

# Building Arkansas

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



## This interchange is a Grand Concept

Crafton Tull won the Grand Conceptor Award at this year's Engineering Excellence Awards banquet by designing Arkansas' first single point urban interchange let to contract. The firm completed the design for the I-49 overpass of Highway 71B at Rogers and Bentonville. Pictured from left are Crafton Tull bridge designer Ken Miller, P.E.; project manager Mike Burns, P.E.; and Chuck Wipf, P.E, bridge engineering manager.

# ACEC/A to host first annual Award Lunch

Event to honor winners of Distinguished Service Award, Young Professional of the Year, Community Service Award

ACEC/A's First Annual Award Lunch and Membership Meeting will be June 4 from 11:30 a.m. until 1 p.m. at the DoubleTree by Hilton Little Rock.

Tickets for the event are \$65, a table of eight is \$500, and sponsorships are \$250.

The event will present three awards: the Distinguished Service Award, Young Professional of the Year, and the Community Service Award. The Distinguished Service Award winner will be selected by the Past Presidents Council. The other awards are College of Fellows Awards and will be judged by ACEC/A College of Fellows members.

The Community Service Award will recognize a principal or manager of an

ACEC/Arkansas member firm who has been involved in community service such as a board, commission or community group, but has received no remuneration for professional services rendered. The awardee will be perceived by the public as a leader and will have influenced decision-making on issues other than professional. He or she could be active in local, county or state government.

The Young Professional of the Year will be an ACEC-A member firm employee who is age 35 years or younger as of Dec. 31, 2024. The awardee will be a registered professional engineer or hold a professional license, designation, or certification in their field of expertise. The winner will be automatically submitted for consideration as the ACEC National Young Professional of the Year.

Nominations for the Community Service Award and the Young Professional

Award were being taken until April 22.

The event also will recognize this year's Emerging Leaders, the program led by ACEC/A that teaches leading young design professionals about communication, state government and other subjects.

Participants this year are Landon Woodfield, P.E., and Blake Murray, P.E., Crafton Tull; Nick Braddy, P.E., Garver; Robert Bullis, P.E., and Taylor Clark, P.E., McClelland Consulting Engineers; Robert Darrington, P.E., and Phillip Zeagler, LSIT, Michael Baker International; Colton Echols, EIT, CEI Engineering; Patrick Jones, P.E., HDR; James Ketchum, EIT, McGeorge Contracting; Caleb LeBrow, M.S., P.E., and Andrew Stengel, E.I., Olsson; Tyler Moncrief, P.E., Burns & McDonnell; and Jacob Monroe, P.E., Geotechnology.

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**SINGLE POINT URBAN INTERCHANGE  
AT HIGHWAY 71B AND INTERSTATE 49  
BENTONVILLE + ROGERS, AR**



**Crafton Tull**

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**20** Crafton Tull won the Grand Conceptor Award at this year's Engineering Excellence Awards banquet by designing Arkansas' first permitted single point urban interchange. Pictured from left are Crafton Tull bridge designer Ken Miller, P.E.; project manager Mike Burns, P.E.; and Chuck Wipf, P.E, bridge engineering manager.

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**18** [Emerging Leaders get Capitol lesson](#)  
The 15th class of Emerging Leaders had a session on state government at the State Capitol Feb. 21. The program teaches younger design pros about government, communication and other needed non-engineering skills.

**20** [Cover / Interchange a Grand Concept](#)  
Crafton Tull won this year's Grand Conceptor Award at the ACEC/A Engineering Excellence Awards dinner for designing Arkansas' first single point urban interchange let to contract.  
The Highway 71B and I-49 Single Point Urban Interchange project replaced and expanded the I-49 overpass over Highway 71B and made other improvements to the interchange. The overpass divides Rogers and Bentonville. Highway 71B is known as Walton Boulevard in Bentonville and Walnut Street in Rogers. The Arkansas Department of Transportation was the client.

**30** [Member Spotlight / CEI celebrates 50 years with new office](#)  
CEI is now more than half a century old, and for most of that time Walmart has been a client. But CEI is far from a one-client civil engineering firm.



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# The status of research and development tax credits

In 1954, Congress enacted a tax code to allow businesses to deduct qualified research expenses in the year the costs incurred. The purpose of the deduction was to incent more United States businesses to invest in research activities within the country. Congress created the related tax credit in 1981. The law has been extended and revised several times over the years until it was made permanent in 2015.

The credits are intended to provide savings for companies that perform activities related to the development, design, or improvement of products, processes, formulas, or software.

They have become a popular method for many engineering firms across the United States to manage their tax liabilities. In 2022, more than 14,000 engineering companies claimed tax credits for work that they did that meets the criteria for the credit. The credits provide money to be able to hire additional employees, purchase equipment for more research, and increase research and development efforts. Many states have also enacted R&D tax credits (including Arkansas).

However, just two years after making the credits permanent, Congress changed how companies can claim the credits for R&D expenses when they passed the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017. According to the new law, starting January 1, 2022, companies could no longer claim the credits for R&D expenses in the year they were incurred and must amortize those expenses over five years. There were several attempts by Congress to delay the implementation of the amortization costs prior to the end of 2022, but they were



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

not successful. As a result of the changed tax code, many engineering firms had to deal with higher taxable income, with some having cash flow problems.

The change has effectively created a disincentive for investment in innovation. It places the U.S. at a competitive disadvantage to other countries

that provide greater incentives for R&D.

With input from the engineering industry, ACEC has lobbied and continues to lobby Congress to address the issues with the changes to the R&D tax code. With the encouragement of those lobbying efforts, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 7024, the Tax Relief for American Families and Workers Act of 2024. This legislation would pause the five-year amortization mandate till 2026 and would restore the tax code's traditional approach to allow engineering firms to fully deduct R&D investments the year they were incurred. The law would also allow companies to amend 2022 tax returns to take advantage of the R&D tax credit if they did not previously claim them. While this sounds very promising for our industry, the bill has been stuck in the Senate.

ACEC and its member firms have been instrumental in getting Congress to consider fixing the R&D tax code. The credits provide a valuable tax incentive for our industry to continue to conduct research and develop new engineering procedures and tools that may otherwise not be invested in due to their costs. Hopefully, the final bill that is passed will be permanent instead of a short-term fix.

# ACEC

American Council of Engineering  
Companies of Arkansas  
Officers 2023-24

## President

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

## President-elect

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

## Secretary

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

## Treasurer

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

## Senior 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

## State Director

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

## National Director

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

## Immediate Past President

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

## Executive Director

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

**Arkansas Society of  
Professional Engineers  
Officers 2023-24**
**President**

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

**President-elect**

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

**Secretary-Treasurer**

Landon Miller, P.E.  
Michael Baker International  
900 Southeast 5th St., Suite 20  
Bentonville, AR 72212  
479.326.6711

**National Delegate**

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

**State Director**

To be announced

**Past President**

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

**Building Arkansas**
**Editor & Publisher**

Steve Brawner  
Steve Brawner Communications  
501.847.7743  
[brawnersteve@mac.com](mailto:brawnersteve@mac.com)

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# You spoke; we listened. Big changes coming to conference

It is no secret that the ASPE Annual Conference we have come to know over the last 5-plus years has gotten a little stale. This has been evidenced by a steady decline in attendance over the same time period. Given that the Annual Conference is ASPE's largest single event and makes up its main revenue opportunity aside from membership dues, it should be an event we are all proud of and want to attend, and one that offers value in multiple areas to our members and attendees. After last year's conference, the ASPE state board sent out a survey to the membership asking for input on how to improve the event. We looked for feedback on venue, content, format, and social value. Survey results were mixed, but there were a few areas where a strong preference was noted: format, social activity, and technical content.

I have been attending this conference since 2013, and it has always been two-day event. For many of those years, it was hosted in Hot Springs, which happened to be where I was working, so it wasn't inconvenient. But for many who travelled from other areas of the state, this meant missing two days of work for one day's worth of continuing education. The adage "time is money" is truer in fewer industries than engineering. The survey results showed that many attendees had a desire to see this event compressed into one day. For 2024, we have done that while not decreasing the continuing education credits. In fact, the conference this year will likely offer up to eight professional development hour credits for attending all sessions, where in years past, the average was six to seven PDHs over a two-day span.

While the main objective for many of the conference attendees is to knock out a chunk of their required PDH credits for the year, survey results also pointed to a need for more/better social interaction. We have tried cocktail hours and going to Oaklawn for a "Day at the Races," with



**Tyler Avery, P.E.**  
ASPE President

dwindling attendance and interest. This year, we are hosting a social event at the newly opened Top Golf – Little Rock. The event will be the evening before the conference. Best of all, the event will be FREE! We hope to have so many people show up for this social event that we have to request additional space beyond what has been reserved.

In the age of the internet, and in particular, post COVID, PDHs are readily available all over the web and often can be found for little to no cost. The downside of getting PDHs online, aside from not interacting with our peers, is that the content is typically pre-recorded and is not always as good as advertised. But if we are going to ask you or your employer to support you being out of the office for a day as well as ask you to spend your or your company's money to attend the conference, we owe it to you to do our best to provide quality content. The survey results indicated a leaning towards content more technical in nature. While ASPE doesn't advertise as a technical society but rather a professional society, we are in full support of a blend of presentations that offer some "in the weeds" content. This year you can expect some additional technical sessions. Do not fear, the highly-sought-after ethics credit will still be offered by the one Rick Geraci.

One conference parameter that was not surveyed was the cost – probably because we knew the answer without asking. Many of the changes to this year's conference are driven by the need to reduce the cost of attendance without a dip in quality. Cost savings to the attendee have come from numerous areas. The conference this year will be hosted at the Aloft Hotel in west Little Rock, a move away from the Convention Center in Hot Springs. Compressing the event to a single day has also helped to bring costs down. We have also de-coupled the conference this year from the ACEC/A

*Please see CONFERENCE on page 8*

# In the News

## Conference

Continued from [page 7](#)

Emerging Leaders graduation. That great event will be held in May at the ACEC/A's First Annual Award Lunch and Membership Meeting. Lastly, we throttled up our sponsorship campaign in an effort to have as much cost covered by our generous sponsors as possible. As a result, you will be seeing registration prices for this year's event cut nearly in half from previous years. We hope this makes the conference more attractive to individuals and employers alike. Yes, the event will still be offered at no charge to our new P.E.'s.

Watch your emails and calendars closely for invites and registration forms. We can't wait to see you in Little Rock for the 2024 ASPE Annual Conference.

Questions about the event? Contact me at [tavery@jurnidesign.com](mailto:tavery@jurnidesign.com) for more information.

Want to register or sign up to sponsor the event? Scan QR codes below to be routed to our quick and convenient online payment offerings through PayPal this year.



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## Olsson has pending agreement to acquire FTN

Negotiations are nearly complete for Olsson to acquire FTN Associates Ltd., a water and environmental engineering consultant in Little Rock. The acquisition will combine FTN's operations with Olsson's full scope of engineering consulting disciplines.

Founded in 1980, FTN specializes in designing solutions to meet the needs of clients in water, wastewater, natural re-



**Calendar of events**

**April 25**  
ASPE Annual Conference  
Aloft Little Rock West  
Little Rock

**May 8-9**  
ACEC/A and PSMJ Boot Camp  
Arkansas State Chamber  
Bob Lamb Conference Room  
Little Rock

**June 4**  
ACEC/A's First Annual Award Lunch  
and Membership Meeting  
DoubleTree by Hilton Little Rock

sources, solid waste, and Clean Water Act compliance. Joining Olsson will be approximately 55 FTN employees in Little Rock, Fayetteville, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and Creve Coeur, Missouri.

"Olsson has been in the Arkansas market for about six years, so we knew of FTN's strong reputation for quality work. When we met their leadership, we were impressed by their collaborative approach and technical excellence," said Brad Strittmatter, Olsson's CEO.

"Their services align well with our services, and FTN is well respected by their clients," Strittmatter added. "We believe joining forces will better serve clients and provide greater opportunities for employees to grow their careers."

The acquisition is anticipated to close on April 22. Upon closing, FTN will become Olsson FTN through January 1, 2025, when it will take on the Olsson name.



Crawford

"We are excited about this acquisition," said Paul Crawford, P.E., P.G., president of FTN. "It will allow us to continue pro-

viding the quality services our clients expect while expanding the services we can offer by joining Olsson."



## Olsson hosts grand opening of Fayetteville office

Olsson recently held a grand opening to unveil a new three-story office in Fayetteville.

The 39,000-square-foot office complex is located at 3537 N Steele Boulevard and includes open spaces, conference rooms, "Zoom rooms" and a rooftop patio area. About 200 employees and clients attended the grand opening event last month.

The facility will accommodate the engineering and design firm's steady growth in northwest Arkansas and allow it to meet rising demand throughout the region.

Brad Hammond, P.E., Olsson's Fayetteville local area leader, was part of the project throughout the process.

"This office really is a symbol of the investment Olsson is making in our community here in Northwest Arkansas," Hammond said. "Olsson has a work atmosphere and camaraderie like no other firm, and that's what we need to showcase as we're trying to attract and retain top talent."

Hammond is excited for how the new office will build on the office culture and provide a great place to work for employees.

"We're a community here in our office," he said. "We work together, we play together, and we do a great job for our clients. But first and foremost, we take

*In the News continues on [page 10](#)*



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## In the News

care of our employees and that's what it's all about."

When Olsson project scientist Eric Fuselier first saw the new office, he noticed the amenities right away.

"I love the tall ceilings, all the natural light, the technology we have here and the 'Zoom rooms,'" Fuselier said. "It's an amazing place to work."

Sage Partners, a leader in commercial real estate, teamed up with Olsson to build the office complex. Olsson occupies the third floor and most of the second floor. Employees moved into the completed office in December 2023.

Olsson provided all civil site design; structural, mechanical, and electrical engineering; landscape architecture; geotechnical investigations and special inspections. It partnered with Core Architects on the design. C.R. Crawford Construction of Fayetteville was the contractor and construction manager.

Olsson has 65 employees in Fayetteville and expects that number to soon grow to 100.

### FTN moves back into offices 11 months after tornado

FTN Associates moved back into its old offices Feb. 19, 11 months after they were damaged by the tornado that struck Little Rock March 31, 2023.

About 14 employees were at the two-story office in West Little Rock, which it owns, when the tornado hit. Forty people typically work there including FTN employees and three tenants, but some had left early because of the weather. When it became obvious the danger was imminent, those still present took shelter in a downstairs men's room.

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. 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



**AFTER THE STORM.** A view inside FTN's offices following the tornado that struck Little Rock March 31.

by swirling residential roof material. The office of company president Paul Crawford, P.E., P.G., was the hardest hit. A window structure unit fell across his desk and the conference table in his office.

The company had a disaster plan already in place. Office managers in FTN's other offices were contacted and told that everyone was fine but the server was down. By Monday, it 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. It was about a third of the size.

The tornado struck on a Friday. Servers were operational at a remote location the next Wednesday, and employees were working in the temporary office the next Friday.



### Crafton Tull cuts ribbon on new Fort Smith office

Crafton Tull recently hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony and grand opening for the firm's new office in Fort Smith.

The engineering and surveying staff had outgrown their previous office and relocated to a recently renovated space in the Bakery District in downtown Fort Smith. The historic office building is located at 51 S. 6th St., Suite B, and will allow for further expansion for the team to support the Fort Smith area and surrounding communities.



Tull



Wynne



Carlile



Bevill

### Crafton Tull cuts ribbon on new Fort Smith office

Crafton Tull has recently had several promotions.

Jim Tull, the son of company co-founder Lem Tull, is now chief strategy officer. Previously chief financial officer, he has been with the firm since 1993.

Other recent Crafton Tull promotions include the following.

- Alison Wynne has been promoted to chief financial officer. She joined Crafton Tull in 2002 as vice president of finance.

- Dee Dee Carlile has been promoted to vice president of finance.

- Jeremy Bevill, P.E., CFM, previously a project manager in Jonesboro, has been promoted to vice president.

*In the News continues on [page 12](#)*

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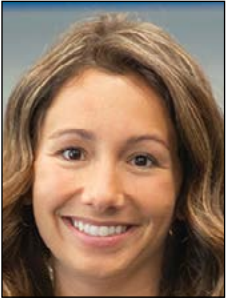


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## In the News (Cont'd)



Karr



Daniels

– Ali Karr, P.E., CFM, has been promoted to vice president. She previously was a project manager in Rogers.

– Michael Daniels, previously a surveyor in Jonesboro, has been promoted to vice president.



Carr



Bakunas

## MCE announces promotions, new hires in Fayetteville

MCE has made a number of promotions and additions in its Fayetteville office.

Bailey Carr, P.E., a project manager within MCE's Aviation Department, has been promoted to associate.

Carr joined the Little Rock MCE office in 2018 as a project designer focusing on aviation facility design. She currently works in the Fayetteville office, where she assists airports with their disadvantaged business enterprise plans and helps them develop capital improvement plans for the FAA. Additionally, she assists the design team with all aspects of land-side aviation projects including runways, taxiways, aprons, security fencing, performing runway safety area evaluations, and overseeing project administration.

Chris Bakunas, PLA, has been promoted to interim Land Development Department head. Bakunas joined the Fayetteville MCE office in 2016 as a project designer focusing on land development. The first project he worked on was the Arkansas Children's Hospital. He has played key roles in various projects including TheatreSquared, Emma Avenue in Springdale, the Momentary, and, most recently, the Alice Walton School of Medicine. Additionally, he worked with Gentry to design a sports complex and splash pad.

Grady Caton, E.I., recently joined MCE's Fayetteville office as a project designer for the firm's newest service line, structural engineering. He earned a Bachelor's Degree in Mechanical Engineering and a Master's Degree in Civil Engineering at the University of Arkansas.



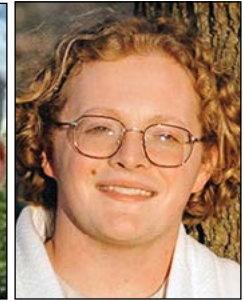
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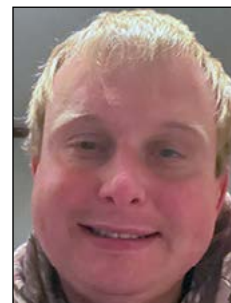
Fuller



Meyer



Morton



Huggins

Clarissa Fuller recently joined MCE's Fayetteville office as a project designer in the Transportation Department. She earned a Bachelor's Degree in Biological Engineering at the University of Arkansas. Before coming to MCE, she worked on drainage studies at Kimley-Horn in Fort Worth.

Jack Meyer recently joined MCE's Fayetteville office as a project designer in the Transportation Department. He earned a Bachelor's Degree in Civil Engineering with a minor in Construction

*In the News continues on [page 14](#)*



## Ground broken on apartments that Crafton Tull designed

Ground was broken March 7 for Big Emma, a 77-unit mixed-income apartment development in downtown Springdale. Crafton Tull provided site design services

The project is supported by a \$6.75 million grant from the Walton Family Foundation and is led by Groundwork (originally the northwest Arkansas workforce housing center), which will ensure that 30 of the units are available to households that earn less than NWA's median income. Big Emma is part of the revitalization of downtown Springdale and is part of the overall push for affordable housing and scalable growth in the Northwest Arkansas metro area. BiLD Architects is the lead designer.

Big Emma will be located within walking distance of various amenities, including shops and restaurants, and will have easy access to the Razorback Greenway walking trail.

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**Bentonville**

## In the News (Cont'd)

Management at the University of Missouri.

Oscar Morton recently joined MCE's Fayetteville office as a project designer for the water/wastewater field. He earned a Bachelor's Degree in Biological Engineering at the University of Arkansas.

Tanner Huggins recently joined MCE's Fayetteville office as a survey field technician. He completed his Technical Certificate in Surveying Technologies at the University of Arkansas Community College at Morrilton and hopes to finish his Associate's Degree in Surveying this fall.

Layne Adams recently joined MCE's Fayetteville office as a marketing coordinator. She earned a Bachelor's Degree in Advertising and Public Relations at the University of Arkansas.

In addition, MCE's Fort Smith office has added Ben Frederick as a project designer. He graduated from the University of Arkansas with a degree in chemical engineering.

## MCE promotes two, adds two in office in Little Rock

MCE's Little Rock office has made two promotions and two additions in its Little Rock office.

Taylor Clark, P.E., a project manager in MCE's Transportation Department, has been promoted to assistant manager. Prior to joining the MCE-Little Rock team in 2020, Clark had eight years of service in transportation design, specializing as a staff engineer in freeway design and major widening projects. He has substantial experience in interchanges, interstate/high speed roadway design, interstate reconstruction and widening, major widening projects, storm sewer drainage, and drainage structure replacement. He graduated with his Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering from Arkansas State University in 2013.

Tim Estes, a construction materials testing project manager in MCE's Geotechnical Engineering Department, has been promoted to associate. Estes has more than 16 years of experience, three of which consisted of construction coor-



Slater



Smither

dination experience, and 13 years of experience supervising and inspecting infrastructure and municipal construction projects. These projects included providing materials testing for aviation projects, the Arkansas Department of Transportation, and municipal projects within an AASHTO Materials Reference Laboratory and Concrete Reference Laboratories-certified laboratory. As materials testing supervisor, Estes is responsible for ensuring that all necessary tests for soils, aggregates, concrete, asphalt and field density are sampled and done properly to ensure compliance with specifications.

In addition, Clyde Slater III joined MCE in 2023 as a materials testing technician. He has a Bachelor of Science in Mass Communications in Motion Picture from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. He is a screenwriter, director, and producer apart from working with MCE. Clyde completed eight years of service in the United States Marine Corps, including two tours in Iraq.

Mark Smither joined MCE this year and has 13 years of construction materials testing experience. He works out of the Texarkana area performing construction materials testing. Mark is trained in the University of Arkansas' Center for Training of Transportation Professionals for concrete field testing, concrete strength testing, basic aggregates and soils.

## Garver employees visit schools during Engineers Week

During this year's Engineers Week Feb. 18-24, Garver employees across the country visited elementary schools to share with students about why they should consider becoming an engineer.



**ENGINEERS WEEK.** Garver's Patrick Joseph, E.I.T., introduces engineering concepts to students at Crystal Hill Elementary in North Little Rock.

School visits included hands-on experiments like gumdrop and toothpick bridges, homemade water filtration systems, and cardboard airplanes.

North Little Rock Mayor Terry Hartwick joined Garver's visit to Crestwood Elementary and worked alongside students in building a gumdrop bridge.

EWeek was founded by the National Society of Professional Engineers in 1951. Its purpose is to increase understanding of and interest in engineering and technology careers. It now encompasses more than 70 engineering, education, and cultural societies, and more than 50 corporations and government agencies.



Cerrato



Cochran

## WTS women's group honors Garver's Cochran, Cerrato

Garver's Business Process Improvement Manager Jenny Cochran received the President's Award for Outstanding Leadership, and Client Services Team Leader Sasha Cerrato was named Promoter of the Year at WTS Arkansas' annual gala Feb. 1 in Little Rock.

WTS International promotes the advancement of women in transportation.

Cochran started the WTS Arkansas Chapter in 2018 with Keli Wylie, P.E., assistant chief engineer of program delivery, at the Arkansas Department of Transportation. Cochran had the support of Garver's Director of Enterprise Solutions Jerry Holder, P.E., then Garver's director of transportation. She served as the chapter's vice president from 2019-2021.

"Being part of getting the Arkansas chapter up and going, with help from such an amazing group of people, is definitely a career highlight for me," said Cochran. "WTS Arkansas has become so much bigger than our original ideas, the first board, and the founding corporate sponsors. It has become a self-sustaining force for change in fewer than five years, and everyone who played a role in that should be proud."

Cerrato was a founding board member of the Arkansas chapter and served as its communications chair from 2019-21. She was instrumental in launching the

WTS Arkansas chapter, helping tell its story and share its mission.

"I'm proud of how the chapter has grown in such a short time and how receptive and supportive the community has been," said Cerrato. "We've already created some enduring partnerships that are going to continue to help empower women in this industry."

## Halff's Rutledge is on WTS board

Halff civil engineer Katie Rutledge, P.E., of Little Rock has been elected to the Board of the Arkansas chapter of WTS International as programs chair.

WTS attracts, sustains, con-



Rutledge

nects, and advances women's careers to strengthen the transportation industry.

"As a big fan of the transportation industry and an even bigger fan of supporting women, I am so happy and proud to be part of an organization that supports both," Rutledge said. "Being programs chair will allow me to connect various transportation industry professionals to provide learning and networking opportunities. I am excited to help WTS Arkansas as much as possible and to represent Halff while doing it!"

## Halff's Rogers is honored by Arkansas Money & Politics pub

Halff Water Resources Team Leader Natalie Rogers, P.E., of Little Rock has been honored by Arkansas Money & Politics as one of 22 leading women in AEC

*In the News continues on [page 16](#)*



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## In the News (Cont'd)



**Rogers**

out of Little Rock and Bentonville offices,” the article said.

Rogers specializes in developing and applying hydrologic and hydraulic models used in FEMA floodplain studies, dam breach analysis, inundation mapping, emergency action plan development, and public outreach. She is also chair of the Arkansas Floodplain Management Association.

Rogers, a certified floodplain manager, earned a Bachelor of Science degree from Arkansas State University in 2010 and a Master of Science degree from Mississippi State University in 2013.



## Halff receives Wastewater Digest Top Project award

Halff recently received the “Top Project Award” in the November issue of *Wastewater Digest* for its involvement with the Gravel Ridge Sewer Improvement District’s wastewater treatment plant modifications and expansion.

Gravel Ridge SID 213 serves 1,500 customers. Facultative lagoons were a primary feature of the treatment process at this plant. Like many facilities with lagoons of a similar age, the process was no

(Architecture, Engineering, and Construction).

“As the water resources team lead and project manager at Halff, she’s the driving force behind a team of professionals who work

longer sufficient to meet the new effluent water quality standards imposed by the state, particularly with nutrient limits.

Halff repurposed the existing lagoons as equalization basins, saving more than \$2.5 million on project costs. Halff engineers designed a new influent pump station to receive flow from both force mains and discharge to the new treatment plant headward, and a secondary discharge header to the lagoons for wet weather flow storage.



**BREAKING GROUND.** John Johnson, AIA, Williams and Dean Architects, third from left; Sally Horsey, PLA, Halff project manager, fourth from left; and Jerome Green, Shorter College president, fifth from left, break ground with others.

## Halff breaks ground at Shorter College technology hub

Members of Halff’s design staff were on hand to celebrate in the groundbreaking ceremony for Shorter College’s new \$1.8 million technology hub.

The hub will sit on the site of the historic Rock Island Railroad Depot in North Little Rock, which was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1989.

Halff and sub-consultant Williams and Dean Architects are tasked with updating the parking facility and retrofitting the interior to include a classroom, hands-on technology training, a financial lending space, restroom, and offices. The design also must meet Americans with Disabilities Act standards and access, and maintain the facility’s historical integrity.

## Halff’s Clemons passes PE exam



**Clemons**

Halff’s Jonathan Clemons, P.E., a graduate engineer with Bentonville’s Transportation Team, recently passed his P.E. exam. Clemons, a civil engineering graduate from the University of Arkansas in 2018, has experience in roadway design, pavement rehabilitation, and leading design initiatives in large-scale and residential development projects. His expertise extends to civil construction, covering roads, drainage, and water and sewer infrastructure projects across northwest Arkansas and the Fort Smith area.

## Halff’s DeMoss is ARDOT parcel survey-certified



**DeMoss**

Halff Survey Technical Leader Adam DeMoss of the North Little Rock office has become parcel survey-certified for the Arkansas Department of Transportation. As a parcel survey-certified professional, DeMoss possesses the knowledge and skills to maintain the accuracy and reliability of survey data crucial to ARDOT’s operations.

## Michael Baker hires Gifford as roadway engineer

Michael Baker International has hired Kristopher Gifford, P.E., as a roadway engineer in its Bentonville office.





Gifford

Gifford has six years of engineering design experience focused primarily on Arkansas Department of Transportation roadway design. His experience includes extensive intersection

and roundabout design, having contributed to the design of 20 separate roundabouts (18 on the proposed Highway 112 improvements) and numerous signalized intersection improvements on Highway 412, Highway 82B in El Dorado, Highway 69 in Trumann, and Highway 255 in Fort Smith.

With the hiring of Gifford in December 2023, Michael Baker's Bentonville office, which opened in November 2021, now boasts a staff of more than 10 engineers and designers.

## Registration open for ACEC Annual Convention in May

Registration is open for the 2024 ACEC Annual Convention and Legislative Summit, which will be May 13-16 at the Grand Hyatt in Washington, D.C.

Featured speakers include Mara Liason, National Public Radio national political correspondent; and Kevin Kosa, senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. Those two will speak at the opening general session May 14.

Other featured speakers include Michael Maslansky, CEO of maslansky + partners; author, mixed martial arts fighter and mental health advocate Justin Wren; and Miguel Cervantes, who plays Alexander Hamilton in the Broadway musical "Hamilton."

Among the event's highlights is the Engineering Excellence Awards Gala Reception, Dinner and Afterparty May 15.

Registration for the convention is available at [www.acec.org](http://www.acec.org). Rates are \$1,445 for full attendees with member firms. Group registrations receive a 20% discount off every 3rd registration.

First-time attendees with member firms pay \$1,245. Young professionals with member firms pay \$765. Rates are \$785 per day for daily attendees.

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**EMERGING LEADERS.** The 15th class of Emerging Leaders had a session on state government at the State Capitol Feb. 21. Pictured are, left to right, Phillip Zeagler, LSIT; Michael Baker International; Taylor Clark, P.E., McClelland Consulting Engineers; Landon Woodfield, P.E., Crafton Tull; Colton Echols, EIT, CEI Engineering; Tyler Moncrief, P.E., Burns & McDonnell; Blake Murray, P.E., Crafton Tull; Nick Braddy, P.E., Garver; Jacob Monroe, P.E, Geotechnology; Caleb LeBow, M.S., P.E., Olsson; Patrick Jones, P.E., HDR; Andrew Stengel, E.I., Olsson; James Ketchum, EIT, McGeorge Contracting; and Robert Bullis, P.E., McClelland Consulting Engineers. Not pictured is Robert Darrington, P.E., Michael Baker International.

## Emerging Leaders get Capitol lesson

Program teaches younger design pros about government, communication and other needed non-engineering skills

Rick Geraci, P.E., wanted the young ACEC/A-ASPE Emerging Leaders participants to understand an important concept about engineering: “This isn’t a job. It isn’t a career. It’s a profession. Something that they need to be personal in their dedication to the public. It’s way more than numbers.”

Geraci, a retired electrical engineering professional, made that comment in an interview Feb. 21 at the Arkansas State Capitol shortly before he was scheduled to present a session to the Leaders about state government.

Now in its 15th year, the Emerging Leaders program is a series of sessions

meant to help prepare engineering and other design professionals in their 20s and 30s to move into industry leadership positions. Sessions cover topics that may not have gotten much attention in engineering school: communications, state government, Business 101, and a Senior Leadership Roundtable where participants meet with experienced industry professionals. This year’s class will be recognized at ACEC/A’s First Annual Award Lunch and Membership Meeting June 4.

Geraci, 73 with 52 years in the engineering profession, said young design professionals should understand and appreciate how state government works. One reason is that state government is often their firm’s client. Furthermore, engineers should understand how it all works to further their careers, their companies and the profession.

“And it’s a public service. That’s what we do is serve the public,” Geraci said.

Geraci knows about public service. In addition to his long career, he currently serves on three state boards including the State Electrical Apprenticeship Committee, which he chairs and which oversees more than 5,000 electrical apprentices.

At the beginning of the state government session, he asked how many participants had never before been to the Capitol. Two-thirds raised their hand, he said. He asks that question every year, and it’s always at least half. Speaking to Building Arkansas, he recalled his own first trip to the Capitol as a first-grader, when Gov. Orval Faubus knelt and shook his hand. He still has the photo.

In addition to Geraci’s presentation, the Emerging Leaders toured the House of Representatives and Senate chambers

along with the Governor’s Conference Room. Dr. David Ware, the state historian, provided a detailed history of the State Capitol, including some of the engineering and political challenges involved in the Capitol’s lengthy and interrupted construction more than a century ago.

Among the Emerging Leaders was Blake Murray, P.E., a project manager with Crafton Tull’s Fayetteville office. This was the 34-year-old Texarkana native’s second trip to the Capitol, the first coming six or seven years earlier with the Leadership Springdale program.

Murray said the Emerging Leaders program had been a good networking opportunity, as he had never met many of the participants. It also had helped him sharpen his communication skills.

“I think it’s a fantastic program,” he said. “It’s great to interact with other local professionals both in Northwest Arkansas and throughout the state. The program’s been good at teaching me leadership skills, communication skills, getting to



**CAPITOL VISIT.** Dr. David Ware, the state historian, offers Emerging Leaders a detailed history of the State Capitol Feb. 21.

do this kind of tour and learn more about our state, so it’s been fantastic.”

Other participating Emerging Leaders this year are Landon Woodfield, P.E., Crafton Tull; Nick Braddy, P.E., Garver; Robert Bullis, P.E., and Taylor Clark, P.E., McClelland Consulting Engineers; Robert Darrington, P.E., and Phillip Zeagler,

LSIT, Michael Baker International; Colton Echols, EIT, CEI Engineering; Patrick Jones, P.E., HDR; James Ketchum, EIT, McGeorge Contracting; Caleb LeBrow, M.S., P.E., and Andrew Stengel, E.I., Olsson; Tyler Moncrief, P.E., Burns & McDonnell; and Jacob Monroe, P.E, Geotechnology.

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**GRAND CONCEPTOR.** Crafton Tull won the award for designing the Highway 71B/I-49 Single Point Urban Interchange project for the Arkansas Department of Transportation. It is the first single point interchange project let to contract in Arkansas. It controls traffic using a three-cycle process of left turns. The first cycle allows arterial street through-traffic to pass. In cycle two, freeway traffic turns left onto the arterial street. In cycle three, arterial street traffic turns left onto the freeway. The technique reduces opportunities for collisions, accommodates large traffic volumes, allows wider turns, and requires less land area for construction.

# Interchange a Grand Concept

Crafton Tull won the Grand Conceptor Award at the ACEC/A Engineering Excellence Awards for designing Arkansas' first single point urban interchange let to contract

Crafton Tull won this year's Grand Conceptor Award at the ACEC/A Engineering Excellence Awards dinner for designing Arkansas' first single point urban interchange let to contract.

The Highway 71B and I-49 Single Point Urban Interchange project replaced and expanded the I-49 overpass over Highway 71B and made other improvements to the interchange. The overpass divides Rogers and Bentonville. Highway

71B is known as Walton Boulevard in Bentonville and Walnut Street in Rogers. The Arkansas Department of Transportation (ArDOT) was the client.

Award winners were honored at the ACEC/A's annual Engineering Excellence Awards dinner March 7 at the Chenal Country Club.

A single point urban interchange (SPUI) keeps traffic flowing by using a three-cycle process of left turns that are controlled from a single set of traffic signals. The first cycle allows arterial street through-traffic to pass. In cycle two, freeway traffic turns left onto the arterial street. In cycle three, arterial street traffic turns left onto the freeway. The technique reduces opportunities for collisions,

accommodates large traffic volumes, allows wider turns, and requires less land area for construction.

The project was the first single point urban interchange in Arkansas to be let to contract, although preliminary design work earlier had been completed by the Arkansas Department of Transportation (ArDOT) for a project in Bella Vista. Design work for the \$26.9 million project began in 2012, but it wasn't completed until last spring. Construction delays at the Rogers-Bentonville site allowed the Bella Vista one to be completed first.

"We still consider it the first SPUI, even though the one in Bella Vista was open first," said Crafton Tull's Mike Burns, P.E., the project manager. "This one went to

construction first, so in our mind it's still the first SPUI in Arkansas."

The interchange is visible from Crafton Tull's offices. In fact, Crafton Tull's employee-owners use it to come to work.

"It's kind of unique to get to do an interchange that's the access to our office building," Burns said. "Everybody coming to this office comes through that interchange."

The project replaced two 183-foot bridges with a 239-foot single span that is about 131 feet wide. It improved 1.043 miles of I-49 and .612 miles of Highway 71B. It left the I-49 overpass at six lanes, but it can be expanded to four lanes with restriping to accommodate future growth. Highway 71B increased from five lanes to six plus dual turn lanes entering I-49. Dual left turn lanes were added to all interchange points except the northbound exit ramp, which has a triple left westbound turn lane. The bridge's 85-inch steel girders required I-49 to be raised about four feet. The deeper beams were

needed because the bridge would have a longer span without supports in the middle. Designers used a 70 kilo-pound-per-square-inch hybrid steel for the beam and for the flanges, and 50 KSI steel for the web. Nineteen thousand square feet of mechanically stabilized earth-retaining walls with ashlar masonry support both sides of the span. Traffic signals hang off the web.

Construction was completed in three sections in three stages to keep as much of the road operational as possible at all times. Bridge girders were installed at night to minimize lane closures on Highway 71B.

Turn lane capacity entering and exiting I-49 doubled as a result of the project. Traffic signalization was centralized, sidewalks were widened, and pedestrian crossings were clearly delineated. The project improved drainage on a roadway where ponding was occurring on the outside lanes. It added 21 drop inlets, 28 pipe culverts, 52 drop inlet extensions,

and 681 square yards of concrete ditch paving.

The improvements were needed to accommodate traffic in a rapidly growing region. The average daily traffic count in 2022 was 88,000 on I-49 north of the project and 99,000 south of it. Businesses along the southeastern part of Bentonville's Moberly Lane in the project's northwest corner had requested a traffic signal. Area car dealerships needed a wider turning radius for trucks delivering their inventory. The project increased the northbound turning capacity to the 46th Street intersection so shoppers could better access a box store and strip mall.

The project involved a partnership between Crafton Tull and ArDOT, its client, which provided environmental services, right-of-way acquisition, utility coordination, bid letting, and construction inspection. David Baker, P.E., was ArDOT's project manager. Parsons provided the interchange justification

*Continues on [next page](#)*



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**AWARD WINNERS.** Crafton Tull won the Grand Conceptor Award at the Engineering Excellence Awards banquet for its Highway 71B/I-49 Single Point Urban Interchange project for the Arkansas Department of Transportation. Pictured from left are Rick Ellis, P.E., Trinity Smith, P.E., and Mike Fugett, P.E., ARDOT; Levi Gottsponer, P.E., and Mike Burns, P.E., Crafton Tull; Jared Wiley, P.E., and David Baker, P.E., ARDOT; ARDOT Director Lorie Tudor, P.E.; and Matt Crafton, P.E., Crafton Tull.



**CATEGORY H: TRANSPORTATION HONOR AWARD.** Garver received the Honor Award for the Rogers Uptown Overpass project for the City of Rogers. Pictured from left are John Cantabery, P.E., Ron Petrie, P.E., and Zach Moore, P.E., Garver; and Dylan Cobb, P.E., and Lance Jobe, P.E. City of Rogers.

**CATEGORY H: TRANSPORTATION HONOR AWARD.** McClelland Consulting Engineers received the Honor Award for the Malvern Municipal Airport Runway Extension & Rehabilitation project for the City of Malvern. Pictured below is Jarrett Elliott, E.I.



report, traffic modeling and signalization. Grubbs, Hoskyn, Barton, & Wyatt provided geotechnical support.

The traffic study led to five options that included a single point urban interchange and a diverging diamond

interchange. Crafton Tull initially designed a diverging diamond interchange, which would not have required replacing the bridge, but it would not have allowed signalization at Moberly. With both Bentonville and Rogers willing to supplement

ARDOT funding, designers instead went with the single point urban interchange concept in 2016. Construction began in the fall of 2018.

In addition to receiving the Grand Conceptor Award, the project was the



**PEOPLE'S CHOICE AWARD.** Crist Engineers won the People's Choice Award for its Lake Ouachita Lake Tap and Intake project for the City of Hot Springs. Pictured at right is Matt Dunn, P.E., Crist president. From left are Todd Piller P.E., and Monty Ledbetter with the City of Hot Springs, and Ken Estes with Cadence Insurance, sponsor of the award. In addition to receiving the People's Choice Award, the project was the category winner in Category F: Water and Wastewater.

category winner in **Category H: Transportation**, which involves highways, railroads, airports, marine and port transportation, public transit, and intermodal facilities.

There were three Honor Award recipients in the category: McClelland Consulting Engineers for the Malvern Municipal Airport Runway Extension & Rehabilitation project for the City of Malvern; Garver for the Rogers Uptown Overpass project for the City of Rogers; and Michael Baker International for the Interstate 40 Rehabilitation – Conway to North Little Rock project for ArDOT.

**Crist wins People's Choice Award**

The evening's other big award winner was Crist Engineers. It won the People's Choice Award as selected by banquet attendees for its Lake Ouachita Lake Tap and Intake project for the City of Hot Springs. The award was sponsored by Cadence Insurance.

*Continues on next page*



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**CATEGORY A: STUDIES, RESEARCH AND CONSULTING, LARGE PROJECT.** The winner was Crafton Tull for the Central Arkansas Regional Greenways Plan for Metroplan. Pictured are Aaron Schlosser, Dave Roberts, ASLA, and Julie Kelso, AICP, ASLA, Crafton Tull; Daniel Holland, Metroplan; and Brad Peterson, P.E., and Isaac Sims, PCED, Crafton Tull.

**CATEGORY A: STUDIES, RESEARCH AND CONSULTING, LARGE PROJECT.** The Honor Award went to Olsson for the Southside Sewer Capacity Study project for Springdale Water Utilities. Pictured are Heath Ward, Springdale Water Utilities; Brad Hammond, P.E., Olsson; and Rick Pulvirenti, P.E., Springdale Water Utilities.



The project installed a new lake tap intake structure on Lake Ouachita along with a raw water treatment plant system. The lake tap allows the lake's water pressure to transmit raw water to the city by gravity flow. This saves tens of millions of dollars over the intake's life. With a traditional surface water intake structure, the mountainous topography surrounding Lake Ouachita would have required large raw water pumps to deliver water to the treatment plant. In addition, the design allowed the intake to be installed under water and out of sight. This eliminated visual impact to beautiful Lake Ouachita.

The lake tap includes almost a half mile of 60-inch welded steel pipeline through

Blakely Mountain to Lake Ouachita and provides gravity flow of raw water to the treatment plant located in Hot Springs approximately 17 miles away. It was the largest pipeline ever installed in North America by the direct pipe method. Challenges included difficult geotechnical conditions, significant regulatory demands, and construction method limitations. There were also contract procurement complexities, budgetary constraints, and construction setbacks.

The project also won in **Category F: Water and Wastewater, Large Project.** Those projects involve water and wastewater, wastewater collection/treatment and disposal, residuals management,

storm water management and erosion control.

There was one Honor Award recipient in the category: Hawkins-Weir Engineers for the CMAR Rescues Project from Pandemic for City Corporation Russellville Water & Sewer.

### Other Category winners

Other category winners included the following.

- **Category A: Studies, Research and Consulting, Large Project.** The winner was Crafton Tull for the Central Arkansas Regional Greenways Plan for Metroplan.

In 2020, Metroplan announced a substantial investment in a regional pathway network to connect central Arkansas communities within its four-county jurisdiction. This represented a shift in traditional transportation thinking, with local leaders embracing active transportation not as a luxury but as a critical pillar of thriving communities.

Crafton Tull was selected in 2021 to lead the 18-month process to create a master plan for the network, which connects the region's center to its fringes along six corridors. The Central Arkansas Regional Greenways Plan maps more than 220 miles of trail network at an estimated cost of nearly \$280 million. Crafton Tull, along with Toole Design, led the effort to identify routes, establish design criteria, prepare estimates of probable cost, and prioritize investments based on public input. Metroplan officially adopted the final report in May 2023. What started as an ambitious vision is now becoming reality, with several planned segments in design and some in construction.

Each of the 19 communities within the study area is unique, with varying levels of political and financial support. The Metroplan and the Crafton Tull team navigated these differences and facilitated collaboration to create a unified vision for the Central Arkansas Regional Greenways Plan.

The category involved non-design services including but not limited to new products, materials, and technologies; expert testimony; basic research and studies; computer/software technology; and technical papers.

There was one Honor Award recipient in the category. Olsson received the





**CATEGORY B: BUILDING/TECHNOLOGY SYSTEMS, SMALL PROJECT.** The winner was Garver for the Delta Regional Airport AWOS Installation project for the Delta Regional Airport Authority. Pictured are Eric Farmer, P.E., Aimee Davis-Rhodes, and Jordan Culver, P.E., Garver.



**CATEGORY C: STRUCTURAL SYSTEMS, LARGE PROJECT.** The winner was Michael Baker International for the Highway 212 Bayou Derriseaux Structures project for ArDOT. Pictured from left are Trinity Smith, P.E., ArDOT; Fred Harper, P.E., Michael Baker; Steve Peyton, P.E., ArDOT; and Srishti Bhutani, E.I., Sharath Ranganath, P.E., Ethan Baker, P.E., S.E., Megan Land, E.I., Landon Miller, P.E., and Scott Thornsberry, P.E., Michael Baker.

award for the Southside Sewer Capacity Study project for Springdale Water Utilities.

• **Category B: Building/Technology Systems, Small Project.** The winner was Garver for the Delta Regional Airport AWOS Installation project for the Delta Regional Airport Authority. The category involves projects related to mechanical/

electrical; computer/technology; communications; acoustics; software systems; and energy efficiency – new and retrofit.

Garver provided complete engineering services for the installation of a new automated weather observing system (AWOS) at Delta Regional Airport. The airport had originally used data from a weather station on an airfield that was

29 nautical miles away. This resulted in incoming weather data that, although usable, was not always true to local weather conditions. The airport required a more accurate weather reporting system for pilots to reference.

The Delta Regional Airport Authority recognized this need and selected Garver to provide professional services for planning, design, and construction phase services and to assist with commissioning the automated weather observing system. The airport sought a Level 3 system, but only expected to be eligible for Level 2 system funding. Garver researched and confirmed a new regulation that allowed usage of federal funding for a Level 3 system at this category airport, going beyond the airport's expectations.

With the successful installation of the automated weather observing system, the airport now has an on-site system that broadcasts correct and continual weather conditions, enhancing safety for pilots, the public, and the airport.

• **Category C: Structural Systems, Large Project.** The winner was Michael Baker International for the Highway 212 Bayou Derriseaux Structures project for ArDOT. The category involves design work related to foundations, tunnels, buildings, seismic design, towers, bridges and sports facilities.

The Highway 212 Bayou Derriseaux structures replaced two closely located bridges – a main structure and relief structure in Cleveland County. Michael Baker International provided design and engineering services for the project. The team considered multiple construction techniques and economic and feasibility studies to determine alternate design possibilities. Complexities included construction sequencing and difficult access in the marshy wetland conditions. The new bridges measure 144 feet and 241 feet in length and feature a 30-foot clear width, an increase from both previous bridges' 24-foot clear width. Both bridges include two 11-foot-wide paved travel lanes with four-foot-wide shoulders. The project also involved almost two acres of additional right of way and 2.5 acres of temporary construction easements.

The project successfully realized the goal of replacing the existing structures

*Continues on [next page](#)*



**CATEGORY I: SPECIAL PROJECTS, LARGE PROJECT.** The winner was Crafton Tull for the Pea Ridge National Military Park Improvements project for ArDOT. Pictured from left are Matt Crafton, P.E., LEED AP, Crafton Tull; Mike Fugett, P.E., Trinity Smith, P.E., Jared Wiley, P.E., and Director Lorie Tudor, P.E., ArDOT; and Levi Gottspomer, P.E., and Mike Burns, P.E., Crafton Tull.

**CATEGORY I: SPECIAL PROJECTS, SMALL PROJECT.** The winner was McClelland Consulting Engineers for the Benton Archery Range for the City of Benton. Pictured are Junior Rodemeyer, City of Benton, and Steve Hales, McClelland Consulting Engineers



with two bridges that now meet ARDOT standards, enhance capacity, improve hydraulic performance, and do not have load posting restrictions.

• **Category G: Water Resources: Large Project.** The winner was McClelland Consulting Engineers, for the Hidden Meadows Drainage project for the City of Benton. The category involves projects related to hydraulics and hydrology and irrigation.

Working on a quick turnaround time, McClelland Consulting Engineers worked with the City of Benton to

mitigate drainage issues within the Hidden Meadows Subdivision. The city first met with the property owners who were having drainage issues in the area, and a notice of interest was developed using a state hazard mitigation grant provided through the Arkansas Department of Emergency Management. The city was awarded the project in the summer of 2022, and at that point reached out to MCE to begin the process of designing a solution.

The design process was fast-tracked in order to meet the deadline of summer

2023, so getting the project into construction was a high priority. Because the project took place between houses, care was taken to reduce the impact on the homeowners. Two sanitary sewer lines were encased in steel to protect the utility lines from the weight of the reinforced concrete box culverts. After the concrete-lined ditch was installed, landscaping was provided around the curves of the concrete channel, and solid sodding or seeding was placed over the disturbed areas.

MCE also developed an additional landscaping plan to place shrubs and trees along the open channel. The additional landscaping provided social benefits to improve the visuals around the open channel. As well, the channel's concrete lining reduces maintenance requirements and the likelihood of flooding events.

• **Category I: Special Projects, Large Project.** The winner was Crafton Tull for the Pea Ridge National Military Park Improvements project for ArDOT. The category involves projects related to safety and security, corrosion protection, program and construction management, land development, and recreational facilities.

Improvements were made to meet criteria set forth by the National Park Service to support park preservation while improving visitor experience. In fact, the number of visitors has increased nearly 87%. This project, precipitated by the relocation of Highway 62, spanned six sites within the 4,500-acre park. Two sites required removal of roadbed and remediation, removing all traces of previous development, and regrading the land. The abandoned Highway 62 roadbed required approximately one mile of remediation efforts. A new entrance to the park was established with a new roadway alignment. Horse trailer parking was provided for the riders who frequent the park. Additional parking, including parking for trailers and RVs, was included at the visitor center area, along with drainage and lighting. Parking for trailers and RVs was added at the visitor center. A new parking lot was added at the historic Elkhorn Tavern out of the building's line of site. It improved capacity. New 10-foot sidewalks were added leading up to the tavern and around two monuments set in the 1800s.



**CATEGORY J: SMALL PROJECTS, LARGE PROJECT.** The winner was Crafton Tull for the Two Rivers Park Inclusive Playground project for Pulaski County. Pictured are Jerry Kelso, P.E., Crafton Tull; Travis Montgomery, Pulaski County; Dave Roberts, ASLA, Crafton Tull; and Matthew Breckenridge, P.E., Pulaski County.



**CATEGORY J: SMALL PROJECTS, SMALL PROJECT.** The winner was McClelland Consulting Engineers for the Spring Lake Roundabout project for Saline County. Pictured are Byron Hicks, P.E., McClelland Consulting Engineers; Trevor Villines, Saline County; and Taylor Clark, P.E., McClelland Consulting Engineers.

There was one Honor Award recipient in the category: Olsson, for the Public Safety Campus-Midtown Corridor project for the City of Fayetteville.

• **Category I: Special Projects, Small Project.** The winner in this category was McClelland Consulting Engineers for the Benton Archery Range for the City of Benton.

The transformation of the Hooked on Fishing Lake into the Benton Archery Range, spearheaded by McClelland Consulting Engineers, is an example of repurposing a neglected area for a beneficial community project. The archery range is a valuable recreation asset for Benton citizens and also archery fans from the broader community. The choice of

materials, such as the use of a metal shelter, reflects consideration for low maintenance with the goal that the amenities remain functional with minimal upkeep.

MCE's creative techniques in designing the outdoor archery range not only fulfilled a recreational need but also positioned the City of Benton as a forward-thinking community with diverse and unique offerings. The project's sustainability and low maintenance requirements contribute to its long-term value and usability. The firm's role as the prime consultant showcased its expertise in landscape architecture and engineering. The project was completed under budget and on schedule and features inclusive design.

• **Category J: Small Projects, Large Project.** The winner was Crafton Tull for the Two Rivers Park Inclusive Playground project for Pulaski County. The category involves projects whose total construction budget does not exceed \$25 million.

Children playing on a playground might seem like an everyday occurrence, but for some children, just getting to a playground can be a struggle due to lack of accessibility. Now, at Two Rivers Park in Pulaski County, children of all abilities have a 64,000-square-foot playground. Crafton Tull planned and engineered this project with all children in mind — no matter their ability or disability.

Because Two Rivers Park is located, as the name implies, near two rivers, the floodway and adjacent floodplain created a complex site to design. The Crafton Tull team evaluated the floodplain and efficiently addressed the requirements to build in the area. This included substantial grading to raise the site from its original height and obtaining a FEMA no-rise certificate. The project also utilized additional drainage features along with poured-in-place, permeable rubber to prevent localized flooding.

The innovative use of a culvert for a tunnel and abundant artificial turf makes the Two Rivers Park Inclusive Playground a unique space and one of Arkansas' largest inclusive playgrounds. The thoughtful selection of state-of-the-art inclusive play structures, and incorporating Americans with Disabilities Act requirements throughout the site, highlights how

*Continues on [next page](#)*

planning and engineering with inclusivity can create an ideal destination playground.

• **Category J: Small Projects, Small Project.** The winner was McClelland Consulting Engineers for the Spring Lake Roundabout project for Saline County.

The Spring Lake Roundabout project was needed due to the amount of heavy traffic flow in the area. The skewed geometry of the existing intersection, involving three streets and nearby parking lots, caused confusion and increased traffic, which had resulted in accidents as well as inefficiency during peak hours.

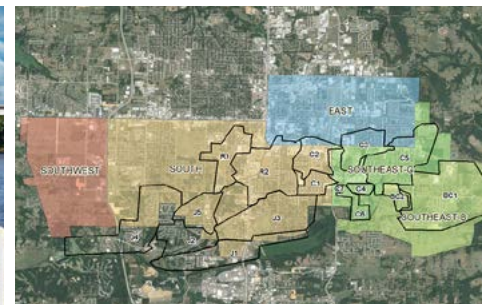
Saline County wanted to construct a roundabout at the intersection to alleviate dangerous conditions and improve traffic flow. McClelland Consulting Engineers provided topographic survey, geotechnical investigation, right-of-way, and design engineering services for a single-lane roundabout at the intersection. It also helped the county obtain federal funding through Metroplan's CARTS System Organization program.

There was one Honor Award recipient in this category: Michael Baker International, for the Melbourne Airport Automated Weather Observing System Installation project for the City of Melbourne.

As in previous years, the master of ceremonies was Brad Hammond, P.E., of Olsson. Sponsors of the event included Cadence Insurance; FTN Associates; Olsson; McClelland Consulting Engineers; Crist Engineers; Michael Baker International; Crafton Tull; Garver; American Ductile Iron Pipe; Keller; nu marketing; ACEC Life, Health, and Trust; and ACEC Business Insurance Trust.

Arkansans who are members of the ACEC College of Fellows were recognized. They are Dan Williams, P.E.; Bert Parker; Rick Geraci, P.E.; Jeff Geurian, P.E.; Dennis Ford, P.E.; the late Carl Yates; and the late Brock Johnson.

Also recognized was Tom Cascino, P.E., vice president of AECOM's transportation business line, who represented the National ACEC executive committee. He will be completing a two-year term as a vice chair on the ACEC National Executive Committee in May. He was assigned to provide guidance and assistance to nine Southeast Region states including Arkansas.



**WINNING DESIGNS.** Top photo, Crist Engineers won the People's Choice Award as selected by banquet attendees for its Lake Ouachita Lake Tap and Intake project for the City of Hot Springs. The project also won in Category F: Water and Wastewater, Large Projects. Middle left, Crafton Tull won in Category A: Studies, Research and Consulting, Large Project for the Central Arkansas Regional Greenways Plan for Metroplan. Middle right, Olsson received the Honor Award in that category for the Southside Sewer Capacity Study project for Springdale Water Utilities. Third row left, Garver won in Category B: Building/Technology Systems, Small Project for the Delta Regional Airport AWOS Installation project. Third row right, in Category G: Water Resources, Large Project, the winner was McClelland Consulting Engineers for the Hidden Meadows Drainage project for the City of Benton.



**MORE CATEGORIES.** Top left photo, Michael Baker International won in Category C: Structural Systems, Large Project for the Highway 212 Bayou Derriseaux Structures project for ArDOT. Top right, Crafton Tull won in Category I: Special Projects, Large Project for the Pea Ridge National Military Park Improvements project for ArDOT. Second row left, McClelland Consulting Engineers won in Category I: Special Projects, Small Project for the Benton Archery Range. Second row right, Crafton Tull won in Category J: Small Projects, Large Project for the Two Rivers Park Inclusive Playground project for Pulaski County. Third row left, McClelland Consulting Engineers won in Category J: Small Projects, Small Project for the Spring Lake Roundabout for Saline County. Below left and center, there were three Honor Award recipients in Category H: Transportation. Those were, fourth row left, McClelland Consulting Engineers for the Malvern Municipal Airport Runway Extension & Rehabilitation project; fourth row middle, Garver for the Rogers Uptown Overpass project for the City of Rogers; and bottom, Michael Baker International for the Interstate 40 Rehabilitation – Conway to North Little Rock project for ArDOT. Bottom right, the Honor Award recipient in Category J: Small Projects, Small Project category was Michael Baker International, for the Melbourne Airport Automated Weather Observing System Installation project.



## ACEC/A Member Spotlight

# CEI celebrates 50 years with new office

The northwest Arkansas-based firm has been working for Walmart 43 years and has a diverse set of clients and projects

CEI is now more than half a century old, and for most of that time Walmart has been a client. But CEI is far from a one-client civil engineering firm.

The company got its start in 1973 when engineers Mike Shupe and Bob Holmes bought a two-man engineering and survey company, Shields and Pace, in Danville and rebranded it as CEI. Their first project was a water treatment plant in Dyess.

From there, it's grown to a staff of 170 working in offices in Bentonville, Dallas and Fresno, with employees working remotely in 17 states. The firm celebrated its 50th anniversary last year and also moved into a new headquarters space on North 11 Street in Bentonville that is twice as big as its previous office. The new office offers plenty of room for collaboration, an important tool for a company with so many remote employees.

"We have probably about a hundred or so that are based in the northwest Arkansas area," said Debbie Jones, director of business development and marketing. "But we still very much have been allowing and also promoting a more diverse workforce by embracing the ability to work remotely. So this is a great space for that. People are coming in and out, and it gives them a chance to work together."

A key to the company's growth has been its 43 years with Walmart. It does civil engineering on new stores and remodels and has a team dedicated to the stores' fueling stations. CEI is also the local civil engineering representative for the company's new corporate campus in Bentonville. It is doing most of the construction administration and local permitting and is doing the site design for parts of the project, including the fitness center and child care facilities.

CEI President and CEO Jeff Geurian, P.E., FASCE, said every Walmart project presents a unique engineering challenge. The projects are large with many consid-



**CEI PROJECTS.** Top photo, CEI did civil engineering work on the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, including the floodplain analysis and storm water controls allowing the facility to be placed over Town Branch Creek in Bentonville. Above left, the Peloton Building in Bentonville. Above right, the Walmart on Pleasant Grove Road in Rogers.

erations, including traffic, sewage, infrastructure, safety and sustainability.

"Walmart hires a lot of consultants to do their work," he said. "CEI's not the only one. But I can tell you that CEI is the only consultant that's worked for 43 consecutive years. It's incredibly competitive in their world, and for us to be in the saddle with the world's largest retailer and to be still working for them after 44 years, I think says a lot about who we are. You've got to bring your 'A' game every day. ... Because they always have somebody else that's knocking on the door going, 'I'd like to have your work.'"

While Walmart has been a catalyst for CEI's growth, the company has definitely diversified. It has done more than 2,400 projects in northwest Arkansas. Other big projects include the Pinnacle Hills Promenade in Rogers, one of the area's first open air, walkable shopping centers. Soon afterwards, CEI was selected to do the civil engineering work for the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art founded by Walmart heiress Alice Walton.

Geurian said Crystal Bridges, "from an engineering standpoint, is probably

the most cool project, I'll say. The drainage running underneath those bridges is very unique and very specialized and has a high degree of complexity in the way it was designed and how it operates. ... From the geek side of us, that's probably one of the coolest ones that we've ever been a part of."

Other big projects include the Peloton Building in Bentonville, a five-story office building and five-story parking garage connected by two pedestrian connections. CEI's work on the Razorback Greenway led to it having a full-time parks and trails group. Another recent big project is Town Branch, a 26-building mixed use complex in Bentonville. In recent years, CEI has also been focusing on sports facilities, including the Rogers baseball complex.

It's also done work across multiple states for Circle K, Love's, Hardee's and other national companies.

"We're unique in the fact that we don't just work on local projects," Geurian said. "We do a lot of local projects, but we're not just a local firm. We really are a national firm to our national projects."

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# National expertise, local experience

As Garver's Water Technology Team Manager, Ashley Pifer, PhD, PE, has dedicated her career to securing high-quality drinking water for communities across Arkansas and the nation. Her dedication and expertise have placed her at the forefront of research that keeps water clean, safe, and reliable. She's committed because she knows she's not just securing a resource—she's protecting a lifeline.

Ashley Pifer, Ph.D., PE  
*Water Technology Team Manager*

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