

Building Arkansas

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

years
and
we're
just
warming
up

New year, new president

Crafton Tull's Jerry Kelso, P.E., manages the firm's infrastructure division, its largest. Now he's taking the reins of the American Council of Engineering Companies of Arkansas as this year's president. The first order of business is the upcoming legislative session, when ACEC/A will be the most important association advocating for engineering. Membership is another priority – and so is fun. Who says engineers can't have a little of that?

Also inside:

- Matt Crafton, P.E., is newest ACEC/A Fellow
- Landon Miller, P.E., is Young Engineer of the Year
- Jon Moran receives Community Service Award

20
24
13

CRAFTON TULL

ACEC/A lobbyist: Communication is key

Political and military veteran says members contacting legislators can help move bills

The ACEC/A's contract lobbyist got her introduction to politics on the USS San Antonio.

Susanna Watt met former President George H.W. Bush when she sang the national anthem while serving as a yeoman administrative assistant when the amphibious landing ship was commissioned in 2006. Meeting the former commander-in-chief led her to realize that she found politics interesting and also that politicians were real people.

Her political education continued after she left the Navy. She majored in political science at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. Her service paid for her schooling. She interned in the governor's office and the House of Representatives and became active in the Young Republicans at the state and national levels.

Then politics became her career. She spent about 12 years working for two lobbying firms. In March, she set out on her own.

"And now I have Anchor Strategies, and through that I have picked up about 11 clients now, and I'm really enjoying it," she said. "So far, it has been kind of a dream come true."

Watt, 38, described her lobbying philosophy as "Building relationships, maintaining them, and being extremely ethical and honest, and I approach people in a very friendly manner. And I try to bring all parties together when I know that something's going to be controversial, and not just throwing it out there and seeing what happens and not having the communication.

"Communication is a huge part of my approach by even letting parties that are going to be opposed prior to even dropping a bill, letting them know, 'Hey, this is coming. If there's anything that we can do to negotiate on the front end, that would be great. We're still going to do it, but obviously it would be better if we could work something out before we get in there in the lion's den and we rip each other apart.' Because I've seen it happen a million times."



SUSANNA WATT is the ACEC/A's contract lobbyist. After about 12 years of working for other firms, she started Anchor Strategies in March. She said lobbying requires communication with all parties and being patient with the process.

Watt said her more controversial bills have included scope of practice bills for nurse anesthetists and optometrists. The nurse anesthetist bill increased the services they could provide and allowed them to operate more independently of doctors.

"It was hard, and it really didn't pass or go through until one of the legislators got involved and decided that we were all going to come together and negotiate and have the conversations, and that's kind of where I've trained my approach a little bit," she said. "Having the conversations and the communication really impacted how we were able to move that forward."

Watt comes to the ACEC/A at a time when it has a full legislative agenda. In 2023, it tried unsuccessfully to pass legislation that would address widespread contract practices forcing engineers to indemnify their clients and to compensate them for losses even when the engineer is innocent of professional wrong-

doing. The legislation also attempted to address clients' requiring engineering firms to sign "duty to defend" clauses that require them to pay for clients' legal costs.

The bill was opposed by groups and government agencies that benefit from those clauses. They argued that if a firm doesn't want to shoulder those responsibilities, it shouldn't sign the contract. ACEC/A is arguing that reforms would level the playing field and protect all engineers. Some firms have more capacity to take on a legal challenge than others.

Watt said it makes a big difference when legislators hear from their constituents – for example, when nurse anesthetists explained why the scope of practice legislation would be beneficial. Likewise, it diminishes ACEC/A's lobbying efforts when legisla-

tors aren't contacted by their constituents.

"Because if they say, 'Well, I haven't heard from the engineering firms in my district,' or 'The engineering firms in my district don't really care about this,' it really does impact my effectiveness," she said.

ACEC/A is still determining if it will try to run the legislation this upcoming session or instead lay some more groundwork for 2027. Because it's a professional services bill, the it might be able to enlist other associations to join the effort. Moreover, it will be talking to the opposition before it tries to move the legislation.

Watt said her experiences have taught her that the process can't be rushed.

"It probably requires way more patience than most people have because you have to deal with many different aspects, and nothing happens when you want it to, and you can't take it personally, and you just have to keep moving forward," she said.



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28 Jerry Kelso, P.E., who works in Crafton Tull's Little Rock office, took over leadership of the ACEC/A in July. The position is the culmination of years of serving on the board of directors.

Departments

- 6 [ACEC/A President's Column](#)
- 7 [ASPE President's Column](#)
- 8 [In the News](#)
- 8 [Calendar of Events](#)
- 12 [ACEC/A Affiliate Members](#)
- 15 [Advertiser Index](#)

News and Features

- 18 [Luncheon honors winners, leaders](#)
The ACEC/A's latest ACEC Fellow, this year's Community Service Award winner, and this year's Young Professional Engineer of the Year Award were recognized at the ACEC/A's First Annual Award Lunch and Membership Meeting in Little Rock June 4.
- 22 [Moran wins Community Service Award](#)
This year's ACEC/A Community Service Award winner isn't an engineer and has only worked in the industry for a year-and-a-half. But he has done plenty for the engineering community.
- 24 [Miller is Young Professional of the Year](#)
At 34, Landon Miller, P.E., is already leading his office's roadway design team and is president-elect of the Arkansas Society of Professional Engineers.
- 26 [Crafton is latest ACEC/A Fellow](#)
Matt Crafton, P.E., Crafton Tull's president and CEO, is the state's eighth member of the distinguished national group. He was nominated by other Fellows who worked for competing firms.
- 28 [Cover / From Tinker Toys to ACEC/A prez](#)
Crafton Tull's Jerry Kelso, P.E., grew up wanting to be an engineer. In fact, you might say engineering is in his blood. Now, he's leading the American Council of Engineering Companies of Arkansas.
- 30 [Member Spotlight / HNTB new to Arkansas, but not really](#)
HNTB has been working in Arkansas for a long time, even though it's only had an office here three years. Now it will be involved with one of the Mid-South's highest-profile construction projects ever.

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Beware of indemnification, 'duty to defend' clauses

Let's consider a scenario. Your firm just learned it has been selected for a project that could transform a community. The client is excited to start working with you, and you're just as excited to start on this project. You meet with the client, and you're handed the contract. You're skimming. Everything looks good, but then you encounter a term that gives pause: indemnification. Your excitement is halted. It's time to scrutinize every word.

We have all seen these clauses, and we know that this term simply means "compensate for a loss." On the surface, this makes sense. Our minds first go to compensation for an engineer's professional negligence. That's why we have professional liability insurance. Risk covered. However, many contracts don't stop here. Some require a firm to pay for damages related to a project even with no professional wrongdoing on the engineer's part. This is what is referred to as broad-form indemnification. This is an unfair practice, and we need to be able to recognize clauses that might be overreaching.

Soon, you encounter another concerning word: "defend." If a design firm agrees to "defend" its client, it is agreeing to pay for the client's legal costs upfront, even before there's any due process that determines liability and even if a client's attorney costs are unrelated to the firm's professional negligence. The design firm may be exposing itself to a huge out-of-pocket expense with no help from its professional liability insurance company.

Of course, accountability in engineering is essential. Otherwise, there will be nothing keeping the profession from disregarding the fundamentals of safe design practices. However, we should not be held accountable for actions that are not within the design firm's control and not stemming from our fault.

The importance of thoroughly reviewing contracts and seeking legal expertise is evident when looking at these clauses.



Jerry Kelso, P.E.
ACEC/A President

Although Arkansas does not have a statute specific to engineering or design contracts regarding indemnification or "duty to defend" clauses, standard contract law applies. Overly broad clauses don't typically stand up in court, but we must be vigilant because a client will often have the advantage once we sign on the dotted line.

So, what can we do if we encounter something that we think might be too broad? On the simplest level, try to negotiate these items out of the contract. This is where consulting knowledgeable legal counsel can be a benefit. If the contract language is something that doesn't sit right with you or your attorney and negotiation is not an option, the contract might not be worth the potential risk.

The Engineers Joint Contract Document Committee (EJCDC) includes representatives of ACEC, the American Society of Civil Engineers, and the National Society of Professional Engineers. EJCDC produces many contract documents for design firms and construction projects. These are a nationally recognized standard for engineering and surveying projects, are easy to edit, and provide legally vetted, fair terms for firms and their clients. These documents are available to purchase and download on the websites of ACEC, ASCE, and NSPE.

Just as our calculations must be precise, the contract's wording should reflect the same precision. We might be eager to secure a job, but at what risk and what cost? With a broad clause that makes the firm liable beyond its insurance coverage, that job could have a huge financial impact on the firm even when its professionals did nothing wrong. As company leaders, it is our responsibility to ensure the contracts we sign are fair to us but still provide the client with the protection they need. It's not just our job; it's an essential piece of laying a foundation for a client relationship.

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Set example for new engineers

As students across the country return to their studies, many young engineers are beginning their careers. For the first time, they're not returning to the classroom — they're stepping into our offices, ready to help build the infrastructure that supports our communities. This transition is a critical moment for experienced engineers to support these emerging professionals and to revisit our core values as engineers, mentors, and leaders. The core values that have shaped our careers are crucial for professional growth and ensuring the safety, integrity, and trust placed in our work by the public.

Ethics are at the heart of engineering. Professional licensure is one way we uphold the highest standards of practice and ethics. It signifies a professional who has demonstrated the knowledge, skill, and dedication required to make decisions that affect public infrastructure. Licensure is a safeguard, ensuring that those entrusted with critical responsibilities like the roads we drive on, the water we drink, and the electrical systems we rely on meet the highest standards. For me and many others, licensure is more than a personal achievement; it represents public trust in our work and capabilities. By emphasizing the importance of licensure, we remind both our new colleagues and ourselves of the significant responsibilities that come with our role.

In the same spirit of stewardship, I'm reminded of the importance of qualifications-based selection (QBS) and how fundamental it is to the core tenets of our practice: prioritizing technical expertise, experience, and quality over cost alone. This approach is particularly vital in engineering, where safety is paramount. QBS reinforces the importance of our work and ensures that we, as engineers, uphold the highest standards, recognizing that public safety, financial stewardship, and the long-term viability of our infrastructure are on the line.

Engineering is inherently collaborative, with many layers of checks and balances, yet each person must take personal ac-



Mary Fair, P.E.
ASPE President

countability for their work. Quality control isn't just a procedural step; it's an ongoing commitment to ensuring every aspect of a project meets the high standards of our profession.

When I began my career, I distinctly remember the first time my supervisor asked if my work was ready to be sent to a client. I wondered, should someone else look at this? Is it ready? This lesson of personal accountability has stuck with me. Despite all the checks, we should be prepared to confidently present our work at any time. And by fostering this sense of responsibility in new employees, we encourage them to take pride in their work and to uphold a high standard of professional performance. When engineers understand the gravity of their work and take ownership of their contributions, they are motivated to deliver results that are not only technically sound but also meet the ethical standards expected of our profession.

In our industry, the pressures of deadlines and budget constraints are ever present. However, instilling values of stewardship and accountability can help mitigate these pressures. We must be good stewards of public funds and strive for efficiency — designing projects that are safe, cost-effective, and reliable for our clients. This requires a commitment to integrity, even when it demands additional time and effort. Whether we are designing bridges, water systems, or airports, the work we do directly impacts the daily lives of countless individuals. The infrastructure we design must not only meet current needs but also stand the test of time, remaining safe and functional for decades to come.

As we welcome new faces into our offices this fall, let's reaffirm our dedication to the standards and principles that our profession depends on. The stakes are high — public safety, fiscal responsibility, and the enduring reputation of our work. By mentoring the next generation of engineers and reinforcing these core values within our own practices, we are ensuring that the future cohort of engineers will continue to lead by example.

In the News



Zweig again names Garver a best firm for employees

Garver has once again been recognized as the #1 Best Firm to Work For by the Zweig Group. This is the fourth consecutive year Garver has ranked #1 and the 11th consecutive year that the firm has ranked in the top three.

The list, which ranks the nation's outstanding workplaces in the architecture/engineering/construction industry throughout the United States and Canada, is compiled based on statistics and employee opinion on firm culture, workplace practice, employee benefits, employee retention rates, professional development, and other qualities.

Garver's Holder on Good Roads Executive Board



Holder

Garver Director of Enterprise Solutions Jerry Holder, P.E., has been named to the Arkansas Good Roads Foundation's Executive Board.

The Arkansas Good Roads/Transportation Council was established in 1975 and was re-established as a foundation in 2015. Its purpose is to promote adequate funding and financing for roadways and bridges.

Holder has spent almost four decades delivering infrastructure solutions across the country, including almost two



October 9
[ACEC/A Pickleball Tournament](#)
[The Matrix Club](#)
 Lowell

November 6
[ACEC/A Trap Shoot](#)
 Jacksonville Shooting Sports Complex

March 6, 2025
[Engineering Excellence Award Gala](#)
[Chenal Country Club](#)
 Little Rock

April 22, 2025
[2nd Annual ACEC/A Awards Luncheon and Membership Meeting](#)
 Little Rock

decades in his home state. He served as Garver's director of transportation from 2012-22 and now serves as director of enterprise solutions, which offers tools and services to streamline and more efficiently execute project processes from the planning stages through construction.

NWA Biz Journal names Garver's Pifer to women's list



Pifer

Dr. Ashley Pifer, P.E., a nationally renowned water engineering expert, was recently named to Northwest Arkansas Business Journal's 2024 Women in Business list.

Pifer, Garver's Water Technology Team manager, is a sought-after expert on evolving water industry standards, including revisions to the Lead and Cop-

per Rule that affect every community's water system across the country. She is working directly with more than 20 water systems across the country to reduce exposure to lead in drinking water. She is also assisting utilities in efficiently addressing PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) contamination by developing and implementing robust water treatment processes.

Arkansas Business names White to 40 Under 40 list



White

Arkansas Business recently named Garver's Aviation Operations Manager Adam White, P.E., to its 40 Under 40 list, which recognizes young professionals

across a range of fields for demonstrating excellence in both their personal and professional lives.

White, 37, leads a team of 40 aviation engineering experts and has managed the design of more than \$500 million in infrastructure projects across the nation, from terminal design to runway rehabilitation.

White was selected to lead the launch of Arkansas' first ever Aviation Design Center, Garver's hub for aviation engineering expertise, in Fayetteville. Together with his team, he created a vision for the Center and saw it from inception to completion. Since its launch, the Center has worked on more than \$1 billion in airfield improvements.

Sardari named to Wastewater Digest's Young Pros list

Kammyar (Kam) Sardari, Ph.D., P.E., 33, recently was named to Wastewater Digest's Young Professionals for 2024 list.

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

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In the News



Sardari

As process team leader at Garver's Water Design Center in Fayetteville, Sardari designs, performs, and evaluates processes to help provide clean water resources

for communities across the nation. In addition, he has authored eight peer-reviewed industry publications.

Sardari began his career at Garver as a process design engineer. Four years into his time at Garver, he was asked to help lead the Water Design Center as process team leader. He leads a team of seven tasked with improving water and wastewater treatment plants.



Crafton Tull designs, surveys Bentonville road extension

Crafton Tull provided civil engineering, surveying, and environmental design services for the Gator Boulevard extension project in Bentonville, which officially opened July 19.

The design included a sidewalk and a multi-use path that connect nearby neighborhoods with Willowbrook Elementary, Bright Field Middle School, and Fulbright Junior High School. The project, located between Bright Road and Morning Star Road, will be heavily accessed as the 2024 school year begins.

The Bentonville Chamber of Commerce, the city of Bentonville, and the Bentonville Moves Coalition (BMC) commemorated the occasion with a ribbon cutting, ice cream, and a bike ride led by BMC.



Campbell



Jennings

Two with Crafton Tull earn PE licenses

Matt Campbell, P.E. and Jeremiah Jennings, P.E., project engineers in Crafton Tull's Transportation Division, recently earned their P.E. licenses.

Campbell, a bridge engineer, earned a bachelor of science and a master of science in civil engineering from Missouri University of Science and Technology. Jennings, a roadway engineer, earned a bachelor of science in civil engineering from the University of Arkansas.

Michael Baker's Bossio is ASPE's new secretary



Bossio

Stephane Bossio, P.E. a project manager with Michael Baker's Little Rock Roadway Design Team, in July became secretary of the Arkansas Society of Professional Engineers.

Bossio has served as president, vice president, and secretary of ASPE's Central Arkansas chapter.

Three join staff of Michael Baker

Michael Baker International recently announced the hirings of two staff members along with an intern in its Little Rock office.



Brown



Reed

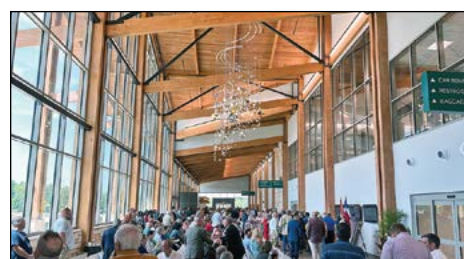


Garcia

A r o n a n a Brown joined the Little Rock Roadway Design Team as a civil associate. Brown is a 2024 graduate of Arkansas State University with a bachelor of science degree in civil engineering.

Don Reed joined the Little Rock Survey Team as a survey party chief with more than five years of experience. He is a United States Marine Corps veteran.

Uriel Garcia joined the Little Rock office as a CADD intern. He is currently enrolled at University of Arkansas Community College at Morrilton and will soon graduate as a CADD designer.



MCE does civil engineering for new Texarkana terminal

The Texarkana Regional Airport, for which McClelland Consulting Engineers did the civil engineering, recently celebrated the grand opening of a new 40,000-square-foot terminal building.

The facility represents a major upgrade in accessibility, capacity and functionality with more comfortable seating and upgraded security checkpoints. It is designed with modern amenities and

In the News continues on page 12

ENGINEERING ARKANSAS

GATOR BOULEVARD
BENTONVILLE, AR



Crafton Tull

In the News (Cont'd)

expanded services to meet the growing needs of the region. Additionally, the terminal features environmentally sustainable technologies.

Other members of the design and construction team were WDD Architects and Nabholz Construction.



MCE does design work for Maumelle pickleball facility

McClelland Consulting Engineers recently attended the grand opening for Maumelle's newly constructed pickleball facility. MCE provided conceptual design, topographic survey, geotechnical investigation, civil site design, grading and drainage design, utility coordination, landscape design, and construction administration.

Behind the Jess Odom Community Center sat abandoned tennis courts that were being used as an unregulated pickup and drop-off location for the adjacent schools. The area was a safety hazard and an eyesore. A pickleball complex would eliminate those concerns and include an additional recreation group in the already buzzing location.

Because this project was being funded through a one-time grant, designing a facility that required limited maintenance was a top priority. The facility was designed to include seven post-tensioned pickleball courts with shade structures, low-maintenance landscaping, lighting, and a detention pond. A hardy, low-maintenance landscape plan was selected to limit the requirements for irrigation, and a post-tensioned slab was selected to limit cracking. The site was designed to be ADA-accessible and connect to the existing Maumelle Trail System.

Though the facility has only been open for a short time, the city has already seen a positive impact. Within 36 hours after opening, Maumelle Parks had sold more than 100 keys for people to access the complex.

MCE promotes one, hires four pros

MCE has promoted one staff member and hired four others.



Bakunas

Chris Bakunas, PLA, ASLA, has been promoted to Land Development Department head and works out of the firm's Fayetteville office. Bakunas has been with MCE since 2016, previously serving as interim Land Development Department head.

He has worked on projects across the country in commercial and residential developments, parks and open spaces, streetscapes, master planning, and environmental design.

Bakunas holds a bachelor of landscape architecture degree from the University of Arkansas and is registered as a professional landscape architect in Missouri and Arkansas. He is an accredited arborist and a member of the American Society of Landscape Architects, where he served as treasurer of the Arkansas Executive Committee from 2016 to 2022.



Light

Jesse Light has joined MCE as a project designer in the Land Development Department. The Mountain Home native graduated from the University of Arkansas in 2024 with a bachelor's degree in landscape architecture and a minor in sustainable landscape management and design.



Moses

Dayten Moses also joined the Land Development Department as a project designer. Moses grew up in Hot Springs where he attended Lakeside High School and played soccer before going on to graduate from the University of Arkansas in 2020 with a bachelor's degree in civil engineering.

Jacqueline Steinauer joined the Water/Wastewater Department as a project designer on June 10. The Fayetteville native earned a bachelor of science in biological engineering degree from the University of Arkansas. She served as a combat medic and company armorer in the U.S. Army from 2016 to 2020.



Steinauer

Thomas Raymick was hired in July by MCE's Little Rock office as a construction observer. Raymick began his construction career in 1989 and by 1993 held an Arkansas state plumbing license. Shortly after, he shifted from plumbing work to utility work. Twelve years ago he went to work for a large utility company, where he

In the News continues on page 14

ACEC/A AFFILIATES

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In the News (Cont'd)



Raymick

served as a project specialist for almost 10 years, four of those as acting operations manager. Most recently he was the director for the Pine Bluff Street Department.



MCE does design work for J'ville railroad crossing

JP Wright Loop Road in Jacksonville, the 11th and final railroad crossing slated for safety improvements by the Metroplan Board of Directors 28 years ago, opened to traffic in July.

Weaver Bailey was awarded the project in November 2022 for \$15 million and started construction in January 2023. MCE has worked alongside Weaver Bailey to complete the project. MCE's portion of the project included Title I services for the rail grade separation, surveying, geotechnical investigations, roadway design, drainage design, FEMA coordination, bridge design, environmental documentation, lighting, and limited Title II services.

The busy Union Pacific train tracks running through Jacksonville required the contractor to pause work several times while constructing the bridge over the railroad right-of-way.

Metroplan set out on a mission 28 years ago to prioritize safety at railroad crossings across central Arkansas. Railroad crossings in Benton, Cabot, Conway, Jacksonville, Little Rock, Maumelle, Mayflower, and North Little Rock were

selected to upgrade at-grade crossings to grade separation crossings.

Originally 12 locations were selected, but due to changes in train traffic patterns, one was removed from the list.

Halff opens office in Fayetteville, fifth in state

Halff has opened an office in Fayetteville, marking its second office in north-west Arkansas and the fifth in the Natural State.

Located at 1465 East Joyce Boulevard, Suite 200, Halff's new office will offer services in planning, landscape architecture, land development, public works, surveying, transportation, water/wastewater and water resources.



Maurer

Brian Maurer, P.E., serves as operations manager for the office, which currently has 12 employees. Maurer, a University of Arkansas civil engineering graduate and an

Arkansas Academy of Civil Engineering inductee, has more than 29 years of experience and recently served as Halff's vice president and director of public works.

Halff will be hosting a ribbon cutting ceremony and open house later this fall.

Halff's Rogers leads floodplain training committee

Halff's Natalie Rogers, P.E., has been chosen to serve as the certified floodplain manager (CFM) coordinator and chair of the Professional Development and Certification Committee for the Arkansas Floodplain Management Association.

Rogers will work closely with the PDCC committee to maintain a program responsible for training and testing individuals seeking to become CFMs. She



Rogers

will also oversee the recertification process for existing CFMs, helping them maintain their certifications and uphold the highest floodplain management standards.

Halff's Barr, five others promoted to new positions

Halff has announced promotions of six staff members.



Barr

James Barr, P.E., has been promoted to director of transportation. Barr joined Halff's Little Rock office in 2018 and has more than 30 years of transportation design experience, encompassing all aspects of highway design.



Scheffer

Jason Scheffer, P.S., PLS, RPLS, has been promoted to director of survey. Scheffer joined Halff's North Little Rock office in 2018 and has more than 15 years of surveying experience in Arkansas, Oklahoma and Texas. Prior to joining Halff, Scheffer worked on several boundary surveys, FEMA flood studies, linear water projects for water agency, oil and gas pipeline projects, oil and gas well surveys and topographic surveying projects.

Sally Horsey, PLA, ASLA, CLARB, has been promoted to director of planning and landscape architecture. Horsey



Horsey

has nearly 30 years of experience as a landscape architect. She joined Halfff's Little Rock office in 2017 and plays a pivotal role in the master planning and design for a variety of parks, trails and streetscape designs.



DeMoss

Adam DeMoss, P.S., has been promoted to survey team leader. DeMoss currently works out of Halfff's North Little

Rock office and has more than 17 years of surveying experience in Arkansas and



Vazquez

surrounding states. Prior to joining Halfff, he served as survey crew chief and coordinator in multiple facets of the land surveying profession.



Potter

Brian Vazquez, PLA, CLARB, has been promoted to planning and landscape architecture team leader. Vazquez joined the Little Rock office in 2022 with 10 years of landscape architecture experience. He has done projects of all scales, from pocket parks with low-

maintenance native plants to international resorts with exotic flora.

Veronica Potter has been promoted to senior marketing coordinator. Potter joined Halfff's marketing team in Little Rock in 2019.

In the News continues on page 16

Advertiser Index

- [Garver](#)..... [Cover](#)
- [Benchmark Group](#)..... [3](#)
- [Olsson](#)..... [5](#)
- [ETEC/Poly Processing](#)..... [9](#)
- [Crafton Tull](#)..... [11](#)
- [CEJ](#)..... [13](#)
- [Halfff](#)..... [15](#)
- [Tolm Group](#)..... [17](#)
- [Crist Engineers](#)..... [19](#)
- [McClelland Consulting Engineers](#)..... [21](#)
- [Nixon Power Services](#)..... [23](#)
- [Cadence Insurance](#)..... [27](#)
- [Michael Baker International](#)..... [31](#)

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Benchmark Group's Grimmatt earns PE license

The Benchmark Group's Chad Grimmatt, P.E., LEED GA, recently became a licensed professional engineer. He was also recently inducted into the Colegio de Ingenieros y Agrimensores de Puerto Rico (Professional College of Engineers and Land Surveyors).

Grimmett started with Benchmark Group in 2020 and works on the refrigeration team.

Burdette, electrical engineer, joins Benchmark Group



Burdette

electrical engineering.

His experience includes healthcare, hospitality, office, education, industrial, retail, multi-family, and federal market sectors.

Clifton Burdette, P.E., has joined the Benchmark Group.

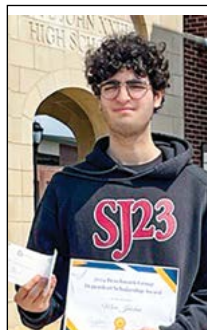
Burdette graduated from the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville with a bachelor of science in electrical



Benchmark awards scholarships to employees' children

Benchmark Group recently presented its BG Dependent Scholarships to four children of Benchmark Group staff members.

Pictured above are recipients and their parents. From left are Lillian Goines and her father, Brian Goines; David Kimball, P.E., president; Aiden Saiz and his mother, Tiffany Saiz; and Wyatt Puck and his mother, Sonja Ross. Pictured at right is Marc Jahchan, son of Guss Jahchan, AIA.



Benchmark Group also presents the Paul C. Parks Memorial Scholarships to students at local high schools.

Benchmark's Damer leads new NWA AEE chapter



Damer

CEM, CBCP, is the chapter's president.

The Association of Energy Engineers (AEE) – Northwest Arkansas Chapter recently was recognized as an official chapter by AEE. Benchmark Group's Steve Damer,



Leesch



Meeks

Benchmark's two help found women's real estate group

Benchmark Group Permitting Manager Mandy Leesch and Project Manager Tracy Meeks helped found the first Arkansas chapter of the CREW (Commercial Real Estate Women) Network. The two helped form the Northwest Arkansas Chapter and serve on the board.

Benchmark Group was a founding sponsor.

Olsson's Stengel leads reactivated National Guard unit

Andrew Stengel, P.E., MBA, an associate engineer at Olsson Associates, now commands the U.S. Army National Guard's Charlie Battery, 1st Battalion, 142nd Field



Stengel

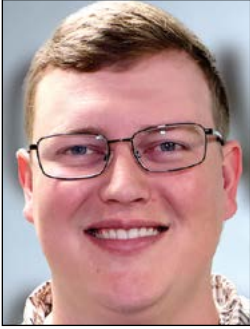
Artillery Brigade. Stengel previously was a battalion logistics officer.

The rocket system battery is based in Bentonville. As reported by KFSM 5 News, the unit was active in World War 2, the Korean War and in Operation Desert Storm in Iraq before it was deactivated in 2011. It has been reactivated to strengthen the United States' long-range precision artillery capabilities.

Stengel graduated from the University of Arkansas – Fayetteville in 2019 with a bachelor's degree in civil engineering. He earned his master of business administration from the University of Arkansas Grantham.

He was a member of the ACEC/A's 2023-24 Emerging Leaders class.

Tolm Group's Foshee now senior project manager



Foshee

T O L M Group's Austin Foshee, P.E., has been promoted from project manager to senior project manager, where he will lead the project management team.

Since joining TOLM Group four years ago, Foshee has played a pivotal role in several projects, including the Lake Ouachita Water Treatment Plant, FORMAT Cantilever Bridge Launch, Markham Park, and Petit Jean State Park Campground B.

He recently became a licensed professional engineer.

Foshee has recently relocated to Greenbrier. He and his wife were anticipating the arrival of their second son in September.

Emerging Leaders 2024-25 class is starting program

The 2024-25 Emerging Leaders class has been named and was scheduled to begin the program with a Leadership Development Series Sept. 25-26 in Northwest Arkansas.

The six-session program features curriculum focusing on right-brain thinking – the people skills associated with business management and the creative, visionary skills required of effective leaders.

In addition to the Leadership Development Series, sessions will focus on contracts and risk reduction, state government, Business 101, a senior leadership

roundtable, and a graduation ceremony scheduled for April 22, 2025. The Emerging Leaders participate in the Order of the Engineer ceremony at graduation.

The program is open to anyone over age 25 who is a member of ASPE and/or an employee of an ACEC/A member firm. Participants earn 10 professional development hours.

This year's Emerging Leaders are Joe Adams, E.I., Chase Allison, P.E., and Colton Wylie, P.E., Garver; Elliott Bell, E.I., and Dr. John Dennis, PLS, Crafton Tull; Bailey Carr, P.E., and Claire Schoppe, P.E., McClelland Consulting Engineers; Matt Cox, P.E., Kimley Horn; Kapil Dhital, P.E., and Allison Richins, P.E., Olsson; Patrick Foy, P.E., Half; Beau Gay, CEI Engineering; Joseph Hart, CDI Contractors; Travis Keymer, E.I., Michael Baker International; Ryan Mills, P.E., Horner & Shifrin; Andrew Morrison, P.E., Mickle Griffin; Garrison Smith, P.E., Burns & McDonnell; and Ronnie Smith Jr., UES.

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ORDER OF THE ENGINEER. Reciting the Obligation of the Engineer as part of the Order of the Engineer ceremony were, from left, James Ketchum, EIT, McGeorge Contracting; Robert Bullis, P.E., McClelland Consulting Engineers; Colton Echols, EIT, CEI Engineering; and Jacob Monroe, P.E., Geotechnology. The four were inducted into the Order of the Engineer at the ACEC/A's First Annual Award Lunch and Membership Meeting June 4.

Luncheon honors winners, leaders

At the ACEC/A's First Annual Award Lunch and Membership Meeting, Crafton Tull's Matt Crafton was announced as the latest ACEC/A Fellow, while Horner and Shifrin's Jon Moran received the Community Service Award and Michael Baker's Landon Miller was Young Professional of the Year.

The ACEC/A's latest ACEC Fellow, this year's Community Service Award winner, and this year's Young Professional Engineer of the Year Award were recognized at the ACEC/A's First Annual Award Lunch and Membership Meeting in Little Rock June 4.

Matt Crafton, P.E., LEED AP, president and CEO of Crafton Tull, was recognized as the newest Arkansas member of the ACEC College of Fellows. The honor was announced earlier this year and will become official when he is inducted at the ACEC Fall Conference in New Orleans in October.



AWARD WINNERS. Jon Moran, left, a business development officer with Horner and Shifrin, received the Community Service Award. Landon Miller, P.E., a project manager with Michael Baker International, is the ACEC/A Young Professional of the Year.



Crafton joins a distinguished and exclusive group of Arkansas inductees: Dan Williams, P.E.; Bert Parker, P.E.; Rick Geraci, P.E.; Jeff Geurian, P.E.; Dennis Ford, P.E.; the late Carl Yates; and the late Brock Johnson.

The Community Service Award went to Jon Moran, a business development officer with Horner and Shifrin. Moran has more than 20 years of public and governmental affairs experience. He helped develop legislative and regulatory strate-



ORDER OF THE ENGINEER. Rick Geraci, P.E., a retired engineer and an ACEC/A Fellow, places a stainless steel ring on the fifth finger of the working hand of Nick Braddy, P.E., Garver. The Order of the Engineer is a fellowship of professionals devoted to the standards and dignity of the engineering profession.

gies as Gov. Mike Beebe's special assistant to the governor for legislative and agency affairs. His activities there included helping pass the temporary half-cent sales tax for highways approved by voters in 2012. He also served as senior vice president of governmental affairs for the Rogers-Lowell Chamber of Commerce and worked with ACEC/A to develop a grassroots advocacy section.

Also recognized was the ACEC/A Young Professional of the Year, Landon Miller, P.E., a project manager with Michael Baker International. Miller has more than 10 years' experience with the firm and now manages a staff of 10. He led the ASPE chapter in 2017 and 2021 and currently serves as the state ASPE president-elect.

Miller also teaches courses on roadway design at the University of Arkansas and serves as practitioner advisor for the American Society of Civil Engineers student chapter on campus.

Continues on [next page](#)



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EMERGING LEADERS. Participants in ACEC/A's training program last year were Nick Braddy, P.E., Garver; Colton Echols, EIT, CEI Engineering; Jacob Monroe, P.E., Geotechnology; Tyler Moncrief, P.E., Burns & McDonnell; James Ketchum, EIT, McGeorge Contracting; Patrick Jones, P.E., HDR; Landon Woodfield, P.E., Crafton Tull; Blake Murray, P.E., Crafton Tull; Robert Darrington, P.E., Michael Baker International; Phillip Zeagler, LSIT, Michael Baker International; Robert Bullis, P.E., McClelland Consulting Engineers; and Taylor Clark, P.E. McClelland Consulting Engineers. Not pictured are Caleb LeBow, M.S., P.E., Olsson, and Andrew Stengel, E.I., Olsson.

"I do my best daily to lead by example," he said in a statement. "I never ask my team to do something that I wouldn't do myself. When up against a project deadline, I always make sure to be the last man standing."

Moran and Miller were eligible for the ACEC's national versions of the awards.

PELS: Engineer complaints up

In other business, complaints about engineers before the Arkansas State Board of Licensure for Professional Engineers and Professional Surveyors are rare but increasing, Executive Director Heather Richardson said.

Richardson said the state board's complaint committee typically has no more than 10 complaints about engineers and surveyors each year. Last year, that number rose to 25. As of June 4, it had 21.

"The surveyor is out in the public, and so we typically get a lot of complaints against surveyors, but we're seeing a rise in the engineering complaints, yes," she said.

Richardson said many complaints against engineers regard their practicing outside their discipline. Some are ethics related. There have been work product issues and issues with seals being stolen. She said that some have been doing engineering work in another state where they are not licensed, reasoning incorrectly that they didn't sign and seal the document.

"Just remember that it's the practice of engineering. It's not if you sign and seal something," she said.

She said complaints are coming from clients and from other engineers.

Richardson said that, under Act 662 of 2019, all rules and regulations will be codified into one area of the law for easy access. The State Board of Licensure has approved the classification, and the Bureau of Legislative Research expects to make it available in January.

Legislators meet again in their regular session starting in January. The State Board did not have any bills on its legislative agenda as of June 4.

A big issue nationwide, and one that has come up in Arkansas, has been universal licensing and weakening licensure rules. Four states don't have any educational requirements for licensure. Richardson stressed the importance of protecting responsible licensing.

"Professional licensing creates a defined pathway for professionals based on their total experience," she said. "It helps level the playing field by removing subjectivity and setting clear, objective levels of qualification. It also establishes a consistency in qualifications within professions that makes it possible for professionals to move from state to state and maintain their careers."

The board as of June 4 was overseeing 15,834 active licenses, including 11,212 professional engineers, 1,183 engineering interns, 707 professional surveyors, and 78 individuals with dual professional engineering and professional surveying licenses. Engineering licenses are increasing while professional surveying licenses are decreasing.

The Award Lunch also recognized this past year's ACEC/A Emerging Leaders class. The ACEC/A has offered the program, which emphasizes right-brain leadership and communication skills, since 2009 for anyone over age 25 who is an employee of an ACEC/A firm or a member of the Arkansas Society of Professional Engineers.

Participants last year were 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 LeBow, M.S., P.E., and Andrew Stengel, E.I., Olsson; Tyler Moncrief, P.E., Burns & McDonnell; and Jacob Monroe, P.E, Geotechnology.

The event also included an Order of the Engineer induction ceremony. Re-



CRAFTON TULL'S Jerry Kelso, P.E., now the ACEC/A president, emceed the ACEC/A's First Annual Award Lunch and Membership Meeting June 4. Arkansas State Board of Licensure for Professional Engineers and Professional Surveyors Executive Director Heather Richardson said complaints about engineers are rare but increasing.

ceiving the stainless steel ring on the fifth finger of their working hands were many of the Emerging Leaders. Those

were Murray, Braddy, Clark, Darrington, Jones, Ketchum, Moncrief, Monroe and Stengel.



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Moran wins Community Service Award

Horner and Shifrin's business development officer came to engineering after earlier working as Gov. Beebe staffer, Chamber lobbyist

This year's ACEC/A Community Service Award winner isn't an engineer and has only worked in the industry for a year-and-a-half. But he has done plenty for the engineering community.

Jon Moran has been working as a business development officer with Horner and Shifrin since February 2023. He came to the position after working for 20 years in the governor's office and attorney general's office and, after that, as a lobbyist for the Rogers-Lowell Chamber of Commerce.

"It's a different lingo, but it's kind of the same skill set," he said of his new industry. "You're out there networking. You're out there talking to people. You're building relationships. That is the core of the job. The vocabulary, you can learn, and the issues, you can learn. But the basic skill set to get the job done mirrors very closely with what I did for a long time. ... Knowing who to talk to and how to talk to them, if you know how to do that, you've got half the job done."

Moran was St. Louis-based Horner and Shifrin's second employee in Arkansas, but it's since grown and is looking to expand further. He's been able to use his connections and previous experiences dealing with municipalities, the business community and commercial developers.

A major project he helped land was the Natural Resources Division's lead service line inventory project. Horner and Shifrin is helping inventory 600,000 water lines leading to every Arkansas residence to see which are made of lead and should be replaced. The multiyear project is being supported by \$11 million primarily coming from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law of 2021. Every state is doing the project, with Arkansas' initial report due in October. The state will apply for the money to replace the lines later.

Moran not only helped Horner and Shifrin land the account but also has worked with local officials and the public



JON MORAN helped Gov. Mike Beebe pass the temporary half-cent sales tax for highways in 2012 that voters later made permanent in 2020. He also worked on the Ozark Mountain Regional Water District project that brought water to 25,000 people. Now a business development officer, he helped Horner and Shifrin land a project inventorying the state's 600,000 residential water lines to see which ones are constructed of lead.

in spreading the word. He said engineers sometimes have questions about state agencies with which he has experience and connections.

"That's my role as far as public projects go because I've been in every county, every major city in this state over the last 20 years, and I've got contacts in all of them," he said. "If I don't know who to talk to when we get there, I'll find out really quickly. That's where I come into the picture is I kind of shorten the discovery process for them on how do we need to handle this."

Moran said he keeps his ear to the ground with his old life while he's building a new one at Horner and Shifrin. He enjoys working with engineers, who he describes as team-oriented, and jokes that he would be one "if it weren't for all the math classes."

"It's fascinating to me, just the amount of knowledge that they have and attention to detail and just the way they approach problem solving," he said. "It's impressive, and so I really do like working with these guys."

Moran's winding path to the engineering community started in the office of then-Attorney General Mark Pryor and then transitioned to his successor, then-Attorney General Mike Beebe.

When Beebe became governor, Moran went with him. As special assistant to the governor for legislative and agency affairs, Moran was a liaison to the Arkansas Department of Transportation, the Arkansas Natural Resources Commission, the Department of Rural Services, Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality, and the Arkansas Economic Development Commission. He helped pass the temporary half-cent sales tax for highways approved by voters in 2012 that would become a permanent tax under Beebe's successor, Gov. Asa Hutchinson, in 2020. Moran was in charge of handling things in Northwest Arkansas for Beebe's statewide efforts. The Razorback Greenway walking trail was another project of his. He also worked on the state's Medicaid expansion under Obamacare, originally commonly known as the "private option."

Moran also worked on a number of water projects, including the Ozark Mountain Regional Public Water Authority, a Buffalo River Valley project that pulled water from Bull Shoals Lake and transported it to Newton, Searcy and Boone counties. It was dedicated near the end of Beebe's second term in 2014.

"A \$60 million water project serving 25,000 people roughly in an area that has had bad water service forever, getting it done in seven years, that was a monumental task," he said.

After Beebe left office, Moran in 2015 took a government affairs job with the Rogers-Lowell Chamber of Commerce. He lobbied for the Chamber and for the Northwest Arkansas Council economic development group.

From politics to engineering

Moran eventually grew tired of lobbying and wanted to get into business development, but he wasn't sure how to do that and still needed to pay the bills. In

February 2021, he took a hiatus and became a premises technician for AT&T. He was "the guy that comes and installs fiber internet to your house," he said.

The job helped him accomplish his goal. It paid the bills and gave him a chance to think.

"Plus I wanted to be anonymous for a while," he said. "I wanted to be able to go to work and just make people happy that I was there and happy when I left, and you don't get that in a legislative environment. So I learned how to climb a telephone pole at 50 years old in 114 degree Dallas heat, and to keep that job, you had to learn how to do that."

The assignment was much different than his previous jobs, but it led him to engineering. A customer who recognized him asked how he went from the governor's office to being a lobbyist to installing fiber internet. When he told her he wanted to do business development, she told him she had recently removed herself from consideration for the position

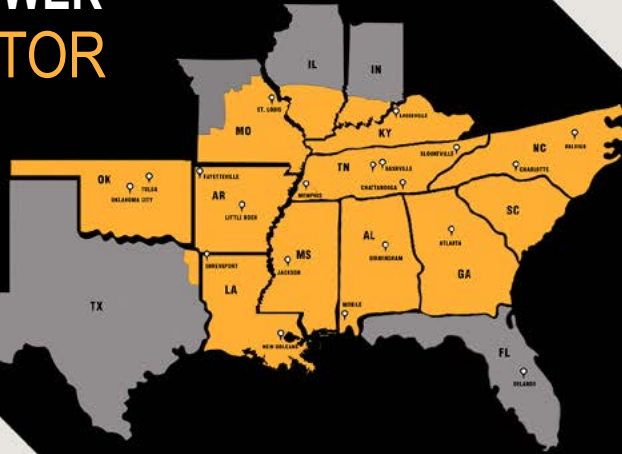
with Horner and Shifrin. She told him to leave his information if he were interested, and she would pass it on. Two weeks later, the company's recruiter called him.

While most engineers prefer working on projects, politics is unavoidable. Asked for advice on how to do that, he said they should be patient and should know what they are asking for.

"Because legislators, even though the environment has changed, the circumstances have not changed, he said. "And what I mean by that is, basically know what you're talking about when you're dealing with legislators and elected officials. ... Ask for what you want specifically. Be very direct. Be very honest with legislators because still, even after all these changes that we've had politically and atmosphere-wise, at the end of the day, your reputation, your integrity, your word is what they're relying on, and if you violate any of those, then you're not going to get their attention much longer, if at all."

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Miller is Young Professional of Year



LANDON MILLER, P.E., a roadway design project manager, leads a team of 11 roadway design engineers at Michael Baker International's Bentonville office. In addition to being the ACEC/A Young Professional of the Year, he's also led a project that won an ACEC Engineering Excellence Award. That project used a lateral bridge slide method to replace an I-30 bridge that crossed DeRoche Creek near Arkadelphia. The bridge was constructed alongside the old bridge and then was slid to its permanent location over the course of a weekend.

At 34, Landon Miller, P.E., is already leading not only his office's roadway design team, but he's also president-elect of the Arkansas Society of Professional Engineers.

Landon Miller, P.E., is only 34 years old, but he's already leading a team of 11 roadway design engineers in Michael Baker International's Bentonville office. Many of them are recent University of Arkansas graduates, and all of them are good.

He's glad they are.

"I've never been the smartest person in the room, and I try to continue that in my career and surround myself with people who are smarter than me," he said. "It keeps me driven and kind of gives me that no-complacency mindset. If I can surround myself with people who can take my job on any given day, it keeps me motivated and then also makes my job easier."

The roadway design project manager received the Young Professional Engineer of the Year Award at the ACEC/A's First Annual Award Lunch and Membership Meeting in Little Rock June 4. He qualified with a year to spare for the award, which is reserved for professionals younger than 35.

Miller has spent his career with Michael Baker after graduating from the University of Arkansas in 2014. In fact, he was the firm's first Arkansas employee that was hired directly out of college. The Arkansas Department of Transportation had recently initiated the Connecting Arkansas Program funded by the then-temporary half-cent sales tax for highways, so the company knew it would have enough work for 10 years.

The Searcy native would spend seven years in Little Rock, his first three working on the expansion of Highway 70 from Interstate 30 to Hot Springs from two lanes to four. Before the project, it was a winding, dangerous roadway that claimed 12 lives in 2015, including the Hot Springs mayor's son. His focus was on driveways – he recalls 80 of them needing attention – along with box culvert extensions, ero-

“ My comfort zone is behind my computer. But at the same time, I enjoy meeting new people. I don’t like getting out in front, being the center of attention, but I like walking into a room and being known. I like to walk into a room, recognize faces, people recognize me, and being able to interact with them. I credit a lot of that to ASPE and all the leadership roles I’ve been in. ”

sion control, and traffic maintenance. It was a learning experience. He read manuals and asked questions of Scott Thornsberry, P.E., and Fred Harper, P.E., who also were working on the project.

“A lot of people think roadway design, that sounds kind of boring,” he said. “But there’s a lot that goes into it. How are you going to kind of put the puzzle together during construction in order to keep traffic moving while you’re getting it built?”

Engineering Excellence Award

Another high-profile job was one that used a lateral bridge slide – ARDOT’s first – to replace a bridge on I-30 crossing DeRoche Creek near Arkadelphia. Miller led the design process for a project that received an ACEC/A Engineering Excellence Award. Constructors built the replacement bridge adjacent to the existing lane on temporary supports. Then they used a series of jacks and frictionless plates to pull the new bridge in place over the course of a weekend. The approach roadways took a little more time, so traffic was limited to one lane each way for about 10 days.

Miller returned to northwest Arkansas in November 2021. Office manager Mike Stengel, P.E., had opened the Bentonville office and asked him to join him as the firm’s second engineer there. The company believed a Northwest Arkansas office would help it recruit University of Arkansas graduates. It’s now opening a second office in the region.

One of the biggest projects there has been the widening of Highway 102 from I-49 to J Street adjacent to the new Walmart home office. It involves widening a five-lane road into six lanes with a 30-foot raised median, with traffic signals at J Street, P Street, Martin Luther King Jr. Parkway and Moberly Lane.

As roadway design project manager, Miller is serving in a management role. He sometimes misses designing, but he

also enjoys mentoring young staffers. The company has hired a few experienced engineers, but mostly it’s brought in new University of Arkansas graduates.

“I love being so impactful on young engineers and building their career, but I also love managing them and bringing them up,” he said. “There are times, even 10 years in, where I feel right at home doing what I feel like I need to be doing, but then there are also days where I feel like I’m in over my head. But I think that comes with the career.”

Another big project is the widening of Highway 182 in south Arkansas from two lanes to five lanes. Five locations are being widened. Michael Baker International is working on a section from Hamburg to Montrose.

Part of ASPE’s young leaders

In addition to his work with Michael Baker, Miller is active in the Arkansas Society of Professional Engineers. He first became the central Arkansas chapter’s secretary-treasurer after being “voluntold” to do it, he said. He served as president for two years from 2019 through 2021 during the COVID pandemic.

He’s currently the state president-elect and next will be president. As a state officer, he’s been part of a young leadership team that is trying to regain the momentum the Society lost during the COVID pandemic when meetings were held virtually or not at all. The virtual events that did occur were more convenient than meeting in person, but participants missed out on the experience of community they had when they were together.

“I know a lot of engineers are introverts and can sit behind their computer, not talk to anybody all day and be perfectly fine with it,” he said. “But from my standpoint, I love to get out and meet and mingle and talk to other engineers about what projects they’re working on, and that was something that we missed, and

we started losing quite a bit of membership because of that,” he said.

The state board is trying to encourage engineers to obtain their professional development hours in person and is trying to increase opportunities for them to interact with each other in other ways. Among its changes was shortening this year’s ASPE Annual Conference to one day, bringing it to Little Rock, and reducing the cost. Following those efforts, this year’s conference was the best attended in years. The state board furthermore is trying to encourage the ASPE’s three local chapters to meet in person.

“If you’re trying to increase membership, you have to show them that the money that they’re putting into it is worth it, that their money is going towards something,” he said. “And so we want to increase monthly meetings, increase social activities, because not everybody just likes to go and listen to a speaker every single month.”

Despite the sometimes introverted nature of engineers, it’s still a profession where relationships matter, Miller said. Fellow engineers can be sounding boards, and those relationships can lead to additional work. ASPE helps build those relationships. It also helps develop leadership skills.

“You could have never gotten me up in front of a group of people,” he said. “My comfort zone is behind my computer. But at the same time, I enjoy meeting new people. I don’t like getting out in front, being the center of attention, but I like walking into a room and being known. I like to walk into a room, recognize faces, people recognize me, and being able to interact with them. I credit a lot of that to ASPE and all the leadership roles I’ve been in.”

Outside of the office, Miller and his wife, Taryn, a district social worker for the Bentonville School District, have a son, Lucas, 8, and a daughter, Olivia, 5. The family is active in the Fellowship Bible Church. Otherwise, family life revolves around sports and dance. Miller this past spring coached Lucas’ baseball and soccer teams, but he downplays his own coaching ability.

“Fortunately, when they’re 8 years old, you don’t have to be good,” he said. “It’s just out there herding cats.”

Crafton is latest ACEC/A Fellow

Crafton Tull's president and CEO is the state's eighth member of the distinguished national group. He was nominated by other Fellows who worked for competing firms.

Matt Crafton's first job at Crafton Tull was mowing the lawn. Now, he's Arkansas' latest member of the ACEC/A College of Fellows.

The honor was announced earlier this year and will become official when he is inducted at the ACEC Fall Conference in New Orleans in October.

Crafton, P.E., LEED AP, joins a distinguished and exclusive group of Arkansas inductees: Dan Williams, P.E.; Bert Parker, P.E.; Rick Geraci, P.E.; Jeff Geurian, P.E.; Dennis Ford, P.E.; the late Carl Yates; and the late Brock Johnson.

Some of those individuals are the reason Crafton is now a Fellow. Prospects must be nominated through letters of recommendation written by engineers associated with other firms. The nominee then completes a questionnaire regarding his or her career, engineering projects, education, ACEC involvement and volunteer activities. A national committee makes the final selection.

The nominations by those other Fellows speaks to the collaborative culture of Arkansas engineering. Firms may compete for a project one week and then work alongside each other for another project the next.

"I think we consider ourselves to be professionals, and sure, our companies compete for projects at times, but there's also a genuine respect for the leaders and companies in our state," Crafton said. "We're a small state, and so we get to know each other. We serve on committees and the board together for several years. [You] get to know these guys and see the quality of people they are, and you know that they run a good company, and just I think the work that engineers do is an honorable profession. The work that we do improves the lives of people every day in our state, so there's a sense of pride and professionalism, not just in our own firms but for other firms as well. And so



ACEC FELLOW. Matt Crafton, P.E., CEO of Crafton Tull, will be inducted into the ACEC/A College of Fellows in October at the ACEC Fall Conference. *Photo courtesy of Crafton Tull.*

I was really honored to be nominated by those guys."

The company was co-founded in 1963 by Crafton's father, Bob Crafton, and Lem Tull. Matt Crafton started out as a teenager mowing the lawn.

Bob Crafton retired in 2000. What did the son learn from the father?

"Lots," he said. "The importance of client relationships. Showing up. Working hard. Doing the job every day. Not seeking advantage for yourself but for the

company as a whole and just being willing to do whatever it takes. He had a saying, 'I'll never ask you to do something that I'm not willing to do myself.' And he's lived that. He's always been willing to jump in and work. And that's true in the business, at church and everything he's been involved in."

Matt Crafton is now in his 34th year of his engineering career. He earned his civil engineering degree at the Air Force Academy and his master's degree at the



MATT CRAFTON, P.E., speaks at an event in Hot Springs in 2022 marking Crafton Tull's acquisition of B&F Engineering, above. Top right, Crafton speaks before a legislative committee meeting in 2017.

University of Texas. He served eight years on active duty as a civil engineer. He first was stationed at Eaker Air Force Base in Blytheville. From there he deployed to the United Kingdom during Operation Desert Storm in support of B-52 bombing missions originating there. He also served five months in Mogadishu, Somalia.

He transitioned to the Air Force Reserves, eventually retiring as a lieutenant colonel, and came to work for Crafton Tull 25 years ago.

Among Crafton's early projects was working on 17 miles of U.S. Highway 67 from Walnut Ridge south. The highway eventually will be Interstate 55. He also played a role in the state's

rubblizing and overlaying Interstate 40 from Oklahoma to Tennessee. The project involved crushing the old concrete into a gravel base for the new asphalt overlay.

He eventually moved into management, becoming chief operating officer and then chief executive officer in 2009. He still does some project management, including an infrastructure study a few years ago for the city of Rogers. He holds professional engineering licenses in seven states and is a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Accredited Professional. He's also a past president of ACEC/A, past chapter president of the Arkansas Society of Professional Engineers, and past chairman of the Rogers-Lowell Chamber of Commerce. He is a deacon at First Baptist Church of Rogers and serves on several local nonprofit boards.

Under his leadership, the company has grown to 320 employees and nine offices, the newest in Jonesboro opening last year. In addition to the corporate headquarters in Rogers, the others are in Little Rock, Fayetteville, Fort Smith, Russellville, Conway, Hot Springs, and Tulsa. The Hot Springs office came about through an acquisition of B&F Engineering in 2022.

Crafton, a married father of four, said a major highlight was Crafton Tull's transitioning to an employee stock ownership plan in 2019. It became the third Arkansas-based company of any kind to adopt the ESOP model.

"At that time, we transitioned from being held by 25 shareholders to being held by every employee in the company," he said. "And so it's been a great model for us. We're now five years into it. We love that employee ownership model. It's been really good, and we think good for all of our employees."



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From Tinker Toys to ACEC/A prez

Crafton Tull's Jerry Kelso always wanted to be an engineer. Now he leads the state's leading engineering advocacy organization.

Jerry Kelso, P.E., grew up wanting to be an engineer. In fact, you might say engineering is in his blood. Now, he's leading the American Council of Engineering Companies of Arkansas.

Two of his uncles were engineers who graduated from Missouri University of Science and Technology. Kelso was good in math and liked to build things, and he wanted to follow in their footsteps with his own engineering career.

"I always had my Tinker Toys and my Lincoln Logs back when I was a kid growing up – always building and making little things and structures and stuff," he said.

Kelso, who works in Crafton Tull's Little Rock office, took over leadership of the ACEC/A at the ACEC Deep South Conference in Miramar Beach, Florida in July. The position is the culmination of years of serving on the board, which he joined after being approached about it by Matt Crafton, P.E., Crafton Tull's CEO and president.

It's an important responsibility. As Kelso noted, ACEC/A is the most important advocate for Arkansas engineers at the state legislative level, and a number of big issues need to be addressed.

One is the standard of care clause that is commonly included in engineering contracts. Typically, those clauses have required engineers to meet the same standards expected of other engineers working on similar projects. However, some clients add words such as "highest" or "best" to the clause, a potentially unattainable standard that might not be covered by an engineering firms' professional liability insurance.

Another clause being included in many contracts is one where clients ask to be added to engineering firms' professional liability and workers' compensation insurance policies. Insurers are not willing to do that.



JERRY KELSO, P.E., manages Crafton Tull's infrastructure division, the company's largest, and works out of the firm's Little Rock office. Opposite page, Kelso is shown with Brad Peterson, P.E., who also works out of that office. Peterson is ACEC/A's Membership Committee chair. Photos courtesy of Crafton Tull.

"Duty to defend" is another problematic clause being required by engineering firms' clients. Clients are asking engineering firms to indemnify them or hold them harmless on projects that firms design. They want the engineering firm to pay the full legal costs in case something happens with a project. Professional liability insurance doesn't cover this, either.

ACEC/A tried to pass comprehensive legislation in 2023 to address these issues, but it ran into fierce opposition from organizations benefiting from the current arrangement. Kelso said passing a bill will require ACEC/A to educate legisla-

tors and other engineers about the topic. ACEC/A's lobbyist, Susanna Watt with Anchor Strategies, will be working to pass legislation. (Story, page 2.)

Patience will be required. So will communication. Kelso's goals as president include providing more frequent updates to the membership about legislative happenings and Council events.

Building and maintaining the membership also will be a focus, especially with the potential of adding large national firms moving into Arkansas. Brad Peterson, P.E., who also works in Crafton Tull's Little Rock office, is chair of ACEC/



As Membership Committee. ACEC/A will have fun events, too, including a pickleball tournament at the Matrix racquet club in Lowell Oct. 9, the annual trap shoot in Jacksonville Nov. 6, and the annual Engineering Excellence Awards next March 6.

Kelso has spent his entire career at Crafton Tull after joining the company after graduating from the University of Arkansas in 1993. He started at the Rogers office, where Tom Hopper, the company's future president, was his mentor. After four years, Kelso earned his P.E. license and became a project manager and then a vice president running Rogers' civil engineering group.

Northwest Arkansas was booming. Two of his largest clients were Jim Lindsey, for whom he helped develop large apartment complexes and golf courses, and Charles Reeves. The latter developed Shadow Valley in Rogers, an upscale residential golf course community.

Kelso enjoyed the creativity involved with development work, as well as the chance to serve both the developer and the community. He likes being able to drive by and see properties he helped develop.

"I don't know that I would do anything different," he said. "I don't know

that I could be a transportation engineer. A lot of our transportation groups are big highway projects that they'll work on for years, and in their lifetime or in their career, they might see it being built, or they may not, just because those projects last forever. Whereas a development project, it's fast and furious, it's hurry up, hurry up, get it permitted, get it built so that the developer can start creating revenue and make it profitable for them."

Coming home to central Arkansas

Kelso, a graduate of North Pulaski High School, returned to central Arkansas in 2006 to work in the firm's new Little Rock office after it acquired I.C.E., a primarily structural, mechanical and electrical firm that served architects and didn't have a civil engineering component. He was promoted to vice president in charge of the Little Rock office and then later was promoted to executive vice president, director of infrastructure, which is Crafton Tull's largest division. In that position, he is in charge of all the company's civil engineering divisions. It includes about 200 people, but he says he's really in charge of managing about a dozen vice presidents who run their groups in their offices.

"Right now things are pretty easy," he said. "Business is very good. There's

plenty of work out there. I would say the hardest thing is retaining employees. Recruiting and retention is the hardest thing these days. ... Talent's what's we're competing for, and it's tough. It's a tough market out there. It's great if you're a talented engineer, but trying to maintain and keep those folks is definitely challenging."

To keep those employees, Crafton Tull tries to keep pace with other firms regarding salaries

and benefits. It provides a hybrid work environment where employees can work from home on occasion. Crafton Tull also can sell the fact that it's an ESOP, an employee stock ownership plan, where all the employees are also owners.

While most of his time is spent managing people and the division, he still manages some projects, including highly visible ones. Two of those were the Little Rock Top Golf location and the new 15-acre CARTI hospital.

Among the office's 30 employees is his wife, Julie Kelso, AICP, PLA, ASLA, a landscape architect who works in the office's planning group. They met when she joined the firm about 15 years ago when Crafton Tull acquired the Roberts and Williams landscape architecture firm. While he doesn't manage her, they do work on some projects together.

When not working, the two own a lake house on Greers Ferry Lake. They traveled to Germany, Switzerland and France last year. They have four children between them. Julie's daughter is a member of the Arkansas Razorbacks marching band, so they try to attend all Razorback football games.

"Between traveling and then going to the lake house and hunting and fishing, it keeps us pretty busy," he said.

ACEC/A Member Spotlight

HNTB new to Arkansas, but not really

National firm working on Tennessee side of I-55 bridge replacement designed Little Rock's Broadway Bridge in 1972.

HNTB has been working in Arkansas for a long time, even though it's only had an office here three years. Now it will be involved with one of the Mid-South's highest-profile construction projects ever.

That project is the replacement I-55 bridge connecting Memphis and West Memphis across the Mississippi River, otherwise known as America's River Crossing.

HNTB is doing the environmental clearance and planning for the Tennessee Department of Transportation. The new bridge is projected to support roughly 64,000 vehicles daily by 2050.

The federal government is investing nearly \$400 million in the \$800 million project through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act's Bridge Investment Program. Meanwhile the state transportation departments in Arkansas and Tennessee each have committed up to \$250 million.

The replacement bridge is needed because the current mile-and-a-half-long bridge is 75 years old and reaching the end of its useful life, and it can't be renovated. It's narrow with 11-foot-wide lanes and no shoulders, and because it's a through-truss bridge, it can't be widened. It also would need to be painted and seismically retrofitted, the latter a \$400-\$500 million project, said Dan Chapman, P.E., HNTB senior vice president and Arkansas practice leader.

HNTB also is currently doing all of a \$1 billion, four-phase project extending Interstate 49 from Fort Smith 14 miles south to Highway 22 near Barling.

The company was founded in 1914 and is headquartered in Kansas City, Missouri. Thousands of employee-owners work at 81 offices. It provides a range of services related to architecture, aviation, bridges, highways, transit, water and other areas. In 2015, *Fast Company* magazine ranked it number three on its list of top 10 most innovative companies of



DAN CHAPMAN, P.E., HNTB senior vice president and Arkansas practice leader, stands in front of a rendering of the future I-55 bridge connecting West Memphis and Memphis, top photo. HNTB is doing environmental clearance and planning for the Tennessee Department of Transportation. Above photo, Chapman cuts the ribbon at a ceremony celebrating the firm's new office in Little Rock June 19. With him are Arkansas Department of Transportation Director Lorie Tudor, P.E., third from left, Little Rock Mayor Frank Scott, third from right, members of the Arkansas Highway Commission and others.

2015 for live events thanks to its design of Levi's Stadium, home of the San Francisco 49ers.

HNTB opened its first office in Little Rock at the end of 2021 and moved to its new location this year in the Region Center Office Tower. The office held a ribbon cutting ceremony celebrating the move June 19. Fifteen staff members work in the Arkansas location, about 10 of them engineers, Chapman said. The staff also includes a senior environmental planner and a biologist.

"Our firm is growing like crazy, and so we can hire people here, they could be working on projects anywhere," he said.

Chapman said HNTB has a long history in Arkansas. In 1972, it designed the

arch on the Broadway Bridge connecting Little Rock and North Little Rock across the Arkansas River. It then designed the new bridge that opened to traffic in 2017. It designed the Mississippi River bridge connecting Lake Village, Arkansas, and Greenville, Mississippi, that opened in 2010. That bridge has more than 2.5 miles of bridge deck and is supported by two 425-foot-high concrete cable towers.

HNTB also did design-build procurement and environmental work for the Arkansas Department of Transportation on the 30 Crossing project connecting Little Rock and North Little Rock. That project helped lay the groundwork for the opening of the Little Rock office, Chapman said.



I-40/White Oak Crossing Interchange
Maumelle, Arkansas

CONGRATULATIONS LANDON MILLER!

Congratulations to Landon Miller, P.E., for receiving the ACEC/Arkansas Young Professional Award! Landon joined Michael Baker's Little Rock office in 2014 as the team's first young roadway engineer. He soon mastered client requirements and began to find creative ways to enhance design quality, cost and aesthetics. Today, he leads the roadway design team in the firm's Bentonville office, overseeing a team of 10 engineers and designers and managing complex roadway projects.

Landon is highly active in the engineering community, having held leadership roles in the Arkansas Society of Professional Engineers and other professional associations, while also serving as an adviser to the American Society of Civil Engineers Student Chapter at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville.

On behalf of the entire Michael Baker Wolf Pack, we extend our heartfelt thanks to Landon for *Making a Difference* for our colleagues, clients and Arkansas communities.





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