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Hermann **Advertiser-Courier**

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Hermann's Kammerchor performed at Stone Hill Winery.



Kids at Pea Ridge Christmas Tree Farm getting new stuffed animal friends.

Winter Field Art Show Opening

BY REBECCA ALDRICH
Advertiser-Courier Correspondent

It was a well attended Winter Eden art show opening at the Gallery on Friday, December 1, 2023. The opening night reception allowed the public to meet the artists and hear the stories behind their pieces, as well as enjoy the many artworks on display. The Gallery is part of the Scenic Regional Library - Hermann Branch, and has developed a reputation for interesting and thoughtful exhibits that draw artists from both the local area and from all around the state for the opportunity to show their work in this unique, beautifully designed space.

Long time local artists Lynnette Watts and Catherine Mahoney, both from Hermann, MO have both had their work accepted into the Gallery's previous exhibits. Watts' piece that she submitted to the Winter Eden exhibit is titled "Lethe," and is a wondrous collage of origami swans, upholstery fabric squares, driftwood, shells, and stones as well as other natural materials. The swans are strewn along the canvas in the pattern of the Missouri River. There are 340 swans, some large, some small, each intricately folded - one for each mile of the river's length from Kansas City, MO to St. Louis, MO. The fabric squares are spread on each side

of the swan-filled river, and represent patterns of harvested fields in winter. Watts was inspired to start the piece after her exhibit of "River" art in the fall of 2022, when she was driving on the highway in Hermann, crossing the Missouri-Joni Mitchell's song River was playing and a crane flew over the bridge of her. Watts worked on the piece incorporating religious themes and are represented in all her work. tiny human figurines incorporate the swans, inspired by the hymn "Gather at the River", and a small Holy Water as well. "I like to put stuff in my art, so that you can look at a long time, always find something new," she said. Watts finished the piece a couple of days before the opening. "I drove over the bridge just the other day, and I saw the bare trees and the brown fields, and I thought, there it is! Just like I envisioned it!" she added.

Award-winning American Impressionist painter Catherine Mahoney was thrilled to be accompanied at the reception by husband Dr. Michael Mahoney, grandson Joe Broecker, and friend Ashley Grosse, celebrating Mahoney's



Barlow Molloy, Lynnette Watts and Lucy English in front of Lethe.

Parker, who is also an illustrator. "The paper is synthetic with a super smooth surface, making it ideal for the alcohol ink," she said. Parker's mother, Renee Wright was overcome with emotion earlier in the week, when she came with Parker to deliver the paintings to the

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Miracle on the Gasconade

Endangered Hellbenders' Holiday Triumph

BY JOHN GRADY
Advertiser-Courier Reporter

As Gasconade County embraces the 2023 holiday season, a natural 'Christmas miracle' unfolds on the Gasconade River. A groundbreaking announcement by the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) on November 28, 2023, has brought festive joy, announcing an eastern hellbender, raised through a collaboration between MDC and the Saint Louis Zoo, was found successful breeding in the wild on the Gasconade River. This discovery is a remarkable gift to the community and marks a critical step forward in the conservation of the endangered Ozark and eastern hellbenders.

Eastern Hellbender: A Missouri Conservation Success

The eastern hellbender, a subspecies found in the northern Ozark highlands' spring-fed rivers, is one of two subspecies of hellbenders native to Missouri - the only place on earth where both are found. Classified as endan-

gered by both the State of Missouri and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the hellbenders have faced numerous threats over the years, including habitat alteration, over-collecting, disease, predation, and degraded water quality. These long-lived, slow-to-mature amphibians are crucial indicators of an ecosystem's health, making their conservation essential.

Historic Discovery on the Gasconade River

According to the MDC press release, the male eastern hellbender in focus was originally collected as an egg from the Gasconade River in 2015, raised at the Saint Louis Zoo, and was one of the hellbenders released back into the river in 2018. In a historic development, this hellbender was found guarding a nest with 86 eggs in September 2023. "Rarely are hellbender nests found on the Gasconade River," noted Jeff



Missouri State Herpetologist Jeff Briggler holds the first zoo-reared eastern hellbender to reproduce in Missouri. Photo courtesy Jeff Briggler from MDC's website

Briggler, Missouri State Herpetologist, emphasizing the rarity and importance of this find. This discovery underscores the river's emerging health and suitability as a habitat for hellbenders. Briggler shared his excitement: "Seeing successful reproduction of zoo-reared

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A German Christmas COOKIE

BY REBECCA ALDRICH
Advertiser-Courier Correspondent

The very special Christmas tradition of Springerle cookies was a treat indeed at the Deutschheim State Historic Site in Hermann this past weekend. Volunteers Linda Walker Stevens and Mary Kunstmann welcomed visitors into the period kitchen at the 1840 Pommer House, which is part of the Deutschheim site, and provided samples of the beautifully ornate anise-flavored cookies for guests to enjoy while they toured the historic home decorated for Christmas in traditional 19th century German style.

The cookies were made by Walker Stevens, who has years of experience baking springerle. "I was taught how to make them 40 years ago by Bertha Bugg, of Hermann. Her parents came to Missouri from southern Germany in the 1850s," Bertha is pictured on the cover of "A Midwest German Christmas" cookbook, written by Erin McCawley Renn, that is for sale in the Deutschheim gift shop. According to Stevens, "Bertha's recipe on page 28 of the book is the best one I've ever used, and it is the easiest. I definitely recommend it!"

Springerle cookies are made with a dough of eggs, flower, powdered sugar, and baking ammonia or baking powder. They are traditionally flavored with anise, but other flavorings can be used instead. The dough is rolled out and then pressed with wooded blocks or molds that have

been carved into patterns of animals, fruits, flowers, hearts, music instruments, and even country scenes. Holiday-themed molds include Christmas trees, nativity scenes, nutcrackers, depictions of St. Nicholas, and many more. After the cookies are pressed and cut out, the dough is allowed to dry for several hours before baking, which preserves the intricate designs. Modern day springerle are sometimes painted with edible food colorings, but the cookies are wonderful and beautiful, even when unadorned. Antique cookie molds are highly sought after, and there are many collections of them in museums throughout the world. According to the online encyclopedia Wikipedia, the molds are "evidence of local cultures, as they include religious, secular, and other symbols, as well as revealing what aesthetics were valued at the time of their carving." The Deutschheim has a variety of springerle molds available for purchase, as well as the flavorings and baker's ammonia that are used to make the holiday cookies. The 'Weihnachtfest' Christmas celebration and springerle experience at the 1840 Pommer House continues for another weekend, on December 9th and 10th, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Admittance is free, although monetary donations are accepted. The Deutschheim State Historic Site is located at 101 W. 2nd Street, Hermann, MO.



Pictured above, Linda Walker Stevens and Mary Kunstmann show antique German baking items. Featured below, Offering a taste of German Christmas treats is Linda Walker Stevens



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library. She and Parker were in a terrible motor vehicle accident when Parker was a toddler. Parker said she experienced going through tunnel toward a light, but just as she was about to cross over, she felt something pull her sharply back. She awoke to see her mother crying desperately over her. "She prayed me back to life," said Parker, and ever since, the two have had a very special bond. "My mother has always encouraged me. She got me into music, dance, theater, and art. It is how I communicate my emotions and feelings." Wright, and Parker's grandmother Juanita Wright were jubilant at the reception on Friday night, celebrating all that Parker has accomplished as a person and as an artist.

Young has been a photographer for ten years. She submitted the picture "Snowy Blue Jay" to the exhibit, of a sole blue jay on a tree branch, amid tiny falling snowflakes. The striking photo almost looks like an oil painting. It was Young's first time to visit The Gallery, "it's interesting and exciting. I'm glad to be here," she said.

The Robert Frost poem "A Winter Eden" is the theme for the current show at the Gallery, which runs from December 1, 2023 to March 22, 2023. The poem describes the "near to paradise" of the snowy season. The exhibit was sponsored by First State Community Bank. Admission to the Gallery is free, and the exhibit is open during library hours, which can be found at the Scenic Regional Library website scenicregional.org.

History and the Science of Climate Change

BY GARY LEABMAN
Advertiser-Courier Contributor

"What's the use of having developed a science well enough to make predictions, if in the end all we're willing to do is stand around and wait for them to come true?"

-Dr Sherwood Rowland, 1986

I am not a scientist, but one of my best friends is. He has been sending climate articles to me since December 2017 when I began to study the issue and became a Climate Reality Leader. In over 6 years I have read dozens of books, hundreds of articles, and made over two dozen presentations to audiences, including libraries, schools, universities, 4H groups, plus religious and civic organizations. So, these articles are intended to share enough information to help modern generations preserve our way of life. Also, to allow future generations to be optimistic that humans can solve the climate problems we've created.

So let's begin today with a brief history lesson for those who might be doubting the science of Climate Change, which was created in only 250 years of burning fossil fuels. Sure, there has been repeated warming and cooling of the planet, including the last Ice Age which lasted over 100,000 years, but the ice retreated about 10,000 years ago. That set the stage for over 5,000 years of favorable climate conditions for agriculture to flourish as never before. Yet the burning of fossil fuels has changed the climate dramatically since the Declaration of Independence in 1776.

The 21st century has already experienced more devastating wildfires and floods, more powerful hurricanes and tornados, more temperature extremes, and more people. We humans have been putting more pressure on all other species. One of many necessary solutions is to move away from burning fossil fuels. Rapid electrification is needed to avert the worst consequence of doing little or nothing. We are not frogs in water coming to a boil. Some of the names listed here were not scientists but are important early contributors to electrification. They include Benjamin Franklin, Luigi Galvani, Alessandro Volta, Michael Faraday, Samuel Morse, Alexander Graham Bell, George Westinghouse, Nikola Tesla, and Thomas Edison. Those names are associated with inventions, modern corporations, plus electrical terms like volts and galvanization.

A name many of us won't recognize is a Swedish scientist, Svante Arrhenius. In 1896, the future Nobel prize winner for Chemistry, published a report linking fossil fuel burning to more carbon dioxide trapping heat in the atmosphere.

In 1938, G. S. Callendar, a steam engineer helping run coal-fired electric plants, published a report that the burning of coal was generating man-made CO₂, thus changing the climate. Coal is still the dirtiest of fossil fuels. Missouri receives 66% of its electricity from coal, the fourth highest of any state.

Next week, we will discuss how the Inflation Reduction Act of August 2022 can provide YOU immediate savings by switching to renewable energy or sequestering carbon dioxide through reforestation or unproductive acreage. If you subscribe to this newspaper you won't miss any of the weekly articles helping people understand climate change and live comfortably during the energy transition happening now.

Miracle

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animals in the wild has been our ultimate goal and our hope is this event becomes more common." Gasconade County, encompassing a significant portion of the Gasconade River, plays a pivotal role in the conservation story of the hellbenders. The river's improved health and the presence of a breeding population of hellbenders reflect positively on the county's environmental stewardship and the effectiveness of ongoing conservation efforts.

Stone Hill Winery: Hermann's Proactive Conservation Efforts

A shining example of local commitment to wildlife conservation, Stone Hill Winery has played a significant role in supporting hellbender preservation efforts. In 2017, the winery launched their Ozark Hellbender wine, aligning with the Saint Louis Zoo's breeding center for these unique salamanders. A portion of each bottle's sale contributes to this vital conservation initiative, marking Stone Hill and its patrons as key contributors to wildlife preservation in Gasconade County and beyond.

In a recent conversation with Nathan Held, Director of Strategy at Stone Hill, the winery's deep connection and commitment to this cause were further illuminated. When asked if he heard about the thrilling news on the Gasconade River—a male hellbender found with eggs. "Yes, actually! I heard about it just a few days ago. Truly incredibly exciting news for the species, and even more exciting as it's in our backyard," Held commented. This discovery, occurring near Hermann, underscores the local impact of Stone Hill's efforts.

Reflecting on the winery's role in these conservation efforts, Held expressed immense pride: "For me, I can't think of any better news at this stage of the conservation efforts. We are incredibly proud to have a very small part in helping protect and reestablish this unique endemic species in our Missouri waterways." Initially aware of the presence of eastern hellbenders in the nearby Gasconade River and their need for increased population support, Stone Hill was motivated to act. The recent progress in the species' recovery near the winery highlights the significance of their involvement.

To date, Stone Hill's Ozark Hellbender wine has raised approximately \$70,000 for hellbender conservation, with plans to continue this support. "We are excited to keep raising money and awareness for the hellbenders and directly supporting the zoo," Held stated.

The Collective Journey to Recovery

The journey toward the recovery of the eastern hellbender, marked by the successful breeding in the Gasconade River, illuminates a path of hope and resilience for this unique species. This milestone is a testament to the collaborative efforts of the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC), the Saint Louis Zoo, and other agencies, who have collectively released over 12,000 Ozark and eastern hellbenders into Missouri rivers since the early 2000s. Justin Elden, Curator of Herpetology and Aquatics at the Saint Louis Zoo, reflects on this achievement, stating, "This conservation effort shows if given support and patience, these animals can take the lead and ensure they're around for generations to come." The success of zoo-reared hellbenders breeding in the wild is a beacon of hope, underscoring the effectiveness of joint conservation endeavors and highlighting the significant role played by communities like Hermann and businesses like Stone Hill Winery.

As the holiday season draws near, Nathan Held of Stone Hill Winery speaks to the special significance of their Ozark Hellbender wine. "The Ozark Hellbender wine is perfect for this holiday season. It's a time of giving, and this wine directly gives back to these unique salamanders who are native to our Missouri streams and can't advocate for themselves." With its distinct cinnamon note, this wine is not just a delightful choice for festive celebrations but also a meaningful gift that contributes to the conservation of the hellbenders. Stone Hill's enterprises can effectively engage in environmental conservation and wildlife preservation. Their efforts not only raise critical funds but also increase awareness, ensuring that the future of the hellbenders and the diverse ecosystems they inhabit remains bright and sustainable. This season, a bottle of Ozark Hellbender wine offers a dual gift—a delightful taste experience and a contribution to a noble cause, embodying the spirit of giving in more ways than one.