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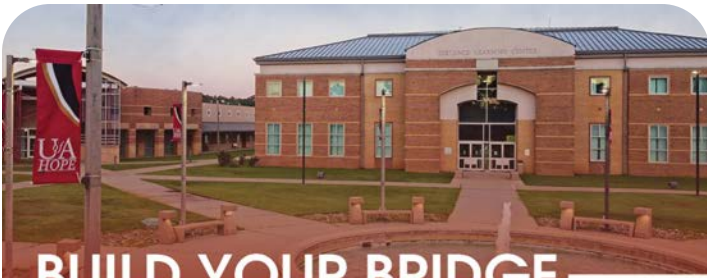
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to all
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2023 Hempstead County

20 Under 50

This special edition from SWARK.Today highlights 20 local individuals under the age of 50 who are making big contributions to Hope and Hempstead County. There are so many wonderful, interesting people out there, and we are proud to recognize them and their achievements in this special section. This fascinating group of people hail from all walks of life with varying backgrounds, but they all have one thing in common: a devotion to move Hope and Hempstead County forward and improve the lives of others. This may be a small community, but the citizens have big dreams. To get to that "better tomorrow," we need individuals like these to share their talent, philosophies, and experiences. Whether it's through industry or community service, all twenty of these admirable and phenomenal citizens have made an impact on many lives, businesses, and organizations. There aren't enough phrases to describe these outstanding people and how they inspire the rest of the community, but as you read, you will discover just a few.

THANK YOU for you service to our community!

The 2023 Hempstead County 20 Under 50 magazine was published by SWARK.Today LLC.
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i'm lovin' it

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KELLY BASS

Kelly Bass has a caregiver's heart. Between her day job and her after-hours activities, Kelly's days are full, with every hour dedicated to taking care of others. As a Coordinator for Rainbow of Challenges (ROC), Kelly says she is just as inspired by her clients now as she was when she first began her career 20 years ago. Kelly oversees the functions and daily living of a group home, in addition to that of community clients, but she doesn't stop there. Kelly goes the extra mile. She participates with her clients in activities like the building of the luminaries in Old Washington and the Special Olympics. Kelly even helps with ROC fundraising events and joins in activities like the Polar Plunge.

Kelly's humanitarian approach to life doesn't just apply to people, though; she is just as passionate about caring for those with four legs and a furry tail. She is one of the founding members of Hope for Paws, a local nonprofit organization whose mission is to increase the adoption rate at the Hope

Animal Shelter. She and fellow Hope for Paws members have done this with adoption drives, as well as promoting the animals on social media and other mediums. With fundraising and through charitable donors, Hope for Paws is also able to assist with the costs of shots, spaying, neutering, and more adoption requirements so people are able to adopt a fully vetted dog at a fraction of the cost.

Kelly's compassionate works are also a family affair. Her mom, dad, and daughter all work at ROC as well, and the whole family joins in for both ROC fundraising and Hope for Paws activities. She says her husband Steven, and kids Miranda, Daylen, and Parker are a tremendous source of support and inspiration, but also that serving others is just something that has always come naturally. "It's in my heart," she says. "If I can work and volunteer my time doing something I love, then there's no question about what I should do. I love my clients, I love animals, and I just want to help wherever I can."

Congratulations to Lyndsi Easterling, Hosea Borne and Kirby Bradley on being recognized for excellence!!

Bobcats

"Hope For the Future!"

RUSTY BECK

Rusty Beck has two jobs. He is the Youth Pastor at First Baptist Church in Hope and also the director of Banner Hope, a faith-based addiction-recovery program that works with the Hempstead County Sheriff's Office to change the lives of men jailed on addiction-related offenses with classes, ministry and community service.

Beck himself is testimony to the value of such programs in bringing those back to life after struggles with drugs or alcohol. He said he had been in that struggle for 17 years before attending Renewal Ranch in Conway.

"When I went up there, the Lord put in me a heart for recovery ministry," Beck said. "I was able to stay on staff there for a few years and came back here and started in kind of a dual role with Banner Hope and First Baptist Church. I want to help these guys because I've been where they're at, and I know what it feels like to be in that spot, spot of hopelessness."

After separating himself from the life of an addict, Beck vowed he would never return to Hope, where so many

acquaintances still lived who were still pursuing lives of substance abuse but he returned five years ago to be of service here. "When the Lord calls us to do something, we get out of our comfort zone, and we do what we need to do. So being back in my hometown around my family, it's been great."

Banner Hope began as a program for troubled kids during the summer. Unfortunately, it was shut down by the COVID pandemic. But by the time it became safe to start it again, grant support became available and the partnership with the Hempstead County Sheriff was formed. Now Banner Hope has graduated 20 men in the past two years and looks to do more in the years to come.

What keeps him going? "I couldn't do this, obviously, without God, without my church, without my team and without my family, just the grace and forgiveness that they've shown me has given me the ability to move past my past," Beck said.



HOSEA BORN

For five years, Hosea Born has been a bolt of energy at Yerger Middle School and HAPS. He has made headlines with his robotic teams excelling on state and national levels and was recognized in 2020 as the Arkansas Education Association's Teacher of the Year.

At HAPS, his four robotics teams were tasked to use parts provided by VEX IQ to construct robots, solving engineering problems presented as games. The four-member team called The Vexes, placed second in the teamwork challenge. Meanwhile, The Flamethrowers, placed sixth overall in the Arkansas VEX IQ State Championship. All four of Born's teams placed in the top third of the state.

Born took the two placing teams to the World Championships, saying the trip was a motivator to continue in Hope's Robotics program. "It was really energizing to see them when it was over, and they saw the game and competition for next year. They're so excited to keep working and keep going for even greater goals."

A native of Goodman, Missouri, Born was the tenth child of a poverty-stricken family. By the time he reached his junior high years, he became aware of education as a means of improving his quality of life. Winning scholarships to the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville, he finished with a degree in communications and political science and later attained a Master's in educational leadership at HSU.

When not teaching or coaching, Born is restoring a building on East Second Street. He envisions turning the long-vacant department store into a nonprofit youth center where students will have access to a Maker's Space, for "developing entrepreneurial opportunities and testing out different hobbies," and a tutoring center as well as a student-run café.

Born's mission is to lift kids from poverty by creating chances for them to use their own voices and contribute their feedback on how their projects and educational careers unfold. From his own experiences, he knows that is what works.

KIRBY BRADLEY

When she was in sixth grade, Kirby Bradley remembers seeing a gymnastics competition on television and thinking, I'd sure like to do that. "At that time, Hope had no gymnastics other than cheerleading. I wanted to be a cheerleader, because I wanted to learn how to tumble."

Learn to tumble, she did, but cheerleading had to wait. "My first year I tried out, I didn't make it ... the next year, I worked hard because I had to get cheerleading skills, [while before,] I only wanted to watch. And then I fell in love with it and went from there." Going from there from Bradley has taken her to top. She's now in her 14th year as Cheerleading Coach at Hope Public Schools.

Bradley is a Hope native, having graduated Hope High and then completed a Bachelor's in General Education and a Masters in Education, while teaching and coaching here in Hope, at Southern Arkansas University. Along the way, she also gained an interest

and lots of experience in photography, which she minored in. Many of the photos released by the school system of sports teams, school events and high achievers are credited to her.

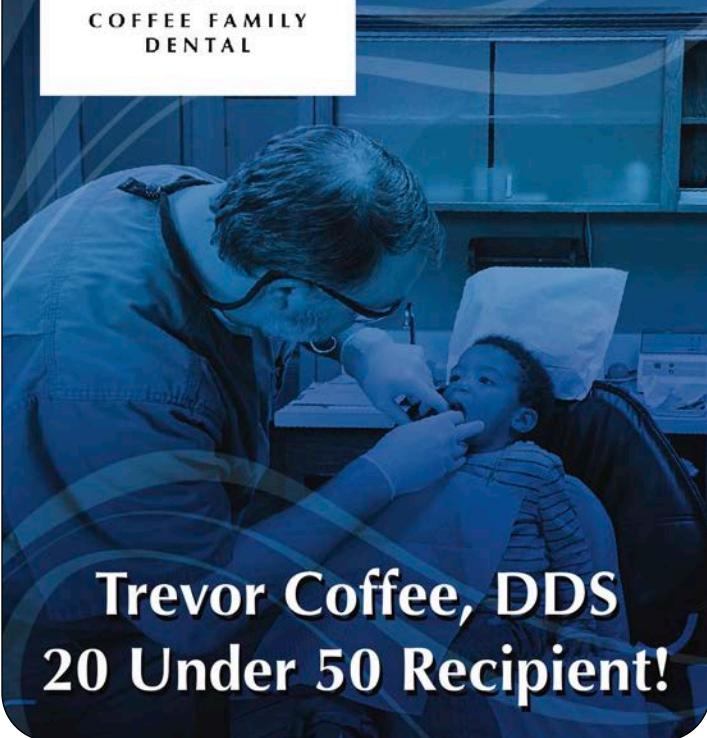
Meanwhile, her varsity cheerleading squad did some high achieving of its own. This past December it placed second in the Southern Spirit 4A All Girl division in Hot Springs. In the same month, it also won third in the 3A-4A All Girl division at the Arkansas State Cheer "Last year, I had 13. This year, I have 21," she said.

Unlike many teachers who only have a student for one year, Bradley sees them grow from seventh grade to seniors in cheerleading. She may see them even sooner in the PE classes she leads at Beryl Henry elementary. Her students go on to cheer at colleges and even coach cheerleading themselves, but they don't forget her. "Even when they go off to college, they still contact me and come back," Bradley said, and while laughing added, "I have to try my best to stay in some shape."



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SYLVIA BROWN

Sylvia Brown, who graduated in Hope High's Class of 1992, began her career of civic engagement in the 1990s, working in Washington D.C. for then Senator Blanche Lincoln and then Congressman Mike Ross. She decided to live in the District itself and began working for the Civic Association and the Advisory Neighborhood Commission, winning an elected position.

She describes her work as "helping those neighbors who were very consistent voters, but didn't have the community projects, the Civic improvements to match those votes." That meant making the people of the neighborhood and their concerns more visible, having legislators tour neighborhoods and getting projects started that had been dormant for years.

This experience came in handy when she returned home to Fulton. After a few years working regular jobs in town, Brown was hired to help people enroll in insurance through the Affordable Care Act in Texarkana. Seeing the difference in options available to residents of Texas, which did not accept Medicaid expansion funds and residents of Arkansas, which did, reminded her of the need for people to become more involved in

government.

Now, as deputy director of strategic operations for ruralorganizing.org, Brown is applying the lessons of making the concerns of underrepresented people here in the region more visible, thereby increasing the access and quality of the government services they need. She is also the founder of the nonprofit Visibility Outreach Touch Engage South Arkansas (VOTE SoAR), which has, among many things, staged voter education and registration events throughout our corner of the state.

VOTE SoAR organized 2023's Juneteenth celebration in Hope and Historic Washington State Park. As well as celebrating African-American freedom from slavery, Brown sees the event as "about community building and bridging the isolating divide some of have shared and expressed."

Brown said she is always pursuing the key question, "How do we utilize these government structures ... so that we're not just chasing after the latest manufacturer, but how do we take care of our folks who are here now and support them to thrive in the way they feel is best?"

JASON CAMPBELL

Jason Campbell could easily fit Homer's description of Odysseus as a "man of many turns," because of having made his living in so many different ways over the years. But his turns nearly always pertain to educating the public and helping the vulnerable.

Campbell grew up in Laneburg, Nevada County in a time, he points out, before the internet. If he got bored, he had to find something he could do himself. This is when he turned to art. "We lived on a dirt road in a farming community where your closest neighbor was four miles away, So you had what you had," Campbell said. This included Bob Ross' show, The Joy of Painting. Because Campbell's mother usually had art supplies at home, Campbell found himself, he said, "always building something, always drawing something." As an adult, he worked as a professional photographer for two years in Fayetteville, Arkansas.

His arts interest helped guide him to his new role as president of the board of Southwest Arkansas Arts Board of

Directors, which he has assumed this month (June 2023). At the same time, he is the Director of Marketing for Southwest Arkansas Counseling and Mental Health Center (SACMHC) which has an outpatient clinic in Hope where Campbell has an office.

Helping the vulnerable is family tradition with Campbell, his mother having worked with developmentally delayed children her whole career. Because of her, Campbell got experience in the field himself, helping with Special Olympics in the summers. A recent experience as a teaching assistant in a kindergarten class for children who have experienced trauma has confirmed Campbell's resolve to be a public school teacher. He will be attending Henderson State this fall.

Campbell said he was glad to join the SWAAC board, having seen it perform with dispatch in organizing its gallery exhibitions at the SWAAC Arts Station. "We like a good project," Campbell said. "And we like being able to do things for free for the public."



TREVOR COFFEE

Making a better Hope for his three daughters and following his father's example are the twin motivations for Trevor Coffee to complete long days of work and service. He has a dental practice in town and has been a member of the City of Hope Board of Directors since 2017.

He is a Hope native, a graduate of Hope High in 1993. When he first entered college, he wasn't sure what he was going to major in, but an affinity for one subject offered a clue. "I figured out I enjoyed science," Coffee said. "I decided on a biology degree, and then I had to figure out what I could do with that degree. That was how I got narrowed down. My dad was a optometrist here in town, owned his own building and owned his own business. And that was something that appealed to me. I wanted to do something with my hands, and dentistry ended up fitting the bill."

His dental degree is from the University of Tennessee in Memphis. After

graduation, he returned to Hope to work under Wallace McDowell, eventually setting up Coffee Family Dental on 901 South Elm when McDowell retired. Coffee has been back in Hope for 20 years now, making dental visits more pleasant for patients of all ages.

On how he became interested in city government, Coffee says the process was gradual. He had been serving on boards for Rainbow of Challenges, for his church and other entities. When his neighbor and friend former Mayor Dennis Ramsey decided to retire from city government about seven years ago, Ramsey asked if Coffee would be interested in joining the city board. He was.

In his service as city director for ward five, Coffee has become known for his attention to detail, a trait helps him better serve those he represents. "I just want it to make sense. If somebody asked me a question about it, I want to be able to explain to somebody why we've done it that way," Coffee said.



CASEY CURTIS

Casey Curtis is an agent of change. In his role as UAHT Communications Coordinator, Casey is responsible for promoting the college and its multitude of degrees, certificates, and services that it has to offer local residents, in addition to the most effective and life-changing resource one could ever hope to obtain: opportunity. "Education can change people's lives," Casey says. "What we have to offer here can impact their livelihoods, get them better paying jobs, and have a positive effect on their families. The best part is that doing this at UAHT doesn't break the bank; it's an affordable option for our local families."

His service doesn't stop at the close of office hours, though, because Casey also positively affects the lives of others in the community through his role as Pastor of Providence Missionary Baptist Church (PMBC). Under his leadership, PMBC supports two local missions, Charitable Christian Medical Clinic and the Crisis Pregnancy Center, donates school supplies and backpacks to the

Spring Hill School District, and provides loving support to numerous families at Thanksgiving and Christmas with meals and presents for children.

When he's asked what inspires him to continuously and tirelessly dedicate his time to serving others, he says that first and foremost, God leads him. "I've been blessed," Casey says. "The Lord brought me to UAHT and has kept me here for 20 years, and He led me to the call of ministry." Casey also credits his wife, Mikki, as a source of motivation, and says the work itself inspires him daily. "To see a single mother who's been working a full-time job, taking care of her children, and going to school walk across that stage for her diploma? If she can do it, anyone can," Casey says. "Or to see children's faces when we bring them presents and it might have been a few years since they had Christmas. The biggest inspiration, by far though, is seeing someone come to salvation through Jesus Christ. The work is easy when you believe that what you're doing is really worth something."



EMMANUEL DIXON

Emmanuel Dixon's profession is the one that inspires all others. As a Career Advisor for UAHT, he provides for the community the essential service of helping students prepare for the workforce. Whether it is assisting with tutoring, resumes, dress for success tips, interview skills, or just lending a listening ear, Emmanuel makes himself available to help students in any way possible. He also liaises between companies and students to make the transition smoother for both parties. Emmanuel's service applies to all students, whether they are in a degree program or on the path to a Trade & Industry certification. "These are our future business leaders, engineers, lawyers, doctors, and all other professions," he says. "If I can help them at any point on their journey, then I feel like that's the best impact I can make in our community." Being the first generation in his family to attend and graduate college, Emmanuel knows firsthand how important it is to have a support system when navigating the world of academia, so that's where he

draws his inspiration. "My parents were great, but they just didn't know what to do about college or who to seek out for answers," he says. "It's important to have someone in your corner and to know you have someone backing you in your decision-making."

His abiding dedication to helping others extends way beyond campus hours though. Emmanuel spends his weekend working for Arkansas Department of Human Services and living as a teaching parent in a youth group home, acting as a role model for those children who need care and guidance. He is also an active member of Alpha Phi Alpha and participates in the organization's scholarship program. One might ask Emmanuel how he has time for anything else when his calendar stays full with work, but his answer to that is simple, yet sincere. "I don't look at it as work," he says. "When you do something you love, it never feels like work. I get so much enjoyment out of seeing someone else succeed that I feel like I've done my part by just helping them along the way."

LYNDSI EASTERLING

Lyndsi Easterling has been serving the community's children for 19 years at Hope Public Schools ABC Pre-K where she was recently promoted to the role of Director. Lyndsi takes no credit for this accomplishment though and says her team members are the real stars. "I've been blessed with a good group of teachers and a good secretary who truly cares about the kids and their families," she says. "They work so hard and have such passion for helping these children." Lyndsi's own devotion is just as obvious though when she speaks of her students. "At this age, they are sweet, innocent, and hold so much promise," she says. "Then, when I see them years down the road and they are making a difference, it inspires me even more to do everything I can to make things better for our kids."

Her dedication to taking care of children extends way beyond the school day, as well. Lyndsi's work with Junior

Auxiliary of Hope and time as a previous president of the organization included her in activities such as Cookies with Santa, the JA Easter Egg Hunt, and the JA Spaghetti Supper that raises funds for local student scholarships. Lyndsi's work with local youth has even become a family affair, and her husband, Jay, and kids, Ryleigh and Collin, also participate. When asked what motivates her to continue her mission of caring for the youth of Hope and Hempstead County, she says "Sending money and volunteering all around the world is admirable, but I think it's just as important, if not moreso, to make a difference where you live. We live and work here, so we need to invest in our children if we want them to be good stewards of the community someday. What better way to make a difference than to help the next generation?"





JOHN GLADDEN

During his nine years at Hempstead Hall, John Gladden has had an active role in bringing a wide variety of concerts, banquets, workforce training, educational opportunities, and family entertainment to the residents of Hope and Hempstead County. A few highlights include the concert of popular country singer Trace Adkins, the family-fun and Halloween-inspired Haunted Hall, plus the partnership and collaboration with the Hempstead County Health Expo.

Now, in his first year as Director of Hempstead Hall, John has continued to produce those types of community-favorite events while also bringing a little something new to the area. The Hall held its first-ever contemporary concert, the Plain White T's, recently, and John said the success of this, as well as every Hempstead Hall accomplishment, is due to the support of many others. "Hempstead Hall has been a beacon in the community since its inception in 2013, and any achievement to be celebrated is because of the

dedication of our staff, the support of the community, and the opportunities provided by UAHT that have allowed us to shine and grow," he says. These community partnerships combined with the support of his wife, Julie, and daughter, Annie Jo, have been a huge source of inspiration for John and the staff during selection and production of events. "Family life is important to us here at Hempstead Hall," he says.

John's service to the community doesn't end at the Hall's doors, however. He is also active with the Garrett Memorial Baptist Church Praise and Worship Team and a member of Hope Lions Club, a civic organization that John says truly embodies the community spirit of the town he is proud to call home. "People in Hope genuinely care about each other and are committed to helping other members of their community in need," John says. "It has really left an impression on me, and I'm proud to be able to call myself a Lion and a member of this community."

BEN HALE

Ben Hale epitomizes what it means to be a public servant. His dedication and commitment as the Deputy Prosecuting Attorney the previous four years resulted in his win of the election for Prosecuting Attorney of Hempstead and Nevada Counties this last year. Even though this role is one with far-reaching impacts in the community, Ben holds this position with the responsibility and sincerity it deserves, as well as great humility. When speaking of the role his office has in the community, Ben never uses the word "I," but instead places great emphasis on his team and the group effort it takes to get the job done. "The constitution is an agreement between the government and the people," he says "We are just one part of what upholds that agreement because the team extends way beyond this office. Every officer, first responder, 911 dispatcher, jailer, and many others make the whole of our justice system. The job of our office is just to carry that baton into a conviction."

Ben says the importance of public

service is a value that comes from both of his parents, and his wife, Lizzy, shares in this, as well. Since the arrival of their daughter, Evelyn, they have been inspired even more to take an active role and be involved in numerous community, civic, and church organizations such as Hope Kiwanis, Prescott Rotary, Southwest Arkansas Arts Council, Chamber of Commerce, A Place of Meeting, and First United Methodist in Prescott. This community-focused mindset is also an essential component for Ben and the staff at the Prosecuting Attorney's Office. "We try to approach issues in a way that makes our community safer for the people who live here," he says. "What serves the best interest of everyone, how to achieve justice for victims, and remaining mindful that these decisions affect the trajectory of people's lives are all factors in the team's decisions and actions. Then, we can feel confident that we did everything we could to be able to answer positively to the most important question, 'Is it right?'"



KYLA HAMILTON

Kyla Hamilton's day job is as Diamond Bank in Hope's Market President, a job she describes as "like a branch manager. I oversee the day to day transactions, everything from deposits to loans, employment, employees, everything that arises." But she has also made time for being on the Hempstead County United Way board, having volunteered for the agency of agencies for 15 years.

She especially enjoys the United Way's yearly meeting because she gets to see what the various agencies have done with United Way contributions. "It's just a big eye opener to what goes on in our community, and how many people are actually pitching in to help, whether it's the senior citizens, the pregnancy center, the children at the schools that get the backpack program," Hamilton said.

Perhaps the most spectacular success this past year for United Way was the late October gala that took place at Hope's Country Club. Dozens of attendees arrived in their best finery

for a dinner and dance. They were able to buy tickets to vie for a raffle drawing later in the evening for items donated by local and regional merchants. The event helped raise what Hamilton estimates to be near \$19,000 for the United Way's programs. Hamilton helped keep track of transactions at the event, which was meant to replace the charity's annual golf tournament that got cancelled by COVID restrictions. This year, however, Hamilton said the golf tournament will take place again, and so will the gala.

Hamilton grew up in McCaskill, graduated from Blevins High and then got her Agri-Business degree from Southern Arkansas University, following that with an Masters in Business Administration from Texas A&M Texarkana. About her job, she says she likes when Diamond Bank can help start new businesses and farms. "It is so much fun when you start a project, and then you get to see it come to fruition and be successful."



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KOLBY HARPER

Kolby Harper is making great strides in Hope and Hempstead County. In addition to being the first female judge and the first African-American judge to take the bench in our community, she is also one of the youngest. As the 38th Judicial District Judge, Kolby presides over matters involving citizens of both Hempstead and Nevada Counties, and with less than a year since she was sworn in, she has already made quite an impression on area residents. Her essential role in that of the justice system is one she takes with great responsibility and humility, and when asked to define that role, she gives a thoughtful response. "Justice isn't about punishment; it's about what's fair and right," Kolby says. "My job is to implement the laws of the state of Arkansas, but at the same time take into account people's situations. I try to work with people while at the same time seeking the justice that I am supposed to seek through the state of Arkansas."

Kolby dedicates time to serving others outside the courtroom, as well, by volunteering time with her sorority Alpha Kappa Alpha. She's dedicated to their initiatives of supporting Black-owned businesses, promoting environmental endeavors like planting trees and recycling, and aiding children all around the world by sending clothing, shoes, and glasses. She also volunteers time at Give Me a Chance Equine Rescue Ranch, joining in the mission to rehabilitate the injured, neglected, or starved horses, mules, and donkeys of southwest Arkansas. When asked what inspires her commitment to public service, both in and out of the courtroom, her answers revolve around faith and family. "I come from a very large family with a lot of personalities, and they taught me a great deal about acceptance and taking people as they are," she says. "A family is a community. So if you are really truly a part of a family unit, no matter how wide it is, then I think you can be a productive citizen."

LINSEY KIRKPATRICK

Linsey Kirkpatrick has just been named president of the Junior Auxiliary of Hope, having volunteered with the group since moving to Hope in 2011. "Initially I thought, 'I'll get in here, and meet some ladies, make some friends and get to experience Hope and what it's all about,'" she said. But with many year's experience, she now leads the organization.

In that time she has also built a career, earning an Associates in Accounting at University of Arkansas Hope-Texarkana, then a Bachelor's of Business with a concentration in Finance at Texas A&M Texarkana and going from receptionist at Tyson to accountant for a subsidiary of the company River Valley Ingredients. She has done all this while also raising a son. But she is clear that others can follow in her footsteps. "I don't want anyone to feel like they can't do it. You can have a kid, you can have extracurriculars, you can have a full plate, but you can still persevere," Kirkpatrick said.

Asked what has been her favorite Junior Auxiliary project, Kirkpatrick said, "This year we did one that was called Operation Holiday Cheer. We got to go and shop Thanksgiving and Christmas meals. And then, for Christmas, we got to shop for Christmas presents for those same six families too. So that was good, and we gave a little bit back to the parents as well."

Kirkpatrick said she is motivated by the way Junior Auxiliary sets its sights on lifting children up and, as president, hopes to bring more awareness to high school students so they will apply for scholarships to college.

Her personality has suited her to volunteerism and she hopes to have passed that trait down to her son, "I want to make an impact, and I want my life to mean something. I want for my son to look at me and say, 'My mom did that,' and I want him to continue that and make a difference any way he can," she said.



ANGELICA MANZANARES

Angelica Manzanares is a woman who can do it all. This up-and-coming young leader works at the Hope Hempstead County Chamber of Commerce, has her own boutique, ESA Beauty, is a member of Junior Auxiliary (JA) of Hope, and homeschools her three children, two of which are autistic. One might ask how she has time to devote attention to this many tasks, but her answer is simple. "You make time," she says. "Everyone has busy lives, jobs, and families to tend to, but you have to make the time to do the things that are important to you, and it's important to me to give back in any way that I can."

Angelica has lived up to this tenet with her many community activities. Even before she became the Administrative Assistant/Membership Manager at the chamber, she was a Chamber Ambassador, assisting with events like the Watermelon Festival and the annual chamber banquet. With JA, she has participated in the Senioritas & Margaritas

Fundraiser, JA Easter Egg Hunt, and Sparks Fly in July. Everything Angelica works on or participates in centers around family. Even her entrepreneurial endeavors with her boutique, ESA Beauty, is marketed for women and children. When asked what inspires her tireless efforts to serve others, Angelica says, "My dad. Growing up, I watched him do so much to help other people. I want to be that way." She also says her children, Esperanza, Aaliyah, and Mariana, motivate her to be active in raising awareness and promoting inclusivity for children with special needs in the community. "With my two youngest being autistic, it's important to find family-friendly events that will include all three of them and have activities they all will enjoy," Angelica says. "Also, it's important to invest in the community in which we live. If we want a great community for all of our children, then we need to put our resources to work here in Hope and Hempstead County."




TERRY POWELL'S GROCERY



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Congratulations Kelly Bass!



COURTNEY MCNIEL

Courtney McNiell, born and raised in Hope, grew up with the habit of reading. She especially remembers the Goosebumps series of books by R.L. Stine that numbers in the hundreds of titles including How I Got My Shrunken Head and Egg Monsters from Mars. Then the Nancy Drew mysteries beckoned. Later on, as a player of softball and basketball, McNiell took up Tennessee women's basketball coach Pat Summit biographies. "I always had a book in my hand," McNiell said.

Having been hired to work in the Hempstead County Library after graduating from Southern Arkansas University with a finance degree and then earning a Masters of Business Administration, McNiell soon realized she needed a third degree. A Masters of Library Science was a requirement for being director of the library and for the library keeping its state funding.

So she enrolled in a Florida State masters program that could be

done from home. But it didn't take her long.

"I did it in a year and a half," she said. "I enjoyed it." McNiell and her staff now stay on top of the in-house work like building the library's shelved and digital collections and helping patrons. They also organize programs, including a summer reading program for kids. But they also fan out into the community, teaching at University of Arkansas-Hope Texarkana's Kids' College and speaking at civic club meetings.

Asked what keeps her going in a demanding position, McNiell said, "I tend to favor the kids in in this job, helping them to want to read and become educated and go far and, and then maybe, in turn, come back here and serve the people here. But the main thing is building relationships and getting people to keep coming back."

Certainly, if the library's 45,000 items don't compel you to keep coming back, it's staff will.

Congrats!

20 Under 50 Recipients in Hempstead County



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DANIEL OLLER

Daniel Oller has been serving the communities of Hope and Hempstead County for 19 years, all the while exemplifying the HPD motto "Helping People; Discovering truth." One glance at the long list of roles, investigations, projects, and community collaborations in which he has taken part provides a clear picture of Daniel's diligence to public service. Currently, he serves as HPD Patrol/Narcotics Sergeant, HPD Sniper, Special Response Team member, Narcotics Investigator with 8th North Task Force, and Federal TFO for Homeland Security ICE Division, just to name a few. As the most decorated officer at Hope Police Department, he's received numerous accolades over the years, including that of the prestigious Arkansas Association Chiefs of Police Officer of the Year Award and Citation from the 88th General Assembly of the Arkansas House of Representatives. Daniel says he has always known law enforcement was his calling. "I never wanted to be anything else," he says. "Even when I was very young, I was fascinated with police work; I was drawn to it. I have always known it

was what I was meant to do."

His selfless dedication to helping others doesn't end when his shift is over, though; even when he is off duty Daniel has been known to assist other members of the community when they are in need. Whether it's helping a citizen move, providing Christmas for families, or assisting someone financially, Daniel is usually the first in line to spend his own time, energy, and funds to lend a helping hand. Moreover, these acts are carried out with great humility and Daniel shies away from recognition. He says the lessons learned from his family, his wife, his kids, and especially his parents and grandparents, are what guides and motivates him. "I've always had 'do the right thing' as an example," he says. "They taught me that caring about someone else is way more important than anything else you will ever do in your life. If more people could live by that or just put themselves in someone else's shoes to see things from another point of view, it would be better for our community and this whole world."



COLBY POWELL

Colby Powell remembers practically growing up in Terry Powell's store. "We were up here quite a bit," he said. "This was my babysitter for a while, and my sister's. And if we didn't have somebody take care of us, we'd be up here with dad, running around here like crazy. Playing with all the toys, messing with all the customers."

After he graduated at UCA, when his father considered selling the store and retiring, Colby began to realize what that might mean: "I started thinking. Man, that would really sting for him to sell to somebody else before I got a chance."

Colby said his father gave him a good price to buy the business in 2014. Terry still works there now, earning a wage and contributing his wisdom. When Colby came back down to Hope from Conway, he brought his soon-to-be wife Anna, who lent some wisdom of her own. "When she got in my ear, and started talking to me about it, and how we could do this, and

that, it changed my way of thinking."

Still, Colby has kept so much of what makes Terry Powell's Grocery and Station so original, including the world famous cracklins, pieces of sliced pork belly fried in a special batter that is a trade secret. But the store also serves fried fish tacos, fried rib tips and much more. For those who fish, the store has a wide selection of lures and live baits. For those who hunt or who feed livestock, the store sells huge bags of Ultimate Grub.

People often come in to make buys but also chat about community affairs. Colby is involved himself in service for the Kiwanis Club and the Hope-Hempstead County Chamber of Commerce. "We're going to raise our kids in this community," Colby said. "We just go down and hit the road running and do everything we can that is going to be a positive outlook or improvement."



JEFF RUSSELL

When he is on duty, one might occasionally find Jeff Russell at the EMS station near the s-curve in Hope, but most of the time, Jeff will be on a rig somewhere in the community performing a vital service for local residents: saving lives. After 11 years as a paramedic with Pafford Medical Services, Jeff has become a leader in his field. He's not only been present to attend to our local citizens with his calming presence during some of their most traumatic times, but Jeff has also been there to lend a hand to residents of other towns when the Special Response Team responded to major events like hurricanes and tornadoes. He also serves as a preceptor who trains up-and-coming medic students and helps prepare them to enter the field.

For his valiant efforts

and unwavering dedication, he has been a recipient of the Star of Life Award, both in Arkansas and on the national level. Jeff says any success he has is due to his wife, Ginger, and daughters, Chloe and Bianca, all of whom he says, "I couldn't have done this without them." He also credits his partner, Justin, and says skillful teamwork such as theirs is an essential component in this line of work. For Jeff, though, he says the job itself is a reward all on its own, yet he remains humble about his part. "We are there for people during some of the most difficult times of their lives, and I just want to help them in any way I can," he says "What we do, getting them from emergency care to definitive care, is just one part of the bigger picture of getting someone on the path to wellness. We are a link in the chain."

HONORABLE MENTION BREN YOCOM

We at SWARK.Today want to recognize our General Manager Bren Yocom. She received nominations for our 20 under 50 Magazine, but with so many wonderfully committed people in Hope and Hempstead County contributing to the community, the SWARK family wants to leave this illustrious roster open for only you, the citizens. So we'll celebrate our favorite SWARKansan here with an Honorable Mention!

Bren has been with SWARK.Today since 2018, playing an integral role in bringing breaking news and sports coverage to southwest Arkansas. Under her leadership, SWARK.Today has flourished, expanding the lineup of what we offer the community with print and video projects like Reader's Choice Awards, Coffee with the Candidates, I'm a Survivor, 20 under 50 magazine, livestreams of school sports and much much more. The SWARK team also participates in numerous community partnerships like the Watermelon Festival, United Way Gala,

the Chamber Banquet, and the Back-to-School Bash, to name a few. Just last year, SWARK.Today was named Business of the Year by the Hope-Hempstead County Chamber of Commerce, and we feel none of these accomplishments would have been possible without Bren's devotion and commitment to our team!

Bren's service to the community also extends into after-hours volunteer work. She donates her time serving as a member on the Board of Directors for the Hope and Hempstead County Chamber of Commerce, participating as a member of Hope Rotary Club, and volunteering as a coach for little league sports. Bren is truly proud to live and work in this community, and her enthusiasm shows.

The SWARK family wholeheartedly appreciates Bren for all of her hard work and unwavering dedication to our team. Thank you, Bren, and congratulations on your nominations!



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Congratulations
**Jeff
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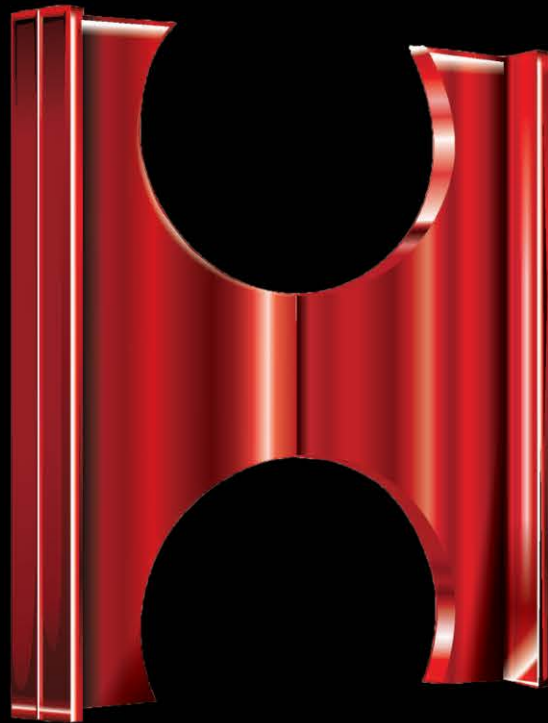
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