About the cover...
Sugarloaf Mountain, so-named because it resembles an old-fashioned loaf of bread, will be the new home of ASU-Heber Springs in Cleburne County. See page 6 for details.
Keeping service in check with growth

We talk about growth a lot, and at Arkansas State University, we see it in several different regards.

Most obvious, perhaps, is the physical growth of the Jonesboro campus and its branch campuses within the ASU system.

If you take a look at major physical developments at ASU-J beginning in 1995 with the completion of the Dean B. Ellis Library expansion, and all the others that took place up to the turn of the century (Fowler Center, Collegiate Park, Equine Center, enhanced technology and others), the growth is impressive.

If you look at those projects that are now ongoing (Student Union, family housing, new parking, track complex, Library bell carillon and Washington/Matthews overpass), the growth is impressive still.

Looking into the crystal ball that shows a not too distant future, we are poised for the beginning of additional milestones that will realize a bio-sciences research institute, new College of Business, and liberal arts and student health services facilities.

Growth is measured by more than just bricks and mortar, however.

Safety is being enhanced on campus. Soon, students, faculty and staff will be able to walk across the entire campus without ever having to cross a street.

A wireless environment provides the ultimate convenience for more than 10,000 ASU students.

New student services and programming are blossoming on all fronts of the university system.

And looking through the lens of the ASU Foundation, private support from friends like you is at an all-time high.

The alumni giving rate is higher than ever, the number of new donors shows steady growth annually, major gifts are increasing in number and faculty and staff continue to set records every year.

So financial support from every special ASU constituency is growing at an impressive rate and makes possible our venture into that “vital margin” of excellence.

It all culminates into real momentum and a grand vision for ASU.

With all that vision for growth we never want the ASU Foundation to lose sight of its role as a service provider to you.

What we like most about our work is that it’s person to person, friend to friend.

If you need us, we want you to call on us.

We’ll be here.

Many thanks for all your support, guidance and direction to the ASU Foundation.

(Steve Watkins is director of development at Arkansas State University and serves as executive editor of “The Foundation News.”)

Dear Alumni and Friends:

It is truly an exciting time on our campus. The students are back and with them comes the enthusiasm and energy associated with the start of another school year. These bright, young minds are eager to learn and succeed. We are indeed fortunate to have this group of tomorrow’s leaders on our campus.

The “margin of excellence” on our campus is made possible through your support. Your generosity makes funds available for opportunities that would not otherwise be possible. Purchases of needed instructional materials, repair of expensive capital equipment and student scholarships are but a few of the areas where private contributions have made a difference.

Likewise, campus facilities are enhanced through your gifts. The final bells in the Dean B. Ellis Library bell tower will be installed in November. This project, totaling nearly $400,000, was entirely made possible by contributions. The Summer Children’s Theatre program provided greater opportunities for children as a result of private support.

These are a few of the many ways in which you make a difference. We are very grateful for your confidence, for you are very valuable to our university. Arkansas State University is growing and on the move. Thank you for helping make it possible.

Very Sincerely,

Steve Owens
Vice President, University Advancement
President/CEO, ASU Foundation
Environmental Science program to benefit from Strickland property

Long-time Arkansas State University supporters Russell and Melda Strickland of Black Oak, Ark., are helping with the ASU Foundation, by allowing students in the Environmental Sciences graduate program to conduct research that may yield interesting results.

“Having the value of the Strickland property will give us the ability to collect samples and bring them back to our laboratories for study,” said Dr. Jerry Farris, holder of the Judd Hill Chair of Environmental Biology and professor of Environmental Biology. “It lends itself nicely to fate and effect studies.”

The property, located on state highway 18 between Lake City and Black Oak in eastern Craighead County, was, for many years, used in crop production. When Mr. Strickland bought the property in 1996, he worked to establish a tree farm on the property, with the help of Ducks Unlimited and through the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).

The Stricklands had a relative who was enrolled at ASU in one of Dr. Farris’ ecology studies classes. The family member, Steve Strickland, invited Farris to meet Russell Strickland, who Steve said might be interested in allowing Farris to monitor the growth of the trees planted on the property.

About a year later, Dr. Farris was invited back to the property to see how it could be used not only for research, but for classroom use.

“The farm lends itself well to research,” Dr. Farris said. “We will be able to measure the benefits of returning farm land back to its original state, and will be able to study the fate and effect on bird populations, something in which the Stricklands are very interested. Too, we’ll be able to examine wildlife recolonization on the property, and, because the property is in the St. Francis River district, we can also perform very timely sedimentation and nutrient studies. Our region is the greatest laboratory.”

Farris said the tree farm could possibly be used in a public outreach capacity, through demonstration plots and with volunteers supplying help with the various testing that is planned. He said as far as future interest, the farm will also allow students to develop research on the drainage of the St. Francis.

Mr. Strickland said he and Mrs. Strickland are happy the property can be used in environmental studies.

“I think it is wonderful that schools are beginning to get more involved with the environment,” he said.

The couple has been watching birds for many years, and it is not at all uncommon to see them driving throughout eastern Craighead County and western Mississippi County in the early morning hours looking for different bird species. They also volunteer annually to document the bird species who make use of Big Lake National Wildlife Refuge just east of Manila.

Mrs. Strickland is a 1952 alumna of Arkansas State, and Mr. Strickland also attended the institution until World War II cut short his college career. For many years the couple has supported ASU causes, including KASU radio station and the ASU Museum. Additionally, they are avid Arkansas State sports fans and attend many of the football, basketball and volleyball games for both men and women.

“We are so pleased with the way the Stricklands give back to ASU,” Dr. Farris said. “They are a very visible presence here, and this latest gift will allow some very interesting results.”
Hoeper family fully endows two scholarships to benefit English, Honors programs at ASU

A shining example of the philanthropic ethic of the World War II generation is evident through the endowment of two scholarships at Arkansas State University.

Dr. Jeffrey Hoeper, ASU professor of English and Philosophy, and his family have brought ASU’s BA English Book Award to the fully endowed level, and additionally have endowed the Hoeper Family Honors Scholarship at the university.

Dr. Hoeper said his parents, natives of Northern Wisconsin, were a model of the so-called “greatest generation.”

“My father was a fighter pilot and my mother was a flight nurse during the war,” he explained. “They gave to their county in wartime; they worked hard throughout their lives to make our lives better. My father retired from the military.”

Dr. Hoeper said when his father died in 1983, his mother wanted to do something in his memory, so she established a scholarship at a community college, Nicolet, in Wisconsin. Later, she decided to establish the Mary Alice Hoeper and Sons Charitable Trust to allow the family to invest their funds, let the funds grow and then award money each year to charities they chose.

“In the Department of English and Philosophy, we refer to the first scholarship as the Mary Alice Hoeper BA Book Award,” Dr. Hoeper said. “Mom has always been a great reader and wanted to support reading. We established this award to recognize academic excellence in students.”

Still active in retirement, Mary Alice Hoeper finds time to teach wind surfing at boy’s camp and plays competitive tennis. She and her sons also support charitable causes.

Dr. Hoeper said in the last year he, his mother and his two brothers wanted to disburse the funds in the family charitable trust. They made the decision to fully endow the book award and to establish the honors scholarship at Arkansas State.

“I was in the honors program when I was in school at Michigan State,” said Dr. Hoeper, who is an enthusiastic supporter of the ASU Honors Program, having been a former director of the program.

“The Honors Program at Arkansas State University allows very bright students to get more for their money and increase their interest in learning.”

Dr. Hoeper said the level of support for in-state students speaks well for the program, so he and his family decided to endow the scholarship for an outstanding out-of-state student to come in and be a part of the ASU experience.

He said his family’s hope for the scholarships is that they will encourage others to consider making charitable gifts toward other similar scholarships at Arkansas State.

“ASU has a wonderful program that should be supported. I like to say students in our Honors Program are getting an Ivy League education at a state university price.”

Dr. Jeffrey Hoeper (right) visits with one of his students at the beginning of the semester. Hoeper and his family have fully endowed two scholarships at Arkansas State University.

“I like to say students in our Honors Program are getting an Ivy League education at a state university price.”

-Dr. Jeffrey Hoeper
New museum to focus on agriculture, birth of farmers’ union

A grant from the Arkansas Natural and Cultural Resources Council enabled Arkansas State University to purchase this adjoining property to what will become the Southern Tenant Farmers Museum in Tyronza, Ark.

A piece of property in Tyronza that played an interesting part in the nation’s farming history has been given to Arkansas State University and is being developed into an agricultural museum.

Dr. Ruth Hawkins, director of ASU’s Delta Heritage Initiatives, said the City of Tyronza has given what is known as the Mitchell-East building to ASU. The location served as headquarters for the Southern Farmers Tenant Union, formed in the 1930s.

Hawkins said in 2000 she received a call from Jim Walsmith of the Historic Preservation Alliance of Arkansas about the possibility of the university’s involvement in developing the site. The City of Tyronza had been unsuccessful in trying to get the building on the National Register of Historic Places, because siding had been added to the original building.

The building had been placed on the state register, however, and the residents strongly believed the place should be restored.

“The people of Tyronza were tenacious,” Hawkins said. “They believed the Southern Tenant Farmers Union was a part of history that needs to be remembered and told.”

Hawkins said during the 1920s and 1930s, times were bad on the farm, especially for sharecroppers and tenant farmers. A group of these farmers came to Tyronza businessmen H.L. Mitchell and Clay East, who helped the group of 11 Caucasian men and seven African-Americans form the union.

“It was unusual that this national organization was formed in this small rural town,” Hawkins noted. “But early on the union was different. The founding members were of different races, which was very uncommon during that time. Also, women held leadership positions within the union. Although the union eventually died out, its impact was felt.”

Hawkins said state Sen. Mike Everett of Marked Tree sponsored a bill during the 2001 legislative session for operating funds for the first two years.

Additionally, the university applied to the Arkansas Natural and Cultural Resources Council, which makes grants toward the restoration and preservation of properties belonging to state agencies, for monies to restore the exterior of the property and purchase adjoining property. The council made a grant of $300,000.

See “New Museum” page five

Volunteers work during “Peel-Away Day” to remove siding from the Mitchell-East building in Tyronza. The building is the birthplace of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union.
Scholarship for former business professor reaches endowment level

A scholarship established in 1993 to honor a faculty member upon his retirement from Arkansas State University’s College of Business has reached endowment level as a memorial scholarship.

John H. Tipton, retired assistant professor of management, died Dec. 6 of last year. Friends, family members, former colleagues and students are making charitable gifts toward the John H. Tipton Scholarship to remember the man whom many describe as “student focused.”

“Students loved him,” said Melodie Philhours, ASU instructor in management. “He was a very gracious man.”

“He would be pleased about the scholarship,” said Gail Hudson, marketing professor. “He was very student-oriented. It would mean a lot to him that something was being given to help with a student’s education.”

Dr. Tipton was a graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, and a retired colonel. Although he had one masters degree, when he came to ASU he continued to pursue a higher education himself, earning an additional master’s degree and his doctoral degree at the former Memphis State University.

Dr. Laddie Logan, emeritus associate professor of management, said he and Dr. Tipton shared a couple of classes while both pursued their doctorate at Memphis. He said Tipton was an all-around good professor.

“He was the kind of guy who could teach just about anything,” Dr. Logan said. “Operations management, statistics or policy, he was comfortable with any management subject. He was especially good with policy, and was very comfortable with high-level policy.”

“Of all the people I’ve known in my life, John Tipton was just one of the nicest,” he said.

Dr. Len Frey, chairman of the Department of Marketing and Management, said the Tipton Scholarship is one of only two scholarships that are specific to the department. A former student of Dr. Tipton, Dr. Frey said he enjoy Dr. Tipton’s classes.

“He was a good statistics teacher, and explained concepts well,” Dr. Frey noted. “He was a pleasant man who cared for his students. “This scholarship is a wonderful way to recognize our top students.”

Additional gifts are being accepted toward the John H. Tipton Scholarship by the ASU Foundation, P.O. Box 1990, State University AR 72467.

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Arkansas State University
There’s a legend that says an Indian chief sits atop Sugarloaf Mountain, and looks over the land below to protect it.

The argument could be made that he’s favorably watched over the area, located on the outskirts of the Cleburne County town of Heber Springs, allowing Arkansas State University-Heber Springs to become a reality. But most folks know the real story is one of hard work by some dedicated volunteers who fostered a dream, and by the people of Cleburne County, who voted a -cent sales tax to make that dream an actuality.

The campaign to create a community college for Cleburne County first began in late 1997 with a conversation between Dianne Williams of the Heber Springs Area Chamber of Commerce and Cleburne County resident Dick Herget.

Both were searching for an idea that would make a positive, long-term impact on the county and its people. They knew that obtaining a higher education generally results in better paying jobs, an improved quality of life and health, and overall job security.

“We saw a new college as an opportunity to reach people who might not ever have had such an opportunity in the past,” Herget said. “A better education instills confidence and self-esteem, and promotes personal pride in being a part of the education process.”

Herget, at that time was a new resident to the county, but was well acquainted with higher education, having served on the Arkansas State University Board of Trustees from 1975 until 1985, and having served as chairman of the board during 1979 and 1980. Additionally, Herget was one of the founding members of the ASU Foundation.

Herget called Dr. Les Wyatt, ASU president, about the idea of a branch campus in the area. Dr. Wyatt favored the idea and made plans to further explore the feasibility of a campus at Heber Springs.

Volunteers, state legislators and agencies, civic groups and county officials gave thousands of hours of their time to work for the branch campus.

In the fall of 1998, the first semester of classes began at night with 80 students attending 10 classes. By November of that year, state Rep. Becky Lynn and a group of local leaders met with Lu Hardin, director of the state’s Department of Higher Education, where they lobbied and received a pledge of $700,000 from the state to help the new campus meet expenses and have an operating budget.

Classes began to grow, and were being offered during the day and at night, year-round. The campus began offering specialized course work requested by local industry. There was a broadening selection of classes, and financial aid was available to prospective students.

The Arkansas General Assembly also passed Act 818, which allowed sales taxes collected by the counties to be used to fund colleges in the state. In early 2000, plans were set in motion to have a special vote to decide if a -cent sales tax would be dedicated solely for the support of ASU-Heber Springs. In April, that...
passage became more crucial when the Department of Higher Education Board invoked a 10-year moratorium on new colleges in the state. If the proposed sales tax failed to pass, ASU-Heber Springs would have to close its doors because the state would not assist any college that did not have local community financial support.

“We built a 26-day campaign designed around people who were interested in higher education in Cleburne County,” Herget said. “My wife, Gina Herget, and Randy Kemp, editor of the Heber Springs Sun Times, spoke to the people of the county through large newspaper ads and news coverage.

Representatives from ASU-Heber Springs met with members of all six of Cleburne County’s communities and asked them to support the Heber Springs campus by foregoing their share of the proposed sales tax and to publicly support establishing the school in Cleburne County.

The communities’ unanimous support proved to be a precursor of the special election; 62 percent of the county’s residents voted in favor of the tax for ASU-Heber Springs.

“The sales tax put us over the top,” Herget said.

Since the passage of the sales tax, the campus has continually grown with each passing semester, moving to larger and more spacious locations. But the Hergets knew that a permanent site with lots of acreage was needed for the campus.

The selection of a site for the permanent campus had to meet several important criteria set forth by Dr. Wyatt, Gina Herget said. The new campus had to be easily accessible, publicly visible and near the highest student population center. Although several sites were considered, Dr. Wyatt’s suggestion of the Sugarloaf Mountain acreage met all the criteria standards.

The approximately 230 acres around and including Sugarloaf Mountain became the property of ASU-Heber Springs in March of this year. The purchase was made possible by a grant from the Herget Family Foundation and the efforts of Rep. Bill Stovall and Sen. Bob Johnson, who successfully lobbied the Arkansas General Assembly for a match to the gift. To date, the state has paid $312,000 toward the purchase. Monies derived from the sales tax funds are paying the balance of the purchase price.

A sign facing state highway 110 signals the pending construction on the new campus. Cleburne County residents, like ASU alumna Sandra Curtis Cherry, are pleased that the permanent campus is in the near future.

“This facility is good news for the people of Cleburne County,” Cherry said. “It’s a fabulous experience for people who want to return to school and finish their degree. The students are excited because without this campus, they might not otherwise have the opportunity to further their education. And we have an opportunity to find out what is needed by business and industry in our county and cater to that need, and increase the skill level of our working population. I think it’s just great all around.”

Gina Herget said there are more than 390 students attending 65 different classes this semester at ASU-Heber Springs.

“We have more full-time students this year than in the past,” she noted. “The Foothills Adult Education Center of Cleburne County has moved into our facility, and they reach more than 300 students per year in the GED program. And the community is also using this wonderful center for all kinds of civic events. It’s just been wonderful for this county.”

(from left) Gina Herget, Sandra Curtis Cherry and Dick Herget are just three of the many volunteers who have worked to make the ASU-Heber Springs campus a reality. Sugarloaf Mountain, the future site of the campus’ permanent home, is in the background.
A Jonesboro man is continuing a tradition of charitable giving to Arkansas State University he learned from his father, and has brought a scholarship he established in 1999 to the endowment level.

Tony Pardew, owner and president of Olympus Construction Company in Jonesboro has made a gift to complete the Olympus Construction Endowment, which will assist students in ASU’s College of Engineering.

“I wanted to follow in the footsteps of my father by giving to ASU,” Pardew explained. “But I also wanted to ensure promising engineering students an opportunity to achieve their dreams.”

Pardew spent two years as an undergraduate at Arkansas State, and played on the 11-0 Indian football team in 1975-76. He said while he loved his football experience, he knew there was something more for him at Arkansas State.

“I decided I would have to focus on my education to be successful in life.”

After two years, Pardew transferred to Northeast Louisiana and concentrated on building construction. When he graduated in 1979 he returned to Jonesboro and went to work for his father, Guy A. Pardew Jr., who owned a well-known real estate business.

“Dad was active in the Indian Club and we founded the Indian Air Force to assist ASU athletics,” he noted. “He lived the example of being involved and helping out in the community.”

Two years later, Tony Pardew, with the help and good wishes of his father, started Olympus Construction Company, today one of the largest construction companies in Northeast Arkansas.

In fact, Pardew noted, one of his first commercial construction projects was the addition to the Administration Building at Arkansas State.

Over the years, he has completed many projects for ASU, and is currently building the family student housing project on the site of the old Indian Village, as well as the Childhood Services building that is being constructed next to the University Police station.

“ASU has given so much to me, in my education and in my business, that I believe I have the responsibility to give back in some way,” he said.

“This scholarship is my way of recognizing the importance of academics and the engineering program at Arkansas State University. I am glad to support engineering students through this scholarship so they might be successful like I’ve been.”

“ASU is part of the lifeblood of Northeast Arkansas, and business leaders and owners should recognize that fact,” he said. “I’m hopeful other companies will consider giving to ASU for all they’ve given us.”
Former students, colleagues, friends and family members have established a scholarship endowment in memory of a former Arkansas State University dean of Agriculture who was a pioneer in the field of soybean research.

George Berger of Wiener, Ark. came to Arkansas State in 1971. He was a plant breeder by trade, who wanted to see Arkansas State University, an institution right in the middle of the largest agricultural area in the state, get into agricultural research and development, according to one of his former students and graduate assistant, Tom Franzen.

“George saw an opportunity to bring research to the university and, in turn, the university would gain some noteriety,” Franzen explained. “He had some success in soybean breeding and visited with Dr. Carl R. Reng about ASU getting into agricultural research.” Franzen said Dr. Reng gave Dr. Berger an office and charged him with developing a soybean breeding project, a project that would have to be funded by a percentage of the four-cent-per-bushel fee collected by the Arkansas Soybean Promotion Board from the state’s soybean producers. Franzen, who was in the master’s program for agricultural education (the only master’s degree program in the college at the time), worked with Dr. Berger on the project.

“There was a lot of opposition to ASU getting a portion of that money—I think is was a half-cent a bushel,” he said. “So we made a lot of personal visits to sell people on the idea. I was from Stuttgart and was able to introduce Dr. Berger to people from that area. The significance of this uphill task was that he was successful.”

Arkansas State got $30,000 for soybean research from the Arkansas Soybean Promotion Board, which Franzen said Dr. Reng matched.

“It was truly a pleasure to work with George Berger,” said Dr. Lew Brinkley, ASU professor of Agriculture Studies. “He used to tell us we weren’t doing our jobs unless we were training our replacements.”

Dr. Brinkley was a colleague of Dr. Berger, having worked with him from the time he came to ASU in 1971, through the time he spent as dean of the College of Agriculture from 1975 until 1981. Dr. Brinkley said Dr. Berger wanted to build on the strong teaching tradition at Arkansas State and get the university more involved with research.

“In many years I’ve worked with several deans who all made positive contributions to this institution,” Dr. Brinkley said. “I believe George Berger was the right man for the times when we needed to be shifting to research and extension.”

Dr. Brinkley noted that Dr. Berger was a man who had a great sense of humor and was open to faculty and students. On the other side, Brinkley said, Berger was a dedicated scientist who wanted to see more research done in this area of the state—particularly for soybeans. He said Berger led a movement that evolved into a cooperative agreement with the University of Arkansas in research and extension that is still in existence today.

“Even though he was our superior as dean, we always felt he was a close colleague,” Dr. Brinkley said. “He was a leader, not just in the College of Agriculture and in soybean research. He was a Boy Scout leader as well. He had lots of energy and enthusiasm.”

He encouraged professors to develop personally, Dr. Brinkley said, and stressed leadership skills that could be passed on to students.

“He always said if we could just go to auctioneering school and be like a country preacher in our presentation, we’d do well.”

Dr. Berger left the university in 1981 to form his plant breeding business, Eagle Seed Company of Weiner. Franzen was the first to contribute to the fund that established the memorial scholarship endowment.

“I admired him for his perseverance,” Franzen said. “He surrounded himself with good people and taught me never to give up.”

Persons interested in making a charitable gift toward the George Berger Memorial Endowment may do so by sending their gifts to the ASU Foundation, P.O. Box 1990, State University AR 72467.
If you receive a call this semester from one of Arkansas State University’s annual Phonathon callers, and he or she sounds extra chipper, it could be attributed to the caller’s new surroundings.

Phonathon, which for several years originated out of a room on the third floor of the Dean B. Ellis Library, has a new home in the Annual Giving Center located downstairs in the Administration building on the ASU campus.

“We are so excited to be here in a truly permanent location,” said Elaine Poynter, ASU’s annual giving coordinator. “It’s no longer a borrowed space, and we can promote a team-spirited atmosphere focusing on our alums and serving their needs.”

Poynter said the annual giving center is closer to campus parking, which is a great security feature for the callers who work until after dark. In the center, callers now have individual cubicles from which to call instead of one or two communal tables. The more than one dozen cubicles allow for a bit of privacy and reduce the level of sound around the caller so he or she can concentrate on the person to whom there are speaking.

“Having our own space allows us to concentrate on our alumni and friends in a way we couldn’t before,” Poynter noted. “We have access throughout the day and evening, and we can use the calling center for many types of events, not just alumni Phonathon.”

One of those special calling events was a new addition to this year’s Phonathon. The first Parent Phonathon was conducted during the spring semester, in which callers contacted parents of ASU freshmen and sophomores.

Parents made charitable gifts totaling more than $5,000, to the ASU Foundation, to be given to programs like the Dean B. Ellis Library, the ASU Museum, the general scholarship fund, or the college or department of study in which the student is enrolled.

“We are very pleased with the results of this first year for Parent Phonathon,” Poynter said. “It is a strong demonstration of the parental commitment to our A-State student population.”

Poynter said another demonstration of commitment to Arkansas State University was achieved in early spring when Torchbearers, the giving club of ASU faculty, faculty emeriti and staff, surpassed the $1 million mark of charitable gifts to the university.

“We are so excited to be here in a truly permanent location,” said Elaine Poynter, ASU’s annual giving coordinator. “It’s no longer a borrowed space, and we can promote a team-spirited atmosphere focusing on our alums and serving their needs.”

Poynter said that while the $1 million mark is a superb achievement, a new year of Torchbearer recruiting is under way, and she is hoping faculty and staff participation will rise above the 50 percent participation level. But to recognize the $1 million accomplishment level, a long-sleeve t-shirt was designed by ASU’s Publications and Creative Services department for this year’s participants.

To become a Torchbearer or to upgrade a donation, faculty and staff may contact Poynter at epoynter@astate.edu, or call her at (870) 972-3940. To receive one of the t-shirts, a gift of $48 or a payroll deduction of $2 or more per pay period must be pledged.

The t-shirt slogan: Thanks a Million!

This year’s Torchbearer club members are receiving a “Thanks a Million” long-sleeved t-shirt for their participation toward a million dollars in faculty and staff gifts to ASU.
Arkansas State University eleven

ASU Summer Children’s Theatre sells out 2002 season

A gingerbread man and an ugly duckling seem an unlikely pair for success, but that’s exactly the story of the 2002 season for Arkansas State University’s Summer Children’s Theatre.

“It was a great summer,” said Bob Simpson, chairman of ASU’s Department of Theatre and professor of Theatre. “We had sell-out crowds during each performance. All of our guests seemed to really enjoy both plays.”

This summer, the two plays were patronized by local businesses. “The Gingerbread Man” was sponsored in June by the Golden Grotto, a costume, gift and party supply shop, while “The Ugly Duckling,” presented in July, was supported by j. christopher Toys and Collectibles. Simpson said this was the first time a Summer Children’s Theatre production has been presented through a gift from any organization.

“The Golden Grotto has been a long-time supporter of the Theatre Department,” he said. “But we have never had sponsors for our summer program.”

Not only did the businesses sponsor the performances, Simpson said, but they sponsored the tickets for one performance to be given to area children with disabilities.

“A cast and production crew of 20 to 25 people, including faculty, students and volunteers, are needed to work on each play. A portion of the gifts from the two businesses goes to scholarships that support students participating in summer theatre. Simpson said this sixth season was another success.

“Because of demand, we increased the number of performances for both plays, and both were sell-outs,” he said. “As we work to garner more public and corporate support, we hope to increase the number of performances and build on the program.”

A cast of “The Ugly Duckling” following a dress rehearsal in July: (From left, seated) Kimberley Lee and Nicole Kelly; (from left, standing) Ashley Swetnam, Starlett Collier, Ashley Patterson and Brittany Hillyer.

“The Gingerbread Man,” also known as Starlett Collier, signs autographs following the June Summer Children’s Theatre performance.

“We don’t allow anything that would distract from the performance while it is being presented,” Simpson said. “So cell phones and pagers must be turned off, and no photos may be taken. The autograph session works well because the kids get to meet the cast in-costume, and can also have their photo made with the cast.”

“Any time we can help promote the talent of ASU’s theatre students, we’re glad to be involved,” said Larry McIlvoy, owner of the Golden Grotto. “It’s just something we want to do, especially the performance for our special children.”

Jill Jernigan, co-owner of j. christopher, said she was pleased with the enthusiasm with which the crowd responded to “The Ugly Duckling.”

“I thought it was a good thing for the children of Jonesboro,” Jernigan said. “We were really excited about how excited the children were to be able to see live theater.”

Each performance culminated in a very popular autograph session with the plays’ characters.

“We allow the children to do anything that they want,” Simpson said. “But we ask that they not use cell phones or pagers, and not to take any photos.”
Jonesboro surgeon brings “About Face” to Fowler Center’s Bradbury Gallery

Thanks to the generosity of a local surgeon, a major art exhibition has come to Bradbury Gallery in Fowler Center on the Arkansas State University campus.

“About Face,” the collection of Little Rock residents Jackye and Curtis Finch Jr., was presented to the ASU region through a gift provided by Jonesboro plastic surgeon Dr. Connie Hiers. The collection of drawings, completed by more than 75 artists, is a study in faces and the human figure the Finches began acquiring in 1985.

“It was a perfect fit for me,” Dr. Hiers said. “The opportunity to bring such an exhibition here, which hadn’t been done before, was very appealing to me.”

The collection has been on loan to the Arkansas Arts Center in Little Rock. During the last few years, Arkansas State University has developed a special relationship with the arts center, said ASU President Dr. Les Wyatt. That relationship turned the possibility of bringing the About Face collection to ASU into reality.

“When we thought about the exhibition itself, and the images, the various faces it features, we wondered, who else is ‘about’ faces?” Dr. Wyatt said. “We were glad when Dr. Hiers graciously responded to bringing this wonderful exhibition to Bradbury Gallery. We hope to make this sort of exhibition an annual occasion.”

“You really have a treasure here in Bradbury Gallery,” said Tom Hall.

Hall, an artist affiliated with the Arkansas Arts Center for more than 25 years, said the exhibition represents a little less than half of the Finch collection.

“Markham Road” 1993, an oil on paper print by Glenn Priestley, is one of the prints displayed in the “About Face” exhibit sponsored by Dr. Connie Hiers.

Three of Hall’s works are on display in the exhibition. He stressed the collection is one consisting of mostly drawings.

“A drawing is a unique work on paper that is not a print,” Hall said. “About Face is a wonderful collection that I was fortunate enough to help Curtis and Jackye Finch develop.”

Dr. Hiers, who also supports Arkansas State University academics, said she’s hopeful others will consider the opportunity to bring these kinds of showings to the region.

“I love museums and art,” she said. “Even though I’m not a graduate of Arkansas State, I do live here. This is a wonderful part of our community, and I am happy to support it.”

“I hope people enjoy the exhibition and I hope we’ll have more.”

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twelve
Vaughns donate bronze sculptures of Native Americans for Arkansas State Student Union

A gift of art from Jim and Wanda Lee Vaughn of Delaplaine to Arkansas State University demonstrates their devotion to their alma mater and underscores their appreciation for Native American culture.

The couple has donated eight bronzes from the Native American series by artist Mark Hopkins of Rome, Ga. The sculptures will be prominently displayed in the Student Union, which is currently under construction in the center of the Jonesboro campus.

At a recognition event, Dr. Les Wyatt, ASU president, talked about the meaning of the gift and the art itself.

“We are very grateful for the gift of this personal collection, which is particularly significant to us at Arkansas State University because it represents quality images of Native Americans,” he said. “Mark Hopkins is recognized and celebrated for his work of this type. Each of these works is very remarkable, and features the finest craftsmanship.”

The eight sculptures, each one from a numbered series, are titled “Broken Treaty,” “In Search of Peace,” “Grandfather’s Prayer,” “Grandmother’s Blessing,” “Gathering Wisdom,” “Legend Keeper,” “Shaman’s Vision” and “Peace No More.”

Hopkins, who learned of the Vaughns’ gift to ASU, said, “I hope the faculty and students, as well as university visitors, will enjoy the spirit I try to instill in my Native American sculptures. That spirit can serve as a source of inspiration to each of us, as it represents the nobility of the human race.”

The collection will be displayed in a special way at Arkansas State.

“Because Native American people have a great heritage, we are especially pleased with the university’s plan for placing these works in the new student union,” Mrs. Vaughn told President Wyatt.

The Vaughns are longtime benefactors of ASU, having supported academic and athletic programs with previous gifts. Both are A-State graduates; she completed a bachelor’s degree in Education in 1961, and he earned a master’s degree in Education the following year.

The couple has also given generously of their time to benefit ASU. Mrs. Vaughn is a former member of the ASU Foundation, Inc., Board of Directors; she served from 1993 through 1999. Mr. Vaughn served as a member of the Advisory Council for the ASU Museum from 1994 through 1997.

Additionally, the Vaughns were recognized in 1993 as Lifetime Benefactors of the ASU Museum.

Their staunch support of the Indian athletic program led them to involvement in the ASU Indian Club, where they established the Jim and Wanda Lee Vaughn Athletic Endowment for Arkansas State University athletes.

During their careers in education, the Vaughns were involved in several facets of education. They served many years on the faculty of the Hoxie School District, where she taught speech and dramatic arts, and he was high school principal. They are still remembered in the district as strong proponents of the arts, especially through stage productions. She also taught at Delaplaine and at Williams Baptist College in Walnut Ridge.

The couple has written and published educational materials to be used at the elementary and secondary school levels. Mrs. Vaughn combined her interest in dramatic arts and local history to write and direct major productions with regional interest, such as “Mother of Countries” in Lawrence County, and “The Crowley’s Ridge Story” in Greene County.

Mrs. Vaughn was instrumental in introducing the Quiz Bowl when he served as a member of the Arkansas Educational Television Commission from 1980 to 1988.
An Arkansas State University alumnus has created a significant scholarship endowment honoring his family and benefitting the nursing profession for generations to come.

Lea Leet, who serves as the Leet Family representative to Arkansas State University, said the scholarship endowment will begin in Fall 2002 and will provide equal scholarship awards to two deserving students pursuing the four-year RN BSN degree.

First preference will be given to those students from Poinsett County who are eligible. Second preference will be given to those students from Crittenden and Craighead counties, Leet said.

Financial need and past academic performance are considered in the scholarship selection process and strong consideration is given to minority students who meet the qualifications, she explained.

The scholarship honors the Leet family, which has a long history in Poinsett County. It was established through the generosity of a family member who now lives outside the state of Arkansas.

To date, the gift that provides for the Leet Family Scholarship, is the most significant scholarship endowment in the College of Nursing and Health Professions.

One reason for the establishment of the scholarship, the donor said, is because of the strong educational foundation he received while attending classes at Arkansas State University.

“I grew up in this area and attended school at ASU twice, before and after the war,” the donor said. “I believe that my schooling and what was given to me there was very helpful along the way."

“I very strongly believe in education. Beginning a life beyond high school graduation can be expensive and it’s important to have some money available to start on that road to success,” the donor said.

Dr. Tom Kippenbrock, chairman of the Department of Nursing in the College of Nursing and Health Professions, said the scholarship is extremely important for Arkansans and the overall health of Arkansas.

“If it were not for the generous donation of the Leet family and other donors, students would have financial difficulties attending nursing programs,” he said. “At a time of an inadequate nursing workforce, this gift makes it possible to support more nursing students. The Department of Nursing is deeply indebted to the Leet family."

The donor said he was particularly drawn to support the College of Nursing and Health Professions at ASU because of the need across the country for nursing professionals.

Helping nursing students to get their education can pay dividends for the future, he said, because of the help that future nurses can give to people in years to come.

“It is needed in nursing. In time, a nursing student can help to make another life better and if you help others, you will be blessed."

“If there is a way you can do something to help in a way like this, I think it is worth it. Education is a very important tool for life.”
“Holiday Spectacular” to be a “thank you” to the region

To celebrate the holiday season and to say “thank you” in a big way, the Arkansas State University Foundation and College of Fine Arts are presenting as their gift to the community the first “Holiday Spectacular” on Sunday, Dec. 8, 2002 at Fowler Center.

ASU Director of Development Steve Watkins said the event is being sponsored for a number of reasons.

“We wanted to showcase a broad array of student and faculty talent,” he explained. “That is one of our greatest resources here on the Arkansas State University campus. We’ll also be showcasing Fowler Center, one of the greatest facilities of its kind in this region. We feel so fortunate to have so many great folks who’ve supported ASU in different ways through the course of the year. Through this event, which we hope to create as an annual holiday tradition, we want to say, ‘thanks.’”

Watkins said the free ticketed event will have a great holiday atmosphere. Featured performances will include the ASU Handbell Choir, the Wind Ensemble, University Singers and ASU Concert Orchestra as well as other musical groups.

The grand finale, Watkins said, will include all the performing groups coming together in a unique way.

“We’re fortunate here at ASU in that we get to bring the collective talents of so many young people together in one place,” he noted. “This is some of the finest talent around. The opportunity to have them perform in a facility like Riceland Hall will set the stage for a memorable performance, unlike anything ever done in this community.”

“We are proud to showcase this very diverse talent, and it is a pleasure for us to present to our friends and supporters the talents and quality of our students here at Arkansas State University.”

Guests will also enjoy a visual presentation, as Fowler Center will be decorated in the holiday motif, and an epicurean presentation in the refreshments that will be served.

Watkins stressed that while this is a performance is free, the event will be ticketed. He said the tickets are available through the Development Office, and will be given on a first-come, first-served basis.

For more information, or to request tickets, please write University Development, P.O. Box 1990, State University AR 72467, or call (870) 972-3940. If you live outside the Jonesboro area, you may call toll-free at (888) 225-8343.

Arkansas State University
To honor the memory of a father that sparked his interest in music, an Arkansas State University faculty member has made a significant gift that will bolster the Department of Music’s electronic music program.

Dr. Timothy Crist, assistant professor of music in the College of Fine Arts, made the gift to purchase a Moog Minimoog Voyager synthesizer for the college’s electronic music studio.

Dr. Crist grew up in a house full of music lovers and musicians, he said. That support led him to his first instrument—an electric guitar.

“Dad encouraged me and allowed me to experiment with oscillators and other various electronic equipment,” Dr. Crist explained. “From there I experimented with other methods of signal processing. I just enjoyed experimenting with sound.”

Dr. Crist’s father, Philip Widdecombe Crist, was a Carnegie Mellon University graduate who worked during his career as an electronics engineer in Long Island, N.Y. After retirement, he moved to Pisgah Forest, N.C., where he was an amateur painter, free-lance writer and electronic hobbyist.

“Dad really got interested in electronic music when the ‘Switched On Bach’ album was released,” Dr. Crist said. “The album was recorded using a Moog synthesizer created by Bob Moog. Moog was one of the pioneers of the portable synthesizer. Recently I learned that Bob Moog lived only 30 miles away from my father. I just believed it was the perfect gift to give to the program and it would be a great way to honor my dad.”

While an electronic music studio has been in ASU’s music department for more than 10 years, Crist said the electronic music program is formally beginning its fourth year.

“We first had a 12-by-six room as a studio. Now, thanks to a recent infusion of funds, we have state-of-the-art equipment and a large studio. I believe Arkansas State is the leading provider of electronic music in the state.”

Electronic music involves the use of computers and various sound processing equipment to create musical works. The electronic music studio is outfitted with computer software like Pro Tools, a digital audio sequencer and editor, and a composition program called Metasynth, which converts graphics into sound.

“It’s easy for even non-musicians to work,” he noted. “Flexibility is one of the key features. Students get an immediate response to their composition as opposed to having to hire an orchestra to play the piece. Electronic music allows for immediate feedback.”

“The backbone of a musical piece is that there is a stream of logic running throughout. This stream of logic may be realized in a number of ways. Usually, we connect to a piece of music through its melody or harmonic progression. In electronic music, the connection may be made at some other musical parameter such as color or texture. Students now listen to music differently because of this. The electronic music program is a very important facet of the music program at ASU.”

Dr. Crist said there are usually about seven students who take his electronic music class, but he expects that number to double. Students are given instruction individually. The class is part of the curriculum for a student working toward a degree in composition; students generally go on to become composers of electronic music for various media, as well as music teachers and performers.

He noted that two ASU undergraduates had their works played last spring at the Electronic Midwest Festival in Kansas City. He said he is pleased with the progress of his students, and encourages them to seek creativity and experimentation.

“Electronic music offers an alternative listening experience, and it is a great learning experience for the students.”
Students of the College of Engineering and university faculty are mourning the loss of one of Arkansas State University’s own after Albert Mink, dean of the College of Engineering, died on Friday, Sept. 6, 2002.

Mink was a 36-year veteran of the ASU faculty and had been behind the push to make the Department of Engineering a college, said Dr. Les Wyatt, ASU president.

“Al really has built the engineering department, the engineering program we see here at ASU today,” Dr. Wyatt said.

He took that college from a department to one of only two fully accredited engineering colleges in the state; meanwhile, he led its students to being the top in the state, Dr. Wyatt noted.

“With everything he did as a dean he still like to get out there and recruit for the university, bringing in students from all over the state.”

“We will greatly miss his leadership and influence on the professional world of engineering. It is a very tragic loss that we are very sorry to see. He was a great guy,” Dr. Wyatt said.

Dr. Eugene Smith, president Emeritus of ASU and former dean of Graduate Studies, said, “He is the grandfather of our Engineering program and his death is a tragic loss. He was a graduate of our university, and he was very loyal and dedicated to this institution and he will be missed."

Bob Cable, a junior Engineering major of Blytheville, said, “He was a great professor. I had him this semester and he was a great person. He has really helped a lot of the students in the department and was a great mentor."

“This is such a tragedy; he will be really missed,” Cable added.

Russell Shain, dean of the College of Communications, who served with Mink on the Dean’s Council, said, “He worked hard and did miraculous things for the College of Engineering. He was a favorite, enjoyable to be around, and a great person; he will be truly missed."

Mink graduated from Arkansas State in 1961, and went on to receive a master of Science degree at Louisiana State University, and then a doctorate at Oklahoma State University.

After completing his doctoral degree, Mink returned to become a faculty member at ASU in 1966. He was a professor of Agricultural Engineering and department chair of the Department of Engineering until Sept. 30, 1999, when the department became a college. Mink was then named dean of the new college, the position he held until his death.

(This story is reprinted from The Herald, and was written by Herald News Editor Grover Welch.)

Send us your ideas

The Foundation News is published twice yearly by the division of University Advancement at Arkansas State University. We welcome your ideas about the ways in which we might better serve you with information about Development project highlights, or about information related to opportunities for charitable giving to the ASU Foundation.

Call or write to us with your comments and suggestions. You may write to: Diana Monroe, Office of Development, P.O. Box 1990, State University, AR 72467, call toll-free at: 1-888-225-8343, or send e-mail to: dmonroe@astate.edu