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Boys & Girls Club

'Much more than a baby-sitting service'

STEVEN MROSS
The Sentinel-Record

Some people may think of the Boys & Girls Club of Hot Springs as a "baby-sitting service" or "day care," but its new executive director says "We don't appreciate those terms. We do a lot more than that."

Steven Mills, who took over as the chief executive officer of the club, located at 109 W. Belding St., two months ago said Friday that Boys & Girls Clubs "always change to meet the needs of the community and that's what we're doing."

A native of Branson, Mo., Mills got involved with the Boys & Girls Club there as a volunteer when he was only 17, working as a program assistant, teen director, 'tween director and eventually as director of operations after a few detours along the way, including six years of service in the U.S. Army Reserves, with a one-year tour in Afghanistan in 2010.

He said when he saw they had an opening at the club in Hot Springs he jumped at it, noting, "We had a great leadership team up there, but I felt I was ready to move on to something else."

Mills said Hot Springs appealed to him because "it's such a beautiful area. I'm not much of a city person and you've got a wonderful blend of both here. It's not too industrialized. Everyone talks about Hot Springs."

He said the Hot Springs club "has a rich history" having been established in 1941 making it the third oldest Boys & Girls Club in Arkansas. Coming in, he noted "they were very focused on sports, which is great. But I wanted to also bring in an education aspect."

The club now offers a 10-week educational curriculum to coincide with the youths' regular school day, but stressed the emphasis is on having fun. "I don't want the child to feel like they're sitting in a classroom here."

CLUB, PAGE 3A

The Sentinel-Record/Richard Rasmussen

NEW DIRECTION: Steven Mills, front left, the new executive director of the Boys & Girls Club of Hot Springs, was recently joined at the club at 109 W. Belding St. by just a handful of the many children taking advantage of its programs and fun activities. Mills said he plans to bring in an educational aspect to the club, in addition to sports.

Champion's 'vision' includes accreditation, Division III

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the second of two articles about Champion Christian College's transition from a seminary school to a college with accredited degree programs for local students.

JAY BELL
The Sentinel-Record

Champion Christian College has set lofty goals for the next five years as it shifts into "vision mode" after surviving a strategic transition to become more community oriented.

College President Eric Capaci hopes Champion can reach an enrollment of 300-500 students within five years after the college earns full accreditation. He plans to lead the development and growth of the college in its current location, as well as 10 sports teams that could compete in NCAA Division III.

"I feel like that is very doable, very possible and it has been done before," Capaci said. "That is what we have in mind. That is why we want to stay right here in the heart of Hot Springs and continue to develop community relationships."

Champion, located at 600 Garland Ave. by Gospel Light Baptist Church, was founded as Champion Baptist College in 2005. Enrollment reached 180 as the college

CHAMPION, PAGE 7A

The Sentinel-Record/Caitlin LaFarlette

FAMILY GIFT: Robert Lightfoot received an album of possibly original Bonnie and Clyde photographs from his father, who knew W.D. Jones, the driver for the two criminals.

Historic photographs

Album may contain original Bonnie and Clyde photos

CAITLIN LAFARLETTE
The Sentinel-Record

A local man who received an album of possibly original Bonnie and Clyde photographs from his father, an acquaintance of W.D. Jones, the driver for the two criminals, may put it up for bids and donate the funds to a worthy cause.

Robert Lightfoot moved to Hot Springs three years ago but formerly resided in Texas, where Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow became famous in the 1930s for their string of crimes.

Lightfoot's father, George, was a police officer in Huntsville, Texas. When his father died, all Lightfoot wanted was his badge, gun and the flag from the coffin. Before George Lightfoot died, however, he also passed along a piece of history to his only son.

The album contains possibly original photographs of Bonnie and Clyde that were gathered together by their driver, William Daniel Jones.

PHOTOS, PAGE 6A

The Sentinel-Record/Mara Kuhn

FILLING UP: Rebecca Hiatt, of Camden, left, and Carla Grange, of El Dorado, fill water bottles Saturday at the hot spring near the Hot Springs National Park administration building. Grange said she was helping Hiatt, who makes regular trips to collect the water.

Economic impact study shows tourism continues to grow

BETH BRIGHT
The Sentinel-Record

Hot Springs tourism continues to grow, and the city remains Arkansas' No. 1 leisure-tourism destination, according to a new economic impact study.

The study, completed in July by inVeritas Research and Consulting — a national public affairs firm, specializing in management consulting, strategic communications, advocacy and research — determined that 2.7 million people visited the city in 2014, and spent $686 million.

This spending helped to directly sustain 7,142 jobs in Garland County, according to the study.

"We do this every year as a snapshot of what we're doing and what works," said Steve Arrison, CEO of Visit Hot Springs. "I think it shows our tourism economy is healthy, and that's not just in the city but in Garland County, as well."

According to Arrison, the findings reinforce the fact that Hot Springs is the destination in Arkansas for leisure.

"We aren't the business tourism destinations that Little Rock or Bentonville are," he said. "The only other destination that compares in our state would be Eureka Springs, and this just reinforces everything we already knew."

Arrison noted visitor expenditures have increased 22.5 percent since 2010, and that spending underpins a significant portion of the economy in the city and the county.

Travelers generated more than $14 million in local tax revenue, and those dollars help fund jobs, firefighters, police officers, teachers and infrastructure, he said.

The inVeritas study found that travel expenditures in Garland County increased from $560 million in

TOURISM, PAGE 2A

New Afghan Taliban leader promises to continue insurgency

LYNNE O'DONNELL
AND RAHIM FAIEZ
The Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — Political uncertainty inside the Taliban has cast doubt on the prospects for an end to the war in Afghanistan. On Saturday the Taliban's controversial new leader vowed to continue fighting while urging unity among his followers in a message aimed at preventing a split in the group between those who want peace and those who still believe they can win.

An audio message purportedly from newly elected Taliban leader Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansoor came as cracks in the Taliban's previously united front widened, two days after the group confirmed an Afghan government report that reclusive longtime leader, Mullah Mohammad Omar, had died. The 30-minute speech attributed to Mansoor was emailed to The Associated Press by the Taliban's spokesman. It could not be independently verified.

In it, the man purported to be Mansoor seemed to be carefully parsing his words to calm internal dissent and solidify his political base inside the Taliban, urging his fighters to remain unified and continue the jihad, or holy war, to establish an Islamic state in Afghanistan. He did not endorse or reject

TALIBAN, PAGE 6A

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Weather

MOSTLY SUNNY. HIGHS IN THE MID 90S. LOWS IN THE LOW 70S.

SUNRISE: 6:23 A.M.
SUNSET: 8:14 P.M.

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MONDAY: HIGH 97° LOW 78°

TUESDAY: HIGH 96° LOW 76°

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