin, is requesting approval from the Missouri Public Service Commission (PSC) for a large load customer rate plan and associated tariffs, the PSC announced in a Sept. 17 press release.

Locally, Liberty Utilities provides electricity to residents in northern Barry County, including Purdy and Monett.

According to the PSC, Senate Bill 4 (passed by the Missouri General Assembly and signed into

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Monett caves again spotlighted

Technology to explore underground shared in discussion

BY MURRAY BISHOFF

Special to the Monett Monthly

A second program on Monett's caves offered technical information on exploration as enthusiasts pondered how to access and penetrate the legends of subterranean Monett.

Mike Randall, Robert Painter and Rusty Morris returned to the Monett Museum for more conversation at the Sept. 15 membership meeting of the Monett Historical Society. This time Randall had Dr. Katherine Grote, an associate professor in geological engineering at Missouri University of Science and Technology in Rolla, on a Zoom connection to offer information on ground penetrating radar as well as electrical

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JARED LANKFORD

The elephant on the football field

There is an old Indian fable about blind men encountering an elephant.
Unable to see the animal, each man is allowed to touch it in an attempt to determine what an elephant looks like.
The first places his hand against the elephant's side and declares the animal is like a wall.
The second touches a tusk and insists the first man is wrong. An elephant, he says, is clearly like a spear.
Another grabs the trunk and says both men are mistaken because the animal is obviously like a snake.
The last takes hold of the tail and concludes the elephant is like a rope.
Each man experienced part of the elephant. Each was convinced he understood the whole animal.
And they spent the rest of the day arguing about who was right.
The moral isn't difficult to understand.
Too often, we rush to judgment with only part of the story. We grab hold of one piece of information, convince ourselves we understand the entire situation and then attack anyone holding a different part of the elephant.
That brings us to Aurora football.
In September, a situation unfolded that captured the attention of teams across the Big 8 Conference and threatened to derail the football season at Aurora, a program that has played the sport for more than 100 years and is a charter member of the conference.
The Houn' Dawgs entered the 2026 season with serious roster questions.
Aurora had its fourth head coach in five seasons, and more than a few athletes who participated in summer workouts ultimately opted not to play.
At a Class 3 school, coaches generally want at least 10 players per grade level, with 15 or more providing considerably more roster stability.
Aurora opened Week 1 with fewer than 40 players on its eligibility roster.
Inevitably, injuries and attrition took their toll. By the Monday following a Week 3 loss to Mt. Vernon, the school said the number of available players had dwindled to just 15.
Aurora was facing a crisis.
According to a source who was present, junior and senior players turned in their pads that Monday, and the administration was preparing to cancel the remainder of the season.
A meeting with parents later that day produced a different outcome. According to sources, an agreement was reached that players would return if a coaching change was made.
The district relieved head coach Dalton Hill of his football coaching duties and promoted assistant Broc Wolfe to serve as interim head coach.
Aurora canceled its Week 4 game against Nevada and later hosted a "Fight for Friday" event designed to rally community support around the program.
According to the district, the roster subsequently climbed back to 49 players.
Then came Facebook.
Everyone seemed to have an explanation for what happened and who was responsible.
But, just like the blind men, everyone seemed to be holding a different part of the elephant.
Some parents placed the blame squarely on the head coach, alleging mistreatment of players and criticizing the way practices were conducted.
Those are serious allegations.
But they also raise serious questions.
If the alleged conduct was severe enough to warrant removing the head coach, what responsibility belonged to the assistant coaches who were present? What responsibility belonged to administrators charged with overseeing the program and protecting the welfare of student-athletes?
Those questions deserve answers.
There is another uncomfortable question.
Parents publicly took credit for helping force the coaching change. If that perception is accurate, where does that leave the administration?
And what prospective coach looks at Aurora now without wondering who ultimately controls the fate of the person holding that job?
Others place the blame on parents — complaints about play calling, playing time or how

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BEYOND THE HASHES



Monett's Carson Nestleroad makes a catch during a contest against Mt. Vernon this season. MSL Photography/Special to the Monett Monthly

Mauk building Cubs program around life after football

BY JARED LANKFORD
monettsports@gmail.com

Wins matter. Yards matter.
Touchdowns matter.
But for Monett Head Football Coach Ben Mauk, the real measure of the Cubs' program may not be found on a scoreboard.
It may not even be known for another 10 or 20 years.
Mauk is working to rebuild a culture at Monett where football provides players with more than a place to spend their Friday nights. The goal is to give them structure, relationships and lessons they can carry long after they have played their final down.
"We want to win football games, but at the same time, we know that you're not going to play football forever," Mauk said. "I think what you're going to see in the next 10 to 15 to 20 years is the success that these guys have after high school and



Monett's Braden Crowell makes a tackle in a road game against Knob Noster this season. MSL Photography/Special to the Monett Monthly

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Lady Cubs continue to chip away

Monett shows improvement despite 11-1 setback to McDonald County

BY JARED LANKFORD
monettsports@gmail.com

The final score may not have shown it, but Monett softball coach Kaesha George saw signs of progress from her Lady Cubs.
McDonald County collected 15 hits and extended its winning streak to seven games with an 11-1 victory over Monett on Sept. 22, but George said the Lady Cubs played several solid innings against a potent Lady Mustang lineup.
"We're trying to focus on the positives here," George

said. "I thought that they put at least four good innings up there. I think I would even maybe give them five. Only two errors is a huge positive that I want to take away from this game."
McDonald County finished with 11 runs on 15 hits and no errors, while Monett scored one run on four hits and committed two errors.
Dakota O'Brien earned the win in the circle for McDonald County, while Kyra Garner took the loss for Monett.
The Lady Cubs had opportunities to put pressure on McDonald County early, including loading the bases with two outs in the first inning, but could not produce the timely hit.

Monett later put two runners aboard with one out but again came away without a big inning.
Those missed opportunities highlighted an area George wants to see improve as the Lady Cubs move closer to district play — competitive at-bats.
"A big thing that we just talked about is competitive at-bats," George said. "Just stepping in the box, having an approach and being competitive."
George specifically pointed to called third strikes with runners aboard as something Monett cannot afford.
"The backwards K's with bases loaded, I think we had two with runners on tonight, and that just really hurts us,"

George said. "If you strike out looking the first at-bat, we're making an adjustment for the next at-bat and we're ready to go."
McDonald County also made adjustments as the game progressed. George said the Lady Mustangs became increasingly comfortable after seeing Monett's pitching multiple times through the lineup.
"I knew third, fourth time they're seeing the same pitcher, the ball is going to look a lot bigger to them," George said. "They're just making adjustments like we should be making adjustments, too."
For Monett, the challenge is putting together a com-

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NEWS BRIEFS

Bingo at Senior Center Oct. 9

The Monett Senior Center, in partnership with Access Family Care, will host free Bingo on Friday, Oct. 9, from noon to 12:30 p.m. The Center is located at 405 Dairy Street in Monett.

First Responder Citizens Appreciation Night on Oct. 10

The Monett First Responders Citizens Appreciation Night will be held on Saturday, Oct. 10 from 6-8 p.m. at the Jerry D. Hall Memorial Pavilion, located at 104 5th St. in Monett. Join the Monett police Department and Monet tFire Department and meet local heroes and enjoy a free dinner, music, games and prizes for children.

Fashion Show at Bruner’s Oct. 10

The Bruner Pharmacy Fashion Show will be held on Saturday, Oct. 10, from 5-7 p.m. at Great Dave’s Coffee Shop, located at 404 E. Broadway in Monett. The event will feature fashion, food, friends and shopping at the gift shop with special discounts following the show. Tickets are limited and cost \$20 each. They may be purchased at Bruner Pharmacy.

Blood Drive to be held Oct. 12

The American Red Cross will host a Monett Area Blood Drive on Monday, Oct. 12, from 1-6 p.m. at First Christian Church’s Fellowship Hall, located at 603 4th St. in Monett. People may call 1-800-733-2767 or visit RedCrossBlood.org and enter “MONETT” to schedule an appointment. Donors will receive a \$15 e-gift card for donating.

Chili Supper at church on Oct. 16

Liberty United Methodist Church will host its annual Chili Supper on Friday, Oct. 16, from 4:30-7:30 p.m. at the church, located at Farm Roads 2210 and 1090, or 3 miles north of Monett Ramey on 1090. The price for adults is \$11 per person, and children 3-12 are \$6 each, with under 3 eating free. The church will be serving all-you-can-eat chili or stew, desert and tea, water and coffee. Proceeds will benefit Lives Under Construction Boys Ranch and Foster Children for Christmas.

Harvesting Hope in the City set for Oct. 17

Harvesting Hope in the City will be held on Saturday, Oct. 27 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Jerry D. Hall Memorial Pavilion, located at 104 5th St. in Monett. The Christianity themed event will feature speakers, testimonies, live worship music and resources. There will be children’s activities, free water, hats to raffle and free Bibles.

Local Artist Mixer to be held Oct. 20

The Monett Arts Council will host a Local Artist Mixer on Tuesday, Oct. 20, from 5-7 p.m. at Great Dave’s Coffee Shop, located at 404 E. Broadway in Monett. The event is for artists, performers, photographers, writers, art supporters and the public to share ideas, meet creators and shape the future of the arts in Monett.All ages are welcome, and refreshments will be provided. No experience or artistic background is required.

Boo-ths, Boots & Sensational Bargains Oct. 23-25

Shoe Sensation, located at 903 E. Hwy. 60 in Monett, will host Boo-ths, Boots & Sensational Bargains Oct. 23-25, from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday and 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Sunday. The event features a Halloween vendor market and tent sale filled with fall finds, treats, eats and discounts. A photo booth will be set up, and those who take a photo and tag the Monett Shoe Sensation’s Facebook page will be entered for a chance to win a \$50 Shoe Sensation gift card. People may also donate a pair of socks, pair of shoes or backpack to Care to Learn, with every donation earning an entry into a separate \$50 gift card drawing. Winners will be drawn on Monday, Oct. 26.

Trunk or Treat at hospital on Oct. 24

Cox Monett Hospital will host a Trunk or Treat on Saturday, Oct. 24, from 5-7 p.m., at the hospital, located at 1000 E. Hwy. 60 in Monett.

VFW’s Fall Fest on Oct. 25

The VFW Post No. 4207 Tom Wolfe Memorial, located at 5400 W. Hwy. 60 in Monett, will host the 3rd Annual Freedom Fall Festival on Sunday, Oct. 25 from noon to 4 p.m. The free community event will feature a hay ride, photo booth, laser tag, pumpkin painting, a petting zoo, face painting, a chili bar, hot dogs, hot cocoa bar, candy apple bar and more. Children who attend in their Halloween costumes will get candy bags with goodies.

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

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

Monett Chamber hosts golf tourney

Annual event draws 27 teams

BY MURRAY BISHOFF
Special to the Monett Monthly
The Monett Area Chamber of Commerce hosted its annual golf tournament on Sept. 11 at the Windmill Ridge municipal golf course.

The tournament is a benefit for the Chamber, the Chamber Foundation, and the Young Professionals Network. A total of 27 teams participated, putting 108 golfers on the course.

Among the special awards, Brandon Harter from the WinTech team sank a 25-foot putt to win the



This was the check-in center for the Monett Area Chamber of Commerce’s annual golf tournament, set up outside the Windmill Ridge golf course clubhouse. Murray Bishoff/Special to the Monett Monthly

putting contest. Joe Osborn hit the ball closest to pin No. 16. Hunter Hatfield had the longest drive.

In team competition, the squad from Roberts Family Eye Care won A Flight with a score of 51.

The 19th Hole Golf Studio took second with a score of 55, and Discount Auto Glass placed

third with a 56. The Roberts team donated its winnings back to the Chamber.

In B flight, the Jack Henry team took home top honors. Bulldog 79 placed second. Both had scores of 60. In C Flight, Freedom Bank was first and WinTech second, both with a score of 65.

Tanks: Additional water sampling to be done

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

rounding properties,” Oravetz said. According to Kristen Doran, Drinking Water Section Chief, with DNR’s Southwest Regional Office, two special samples were collected by her department near the fuel release on August 4, to determine if product had entered into the main waterline of Monett’s distribution system.

“Both of these samples were non-detect for petroleum products,” Doran said.

Doran indicated that additional water sampling will be conducted.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) commonly found in petroleum fuels and solvents include a variety of chemicals: some man-made, and “some which may have short and long-term adverse health effects.”

In southwest Missouri’s fractured karst bedrock, VOCs and other contaminants can enter groundwater and migrate rapidly. Petroleum in groundwater and soil can allow potentially harmful vapors to rise into businesses and homes through pathways created by building foundations and sewer lines.

Monett city utilities superintendent Skip Schaller said he believed gasoline had been leaking at the Rapid Roberts’ site for an undetermined amount of time.

“It appears that some of it [has] migrated off the property,” he said.

Schaller said there’s still “more work to do to determine the extent [of migration],” and that Environmental Works is waiting to receive proper work-zone signage before beginning sampling below Central Avenue.

Underground fuel and chemical storage tanks (USTs) buried before 1988 - the year more stringent tank regulations were implemented by the DNR – are an ongoing source of potential groundwater and soil contamination in Missouri and across the nation.

Prior to 1988, if a gas station or other business with a UST closed, their tanks could be sealed and left where they were, contents and all, according to Ken Koon, former director of the Tanks Section of the DNR.

“No inspection of the site was required, nor were samples of soil and the tanks’ contents taken and recorded,” Koon said.

Those old tanks, Koon says, are subject to corrosion, and exist in unknown condition, without oversight, and are not subject to cur-



Old 5,000-gallon storage tanks have been removed from Rapid Roberts location in Monett, with new ones scheduled to take their place. Sheila Harris/sheilaharrisads@gmail.com

rent regulations (<https://tinyurl.com/3p7vypdz>).

Missouri currently has no laws which require property owners and landlords to disclose the presence of hazardous waste sites, including old USTs, on nearby properties to prospective buyers and tenants, even though waste from those sites often has the potential for migrating through soil and groundwater — sometimes miles beyond the source of contamination.

Many old tanks now lie buried on private property, where new property owners have no interest in uncovering liabilities that they may have to take responsibility for. Often, the only way to know that something is amiss with an old UST is when fuel surfaces or shows up in someone’s well.

“Then, we might be able to get a search warrant to allow us to look for the problem,” Koon said, in 2024.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, over 581,000 releases from underground storage tanks have been confirmed across the US, as of September 2025.

Nearly 528,000 contaminated sites have been cleaned up, the agency says, but about 54,000 sites remained to be cleaned up, at that time.

Many other tanks remain underground in unknown condition, says Ken Koon.

Although, in Missouri, there are no laws requiring property owners and landlords to disclose the presence of neighboring USTs and hazardous waste sites, buyers and renters can conduct their own due

diligence.

The DNR’s website features an environmental site-tracking tool at <https://tinyurl.com/2s4ehpt2>. The tool discloses the sites of current and past hazardous waste investigations, as well as reported underground storage tanks - both those currently in use, and tanks which were closed in place, prior to current regulations.

Some tanks have likely not been reported, Ken Koon said.

The EPA maintains a similar mapping tool to track Superfund sites at <https://tinyurl.com/msbcp3d>.

Residents who suspect that petroleum is impacting soil or water on their property may contact the DNR’s Southwest Regional Office at 417-891-4300.

Makoski says Rapid Roberts plans to replace their old fuel storage tanks with newer, upgraded tanks, when they replace the fuel distribution lines.

Eric Hoyle, DNR Environmental Program Specialist, says the department is currently awaiting “the completion of release investigation and underground storage tank closure activities,” for Rapid Roberts, which were expected to begin the week of September 21.

After the initial investigation and the closure of the old tanks are complete, Hoyle says Rapid Roberts will be required to conduct additional site investigations regarding the extent of the release and any unacceptable risks associated with the remaining contamination.

The Tank Section of the DNR will be overseeing the remediation process.

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LOCAL

Monett Stake hosts annual conference

On Sept. 26-27 the Monett Missouri Stake of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints enjoyed an international spiritual feast from Elder Yoon Hwan Choi and Elder Clement M. Matswagothata.

Choi was born in South Korea. Matswagothata was born in Botswana. Both are full-time General Authority Seventies in the Church of Jesus Christ, serving under the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as special witnesses of Jesus Christ and helping to build up and regulate the Church globally. Choi presided at the conference, which was held in the Monett Stake Center and televised to Aurora, Carthage, Granby, Stockton, and Cassville for the Stake's population of over 3,000.

Choi, a black belt in taekwondo, related an experience he had while in the South Korean military. He was at a ceremony for the nation's presidential honor guards, of which he was one. Each soldier was given a shot glass. Their commander was going down the line filling each soldier's glass with wine, after which each soldier quickly drank his wine and stood back at attention. To not follow the commands of a military leader would result in punishment. Choi was the only member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in his unit. As part of his church

membership, Choi had committed to not drink alcohol or use tobacco or take any harmful substances. He silently prayed to Heavenly Father for protection. Just as Choi's commander poured the wine into Choi's glass, a messenger ran in with an urgent phone call from the general for the commander. The commander left without seeing if Choi drank his wine. The soldier next to Choi, who had already drank his wine, quickly switched glasses and drank Choi's wine. The commander returned, looked at Choi's empty glass, said, "Good!" and went on to the next soldier. This and other faith-building stories were shared at the conference..

At another time, Choi asked the people who had served missions in South Korea, of which there were two people, to come up and sing "I Am a Child of God" in Korean with him. Next he asked everyone who knew Spanish to stand and sing "I Am a Child of God" in Spanish. To everyone's delight, Choi concluded by asking "everyone who speaks English" to stand and sing "I Am a Child of God." Everyone stood with grins on their faces and filled the room with joyful music.

The two-day stake conference began with a Saturday afternoon leadership training, with 170 in attendance, followed by a supper of pulled pork, buns, beans, coleslaw, watermelon,

and cookies. After supper, there was an adult session with 334 in attendance. Early Sunday morning, there was a Rising Generation Devotional for children ages 8-11 and their parents with 297 in attendance. Then came the general session with 929 in the Stake Center and more viewing in buildings throughout the Monett Missouri Stake boundaries.

Monett Ward Relief Society President Becky Ward, whose occupation is a nurse, said of the conference, "Elder Choi taught me how to be kinder and love others more like Jesus loves us, to look at others the way God and Jesus look at all of us, as individuals, to not forget that no one, other than our brother, Jesus Christ, has been perfect here on this earth, and tell others about the Gospel of Jesus Christ."

Monett Young Single Adult President Blair Powell and his wife, Lauralie, who work in the Monett School District, said of the conference, "I loved Elder Choi's message. He shared a message of peace and joy. The doctrine of this church is centered on family and our Savior Jesus Christ. He encouraged us all to 'open our mouths' and share the love that the Savior has for all of us."

In six months, another conference will be held with the goal of strengthening members' faith in Jesus Christ.

Caves: Camera put into hole shows blue hue

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

resistivity tomography and imaging.

Grote provided several PowerPoint slides explaining these tools. Electrical resistivity, she noted, uses electrical current to penetrate the ground and send back patterns based on subsurface materials. Metal electrodes are placed in the ground and receive currents shaped by different soil, and geological formations. Air, she noted, is an electrical insulator that can be detected in underground voids. It shows up differently than surrounding rock and soil. Water-filled voids appear as anomalies with low resistivity. Groundwater systems dissolve solids that conduct electricity easily.

Ground penetrating radar uses high frequency radio waves to create images. Grote reported the industrial use for this tool falls primarily in detecting underground utilities, pipes and rebar, as well as geological structures. She conceded that interpreting data from these machines can be "tricky." However, she noted the equipment can be used inexpensively and covers large areas easily. It will not, however, work well in a clay-rich environment. Its major disadvantage stems from its limited range.

Randall, who led the discussion, emphasized that these tools could help identify the location of the stone quarry under the sledging hill at South Park and find other access points. He observed that every time he

goes to South Park, he sees people walking along the bluff and the dirt path that cuts through the wooded area above the soccer fields.

Rusty Morris further stressed the path offers links to the underworld. He observed a hand-held thermometer can measure temperatures in the 90s on rocks on the edge of the path. Moving south, toward the middle of the path paralleling the soccer fields, temperatures dip to the 80s and as low as 75 toward the Scout picnic pavilion near the Kiddie Playground, a site believed by many to be the most accessible entrance to the caves themselves. Steam is not evident coming from the ground, but on a humid day, rocks can be seen "dripping" moisture. Audience members asked about other cave-related signs. No bats, however, had been seen around the potential cave entrances.

Robert Palmer, who works at the park, recounted how on Sept. 9, he lowered an endoscopic camera into a hole through some poured concrete to a depth of three-and-a-half feet. The camera brought back blue reflective images, suggesting water. This challenged past stories that the cave at South Park was simply dry, unlike the cave under Broadway, known initially as a water source. Painter noted that under present dry summer conditions, the reflected image had to be water.

Randall suggested



Mike Randall, left, led a second public discussion on Monett's caves and their potential at the September membership meeting of the Monett Historical Society. Pictured with Randall, from left, were author Elizabeth Hilton, cave enthusiasts Robert Painter and Rusty Morris. Sheila Harris/sheilaharrisads@gmail.com

studying historic photos and lining them up with unchanged geologic formations at the park. These, he felt, verified the existence of the caves. He spoke about potential for tourism if the caves could be entered. He cited the Mark Twain Cave in Hannibal, the Roanoke Park Cave in the Kansas City area, the Top of the Rock Cave, south of Branson, and the cave at Jolly Mill, west of Monett. The Jolly Mill cave has a steel grill door covering its entrance, erected by the Missouri Department of Conservation to keep people out but to allow access by bats, a subject of major interest to state researchers.

Morris spoke about his contact with an agent from the Department of Conservation that could enable him to accompany a trip into that cave.

Randall summarized

the assorted legends about the caves, the prominent community leaders who explored them, the alleged connection to other underground channels that led by boat toward Pierce City. Randall teased the audience about a strategic plan he could unveil at a later date, involving formation of a not-for-profit organization to spearhead cave development and partnerships needed to advance the plan, including pursuing grants.

He invited those seeking more information to view the group's Monett Muddy Cave page on Facebook, and view Morris's Barry and Lawrence Counties History and Mysteries posts.

The Monett Historical Society offers monthly meetings on the third Tuesday on the month at the Events Center at 320 E. Broadway.

Barry County
Health Corner



People should get a flu vaccine every year for optimal protection against flu

CDC recommends a yearly flu vaccine for everyone 6 months and older with rare exception. The reason for this is that a person's immune protection from vaccination declines over time, so an annual vaccination is needed to get the "optimal" or best protection against the flu. Additionally, flu viruses are constantly changing, so the vaccine composition is reviewed each year and updated as needed.

Flu and People 65 Years and Older

- Flu vaccination is especially important for people 65 years and older because they are at higher risk of developing serious flu complications.
- While flu seasons vary in severity, during most seasons, people 65 years and older bear the greatest burden of severe flu disease.
- CDC and the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) preferentially recommend the use of higher dose flu vaccines (including high-dose inactivated and recombinant) or adjuvanted inactivated flu vaccine over standard-dose unadjuvanted flu vaccines for people 65 years and older.
- CDC recommends prompt flu antiviral treatment for people who have flu or suspected flu and who are at higher risk of serious flu complications, such as people 65 years and older.
- Take time to get a flu vaccine.
- Everyone 6 months and older should get a flu vaccine every season, especially people at higher risk.
- CDC recommends a yearly flu vaccine as the first and most important action in reducing your risk of flu and its potentially serious outcomes.
- For 2026-2027 flu season, CDC recommends seasonal flu vaccination for children, pregnant women, and adults with only single-dose formulations of flu vaccine that are free of thimerosal as a preservative.
- Flu vaccines help to reduce the burden of flu illnesses, hospitalizations and deaths on the health care system each year.
- Flu vaccination also has been shown to reduce the severity of illness in people who get vaccinated but still get sick.
- All flu vaccines are designed to protect against three influenza viruses
- Everyone 6 months and older should get an annual flu vaccine, ideally by the end of October but people should continue to get vaccinated as long as flu viruses pose a threat to their community.
- Vaccination of people at higher risk of developing serious flu complications is especially important to decrease their risk of severe flu illness.
- People at higher risk of serious flu complications include young children, pregnant women, people with certain chronic health conditions like asthma, diabetes or heart and lung disease, and people 65 years and older.
- Vaccination also is important for health care workers and other people who live with or care for people at higher risk of serious flu illness to keep from spreading flu to them. This is especially true for people who work in long-term care facilities, which are home to many of the people most vulnerable to flu.
- Children younger than 6 months are at higher risk of serious flu illness but are too young to be vaccinated. People who care for infants should be vaccinated instead.
- Health care providers can support patients in making informed decisions about vaccinations.

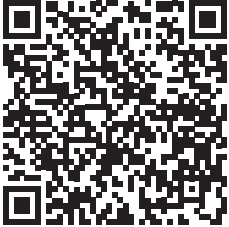
The Barry County Health Department has the following vaccines available Monday through Thursday from 7:30am to 5:30pm as a walk-in service. Due to high demand, please call 417-847-2114 to verify availability and cost:

- Flulaval Trivalent
- Fluarix Trivalent
- Flublok Trivalent
- Fluzone High Dose.

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.

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 ktroatman@cassville-democrat.com or scan the QR code to the right to submit a letter online.





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Local Death Notices

Dwight James Pattyson • Aurora • July 14, 1950 – Aug. 22, 2026

David Jameson • Monett • Oct. 15, 1950 – Aug. 28, 2026

Neil Curtis Roller • Monett • Oct. 19, 1977 – Aug. 30, 2026

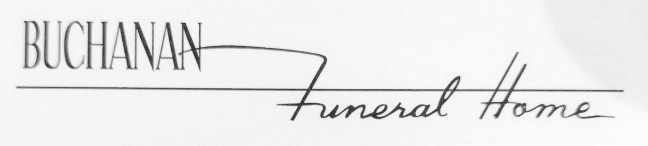
Mildred Hutchings • Joplin • May 4, 1930 – Aug. 31, 2026

Mu Sar • Monett • Jan. 1, 1983 – Sept. 5, 2025

Marisela Madrigal Morales • Verona • March 26, 1973 – Sept. 6, 2026

Phillip Roy Short • Aurora • Nov. 14, 1948 – Sept. 22, 2026

Robert (Bob) Alexander • Pierce City • Mar 26, 1955 – Sept. 26, 2026



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When: Saturday, Nov. 7, 11:30 a.m

Where: Monett City Park Casino

Tickets: \$25 In Advance, \$30 After October 24

Proceeds: Go To Monett Historical Society And Museum



First responders, veterans, and the public gathered on Sept. 11 at the Freedom Silo to remember the terrorist attacks 25 years earlier on that date. Murray Bishoff/Special to the Monett Monthly



First responders, veterans, and the public gathered on Sept. 11 at the Freedom Silo to remember the terrorist attacks 25 years earlier on that date. Murray Bishoff/Special to the Monett Monthly



The moment of silence that concluded the morning 9/11 remembrance ceremony. Pictured are Assistant Fire Chief Dustin Stellwagen ringing the memorial bell at left, Mayor Randy Burke at center, and speaker Capt. Clell Maples at right. Murray Bishoff/Special to the Monett Monthly

9/11: Moment of silence observed

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

satisfied, they still wouldn't change what happened that morning."

Reflecting on divisions in America today, Maples continued the unity of sentiment that followed the attacks was a blessing. "Our country needs this again," he said, leading into a prayer where he asked "for our nation to get to the point where we can stand hand in hand once again without another tragic event, to remember that if we can stand together in the wake of tragedy we can stand together daily."

During Maples' talk, Assistant Fire Chief Dustin Stellwagen rang a special fire bell three times, then three times more after a pause. This was done three times. The bell came from the funeral team from the Firefighters Funeral Team, rung to denote the conclusion of service. The bell

itself stays in a special trailer located in Aurora that travels to burials.

With that, the service concluded with a moment of silence.

Both firefighters and police had training scheduled that morning, which pushed the ceremony back to 7:30 a.m., before the sun appeared on a cloudy day, prior to the actual minute when the first plane hit the World Trade Center.



Abby Hartin, back, explained her display of memorabilia from contact with Armed Forces personnel activated in the wake of the 9/11/01 terrorist attacks. Her exhibit was set up in the lobby of the Monett High School Performing Arts Center for the 9/11 memorial service. Murray Bishoff/Special to the Monett Monthly



Brenda McKinney, left, and Ron Monnig led the Barry County Concerned Citizens program recounting the terrorist attacks 25 years ago. Murray Bishoff/Special to the Monett Monthly

Remembering the history of the 9/11 terrorist attacks

Monett program details development, aftermath

BY MURRAY BISHOFF
Special to the Monett Monthly

History and personal recollections expanded into a detailed narrative about the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in a memorial program presented on the evening of Sept. 11 at the Monett High School Performing Arts Center.

Organized by the Barry County Concerned Citizens, an offshoot of the Barry County Democrats, the event was non-partisan and focused on history. Those arriving had an opportunity to review memorabilia placed by Abby Hartin, a member of the area TLC Military Support Group, which grew out of the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post in Shell Knob. Hartin displayed letters from military personnel touched by the group in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks.

Brenda McKinney, a retired teacher from the Southwest school district, and Ron Monnig served as hosts for the event, speaking from the stage. Monnig noted the program served to remind the public of what happened and to focus on the work carried on by first responders today.

Bradley Bos, whose godmother perished in the terrorist attacks, presented the American flag. Allison Logan, a member of the Purdy High School choir, sang the National Anthem. McKinney contacted choir director Lauren Lee about

having her ensemble participate, and nine members came. They sang "Song for the Unsung Hero," which has a sing-along section.

Christian Renfrow, a former student of McKinney's, brought his guitar and sang "Remember the Day."

During a break to deal with technical issues, members of the audience were invited to share their recollections of that day. Abby Hartin spoke about working at the Shell Knob Post Office that day. Jim Cabell, who lives in rural Miller, recalled being stranded at a conference in Chicago, renting a car to drive a friend to Kansas City then continuing back to Missouri.

Connie Jarvis of Monett spoke of working at the International Institute for Learning in Monett, which has an office in Manhattan. Her colleagues there were family and friends, and they all had connections to people lost that day.

Robert McGuire, a teacher at Monett Elementary at the time, recounted how parents that morning began appearing at school windows, checking on their children. The school, he recalled, chose to conduct school as usual, trying to make a normal day, while reassuring parents that conditions were normal, though teachers on break clustered around televisions to learn what was happening.

McKinney used projections to walk the audience through the story and timeline of each hijacked plane, when they departed and crashed. She detailed how the planes' transponders were turned off, blinding officials to their locations

and the times of the crashes. In recounting Flight 93, she noted Todd Beamer's last recorded words, "Let's roll," as the passengers took over their plane and crashed it into a field at Shanksville, Penn., to prevent it from killing others.

She showed photos of those on board each plane. Photos of the crashes, statistics of the death tolls adding up to 2,753 people in the planes and on the ground, the disaster response teams at work, had a cumulative effect. McKinney shifted to photos of the various memorials, including the seldom seen unique design at the Pentagon distinguishing those killed in the plane and those inside the building. Later memorials, such as the beams of light at the World Trade Centers, the bell tower at Shanksville, and international monuments in Israel, London, Italy, and one as close as College of the Ozarks, were also pictured.

The program lasted for 80 minutes, and would have run longer had McKinney's videos played, but did not due to technical issues.

"This is a day for us to remember, and never forget," McKinney said.

Monnig added that estimates put the number of people who have died from illness related to the destruction of the Twin Towers and the Pentagon at around 8,000, with many more unknown. He concluded the program by asking for a moment of silence, and to remember what it was like to have a great nation unified in spirit, as it was after the attacks.

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LOCAL

Sound and Smoke rides into Monett



Kids loved romping in the eco-friendly foam added to the Downtown Pavilion's splash pad as an added activity for the Smoke and Sound Festival. Faith Schmidt at rear was the cannoneer. Murray Bishoff/Special to the Monett Monthly



Here were some of the 15 motorcycles shown at the Sound and Smoke Festival's bike show on Sept. 19, with several members of the Throttle Junkies club. The bike show was a new feature at a Monett festival.

Murray Bishoff/Special to the Monett Monthly



Mike Bennett of Eagle Logistics in Purdy showed off his ribs offered in the Backyard Barbecue Showdown for the Sound and Smoke Festival. Bennett won first place for his ribs. The prize for the best barbecued wings went to Ted VanZandt with D1 Resources of Joplin and Billings. The People's Choice Award for pork tenderloin also went to Eagle Logistics of Purdy. Murray Bishoff/Special to the Monett Monthly



The country band Outlaw Reloaded brought a rocking country sound to the Downtown Pavilion stage for Sound and Smoke. They closed with Hank Williams Jr.'s "It's a Family Tradition." Murray Bischoff/Special to the Monett Monthly



Dancing was irresistible as the band Sequel Dose closed the show at Monett's Downtown Pavilion for the Smoke and Sound Festival. Murray Bishoff/Special to the Monett Monthly

Liberty: Too many loopholes exist in Senate Bill 4, accoring to MCE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

law by Governor Kehoe in 2025) requires the PSC to adopt special rate structures (tariffs) for large load customers. Those customers include data center developers, the PSC said. The required tariff proposals are designed to ensure that large load customers pay their share of the costs associated with serving them, while preventing smaller customers from facing “unjust or unreasonable costs arising from service to large load customers,” the PSC states.

According to SB 4, a large load customer is a business "reasonably projected to have above an annual peak demand of one hundred megawatts or more," in a market where electricity is served to over 250,000 customers.

In an area where 250,000 or fewer customers are served, a large load customer is defined as one projected to have an annual peak demand of "50 megawatts or more."

When considering large load tariffs, the PSC uses previously adopted provisions which they say are designed to protect residential and small-business customers from costs related to data centers. They include, for large load customers, minimum service contracts of 12 years, with an additional 5-year option; financial security and collateral requirements; exit and early termination fees; a minimum monthly bill at a projected, agreed upon rate; cost stabilization recovery to ensure that the electric utility can recover all costs associated with serving large load customers and that customers are paying their full cost of service; and optional renewable and carbon-free programs at the large-load customer's expense.

The Missouri Coalition for the Environment (MCE), a non-profit advocate for Missouri's environment since 1969, weighed in on Senate Bill 4 after its

passage last year (<https://tinyurl.com/bddmpnba>).

"Despite the large load section of the law, SB4 does not guarantee that data center costs will not be pushed onto residential consumers," the MCE states.

Too many loopholes exist in the bill, they say.

According to the MCE, data center electricity usage can range from a few megawatts to hundreds. Data center developers can work around the PSC's large-load descriptions by building multiple smaller facilities and thus not be subject to the large-load tariff requirements, the MCE said.

Another section of Senate Bill 4 allows utilities to charge in advance for construction works in progress (CWIPs).

"The accounting mechanisms...make it easier for utilities to finance projects that will attract data centers and incentivizes them to raise residential rates in order to pay for new generation infrastructure," the MCE said.

Although the CWIP rule does not apply to electricity projects, Liberty received approval from the PSC in July for a rate increase which began the first week in August. According to the PSC, increase was approved because Liberty met “customer service and billing metrics with over 99% compliance.”

However, approval for the increase came one month after Liberty announced a \$750 million project to upgrade the capacity of 90 miles of their transmission lines from 161 kV to 345 kV, from Branson to Joplin, as part of a larger project that includes parts of southeast Kansas, northeast Oklahoma and southwest Missouri.

Liberty's rate increase is scheduled to be implemented in intervals over a three-year period. Their transmission-line upgrades are projected to be completed in 2030.

According to its website, Liberty Utilities serves “electric, natural gas, water, and wastewater treatment utility systems and electricity generation, transmission and distribution utility services to over 1.2 million customer connections, mostly in the United States.”

The Missouri Public Service Commission regulates investor-owned public utilities in Missouri, including electric providers Ameren Missouri, Evergy and the Empire District Electric Company (doing business as Liberty Utilities). Large load tariff plans for

Ameren and Evergy have already been approved by the commission.

Liberty is requesting that the PSC issues an order approving its application by January 31, 2027.

The PSC has set a deadline of October 12, 2026, to intervene and participate in Liberty's large load customer rate plan and associated tariffs.

Applications to intervene and participate in this case must be filed with the Secretary of the Missouri Public Service Commission, P.O. Box 360, Jefferson City, Missouri 65102, or

by using the Commission's Electronic Filing and Information System (EFIS) at www.psc.mo.gov.

Individual citizens wishing to comment should contact either the Office of the Public Counsel (Governor Office Building, 200 Madison Street, Suite 650, P.O. Box 2230, Jefferson City, Missouri 65102-2230, telephone 1-866-922-2959, email opcservice@opc.mo.gov) or the Public Service Commission Staff (P.O. Box 360, Jefferson City, Missouri 65102, telephone 1-800-922-4211, email pscinfo@psc.mo.gov).

The Office of the Public Counsel is a separate state agency that represents the general public in matters before the Commission.

Written comments may also be submitted by using the Commission's online comment form at <https://tinyurl.com/4pv39f6e>. When submitting comments, please refer to Case No. ET-2026-0184.

To read the press release, visit <https://tinyurl.com/2dw24wxh>.

For more information about large load utility tariffs in Missouri, visit <https://tinyurl.com/227vs5am>.



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On the Homecoming march!



The Monett High School juniors recreated the 1970s with a disco ball and flamboyant fashions for their float in the homecoming parade. Murray Bishoff/Special to the Monett Monthly



Looking tough, Mighty Mite football players aspired to be future Monett Cubs as they marched in the homecoming parade. Murray Bishoff/Special to the Monett Monthly



The Monett Community Teachers Association had their own float in the homecoming parade, led by the clearest banner of the event. Murray Bishoff/Special to the Monett Monthly



Possibly the largest class to date in the Army Junior ROTC course at the Scott Regional Technology Center marched at the head of the Monett High School homecoming parade. Murray Bishoff/Special to the Monett Monthly



In the only thematic misfire of the Monett High School homecoming parade, the seniors failed to capture either the spirit or the costumes of the 1980s, which they seemed to think was a period of sitting around and listening to MTV or music on cassettes. Murray Bishoff/Special to the Monett Monthly



The Monett High School sophomores made a gallant try at saluting the 1950s with pastel furnishings, a jukebox, polka-dotted clothes and muscle shirts for the “Decades” theme in the MHS homecoming parade. Murray Bishoff/Special to the Monett Monthly

Toward the end of the Monett High School homecoming parade, a scramble for the last candy-pitted spectators and players in a scramble for the prizes. Murray Bishoff/Special to the Monett Monthly



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With the theme of “Decades,” class floats for the Monett homecoming parade tried to mirror past periods of pop culture. The freshmen float portrayed the 1980s as a fun riot of color and fashion. Murray Bishoff/Special to the Monett Monthly

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Tracing their family line through a genealogical chart were, from left, Vince Boucher, Roger Pruitt, and Larry Boucher, a frequently repeated exercise among members of the 12 Pioneer Families Reunion members. Murray Bishoff/Special to the Monett Monthly



This is the group photo of all the attendees at the 2026 reunion of the 12 Pioneer Families of Southwest Lawrence County and surrounding areas, held Sept. 20 at the Monett City Park Casino. Murray Bishoff/Special to the Monett Monthly



Priscilla Featherston, left, and Donnie Hewlett looked over her collection of photos from the Hewlett family, including a peek at their pistol-toting Civil War veteran ancestor, one of many similar scenes taking place around the 12 Pioneer Families Reunion. Murray Bishoff/Special to the Monett Monthly

Pioneer Families hold 92nd reunion

Gathering in Monett showed growth over 2025

BY MURRAY BISHOFF
Special to the Monett Monthly
Descendants of 12 pioneer families of Lawrence County gathered on Sept. 20 at the Monett City Park Casino for reminiscences, fellowship, and food.
The families, whose names are on a monument at Farm Road 2180 and Hwy. 97, north of Pierce City, began coming to southwest Missouri around 1835, when both Barry and Lawrence counties were still one county. The invitation extends to all families that can trace their local lineage back to that period, as well as anyone interested in local history.
This year's event attracted 40 descendants.

Gatherings in decades past attracted as many as 100 family members. Following a potluck luncheon, Doug Moore, who serves as secretary/treasurer, called for updates on those who had passed in the preceding 12 months. A moment of silence was held in their honor.
In past decades, each family had a historian, preserving documentation of their evolution. Several family members brought ring-binder notebooks of photos, letters, and family trees to share. Much of the conversation focused on establishing heritage links to present family members and connections between cousins, as many of the families connected through marriage.
A storytelling time offered families a chance to share new discoveries and share favorite stories

about their ancestors and attending past reunions.
During the business meeting, Kristin Nama of Pierce City, who has served as president of the group in charge of the reunion for the past two years, stepped down. Beverly Jones, who served as president prior to Nama, will step back into that role. Nama said she will continue to help, expressing her willingness to continue in a leadership role at a future date.
Photos were taken of all family members in attendance and those from each family.
The reunion is scheduled annually for the third Sunday in September, most often at the City Park Casino. Updates are posted on the 12pioneerfamilies Facebook page or are available via email at 12pioneerfamilies@gmail.com.

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2026-2027 School Year

October 2026

SRTC Anatomage Table

Students in the Health Occupations program at Scott Regional Technology Center (SRTC) are getting a new look at the human body through the addition of an Anatomage Table.

An Anatomage Table is a life-size, interactive anatomy visualization system that allows students to explore the human body digitally. Using the table's large touch-screen display, students can view detailed 3D images of the body, examine individual organs and body systems, and virtually move through the different layers of anatomy. The technology gives students a close-up view of structures that can be difficult to understand through textbooks and diagrams alone.

This type of technology is used in healthcare education to give students access to detailed anatomical models in a classroom setting. For SRTC students, the Anatomage Table helps make complex concepts easier to visualize and understand while giving them another hands-on way to build practical knowledge, strengthen their understanding of anatomy, and prepare for continued education and careers in healthcare.



150-Day Academic Calendar Exploration

Monett Schools has begun exploring a different way to organize the school year beginning as early as the 2027-2028 school year. **This work is in the early stages, and no decision has been made to change the academic calendar.** The purpose of the exploration is to learn what a 150-day calendar could look like for Monett and what would need to be considered before any decision is made.

Students currently attend 169 school days. The potential calendar being studied would include approximately 150 academic days, school days that are about 18 minutes longer, a similar August start date, and a regular academic year that would end at the end of April.

Six design teams are reviewing key areas of the potential calendar, including academics, student support, staffing and operations, family and community impact, and financial considerations.

To keep families and community members informed, the district has created a 150-Day Academic Calendar Exploration website with information about the process, what a potential calendar could look like, and frequently asked questions.

A form is also available for families and community members to submit questions and feedback. Responses will help the district identify areas that may need additional research or clarification as the exploration continues.

We encourage families and community members to visit the website, learn more, and share their questions.

To learn more or submit a question, scan the QR code below.



Homecoming 2026

Monett High School celebrated Homecoming with a day filled with school spirit and tradition.

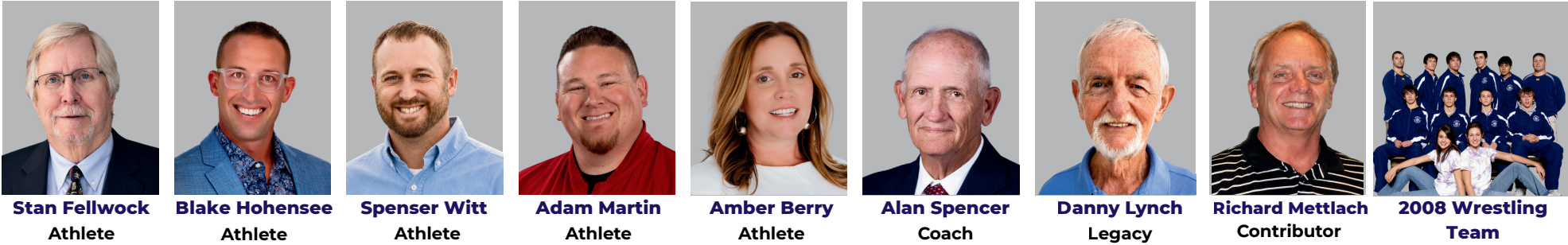
The celebration included the crowning of this year's Homecoming King and Queen, D'Shawn Collins and Emily Beck, surrounded by classmates, family, and friends. Later that evening, the Monett Cubs took the field against the Aurora Houn' Dawgs.

The Cubs earned a 34-20 victory over Aurora, making the day even more memorable.

The 2026 Homecoming Court included:
Freshman: Fallon Wilson
Sophomore: Camila Robles
Junior: Myla Williams
King Candidates: D'Shawn Collins, Michael Diaz, Fidel Valenciano
Queen Candidates: Emily Beck, Celeste Hernandez, Marrin Rosebaugh



Monett Schools Hall of Fame 2026



Congratulations to this year's Monett Schools Hall of Fame inductees! The Hall of Fame Banquet will be held **Friday, October 9**, beginning at 11:00 a.m. at The Casino at South Park. Inductees will also be recognized before the Monett vs. McDonald County football game that evening.

The Cubbies | Celebrating Staff Who Embody The Monett Way



Around the District

