

Building Arkansas

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

A photograph of three men standing outdoors at a wastewater treatment facility. The man on the left is wearing a blue button-down shirt and jeans. The man in the center is wearing a black polo shirt with a logo and jeans. The man on the right is wearing a light blue polo shirt with a logo and khaki pants. They are standing in front of a concrete wall with large pipes in the background.

Storm responders

On March 31, the city of Wynne's wastewater treatment facility was destroyed by a tornado, and power was shut off throughout the city. Wynne Water Utilities General Manager Blake Marotti, center, had to act fast before sewage started backing up in homes. Using generators provided by the Arkansas Rural Water Association, he diverted the wastewater to an equalization basin. He then enlisted the help of Crist Engineers, which had designed the 45-year-old plant. Craig Johnson, P.E., left, and Matt Dunn, P.E., right, designed a three-stage process using the equalization basin and two other ponds. Crist also helped Marotti navigate the state's regulatory process. Now the city has a fully functioning facultative lagoon system while it builds an \$18-\$20 million replacement over the next few years.

ACEC/A trap shoot set for Nov. 1

Teams, sponsors sought for second event at Jacksonville Shooting Sports Complex

Teams can register now for the ACEC/Arkansas Trap Shoot Nov. 1 at the Jacksonville Shooting Sports Complex at 2800 Graham Road in Jacksonville.

The event will begin with a noon lunch followed by a sporting clay shoot from 1 p.m. until 2:30 p.m. An awards ceremony and raffle will follow from 2:30 p.m. until 3 p.m.

This will be the second straight year ACEC/A will have hosted the trap shoot. Last year's event drew 14 teams with 65 total shooters. Terracon won the team prize, while Terracon's Aaron Hunter was the top shooter.

The cost to participate is \$100 per person or \$450 for a team of five. Participants receive two boxes of shells. Eye and ear

protection are mandatory. The shooting range has free ear protection along with eye protection that can be purchased for \$2. Lunch tickets are \$35 per person.

The first place team and first place individual each will receive prizes. A raffle prize will be drawn at the end of the shoot. Raffle tickets are \$25 each or four for \$75.

A variety of sponsorships are available.

- Pull sponsors can field a team of five and will have a sign at one field station. Cost is \$600.

- The target sponsor will assist with handing out ammunition to all participants. It will display a sign at one field station and another at the ammunition table. It also will have an opportunity to pass out promotional projects, display its company banner, and have a company representative on site. Cost is \$500, and there is a limit of one.

- The lunch sponsor will have a sign at a field station and another at lunch. It also will have an opportunity to pass out promotional projects, display its company banner and have a company representative on site. Cost is \$750, and there is a limit of one.

- The beverage sponsor will have a sign at a field station and another at the beverage table. Cost is \$400, and there is a limit of one.

- Range sponsors will have a sign at a field station and another at lunch. Cost is \$200, and there is a limit of 10.

All the sponsors will have their logo displayed on the ACEC/A's website and social media as well as a listing in the next Building Arkansas magazine.

For more information about how to sponsor or participate, go to <https://arkansasengineers.org/event/acec-arkansas-trap-shoot>.

MY ARKANSAS:

Bridging the way for generations to come.

Travis Rapp is passionate about his family, water skiing and impacting the lives of others positively. Whether it is spending time outdoors with his loved ones or designing the latest bridge project, Travis works diligently to support the people of Arkansas with strong connections.

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20 Crist Engineers' Craig Johnson, P.E., left, and Matt Dunn, P.E., right, worked with Wynne Water Utilities General Manager Blake Marotti to respond to the tornado that destroyed that city's wastewater plant March 31.

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News and Features

18 **Member Spotlight / Horner and Shifrin expanding in state**

St. Louis-based Horner and Shifrin has a staff of four in Bentonville, but it doesn't plan to stay in the same place or the same size. After opening up shop there last year, the regional firm will soon build out space in Rogers for 16 staff members, said the company's president, Steve Donahue, P.E.

20 **Cover / Tornado response**

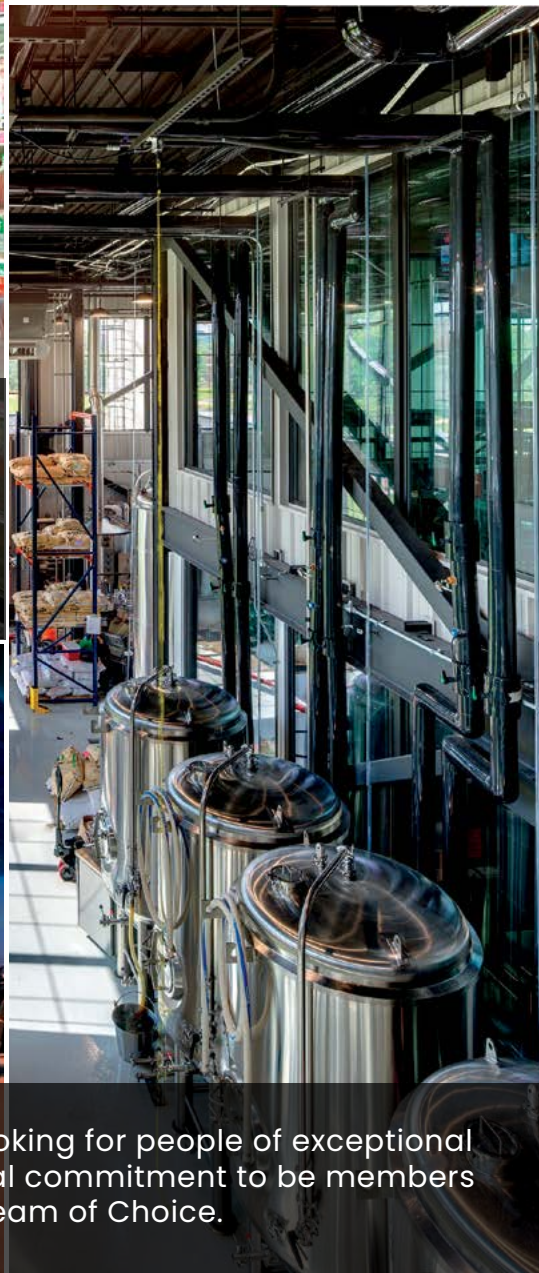
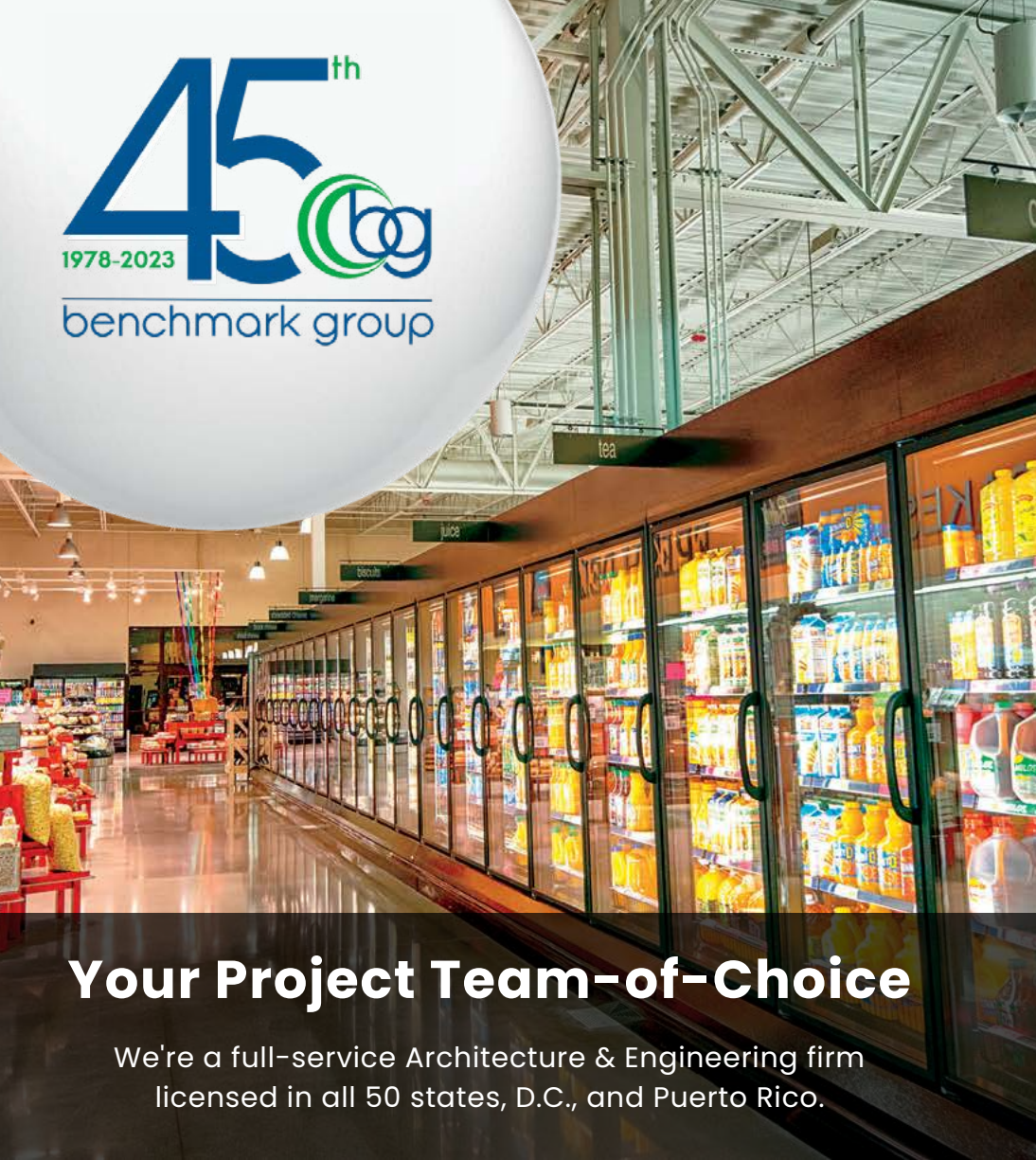
When a tornado destroyed the wastewater treatment plant in Wynne, the local utility and Crist Engineers acted fast to create a midterm solution. An existing equalization basin and two ponds will treat the wastewater while a new plant is built.

24 **Crawford prepared to lead ACEC/A**

Paul Crawford has had an eventful five years as head of FTN Associates, including a pandemic and a tornado that severely damaged his offices. Now he's heading ACEC/A with hopes that the Council can find ways to address the shortage of engineers.

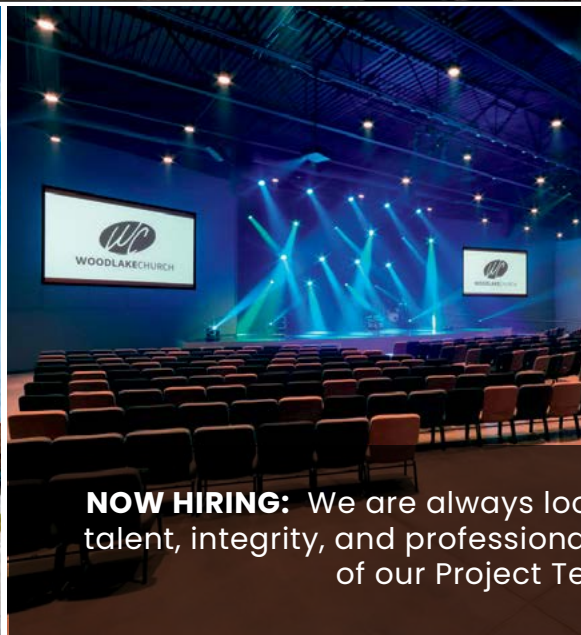
26 **Avery says ASPE must show value**

Tyler Avery, P.E., is leading a new design-build venture, Jurni Design Group, at an established company, C.R. Crawford. As the new ASPE president, he says the Society must show members that they benefit not just from the training but also from the camaraderie.



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Addressing the shortage of future engineers

In the July 2023 Building Arkansas issue, Jerry Holder, our past-president of the ACEC/A, highlighted that our industry is experiencing unprecedented staffing problems. As Jerry mentioned in his article, this is due to a shortage of students graduating from engineering programs coupled with the large amount of work being funded by the



Paul Crawford, P.E., P.G.
ACEC/A President

Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. According to a recent ACEC Research Institute survey, many firms (more than half of the respondents) are turning down work because they do not have sufficient staff to complete the work. In addition, 70% of the survey's respondents indicated that the lack of qualified workers is the single largest barrier to growing their company.

Jerry highlighted the efforts of ACEC to help increase the number of H-1B visas to alleviate some of the shortage in engineering candidates. I agree that the number of H-1B visas should be increased along with improvements in the process for selecting individuals to obtain the visa.

These potential foreign national engineers will address part of the staffing shortage, but it won't address the problem of why there are fewer STEM students seeking engineering degrees. According to educational surveys, dropout rates for STEM majors are high and have gotten worse during the pandemic. This trend will create even more of a staffing shortage for engineering candidates in the future.

So how do we as an industry address this problem? There are several possible solutions. We need to improve the workforce pipeline by doing a better job promoting our industry to elementary, middle, high school, and college students to pursue careers in engineering. We

can do this through partnerships with schools or school districts to explain what we do and how they can be part of the process that affects the lives of all of us. We need to sell these potential future engineers that what we do has societal, environmental, and livability impacts on our world – all things that are important to this younger

generation.

Another possible solution is to be mentors for high school and college students to address the problem of the increasing dropout rate in STEM programs. Mentoring programs also provide a network for future recruitment into our industry and companies.

In addition, the current market for engineers will help with encouraging younger students to pursue engineering degrees and careers. Current salaries in our industry are very competitive with other STEM-related careers.

A positive effect from the increased demand for engineers is the increase in the number of higher education facilities in Arkansas that offer engineering degrees. The current list of ABET-accredited engineering programs includes the following schools: University of Arkansas at Fayetteville, Arkansas State University, Arkansas Tech University, University of Arkansas at Little Rock, Harding University, Southern Arkansas University, and the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff. Ouachita Baptist University is forming another program.

The current workforce shortage for our industry is problematic, but we can help address the problem by promoting our industry to younger students and working with them during their educational careers. This is necessary to prevent a similar situation in the future.

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Win your workday, end your workday

The infamous *Seinfeld* character Newman notably said about the mail service, “The mail never stops! It just keeps coming and coming and coming. There’s never a letup. It’s relentless. Every day it piles up more and more and more, and you gotta get it out, but the more you get out, the more it keeps coming in!”

Engineering work can often seem equally relentless. Unlike many professions, in engineering there is rarely a clean cut end of a workday. There is always more to do – more emails to read or send, more proposals or reports to write, more drawings to check, more specs to redline. It’s not like we see our last patient for the day and call it quits until tomorrow. (No disrespect to the hardworking health-care workers out there.)

This feeling of being unable to find a stopping point can lead to “bringing your work home” or staying at the office far beyond the point of diminishing returns. While we all recognize the occasional need for long hours to meet a crucial deadline, repeating this pattern or making it the norm hurts not only the individual, but also the company long term when it faces employee turnover from burnout or dips in quality.

Many times, this isn’t forced on us. It’s in our nature as engineers to want to go above and beyond to satisfy our managers and clients.

But at what cost? I read a quote not long ago that really hit hard: “The only people who will remember you worked all those extra hours are your kids.” This is not to say that I now power down my computer at 5 p.m. on the dot regardless of what I am in the middle of, but with a three-year-old son, this took on a whole new meaning. It doesn’t seem to be so much about what time we leave work, but working towards effectively ending the day so we can turn our focus towards life outside of work when we are away.



Tyler Avery, P.E.
ASPE President

So, how do we draw the line? How many small talk conversations have we had since covid that went something like, “Y’all staying busy?” “Oh yeah, slammed. It’s crazy.” “A good problem to have, I guess.” With our inboxes filling up like Newman’s mailbag, how do we log out physically and mentally so we can be our best as

husband, wife, dad, mom, roommate, or friend when we get home?

There’s not a single right answer for everyone, but we should all find the right answer for us individually. For me, I have begun using my 45-minute commute as a buffer of sorts. It allows me time to collect my thoughts in the morning and establish realistic (hopefully) expectations for what needs to be done that day, and it allows me time to make my last few calls and unwind on the way home so I can be a husband and dad. For you, it might be stopping at the gym on your way home from work. If you find yourself constantly feeling like you can’t find a good place to stop and leave, or you’re unable to “turn it off” when you get home, I encourage you to think about ways to effectively end your workday at work.

As managers, what can we do to help our employees with this battle? First and foremost, we should set realistic expectations for their production considering their experience and resource availability, and avoid setting them up to fail. Second, we should strive to create a culture and environment that puts work-life balance into practice and not one that just pays lip service to those buzzwords. We have to take care of our people because engineering companies are nothing without them.

As an employee, this is not instruction to become lazy or work less. Give your work your best and take pride in it, but remember the adage, “All you can do is all you can do.”

You have heard it many times: It will be there tomorrow.

— In the News

Britton leads UA's Ark. Academy of Civil Engineers

Keith M. Britton, P.E., president and founder of ICONIC Consulting Group, Inc., has been named the president of the Arkansas Academy of Civil Engineers.




Britton

Britton will be the AACE's first African American president in its 43-year history. He follows Garver's Nicci Tiner, P.E., PTOE, who was the first woman to be named president.

The AACE is an accomplished group of civil engineering alumni who support the University of Arkansas Civil Engineering Department. It donated more than \$100,000 in student body scholarships this past year. It also contributes to the recruitment of new tenure-track faculty. Britton was inducted into the Academy in 2018.

"In this era of rapid technological change, where civil engineering is continually evolving, I am keenly aware of our Academy's pivotal role," Britton said in a press release. As president, my commitment extends beyond upholding our traditions and legacy. I am dedicated to creating opportunities to engage our members more actively, thereby strengthening our organization."



Calendar of events

Oct. 15-18
ACEC Fall Conference
Austin, Texas

Nov. 1
ACEC/ A Trap Shoot
Jacksonville Shooting Sports Complex
Jacksonville

Britton has served the engineering industry for more than 20 years and launched ICONIC Consulting Group in 2008. ICONIC is a multi-disciplinary engineering firm established in Dallas that has expanded into Little Rock, Houston and Omaha, Nebraska. The firm provides civil engineering and construction support services for various sectors, including aviation, transit, municipalities, states, counties, and transportation agencies.

Britton began his studies at Arkansas State University, later transferring to the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville where he obtained his bachelor of science and master of science degrees in civil engineering and his master's in business administration with a concentration in entrepreneurship and strategy from Southern Methodist University.

CEI's Stamps named ACEC/A's first female board member

Anna Stamps, P.E., a certified floodplain manager and the Public Works Department manager at CEI Engineering Associates, was the first female inducted onto the board of ACEC/Arkansas and was recently recognized in Northwest Arkansas Business Journal's Forty Under 40 class of 2023.

She is CEI's sole female department manager and is also the youngest, being promoted at age 28.



Stamps

Stamps has served as a contract city engineer for more than five years and contract floodplain administrator for more than six years. One of her many achievements was leading a design team for the downtown revitalization of the City of Rogers that totaled more than \$30 million in construction.

After earning her bachelor of science in engineering degree from the University of Arkansas, she worked for several years on a variety of public sector projects that included roadways, infrastructure distribution systems, railroad realignment, and trail design.

Stamps is an active member of American Society of Civil Engineers, Engineers Without Borders, Tau Beta Pi Honor Society and Chi Epsilon Honor Society. In addition to being a member of ACEC, she has also sat on the ACEC Emerging Leaders Advisory Committee for two years and served as the chair for the same committee.

She is active in her community and local church and was a member of the Junior League of Northwest Arkansas for the past five years. Within Junior League of NWA, she was vice chair of the Volunteer Action Committee for one year, chair of the Volunteer Action Committee for two years, and sat on the Touch a Truck Committee.

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In the News (Cont'd)

Terracon acquires PMI, which will keep name locally

Pollution Management Inc. (PMI), an engineering and environmental services firm, announced July 6 that it has joined employee-owned Terracon.

PMI's 37 employees immediately became part of Terracon. The firm will continue to operate locally as Pollution Management Inc., A Terracon Company, and the transition will be seamless for clients.

The new acquisition is supported by Terracon's existing operations in Little Rock and Rogers, Arkansas; Springfield and Joplin, Missouri; and Oklahoma City and Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Since its founding in 1988, PMI has provided a range of engineering, environmental and field services to clients as they seek to comply with environmental regulations. The firm's team is comprised of professional engineers and geologists, environmental scientists, and construction/remediation specialists who provide turnkey projects throughout Arkansas and the surrounding states.



Davis

"By joining Terracon, our clients will continue to benefit from the expertise and creative solutions we have provided for over 34 years, while also enjoying expanded access to Terracon's national resources and multidiscipline services," said Richard Davis, president, PMI.

Beam of Burns and McDonnell rises to Principal Group

Steven Beam, P.E., is one of 49 Burns & McDonnell employee-owners who have been promoted to the Principal Group, a senior level of leadership that recognizes outstanding performance and technical excellence with the firm.

Beam, a director in the company's Transportation Group, leads the firm's Springdale branch office. He served as the project director for the design of the 30 Crossing design-build project for the Arkansas Department of Transportation.



Beam

Burns & McDonnell is a family of companies bringing together more than 13,500 engineers, construction and craft professionals, architects, planners, technologists, and scientists to design and build critical infrastructure. It is 100% employee owned. In 2022, it saw sales and revenue grow by nearly 50% and hired 2,400 people.

"The 2023 Principals possess the leadership skills and determination to take the firm to new heights," said Ray Kowalik, chairman and CEO. "This group embraces employee ownership and the company's values. This talented group will continue to propel Burns & McDonnell through a period of growth and success."

Garver adds three to Enterprise Solutions team



Dennis

Garver has added Dan Dennis, P.E., CCT; Sarah Hague, GISP, PMP; and Daniel Harket to its Enterprise Solutions Team.

The additions allow Garver to offer all public-private partnership clients technical advice and operations and maintenance services. The O&M Team is an addition to the Enterprise Solutions Team that Garver launched in late 2022 to provide specialized services and software that help clients improve efficiency and optimize project processes.



Hague



Harket

Together, Dennis and Harket have more than 40 years of experience with public-private partnerships and operations and maintenance projects. Hague has more than 20 years of experience with geographic information systems and project management.



Garver sponsors scholarship for women of color

Garver sponsored the Women's Foundation of Arkansas (WFA) Tjuana Byrd Summer Internship Program, a 10-week, paid summer internship opportunity for women of color who are enrolled in Arkansas colleges and are pursuing degrees

In the News continues on page 12

ACEC/A AFFILIATES

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- [ACEC Life / Health Trust](#)
- [BT Environmental, Inc.](#)
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Crafton Tull

In the News (Cont'd)

in STEM, finance, or other related majors.

The internship program, named for the WFA's first Black president, is offered in partnership with several Arkansas companies. It includes housing for participants, weekly networking events, and professional development workshops. Its goal is to provide women of color in the state of Arkansas more access to and representation in these professional fields.

Garver's Tate named to magazine Forty Under 40 list



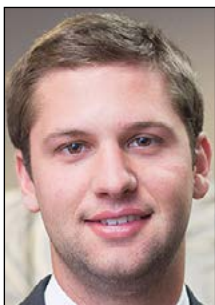
Dennis

Rusty Tate, P.E., a Garver water project manager and process engineer, was named by the Northwest Arkansas Business Journal to its Forty Under 40 list for 2023.

As a member of the publication's 27th class, Tate joins a group of young professionals from across a range of fields who are being honored for excellence in both their personal and professional lives.

As Garver's Fayetteville Water Design Center process group leader, Tate has worked with clients in Northwest Arkansas and across the country to design and implement water and wastewater infrastructure. In the last five years alone, he has led more than \$400 million in projects across Garver's 17-state footprint.

Crist's Mason Allen earns P.E. license



Allen

Mason Allen, P.E., of Crist Engineers, Inc., earned his Professional Engineer license in July.

Allen graduated from the University of Arkansas in 2017 with a bachelor's de-

gree in civil engineering. He began his career in 2018 as a project engineer at Crist Engineers, where he has worked for more than five years. His experience at Crist includes municipal water and wastewater systems design, hydraulic modeling, and construction management.

Allen, originally from Jonesboro, currently resides in Little Rock with his wife.



Carr

Knutson

MCE's Knutson, Carr earn PE licenses

McClelland Consulting Engineers' Barret Knutson, P.E., and Bailey Carr, P.E., recently earned their Professional Engineer licenses.

Both are employed in the Fayetteville office. Knutson works in the Water/Wastewater Department and Carr works in the Aviation Department.



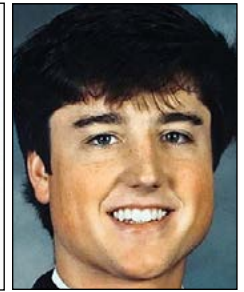
INTERNS. MCE hosted 14 interns in its Fayetteville and Little Rock offices this summer. It took them to lunch on National Intern Day and bowled with them on their last day in the offices.

MCE adds eight new hires to staff

McClelland Consulting Engineers has added eight staff members to its Little Rock and Fayetteville offices.



Camillo



McNeil

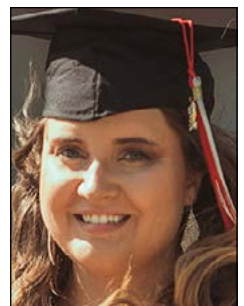


Rogers



Duncan

Asaph Camillo, P.E., was added to the Transportation & Stormwater Management Department as a project engineer. He has two years of experience working with transportation projects.



Felts

MCE's Fayetteville office added Jake McNeil, a project designer, to its Land Development Department. He is a University of Arkansas graduate with a bachelor of science in civil engineering. He previously interned with MCE.

The Little Rock Survey Department added Zane Rogers as a survey CAD technician. He has a bachelor of science in engineering degree in engineering physics - engineering technology from Southern Arkansas University.

MCE's Little Rock office added Emily Duncan as a project designer in its Land Development Department. She received her bachelor of landscape architecture and a bachelor of science in landscape contracting and management from Mississippi State University.

Michael Snook was hired as a construction observer and Joel Ruble as a geotechnical drilling assistant in the Geotechnical Engineering Department. Both

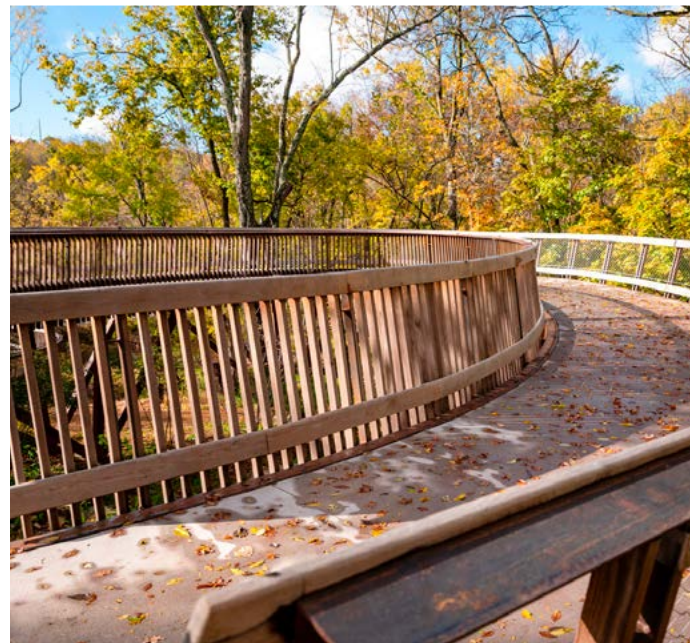
In the News continues on page 14

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were hired to work out of the Fayetteville office.

Madison (Madi) Felts has been hired as a marketing coordinator. She is a University of Arkansas graduate with a bachelor of science in agricultural communications, education and technology.

Elissa Crary joined the company as a billing clerk. She has more than 11 years of experience providing administrative and operations support, managing client deals, overseeing budgets and reports, and communicating with clients.

MCE's Becerra named to board of biking advocates



Becerra

Beatrice Becerra, E.I., a project designer with McClelland Consulting Engineers in Fayetteville, has joined the board of directors of Trailblazers, a trail development and bicycle advocacy nonprofit.

At MCE, Becerra collaborates on a wide variety of water/wastewater and transportation engineering projects, giving her a perspective into both the political and technical aspects of city/regional project planning. She also leads the firm's office bike rides.

While she's always enjoyed hiking, camping, and climbing, cycling was a sport that did not feel accessible to her until 2021. Since then, she has worked to make biking more inclusive of her community. She is a ride leader and Bike Instructor Certified Program coach with Latinas en Bici and currently serves on the board of directors for Bike.POC. She hopes to inspire both younger and older generations to heal through bikes.

Becerra is a native Northwest Arkansan who attended Bentonville High School and Northwest Arkansas Community College before graduating with a bachelor of science degree in civil engineering from the University of Arkansas in 2020.

Pickering's Martin leads engineering for Ark., Tenn.



Martin

Cara Martin, P.E., has been named Pickering Firm's director of civil engineering for Tennessee and Arkansas.

Martin, a principal owner, is the Little Rock office lead and a project manager at Pickering.

Hers is one of several recently announced by the Memphis-based firm.

Others included the appointment of Bob Pitts, P.E., as president. He will be responsible for Pickering's business unit operations. Pitts is a principal owner and has been with the firm 25 years. He has 42 years of experience in land development and civil design services. Mike Pohlman, P.E., serves as CEO and continues directing the corporate vision and strategy.

Other new appointments include Curt Craig as director of corporate business development; Marc Rubenstein as director of corporate management training; Tom McConnell, AIA, as director of facilities design services; and Camille Salters, RPG, as director of natural resources.

The firm also announced two new associate principal owners. Jonathan McLeod, P.E., specializes in water and wastewater design. He joined Pickering's Flowood, Mississippi, office in 2015. Hunter Truette, P.E., is a structural engineer specializing in facility design. He joined Pickering's Memphis office in 2021.

In addition to its Memphis headquarters, the firm has offices in Jonesboro and Little Rock along with four offices in Mississippi.

Olsson expands executive team

Olsson has expanded its 10-person executive leadership group.

Six new members joined Chief Executive Officer Brad Strittmatter, Chief Financial Officer Jeff Jenkins, Chief Rela-

tionship Officer John Olsson, and Chief Culture Officer Melissa Newton.

The six new members all have leadership backgrounds at Olsson and include: Ron Mersch, chief operating officer; Dave Roberts, chief development officer; Sarah Foster, executive vice president of markets; Len Swartz, executive vice president of disciplines; Jered Morris, executive vice president of innovation and sales; and Meghan O'Connell, executive vice president of talent.

Olsson has an office in Fayetteville, with plans to open a new office this year at 3537 North Steele Boulevard. The firm has about 65 employees in Fayetteville and expects that number to soon grow to 100.

Harris joins FTN's Fayetteville office



Harris

Natalie Harris joined FTN Associates as an environmental engineer in the Fayetteville office June 5 and will be working closely with the Water Resources group on floodplain and stormwater analysis projects.

Harris recently graduated from the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville with a bachelor of science in biological engineering with an environmental concentration.

She enjoys thrifting, going to the farmers' market, and watching and playing sports. She's a member of a recreational league soccer team that plays weekly in the fall and spring.

FTN's Pruitt earns PG license

FTN Associates' Andrew Pruitt has earned his Professional Geologist (P.G.) license after completing all requirements set forth by the Arkansas Board of Registration for Professional Geologists.

Andrew started working for FTN in 2016. He earned an associate of arts degree from the University of Arkansas Community College at Morrilton as well

as a bachelor of science in geology degree from Arkansas Tech University. In addition to his educational experience, he is a registered geologist in Arkansas. With his P.G. license, he can now manage, oversee, and certify geological investigations and reports. FTN now has five professional geologists on staff.

Outside of work, his hobbies include hunting, fishing, hiking, and working on automobiles.

HW hires Stanley to work as designer



Stanley

HW hired Dusty Stanley to work in its Fayetteville office as a designer in July. Stanley graduated from Northwest Technology Institute in 1996 with degrees in architectural drafting technology

and advanced architectural drafting technology. He has more than 27 years' experience in as-built verification, concept design, and project drawing management.

ETEC now selling Poly Processing Company tanks

ETEC, a manufacturer's representative for water and wastewater treatment systems, has recently established an exclusive partnership with Poly Processing Company.

Poly Processing produces high-density crosslinked polyethylene storage tanks used in chemical storage systems for water and wastewater plants. ETEC will serve as the representative in a territory that includes Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and western Tennessee.

The collaboration lets ETEC offer a comprehensive chemical feed system to its customers. ETEC had already been

providing chemical feed pumps. Poly Processing's tanks feature double-walled SAFE-Tanks for dual containment, and vertical and sloped-bottom IMFO (integrally molded flanged outlet) tanks for complete tank discharge.

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Cooley

Chad Cooley, vice president of ETEC, highlighted the advantage of having Poly Processing's headquarters in Monroe, Louisiana, which will enhance its service capabilities

for customers in Arkansas.



Crafton Tull helps design Rogers pro soccer stadium

Crafton Tull is on the design team for a new 5,000-seat multi-purpose stadium in Rogers, which will eventually be home to new men's and women's United Soccer League (USL) teams.

The site for the stadium is located on 11.5 acres near Pinnacle Hills Promenade. Crafton Tull is providing site development services for the project, which is currently in the design phase. Taylor Lindley, P.E., works in Crafton Tull's Rogers office and is managing the project.

"This is an exciting project to take on because, as a soccer fan, I know the Northwest Arkansas community will embrace professional soccer, and these teams will greatly impact the continued growth of the region," Lindley said.

USL aims to begin league play for both the men's and women's Northwest Arkansas teams in 2026.

Crafton Tull's two certified in river restoration

Two members of the Crafton Tull environmental team recently completed the final level of the Rosgen Hydrology Training.

Crafton Tull designs mixed-use site for neurodiverse adults

Crafton Tull helped design Fayetteville's South Cato Springs mixed-use development that promotes inclusion and opportunities for neurodiverse adults.

The site being developed by SLS (Supporting Lifelong Success) Community will provide a wide variety of educational, commercial, and recreational opportunities. SLS Community is a Fayetteville nonprofit that focuses on empowering neurodiverse adults.

South Cato Springs Holdings, LLC, is collaborating with the SLS Community to develop the 230 acres along South Cato Springs Road and sitting adjacent to Kessler Park. The "live, work, play" concept will be interwoven into the development for neurodivergent adults but will also affect the entire community.

The SLS vision is to create a place where neurodiverse adults can live, work, recreate, and interact with the local community. Included in the master plan are residential areas along with spaces for educational institutions, agriculture, recreation, offices, dining, and lodging. When completed over the next several years, SLS will bring together neurodiverse adults and the broader community.

The project was officially launched with a groundbreaking in June 2023, but Crafton Tull has been a part of this project since the initial planning started three years ago. It has provided initial planning services for the SLS Community, surveys, and environmental work. Currently, its team is in the beginning

design phases of the roadway and sanitary sewer. OSD (Office of Strategy + Design) provided the overall master plan, and CORE Architects is also collaborating for the design of the project.

Construction could continue for 15 to 20 years as different components are completed. Another anchor of the project will be a multi-specialty UAMS facility that will focus on neurodiverse adults.

The groundbreaking, which was held in June, is a step toward that mission and signaled the beginning of a special project for Crafton Tull's Luke Jost, P.E.

"I chose to be a civil engineer after hearing stories of projects around the world that helped marginalized or overlooked people groups succeed," said Jost, civil project manager team lead in the Fayetteville office. "It's a special opportunity to be involved with a project that will give neurodiverse adults new opportunities right here in our town. It's fulfilling to be part of a project that will change lives and better my community."

Crafton Tull President and CEO Matt Crafton said he is proud that Crafton Tull has had the opportunity to work on the project.

"We have been so honored to assist with the initial planning and engineering for what will become an incredible place where neurodiverse adults can reach their full potential," Crafton said. "The mission of SLS Community is truly extraordinary, and we're excited to help it become a reality."

Senior Vice President of Environmental Karen McCurdy, P.E., CFM, and Garrett Lampson, E.I., CFM, have now completed all four levels of the training, which involves both lectures and hands-on field experience.

The program is administered by Wildland Hydrology and led by Dave Rosgen, P.H., Ph.D., a professional hydrologist and geomorphologist with 49 years of river work experience.

Level 4: River Restoration and Natural Channel Design is the capstone course for the program. McCurdy and Lampson completed the course in August 2023, allowing the two to gain hands-on experience in utilizing natural channel design principles in river restoration, stabilization, and aquatic habitat enhancement.

Prior to Level 4, McCurdy and Lampson also completed Level 1: Applied Fluvial Geomorphology; Level 2: River



RIVER TRAINING. Dave Rosgen, P.H., Ph.D., center, leads the Level 4: River Restoration and Natural Channel Design course recently completed by two Crafton Tull environmental engineers.

Morphology and Applications; and Level 3: River Assessment and Monitoring. Each piece of the program builds on the last and looks to grow unique expertise through shared data, applied methodologies, and project experiences.

“This knowledge is crucial for continuing to build our environmental team’s work in natural channel design

and stream restoration,” McCurdy said. “The additional experience our team has gained in hydrology through this program will be an asset to many current and future Crafton Tull projects.”

Benchmark Group celebrates 45 years in business

Benchmark Group celebrated the 45th anniversary of its founding while also hosting the Rogers-Lowell Chamber of Commerce’s monthly Business After Hours group Aug. 17.

More than 75 people attended the event, which featured catering by The Sous Chef, beverages from Rendezvous Junction Brewing Company, and music by guitarist Tim Hillwood. Giveaways at the event included concert tickets at the AMP.

Founded in 1978 by Paul C. Parks, P.E., as an electrical engineering design



company, Benchmark Group now offers architecture and interior design, mechanical engineering, fire protection engineering, and refrigeration engineering. Other services include permitting, Nav-Vis 3D scanning, commissioning, green building review, and energy services.

Licensed in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, Benchmark Group is headquartered in Rogers with an office in Dallas and professionals based in Houston.

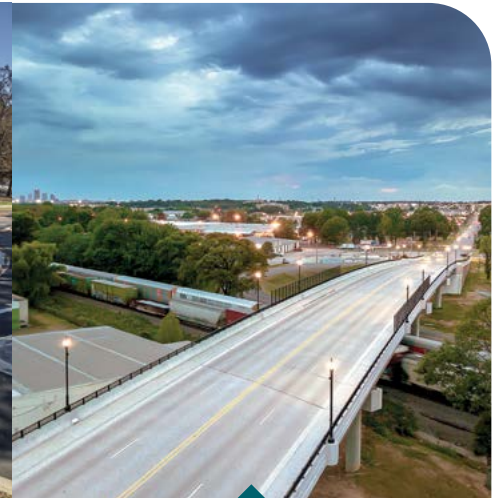
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Location: Bull Shoals, Arkansas
Bull Shoals Water Treatment Plant



Location: Little Rock, Arkansas
Mabelvale Pike Roundabout



Location: North Little Rock, Arkansas
McCain Bridge

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ACEC/A Member Spotlight

Horner and Shifrin expanding in state

The full-service, employee-owned St. Louis-based firm opened an Arkansas office last year. It has four employees now but plans to open a new office with space for 16.

St. Louis-based Horner and Shifrin has a staff of four in Bentonville, but it doesn't plan to stay in the same place or the same size.

After opening up shop there last year, the regional firm will soon build out space in Rogers for 16 staff members, said the company's president, Steve Donahue, P.E.

Horner and Shifrin does construction administration; water and wastewater treatment; stormwater and flood control; transportation including bridge design, bike trails and interstates; and site development for public and private entities.

"We like to stay we're pretty much full-service engineering," Donahue said.

Wesley Horner started the company 90 years ago in St. Louis during the Great Depression. It now has eight offices, with its headquarters in Union Station in St. Louis. Other offices are in St. Louis suburbs in Missouri and Illinois as well as in Chicago; Poplar Bluff, Missouri; and now Bentonville.

It has about 150 employees, about half of them engineers. The company has been employee owned since 1987 through an employee stock ownership plan.

"Our company is 100% employee-owned," he said. "We're an ESOP, so we think it's a good selling point, a good benefit for employees, that everybody is an owner and they have an ownership mentality so they're vested in their client satisfaction and repeat business. It's a mechanism that works well for our company, it works well for our clients and is a tremendous benefit for our employees."

Among its biggest jobs have been two half-billion-dollar projects. One is the new I-270 Chain of Rocks Bridge across the Mississippi River at St. Louis. Horner and Shifrin also did a lot of the design-build work for the reconstruction of I-64 through the middle of the city.



HORNER AND SHIFRIN projects include, top, the I-270 Mississippi River bridge replacement for the Illinois Department of Transportation; middle, the new I-64 design-build project for the Missouri Department of Transportation; and left, the Maple and Lafayette Street bridge restorations for the city of Fayetteville.

The firm had been working on Arkansas-based projects out of its Poplar Bluff office and signed an on-call contract with the Arkansas Department of Transportation, mostly for bridge replacements. With that work and with the expected growth of Northwest Arkansas, it decided that now was the time to invest in an Arkansas office.

In addition to its ARDOT projects, it's also working with the city of Siloam Springs on a painting project for a 1.5-million-gallon water tank and with the city of Fayetteville on a 4,300-linear-foot gravity sewer to take the place of a lift

station. It does a lot of work with Mercy Clinics at various locations in northwest Arkansas. Donahue said the firm's building services team has expertise in the needs of medical facilities. It is working with communities across the state to do a lead service water line inventory through the Arkansas Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Division.

The company is active in the ACEC and recently joined the ACEC/A. Donahue, a member of the ACEC/Illinois board of directors, said being involved at the state level is a priority for the company.

In the News (Cont'd)



FUTURE ENGINEER? Benchmark Group professionals volunteered at the Boys & Girls Club of Benton County during the month of July to present programs promoting women in STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Math). One week the program centered around architecture, and the next week it focused on engineering. More than 100 girls learned about careers in those fields.

McGhee joins Horner & Shifrin staff as technical manager

James McGhee has joined Horner & Shifrin as technical manager in the Building Services Group.

McGhee has more than 18 years of experience in electrical engineering design and project management. His expertise lies in lighting design and calculations, power distribution, management of construction projects, specifications, and emergency systems.

He is certified as a lighting associate by the American Lighting Association. During his career, he has provided electrical engineering design for a variety of clients, from residential and hospitality to government and corrections. He has also been responsible for the development of construction documents for



McGehee

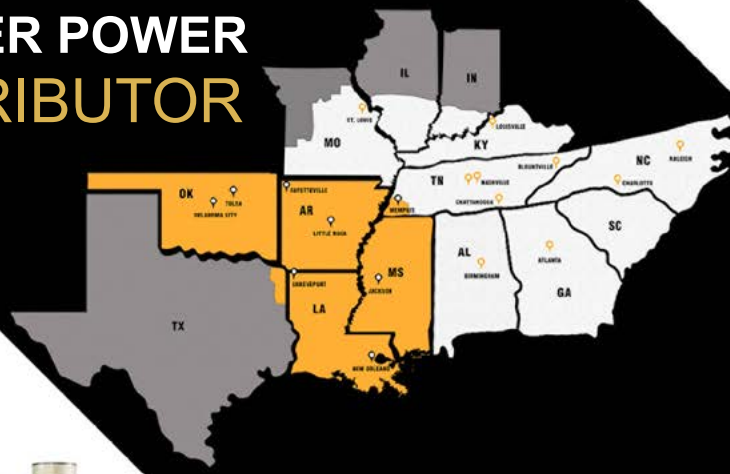
numerous national and multinational retailers. Recently, he was lead electrical designer for several non-profit, advocacy and healthcare clients in the region, such as Children's Safety Center of Washington County and the new Alice L. Walton School of Medicine.

McGhee is an avid baker, a talent he has developed from a very young age. He runs a successful in-home baking business producing custom-decorated cakes and macarons.

"We're excited to add James to the building services team as we continue to expand in Arkansas," said Casey Wilson, P.R., LEED AP BD+C, business unit leader – building services. "With the

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Tornado response

When a tornado destroyed the wastewater treatment plant in Wynne, the local utility and Crist Engineers acted fast to create a midterm solution. An existing equalization basin and two ponds will treat the wastewater while a new plant is built.

What does a city do when a tornado destroys its wastewater treatment facility? Work with whatever it has left, and plan to replace it with something better as soon as possible.

That's what happened in Wynne, where an EF3 tornado March 31 forced Wynne Water Utilities General Manager Blake Marotti and Crist Engineers to come up with innovative temporary solutions while the city waits for a permanent facility to be built.

The storm that day didn't catch the city completely by surprise. With the National Weather Services Storm Prediction Center issuing a five out of five chance for a tornado, Marotti decided to send his employees home at about 3 p.m.

It turned out to be a good decision, as no one was on site when the tornado hit. It struck the facility on the town's outskirts at about 4:45 p.m., making it the first site hit within the Wynne city limits. The twister destroyed a red iron storage and office building, a blower building, a chlorine building, and the main office building. All the equipment surrounding those buildings was destroyed as well.

"It started with our big red iron building there in the back, picked it up, and just threw it at the rest of the plant, and then the tornado came all the way through and tore up every piece of infrastructure we have from front to back, basically. ... It was a complete loss from front to back," Marotti said.

The tornado then headed through town, mowing through residential areas, badly damaging the First United Methodist Church, and destroying much of Wynne High School.

Marotti knew the clock was ticking. No pieces of infrastructure were remain-



DISASTER RESPONSE. Wynne Water Utilities General Manager Blake Marotti, left, and Crist Engineers President Matt Dunn, P.E., center, meet with a FEMA representative in the aftermath of the March 31 tornado that struck Wynne. Photo courtesy of Crist Engineers.

ing that could be used to treat the town's normal daily flow of a million gallons, and with no electricity going to the lift stations, soon sewage would begin backing up into people's houses. He called an in-town contractor to plug the 27-inch sewer main and divert the flow to a nearby equalization basin east of the plant. It had been built as a subsidiary holding pond so that rain surge events wouldn't hydraulically overload the plant. The line wasn't designed to be diverted, so it had to be manually plugged at the nearest downstream manhole. The 12-million-gallon equalization basin was meant for short-term storage and was already at half capacity, but it would do for now.

Marotti's quick thinking kept the plant from overflowing and kept wastewater off the ground at the plant. But he had to get the power flowing to those lift stations. He called the Arkansas Rural Water Association the next day and asked for help.

ARWA provided seven generators to keep the wastewater coming to the equalization basin. The effort was successful. To keep up with the demand, the city contracted with Denali Water Solutions to haul wastewater in tankers to West Memphis.

"We ran for about seven days," he said. "All the while I was talking to [Division of Environmental Quality] to try to find a more long-term solution because I knew that wasn't viable. And just seven days of hauling cost us right at \$75,000."

The good news for Wynne was that while trees were uprooted and there were water leaks all over the city, there were never any pressure issues and never a need to issue a boil order.

"So it was really all hands on deck of all the Wynne Water employees, and contractors came out of the woodworks trying to help, and it was definitely a group effort all the way around," he said.



TORNADO AFTERMATH. The tornado that struck Wynne destroyed the town’s wastewater treatment facility. To keep sewage from backing up into homes and covering the ground at the plant, General Manager Blake Marotti diverted the wastewater to an equalization basin. It became part of the midterm response. *Photo courtesy of Crist Engineers.*

Marotti needed to find a mid-term solution until the plant could be rebuilt. He called Crist Engineers’ Matt Dunn, P.E., and Craig Johnson, P.E. The firm had been working with Wynne for 50

years and designed the plant in the 1970s, but no one involved had experience with a disaster of this magnitude. They had started calling Marotti Saturday but, with no cell service, could not make contact

until Monday. They arrived the first part of the week, finding “Half the plant was in those trees over there,” Dunn said.

Crist’s role became long-term viability and regulatory assistance, as it served as a mediator with DEQ. Marotti wanted the temporary solution to be separate from the plant itself. That way, it wouldn’t have to piggyback off infrastructure that wasn’t in place or wasn’t working anymore, and the plant could fast-track construction of the new plant without having to worry about it being touched by the temporary solution.

“He wanted to keep water out of here,” Dunn said. “He was adamant about that when we got here, which was the correct decision. We figured out a way to divert – not only divert, but to divert long-term – and to turn that into a temporary plant so we can keep water off of this long-term. Because these improvements are going to take years to fix. What you see here, it’s going to take years to get all this

Continues on next page

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Jim Hinkle Spring River Fish Hatchery

construction done, so we designed a plan to allow him to keep water out of here for years during that time.”

Marotti ultimately decided to use the equalization basin, which was designed by Crist in 2015, as a temporary treatment plant. Two lime sludge storage ponds, one of which had been permitted but never used, became facultative lagoons. Crist came up with the design for the facultative lagoon system, which would later be aerated when installed with electrical wires. In response, DEQ issued relaxed discharge limitations. The executive order allows Wynne to improve the plant on an interim basis.

The whole process took about a month. Marotti credited Crist Engineers with helping the utility navigate the bureaucracy.

“Their relationship with DEQ at an executive level helped out tremendously,” he said. “I mean, Craig was on the phone with Alan York (associate director over water quality). So, that and their design expertise. They jumped on the preliminary design plans as soon as we talked about turning that into a lagoon process to see if it was viable, and [they] had ... preliminary design drawings within a week of us discussing it, so that was huge.”

The temporary plant will operate for two or three years while the new plant is built. It won't remove constituents to the same level as the permanent facility, but with the executive order and the federally declared emergency, it's performing well.



TOTAL DESTRUCTION. Not much was left of the wastewater facility. It will be replaced with a new one costing \$18 to \$20 million. Photo courtesy of Crist Engineers.

“This process, we kind of turned lemons out of lemons in this particular situation, and luckily we had the EQ basin there,” Marotti said. “But it's going to be kind of a twofold moving forward because it's always going to be kind of a disaster preparedness alternative in case anything ever happens to the plant again. It's a fallback system that we have in our back pocket.”

The new plant will cost \$18 to \$20 million. The Federal Emergency Management Agency has declared a federal disaster and will cover 75% of the gap that insurance won't cover. Marotti has been talking to agencies looking for grants. Also, the utility refinanced a bond issue last year that freed up \$2 million planned for infrastructure projects at the plant, so it will have that money.

Marotti said the new, permanent plant will keep the same biological processes and hopefully reuse some of the existing concrete structures. But it will be better.

It will replace a plant built in 1978 and remodeled in 2002.

While the destruction of Wynne High School attracted most of the media attention, Marotti said the wastewater facility was not ignored. It is, after all, critical infrastructure. He said FEMA, Army Corps of Engineers, and DEQ have all assisted his own staff in responding to the disaster.

“These guys that have been here 20-30 years, the employees of Wynne Water, we all pride ourselves on being able to stay in compliance, never had any consent orders, things like that,” he said. “We wanted to keep good graces with DEQ, and I knew that if we did all that we could on the front end, that given this disaster, that hopefully we'd have some help on the back end. And they've jumped through all kinds of hoops with us on getting that lagoon approved so that we can turn that into a viable, long-term temporary option until the plant gets rebuilt.”

In the News (Cont'd)

exponential growth that the Northwest Arkansas region is experiencing, Horner & Shifrin is well positioned to support building projects in the region, and James will be integral to our success and growth.”

Michael Baker announces new staff hires

Michael Baker International has hired several new employees.

Tony Crafton, P.E., will serve as a senior roadway designer and project man-



Crafton

ager, expanding the Arkansas design team's footprint into northeast Arkansas. He will also support construction engineering and inspection assignments. Crafton served for 15 years as an AR-DOT construction engineer including several years as an assistant resident engineer, and also has six years of consultant roadway design experience, all in northeast Arkansas.

Brett Galland has joined the Little Rock environmental team as an environ-

mental associate. He holds a bachelor of science degree in environmental science and policy from Chapman University and a master of science degree in environmental geoscience from Mississippi State University. He has two years' experience as an environmental scientist and



Coleman

five years of experience in academia.

Hunter Coleman joined the Little Rock surveying team as a survey party chief. He has three years' experience operating survey crews for

the Florida Department of Transportation utilizing various field data collection techniques.

Zach Taylor joined the Little Rock surveying team as a survey field technician. He has worked in Florida as a survey field technician.



Malik

Evan Malik joined the Little Rock design team as a CAD technician. He holds an associate of applied science and technical certificate in drafting and design from the University of Arkansas Community College at Morrilton. He has a background in roadway and bridge detailing as well as two years of CAD experience. He will be focused on supporting the roadway and right-of-way plan development teams.

Belinda Plastiras has joined the Little Rock office as an office services manager



Plastiras

systems.

She has more than 30 years' experience in managing financial operations and improving internal processes.



Baker

of Examiners for Engineering and Sur-

supporting day-to-day operations for the Arkansas transportation teams and supplementing the program management with her background in consultant operations and administrative

veying (NCEES) Structural Engineering examination and has S.E. licensure in Illinois.

Michael Baker ranked #31 by ENR magazine

Michael Baker was ranked as the #31 Design Firm by ENR Magazine. The number includes a ranking of #20 for pure design and #18 for construction management.

The firm's focus on transportation, both in Arkansas and nationally, is evidenced in the firm's ranking of #13 in transportation, and in its rankings in the various subcategories. Most notably, the firm, which had been ranked as the #5 bridge firm for several years, improved to the #4 bridge firm in 2023, while maintaining strong positions in highways (#18) and airports (#18).

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Our People Do.

Blake Peacock joined HW in 2011 after graduating from college, working in the firm's Van Buren office. In 2021 he became an Associate of the firm, and currently works in HW's Fayetteville office. As a licensed Professional Engineer in Arkansas, Blake specializes in land planning and development and municipal infrastructure projects. He has a broad range of experience in computer modeling of roadway design, stormwater drainage systems, water distribution systems, and sanitary sewer collection systems.

Blake is a native of Springdale, AR and a graduate of the University of Arkansas where he earned his Bachelor's degree in Civil Engineering. He is passionate about the outdoors, whether hiking one of the beautiful trails in the Ozarks or biking along the Razorback Greenway with his wife, Julia, and their two children, Brantley and Mallory. Most of his free time is spent chasing his children around to recreational activities or swimming at the pool. He also enjoys running, woodworking and bow hunting.

Blake Peacock, P.E.
Senior Associate

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Crawford prepared to lead ACEC/A

Paul Crawford has had an eventful five years as head of FTN Associates, including a pandemic and a tornado that severely damaged his offices. Now he's heading ACEC/A with hopes that the Council can find ways to address the shortage of engineers.

Paul Crawford, P.E., P.G., grew up as the middle child in a family with seven kids, so he learned how to get along with others and how to be a mediator. He lived a couple of years in Tokyo when his father, an ear, nose and throat specialist, reconstructed faces of American servicemen wounded in action during the Vietnam War. In high school, he spent a year as an exchange student in Brazil, where he learned to get along with people from different cultures.

That preparation serves him well now that he is president of FTN Associates and this year's president of the American Council of Engineering Companies of Arkansas.

"I've always enjoyed working with people," he said. "I'm more of a team player versus doing things my way. I tend to encourage people to get together to come up with a group solution that fits everybody."

FTN's specialty is water resources – water quality, flood plains, hydraulic modeling and stormwater. It does a small amount of water and wastewater work for industrial clients but not municipalities.

As the company's president since 2018, Crawford doesn't do much technical work for the company any more. He misses that part of engineering, although he sometimes dabbles in a project if his expertise is needed. Instead, the bulk of his time is spent in administrative and leadership tasks like human resources and recruiting. The firm has about 75 employees working in four offices. The largest are the main office in Little Rock with just under 40 employees, and the Fayetteville office with about 17 or 18. A Baton Rouge office has four employees. It was opened years ago when a Little Rock employee moved there to earn a Ph.D. in coastal engineering and stayed. FTN does a lot of work on coastal and master drain-



PAUL CRAWFORD became president of FTN Associates in 2018. He said working for the water resources firm lets him do his part to preserve the environment. He's pictured here in the firm's temporary office in Little Rock.

age studies. One employee moved home to the St. Louis suburb of Chesterfield and works for Missouri clients and others.

Crawford's first few years as head of FTN have been far from routine. The covid pandemic began not long after he became president. FTN staff members scattered, and it set up virtual systems for people to work at home. A lot of FTN's work occurs in the field – collecting samples, monitoring streams and lakes, etc. During the worst of the pandemic, FTN's professionals couldn't visit clients.

The other big challenge facing FTN was the March 31 tornado that struck its Little Rock offices. Crawford and others huddled in a downstairs bathroom while the storm passed. When they emerged, they discovered that FTN's top floor offices were badly damaged – Crawford's

worst of all. The firm had an emergency response plan and was back in business within a few days. It has moved into temporary offices until its old building can be renovated.

One of Crawford's goals as ACEC/A president is to attract more people to STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) professions. With baby boomers retiring and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021 pouring money into infrastructure projects, there simply aren't enough skilled professionals – engineers, surveyors and others – prepared to do the work.

"As a result, all of us engineering companies are competing against each other to get that resource of the engineering field," he said. "It's very difficult, and it's getting to be highly competitive. We're having to outbid each other. And when you add in the infrastructure Act, which is throwing a lot of money

out there to the typical civil engineering companies, there's a lot of contracts out there, huge backlog in money, and people can't get the work done because there's not enough people to do it. So it's created an interesting conundrum."

Crawford hopes to reach out to students at various grade levels to try to get them involved in engineering. He'll be working with the national ACEC to see what materials it has available for students and schools.

Current possible sources of talent include women, minorities and foreign nationals. A majority of FTN's recent hires have been women. In fact, there are more women than men working in the firm's Fayetteville office. Crawford had interviewed a female for a geologist's position the morning of his interview with Building Arkansas. The Arkansas Black

Mayors Association has received a \$95.5 million government grant for stormwater management and other watershed projects. FTN is one of the firms participating in the project. The ABMA has helped engineering firms find interns to collect data in drainage areas. Many students have participated, which hopefully will create future engineers.

As for foreign nationals, FTN has hired several of them and spent money and time training them, but sometimes they can't obtain visas. One recently had to return to Taiwan because he wasn't selected in the visa lottery system the past three years. He'll have to get a normal visa, which takes longer.

"So we're going to try working with him from afar, because he's that valuable to us. ... He's super intelligent, he's really valuable for the team, and losing him would create a tremendous problem," Crawford said. "And it's not because we don't want to hire domestic engineers. We just don't get them applying."

Crawford said ACEC/A will continue asking members of Arkansas' congressional delegation to support increasing the numbers of foreign nationals eligible to work in the United States. The numbers have not been adjusted for years.

Among other issues of concern, ACEC/A will also seek during the 2025 legislative session to pass a law ending the practice of contractors requiring engineering and architectural firms to pay for

defending them in court. ACEC/A tried to pass such a law in the 2023 session but ran into opposition. It will take patience, as engineering advocates have found in other states, but Crawford hopes to find an agreement that can satisfy everyone.

Crawford also hopes to increase the number of engineering firms who are members of ACEC/A. The Council lost two members when B & F Engineering was acquired by Crafton Tull and then PMI was acquired by Terracon. Such acquisitions inevitably will continue. Meanwhile, Horner & Shifrin recently joined the Council. He plans to do a road trip with ACEC/A Executive Director Angie W. Cooper to try to recruit more firms.

Crawford took an unusual road to engineering and to Arkansas. A native of Oshkosh, Wisconsin, he first attended Knox College, a small liberal arts school in Illinois, where a career counselor recommended that he major in geology. He also met his wife, Charlotte, a Little Rock native. He later finished his degree in geology at the University of Wisconsin. After graduating, he worked in the environmental business and then as a surveyor, earning a master's degree in civil engineering at the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago.

Charlotte and he moved to Arkansas 31 years ago. He worked for a succession of engineering companies for about seven years and then found his permanent home at FTN Associates.

He was mentored by two of the company's founders, Dennis Ford, Ph.D., P.E., and Kent Thornton, Ph.D. – not expecting that he eventually would be asked to replace them. Ford, who was leading the company, had been pondering his successor for a while. He and senior leadership team members decided on Crawford about five years ago.

"Dennis just didn't give me the keys and then disappear," he said. "He and I sat together for several years working on things, learning how the company is run, what decisions did he make, and he's still a great resource for me."

Crawford likes the fact that as an environmental engineer, he makes the world a better place. Among his biggest projects have been cleanups of hazardous waste facilities on the state's priority list. He's worked on the city of Little Rock's landfill as well as an expansion of the Craighead County landfill.

"That was part of the impetus of getting into the environmental business," he said. "When I was a young student as a geologist, I've always been interested in the outdoors. I'm not a hunter or a fisherman, but I like being outside doing things, hiking, being in the forests and things like that, so being able to preserve that and the environment was a big push of what I wanted to do. And while I can't fix everything, I feel like I'm doing my part to do as best I can to help make the earth sustainable."



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Avery says ASPE must show value

Tyler Avery, P.E., is leading a new design-build venture, Jurni Design Group, at an established company, C.R. Crawford. As the new ASPE president, he says the Society must show members that they benefit not just from the training but also from the camaraderie.

In his relatively young engineering career, Tyler Avery, P.E., has already been named the ASPE Young Engineer of the Year and played a major role in designing an ACEC/A Grand Conceptor Award winner.

Now he's serving as ASPE president at the same time he is helping build a new venture.

Avery in February became director of engineering of Jurni Design Group, a design-build division of full service construction company C.R. Crawford. He came to Jurni after a successful career with his first employer, Hot Springs-based Mid-South Engineering.

Jurni came about after C.R. Crawford acquired an Oklahoma-based company, Triton Design Builders, that had a design group known as PECM. That group was rebranded as Jurni. With seven staff members, it increases C.R. Crawford's reach into the design-build market, specifically for industrial projects.

Avery has been doing industrial projects his entire career, and he likes the prospect of designing a high-profile job in Northwest Arkansas, his home. The move also allows him to work for an established company that's also engaged in a new venture.

"That was another big draw for me, so it kind of scratched the entrepreneurial itch to get in kind of on the ground floor of something that's building but also to have the assurance that you're backed by a well-established successful organization in C.R. Crawford and Triton. ... You kind of have this feeling of security that, hey, I know I've got all the right resources behind me to do this, but at the same time you get the excitement of being more or less a startup. So you kind of take the good from both of those," he said.

A native of Rogers, Avery had moved back home to Northwest Arkansas in Oc-



TYLER AVERY played a major role while at Mid-South Engineering in designing the project that won the ACEC/A Grand Conceptor Award in 2018. The next year, he was named ASPE Young Engineer of the Year. Now he's director of engineering of the Jurni Design Group – a C.R. Crawford Company.

tober 2020 after spending his entire career at Mid-South Engineering.

He had started working for Mid-South after graduating from the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville in 2012. His fiancée, Leah, was in graduate school in Searcy, and Hot Springs was close enough that they could maintain a semi-long distance relationship. They had planned to move back to Northwest Arkansas when she graduated, but things were going well for him at work and in their personal lives, so they decided to stick around for a while. It ended up being nine years.

While Northwest Arkansas was home, Hot Springs was a home away from home. His parents had met there and lived there. His mom's parents were there, and he had visited them often during his childhood. In fact, his maternal grandfather, Jim Alford, was a big reason why Avery became an engineer. Alford and both of his broth-

ers were engineers. He loved being an engineer and worked until his health wouldn't allow it.

"He never complained about work, and that made an impact on me," he said. "I had been around, I guess, my parents and other adults who you hear them complain about work or this or that, and my grandfather, the things he said about work were always positive. When I was younger and I would go to visit him and my grandparents in Hot Springs over the summers, he'd take me to his projects, and he'd take me to the concrete mixing plant and wastewater plants, so he really opened my eyes to that whole world."

Mid-South Engineering had been the only place Avery had worked as an engineer. The company specialized in the industrial wood products industry, and it gave him an opportunity to do meaningful projects.

His signature project was a \$190 million Weyerhaeuser sawmill dimension lumber

facility in Dierks. The new construction had a capacity of 388 million board-feet per year. At the time, it was going to be the country's top-producing dimension lumber facility. The project stretched out over three years, and he was the engineer of record for the Phase 2 portion. He earned his Professional Engineer license in the middle of it. It won the ACEC/A's Grand Conceptor award at the Engineering Excellence Awards in 2018. The next year, he was named the ASPE's Young Engineer of the Year.

He had always intended to come back home to Northwest Arkansas. He and Leah had enjoyed Hot Springs, and professionally he had been successful, but the birth of their first child in September 2019 had set things in motion. He had come to Rogers to open a small Mid-South satellite office in January 2021, the strategy being to target young profes-

sionals and graduates coming out of the University of Arkansas. The office grew to four people while he was there. But C.R. Crawford was an opportunity he could not pass up.

As ASPE president, Avery said he plans to help people see the value ASPE gives to its individual members, and therefore why they need to be involved in it. That's a challenge in that the organization's three local chapters stopped meeting in person during covid and have since been working to regain their momentum. Based on feedback he has received over the years, he wants to reinforce the connection between the local, state and national levels. He also wants to emphasize the value that ASPE provides its members that they can't get elsewhere, including networking, professional development hours, social events, and publications.

The board, he said, is looking at ways to refresh some of ASPE's offerings in ways that people can see that value. In an effort to respect members' time, it's

considering shortening the two-day Annual Conference to one day, with a social event the night before or the evening of. Perhaps multiple one-day events could be held, with one focused on professional development hours and another on a social event like a fundraising or networking event. Survey questions had been sent to the board that will later go out to the membership. He was hoping to get good feedback so the board can provide members what they want.

"That's our biggest focal point as a board is really putting a focus on what do the members get for the money, and we hope to be very deliberate about that going forward, and I think that the leadership at the state level in the past several years has done a great job with that," he said.

"It's something that takes an ongoing focus [because] that is not going to take care of itself. It's something we have to actively work to continue to advertise and market and push the benefits of the or-

ganization to the membership and make sure it's something that can continue to grow."

Networking has been one of the most important opportunities ASPE has traditionally offered. Events like the ASPE Annual Conference provide professional development hours, but it's just as important that engineers enjoy the camaraderie with their fellow professionals who have experienced the same successes and challenges.

"Engineers often get a bad rap for being antisocial, and maybe there's some truth to that, but there's also a lot of really great people in the profession, and some of my closest friends are engineers that work for other companies," he said. "I don't think there's anything bad that can come from more opportunities to get folks together when there's no technical agenda, when it's just an event that's purely for social interaction and introducing young engineers to other people in the profession."



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