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SUNDAY
December 7, 2014

The Sentinel-Record

Four sections,
38 pages
Number 341, Volume 137
$1.25

www.hotspringssr.com

Published daily in Hot Springs National Park, Arkansas, since 1877

Church asks to be removed as polling place

DAVID SHOWERS
The Sentinel-Record

Campaign signs and volunteers that thronged Lake Hamilton Assembly of God Church on Election Day have prompted church officials to withdraw from the county's list of polling sites, the Garland County Election Commission says.

Commission Chairwoman Ginna Watson told fellow commissioners on Friday that Election Day activity blocked the driveway of the pastoral staff worker who resides at the 2251 Airport Road site and glutted his yard with campaign signs.

According to information provided by the Garland County clerk, the more than 5,200 registered voters assigned to the church are the most of any polling place in the county.

"So we've lost that location, which is a location that was very busy," Watson told the commission. "They said they just couldn't tolerate the campaign signs any longer."

Citing similar grievances, Sulphur Springs Baptist Church, located at 4340 Malvern Ave. near the Hot Spring County line, is expected to follow suit, the commission said. The polling site's chief judge told commissioners the church pastor had indicated it too would no longer be available.

The law prevents electioneering within 100 feet of a polling place, but Watson said the commission doesn't have the authority to regulate activity beyond that.

Sulphur Springs has more than 2,100 voters assigned to it. Losing the two churches leaves the county with 22 polling sites. Watson told the commission the imposition placed on polling sites will make it difficult to find replacements. In addition to Election Day, the site has to be accessible to poll workers delivering and removing

ELECTION, PAGE 3A

Fast descent

The Sentinel-Record/Elisha Morrison

Technical Sgt. Robert Ellis from the Arkansas Air National Guard's 188th Wing Detachment 1 in Fort Smith, and Senior Airman Andrew Woodward from the 138th Combat Training Flight in Oklahoma, practice a fast-rope descent from a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter from the 77th Theater Aviation Brigade, Arkansas Army National Guard, on Saturday during a practice and safety zone review to prepare for today's unveiling of the Fallen Hero Memorial near the Garland County Veterans Memorial. The ceremony begins at 2 p.m. today.

Lake Ouachita to host First Day Hikes

BETH BRIGHT
The Sentinel-Record

For those looking to start 2015 off on the right foot, Lake Ouachita State Park on Jan. 1 will host First Day Hikes, an initiative in all 50 states by America's State Parks.

"This is something that the state parks have been doing for about 20 years, but this is our third year to do it," said Susan Adkins, park interpreter. "Last year was a huge success with about 75 people that showed up."

The tradition originated at the Blue Hills Reservation, a state park in Milton, Mass., and was launched to promote a healthy lifestyle throughout the coming year and year-round recreation at the parks. Last year marked the first year that all 50 states participated in the event, and this year will mark a special milestone for Lake Ouachita.

"This year is a little more special for us because, it's the kick off to our 60th anniversary," Adkins said. "So we hope people will come out not only to enjoy a nice day of hiking, but to help us celebrate our birthday."

According to Priscilla Geigis, president of the National Association of State Park Directors, in 2014 the park system hosted almost 28,000 people who hiked 68,811 miles across the country.

FIRST DAY HIKES, PAGE 4A

Ice on Ice

The Sentinel-Record/Mara Kuhn

Trenton Cowling, left, and Allyn Arendt of Lauray's The Diamond Center examine jewels to find a diamond during Ice on Ice on Thursday at the Arlington Resort Hotel & Spa. Guests received a signature drink with their ticket purchase which could possibly have landed them one of four half-carat diamonds.

Oaklawn, HSMS, FLHS recognized for improvements

JAY BELL
The Sentinel-Record

Oaklawn Visual and Performing Arts Magnet School, Hot Springs Middle School and Fountain Lake High School led local schools that were recognized this week for their improvements on Benchmark tests and end-of-course exams.

The results were released on Wednesday in the final report from the "Outstanding Educational Performance Awards: Highlighting High-Achieving Arkansas Schools, 2014." The report revealed the most improved schools in the state based on Benchmark and end-of-course scores from 2009 and 2014.

Oaklawn Magnet was ranked fourth in the state and first in central Arkansas for literacy score improvements on the Benchmark. The school's percentage of students that scored Proficient or Advanced improved from 27 to 63 percent. Oaklawn's grade point average improved from 2.80 to 3.41.

The Office for Education Policy at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville developed a GPA system similar to the one used in schools for student grades. Four

SCHOOLS, PAGE 3A

Farm Bureau finishes up convention

FROM STAFF REPORTS

Arkansas Farm Bureau wrapped up its week-long convention in Hot Springs this week by re-electing board members and recognizing contest winners, including a Hot Springs student.

This year's Sew With Cotton Contest winners, presented during the annual Women's Luncheon and Sew With Cotton Fashion Show, included Ashley Eye, a senior at Lakeside High School. Eye won the Youth Sweepstakes with her entry in the Youth Dress category. She is the daughter of Anna and Brad Eye.

Eye received a Husqvarna serger sewing machine and $400.

In other convention news, Randy Veach was re-elected president, and Rich Hillman as vice president, of Arkansas Farm Bureau on Friday. Delegates also re-elected five board members and two new board members during the final day of the organization's 80th annual convention at the Hot Springs Convention Center, a news release said.

FARM BUREAU, PAGE 3A

Santa train

The Sentinel-Record/Elisha Morrison

Kyndal Wagenhauser, 4, talks to Santa Claus, portrayed by Roger Lambert, while Mrs. Claus, portrayed by Sandra Lambert, looks on during the Santa Train's stop at the Hot Springs Farmers & Artisans Market on Saturday. The Santa Train, sponsored by Arkansas Midland Railroad, was staffed by volunteers from Midland, Teen Challenge and Simmons Bank. The free event included food, prizes, gifts, activities and games, in addition to giving the children the chance to talk to Santa. The train's other stops included the College of the Ouachitas in Malvern, General Cable in Jones Mill and Lake Catherine Footwear.

Pearl Harbor survivors say reunion won't be last

JENNIFER SINCO KELLEHER
The Associated Press

PEARL HARBOR, Hawaii — Four of the remaining nine USS Arizona survivors of the Pearl Harbor attack are vowing this year's anniversary won't be their last reunion.

The men in their 90s gathered for a news conference Tuesday in a building overlooking the memorial that sits on top of the Arizona, a battleship that sank in the Dec. 7, 1941, attack. Even though it's the last official survivor gathering of the USS Arizona Reunion Association, the men said they still plan to get together, even if not in Hawaii.

"I don't think this is going to be our last. ... We've still got time to go," said Louis Conter, 93, of Grass Valley, California. "We'll be back out here no matter whether the rest of the

PEARL HARBOR, PAGE 3A

8 32116 00100 4

Weather

MOSTLY CLOUDY. HIGHS IN THE LOW 50S. LOWS IN THE MID 30S.

SUNRISE: 7:05 A.M.
SUNSET: 5:02 P.M.

MORE ON PAGE 2A

MONDAY:
HIGH 59° LOW 37°

TUESDAY:
HIGH 59° LOW 34°

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