

October 2025

Formerly Arkansas Professional Engineer

Building Arkansas

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

New year, new leadership

The turning of the calendar into fall means new presidents take the helm at the ACEC/A and the ASPE. ASPE president Landon Miller, P.E., left, with Kimley-Horn plans to reinvigorate the Northwest Arkansas Chapter. ACEC/A President Mike Foster, P.E., right, who's also president of Pickering, is leading the Council as it plans its first ever ACEC/A-ARDOT Partnering Conference next April 7-8.



In the News



THE 30 CROSSING PROJECT, for which Garver provided program management services, was a winner in the Highway/Bridge category of Engineering News-Record Texas & Louisiana's 2025 Best Project Awards. Burns & McDonnell provided design management along with bridge, roadway and maintenance of traffic design services.

Garver makes lists by ENR, Zweig Group

Garver received three recognitions from Engineering News-Record as well as a spot on the Zweig Group's "Hot Firm List" for the 15th consecutive year.

The firm rose 10 places to number 88 on the annual ENR Top 500 Design Firms list, which bases rankings on design revenue from the previous year. The firm's 2024 performance was driven by continued infrastructure industry demand, geographic expansion, commitment to innovation, strategic new hires, investments in developing teams and services, and significant project and contract wins.

Garver also rose to number 15 on ENR's list of the nation's top aviation design firms. It was the seventh consecutive year Garver made the list. Garver's impact is being felt at airports across the United States. Those include commercial service work at places like Dallas Fort Worth International, Denver International, Orlando International, Nashville International, and Louis Armstrong International. Garver also has done extensive design work at general aviation airports that support their local economies and communities.

In addition, the 30 Crossing Project was a winner in the Highway/Bridge cat-



Calendar of events

November 5
ACEC/A Central Arkansas Trap Shoot
Jacksonville Shooting Complex

March 5
ACEC/A Engineering Excellence Awards
Chenal Country Club

April 7-8, 2026
ACEC/A-ARDOT Partnering Conference
Northwest Arkansas Convention Center
Springdale

April 29, 2026
NWA Trap Shoot
Legacy Ranch
Gravette

egory of Engineering News-Record Texas & Louisiana's 2025 Best Project Awards. These awards highlight excellence in design and construction across a region that includes Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas, Mississippi, and Oklahoma.

Garver provided program management services as part of the Connecting Arkansas Program. Those services included project management, design-build procurement, a planning and environmental linkages study, environmental assessment and schematic design support, and design and construction quality assurance.

Finally, Garver ranked 31st on the Zweig Group's Hot Firm List, rising from 34th last year. It was Garver's 15th consecutive appearance on the list.

This annual ranking celebrates the 100 fastest-growing architecture, engineering, planning, environmental, and construction (AEC) firms across the United States and Canada, based on revenue growth over the past three years.

Garver's Allison one of Ark Biz's '20 Under Twenty'

Kenzie Allison, P.E., a process mechanical team leader with Garver's Water Team who works in the firm's Fayetteville office, has been named by Arkansas Business magazine to its "20 in Their Twenties" list.



Allison

Allison joins peers from across the state who are considered to be rising stars in their respective industries.

In just six years in the water industry, Allison, 27, has already helped her clients save more than \$150 million. Her resume includes major projects like the Northwest Arkansas Conservation Authority's Wastewater Treatment Plant expansion. She has also worked on improvements to the Springdale Wastewater Treatment Facility, where she contributed to clarifier design, construction sequencing and cost estimating.

Allison's impact reaches beyond her work life. She founded a Toastmasters Club at Garver's Fayetteville Water Design Center to help engineers sharpen their public speaking skills. Through Garver's STEM outreach program, she regularly speaks to students at the University of Arkansas, her alma mater, and represents Garver at career fairs to encourage students to pursue engineering and help address the national shortage of engineering graduates.

"Though in the early stages of her career, Kenzie has already made a meaningful difference in Arkansas through her contributions as a water engineer and her commitment to serving the community," said Process Mechanical Manager Rusty Tate, P.E. "She represents the spirit of giving back, and Arkansas is stronger because of her efforts."

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24 ASPE President Landon Miller, P.E., left, and ACEC/A President Mike Foster, P.E., take the helms of their respective engineering associations. Miller recently joined the staff of Kimley-Horn. Foster recently became president of Pickering, his longtime employer.

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It's not hard to find highlights of Michael Baker International's Arkansas projects. It might be hard to pick out the biggest one.

17 ACEC/A-ARDOT Conference next April

Plans are taking shape for the first ever ACEC/A-Arkansas Department of Transportation Partnering Conference April 7-8 at the Northwest Arkansas Convention Center in Springdale.

18 ACEC/A celebrates 60th anniversary

Six decades after its incorporation, the American Council of Engineering Companies of Arkansas continues to bring engineers together.

24 Cover / ASPE president wants chapters to meet

Landon Miller, P.E., the new ASPE president who helped revitalize the statewide Annual Conference, now wants to rebuild the Northwest Arkansas Chapter at the local level.

26 Cover / Foster takes helm of ACEC/A, Pickering

The new president of ACEC/A also just became the new president of Pickering. Mike Foster, P.E., officially took over the leadership of the ACEC/A at the Deep South Conference in Florida in July. He became president of Memphis-based Pickering effective July 1.

28 Myers retires after 70 years in engineering

Bob Myers, P.E., may have retired twice, but he definitely didn't retire early. The former Arkansas Department of Transportation resident engineer retired from Michael Baker International this summer shortly before his 85th birthday.

30 ACEC marketer loves to tell stories

The ACEC/A's new marketing consultant has hit the ground running by starting an Instagram page and creating content for all the Council's social media efforts.

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Crafton Tull

Plans taking shape for ACEC/A-ARDOT conference

Engineers understand the importance of infrastructure and the role it plays in economic development. An investment in infrastructure is an investment in Arkansas' future. When we deliver safe, efficient, and forward-thinking transportation systems, we lay the foundation for growth, opportunity, and prosperity in every corner of the state, and that does not happen by accident. It depends on partnerships.

I am excited to announce the inaugural ACEC/Arkansas (ACEC/A) and Arkansas Department of Transportation (ARDOT) Partnering Conference. This event is taking place April 7–8, 2026, at the Northwest Arkansas Convention Center in Springdale. Please mark your calendars and make plans to attend.

This marks the first year ACEC/A will host this type of structured, statewide collaboration between ARDOT and the consulting engineering community. As someone who has worked in the transportation industry for decades, I can say that this event has been a long time coming, and we couldn't be more excited.

We've taken a page from the playbooks of neighboring states that have hosted similar transportation conferences for years. These states have demonstrated how impactful it can be when public and private sector leaders come together in a focused environment to solve shared challenges, align project goals, and plan for the future. In that same spirit, Arkansas' inaugural conference is designed to foster stronger communication and deeper understanding between ARDOT and the engineering firms helping deliver infrastructure projects across the state.

Planning for the conference is already well underway. A committee composed of representatives from both ACEC/A and ARDOT has been meeting regularly for several months to develop the agenda, ensuring the topics are relevant to both the agency and the consulting community. The result will be a conference program focused on improving



Mike Foster, P.E.
ACEC/A President

project delivery, addressing funding strategies, embracing new technologies, and, ultimately, enhancing outcomes for the delivery of transportation projects for the Arkansas residents the system serves.

During the day-and-a-half event, attendees will engage directly with AR-

DOT leadership, network with peers, and thoughtfully discuss issues that impact our work every day. In addition to keynote presentations and breakout sessions, the conference will highlight innovation in action – showcasing tools and technologies that are transforming how we plan, design, and deliver transportation infrastructure.

Adding a social dimension to the event, a reception is planned for April 7. While the location is still being finalized, this gathering will offer a relaxed and informal opportunity to unwind, strengthen relationships, and continue the conversations that are so essential to successful project delivery.

The conference also will provide space for company visibility and business development. Sponsorship opportunities are available for firms who want to show their support for the event as well as receive recognition from transportation professionals. In addition, exhibitor space will be available for companies looking to showcase their capabilities, technologies, or services to a targeted audience.

I encourage all ARDOT staff, consulting engineers, contractors, and industry stakeholders to attend. This is a chance not just to learn and connect, but to help define how we work together to build a better Arkansas. I look forward to seeing you in Springdale next April as we launch a new chapter in collaboration and innovation. More details are coming soon.

Please contact ACEC/A Executive Director Angie Cooper at awcooper@arkansasengineers.org for more information and sponsorship opportunities.

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Revitalizing the NWA chapter; a new era of connection

Northwest Arkansas is booming – and so is its engineering community. Over the past decade, the region has seen remarkable growth in infrastructure, development, and innovation, with engineering firms expanding their reach and capabilities to meet the demands of a rapidly evolving landscape. Amid this momentum, the Arkansas Society of Professional Engineers (ASPE) is stepping forward to revitalize its Northwest Arkansas Chapter, bringing renewed energy, inclusivity, and purpose to the professional engineering community.

While ASPE has traditionally leaned heavily toward civil engineering, what sets it apart from other engineering societies is its commitment to uniting all disciplines under one banner. Whether you're mechanical, electrical, environmental, structural, or in the construction industry, ASPE is a place for every licensed professional engineer to connect, collaborate, and grow. This cross-disciplinary approach is more than symbolic; it reflects the real-world complexity of today's projects, which demand integrated thinking and diverse expertise.

At the heart of this revitalization is a renewed focus on relationships. In an industry where most firms are highly qualified and competing for the same work, technical competence alone isn't enough. What truly sets firms apart is the strength of their relationships – built on trust, collaboration, and shared values. ASPE provides a platform for engineers to foster those connections, not just within their firms, but across the broader professional community.

Another key priority for not just the Northwest Chapter but ASPE statewide is diversity – both in practice and in people. ASPE is working to broaden its reach across the state, encouraging participation from underrepresented groups and disciplines. This isn't just about inclusion; it's about ensuring the society reflects the full spectrum of engineering talent and per-

spectives that Arkansas has to offer.

Equally important is ASPE's commitment to promoting licensure and addressing the challenges engineers face in today's regulatory and professional environment. Licensure remains a cornerstone of public trust and professional accountability, and ASPE

continues to advocate for its value across all sectors.

But revitalization isn't just about programs – it's about people. The future of ASPE depends on the next generation of leaders stepping up. Seasoned professionals have a responsibility to mentor and encourage younger engineers to get involved or take on officer roles and leadership positions. For those looking to elevate their careers, one of the most telling indicators of future success is involvement in professional societies. A quick glance at upper management across firms reveals a common thread: Most, if not all, have served in leadership capacities within their local or state chapters. It's not just a résumé booster; it's a proving ground for strategic thinking, communication, and influence.

To kick things off, ASPE Northwest Arkansas has been laying the groundwork with a new lineup of chapter officers and will be hosting a social event in the coming months. It's a chance to reconnect, meet new faces, and lay the foundation for a vibrant, engaged community of engineers. The once thriving chapter hasn't fully regained its footing since the disruptions of COVID-19, but this event marks a fresh start. Details will be shared soon, and all professional engineers in the region are encouraged to attend.

The revitalization of ASPE Northwest Arkansas isn't just a local effort; it's a reflection of where our profession is headed. Inclusive, connected, and driven by purpose. Regardless of whether you are in northwest or central Arkansas, let's get out, get involved with your local chapter, and build this together.



Landon Miller, P.E.
ASPE President

In the News (Cont'd)



Coleman



Fancher

Two with Crafton Tull earn their P.E. licenses

Parker Coleman, P.E., and Ryan Fancher, P.E., from Crafton Tull recently received their P.E. licensure.

Both Coleman and Fancher have been engineers in the company's transportation division for more than four years. Coleman obtained his bachelor's of science in civil engineering from the University of Mississippi and works on the highway design team. Fancher obtained his bachelor's of science in civil engineering from the University of Arkansas and works on the bridge design team.

Williams to lead Water/Wastewater at McClelland



Williams

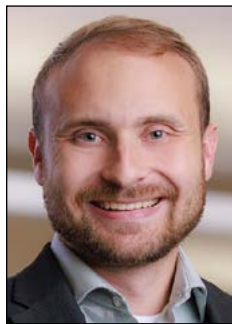
Trent Williams, P.E., MBA, has been promoted to head of McClelland Consulting Engineers' Water/Wastewater Department in Fayetteville.

Williams has been with MCE since 2022 and is currently managing several projects that include the Fayetteville West Side Water Transmission Line and the Greenland Sewer Improvements.

He holds a bachelor's of science degree in civil engineering from Missouri University of Science and Technology and an MBA from Missouri State University.

MCE promotes three to project manager slots

McClelland Consulting Engineers (MCE), has promoted Max Hicks, P.E.; Taylor White, P.E.; and Anna Claire Vocque, P.E., to project manager.



Hicks

Max Hicks has been promoted to project manager in MCE's Water/Wastewater Department. He earned his professional engineer (P.E.) license in May of this year. A 2021 graduate of the University of Arkansas, Hicks has a bachelor's of science in civil engineering and brings more than four years of experience in water and wastewater design. Since joining MCE's Little Rock office in May 2022 as a project designer, he has contributed to the design of water and sewer lines, sewer lift stations, and wastewater treatment plant improvements.

In his new role, he will take on greater leadership responsibilities and help guide the department's growing portfolio of infrastructure projects.



White

White holds a bachelor's of science in civil engineering from Mississippi State University.

He joined MCE's Little Rock office in May 2021 as a project designer, focusing on water and wastewater projects – particularly the design of water distribution and wastewater collection systems. He has also gained valuable experience in

preparing construction documents and assisting with project funding.



Vocque

Anna Claire Vocque, P.E. has been promoted to project manager within MCE's Land Development Department. She has been part of the Little Rock office for two and a half years, bringing with her a strong background in geotechnical engineering and land development. In her new role, Vocque will continue to focus on project design, budgeting and management, primarily for private sector clients.

She has a master's of science in civil engineering from the University of Texas at Austin.



MCE relocates Fort Smith office to Massard Road

MCE's Fort Smith office has officially relocated to 4019 Massard Road.

An open house was held on September 3 to celebrate the move, which marks the firm's continued growth and provides a more modern, efficient space to serve clients.

McClelland's Hopkins earns P.E. licensure

MCE's William Hopkins has earned his professional engineer (P.E.) license. Since joining MCE in 2020, Hopkins

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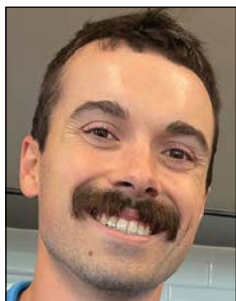
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In the News (Cont'd)



Hopkins

has worked on a wide range of geotechnical and construction materials testing projects including university facilities, airports, data centers, and public infrastructure.

Perkins joins Michael Baker International team



Perkins

Brooke Perkins, P.E., has joined the staff of Michael Baker International.

Perkins, an experienced roadway design engineer and project manager, will support the firm's

Arkansas roadway team as a senior technical advisor providing guidance to various transportation design teams, with a primary focus on quality design and deliverables for transportation projects in Arkansas.

She has more than 21 years of roadway design experience, approximately 17 of which were spent at the Arkansas Department of Transportation. At ARDOT, she served in various roles progressing from civil engineer to staff design engineer and project manager. In these roles, she supported and eventually managed the designs of numerous complex ARDOT highway projects. She also provided oversight and quality reviews for consultant-designed highway projects.

Since 2021, she has served as a consultant roadway design team leader, where she managed projects and oversaw the roadway design team.

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HISTORIC HATCHERY. Arkansas Game and Fish Commission personnel gather bass to transfer to a truck to restock a pond. They were among the first fish to be delivered after the renovation of the nearly century-old Joe Hogan State Fish Hatchery.

TOLM cuts hatchery ribbon

Construction manager TOLM Group participated July 16 in a ribbon cutting of a \$16 million renovation of the Joe Hogan State Fish Hatchery in Lonoke, a nearly century-old landmark in Arkansas' environmental history.

As the construction manager on this legacy project, TOLM Group helped preserve and enhance a facility that has produced more than 370 million fish in the last 25 years. TOLM Group worked alongside the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (AGFC) to deliver a facility that honors the past while investing in the future of fisheries management.

Established in 1928, the hatchery has long served as the backbone of Arkansas' warm water fish production and remains the largest warm water public hatchery of its kind in the U.S.

With this modernization, it now stands at the forefront of aquaculture innovation.

"This project represents more than just a renovation – it's a revitalization of purpose," said project manager Scott Nielsen. "We are proud to have helped bring new life to a facility that continues to support conservation, education, and economic impact across the state."

The TOLM team's scope of work has included major structural upgrades, improved energy systems, and an industry-leading water reuse system that

will conserve an estimated 517 million gallons annually. With 70% of the hatchery's 200 acres of ponds now capable of water recycling – and 90% of water within the hatchery building being reclaimed – the renovation stands as a model of sustainable resource use.

From upgraded lighting and temperature systems for optimized fish rearing, to strategic improvements that will enable earlier spawning of Florida largemouth bass, the hatchery now has the tools to support trophy-class fisheries and contribute cutting-edge techniques to statewide lake restoration efforts.

The project also supports AGFC's broader efforts to renovate key water bodies like Lakes Conway, Monticello, and Wilhelmina, ensuring the hatchery remains essential in the reestablishment of thriving aquatic ecosystems.

More than a job site, the Joe Hogan Hatchery is a living legacy — one that reflects Arkansas' deep-rooted commitment to conservation, recreation, and innovation.

"To build something that impacts both the environment and the everyday lives of Arkansans — that's what we're here for," said General Superintendent Lance Munn. "It's the kind of project that makes us proud to be water builders."

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In the News (Cont'd)

Winters joins Crist Engineers



Winters

Quintin Winters has joined the staff of Crist Engineers.

Winters has experience in construction project management and wastewater/water treatment plant operations. He holds

a bachelor's degree in anthropology from the University of Texas at Arlington and is a licensed wastewater treatment operator. He previously worked at Black & Veatch and the Mountain Creek Regional Wastewater System/Trinity River Authority.

Founded in 1938, Crist Engineers offers specialized experience in water treatment and distribution, wastewater collection and treatment as well as various other engineering services including planning and construction management.

ETEC's staff grows to 30 with hiring of Cooley



Winters

ETEC has grown to a staff of 30 with the addition of Teague Cooley as an outside salesman working in the Little Rock office.

Cooley comes to ETEC from Crist Engineers, where he assisted with various water and wastewater projects.

Cooley grew up in Little Rock, where he attended Pulaski Academy, graduating in 2019. He earned a bachelor of science degree in civil engineering, with a minor in business administration, from Mississippi State University in 2024. During his time at MSU, he participated in the university's Cooperative Education Program for two years, working with a

consulting firm in Jackson, Mississippi. He also worked two summer internships with consulting firms in Arkansas and Alabama.

Building & Earth promotes Gatling to lead branch

Jacob Gatling, P.G., has been promoted to assistant branch manager of the Springdale Building & Earth branch.

Gatling has more than 10 years of experience in geotechnical engineering, environmental engineering, and construction testing. Since 2015, he's served as a project manager in central and northwestern Arkansas, eventually taking on the role of Geotechnical Department manager.

"Gatling's promotion is a testament to his hard work and dedication to his clients and his projects," said Joseph Vistad, P.E., regional manager and principal at Building & Earth. "With a keen eye on quality, deadlines, and project budgets, Jacob is a clear choice to lead our operations in Northwest Arkansas."

In his new role as assistant branch manager, Gatling will help oversee a wide range of projects, from commercial and retail developments to industrial and educational facilities. Gatling's expertise has been instrumental in preparing reports utilized by investors, developers, and contractors across Arkansas and Oklahoma.

"For more than 10 years, Jacob has been at the heart of Building & Earth's northwest Arkansas branch, helping shape its growth and direction through his leadership and dedication," said Mark Nolen, P.E., Building & Earth executive vice president. "Starting as a project manager, he quickly distinguished himself with his technical expertise and client



Gatling

focus, which led to his advancement over the years. Along the way, he has driven the success of the branch by strengthening client partnerships and playing a key role in developing and supporting the NWA team. His commitment, vision, and personal investment in both people and projects have been a driving force in making the NWA branch what it is today."



Halff marks year 75 with week of community service

Halff, an employee-owned infrastructure consulting firm, marked its 75th anniversary by giving back to the communities it serves through its Legacy in Action Giving Week.

Employees across Halff's Arkansas offices contributed monetary donations and volunteer service hours to community organizations through the Halff

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Engineering & Architectural Design Professionals



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In the News (Cont'd)

Community Initiative (HCI) during the weeklong celebration that occurred Aug. 18-22.

On Wednesday, Aug. 20, the firm honored the birthday of its founder, the late Dr. Albert H. Halff, with a Day of Giving by participating in a series of community service projects.

Halff's Bentonville and Fayetteville offices teamed up and volunteered at the Northwest Arkansas Food Bank, where they helped pack 5,000 pounds of ground turkey to be distributed to the local community. The Little Rock and North Little Rock offices packed 1,350 sacks of food at the Arkansas Food Bank for local students' backpacks. They also packed 5,000 pounds of potatoes to be distributed to local food assistance pantries.



Halff's Rogers gets statewide floodplain award

Halff Water Resources Team Leader Natalie Rogers, P.E., CFM, was named the 2025 Floodplain Manager of the Year by the Arkansas Floodplain Management Association (AFMA).

The Floodplain Manager of the Year Award recognizes outstanding individual efforts and contributions to floodplain management, such as the development or implementation of a distinguished program or activity, or instrumental contributions in carrying forward the goals and objectives of floodplain management.

Rogers previously served as the AFMA chair from 2023 to 2024 and has since taken over the certified floodplain manager (CFM) certification process as CFM coordinator. Additionally, she has served

as vice chair, central representative and leader of the Professional Development Committee.

She has specialized expertise in hydrologic and hydraulic modeling, floodplain mapping, dam breach analysis and project management.

Halff's Pifer named to list of 'Forty Under 40'



Pifer

Halff Director of Water/Wastewater Ashley Pifer, Ph.D., P.E., has been named to the Northwest Arkansas Business Journal Forty Under 40.

The publication's Forty Under 40 list recognizes emerging leaders for achievements in their professional lives and their community involvement.

Pifer is a nationally recognized water quality expert who specializes in disinfection and distribution system water quality. She has years of experience conducting applied research, treatment process feasibility studies, water quality assessments, and detailed designs for water and wastewater utilities nationwide.

Wetzel with Halff earns CFM title



Wetzel

Nate Wetzel, P.E., CFM, obtained his certified floodplain manager certification. Wetzel is a graduate civil engineer who works with the Water Resources/GIS team based in Halff's

Little Rock office. He has hands-on experience in both the public and private sector, working on a variety of projects that

involve floodplain modeling and mapping, stormwater management, hydraulic design and stream restoration design.

Burns & McDonnell names two leaders of Water Group

Burns & McDonnell announced the addition of two seasoned leaders to its Water Group. Ron Williams has been named vice president of water operations, and Brady Hays is Kansas City regional manager of the Water Group.



Williams

Ron Williams, vice president, water operations, will focus on establishing a shared vision for growth, aligning regional strengths with national strategy, and identifying

new opportunities to solve client challenges in the evolving water markets.

Williams has more than 30 years of leading water and infrastructure teams spanning water, transportation, aviation, buildings, program and construction management and water operations. His experience includes technical execution, business development, profit-and-loss responsibility and overall leadership of major infrastructure initiatives.



Hays

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After more than 20 years with Michael Baker International and an incredible 38-year career with the Arkansas Department of Transportation, we proudly celebrate the retirement of Bob Myers—a true icon in Arkansas' transportation industry.

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ACEC/A Member Spotlight

Michael Baker has many highlights

State projects include
Hernando deSoto Bridge, Hwy
70 widening, I-30 bridge slide

It's not hard to find highlights of Michael Baker International's projects in Arkansas. It might be hard to pick out the biggest one.

Was it the redesign of Highway 70 from Benton to Hot Springs that turned a deadly, winding two-lane road into a much safer four-lane highway? Maybe it was the lateral bridge slides project on I-30 over DeRoche Creek south of Arkadelphia – the first in Arkansas history. It might be the Maumelle interchange, creating a second entrance to I-40 for that growing city.

But it would be hard to top what happened in 2021. On May 11, Michael Baker's Fred Harper, P.E., discovered a fracture in a tension member of the Hernando deSoto Bridge over the Mississippi River. The fracture could have caused the bridge to collapse.

Mike Stengel, P.E., a vice president and office executive, said the firm was under contract within days of discovery. A national team of Michael Baker emergency bridge repair experts was brought in to work with local staff. The project involved many phone calls and much coordination. Engineers had to ensure the bridge was not in danger of falling before barges travelled beneath it. A temporary fix was needed so construction equipment could traverse the bridge. By August 2, the bridge began reopening to traffic.

Michael Baker had entered the Arkansas market in 2010, when it bought an existing firm, The LPA Group, and began operating out of Little Rock. It opened a Bentonville office in 2021. It added a Fayetteville office in December 2024 because it ran out of space in Bentonville and because it wanted to be more attractive to University of Arkansas interns and new UA hires. It's now comprised of 65 staff members in Arkansas, 35 of them professional engineers or engineering associates or interns. About 45 of its staff members are in Little Rock while 20 are in northwest Arkansas. The offices pri-



ARKANSAS PROJECTS. Top photo, Michael Baker did design work for the widening of Highway 70 from Benton to Hot Springs. Above left is the Maumelle interchange. Above right is the DeRoche Creek lateral bridge slides project – the first of its kind in Arkansas.

marily serve the Arkansas Department of Transportation's on-call contracts. The firm also does municipal work.

One of its biggest projects was the Highway 70 widening. Twelve people had died on that roadway in 2015, including the Hot Springs mayor's son. It was a complex project.

"As we were just starting to develop a transportation team, we got that project and it lasted so long, and it was so large, that we really built our roadway and bridge teams around that project," Stengel said. "And that's to date, I guess, our largest, probably the most notable project."

The DeRoche Creek lateral bridge slides project was another notable one. Michael Baker engineers in 2017 designed a bridge replacement near Arkadelphia. Instead of redirecting I-30 traffic into single-lane traffic for up to a year-

and-a-half, the bridge superstructures were constructed alongside the roadway and then slid into place after the previous bridges were demolished.

Stengel said one of the advantages of working for Michael Baker International's state offices is that they are part of "Bigger Baker," a firm with more than 4,500 engineers and other professionals. The firm emphasizes collaboration across its more than 85 offices in the United States.

"In doing that, you build new relationships outside of the state, across the country," Stengel said. "I have peers in offices across the country, and we're on the phone all the time comparing notes, figuring out ways we can help each other, and so that culture has been really new to me. I got into this leadership position at a pretty young age, and so having those peers across the country doing similar work has been pretty exciting."

ACEC/ARDOT Conference next April

First ever meeting brings engineers, transportation agency leaders together

Plans are taking shape for the first ever ACEC/A-Arkansas Department of Transportation Partnering Conference April 7-8 at the Northwest Arkansas Convention Center in Springdale.



Wiley

Both organizations are planning the topics and speakers, said ACEC/A Executive Director Angie W. Cooper. The agenda is still being developed, but it's been confirmed that ARDOT Director Jared Wiley, P.E., will be one of the speakers. Day two will include a transportation panel.

Cooper said that most of Arkansas' surrounding states have a transportation conference. The event will give consulting engineering firms an opportunity to learn about ARDOT's plans and develop relationships with agency personnel.

"I think it's going to help all of the folks that already do business with ARDOT," she said. "I think it will give them a more intimate knowledge of what ARDOT is doing. I think the people that are not involved with ARDOT but want to do work for ARDOT, it will give them an opportunity to basically get their foot in the door, hopefully."

Among those slated to attend are Linda Darr, American Council of Engineering Companies president and CEO, and Joe Quinn, Arkansas Good Roads Foundation executive director.

Cooper said event planners are seeking sponsors. The event will feature a small trade show.

She said the two groups are looking for a big turnout for the April joint conference.

"We're planning a conservative estimate for 250," Cooper said. "I have room to grow almost double that, and that would be a nice problem to have. And I think as the word gets out, it's going to get bigger and bigger each year, but I'm very excited about that."

Cooper said ARDOT was the big draw when ACEC/A hosted its annual Industry Update in years past. That event is being retooled to focus on environmental work, with ARDOT's part now taking center stage with the April conference.



Quinn



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ACEC/A celebrates 60th birthday

Incorporated in 1965, the Council continues to serve engineers and the state

Sixty years after its incorporation, the American Council of Engineering Companies of Arkansas continues to bring engineers together.

It's planning a first-ever conference with the Arkansas Department of Transportation next year. It's hosting its 17th Emerging Leaders class to help young design professionals develop their communication and management skills. It's continuing to advocate for good policies enhancing Arkansans' safety and welfare. It even added a pickleball tournament.

Meanwhile, it continues to celebrate a vital profession.

"Everything that we use has been engineered," said ACEC/A Executive Director Angie W. Cooper. "Everything. The water that comes out of our faucets? Thank you, engineers. The roads we drive on? Thank you. Getting across the Arkansas River? That too. Innovation – it's all engineering related. ... I'm going to say an engineer has touched every single thing a human uses on a daily basis at some point in some fashion."

When Cooper became executive director in 2009, the organization hosted two annual events. One was the Engineering Excellence Awards banquet in the spring. The other was the Agency Forum occurring in the late fall. The EEAs have grown from about eight projects submitted her first year to 33 last year, with attendance growing from 60 to 200. Previously held at the Governor's Mansion's Great Hall, it now occurs at Chenal Country Club. The other major event was the Agency Forum, renamed the Industry Update, which featured addresses by various state agency directors, with the highlight being comments coming from the Arkansas Department of Transportation.

That event ran its course and is being retooled to focus on environmental issues. Instead, plans are taking shape for the first ever ACEC/A-Arkansas Department of Transportation Partnering Conference April 7-8 at the Northwest Arkansas Convention Center in Springdale. The



OLD GUARD. Pictured top row left is William J. Graham, Jr., founder of W. William Graham Jr. Consulting Engineers, who wrote a history of ACEC/A's early years. He became president of the association in 1968. Top row middle is Garver founder Mark Garver, who became ACEC/A president in 1965. Top right is L.M. McGoodwin with McGoodwin, Williams and Yates, one of the first firms located outside of Little Rock to join the ACEC/A. Bottom left are Bob Crafton and Lem Tull, founders of Crafton Tull. Bottom right is Al Miller, co-founder of Miller-Newell. He assumed the presidency in 1980.

event will give consulting engineering firms an opportunity to learn about ARDOT's plans and develop relationships with agency personnel. Most of Arkansas' surrounding states have a transportation conference.

Aside from the EEAs and the ACEC/A-ARDOT Partnering Conference, the ACEC/A started an annual awards luncheon two years ago. It also has added social events including trap shoots in Jacksonville and Gravette and a pickleball tournament that occurred October 15 in Lowell.

Group formed in 1957

While the Council was incorporated in 1965, its roots stretch back eight years earlier, according to a history of the ACEC/A, "Perspective from the Past."

The colorful paper was written in 1982 by a founding member, W. William Graham, Jr., who died in 2001. Graham based his history on notes, minutes, correspondence and telephone conversations with Council veterans.

Engineers met at the Marion Hotel to form the group in April 1957. Graham said he believed the group was called the Arkansas Association of Consulting Engineers at the time. Charter members included what then was known as Garver and Garver, Leo Landauer and Associates, Max Mehlburger Engineers, H. Allen Gibson Consulting Engineer, Edward G. Smith Engineers, Arthur Thomas Consulting Engineers, and Pettit and Pettit. Graham believed others also helped start the organization, but those involved could not remember them.

"Until the Arkansas Association of Consulting Engineers was formed, it is doubtful that you could have gotten more than two or three engineers to gather together and in one spot to talk about their problems in operating a business," Graham wrote. "I can remember a time when it was difficult to get various firm principals to be personally acquainted and associate with another. After years of trying to exist like this, many of the founding fathers discovered that together they could survive; particularly in the days of the Federal programs and dealing with Federal agencies, and that they had to combine to have a joint effort in order to survive. With this in mind, the Arkansas Association was put together."

Firms had to be licensed in Arkansas and engaged in the "planning of mechanical, sanitary, electrical and/or structural equipment or design of buildings or similar work in the construction industry." They had to practice independently and have offices located in Arkansas.

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"The purpose of the organization was to improve the practice of consulting engineers in order to render a better service to the public and protect life, health and property; to promote a more satisfactory business relationship of its members with their clients; to maintain high professional standards; and to foster harmony throughout the engineering profession," Graham wrote. "This was probably one of the greatest steps that the consulting engineers had made in Arkansas. It was to advance the value of the consulting engineer to the public at large, and this

my friends, we have not succeeded in as of this date."

Other firms later joined the group. After the association was established in central Arkansas, it added L. M. McGoodwin and Associates from Fayetteville and John Hawkins from Texarkana. L.M. Goodwin and Associates would become McGoodwin, Williams and Yates, a pillar of the engineering community that was acquired by Olsson in 2018. The original bylaws set forth how a firm would become a member. The membership

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committee would review the application and present it to the executive committee, which would present the applicants as members at large for a vote at the next regular meeting.

"We have found that in talking to several of the older members of this organization, it was more or less a luncheon session, meeting at the Marion because this was a central location for most of the firms as they were located downtown, and it was rather like an 'eat and belch club.' They would come and discuss the weather, the football games and many other topics of current interest, taking very little heed for what the original purpose of the organization was intended."

The association later appointed an ad hoc committee to study the fee schedule established by the Arkansas Society of Professional Engineers, which had been formed in 1946. It appointed another ad hoc committee to investigate a Texas engineer, not registered in Arkansas, who had designed a facility and placed his seal on plans and documents not prepared under his supervision. Boards of registration in Arkansas became involved, which is when the association's attorney, Judge Bill Smith, advised it to incorporate to limit its liability. Another case involved plans prepared by an electric cooperative and sealed by a Missouri resident.

The group filed a petition for organization that Secretary of State Kelly Bryant signed on January 8, 1965. A certificate of amendment to change the group's name from the Arkansas Association of Consulting Engineers to Consulting Engineers Council of Arkansas was filed with Bryant's office on Jan. 27, 1967.

Graham's history covered each of the years from 1965 until his history was written in 1982. In 1965, Mark Garver, founder of what is now Garver, was president. The group met every two months to discuss issues of concern and was engaging with architects and contractors. By the time the next year came around, it consisted of 22 firms, which had grown to 24 by 1967.

"Along about this same time, we had a visitation from an illustrious gentleman by the name of Eugene Waggoner," Graham wrote in his history. "Mr. Waggoner was a member of the firm Woodward-Clyde and Associates, who were a large



EMERGING LEADERS. Young engineers learn communication and management skills through the Emerging Leaders program, now in its 17th year. Nick Griffin, P.E., with then-Mickle Wagner Coleman and now Mickle Griffin, left, and Adam Triche, P.E., McClelland Consulting Engineers, prepare to try to climb a heights obstacle during the Challenge Quest session in 2013. Travis Tolley, P.E., Crafton Tull, far left, and Scott Geurin, P.E., with Brown Engineers, look on.

soils or geotechnical firm from California. Gene discussed activities of CEC and asked what we in Arkansas were doing for the betterment of the profession. We pointed out to him that we were limited on funds and didn't have enough money to maintain any kind of lobby and had not availed ourselves of attending many of the national meetings because of a limited budget. At that time Mr. Waggoner was informed of our dues structure, which was \$10 a year. Gene in his manly manner jumped up, pounded the table and said, 'You cheap sons *****.' At that time several of us looked at one another with red faces and decided that we should do something about raising our dues structure and shortly thereafter strange things began to happen. We also prepared some budgets and dedicated some money to help defray costs of the officers to attend Semi-Annual and Annual Meetings and from that day forth, in my opinion, the Arkansas Association of Consulting Engineers Council began to become a man."

The group in January 1974 adopted a revised constitution and bylaws for what then was known as the American Consulting Engineers Council of Arkansas, Inc. As Graham explained it, an "unholy three" composed of Graham, John Hawkins from Texarkana and Gene Daniel from Fort Smith met in Graham's

office every Saturday morning. That year, it consisted of 41 firms.

Full-time executive directors

That number would grow to 51 members by 1978. That year, the association teamed with ASPE to hire a joint executive director, Roy Nix. Two years later, it changed its name to American Consulting Engineers of Arkansas.

The two organizations hired their next joint executive director, Ann Hamilton, in about 1981. She was hired through the two groups' holding organization, the Professional Engineers Executive Offices of Arkansas. Hamilton was "a very nice, outgoing individual that really tried to do a lot to promote the organization," said Dennis Ford, P.E., with FTN Associates, whose company became involved at some point after it relocated to Little Rock from Mississippi in 1983. She knew all the members and was very active in the national organization.

The group would change its name to its current one, American Council of Engineering Companies of Arkansas, in 2004. Rick Geraci, P.E., who was president in 2000-01 and national director for the next four years, said the national organization was going through a difficult time. It was having budget challenges and was wrestling with the name change. Some felt the political climate in Washington

had made “consultant” a bad word. It was associated with companies that were paid a lot of money by the government to do very little. The small firms that made up the vast majority of the membership, however, were proud of the consulting work engineers did.

“ACEC/A was opposed to both the budget and name change, but to no avail,” he said.

In 2009, Hamilton retired after 28 years on the job. Ford was head of the hiring committee after writing a transition plan in October 2005. He estimated that more than 20 individuals applied for the position. A selection committee composed of long-term members conducted the interviews before hiring Cooper on Jan. 9, 2009. Hamilton remained at the office for another six months during the transition.

“We did interview most of those or quite a few of those, and (Cooper) was the one that really stuck out as somebody that could do a good job,” Ford said.



COLLEGE OF FELLOWS. Dennis Ford, P.E., left, and Rick Geraci, P.E., shown here in 2013, are two of the eight Arkansas members of the ACEC College of Fellows. Fellows must be nominated by competing firms. Other Arkansas Fellows are Dan Williams, P.E.; Bert Parker, P.E.; Rick Geraci, P.E.; Jeff Geurian, P.E.; Matt Crafton, P.E., the late Carl Yates; and the late Brock Johnson.

Cooper came to ACEC/A after serving as director of government affairs for the Springdale Chamber of Commerce. Prior

to that, she was the northwest Arkansas membership and community relations director for the Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce and had been board liaison for the Arkansas Trucking Association. She had loved working for the ATA and decided then that she wanted to someday serve as executive director of an association, so she had strategically selected her other jobs to prepare her for the role. She didn't know much about engineers beyond what they do when she applied, but her best friend's husband was an engineer and knew Hamilton was retiring. She had jumped at the chance.

Over the next few years, Cooper would work to modernize the office. She created policies and procedures and created a records retention policy where most documents were scanned. In June 2016, she moved her office out of a rented complex to her home. The association was spending almost 20% of its budget to give her a desk and a chair, when the position

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Craig Johnson, PE
Vice President



MAKING THEIR CASE. ACEC/A leaders successfully testified in 2017 against a bill that would have severely weakened qualifications-based selection standards. Pictured from left are Matt Crafton, P.E., with Crafton Tull; Dan Williams, P.E., then with Garver and now retired; and Byron Hicks, P.E., with McClelland Consulting Engineers.

required that she spend most of her time out of the office.

In 2009, she along with the rest of the ACEC/A and the ASPE formed the Emerging Leaders program, which emphasizes right-brain leadership and communication skills for anyone over age 25 who is an employee of an ACEC/A firm or a member of the Arkansas Society of Professional Engineers. It was modeled after a similar program she had managed for Springdale but tailored for engineers. Last year's class featured 19 participants. This upcoming class will be the 17th.

Cooper said she has noticed a change in the participants since the program started. One of the program's purposes is to teach engineers, stereotypically known for being inwardly focused and serious, to be more collaborative. But many participants now display that trait even before it starts.

"I see classes on day one, they know each other," she said. "If they don't know each other, they're meeting each other. They're outgoing. They're outwardly focused. They're exchanging phone numbers. They're setting up a text chain for car-pooling. It is completely different."

The ACEC/A, meanwhile, underwent a number of changes as it sought to be more businesslike with a stronger government affairs program. Leaders revised the bylaws and constitution. They created a strategic plan designed to match the national organization's. It included goals for attracting new members, for spending, and for contributions to the re-energized

political action committee. The Professional Engineers Executive Offices of Arkansas, the holding organization for the ACEC/A and the ASPE, was dissolved.

Good times for engineers

The last 13 years have been fruitful ones for consulting engineers, particularly those involved in the transportation sector. Voters twice approved major spending programs for highway construction and maintenance. The first came Nov. 6, 2012, when they said yes to a \$1.8 construction program funded by a 10-year, half-cent sales tax. The revenue would fund the Connecting Arkansas Program with 31 projects totaling 170 miles at a cost of \$2.1 billion. The biggest was the 30 Crossing Project, which consisted of the reconstruction of the I-30 bridge between Little Rock and North Little Rock along with the approaching roadways.

Highway supporters would enjoy another victory in 2020 when voters approved making the half-cent sales tax permanent through a constitutional amendment. The tax extension would generate \$205 million annually for highway needs while providing \$87 million that would be split between cities and counties. The money would fund the Renew Arkansas Highways program. The 10-year, \$7.4 billion construction program included \$3 billion for pavement preservation that would improve 7,000 miles of non-interstate highways. It also included \$1.1 billion for bridge

improvement and preservation that would replace or repair every structurally deficient bridge in Arkansas. Another \$1 billion would maintain interstates, while \$1.8 billion would address capital and capacity needs through a second Connecting Arkansas Program. Half a billion dollars would be set aside for specific safety needs as they were identified. A coalition led by Gov. Asa Hutchinson that included the Good Roads Foundation, the Arkansas Trucking Association, and the ACEC/A worked together to pass the amendment.

Through the years, the group's partnership with Arkansas Department of Transportation has strengthened. The two groups signed an agreement July 15, 2014, whose purpose was "to sustain a meaningful partnership between our organizations." The agreement's goals included constructive dialogue, enhancing professionalism and integrity in the design and construction industry, and supporting qualifications-based selection processes. The agreement called for continuing a six-person liaison committee that was meeting at least twice a year. Three members from the department were appointed by the agency's director, and three from ACEC/A were appointed by the ACEC/A president with approval by the board of directors.

Engineers have enjoyed other political and legislative victories. In 2017, several testified against a bill that would have largely ended qualifications-based selection. Engineers argued that QBS is a

cost-effective public safety tool, and the work they do is too valuable to be trusted to the lowest bidder. While the bill advanced through the Senate, it died in the House. Cooper remembers sitting in the Capitol at 8:30 p.m. waiting for a committee meeting to start. An independent study commissioned by the Legislature later found that the state's policies were largely the correct ones.

One victory that hasn't yet come is contracting reform. The ACEC/A has tried the past two sessions to pass legislation outlawing the use of contracts requiring engineering firms to indemnify clients – in other words, compensate them for their losses in a dispute – even when engineers are innocent of wrongdoing. The ACEC/A also seeks to ban “duty to defend” clauses requiring engineering firms to pay for legal costs in a dispute. Neither indemnification nor duty-to-defend clauses are covered by engineers' insurance policies. Both legislative efforts have been unsuccessful, and

the Council is considering its next move. In the meantime, it is emphasizing with its members the importance of avoiding such risky contracts.

The 2020 Engineering Excellence Awards banquet didn't seem so unusual when it occurred at the Governor's Mansion March 5. Garver won the Grand Conceptor Award for a project providing access to Conway's Cantrell Field airport. Crafton Tull won the People's Choice Award chosen by banquet attendees for its design of the Washington Elementary Playground for the Fayetteville Public Schools. Later that month, however, much of the state and country would lock down because of the covid pandemic. Looking back, Cooper said it was “like the gate slammed shut.”

Engineering firms and the ACEC/A both weathered the storm. Firms quickly transitioned to remote work. ACEC/A continued serving its members and did not take a Paycheck Protection Program loan offered by the government.

“We didn't struggle like a lot of people did,” Cooper said. “Most all of our material translated into a virtual format. And of course, our members. Our members, instead of pulling their memberships and pulling their funding for our programs, they stood strong and supported the organization, and luckily for us, we came out on the other side of it – not just where we were before covid, but we've grown since. A lot of the associations can't say that. So I feel very fortunate and thankful for the people that are ACEC members.”

Cooper is proud to work with an association whose members compete for projects and then come together to work cooperatively for the good of the industry and the state. Along the way, they contribute to a profession that touches every facet of modern life.

“I absolutely love what I do,” she said. “I love the people I work with. I think that we have done a really good job at changing and morphing into what we need to be as an association to keep going.”



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ASPE's Miller wants chapters to meet

New president wants NWA engineers to get together face to face and interact

The new ASPE president who helped revitalize the statewide Annual Conference now wants to revitalize the Northwest Arkansas Chapter.

Landon Miller, P.E., a roadway design practice builder at Kimley-Horn, wants to start with a social event to let people know the chapter is back in business while keeping expectations reasonable. Like many volunteer organizations, ASPE's local chapters suspended face-to-face meetings during the covid pandemic. While the Central Arkansas Chapter resumed in-person meetings, the Northwest Arkansas Chapter never did.

Miller, 35, knows the value of the local chapters. He first became the Central Arkansas Chapter's secretary-treasurer after being "volun-told" to do it, he said. He served as president for two years from 2019 through 2021 during the pandemic, when the more convenient but less personal online trainings surged.

He said that ASPE's local chapters give engineers a chance to gather together face to face.

"I personally like to get together with like-minded folks, other engineers, talk about the jobs we're working on, interact with them on a day-to-day basis," he said. "I mean, we've got to get out of the office. We need new faces and people to be around, but a lot of organizations offer online (professional development hours), so a lot of professional engineers are getting involved with these organizations to get PDHs. If they can get those online and not get up from their desk, then that's what they're going to do. But we want to get people out of the office, get them involved and interacting with other engineers."

Miller said successful chapter meetings depend on consistency. Meetings should occur at the same time each month. Parking should be free, and it should be easy to get in and out of the lot. At the same time, he has thought about having different firms host each monthly meeting and perhaps sponsor the lunch.



ASPE PRESIDENT. Landon Miller, P.E., of Kimley-Horn wants the Northwest Arkansas Chapter to resume face-to-face meetings that paused during the pandemic and never restarted. Miller was part of a leadership team that revitalized the ASPE Annual Conference by moving it to Little Rock and shortening it to one day.

"What we're trying to do is we're trying to diversify a little bit," he said. "Get more companies involved. The more companies that are involved, if you have an officer at X company, they're going to grab five or so folks to come to the meetings. We don't want to saturate one company too much. We want to spread it out. The more companies you have, the more people they're going to bring along with them. And so that's our goal."

He has a track record of revitalizing organizations. He was part of a leadership team of young engineers who expanded the attendance at the ASPE's Annual Conference by moving it from Hot Springs to Little Rock and shortening it from two days to one. The change came

after the leaders surveyed members and learned that's what they wanted. Miller said the new location allows attendees to avoid staying in a hotel, and they also can come and go to the seminars to earn professional development hours. In addition to the sessions, the conference features a night-before social gathering at the Top Golf attraction off I-430. It's fun, Miller said, and a person doesn't have to be skilled at golf to enjoy it.

"Everybody's busy," he said. "It's tough to get people out of the office to come to meetings to get involved, and we've all got work to do. Schedules are tighter. Deadlines get closer and closer together the further along we get. But we understand, and I thirst for interaction with other

people, other engineers. So we're trying to get people out of the office – get them out of the office and interact with like-minded people.”

The result of the changes was that attendance increased the first year and increased again this year. Miller said he floated the idea of alternating the meetings between Little Rock and northwest Arkansas every other year. Conference attendees seemed open to it.

Another way Miller wants to increase membership and engagement is by reaching out to other types of engineers. While the ASPE is open to everyone, it tends to be dominated by civil engineers. Miller wants to partner with ACEC/A member firms to diversify the membership.

“ASPE is known for being an organization that brings together all engineers,” he said. “We’re not just focused on one discipline. ... Arkansas Society of Professional Engineers brings together all engineers into one community with a common mind: to help promote the industry.”

Joins Kimley-Horn staff

Miller moved to Kimley-Horn in July after spending the last 11 years at Michael Baker International working on roadway design. His job at his new firm will be to build Kimley-Horn's roadway design practice. The firm opened its Arkansas office two years ago with two staff members. It's already grown to about 16 with a goal to double that over the next year to 30 and to reach 100 in five to 10 years.

“Kimley-Horn's all about growth,” he said. “Where can we grow? Which areas of the country are growing, and growing rapidly? And northwest Arkansas was one of those, and they had the staff to do it.”

The firm will provide transportation, land development, architecture, landscape architecture, and mechanical-electrical-plumbing services. As it grows, it will support offices in Oklahoma, Texas and Missouri.

“We want to be a one-stop shop, full-service firm for our clients,” Miller said.

It's been an eventful year-and-a-half for Miller. Last June, he received the ACEC/A's Young Professional Engineer of the Year Award while leading a team of 11 roadway design engineers at Michael Baker International's Bentonville office.

Miller graduated from the University of Arkansas in 2014 and was Michael Baker International's first employee hired directly out of college for its Arkansas operations. The Searcy native spent seven years in Little Rock, his first three working on the expansion of Highway 70 from Interstate 30 to Hot Springs. The project expanded the dangerous and winding two-lane highway into a much safer four lanes. Twelve people had died on that roadway in 2015, including the Hot Springs mayor's son. His focus was on roughly 80 driveways along with box culvert extensions, erosion control, and traffic maintenance. He learned a lot from the project and from the more experi-

enced engineers with which he worked. Miller also worked on the Maumelle interchange, which created a new entrance and exit to the city.

“A lot of people think roadway design, that sounds kind of boring,” he said for a Building Arkansas profile published last year. “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?”

Miller and his team received an ACEC/A Engineering Excellence Award for a project where he led the design of a lateral bridge slide – ARDOT's first – to replace a bridge on I-30 crossing De-Roche Creek near Arkadelphia. Constructors built the replacement bridge adjacent to the existing lanes on temporary supports. Then they used a series of jacks and frictionless plates to pull the new bridge into place during 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. One of his biggest projects there was the widening of Highway 102 from I-49 to J Street adjacent to the new Walmart home office.

Outside of the office, Miller and his wife, Taryn, a social worker for the Bentonville School District, have a son, Lucas, 9, and a daughter, Olivia, 6. The family is active in the Fellowship Bible Church in Rogers.

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Foster takes helm of ACEC/A, Pickering

Focus for Council will be ACEC/A-ARDOT conference; focus for firm will be growth

The new president of ACEC/A also just became the new president of Pickering.

Mike Foster, P.E., officially took over the leadership of the ACEC/A at the Deep South Conference in Florida in July. He became president of Memphis-based Pickering effective July 1.

As ACEC/A's president, Foster, 56, will be leading the Council as it finishes preparing for the first annual ACEC/A-ARDOT Conference. The conference will be April 7-8 in Springdale at the Northwest Arkansas Convention Center. A committee is meeting monthly to set the agenda.

The conference will expand the relationship that ACEC/A and ARDOT already have. ACEC/A has a liaison committee that meets with upper ARDOT management to talk about upcoming lettings, about what's going on with construction and design, and about improving processes. Other state ACEC state chapters and their transportation departments have similar conferences.

"I think ARDOT and the consulting community have a great relationship, a great partnership, but I think that's something that we continue to have an open line of communication, and I think it can only get better," he said.

One role for the Council is inspiring more young people to become engineers. Foster, 56, said that can happen by educating schoolchildren about the profession's opportunities.

"It's an exciting field," he said. "Opportunities are unlimited. Engineers can go to work in just about any field they want to go to work in. Aeronautics, bridges, roadways, buildings –everything you see has engineering behind it, whether it be electronics for TVs or a building with structural/architectural/HVAC/mechanical. Everything you see at some form had the hand of an engineer in it or on it. The opportunities are just endless. And, too, I think it prepares you, if you wanted a non-related engineering job, just the critical thinking skills make you valuable for really any job."



ACEC/A PRESIDENT. Mike Foster, P.E., president of the Pickering firm, became the ACEC/A's new president in July.

Foster will help lead the Council's legislative and policy efforts. ACEC/A was unsuccessful in passing procurement reform during this year's legislative session and is planning its next steps. The bill would have invalidated contract language that requires design professionals

to indemnify clients or third parties for anything other than the professional's negligence. It also would have protected design firms from "duty to defend" clauses requiring them to provide legal representation if a claim is made against the client or third party in a lawsuit. Neither

of those provisions are typically covered by professional liability insurance.

The legislation also would have clarified and standardized design professionals' standard of care. Engineers would have been expected to provide the same care and skill ordinarily used by members of the profession practicing at the same time and same location.

It also would have invalidated contract clauses that require a design professional to list a client or any other party as an additional insured on the professional's liability insurance policy.

Foster said the Council needs to reach out to other design professionals such as architects and contractors as it takes its next steps. Meanwhile, it must educate engineering firms on how to protect themselves in the contract negotiation process with or without changes to the law.

Pickering poised to expand

In his day job, Foster will be focused on leading and growing Pickering, a firm with 135 employees in six offices. Headquartered in Memphis, it has another office in Jonesboro that Foster opened in 2015, along with offices in Little Rock and in the Mississippi towns of Flowood, Pearl and Hernando. He will be employed there 20 years this November after starting his career as a transportation project manager.

The firm works for clients in Arkansas, Tennessee, Mississippi and Missouri. It does general civil, transportation, water resources, environmental, structural, mechanical, electrical, structural, plumbing, and fire protection. A specialty is industrial, big-box distribution facilities.

It's 100% employee-owned – partially through individual ownership and partially through an employee stock ownership plan, or ESOP. Some employees have been with the company for many years – one survey party chief for 40.

"I think we're a great-sized firm," he said. "We're small enough that everyone still knows everyone by name, but yet we're large enough that we offer just about every service except for geotechnical engineering."

Meanwhile, Pickering is looking to grow through new areas of expertise and through geographic expansion. It is in a

good cash position after being frugal the last several years.

"Obviously we're a great firm, very successful, so we're not making any knee-jerk changes," he said. "Our main goal is growth, and that's comprised of different things."

Foster has worked on numerous projects for TDOT and ARDOT. The first 15 years of his career at Pickering were primarily focused in Tennessee. For TDOT, he worked on the I-40/I-240 interchange and the east leg of I-249. He's done a lot of work in Arkansas the past five years. He helped design the final section of West Memphis' South Loop Bypass. He extended and widened Caraway Road in Jonesboro from a two-lane to a five-lane. He has designed numerous bridge replacements and rehabilitation preservation projects for ARDOT, as well as several cable median barrier projects.

Foster's biggest project was the reconstruction of the Memphis International Airport terminal apron. The project involved 98 acres of concrete around the airport's three concourses. He was responsible for a drainage project involving about 300 structures. Traffic management was a big part of the project. Gates had to be available for all the planes at a time when Memphis was a hub for Delta.

The yearlong project was completed in five subphases.

"It was probably the most complicated project I've ever worked on," Foster said. "Largest project I've ever worked on. Close to a hundred million dollars construction, and that was back in 2010-11, so several years ago."

Born and raised in West Memphis, Foster spent one semester at the University of Arkansas before transferring to

Arkansas State University. After graduating, he went to work for the city of Jonesboro for the next five years. He then went into consulting work – first with Fisher Arnold and then with Continental Engineering, where he became head of transportation. The position gave him an opportunity to see the company's finances, which weren't good. The firm closed the week after he left for Pickering.

The experience affected him as a businessman.

"I would have been somewhat conservative, but obviously that leaves a lasting impression on you when you see everybody basically lose their job," he said. "One or two come out smelling pretty good. The rest of us are just unemployed. Luckily I was able to land at Pickering. Best thing that ever happened to me, but at the time, obviously it wasn't so good."

Outside of the office, Foster likes to smoke and grill meat on the weekends and do woodworking projects. He is married with two children. He met wife Marsha, a school counselor in Mississippi, while at ASU.

"My uncle knew her from church, and we had our first date at my uncle's house," he said. "We had a spaghetti dinner Jan. 2, 1988, and we've been together ever since."

The two have two children with their first grandchild on the way. Daughter Ashley, 29, is a pharmacist in Mississippi. Son Cameron, 27, is an accountant in Jonesboro. Cameron is expecting a son in November. The Fosters already know what their grandparent nicknames will be. She will be "Mimzy." Foster's children for years have said he will be "Grump."

Told he doesn't seem grumpy, Foster replied, "I didn't think so, either. But, you know, your kids."



Myers retires after 70 years in field

Career at Michael Baker Int'l followed earlier career, retirement at ARDOT

Bob Myers, P.E., may have retired twice, but he definitely didn't retire early.

The former Arkansas Department of Transportation resident engineer retired from Michael Baker International this summer shortly before his 85th birthday. His title was associate vice president.

Myers' work life spanned almost 70 years, beginning when he was 16 years old cutting bushes for the Dallas County Road Department. At age 18, he drove a school bus for the Fordyce School District while still a student. And while attending college, he worked for the county during summers until his junior year, when he worked for the Highway Department.

Born and raised in Fordyce, Myers described himself in an interview as "an old Redbug at heart." He played basketball and won a state championship in doubles tennis in 1958.

He decided he wanted to be an engineer while he was a student at the University of Arkansas based on his admiration for a first cousin, an engineer. He was good at math, and being an engineer fit with that background.

After graduating with a degree in civil engineering, he was hired by what is now the Arkansas Department of Transportation and became a resident engineer in Camden.

"They tried to get me to come to Little Rock several times, but I'm an old country boy, and I said Little Rock's too big for me," he said. "I'm not interested in moving up there."

The state office eventually accepted the fact that Myers intended to stay in south Arkansas.

As the resident engineer, Myers oversaw major projects such as the four-laning of Highway 79 from Camden to Fordyce and of Highway 7 from Camden to El Dorado. He also oversaw the construction of a bridge over the Ouachita River in Camden and two over the Saline River in the Warren area.

Myers retired from ARDOT at age 62 in 2002 after 36 years at the department



INDUSTRY VETERAN. Bob Myers said he kept working even until his mid-80s because he felt needed.

but didn't stop working. A good friend who previously worked for the department called him a month before Myers retired. He was working for The LPA Group, a multi-state transportation consulting firm based in Columbia, South Carolina, and asked if Myers would move to Louisiana and manage the firm's construction program there. Myers said he wasn't interested in moving to Louisiana but jokingly replied that he would work in Arkansas if the firm would pay him to play golf, hunt and fish, and the conversation ended jovially.

That was a Friday. On Monday, the friend called again saying The LPA Group wanted to expand to Arkansas and would like to fly him to South Carolina. There,

the firm made an offer Myers couldn't refuse. He later returned to South Carolina for a week-long orientation.

"Don't worry about getting work," one of the partners, Glen Lott, told him. "You just make friends. You build relationships. That's all I want you to do right now."

That's what Myers did. He focused on building relationships that would lead to highway projects, of which he was an expert, and airport projects, of which at first he didn't know much. He would spend the next 23 years building and strengthening those relationships. He opened an office in Little Rock and hired an engineer, a secretary and then another engineer.

"The best part about this job that I had was meeting the people," Myers said. "I'm a people person, but I met some of the finest people who you'll ever meet, and made some good friends, lifetime friends that I'm talking about. They're still friends even though I've quit. I'm still in touch with a bunch of them."

Michael Baker International acquired The LPA Group in 2010 and expanded its operations in Arkansas. It opened offices in Bentonville and Fayetteville.

"Bob has been a partner, advisor, and friend to me for nearly 20 years," said Mike Stengel, P.E., a vice president and the firm's office executive in its Fayetteville branch. "He was the firm's first employee in Arkansas and has played



BOB MYERS speaks at an event in 2022 honoring his 20 years of service at Michael Baker International, which also was celebrating 20 years in Arkansas.

a critical role in the growth of the firm's Arkansas team, to include attracting myself and other primary leadership to join the firm. He was also instrumental in the development of the firm's Arkansas client base by developing relationships and building trust. His strategic insights, big-picture viewpoint, integrity, and passion for the success of the team he created provided the perfect mentor for me as a young engineer tasked early in my career with growing a team of engineers."

Myers continued doing for that company what he had done for The LPA Group – building relationships. He said the key to doing so is making connections. If he walked into a person's office and saw photos of a person's family, he asked them about that. If he saw golf photos, he shared his own interest in that subject with them. One prospect had a collection of Chinese checkerboards. Myers hadn't seen one of those since he was a child, but he made a personal connection through that subject.

"When you go in anyone's office, you can tell almost where their interest lies," he said. "That's what you start talking about."

Through all of those years, the "Red-bug at heart" never left Fordyce. He worked primarily from home while traveling the state. He and wife Joyce recently celebrated their 63rd wedding anniversary. A fellow UA graduate, she taught first grade in Fordyce for 35 years. They raised a daughter, Kim Archer, and they have two grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

With his latest retirement, Myers, now 85, is probably out of the workforce for good. While he hasn't worked full-time in recent years, he always was an active part of the firm.

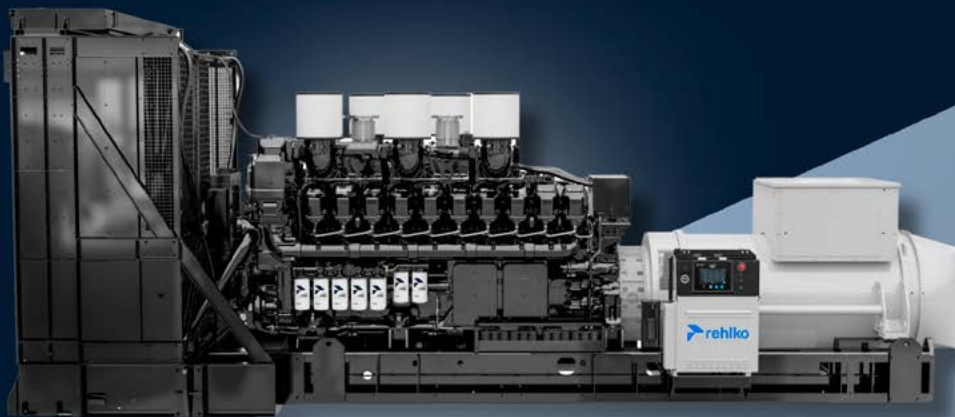
Why did he keep working until his mid-80s?

"You have got to feel needed," he said. "You know that? And if you don't feel needed, then why be around? And I just felt like they needed me."

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ACEC/A marketer loves to tell stories

Isabella Walker came to Arkansas to help mom, stayed and started her firm

The ACEC/A's new marketing consultant has hit the ground running by starting an Instagram page and creating content for all the Council's social media efforts.

Isabella Walker, 27, started Bella Media, her "all-in-one marketing agency," this past March. Her firm does social media, content creation and event organization.

"I love to tell the story behind brands," she said.

Walker is expanding the Council's social media presence. Officers at the ACEC Deep South Convention in July embraced her suggestion of an Instagram account. She took photos and produced a video recapping the convention.

"Everyone seems very open to trying new things, so I'm excited to get more creative with the content," she said.

Walker has worked for clients in construction, law, mortgage lending, real estate, restaurants, fashion, beauty and social work. Now, she'll also be working with ACEC/A Executive Director Angie W. Cooper to promote it and the ASPE.

"I love going to the different niches, and I [will be] bringing my background into learning everything about ACEC – which it's been great working with Angie – just to kind of spice it up a little," she said.

Walker started her company after working in corporate marketing for a global women's clothing brand. She joined the firm after graduating from California State University, Chico in December 2020. She first was a content creator and then was promoted to the marketing team.

The company let her work remotely for a year so she could move to northwest Arkansas to be with her parents, who had retired there and had adopted two children. When Walker's mother was struck with a repeat bout of cancer, she knew she needed to come here and help with the children and take her to appointments.

When the company wanted her to return to Los Angeles at the same time



MARKETING ENTREPRENEUR. Isabella Walker started Bella Media in March. She does social media, content creation and event organization.

her mother was going back into treatment, she began looking for a position in northwest Arkansas. She took a job as director of creative marketing for Buffalo Builders, a construction firm, where she remained almost two years. A production company approached her about a side gig managing clients and doing their social media and content creation.

"I loved it," she said. "I loved the production part. And it kind of got to the point where I couldn't do everything, and I had enough clients on the side. And I was like, 'You know, I'm going to take what I learned from my corporate experience in marketing, plus the production company, and just do it on my own.'"

Owning her own business gives Walker the flexibility she needs to take her mom, whom she describes as "my best friend," to her medical appointments. She takes her laptop with her so she can work for clients. And she's already hired her first employee, a friend, to do the accounting work.

She also does a lot of affiliate marketing, where she produces TikTok videos about various products and receives a commission from retailers when shoppers purchase products through links on her page. She also produces social media for Hope Family Church.

"I pretty much am just constantly creating content," she said.

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