

Building Arkansas

Official Magazine of the American Council of Engineering Companies of Arkansas & the Arkansas Society of Professional Engineers



Why the name change?

The first thing you probably noticed when you received this magazine was the masthead. Instead of “Arkansas Professional Engineer,” it’s now “Building Arkansas.”

Why the name change?

“Building Arkansas” is what engineers do. Every day, engineers design the roads, bridges, water systems, and electrical infrastructure that make everything else possible. That horn should be tooted. “Building Arkansas” is action-oriented, as opposed to a simple description of who we are. OK, so we’re Arkansas professional engineers. Does that mean we drive trains?

“Building Arkansas” better describes ourselves to the outside world. This magazine’s primary audience is professional engineers who work for ACEC/A member firms and/or are members of the Arkansas Society of Professional En-



Angie W. Cooper
Executive Director

gineers. But it’s also mailed to mayors, county judges, state legislators, congressional offices, and others who employ us and regulate us.

“Arkansas Professional Engineer” tells them who we are but not why we’re needed. In fact, both the words “professional” and “engineer” have been so overused and misused that many people don’t ap-

preciate what they mean anymore. We must remind these officials that we’re the ones who build Arkansas, so they should avoid any actions that dilute the importance of licensure and compromise our work’s integrity and therefore the public’s welfare.

The only downside is that we’re losing the magazine’s fun nickname, “the APE.” Now I guess it’s the “BARK.”

Rest assured, we’re not running away from the professional engineer label. We religiously add the letters “P.E.” after the name of every engineer who’s earned it.

Those two letters are like the first letters – “Dr.” – attached to each medical school graduate. They’re not symbols of flattery. They are reminders of the work’s importance. When doctors don’t do their jobs well, people can die. The same is true of engineers, which is why they should be professionals.



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FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT

Chuck Champlin at 501-626-6666 or cchamplin@icminc.us

OR

Trisha Champlin at 501-690-7744 or tchamplin@icminc.us

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18 Jim Vetter, P.E., of Olsson, left, is this year's ASPE president, while B & F Engineering's James Montgomery, P.S., is this year's ACEC/A president. Both are profiled on pages 18-22 in this issue.

News and Features

16 **Spotlight / Pickering growing; has two state offices**

When O.L. Pickering founded the Pickering Engineering Company in 1946, who knows if he could have imagined that someday the firm would employ about 130 people with seven offices in three states, including two in Arkansas?

18 **Cover / Surveyor situation**

The American Council of Engineering Companies this year will be led by a surveyor, not an engineer. That's not a problem. James Montgomery, P.S., is accustomed to leadership as president of B & F Engineering in Hot Springs.

20 **Cover / 'No regrets' about career change**

Olsson's Jim Vetter, P.E., is this year's president of the Arkansas Society of Professional Engineers, but he didn't start his career in engineering. Instead, he worked at an aquarium.

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How a P.S. came to be president of ACEC/A

I am honored to serve as the new ACEC/A president. I'm hopeful that I can continue to represent ACEC/A at the highest level, as our past president Byron Hicks and the others did before me. I am certainly lucky to have the assistance of a very engaged board of directors and an experienced executive director, Angie Cooper, along with many others.



James Montgomery, P.S.
ACEC/A President

About five years ago, Garver's Dan Williams, P.E., nomination committee chair, asked me if I would like to be an ACEC/A state director. At some point, I brought up the fact that I'm a surveyor, not an engineer, but no one seemed concerned. After researching the bylaws, I learned that wherever the words "consulting engineer" or "consulting engineering" appear it is intended that the words "land surveyor" or "land surveying" may be substituted, so I agreed to serve.

As president of B & F Engineering, I work with our engineers as well as engineers with other firms daily. It's been an honor to provide land surveying services to some of the state's finest consulting engineering companies.

Throughout my career, I have always closely associated myself with consulting engineers. It's always been clear to me that engineers and surveyors have much in common. We're all part of the same industry, especially the civil sector, and we have the same goal, a commitment to public health, safety and welfare. And we all pretty much deal in straight lines. We just use different tools.

During my time with ACEC/A, I've never felt like I didn't belong, even though I have a "P.S." after my name and everyone else has a "P.E." at the end of theirs. We're all in this together, working toward the same goals to strengthen the business environment for our member firms through government advocacy, political action, and business education.

That being the case, we should think about what we hope to accomplish. Each

new year brings an opportunity to rethink our goals. I'd like to see us not only grow membership, but better engage existing members. Let's welcome smaller firms as well as the bigger ones. Those smaller firms, in fact, would benefit most from ACEC/A's services.

And let's reach out to parts of the state that aren't well represented – those areas outside central Arkansas, Northwest

Arkansas, Jonesboro and Hot Springs. Most of the larger firms are in those areas, but there are many engineers and/or surveyors in other places who are trying to do business on their own and don't realize what they would gain from associating with the organization. If you're an ASPE or Arkansas Society of Professional Surveyors member but your firm doesn't belong to ACEC/A, I encourage you to look at how you might benefit and see how you can become active in both organizations.

At the same time we're broadening our base, we can also deepen it. ACEC/A tends to involve a relatively small number of officers from its leading member firms. Instead, let's get more people involved. Yes, it's helpful when three or four prominent individuals testify before a legislative committee. But imagine the benefit if legislators were hearing from hundreds of us?

ACEC/A members compete hard against each other by day, but when it comes to our industry, we're all on the same team. The bigger and deeper our team, the stronger it will be. If your firm is not involved, give us a call, and we'll tell you how to join. If your firm is active in ACEC/A but you are not, then we can help you become an active member as well.

And don't let having a "P.S." at the end of your name instead of a "P.E.," stop you. It didn't stop me, or the ones who asked me, and I have since been a proud member and witnessed the benefit we all gain by being involved.



**American Council of Engineering
Companies of Arkansas
Officers 2019-20**

President

James Montgomery, P.S.
B&F Engineering
928 Airport Road
Hot Springs, AR 71913
501.767.2366

President-elect

Steven Beam, P.E.
Burns & McDonnell
6815 Isaac's Orchard Road, Suite B3
Springdale, AR 72762
479.725.5460

Secretary

Steve Pawlaczyk, P.E.
CEI Engineering Associates, Inc.
3108 SW Regency Parkway, Suite 2
Bentonville, AR 72712
800.433.4173

Treasurer

Jerry Holder, P.E.
Garver
4701 Northshore Drive
North Little Rock, AR 72118
501.376.3633

State Director

Mike Stengel, P.E.
Michael Baker International
1400 W. Markham St., Suite 204
Little Rock, AR 72201
501.244.1006

State Director

Paul Crawford, P.E., P.G.
FTN Associates
3 Innwood Circle, Suite 220
Little Rock, AR 72211
501.225.7779

State Director

Jerry Kelso, P.E.
Crafton Tull
10825 Financial Centre Parkway #300
Little Rock, AR 72211
501.664.3245

National Director

Jeff Geurian, P.E.
CEI Engineering Associates, Inc.
3108 SW Regency Parkway, Suite 2
Bentonville, AR 72712
800.433.4173

Immediate Past President

Byron Hicks, P.E.
McClelland Consulting Engineers
7302 Kanis Road
Little Rock, AR 72203
501.371.0272

**Arkansas Society of
Professional Engineers
Officers 2019-20**
President

Jim Vetter, P.E.
Olsson
302 E. Millsap Road
Fayetteville, AR 72703-4098

President-elect

Daniel George, P.E.
B&F Engineering
928 Airport Road
Hot Springs, AR 71913-4618

Secretary-Treasurer

Travis Tolley, P.E.
Crafton Tull
10825 Financial Centre Parkway #300
Little Rock, AR 72211
501.664.3245

National Delegate

Travis B. Scott, P.E., CFM
FTN Associates
124 W. Sunbridge Drive, Suite 3
Fayetteville, AR 72703
479.387.0848

Past President

Fred Harper, P.E.
Michael Baker International
1400 W. Markham St., Suite 204
Little Rock, AR 72201
501.244.1006

Executive Director

Angie W. Cooper
ASPE and ACEC/A
P.O. Box 24902
Little Rock, AR 72221
501.912.4099

Arkansas Professional Engineer
Editor & Publisher

Steve Brawner
Steve Brawner Communications
501.794.2012
brawnersteve@mac.com

Executive Editor

Angie Cooper
awcooper@arkansasengineers.org
ACEC/A - ASPE
P.O. Box 24902
Little Rock, AR 72221
Office 501.912.4099
arkansasengineers.org

Arkansas Professional Engineer is published quarterly by the Arkansas Society of Professional Engineers and the American Council of Engineering Companies of Arkansas. Copyright 2019 by those organizations and by Steve Brawner Communications. All rights reserved.

Protect licensure and engineers' reputations

I am excited to serve as the new Arkansas Society of Professional Engineers president. The organization has been a great opportunity for me to build friendships with others in this profession and further grow in my career. This first column is focused on the key issue of protecting professional licensure and the importance of the professional engineer's reputation with the public.



Jim Vetter, P.E.
ASPE President

Professional licensure for engineers remains necessary today to protect public health, safety and welfare. Engineering is vital for the quality of life for all people. Engineers design buildings, water treatment systems, bridges, factories, roadways, and now autonomous vehicles. Engineers assume responsibility for their projects and for the safety and welfare of their clients and public. The design process can be described as a series of technical decisions to solve a problem. These decisions are driven by constraints including those from the project owner and regulatory agencies. Good decisions require technical competency. This competency is gained through education and experience. Licensing requirements ensure that only technically and professionally qualified individuals are practicing in their fields.

Some policymakers are debating reducing or even eliminating occupational licensing requirements based on the premise that licensing is a barrier preventing people from entering certain lines of work. People would be allowed to practice an occupation provided they disclose their unlicensed status to the consumer. This assumes market forces and litigation will protect the public from unqualified practitioners. But occupations where public safety is at risk require more not less stringent laws.

Engineers must hold their behavior to a higher standard or risk losing their usefulness to the public. The NSPE Code of Ethics states that engineers shall "enhance the honor, reputation, and usefulness of the profession." The code further values honesty, fairness, impartiality and equity. When the work of engineers does not reflect these values, they

may no longer be perceived as objective or working in the best interest of their client. In some cases, this may lead to mistrust. One of my mentors, Carl Yates, P.E., impressed upon me the importance of trust. Without trust we cannot have a functional relationship with our clients, and strong relationships are necessary for success. The message the public receives from engineers needs to reflect these values.

These are among the values ASPE celebrates by recognizing the impact of engineers on our communities annually with the Engineer of the Year (EOY) and Young Engineer of the Year (YEOY) awards. There are many talented and determined engineers all over the state of Arkansas working tirelessly within utilities, industries, and government to provide products and services of the highest quality to the public. These awards provide a rare opportunity to recognize these individuals.

We hope to see greater participation in the nomination process for the EOY and YEOY awards and further highlight the hard work, perseverance, and high standards found in this profession. The rigorous paperwork requirements for nomination have been an obstacle. This year, we plan on streamlining the nomination process to make it easier to nominate individuals for these awards. Please be on the lookout for this later in the year and submit a nomination.

In the News



ESOP ANNOUNCEMENT. Matt Crafton, P.E., Crafton Tull president and CEO, announces the creation of the company's Employee Stock Ownership Plan.

Crafton Tull to become 100% employee owned

Crafton Tull announced Sept. 3 it is selling the company's stock to its employees through an employee stock ownership plan. It becomes just the third Arkansas-based company to be owned 100% by employees through an ESOP, joining Harps Foods and Central States Manufacturing.

The company employs 250 people to provide its architecture, engineering, surveying, landscape architecture, and planning services. Founded in 1963 by Bob Crafton and Lem Tull, it has grown to \$35 million in annual revenues and serves clients in numerous states through nine offices in Arkansas and Oklahoma.

Crafton Tull has always maintained an active presence in the local community. Company employees serve in numerous community leadership positions and nonprofit organizations. To celebrate its 50th anniversary five years ago, the company performed 50 Acts of Kindness in the communities where it operates, volunteering at food banks, planting trees, working in schools, and assisting various nonprofit organizations.

Crafton Tull President & CEO Matt Crafton stated in a press release, "We realized a number of years ago that we would eventually need a plan to transfer the ownership of the business to the next generation. We and those who went before us worked long and hard to build this business, and we want to see it continue far into the future. We want our workforce and the communities that have supported us all these years to continue to do well by us in the future. With this plan, all of our current leadership will stay in place, and we'll continue to operate and grow the company."

Crafton Tull Chief Financial Officer Jim Tull added, "We really needed a transition plan that worked for everyone – for our current owners, our staff, the communities we serve and of course for our clients. Transitioning ownership to the ESOP allows us to continue moving forward based on the core values that have always guided our business – integrity, respect, excellence, responsiveness, teamwork and safety."

An ESOP is a federally regulated retirement plan that is designed to invest primarily in the shares of the parent company. Employees will receive shares of Crafton Tull stock over time, and will receive the cash value of those shares after they retire or leave the company. As is the case with most ESOPs in successful companies, the ownership transition will be funded with corporate earnings. Individual employees are not investing their own funds.

There are approximately 6,500 ESOPs in the U.S., according to recent figures provided by the ESOP Association in Washington, D.C.

Crafton noted that Crafton Tull plans "a series of employee communications" to explain the ESOP.

"We are truly thrilled with this outcome and look forward to many more years of successful operations in the communities we serve," he said.

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In the News (Cont'd)

Garver's Williams accepted into College of Fellows

Garver Chief Executive Officer Dan Williams, P.E., has been accepted into the ACEC College of Fellows, one of the organization's highest honors reserved for those deserving of recognition for exemplary contribution to the profession.



Williams

Williams, who began with Garver as a design engineer in 1982, joins Garver Chief Administrative Officer Bert Parker, P.E., and former President and CEO Brock Johnson, P.E., among the six from Arkansas accepted into the group.

Since becoming CEO in 2012, Williams has helped Garver transform into a national firm now boasting nearly 700 employees in 31 offices in 12 states. He is currently leading Garver through its centennial year, an effort that has included celebrations with communities and clients throughout the Garver footprint.

"ACEC is something I've been involved with a long time," Williams said. "I think it's a very important organization for Garver in particular and for our industry – not only in the state but nationally I think it's very important. So I poured a lot of time and effort in it, and it's nice to have that recognized."



Calendar of events

Emerging Leaders Contracts and Risk Reduction
Oct. 9
BSX Insurance
Little Rock

ACEC Fall Conference
Oct. 13-16
Chicago

ACEC/A Agency Update
Nov. 6
Little Rock

Garver at 31 offices with two in Texas, one in New Orleans

Garver has opened three new office locations in College Station, Texas; El Paso, Texas; and New Orleans.

With the additions, the company headquartered in North Little Rock now has nearly 700 employees spread between 31 offices in 12 states providing designs for aviation, construction, facilities, federal, power, transportation, survey, and water projects.

Michael Baker's Stengel to head firm's Dallas office



Stengel

Michael Baker International announced Sept. 3 that Mike Stengel, P.E., has been promoted to office executive in Dallas. The office serves as the regional headquarters and flagship

of the Gulf Coast Region, which encompasses Texas, Arkansas and Louisiana.

In his new role, Stengel will lead a multi-discipline team in executing client projects and continuing to expand the business with new clients, markets and capabilities. He will continue to serve as the interim office executive for the Little Rock office while he transitions into this new role.

"Mike has been an integral part of the Michael Baker International team for more than 12 years," said Juan Contreras, the Gulf Coast Region's senior vice president and regional director, in a press release. "In that time, he has significantly contributed to the company's growth in the region, expanding his previous office and providing strategic leadership to his colleagues and clients. In his new role, Mike will maintain that same standard of excellence as he leads a talented team in solving some of the most complex infrastructure issues in Texas."

Stengel joined Michael Baker in 2007 and has most recently served as the office executive in Little Rock. During this time, he led the office's work in airport, roadway, bridge and municipal design, as well as survey and construction management services for clients including Arkansas Department of Transportation, Bill & Hillary Clinton National Airport, Military Department of Arkansas, City of Little Rock, Jonesboro Municipal Airport and more.

Prior to joining Michael Baker, Stengel spent 12 years as a project engineer in

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In the News (Cont'd)

Arkansas focused primarily on airport and municipal design and construction projects.

Stengel earned a bachelor of science degree in civil engineering from the University of Arkansas. His professional affiliations include serving as an ACEC/Arkansas board member and state director, and membership in the Arkansas Airport Operators Association and Society of American Military Engineers.

Michael Baker International provides engineering and consulting services including design, planning, architectural, environmental, construction and program management.

It employs more than 3,000 employees across nearly 100 locations.

ARDOT wins AASHTO award for Highway 70 widening; Michael Baker designed

The Arkansas Department of Transportation won the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) 2019 America's Transportation Award in the "Operations Excellence, Medium Project" category for its widening of Highway 70 from Hot Springs to Interstate 30.



The \$78.5 million project widened 17.5 miles to five lanes and replaced four bridges. Michael Baker International provided environmental and design services. B & F Engineering provided surveying services.

As a regional winner, the Highway 70 Widening project will be considered for inclusion in the competition's "Top 12," which will be announced at the AASHTO Annual Meeting in St. Louis in October.

The America's Transportation award winners demonstrate how state DOTs collaborate with local communities and partners to develop innovative, multimodal solutions that keep people and goods moving.

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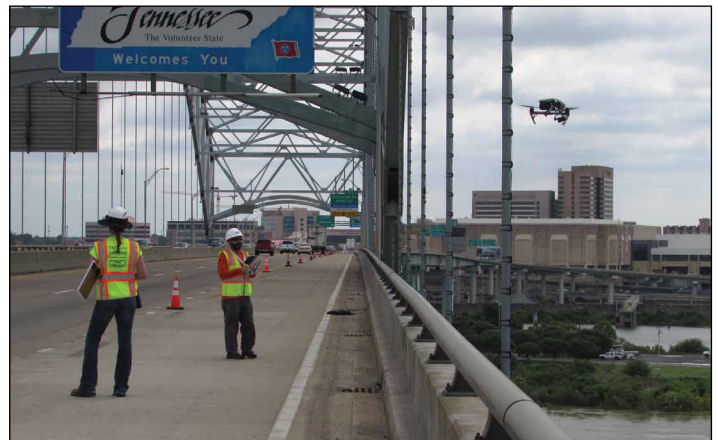
LOUISIANA (HEADQUARTERS)
7731 Office Park Blvd.
Baton Rouge, LA 70809
Tel: 225.295.1200
Fax: 225.295.1800
rhebert@etec-sales.com
dhebert@etec-sales.com
bessums@etec-sales.com

MISSISSIPPI
3000 Old Canton Rd.
Suite 410
Jackson, MS 39216
Tel: 601.899.8525
Fax: 601.899.8575
sagnew@etec-sales.com
mrodd@etec-sales.com
bagnew@etec-sales.com

TENNESSEE
119 S. Main St., Suite 500
Memphis, TN 38103
Tel: 901.322.8082
Fax: 901.322.8083
matthew@etec-sales.com

ARKANSAS
900 S. Shackleford, Suite 300
Little Rock, AR 72211
Tel: 501.978.1025
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Michael Baker first to use drone for ARDOT bridge look

Michael Baker International in June used unmanned aerial vehicles to inspect the Hernando De Soto Bridge on Interstate 40 between West Memphis and Memphis. It was the first time the Arkansas Department of Transportation has used a UAV for bridge inspection.

The firm performed a fracture critical structural inspection of the tied arch truss bridge's above-deck elements. The 175-foot arch height of the 9,400-foot structure, unique configuration, and heavy traffic made a thorough hands-on inspection by traditional means impossible.

In May, ARDOT selected Michael Baker International to perform the rope-access inspection of this bridge. In response to an accelerated schedule requirement, Michael Baker's multifaceted inspection team mobilized on June 16 and completed the physical inspection on June 21. This inspection consisted of both rope-access and traditional man-lift teams and equipment.

UAVs were utilized to inspect and capture imagery of the 92 steel hangar cables and the arch truss' exterior. This technology reduced time and labor and also provided additional recorded inspection data.

Fred Harper, P.E.; Hussam Saleem, P.E.; and Megan Land, E.I., of Michael Baker's Little Rock bridge design team played key roles in this project. Land served as part of the rope-access inspection team, gaining extensive experience toward becoming a fully certified rope-access trained bridge inspector.

Construction nears completion on new Maumelle interchange

After years of delays, construction is scheduled for completion by November on a new Interstate 40 interchange in Maumelle that was designed by Michael Baker International.



The city assigned the environmental study and design to a consultant in 2008. However, numerous environmental setbacks and the associated city street extension delayed the much-needed traffic-improvement project for several years.

In August 2016, the city and the Arkansas Department of Transportation agreed to reassign the environmental and design contract's remaining components to Michael Baker.

Michael Baker's transportation and environmental teams quickly updated the conceptual interchange design and other aspects of the incomplete and outdated environmental document, completed

and incorporated a required Phase I cultural resources investigation, submitted the environmental document for approval, and supported the city and ARDOT in a public meeting to present the updated information to stakeholders.

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In the News (Cont'd)

With approval of the updated environmental document pending, Michael Baker quickly completed the interchange design to include widening and approach slab replacement on existing twin bridges over Newton Creek on Interstate 40. Bids were received Oct. 24, 2018, and a groundbreaking ceremony for construction was held Dec. 10.

When completed, this new interchange will connect to White Oak Crossing, a recently completed city street extension, and create a third primary access route for Maumelle. This will significantly improve the heavy traffic that has plagued the city for years.

Saleem earns P.E. license, Chesnut completes internship

Michael Baker International's Husam Saleem, P.E., has earned his Arkansas professional engineering license.

Saleem is a key member of the firm's growing bridge design team in Little Rock. He is primarily focused on designing bridges for the Arkansas Department of Transportation, where he began his bridge design career after obtaining his doctoral degree in structural engineering at Iowa State University.

In other news, Caleb Chesnut served as an engineering intern this summer in Michael Baker's Little Rock office.



Chesnut

Chesnut gained valuable experience and spent time on a number of ongoing construction sites. He primarily performed transportation design in support of the Little Rock roadway and bridge teams. After concluding a very productive intern program Aug. 7, he returned to Fayetteville to complete his bachelor's degree in civil engineering.



SARACEN RESORT. Attending the event from MCE were, left to right, Robbie Bullis, E.I.; Maneesh Krishnan, P.E.; Adam Osweller, P.E.; Byron Hicks, P.E.; Mitch Rose; Andrew Miller; Dan Beranek, P.E.; and Adam Triche, P.E.

MCE providing design services for Saracen Casino

McClelland Consulting Engineers (MCE) joined the Quapaw Nation of Oklahoma in celebrating the groundbreaking for its \$350 million Saracen Casino Resort in Pine Bluff Aug. 5.

The 570,000-square-foot project expected to be completed in mid-2020 will

include an 80,000-square-foot gaming floor with about 2,000 slot machines and 50 gaming tables. The hotel will consist of 300 rooms, a conference center, entertainment venue, spa and restaurants.

MCE is providing survey, geotechnical, and site design services for the 110-acre site.



McClelland's 53 moving into new Fayetteville offices

McClelland Consulting Engineers' Fayetteville office, including its materials lab, is moving into a new 14,226-square-foot office at Vantage Drive Office Park. The building is being designed by Bentonville Architect Dave Burris and will replace the company's existing office located at 1810 N. College Ave. Approximately 53 individuals work out of this Fayetteville office.



MCE providing civil services for NTI welding facility

Northwest Technical Institute of Springdale held a groundbreaking ceremony Aug. 1 for its new welding tech facility. The facility is approximately 1,700 square feet and has associated parking.

McClelland Consulting Engineers is assisting WD&D Architects with civil and site services associated with construction.



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MCE CHEFS. Volunteers from McClelland Consulting Engineers' Little Rock office recently partnered with the Ronald McDonald House Charities to provide a home-cooked breakfast for the families that are staying in the house. The charity provides a "home away from home" for the families of children being treated at area hospitals. From left to right are Dan Beranek, P.E., April Lester, Andrew Miller, Max Hicks, Edwin Hankins IV, PLA, Jeremy Waits, and Paige Witcher.

MCE announces hiring of 3 in Little Rock, Fayetteville

MCE has recently announced the hiring of three individuals.

Auntreana Wade was hired as marketing coordinator in the Little Rock office to assist with its marketing and public relations efforts. She is a recent graduate of the University of Central Arkansas with a degree in public relations and a minor in marketing. She previously worked as the social media and event coordinator for DMC International in Fairfield Bay.

Anthony Vanderploeg has joined the Fayetteville office's Development Department as a licensed professional landscape architect. He is a 2002 graduate of the University of Arkansas' landscape architecture program. He has worked in the Fayetteville area on engineering and landscape architecture-related projects for the past 18 years – the first 15 in engineering before devoting his time fully to landscape architecture.

Paul Bryant was hired as a project designer for the firm's Fayetteville Development Department. He has more than 20 years of experience in project design. He has specialized in large and small retail as well as mixed-use developments. A graduate of Greenwood High School, he studied computer-aided drafting and engineering at the University of Arkansas – Fort Smith.

Olsson bolsters power team with addition of Robinson

Olsson has hired Matt Robinson, P.E., as lead engineer for the power and transmission team in Arkansas.

Based out of Olsson's Fayetteville office, Robinson manages design phases and teams for investor-owned, cooperative, and municipal power utilities projects. He leads the charge in all aspects of development, design, and implementation of substation, transmission line, and distribution projects.



Robinson

"Matt brings a wealth of experience to our power team in Fayetteville and was a key piece of the puzzle as we expand our services in this area to clients in and around Arkansas," said Brad Hammond, P.E., team leader in Fayetteville. "As more municipalities look to power their projects with alternative energy sources, Matt will be able to bring his expertise to these projects to make sure the power sources for utilities will be economical and efficient."

Robinson, who has bachelor's degrees in electrical engineering and in international economics and business from the University of Arkansas, specializes in protective relaying, coordination studies, settings development, panel design, substation retrofits, greenfield substation design and transmission line design.

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ACEC/A Member Spotlight

Pickering growing, has two state offices

Firm started by one in 1946 in Memphis now offers full suite of engineering services

When O.L. Pickering founded the Pickering Engineering Company in 1946, who knows if he could have imagined that someday the firm would employ about 130 people with seven offices in three states, including two in Arkansas?

Pickering had served as a military surveyor during World War II and founded the company in Memphis.

Since then, what's now known as the Pickering firm has grown many times over. It merged with another firm offering general civil and structural capabilities in about 1972. In about 1984, it added an architectural component. In 1999, it acquired Engineering Associates, Inc.

It also has opened seven branch offices. Five are in Mississippi – in Hernando, Jackson, Flowood, Pearl and Biloxi. It opened its first Arkansas office in Jonesboro in 2015. It's staffed by Mike Foster, P.E., and Tony Crafton, P.E., along with an engineering intern. This July, 25-year company veteran Cara Martin, P.E., opened a Little Rock office.

The company plans to increase its footprint in Arkansas.

"You've got to sell all day and work all night, so she's in that mode," said Mike Pohlman, P.E., president and CEO. "She's in the mode of selling right now. We've got a lot of good contacts over there, and our message of service and good work seems to be well received, and we plan on being very successful in that area."

The company offers many types of engineering services, including structural, mechanical, electrical, plumbing and fire protection.

Among its biggest jobs has been a \$30 million pumping station with a capacity of 1,750 cubic feet per second for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Bayou Meto Basin project.

The pumping station is located five miles east of Little Rock. It is part of a \$575 million project using Arkansas River surface water for 77,000 acres of cropland in 13 eastern Arkansas counties. It's



BAYOU METO BASIN PROJECT.

Pickering designed a \$30 million pumping station for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' \$575 million Bayou Meto Basin Project, top. The station will serve 77,000 acres of eastern Arkansas cropland with water pumped from the Arkansas River. Middle, Pickering has designed renovations and added fuel stations to Kroger stores, including this one in Jonesboro. Bottom, Pickering designed the new access road to the city-owned aquatic center in Searcy.

meant to protect groundwater that was being depleted for crop irrigation. The pumping station was designed in 2011 and constructed in 2013.

Pickering is also working with the city of West Memphis on a \$14 million extension for the final phase of the South Loop project. That project will provide industrial areas access to Interstates 40 and 55, relieve congestion, and keep heavy commercial vehicles out of residential streets. Pickering also has designed renovations and added fuel centers to numerous Kroger stores in Arkansas and other areas served by the supermarket chain's Memphis region.

Pickering has also worked for Arkansas State University, including making

improvements to Aggie Road, the campus' main entrance. It also has done some smaller projects for the Game and Fish Commission.

Pohlman said repeat business has been one of the keys to Pickering's continued success.

"We preach it every day here in the office, and it carries on to our clients," he said. "And once we do a project, it's very successful, and they always come back to us. ..."

"We're good. We like to say we're the best provider of our service. We know what projects and what markets we're good in, and we hit them hard, and we know what we're not capable of doing, and we don't pursue that."

In the News (Cont'd)

He is a registered professional engineer in Arkansas, Missouri and Oklahoma.

Olsson is a nationally recognized engineering firm that offers design and consulting services in planning and design, engineering, field services, environmental, and technology. For more information, go to www.olsson.com.

Hawkins-Weir promotes three, adds one to staff

Hawkins-Weir Engineers, Inc. (HW) recently has promoted Austin Anderson, E.I.; Nelson Heringer, E.I.; and Wes LeMonier, E.I., to the position of Staff Engineer II.

All three are scheduled to take their P.E. exam within the next one to two years. Anderson and Heringer work in



Heringer



Anderson



LeMonier



Williams

HW's Little Rock office, and LeMonier works in HW's Van Buren office.

HW also welcomes Trent Williams, P.E., MBA, to its team as a project manager. He will be working at HW's Fayetteville office. Williams is originally from southern Missouri and earned a civil

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Surveyor situation

This year's ACEC/A president isn't an engineer but knows how to work with them as B & F Engineering president

By Steve Brawner
Editor

The American Council of Engineering Companies this year will be led by a surveyor, not an engineer.

That's not a problem. James Montgomery, P.S., is accustomed to leadership as president of B & F Engineering in Hot Springs.

"I can work with anyone, I believe," he said. "I believe if we have any differences, I believe I can bring us together."

As ACEC/A president, Montgomery hopes to grow the membership, perhaps by five firms. However, his goal isn't simply increasing overall numbers. He'd like to see smaller companies in addition to big firms be involved. They can benefit from the services ACEC/A provides. He wants greater involvement by more members of currently active firms. And more members are needed in southwest Arkansas.

"I wish everyone really knew the value of ACEC," he said. "We have a great relationship with our congressmen, many of our state legislators. There are just so many business components out there that folks don't realize that you have to keep a watchful eye on because they affect us all, whether you're that one- or two-person or so operation or 300-person-plus organization."

Montgomery, 58, came home to Hot Springs when he joined B & F in November 1992. He had grown up on Lake Ouachita, where his parents owned the Spillway Resort. During summers, he would open the boat dock at 6 a.m. in the summers and water ski at the end of the day. He earned an associate of science in surveying degree from the University of Arkansas in 1983. After working in Hot Springs for county surveyor Winston Smith for a year and a half, he moved to Dallas to work for a county surveyor. He then spent seven years in Dallas working



JAMES MONTGOMERY, P.S., wants to increase ACEC/A membership and also involve more engineers working at ACEC/A member firms.

for an engineering firm, Espy Houston & Associates, and for the Texas National Research Laboratory Commission. That commission was created to build the Superconducting Super Collider, a 54-mile ring south of Dallas that would have accelerated electrically charged protons for collision experiments. Montgomery helped map about 1,500 tracts prior to land acquisition before Congress discontinued funding in 1993.

By then, Montgomery had already left the firm to come home to Hot Springs in

November 1992 with his wife, Karen, and one-year-old son, Ryan, to work for B & F Engineering. He and Janet would later have a daughter, Katherine. At the time, Bill Fletcher, P.E., P.S., was the company's president. Montgomery joined the firm as a crew chief whose first job was surveying cross sections for a flood study on the Red River in Ashdown. He spent part of that first year in the field and then began working his way up the ranks to become a technician and a project manager. He's still a project manager despite

being president. That's the way the firm has always operated; it keeps leaders close to the action.

"I just always had a drive," he said. "I think the seven years I spent in Dallas really opened my eyes to a lot of potential opportunities if I ever got the chance to come back home, and I feel like I've always been a hard worker and always wanted to just work on good projects."

Among his projects was retracing and resurveying the boundary around Millwood Lake. This was "rough country," Montgomery said, thanks partly to flooding caused by beaver dams. In 2010, B & F finished surveying Bull Shoals Lake. When Fletcher retired, he was replaced by Gary Ryles, P.E. Montgomery was vice president at the time. He became president in 2008 after Ryles retired.

A strong surveying foundation

It's not surprising a surveyor would advance at that firm. While its name is B & F Engineering, it has always had a

strong surveying foundation. Fletcher and the company's other founder and first president, Don Beavers, P.E., P.S., both had dual licensures, and much of the firm's early work involved surveying projects with the U.S. Forest Service and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Surveying is about 55-60% of the company's business today. It has a staff of about 45 people, including eight professional engineers and seven professional surveyors.

"I've always been around engineers," Montgomery said. "I consider surveying part of civil engineering. But that's the type of environment I've always tried to work in. Like I said, that first year-and-a-half out of school, working with a pure surveyor was a good experience, but I think getting associated with a civil engineering firm, your projects are just broader, bigger and take you different places. So there's been a lot of good opportunities here to do that."

The company has done significant surveying work for other firms. For example,

B & F did all the 18 miles of surveying for the recently completed Highway 70 widening project between Hot Springs and Interstate 30, a project that was designed by Michael Baker International.

"I just have kind of a special relationship with each one of them," Montgomery said.

Among B & F's major current projects is surveying for the planned border wall near McAllen, Texas. The firm had some leftover capacity on an on-call indefinite delivery order contract with the Corps of Engineers' Little Rock District. B & F started in August 2018 with about 40 miles of task orders and recently was awarded another 40-mile task order.

The job means that B & F has a role in one of the most contentious political issues in America today. But Montgomery says the firm stays out of the politics. When Border Patrol officers tell surveyors to leave the area because activity is occurring, they leave.

Continues on next page

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"We're simply the boots on the ground before any action takes place," he said. "And I've got to say, most of the people down there have been very nice to us. We do DOT work in the state of Arkansas. We've worked in 65 of the 75 counties for the Highway Department, and I would say that we have more troubles with right of entry in general for widening a road than we would down there crossing people's lands down in Texas."

About six years ago, Dan Williams, Garver CEO and chair of ACEC/A's nominating committee, asked Montgomery to be a state director. Montgomery was honored by the invitation. He questioned it then because of his P.S. license, but that's never been a problem for anyone in ACEC/A's leadership. As Montgomery explained, "We work for the common good of consultants."

Williams said board members were aware that Montgomery eventually could be president of the association.

"But we certainly consider those guys to be part of our industry, and I think James can speak equally well to protecting and ensuring that our industry is well represented as well as anybody," he said. "It was never a concern. ... And I don't remember that being a discussion point among our board at that time."

Montgomery comes to the position with leadership experience. As president of the Arkansas Society of Professional Surveyors in 2003, he learned about com-



PRESIDENT WITH PRESIDENTS. Montgomery sits in the firm's conference room with pictures of past B & F Engineering presidents. From left, clockwise, are Bill Fletcher, P.E., P.S.; Don Beavers, P.E., P.S.; Gary Ryles, P.E.; and Montgomery.

munication and about the limits of any leader's persuasive abilities.

"Probably the thing that I learned from being president of ASPS is no matter how hard you try, you're not going to please everyone, and as much as you try to believe you can change the naysayers, some days it's just not going to happen," he said.

He also chaired the Hot Springs Metro Partnership, an economic development

group. One of the challenges he tackled was working with the city manager and the county judge when the city came to believe county growth was hurting its tax base. The Partnership's efforts led to good dialogue, Montgomery said.

There is no conflict at ACEC/A, but there is some healthy competition. At meetings, Montgomery said, "We talk shop a little bit, talk about projects, but you can bet though, when we're ... at the shop and you've got your sleeves rolled up, you're going after a job as best you can to get it. There's no doubt about that." A few key firms contribute a lot, but, he said, "no one ever flaunts that or anything. It's just a good team effort."

He's confident he'll be able to lead that team effort despite having a "P.S." at the end of his name instead of a "P.E."

"I have a special relationship with a lot of those guys because I work with them. ... I think that there's the work component of it, and there's the association side of it," he said. "Even back, I've watched Byron (Hicks with McClelland Consulting Engineers), I've watched Mike (Burns with Crafton Tull), I've watched Brad (Hammond with Olsson), and then Dee Brown (with Brown Engineers) and others. These guys are all about ACEC."

"One thing about it, when you serve on this board, you recognize the real benefits of ACEC. Now what we need to do is do a better job of getting that message to membership."

'No regrets' about career switch

New ASPE president Vetter came to engineering in mid-30s after maintaining water quality in New Orleans aquarium

By Steve Brawner
Editor

Olsson's Jim Vetter, P.E., is this year's president of the Arkansas Society of Professional Engineers, but he didn't start his career in engineering. Instead, he worked at an aquarium.

Vetter, 49, earned degrees in biology and English from the University of Charleston in South Carolina. Interested in marine biology, he accepted a job of-

fer from the Audubon Aquarium of the Americas in New Orleans. There, he worked in the animal husbandry department's water quality lab and helped operate the life support equipment.

He had always been interested in water treatment, and doing that work piqued his interest in engineering.

"I think if I'd known about what civil engineers were all about maybe way back when, maybe I would have taken a different path. But we get where we get," he said with a laugh, "and I don't have any regrets."

Vetter completed two years of prerequisite classes at the University of New

Orleans and then transferred to the University of Arkansas, where he earned his civil engineering degree in 2005 at about age 35. He earned his master's degree two years later. He became interested in structural engineering to go along with his interest in water. On the advice of his advisor, he enrolled in structural and wastewater design classes.

The firm that hired him, McGoodwin, Williams & Yates, did a lot of concrete tank work and liked his diverse skill set. His first project involved determining the hydraulic capacity for a Carroll-Boone Water District transmission line from Eureka Springs to the city of Harrison.



JIM VETTER, P.E., ASPE'S new president, poses at Olsson's Fayetteville office. Behind him is a Fayetteville wastewater plant he helped design.

"A wastewater treatment plant, we're basically harnessing biology to treat the water and make it – they used to call it 'stabilized' back in the day," he said. "In a way, it's like a man-made stream, and you're doing what happens naturally, but in a smaller footprint, and you're optimizing all those processes. At the end of the day, most of what wastewater plants today do is they're taking the waste and using bacteria to break it down to compounds that aren't harmful and also separating the solids from the water, and that's pretty much how it works. But there's a whole bunch of biology involved, which I think is really fascinating."

Most of Vetter's work involves water and wastewater plants. He did design work for a \$13.5 million Jonesboro wastewater plant project that will increase peak flow from 27 million gallons per day to 36, with the ability to expand to 45 million gallons per day later. That plant had issues with sanitary sewer overflows, so the utility entered into a voluntary agreement with the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality to improve its collection system. Vetter is also beginning preliminary work on replacing a 40-year wastewater treatment plant on the city's west side that can't comply with today's regulations. He also helped design

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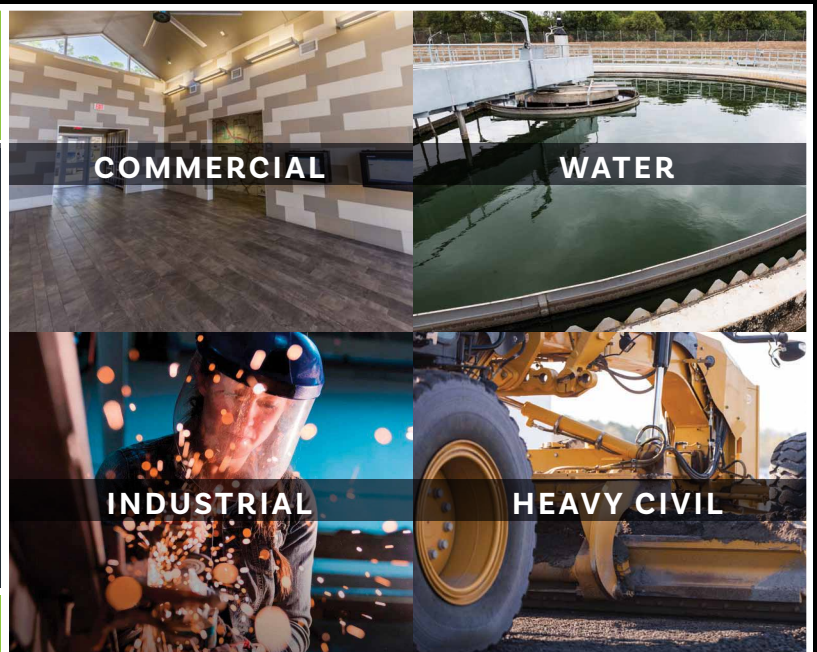


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an increase from 12 million to 18 million gallons a day in a Clarksville Connected Utilities water plant.

Vetter said utilities must decide if they will do what they are mandated to do, or if they should spend extra dollars to address other issues, and therefore make ratepayers pay extra. They must answer to customers but also do what's in the customers' best interests.

He likes business development as much as he does doing design work.

"Everyone that I interact with," he said, "by and large I've really had great experiences with, and so I like the building of the relationships, personal relationships. Most of my clients, I consider them to be friends, and I just think really highly of them as people and as professionals. ...

"I like meeting with the clients, understanding what their problems are, and then coming up with an economical solution for them that helps solve the problems, and then in doing so, it's improving the quality of life for (them), whether it's our community or northeast Arkansas. ... I love I can nerd out on the science of

what I do, or the engineering, but I also really like that part. That's kind of what Olsson (is) about is improving communities."

Olsson acquired McGoodwin, Williams & Yates in 2018. Founded in 1946, MWY was Northwest Arkansas' oldest engineering firm. Vetter said the move has enabled the Fayetteville operation to expand its capabilities. It's grown by seven to 10 people and increased its electrical capabilities. The company is employee owned, so its financials are transparent, he said. Meanwhile, Vetter has access to Olsson's vast network of design professionals.

"We went from about 35 to 40 employees to about 1,100," he said. "So we say we have a lot of cousins now, so that's kind of neat. I've got so many resources now. We have industry experts that do many of the things that I've been doing. So if I want a second or third or fourth opinion, I can reach out to them. And then there's just so much. Olsson has a lot of projects they've been involved with, and there's so many things that I can be exposed to.

OLSSON'S VETTER enjoys the business development side of engineering as much as he does designing projects. "Most of my clients, I consider them to be friends," he said.

Hey, how do we solve this problem, and I learn about problems that I never even realized existed and see novel solutions to that."

As ASPE president, Vetter wants the Society to continue to promote licensure at a time when it's under pressure in other professions. In a changing world, engineers must maintain the public's trust through their professionalism.

"As engineers, I think our primary ethics or goal is to protect public safety and then the welfare of the public, and I think licensure kind of goes hand in hand with that," he said.

Olsson's Fayetteville office recently has hired several young engineers. Some have taken the EIT exam and one soon will take the P.E. exam. Vetter said licensure is part of the culture there.

"All the engineers here, I think they all, that's what they want," he said. "So it's not like we've had to tell them that's what you have to do."

Vetter's father was a sales manager for a bottling equipment maker that was bought and sold several times, so he moved around a lot. He was born in California, lived in Illinois outside Chicago for about 10 years, and then lived in South Carolina for about 10 years.

Now he's settled down in Northwest Arkansas. He and wife Danah have two children: Gabe, 14, and L.J., 10. He enjoys backpacking and hiking – sometimes with his family, sometimes alone – and woodworking. Meanwhile, the former aquarium employee likes to relax at home with his 75-gallon saltwater tank with live corals, a fish named Queequeg (pronounced "Kwee-kway") after a character in the book "Moby Dick," and a shrimp named Fish Sticks.

Vetter was well into his mid-30s before he became an engineer and says, "It took me a while to figure out what I wanted to do." But his first career prepared him for this one, and he's enjoying his work.

"I've never ceased to feel challenged, so it's been really good. ... There's never a day where I get up and I'm just like, 'I don't want to go to work today,'" he said.

In the News (Cont'd)

engineering degree from Missouri University of Science and Technology, and a master's in business administration from Missouri State. He has gained experience the past eight years in water, wastewater, and other utility design/rehabilitation projects. He and his family have recently moved from Columbus, Ohio to Fayetteville where he plans to enjoy the area's lakes and rivers in pursuit of smallmouth bass.

B & F's Boyett passes New Mexico P.S. exam

Danny Boyett, P.S., a project surveyor with B & F Engineering, Inc., recently passed his New Mexico Board of Licensure for Professional Engineers & Professional Surveyors P.S. exam. In addition, he is an Arkansas P.S. and a certified federal surveyor. He is currently providing support surveys for U.S. Customs and Border Protection's border infrastructure program along the southwestern border of the United States from Texas to New Mexico.



Boyett

ACEC Fall Conference features WaPo reporter

Plans have taken shape for this year's ACEC Fall Conference Oct. 13-16 at the Sheraton Grand Chicago. Register online at www.acec.org/conferences/fall-conference-2019.

The conference will feature more than 30 business management education sessions and more than a dozen roundtables, committees and forums for C-level and senior firm leadership. Attendees will be able to network with industry leaders at numerous events and receptions.

The opening general session will feature Robert Costa, national political reporter for The Washington Post. Costa is also the moderator of "Washington Week," a reporter's roundtable series on PBS, and is a political analyst for NBC News and MSNBC. He regularly appears on NBC's "Meet the Press," on MSNBC's "Morning Joe" and "Hardball," and on "PBS NewsHour" and "Frontline."

Other speakers include Anirban Basu, chairman and CEO of Sage, an economic and policy consulting firm; and Keller Rinaudo, CEO and co-founder of Zipline, the world's largest commercial autonomous system, which delivers life-saving medical supplies to hospitals and health centers on demand.

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