

Building Arkansas

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



After the storm

FTN Associates staff members huddled in a downstairs restroom while the tornado that struck Little Rock March 31 passed within yards of their building. It was damaged, while commercial and residential buildings around it were destroyed. Staff are spending 6-9 months in temporary quarters while their office is repaired. The staff began working the disaster plan within moments after the tornado struck. Within a week, the Little Rock offices were open. Client service was barely interrupted. On May 18, the company closed shop for an afternoon and cleaned out the Grassy Flat Creek behind it. The debris collected included a 15-ton HVAC unit. Pictured are, left, Paul Crawford, P.E., P.G., the company's president, and Nathan Siriam, senior environmental scientist.

Photo courtesy of FTN Associates

NWC Golf tournament a good sign

The COVID-19 pandemic changed a lot of things temporarily and some things permanently. Let's make the slowdown in ASPE chapter involvement one of the temporary ones.

The chapters in Northwest Arkansas, Central Arkansas and Hot Springs understandably stopped meeting during the worst of the pandemic. At times many engineers weren't even coming to the office, so it's understandable that they wouldn't gather in a restaurant.

But as far back as last September, President Biden told "60 Minutes" that the pandemic was "over." Most people were living their lives pretty normally long before that.

Given that's the case, I'm glad to see the Northwest Chapter was preparing to host the 23rd Annual NWC ASPE Swingin' for Scholarships golf tournament Aug. 18 at The Creeks Golf Course in Cave Springs.



Angie W. Cooper
Executive Director

Lunch is scheduled to start at 11 a.m. with a shotgun start at noon. The cost is \$400 per four-person team, with the winning team winning \$1,000. The proceeds go to scholarships benefiting junior and senior level engineering students throughout Arkansas. The entry deadline is July 14, which may be after some of you get this

magazine. For more information, contact Taylor Lindley at Taylor.Lindley@craft-tontull.com.

This is exactly the kind of event ASPE chapters need to be doing. It supports an important cause, which is supporting badly needed future engineers as they pursue their education. Just as important, it gets engineers from different firms in the same place for fellowship and education opportunities. While the firms are competitors, engineers have much more in common than they have in conflict.

We heard from all three chapters at the ASPE Annual Conference. The Northwest and Central Arkansas chapters appear to be gaining momentum. The Hot Springs chapter hasn't been meeting that much, but that will change.

Keep up the good work and keep increasing the momentum, everyone. Let's keep getting together – permanently.

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18 FTN Associates President Paul Crawford, P.E., P.G., left, and Nathan Siriam, senior environmental scientist, participated in a workday where staff members cleaned the Grassy Flat Creek of debris left by the March 31 tornado. FTN's offices were damaged by the storm. Employees will work in temporary offices for 6-9 months.

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News and Features

18 **Cover / After the storm, FTN back to work**

FTN Associates has spent the past few months working in a crowded temporary office, but things could have been much worse if the tornado that struck Little Rock March 31 had been a few yards closer to its headquarters – and if the water and wastewater engineering firm didn't have an emergency response plan in place before the storm hit.

21 **ASPE inducts Order members**

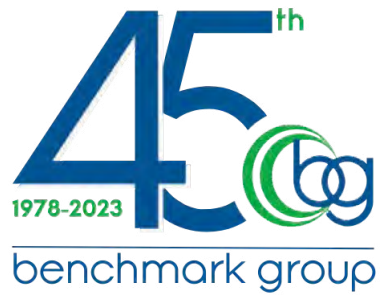
A new group of engineers was inducted into the Order of the Engineer during the ASPE Annual Conference April 13-14, while incoming ASPE President Tyler Avery, P.E., of C.R. Crawford Construction prepared to take over where current President Kale Farmer, P.E., left off.

24 **Member Spotlight / Mickle, Griffin bring big firm lessons home**

The Fort Smith-based firm previously known as Mickle Wagner Coleman is now Mickle Griffin as a third generation now leads the company. Josh Mickle, grandson of founder James "Jim" Mickle, P.E., and son of Pat Mickle, P.E., took ownership earlier this year along with Nick Griffin, P.E., a former employee.

26 **Gum Springs kiln is largest in U.S.**

A 170-ton kiln arrived May 15 at a Veolia hazardous waste destruction facility at Gum Springs outside of Arkadelphia, completing its journey across the Atlantic Ocean and 168 miles of Arkansas' roads.



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We need everyone's help to solve staffing shortage

For a variety of reasons, this is an exciting time to be working in our industry – maybe the most exciting time in my 35-plus-year career. The anticipation for what the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law will mean for our industry has the vast majority of us preparing to take on projects at a volume we've never seen before. That's obviously a good thing, because it means we'll be addressing infrastructure needs that have been on wish lists across the country for years, and in some cases, decades.

However, one issue continues to keep most of us in the industry up at night – staffing.

According to the ACEC, 49 percent of its member firms have turned down work because of workforce shortages. ACEC has also cited data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics showing that the engineering workforce was at full employment before the implementation of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and similar programs. It stands to reason that responding to the wave of projects inevitably coming our way will be a sizable challenge.

Currently, most firms are exhausting all avenues to identify, recruit, and retain the most talented individuals in our industry. But we're still facing a shortage.

Recently, ACEC called attention to one avenue that has proven to be a viable solution to our current staffing problems. The H-1B Program allows employers to hire qualified foreign citizens who hold at least a bachelor's degree or equivalent – the type of professionals who possess the high-level expertise that we need on our project teams. According to ACEC, the cap for these visas in 2018 was reached after just seven days of the application window being open.



Jerry Holder, P.E.
ACEC/A President

In my experience, it's a phenomenal program making a powerful impact on our industry by connecting highly educated, trained, and qualified engineers with firms desperately needing their talents.

The only problem is the cap on these visas – 65,000 for H-1B visas with only an additional 20,000 available to those holding a master's

degree or higher from an accredited U.S. university, according to ACEC. While that may seem to be plenty, remember that's not just for engineering. That's for all positions deemed "specialty occupations" by the U.S. Department of Labor.

Recently, ACEC called on the Biden administration to increase the number of these visas, which would allow a significant number of quality professionals to enter the workforce and help us take on the upcoming increased project load.

I stand with this movement because I can see the shortage that we are facing right now and the negative impact it will have on our industry very soon. Increasing the cap is critical to our industry, and no doubt the best path for speedy augmentation of these positions.

So, how can we help? ACEC is already working with Congress on increasing this cap, and we all should join in that effort. I urge you to contact your members of Congress and educate them on the benefits of H-1B and how an adjustment to the existing cap can help us address our nation's critical infrastructure needs.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law is providing us with a tremendous opportunity. The engineering industry wants to take on this challenge – we just need the help to make it happen. Widening access to a deep, qualified, and willing talent pool is our easiest path to acquiring that help.

ACEC

American Council of Engineering
Companies of Arkansas
Officers 2022-23

President

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

President-elect

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

Secretary

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

Treasurer

Mike Foster, P.E.
Pickering
317 South Church Street
Jonesboro, AR 72401
870.336.0117

Senior State Director

Lawren Wilcox, P.E.
Garver
4701 Northshore Drive
North Little Rock, AR 72118
501.376.3633

State Director

Mike Stengel, P.E.
Michael Baker International
900 Southeast 5th St., Suite 20
Bentonville, AR 72712
479.326.6711

State Director

Adam Triche, P.E.
McClelland Consulting Engineers
7302 Kanis Rd.
Little Rock, AR 72204
501.371.0272

National Director

Matt Crafton, P.E.
Crafton Tull
901 N. 47th St., Suite 400
Rogers, AR 72756
479.636.4838

Immediate Past President

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

Executive Director, ACEC/A & ASPE

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



**Arkansas Society of
Professional Engineers
Officers 2022-23**

President

Kale Farmer, P.E., CFM
FTN Associates
124 W. Sunbridge Drive, Suite 3
Fayetteville, AR 72703
479.387.0848

President-elect

Tyler Avery, P.E.
C.R. Crawford Construction
1102 South Happy Hollow Road
Fayetteville, AR 72701
479.251.1161

Secretary-Treasurer

Mary Fair, P.E.
Garver
4701 Northshore Drive
North Little Rock, AR 72118
501.376.3633

National Delegate

Brad Peterson
10825 Financial Centre Pkwy, Suite 300
Little Rock, AR 72211
501.664.3245

State Director

Landon Miller, P.E.
Michael Baker International
900 Southeast 5th St., Suite 20
Bentonville, AR 72712
479.326.6711

Past President

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

Building Arkansas

Editor & Publisher

Steve Brawner
Steve Brawner Communications
501.847.7743
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

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Know your role

I am a big fan of idioms and catchphrases. I grew up in Arkansas and have been trying to learn from the colloquialisms uttered in my presence since I was knee high to a grasshopper. Some of these statements can morph and either lose their original meaning or take on new meaning. Southern sayings are a category all their own that many people may not understand.

One idiom that has universal relevance, has held true for a long time, and is currently being passed on to a new generation is, “With great power comes great responsibility.” It’s a maxim uttered by many, including Winston Churchill, that was paraphrased and rather famously adopted by a superhero, and which applies quite readily to engineering. Our vast knowledge obtained through school, internship, and as a professional is a great power to be respected and valued. As I discussed in an earlier article, the responsibility engineers are charged with is to “Hold paramount the safety, health, and welfare of the public.”

We can lean on another idiom, “Know your role,” as a guide to both building our power (knowledge and respect) and fulfilling our responsibility. This catchphrase was articulated by one of my favorite professionals, Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson.

Oh, you didn’t know? Maybe I should clarify: Mr. Johnson is the MOST ELECTRIFYING professional wrestler in sports-entertainment turned actor. There was more to his catchphrase that may not be suited for a professional publication, so I will amend it to fit the topics below.

As our careers progress, the roles we play in the profession can evolve, but we must look to the guidance of the fundamental canons in the NSPE Code of Ethics for Engineers to uphold our power and fulfill our responsibility.

As a student, intern, and even recent graduate engineer, your role is to learn the technical skills necessary to assist with project designs, and to learn how to apply these skills to meet the obligatory codes and regulations. This often starts with completing individual tasks assigned by a project manager. As you gain trust and ex-



**Kale Farmer, P.E., CFM
ASPE President**

perience, larger parts of the project begin to be assigned to you. As you grow in this role, two fundamental canons should be practiced: Act for each employer or client as faithful agents or trustees, and avoid deceptive acts. **Know your role: Crawl before you walk.**

As you settle in your career, many employers encourage obtaining professional engineering licensure. While Arkansas has decoupled the P.E. exam from its past experience requirement, the application for licensure requires education verification, exam verification, professional references, and a detailed accounting of your work experience since age 18 or high school. Documenting these topics requires us to know and follow another of the fundamental canons: Issue public statements only in an objective and truthful manner. Careful introspection of your education and experience will bring you a level of comfort that you will be able to be a functioning and useful member of the engineering profession. **Know your role: Look backwards to go forward.**

Professional engineers begin to take on more roles after licensure, with significantly more responsibility. Some focus on technical application, some begin to pursue project management or business development or recruiting, but all should be in some way responsible for mentoring younger engineers as they progress.

As I mentioned in the last couple of articles, we are in a time when there is plenty of work to go around, but we need to find and adequately train more people to keep up with our ultimate responsibility. Part of that training requires a certain level of self-awareness outlined in the fundamental canon: Perform services only in areas of competence. I would add that you should only mentor younger engineers in areas in which you are competent and proficient in performing. Passing on bad habits or encouraging false confidence not only invites negligence lawsuits, but may completely disregard the ultimate responsibility of engineers: to protect the health, safety, and

Please see FARMER on page 8

Farmer

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welfare of the public. **Know your role: Stay in your lane.**

More recently, Mr. Johnson portrayed Maui in the wonderful animated musical adventure, "Moana." Maui was a self-absorbed demi-god who thought that he

was, literally, God's gift to humanity. However, he discovers throughout the film that without his "gifts," he is not beneficial to humanity or even himself. Throughout our professional engineering careers, we should be mindful of our ultimate goal, and in that pursuit, follow the final fundamental canon: that engineers "conduct themselves honorably, responsibly, ethically, and lawfully so as to en-

hance the honor, reputation, and usefulness of the profession.

Unlike Maui who sang, "What can I say except, 'You're welcome,'" I want to thank you for the opportunity to serve as the president of ASPE and thank you for reading this article to the end. And to the jabronis that didn't read this far ... well, thank you anyway. It has been a great honor to be a part of this organization.

— In the News

AACE inducts 15 new engineers

The Arkansas Academy of Civil Engineering inducted 15 members at the Northwest Arkansas Convention Center April 14. The new inductees were:

- **Daniel Barnes**, McClelland Consulting Engineers' Fayetteville office president, who earned a bachelor of science in engineering degree (B.S.C.E.) in 2002;
- **Steven Beam, Jr.**, Burns & McDonnell director/branch office manager, who earned a B.S.C.E. in 2002, a master of science in civil engineering degree (M.S.C.E.) in 2003, and a master of business administration (M.B.A.) in 2010;
- **Jamey M. Bertram**, Burns & McDonnell vice president of international projects, who earned a B.S.C.E. in 1997;
- **Andy Brewer**, Olsson technical leader-transportation, who earned a B.S.C.E. in 2002 and an M.S.C.E. in 2004;
- **Mark Brightwell**, retired, who earned a B.S.C.E. in 1984;
- **Thomas Gregory Fisher**, alternative delivery program manager, Arkansas Department of Transportation (ARDOT),



who earned a bachelor of arts in journalism in 1997 and a B.S.C.E. in 2002;

- **Jason Dupree**, director of maintenance, Atlanta District, Texas Department of Transportation, who earned a B.S.C.E. in 1998 and an M.S.C.E. in 2000;
- **Cathy Funkhouser**, a hydraulic engineer technical specialist with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, who earned a bachelor of science degree in biology in 1994 and a B.S.C.E. in 2000;
- **William M. "Butch" Green**, district pavements engineer and military and heavy pavements subject matter expert

with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, who earned a B.S.C.E. in 1985;

- **Andrea Jobe**, staff engineer for the city of Bentonville, who earned a B.S.C.E. in 1999 and an M.B.A. in 2014;
- **Brian Maurer**, Halff vice president and director of public works and team leader, who earned a B.S.C.E. in 1995;
- **Ellen Norvell**, Bentonville city engineer, who earned a B.S.C.E. in 1985;
- **Steven W. Peyton**, ARDOT assistant division head – bridge design, who earned a B.S.C.E. in 2000 and an M.S.C.E. in 2006;
- **Mike Stengel**, Michael Baker International office executive/vice president, who earned a B.S.C.E. in 1995;
- **Michael J. Tarini**, Cromwell Architects/Engineers project civil engineer, who earned a B.S.C.E. in 1995 and an M.S.C.E. in 1997.

UAPB plans to offer degree in engineering

The University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (UAPB) plans this fall to offer bachelor of science in engineering and bachelor of science in cybersecurity degrees, pending approval by the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board at its July 28 meeting.

The University of Arkansas System Board of Trustees in May voted to approve the programs.

The engineering program will consist of two tracks, construction project management and industrial manufacturing.

It will be the second engineering program offered by the university, according

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to a UAPB press release. The university has been offering classes in agricultural engineering since the fall of 2020. The release said the program equips students to address the agriculture industry's need for improved production methods through a market-driven approach.

The cybersecurity program is the first of its kind in Arkansas at a historically black college or university. The program will prepare students to prevent and detect cyber attacks across various systems.

"African Americans and other minorities are consistently underrepresented in STEM fields," said Industrial Technology Management and Applied Engineering Department Chairperson Dr. Charles R. Colen, Jr. "The new Bachelor of Science in Engineering program will help contribute to the diversity of new ideas in engineering and hone our students' leadership and problem-solving skills for entering the workforce."

Former secretary of state Martin joins Tolm Group

Mark Martin, P.E., who served as Arkansas secretary of state from 2011 to 2019 and was a state representative for six years before that, has joined the TOLM Group as director of engineering.

Morrilton-based TOLM Group is a full-service construction and engineering firm. Martin will be working out of the TOLM Group office in Springdale.

Martin will lead, design, and supervise engineering projects, teams, and clients throughout Arkansas and other parts of the United States. Project types often will focus on water, wastewater, stormwater, and other environmental aspects in the private, industrial and municipal sectors of engineering and construction.

"I hope to draw from a diverse toolbox of organizational leadership experience to continuously develop the operational excellence of the engineering group and TOLM in general," Martin said.

Martin graduated from Hughes High School in eastern Arkansas and in 1998 received a bachelor of science in mechanical engineering from the University



Martin

of Arkansas at Fayetteville. He served as a nuclear engineering laboratory technician in the Navy and held numerous technology-oriented positions in private industry prior to serving three terms in the Arkansas House of Representatives and two terms as Secretary of State.

Prior to coming to TOLM, he was the engineering operations manager for an aerospace manufacturing company.

He is licensed in Arkansas, Georgia and Texas. He is a member of the Arkansas Academy of Mechanical Engineers.

He resides with wife Sharon of 33 years in Northwest Arkansas, where they raised their three children.



OLSSON TEAM MEMBERS ran a 5K from the current office to the new building. Pictured are Wes Bullock, P.E.; Aaron Boll, P.E.; Jayden Minchew, E.I.; Matt Loos, P.E.; Mariah Crews, E.I., and Caleb LeBow, P.E.

Work continues on Olsson's new Fayetteville office

A new office is progressing for Olsson, an engineering and design firm located in Fayetteville.

The 39,000-square-foot office will accommodate the firm's growth in Arkansas. It has about 65 employees in Fayetteville and expects the number to soon grow to 100.

Located at 3537 North Steele Boulevard, the facility will include open spaces, "Zoom rooms," and a rooftop patio area. Bike racks will make it easier for employees to use nearby trails, and infrastructure will be in place to eventually add electric vehicle charging stations.

The full team will move in after scheduled completion in late 2023. Olsson will occupy the third floor and most of the second floor, with other tenants using the rest of the space.

Olsson is providing all surveying; civil site design; structural, mechanical, and electrical engineering; landscape architecture; geotechnical investigations, and special inspections.

"Our new building reflects the significant investment Olsson is making in Northwest Arkansas, and it will provide a great environment for our employees as we continue to find ways to better serve our clients and the community," said Brad Hammond, P.E., Olsson's Fayetteville office leader.

Garver's White recognized by UA Engineering



White

Garver Aviation Operations Manager Adam White, P.E., recently received the Early Career Alumni Award from the University of Arkansas College of Engineering.

White during his 17-year career has overseen the design and construction management of more than \$1 billion in airport improvements, including terminals, hangars, airfield pavement, and navigational aids.

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His client portfolio spans major international airports, including Dallas Fort Worth International and Denver International, as well as those specific to the Northwest Arkansas region. White has served Northwest Arkansas for the duration of his career and has led more than 20 improvement projects at Northwest Arkansas National Airport.

Pottinger of Garver one of NWA's Fast 15

Garver's Ryan Pottinger, P.E., was recently named to Northwest Arkansas Business Journal's latest Fast 15 class. The list celebrates outstanding young professionals across industries within the region.



Pottinger

A member of Garver's Water and Wastewater Team in Fayetteville, Pottinger, 29, developed a water treatment plant condition assessment for Searcy and helped develop water master plans for Tontitown and Rogers Water Utilities. He's currently helping update Bentonville's plan.

Garver creates Innovation group

Garver has established the Innovation Incubator, a collection of some of its leading experts who will focus on building innovative solutions to today's challenges to better serve clients and communities.



Tenclve

Director of Innovation & Business Support Keith Tenclve, P.E., is heading up this initiative. He works out of Garver's Fayetteville office.

The inaugural class of Innovation Incubator fellows represent different facets of Garver's operations. Its Arkansas mem-

bers include Luke Minkner, software development project manager, North Little Rock; Drew Moffitt, geospatial solutions leader, North Little Rock; and Jeremy Porterfield, technology solutions specialist, Fayetteville.

Other members include the following: Eric Dole, water technology leader, Denver; Dusan Jolovic, transportation project manager, Frisco, Texas; Will Watkins, aviation leader – Texas landside, Frisco, Texas; Shannon Wilder, senior business and implementation analyst, Oklahoma City; and Julie Garcia, senior financial operations analyst, Houston.

Garver ranks 96th in the Engineering News-Record's Top 500 Design Firms list. Zweig Group has named it a Best Firm to Work For for nine consecutive years.



OPEN HOUSE. Pictured are from left, Derrick Rainey, city of Little Rock; Mary Fair, P.E., Arkansas aviation leader, Garver; Emily Fair (future engineer?); Kendra Pruitt, city of Little Rock; Anita Smith, public relations leader, Garver; and James Owen, city of Little Rock

Garver downtown holds open house

Garver held an open house at its downtown Little Rock office May 4.

The office at 610 President Clinton Avenue houses Garver's in-house communications team, which consists of 30 staff members working in design and video production, web development and digital marketing. The team has grown from four staff members in 2013.

The office is located not far from where Neal Garver first started the company in downtown Little Rock. Garver now spans 47 offices in 17 states with more than 1,000 employees. The firm's specialties in-

clude aviation, buildings, construction, enterprise solutions, transportation, water, and federal government projects.



Crafton Tull heads watershed projects for Black Mayors

The Arkansas Black Mayors Association (ABMA) hired Crafton Tull to serve as project manager for a first-of-its-kind \$95.9 million urban watershed improvements program.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service allocated the federal dollars to the ABMA as part of a larger \$500 million effort to invest in watersheds across the country.

This Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations Program investment targets 14 project areas in underserved communities across southern and eastern Arkansas. The areas were selected based on environmental risk, historical flooding, community need, and potential impact.

Crafton Tull is assisting the ABMA through the planning, design, and construction process. The ABMA announced at a recent press conference the six consulting engineering firms with which they plan to enter contract negotiations for the planning phase of the projects.

Crafton Tull gets bike route award

Crafton Tull recently accepted a merit award in the analysis & planning category at the American Society of Landscape Architects Central States Conference.

The award was given for a project that laid the groundwork for the designation of a United States Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) system bicycle route connecting



JULIE LUTHER KELSO, AICP, ASLA, center, accepts the merit award at the American Society of Landscape Architects Central States Conference.

North Little Rock to West Memphis. The route ties into the national network of bicycle routes that connect urban and rural communities across the nation.

The USBR 80 feasibility study, adopted by the Arkansas Department of Transportation (ARDOT) in November 2022, became Arkansas’ first nationally recognized bicycle route and the first segment of the USBR 80 route that will one day stretch from the coast of North Carolina to Oklahoma City. ARDOT is currently working on production and placement of route signage.

The Crafton Tull team evaluated and scored infrastructure and amenity criteria along two potential routes before the 165-mile route through Marianna and Stuttgart was ultimately selected.

The study was funded by the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences and included technical support from ARDOT, the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage, & Tourism, and Metroplan.

Two Crafton Tull engineers earn PEs, one gets PS

Crafton Tull’s Seth Boles, P.E., and Landon Woodfield, P.E., recently passed the Principles and Practice of Engineering exam, while Joshua Bembenek, P.S., successfully earned his Professional Surveyor license.

Boles joined Crafton Tull’s Little Rock office in 2022 and is currently working on roadway and drainage design projects in

central Arkansas. He has a background in irrigation, surface water management, and survey field work from his time at the Natural Resources Conservation Service. He graduated magna cum laude from



Boles

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the University of Arkansas with a bachelor of science in biological engineering degree in 2018. He was a member of the Tau Beta Pi Engineering Honors Society.

Woodfield joined Crafton Tull (formerly B & F Engineering) in Hot Springs in 2020. He has a background in structural engineering including seismic loading, concrete design, and steel design. He is currently working on design projects including structural support for equipment at U.S. Army Corps of Engineers dams across the United States, dam safety projects on Entergy high-hazard dams in Arkansas, bridge evaluations for paving and construction equipment throughout Arkansas, and other industrial projects. He graduated from the University of Arkansas with a bachelor of science in civil engineering in 2018 and a master of science in civil engineering in 2020.



Woodfield



Bembenek

Bembenek joined Crafton Tull in 2021 and handles surveying documentation for city and commercial projects at the firm's Rogers office. He graduated magna cum laude from Oklahoma State University in 2016 with an associate of applied science in surveying technology. He earned an associate of applied science in 2012 from Northwest Arkansas Community College.

Moore leads Crist Engineers' NWA office



Moore

Josh Moore, P.E., joined the staff of Crist Engineers in April 2023 as the Northwest Arkansas office leader.

Moore is a licensed professional engineer with 26 years of experience in municipal and utility engineering design, planning, analysis, construction management, and all water system operations. Of those 26 years, 20 have been on the ownership side

of the utility managing and engineering for one of the larger rural water systems in Arkansas.

Moore is an Arkansas Grade IV licensed water distribution operator, licensed Arkansas state plumbing inspector, and a 25-plus-year member of the Arkansas Chapter of American Society of Civil Engineers.

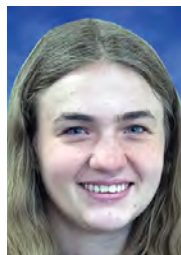
Founded in 1938, Crist Engineers is one of the state's oldest consulting engineering firms. It offers specialized experience in water treatment and distribution, wastewater collection and treatment as well as various other engineering services including planning and construction management to clients throughout Arkansas and surrounding states.

Hardin, Walters, Wendtland join Hawkins-Weir



Hardin

Hardin joined HW in April as structural team leader with 20 years' experience in design and project management and a background in structural design.



Walters



Wendtland

engineering.

Craig Hardin, P.E., and Mary Walters have joined Hawkins-Weir Engineers' Fayetteville office, while Cody Wendtland is working for HW in Van Buren.

Hardin joined HW in April as structural team leader with 20 years' experience in design and project management and a background in structural design. He graduated from the University of Arkansas – Fayetteville, and is licensed as a professional engineer in Arkansas, Oklahoma, Missouri, Kansas, and several other states.

Walters joined HW in May 2023 as a staff engineer. She graduated from Kansas State University in May 2023 with a bachelor of science degree in biological engineering and a B.S. in environmental

Wendtland joined HW in May 2023 as a staff engineer. He graduated from the University of Arkansas – Fayetteville in May 2023 with a bachelor of science in biological engineering.

State House, Bentonville honor CEI for 50 years

CEI was recently honored by the Arkansas House of Representatives for 50 years of dedication and service to the state.

Jeff Geurian, P.E., FASCE, CEO and president; Brent Massey, P.E., vice president of operations; and Debbie Jones, director of marketing and business development, were in the Capitol April 5 for the reading and passing of House Resolution 1062, which recognized the local and statewide contributions of CEI.

CEI was additionally recognized by the city of Bentonville earlier in the year during the first 50th year celebration. Mayor Stephanie Orman read the proclamation that officially announced February 12, 2023, as CEI Day in the city.

CEI started as a two-man operation in 1973 and has since grown to a full-service professional firm that is licensed in 49 states with more than 170 associates across the country. Those include experts in fueling and convenience, parks and trails, public works, restaurants, retail, and sports facilities.

CEI has provided services for more than 7,000 projects statewide and more than 30,000 projects nationwide. Notable state projects include Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Northwest Arkansas National Airport, Fortune



CEI'S JEFF GEURIAN, P.E., FASCE, second from left, is congratulated by Rep. Scott Richardson, R-Bentonville. Also pictured are Debbie Jones and Brent Massey, P.E.

500 company corporate offices such as J.B. Hunt and Tyson, and more than 100 miles of trails. Its 43-year partnership with Walmart has included working directly with founder Sam Walton and completing more than 1,300 projects across 44 states, and it is currently working on the new Walmart Home Office campus.

“For more than 40 years, CEI has worked closely with Walmart to expand its store footprint across the country,” said Walmart’s vice president for real estate, Brian Hooper. “As the firm celebrates its 50th anniversary, we congratulate them on their success and appreciate their contributions to the company’s continued growth.”

Michael Baker adds three to LR staff, three interns

Michael Baker International has added three staff members and three summer interns to its Little Rock office.

Robert Darrington, P.E., joined the Little Rock Roadway Design Team as a civil engineer. He has six years of experience working on Arkansas Department of Transportation and Texas Department of Transportation projects. He is a licensed engineer in Arkansas, Texas and Tennessee. He has a bachelor of science in civil engineering degree from Arkansas State University.



Darrington



Campbell



Jackson



Pahls



Thompson



Wallace

Seth Campbell joined the Little Rock Survey Team as a survey field technician and plans to pursue becoming a licensed surveyor. He is a graduate of Benton High School in Benton.

Jett Jackson joined the Little Rock Aviation Design Team as a civil associate. He is a recent graduate of Arkansas State University and holds a bachelor of science degree in civil engineering. He has an aviation background and is currently working on his private pilot’s license.

Continues on page 16

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Abigail Pahls is a summer intern on the Roadway Design Team. She is currently attending Saint Louis University and will obtain her degree in civil engineering in May 2025.

Andrew Thompson is interning on the Aviation Design Team. He is studying civil engineering at Arkansas State University and plans to graduate in May 2024.

Eli Wallace is interning on the Bridge Design Team. He is attending Arkansas State University and will obtain his degree in civil engineering in December 2024. In addition to his studies, Eli is involved in the ASCE Steel Bridge Competition.

Mickle Griffin's Holmes now a PE

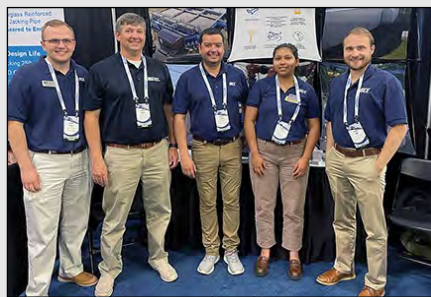


Holmes

Jeff Holmes, P.E., of Mickle Griffin earned his professional engineering license in December 2022.

Holmes graduated from the University of Arkansas in 2014 with a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering. After working in a few mechanical engineering roles for large companies, he began working as a civil engineer at Mickle Wagner Coleman, Inc. in 2017. Throughout his time as an EIT, Holmes has gained experience with projects covering land development, water/sewer design, and master planning.

Holmes in 2006 moved from Oklahoma to Fort Smith, where he currently resides with his wife and two children.



FISH FRY. McClelland Consulting Engineers hosts an annual fish fry for its clients to coincide with the Arkansas Water Works and Water Environment Association Conference. Manning a booth were Taylor White, E.I.; Adam Triche, P.E.; Danny Hernandez; Beatrice Becerra, E.I.; and Max Hicks, E.I.



Knutson



Elliott



Kittler



Switzer



Jolly



Anderson



Dykema



Carpenter



Lerma



Glenwinkel

MCE announces hires, promotion

McClelland Consulting Engineers has announced the addition of staff members at its Fayetteville, Little Rock and Fort Smith offices



Jones

Senior Project Manager Shannon Jones, P.E., joined MCE-Fayetteville's water/wastewater department. He brings more than 25 years of experience overseeing, managing, and conducting engineering services related to the operations and maintenance of municipal wastewater collection, wastewater treatment and water distribution infrastructure. While on staff with major utilities in central and Northwest Arkansas, he was instrumental in master planning programs, hydraulic modeling, and implementing capital improvement programs. He will continue with planning, design, and construction management for various water and wastewater projects for MCE's clients.

Barret Knutson, P.E., recently re-joined MCE-Fayetteville's Water/Wastewater Department. He has nine years of experience working with water/wastewater systems, including seven years of civil consulting services. His areas of expertise include water/wastewater system design and planning, process analysis and biological nutrient removal, and construction

administration services. He recently passed his Principles and Practice of Engineering Exam.

MCE's Little Rock office has added Jarrett Elliott, E.I., as a project designer in the aviation department; Mason Kittler as a CAD technician; Glenn Neilson as a materials lab technician; and Catherine Switzer, a graphic designer, to the marketing department.

The Fayetteville office has added Hannah Jolly, E.I., a project designer, to the transportation department; Blake Anderson as a construction observer; Chase Dykema as a soils lab intern in the construction-related services department; and Taylor Carpenter to the survey crew.

The Fort Smith office has added a second CAD technician, Natanael Lerma. He has extensive knowledge of architectural and site CAD work and will be assisting the structural and water/wastewater departments with structural detailing, site design and general project drafting.

In May, Megan Glenwinkel was promoted to controller of MCE's accounting department. Glenwinkel joined MCE in January 2019 in billing. Her work background includes the Drug Enforcement Agency, Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation, and an Oklahoma oil and gas company. She received her bachelor's degree in accounting and her MBA at Southern Nazarene University in Bethany, Okla.

Women in STEM



McClelland Consulting Engineers was a sponsor at the Women in STEM Conference in North Little Rock April 14. Claire Schoppe, P.E., left, and Anna Claire Vocque, E.I., attended the conference on MCE's behalf and spoke with local high school students about civil engineering. The event was presented by the Arkansas Department of Transportation and Arkansas On-the-Job Training and Supportive Services Programs.

Nixon Power acquires RP, serves 14 states

Nixon Power Services, the world's largest Kohler Power generation distributor, has acquired North Little Rock-based RP Power.

The acquisition expands Nixon Power Services' Kohler Power service area to include all of Arkansas, Oklahoma, Mississippi and Louisiana, as well as the Memphis area and northeast Texas.

Previously, Nixon Power Services served all or parts of nine states. Those included the rest of Tennessee along with Missouri, Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Kentucky, Illinois and Indiana.

Nixon Power's 14-state territory now includes 18 facilities and 325 team members, including 130 factory-certified service technicians.

Formed in 1914, Nixon Power has been in the generator business for more than 80 years. It focuses exclusively on the power generation marketplace, providing industrial, residential, and marine generators. It has represented Kohler for more than 50 years.

The company's product sales business has quintupled in the past seven years, and its aftermarket business has more than doubled.

Nixon CEO Ron Stanley said, "I'm excited about what this acquisition means for all parties involved. For customers and the market, it provides a larger partner providing enhanced resources. For our team members, it's the validation of their accomplishments and provides growth opportunity. For the RP team, it allows them to build on their success with a new organization focused on long-term growth. And for Kohler, it represents an expanded partnership with a proven team that shares vision and goals with a relentless pursuit of achieving such!"

Connecting with **HW** ■ What Sets Us Apart?

Our People Do.

Elizabeth Heiles, a Professional Engineer licensed in the States of Arkansas and Nevada, joined HW in July 2018. Promoted to Associate in 2021, she serves as a Project Manager on public works and private development projects. Elizabeth works with both large municipalities and rural authorities on site grading and civil projects as well as water distribution, wastewater collection systems, water treatment, and wastewater treatment designs.

Elizabeth grew up exploring the lakes and rivers of Arkansas. Raised in a family of engineers, her father, brother and uncles encouraged her to pursue a degree in Civil Engineering from the University of Arkansas in 2012. She saw the degree as a gateway to protecting the State's natural resources. Her love for the environment and passion to provide clean, safe water to local communities motivated Elizabeth to obtain her M.S. in Environmental Engineering from Montana State University in 2013.

Elizabeth resides in Little Rock with her husband, Jared, and their two children, Henry and Mae. On the weekends you can find her floating on a river or lake, chasing Henry around Two Rivers Park or soaking up baby snuggles with Mae. Elizabeth is an active member of Our Lady of Holy Souls Catholic Church and a CASA community volunteer.

Elizabeth Heiles, P.E.
Associate



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HANDS-ON WORK. Andrew Pruitt, P.G., with FTN Associates, surveys the Grassy Flat Creek behind the company's offices. The creek was filled with debris after the March 31 tornado. FTN staff members collected debris that included a 15-ton HVAC unit and placed it curbside for the city of Little Rock to pick up. *Photo courtesy of FTN Associates.*

After the storm, FTN back to work

FTN was prepared for the tornado that damaged its Little Rock headquarters March 31. Despite the disruption, it barely skipped a beat serving its clients. On May 18, it closed for the afternoon to remove debris from the creek beside its office.

FTN Associates has spent the past few months working in a crowded temporary office, but things could have been much worse if the tornado that struck Little Rock March 31 had been a few yards closer to its headquarters – and if the water and wastewater engineering firm didn't have an emergency response plan in place before the storm hit.

About 14 employees were at FTN's two-story office in West Little Rock, which it owns, when the tornado struck

that Friday afternoon. Forty people typically work there including FTN and its three tenants, but some had left early because of the weather. Those who remained were monitoring the situation. When it became obvious the danger was imminent, they along with their tenants took shelter in a downstairs men's room. When it hit, the building and ceiling tiles shook, and dust fell. The power shut off, but emergency lights activated, providing some visibility.

"Almost all of us were in the bathroom for safety," said Paul Crawford, P.E., P.G., the company's president. "Some of us didn't quite get there by the time that it hit. We were in the hallway and heard the boom, and next thing we knew we went upstairs to check to see if everyone was OK, and the back end of the building had blown out."

The building was yards away from the tornado's direct path but was damaged

by the wind and debris. The tornado destroyed nearby commercial and residential structures and blew over trees at the nearby Grassy Flat Creek.

Crawford and other company officials determined that everyone was OK in the bathroom area, although a couple of people were a little dazed and one woman had been claustrophobic. The ceiling in the women's restroom had fallen in, but no one was there. They headed upstairs to see if anyone was there and then to determine the extent of the damage.

The windows blew in on the building's north side and blew out on the south side. Two sets of doors were destroyed when they were hit by swirling residential roof material. Crawford's office was the hardest hit. A window structure unit had fallen across his desk and the conference table in his office.

"When I went back in there, it was this big window on everything," he said.



GROUP EFFORT. FTN staff members pose for a group shot after cleaning the Grassy Flat Creek May 18.

“Many of the things that were on my desk, I have no idea where they went. I had pine cones, tree limbs, wasp nests, fiberglass, ceiling tiles all throughout the stuff. So the emergency people just came in, raked it into a pile, shoveled it into the bags and hauled it off.”

The company had a disaster plan already in place. (“We’re engineers, remember,” Crawford said.) It spelled out where to go in case of a tornado, who was in charge, whom to contact, and how to quickly get the office back up and running. Numbers were stored in cell phones.

“Because of that, we knew who was going to take care of certain parts,” Crawford said. “And it wasn’t just me giving

orders. There were, like, four or five of us that were doing different things, and it was a quick response.”

Within moments the company was responding to the storm. The phone system was down, but cell phones worked. Office managers in FTN’s other offices in Fayetteville, Baton Rouge and Chesterfield, Missouri, were contacted and told that everyone was fine but the server was down. It had been stored in a safe-like compartment and was fine, but it had to be moved. The Little Rock office would let everyone know when the server was back up and how they would communicate with each other in the meantime. FTN contacted its emergency response

contractor to cover the window areas with wood and button up the building

By Monday, the company had found a home in temporary offices managed by the same real estate management company that helps it manage its permanent office building. The move mostly involved relocating the server and furniture.

“The tornado hit on the 31st on a Friday,” said Mark Couch, FTN director of operations and project manager. “We had our servers up and running at the remote location the next Wednesday and had people in the office sitting at furniture working the next Friday.”

It’s about a third of the space, so it’s intimate. Four employees were working from home. But for six to nine months, they will make it all work.

Crawford said the COVID-19 pandemic probably helped the firm respond to the disaster. During that time, FTN’s offices were shut down and employees learned they were capable of working from home. Out of 75 employees across the firm, less than 10 were still working virtually. Everyone went home to work during the week while the temporary office was being set up.

“I think there’s a lot more collaboration that occurs when you’re face to face,” Crawford said. “You can do digital or virtual work just fine for most work, but I think most of our employees like being around others.”

Continues on page 20

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Now the firm awaits the repairs that will be made to the building. A portion will be taken down to the metal frame and built back as it was and painted to match. The roof and the damaged offices will be repaired. Some long-desired improvements will be made.

“We had a structural engineer come and assess the building, and he said it’s structurally sound,” Crawford said. “We’ve had insurance adjusters come in and review everything that needs to be fixed. I think we’ll be all right. We’re back to business as normal in terms of operations.”

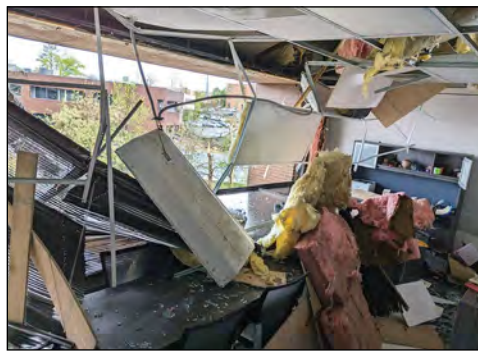
The company does a lot of surface and flood water modeling through large contracts with the states of Arkansas and Louisiana. It works with the Louisiana Watershed Initiative to study drainage basins and manage flooding. It recently began working with the Arkansas Black Mayors Association to assess flooding in parts of Arkansas with large minority populations. That project was funded by the federal Inflation Reduction Act.

Despite the disruption, there were only a couple of days’ interruption in client services. Client managers contacted the clients and let them know that the firm’s server and phone system were down.

“All of them were very supportive and were glad that nobody was hurt and offered to help in any way they could,” Crawford said.

While FTN was waiting for repairs to start on its permanent facility, it took matters into its own hands by cleaning out the Grassy Flat Creek located behind its office building. The creek was full of manmade and natural debris from the storm. On May 18, the company dismissed early so employees could clean. Employees brought debris to the curb for the city to collect. Couch said employees waded into the creek with waders and hooked a 15-ton HVAC unit to a four-wheel-drive tractor. Also pulled from the creek were various construction materials and even a child’s bicycle.

“Everybody’s been asking what they can do to help,” said Nathan Siria, environmental scientist. “All the insurance companies and the contractors take care of all that. This is kind of a purgatory that nobody kind of takes care of, at least not at first, so this is kind of a good fit for us.”



TORNADO DAMAGE AND CLEANUP. The top photo shows the damage done by the tornado March 31. FTN Associates’ office, bottom center, was damaged but escaped the destruction suffered by nearby office buildings, houses and trees. The photos on the left show damage done to the FTN office. Right photo, FTN’s Kyle Templet, E.I., foreground, and Jeremy Brooks, P.E., clear debris from the nearby Grassy Flat Creek May 18. Photos courtesy of FTN Associates.

Crawford said the day out of the office was a good experience.

“It bonded us, particularly for today,” he said. “This is a great thing for helping out with morale. We come together. Even though we work together every day, this is something that’s kind of different where we’re doing something good for the environment and good for the city.”

Now that FTN has survived the tornado, what advice would Crawford give to other engineering firms to help them prepare for disasters?

“Make sure you put together a plan and practice what you have to do, and make sure it makes sense,” he said. “Always have individuals that are accessible to be able to communicate to the rest of the company because if you have multiple offices, then those offices want to know what’s going on and how they can help, or if there’s anything that they need to do. And that’s the big thing. We had to spend a lot of time communicating with our offices and employees to make sure we were all OK.”

ASPE inducts Order members

Inductees encouraged to reflect on their obligations and prepare and be ‘engineering educators’ during ASPE’s two-day Annual Conference

A new group of engineers was inducted into the Order of the Engineer during the ASPE Annual Conference April 13-14, while incoming ASPE President Tyler Avery, P.E., of C.R. Crawford Construction prepared to take over where current President Kale Farmer, P.E., left off.

The ceremony was led by Dr. Judy Cezeaux, dean of the Arkansas Tech University College of Engineering and Applied Sciences; Rick Geraci, P.E.; and Brad Peterson, P.E., CFM, LEED AP, of Crafton Tull. Inductees recited the Obligation of the Engineer. Peterson placed a stainless steel ring on the fifth finger of each inductee’s working hand.

Members of the Order attend no meetings and pay no dues but pledge to “participate in none but honest enterprises. When needed, my skill and knowledge shall be given without reservation for the public good. In the performance of duty and in fidelity to my profession, I shall give the utmost.”

Geraci said engineers are “an elite group.”

“This obligation means we are more than highly trained technicians,” he said. “We must be engineering educators as well as must learn to apply our knowledge and teach others to seek and use our services. The ring is a reminder of our calling. It symbolizes the strength and unity of our profession, and whatever avenue our profession leads in creating a cleaner environment, designing a better bridge, devising a finer product, developing a safer community – there our talents should be applied, not for an hour, not for a day, not for a year, but for life, and on land, sea and air, and in the vast reaches of space.”

The new inductees are Cody Chisholm, Mid-South Engineering; Ryan Clark, CEI Engineering; Tyler Feemster, P.E., Crafton Tull; Luke Freedle, P.E., Garver; Blake Johnston, E.I., Iconic Consulting Group; Luke Jost, P.E., Crafton



ORDER OF THE ENGINEER. Crafton Tull’s Brad Peterson, P.E., places a ring on the finger of William Kraner, P.E., CEM, Benchmark Group, during the Order of the Engineer ceremony.

Tull; Ian Killough, P.E., Michael Baker International; William Kraner, P.E., CEM, Benchmark Group; and Chris Troeger.

In his brief remarks as the incoming president, Avery said he wants to engage the entire organization so the board of directors doesn’t become an “echo chamber” where members share the same perspectives. He asked members to submit their ideas to their local chapter, board members, Executive Director Angie W. Cooper, or Lindsay Young of nu marketing, ACEC/Arkansas’ marketing and communications director. He said he wants to engage people at all levels of the organization and get new leadership involved.

“My goal will be to leave the organization better than I found it,” he said.

Cooper earlier that day had asked attendees for ideas about improving the conference. She said Young and herself were researching alternatives to the two-day conference as part of a task force that also includes a couple of state board members. Local chapters will be surveyed for their ideas. Cooper suggested as possibilities shortening the conference to one day that would be focused on professional development hours, with awards given at local chapter meetings. She said she didn’t want attendees to attend the conference merely as an obligation.

Continues on page 22



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“We want it to be education, maybe fellowship, networking, that type of thing,” she said. “If that’s the most important, then that’s what I would like to know.”

Cooper also provided attendees an update on this year’s legislative session, as did Grant Grigg, chief investigator with the Arkansas State Board of Licensure for Professional Engineers and Professional Surveyors. Cooper described the session as busy but calm. ACEC/A was able to persuade legislators to amend a bill that became Act 457. The legislation, which Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders supported, made it easier for engineers with out-of-state licenses to gain reciprocity in Arkansas. The successful change required the engineers to move to Arkansas, which alleviated concerns that engineers could receive their license in another state with easier requirements, like New Mexico, and remain there but be credentialed here. Grigg said the State Board didn’t have problems with the law. The majority of Arkansas’ 14,000 engineering licensees live out of state.

ACEC/A was less successful with an effort that would end the practice of engineering clients requiring firms to include a “duty to defend” clause in their contracts where they must pay the client’s legal defense. Cooper noted that clients aren’t required to reimburse engineering firms and that the legal fees aren’t covered by professional liability insurance. While larger engineering firms might be able to negotiate out the clauses, smaller firms can be left with big legal bills to pay. Unfortunately, Cooper said ACEC/A’s lobbying efforts did not start early enough, and it became immediately obvious that legislators needed to be educated about the issue. ACEC/A will try again next session and will start earlier.

While Cooper and the ACEC/A’s lobbying firm are actively engaged in the legislative process, it helps when other engineers get involved. She said many legislators have limited knowledge of engineering because they don’t have a background in it. When she sends a call to action, engineers should contact their representatives. She said anyone can join the ACEC/A’s legislative committee at any time, and she encouraged them to do so. It’s also helpful when engineers thank their legislators for their work.



TWO PRESIDENTS. Current ASPE President Kale Farmer, P.E., of FTN Associates, left, accepts a plaque from the incoming ASPE president, Tyler Avery, P.E., of C.R. Crawford Construction, at the ASPE Annual Conference April 14. Below, Grant Grigg, chief investigator with the Arkansas State Board of Licensure for Professional Engineers and Professional Surveyors, talks about the Board’s work.

“We try not to be the gloom-and-doom organization, and we’re always opposed and we’re never thankful for good legislation,” she said.

Grigg said he administratively handles all of the State Board’s 15-25 complaints per year regarding surveyors and engineers. He said most complaints regarding surveyors come from members of the public who are unhappy about property lines, which the Board can do nothing about. Most complaints about engineers come from other engineers. Most complaints are dismissed. Most are the result of parties not communicating.

Grigg does the initial investigation before a complaint reaches a disciplinary hearing. In the last year, he’s had only one, where a mechanical engineer decided to act as a structural engineer outside of his competency and designed a steeple for a Catholic church that no one would build

because it wouldn’t stand. The engineer was suspended for four months, which he has already served, and fined \$6,500, which he is appealing.

Grigg said the Rules of Professional Conduct require licensees who have knowledge of possible misconduct to inform the board. Engineers may be uncomfortable doing that. The complaints are not anonymous. Still, if they see something, they should say something.

“Basically it says you have to be a tattletale,” he said. “It is in the rules. So it is your duty if you see somebody doing wrong to file a complaint.”

Grigg noted that the day of his presentation April 14 was also the last day that the Principles and Practice of Engineering exam would be given as a pencil and paper test. After that, all tests would be administered by computer.

Among the other sessions presented at the conference was one about the Grand Prairie Area Demonstration Project by Scott Thornsberry, P.E., the Transportation Department manager of Michael Baker International’s Little Rock office.

The project is a comprehensive water management plan designed to protect the



Grigg



SPEAKERS. From left, Rick Geraci, P.E., FACEC, led the Order of the Engineer induction ceremony and presented a session on ethics. Trey Reid, assistant chief of communications, spoke about the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission. James Gardner, P.E., CDI Insurance, spoke about the Institute for Integrative and Innovative Research at the University of Arkansas. Ken Estes of Cadence Insurance presented a case study. Brent Birch, director, spoke about the Little Rock Technology Park. Houston Hunter spoke about Structuriam Mass Timber. Scott Thornsberry, P.E., Michael Baker International, talked about the Grand Prairie Area Demonstration Project.

Alluvial and Sparta aquifers. It will do this by using excess surface water and water from the White River to supplement a network of on-farm reservoirs over a 300,000-acre area in Arkansas, Lonoke, Monroe and Prairie Counties.

That part of the state has been ideal for rice farming because of its hard panel area that allows water to remain standing on flooded rice fields. Farmers started relying on the Alluvial aquifer in 1904, and by 1915 it was being tapped at a rate

that exceeded its ability to be replenished. During the 1980s, farmers started drawing on the deeper Sparta for agricultural, municipal and commercial use, and it too is losing water faster than it can be replenished.

Government action has been authorized going back to 1950, but the projects couldn't gain momentum. Progress was finally occurring in 2005 until it was temporarily blocked by a judge because of the purported sighting of the thought-

to-be-extinct ivory billed woodpecker. By the time the judge ruled the project could proceed, the funding had been re-directed.

Now, the project is moving forward. The main pump station on the White River is 90% complete, though it doesn't yet have power, and a 30-acre regulating reservoir is in place. When it's done, roughly 867 farms will get their own on-farm reservoir and tailwater recovery system.

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ACEC/A Member Spotlight

Mickle, Griffin bring big firm lessons home

Third generation take charge of firm formerly known as Mickle Wagner Coleman

The Fort Smith-based firm previously known as Mickle Wagner Coleman is now Mickle Griffin as a third generation now leads the company.

Josh Mickle, grandson of founder James “Jim” Mickle, P.E., and son of Pat Mickle, P.E., took ownership earlier this year along with Nick Griffin, P.E., a former employee.

Mickle agreed to return to the company about a year ago and worked with his father, Pat Mickle, P.E., on the transition. He formally became president in January. He is in charge of business operations, investments, proposals, contracts and negotiations. Griffin will oversee all engineering projects and focus on client relationships and technical work.

“My first goal in doing that was to bring in the right engineering firepower to lead our transition and to grow our business, so I went and brought Nick back into our business as an owner, and we bought out Mickle Wagner Coleman as Mickle Griffin,” Josh Mickle said.

Mickle, 35, earned an aerospace engineering degree at Texas A&M University and then went to work for GKN Aerospace, a tier one manufacturing firm. He worked in a rotational leadership development program before becoming an operations and engineering manager at a factory in Orange County, California, that manufactured F-35 fighter jet cockpit canopy windows. He earned his master’s of business administration at Pepperdine University during the four years he was there. He then worked five years in program and commercial contracts management at GKN’s newly acquired manufacturing facility in the Netherlands. It annually produced \$350 million in F-35 components. During his five years there, he worked in a number of different roles dealing with U.S. defense contractors for the F-35 and also the F-16 and F-22 fighter jets and the C-130 transport plane.

Griffin, 45, started working for Mickle Wagner Coleman in 2004 on the Monday



MICKLE GRIFFIN. The firm’s new principals are, top photo from left, Josh Mickle and Nick Griffin, P.E. The rest are pictures of major projects. Middle left, Arkansas Colleges of Health & Education in Fort Smith, completed in 2015. Bottom left, ArcBest headquarters in Fort Smith, completed in 2016. Right, the Paris, Arkansas Water Treatment Plant, which is being completed in 2023. Opposite page, US Marshals Museum in Fort Smith.

after he graduated with a civil engineering degree from the University of Arkansas – Fayetteville. Pat Mickle was his mentor. He worked there 12 years before being hired as director of engineering and construction by ABF Freight, a less-than-truckload freight company and a subsidiary of ArcBest. He was responsible for construction management for infrastructure improvements across the company’s 250 properties in North America. He was there six-and-a-half years until returning to the firm where he started.

“ABF is a great company, ArcBest is a great company, but it wasn’t design work,

and I missed the design work, and so when Josh called me it was the perfect opportunity for me to come back,” Griffin said. “I couldn’t leave ArcBest and go back to a company just as an engineer, so having that ownership opportunity was what really opened the door for me to come back.”

Their company started as James Mickle and Associates in 1955 in Little Rock and then moved to Fort Smith. Over the years it had several names until it became Mickle Wagner Coleman in 1984. The principals were Pat Mickle, P.E.; Neal Wagner, P.S.; and Randy Coleman, P.E.



The company developed a strong reputation as a full-service engineering firm doing public and private projects in the Fort Smith region. It has provided a full range of services including surveying; testing; geotechnical, environmental and design work; bid-letting; and construction. A second business, Data Testing, provides geotechnical testing and water/wastewater laboratory work.

The company typically has had between four and eight engineers and about 25 employees. During the 1960s, it made its name by designing approximately a dozen water plants across western Arkansas. For decades afterwards, the company designed additions and modifications to those plants. Among its other signature projects has been designing the Lake Fort Smith Park relocation, serving as the local design contact for the Lake Fort Smith dam and water treatment plant, and designing the upscale Highlands on Riley Farm subdivision. It also designed the Fort Smith landfill. For many years, its top client was the city of Fort Smith.

But the company has contracted in recent years. Wagner died in 2020, and Coleman retired and then returned a couple of times. It had some staff turnover. There was no succession plan until Josh Mickle re-entered the picture.

“We eventually realized that the best option was for me to come back to Arkansas to take over the business, find the right level of partnership, and rebuild based on the foundation that we’ve had for the last 65 years,” he said.

He noted that Griffin and he have a history of working for large corporations, which has its upsides – job safety, base salary, travel opportunities – but also less of an opportunity to influence change and shape a company’s vision. They plan to incorporate the corporate processes they learned working for those big companies. They have invested in their in-house software suite while trying to enable more remote working and contract labor, and they have invested in aerial surveying capabilities. They are re-engaging with partnerships with local architects and contractors to do design-build and architecture-engineering work. They are looking at creative contracting methods so they can incentivize themselves to perform and be transparent with clients. The two said they have a core team of young engineers, and they hope to add four or five staff members within the next 12 months.

Meanwhile Pat Mickle will continue to be a part of the business.

“Dad’s not retired,” Josh said. “He still comes into the office every day. He doesn’t like the ‘r’ word. He’ll work here till he dies. So he’s still around. He’s just more in a consulting role.”

The company will continue to provide a full range of engineering services related to commercial land development, sub-

divisions, heavy civil construction, water, wastewater, sewer, parks, recreational, and roadway projects. The firm currently has about 10 multimillion-dollar land development projects on its register as well as a water treatment plan in Paris in Logan County.

With Mickle’s background in aerospace engineering and contracting, they also hope to compete to be a local subcontractor for the work related to the selection of Ebbing Air National Guard Base as the home of the Foreign Military Sales Program Pilot Training Center – a decision that will bring fighter pilots from around the world to train at Fort Smith.

Throughout all this, they’ll be able to take advantage of Mickle Wagner Coleman’s reputation while at the same time building their own name and brand.

“Nick and I kind of joked, but now we agree that we’re basically running a startup with a really solid historical foundation,” Mickle said. “So we’ve taken this really strong name and brand. It was important for us to rebrand that and to change the name for a lot of different reasons, but primarily to show our clients and our customers that we’ve got a new energy, a new ambition. We’ve got a new infusion of ideas and way of working, and we’re going to modernize the firm. We’re going to modernize the way that we do things. And we’re going to carry that forward with an eye towards everything that we’ve done, but with a real vision of being the biggest, most successful firm that’s local, privately owned and has a full suite of capability.”

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LOUISIANA (HEADQUARTERS)
7731 Office Park Blvd.
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dhebert@etec-sales.com
bsssums@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
mtodd@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. Shackelford, Suite 300
Little Rock, AR 72211
Tel: 501.978.1025
Fax: 501.978.1026
ccooley@etec-sales.com

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Gum Springs kiln is largest in U.S.

Centerpiece of \$350 million modernization took winding route across Arkansas after being shipped from Italy

A 170-ton kiln arrived May 15 at a Veolia hazardous waste destruction facility at Gum Springs outside of Arkadelphia, completing its journey across the Atlantic Ocean and 168 miles of Arkansas' roads.

Fifty-nine feet long and 16 feet in diameter, the kiln is the centerpiece of a \$350 million modernization project at what originally was a Reynolds aluminum smelter built in 1952.

Britt Scheer, director of facilities affairs, said the kiln, capable of reaching 2,300 degrees Fahrenheit, will probably be the hottest-burning large-capacity furnace in North America and will be the biggest. The heat breaks down chemicals into their basic elements, such as carbon and nitrogen. If there are solids left over in the ash, they will be stabilized and then buried in a landfill. The kiln will sit at a slightly declined angle and will complete one rotation per minute in order to mix the waste. A separate, secondary combustion chamber will complete the process.

The kiln will enable the 1,600-acre site to incinerate more hazardous and other types of waste, including petroleum tank cleanups, than the current two 1,700-degree incinerators located at the facility, said Scheer. The two incinerators will be shut down.

The kiln will probably start operation at the end of 2024. Three hundred construction workers are on site seven days a week working on the modernization.

Scheer said French-owned Veolia purchased the entire site from Alcoa in 2020 for \$250 million. Alcoa had acquired the plant when it bought Reynolds in 2000. The plant at the time was treating spent potliner, a byproduct of aluminum manufacturing. At the moment, spent potliner still represents half the plant's business, but that is declining as less aluminum is produced in North America, Scheer said.

The number of employees working at the facility has gone from 61 employees when Veolia purchased it in 2020 to what Scheer estimated was 132 now. The head-



FINALLY ARRIVING. The 170-ton kiln manufactured by Italy-based FEMA rounds the final turn before arriving at the Veolia hazardous waste facility in Gum Springs. Barnhart Crane and Rigging carried the furnace on 24 axles in order to receive a permit from ARDOT to travel along 168 miles of Arkansas' roadways. Axles in front and back at times were controlled remotely by employees walking alongside in order to navigate various turns, including the one leading into the plant.

count could reach 225 by the time the plant is operating at full capacity in early 2026. The starting wage is \$23 an hour.

"I think a number that's probably safe is we'll have probably a billion dollar capital impact over 10 years," Scheer said. "That's in purchasing equipment; that's hiring people, that's purchasing consumables and everything else."

Operations and maintenance employees are members of the United Steelworkers. The company is in the middle of negotiations as it switches from Alcoa to Veolia contracts.

Veolia has received no state aid so far for the project because it's not manufacturing anything, Scheer said, but it should qualify for training incentives from the state and from Clark County.

The waste incinerated by the facility ranges from the hazardous to the everyday. Probably the most dangerous are out-of-date chemotherapy drugs. On the other hand, plant employees that morning had discussed how the feeder system was getting plugged up by expired vitamin gummies that arrive in truckloads. The plant also incinerates expired antacids, shampoo, perfumes, adhesive bandages and other products. It does not in-

cinerate explosives, radioactive waste or infectious medical waste. As far as Scheer knows, it has never had an industrial illness from exposure.

The facility does produce carbon dioxide and a small amount of nitrous oxide, along with water vapor. It will attempt to capture the CO₂ produced by the new kiln. It is working with a couple of companies that would use the CO₂ in their chemical processes. Federal dollars may be available through the Inflation Reduction Act passed last year.

Net zero energy use

The steam generated by the kiln will generate half the power needed to operate the plant. A 35-acre on-site solar farm will generate the other half, enabling the plant to achieve net zero energy use.

The kiln is the fifth purchased by Veolia from FEMA, an Italian company. Its journey across the Atlantic Ocean and meandering 168-mile path across south Arkansas May 10-15 became a source of growing interest, fueled in part by online updates from the Arkansas Department of Transportation, or ARDOT.

The kiln and its truck and trailer combination weighed 300 tons total and

stood 21 feet tall and 20 feet wide. It was transported on a trailer powered by a pull truck in front and a push truck in back. Ellen Coulter, ARDOT deputy public information officer, said the combination was 220 feet long, three times the length of an average tractor-trailer combination and about twice as wide.

Memphis-based Barnhart Crane and Rigging was selected to do the transport. Tim Fielder, project sales manager, said ARDOT had to find a dimensional route with no overpasses the kiln couldn't get under and no turns it couldn't navigate. The best route saw it traveling by barge from New Orleans up the Mississippi River and then the Ouachita River, landing in Crossett, and traveling across south Arkansas to Strong, El Dorado, Camden, Stephens, Prescott, Gurdon and then finally to Gum Springs. Landing at the Port of Little Rock wouldn't work because there were too many overhead obstructions, while the Port of Pine Bluff is designed for agriculture and bulk materials.

Twenty-four axles used to haul

Once ARDOT had found a few dimensional routes, it had to ensure bridges could handle the load. The combination weighed 600,000 pounds, compared to the typical maximum weight for semi trucks and trailers of 80,000.

The company had to obtain a permit from ARDOT based on spreading the weight across 24 axles on the trailer. Sets of axles in front and back sometimes were controlled remotely by employees walking alongside in order to navigate various turns, including the one leading into the plant.

"Even though the thing is 600,000 gross weight, it has so many axles, and the axles are spread out, that it really puts ... no more pressure on the infrastructure than what a normal concrete truck would or dump truck or tractor-trailer," Fielder said.

Eleven bucket trucks traveled with the kiln on Saturday and Sunday and nine on the other days to push up or bring down

power lines. Transport planners also coordinated with the Union Pacific railroad.

The procession's speeds ranged from 5 to 35 miles per hour. To help with traffic, the kiln was accompanied by six Arkansas Highway Police patrolmen along with Captain Ross Batson, commander of the Arkansas Highway Police Oversize and Overweight Permits section.

The company paid \$6,600 for two five-day overweight permits, as would normally be the case, but wasn't charged for any other expenses the state incurred.

This was the tallest and the widest load Batson could recall permitting, but not the heaviest. A 990,000-pound electrical transformer was transported through Northwest Arkansas.

He said the kiln attracted a lot of interest along the route. People watched and took pictures. He estimated 300-400 people were watching in Prescott, where the kiln passed through on a Sunday and people were lining the streets and sitting in lawn chairs.

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