



Brodie Johnson • Times-Herald

Express Cleaners in Forrest City officially cut the ribbon for their business this week during a ribbon-cutting ceremony after the business was purchased by Anna and Matt Howton. Employees surround Anna Howton, center, who cuts the ribbon. Matt Howton is pictured at far right.



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The Forrest City Area Chamber of Commerce held a ribbon cutting ceremony for the Mending Hearts Safety Center in Forrest City on Wednesday. Mending Hearts Director Lori Wilson, with scissors, cuts the ribbon for the new business.

Long odds for Powerball jackpot means lots of losing

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Powerball will match a record for lottery drawings Saturday night with a stretch of more than three months without a jackpot winner.

It's that string of futility that has enabled Powerball's top prize to reach \$1.23 billion, the eighth largest in U.S. lottery history. And it's a sign that the game is operating exactly as designed, with long odds creating a massive jackpot that entices people to drop \$2 on a ticket.

It means no one should ever expect to match all six numbers and hit it rich, though it's likely someone eventually will.

ABOUT THOSE ODDS

The last time someone won the Powerball jackpot was on New Year's Day, when a player in Michigan hit an \$842.4 million jackpot.

Since then, there have been 40 consecutive drawings without a jackpot winner. The 41st on Saturday night will match the record for most drawings, set twice before in 2022 and 2021.

The winless streak isn't a fluke. Lottery officials set the odds at 1 in 292.2 million in hopes that jackpots will roll over with each of the three weekly drawings until the top prize becomes so enormous that more people take notice and play.

The odds used to be

significantly better, at 1 in 175 million, but were made tougher in 2015 to create the humongous jackpots. Lottery officials at that time also made it easier to win smaller prizes, and they note that the overall odds of winning something are about 1 in 25.

MORE ABOUT THOSE ODDS

It's hard to envision what odds of 1 in 292.2 million mean.

One way is to think of the roughly 322 million people who live in spots where they can buy Powerball tickets — five states don't participate. If each person bought one ticket, you would expect one person to win and hundreds of millions of people to lose.

PRISON

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firearm under the center console of the vehicle. Parker admitted he was in possession of the firearm and knew that felony charges were pending against him at the time he received this firearm. An investigation revealed that the firearm was stolen out of Denton, Texas, in 2017.

"Today, the man who an Arkansas jury found guilty for the April 28, 2018, murder of Forrest City Police Officer Oliver Johnson, but whose conviction for that murder was later dismissed on procedural grounds, has now been held accountable and punished for the subsequent offense of receiving a firearm while knowingly facing a pending charge of murder," said Ross. "Mr. Parker has an extremely violent criminal past, and his behavior reflects no respect for the law. Importantly, due to the work by prosecutors in our office and the ATF Memphis Field Office, Mr.

Parker has been in continuous custody since before the mandate was issued to release Mr. Parker on May 4, 2023, by the Arkansas Supreme Court.

"Although today's conviction was for a completely separate offense that happened 19 months after Officer Johnson's murder, as soon as our office learned on March 16, 2023, that the Arkansas Supreme Court had announced its decision to dismiss the murder conviction, in order to protect the public from Mr. Parker for as long as possible, we resolved to bring any appropriate federal charges before the Arkansas Supreme Court's final mandate would take effect," Ross continued.

"We did this by securing an indictment from a federal grand jury on April 5, 2023, against Mr. Parker for his receipt of a firearm while under a felony information. This case highlights the importance of working with our state and local partners to focus

on prosecuting the most dangerous and violent offenders when no other options are available to the State of Arkansas. In an act of blatant disregard for human life, this defendant brutally murdered a Forrest City police officer in front of the officer's family. Today's sentence solidifies an intolerance to this senseless act of murder and the protection of the community from villains such as this defendant.

"Today's sentencing means Demarcus Parker will not pose a risk to anyone else in the community," said ATF Nashville Special Agent in Charge Marcus Watson. "Protecting the lives of our law enforcement partners, like Officer Oliver Johnson, and the safety of our communities is one of the cornerstones of what our agency seeks to accomplish every day. This sentence highlights ATF's commitment to protecting the public through vigorous enforcement of the federal firearms laws by identifying, arresting and presenting for prosecution the perpetrators responsible for violent crimes committed in our communities."

The investigation was conducted by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, with the assistance of the Prosecuting Attorney's Office for the Second Judicial District. The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Julie Peters.



Librarian's Log by Arlisa Harris, Librarian Forrest City Public Library



Our locals are well traveled and have left their footprints far and wide as evidenced by some of the comments I have received at the library over the years. During their meanderings, they have encountered and experienced library services in other cities and it has colored their expectations of what they expect from our local library.

One of the common themes is, "when I was in Chicago my library had daily children's programming — why don't you all do something like that here?" or "the Fayetteville library has quiet spaces with computers for students to study and so on. These comments, while well meaning, don't take into consideration the cold hard realities of the funding environment in which small rural public libraries like the Forrest City Public Library exist.

If you all recall, during the last City of Forrest City bond initiative that was passed, the library aggressively advocated for being put on the ballot for \$3.5 million in bond money and we "suggested" that some other bond issues be scaled back because this was the amount needed just to bring the library up to just the basic standards of services to the community offered by surrounding libraries in Wynne, Helena and West Memphis. Two of the three forementioned cities have built new libraries and the other has done extensive remodeling.

We listed a host of community services and improvements to our library space that would have been of great service to our residents. But, at the time, we were only able to garner support to be put on the ballot for only half a million dollars. We were disappointed but undaunted and we felt validated at the ballot box when the library bond request got more votes from you the voters than any other city department and bond requests, including the \$4.5-million expansion of Deaderick Road and the \$1 million artificial turf at the sports complex.

Based on the outcome of the bond issue votes we know that if

the community had the chance, it would have approved our modest request for \$3.5 million. Thanks for the support, we love you back!

In 1993, Forrest City residents went to the ballot box and voted that the Forrest City Library become a public library and consequently, a millage rate was established and collected each year into the library fund.

That millage rate has never been raised, due in part to the library being "discouraged" over the years from asserting its right to go before the voters and ask for a millage increase. Before anybody questions whether we need a millage increase, ask yourself, "can I have the same standard of living today on what I was making 31 years ago?" Me neither. Yet, that is what we have done at the library.

On Tuesday, March 26, every nook and cranny in the library was full. Go to our Facebook page post from that day and you will see that: our VITA volunteer was there preparing tax returns; staff was providing notary services; Mayor Lincoln Barnett was having a meeting; Legal Aid of Arkansas was there providing free legal services; and patrons were using our computer, copying and faxing services. We be busy! But with more money we could do so much more for you.

So, why aren't we doing more for the kids, you ask? Space! The library has 4,200 square feet, with 1,800 of it in the basement and not public space. We have roughly 2,400 square feet to do all that we do and try to accommodate daily requests for an area to study or meeting space. It is not just an issue of space, but also having adequate funding.

And with more space and funding, we could provide:

Early Childhood Development: With more money, we could expand our program offerings and attract more young parents with children to the library and help prepare them for school.

Education Support: We would be able to offer educational resources and support for students of all ages. This includes

homework help, tutoring programs, literacy initiatives and access to educational technology. Libraries with dedicated teen spaces have proven to be an enticement for teens to want to hang out more at libraries.

Community Gathering Place: Our library would be able to serve as a community hub where people can come together for events, meetings, workshops and classes.

Cultural Enrichment: We could better promote cultural enrichment by offering more access to literature, art, music and films. We could host art exhibits and film screenings that could enrich the cultural fabric of our community.

Digital Literacy: We would offer more enhanced computer and internet access, technology training classes and assistance with using digital resources, helping bridge the digital divide in rural areas.

Support for Seniors: Libraries can provide valuable resources and programs for seniors, including book delivery services for those who are homebound, technology assistance and social activities tailored to older adults.

With better funding, we would do all these things and more. It's time for a millage increase to be put on the ballot and approved by you, the voters, and we will put that money into enhanced community services for the betterment of our whole community.

So instead of me wishing you a Happy National "fill in the blank" Day, I preemptively wish the library board and staff a happy National Library Week, April 7 through 13. While we gear up for the solar eclipse on April 8, we also celebrate the Right to Read Day (April 8) and National Library Workers Day (April 9).

You are always welcome at the library but next week, we invite the community to stop by and see all that the library has to offer! We are not your grandmother's library. Or your grandfather's.

Until next time, enjoy the solar eclipse and happy reading!

Application process open for Summer@ASMSA camps

The Arkansas School for Mathematics, Sciences and the Arts is accepting applications for Summer@ASMSA camps.

Summer@ASMSA are free, one-week summer camps for current eighth and ninth grade students in all Arkansas schools as well as seventh graders participating in ASMSA-TIP.

The camps will be held on ASMSA's campus in Hot Springs on Sunday, June 9, through Friday, June 14. The application deadline is Wednesday, May 1.

Students may apply to participate in one of five different camps that will provide a fun and challenging atmosphere, according to a press release.

The camps include:

- **Environmental Science and Biotechnology (Sponsored by AEGIS):** Campers will participate in hands-on, in-lab biological experiments like DNA barcoding and making glowing bacteria as well as environmental field activities such as stream water quality analysis and a visit to a quartz mine in the Ouachita Mountains.

- **Engineering Camp:** Participants will learn all types of engineering, from nuclear to electrical, at this hands-on camp. Campers will learn how to solder, use engineering design methods and more.

- **Anime! Origami! Hiragana!** Japanese Language and Culture Camp (Sponsored by AEGIS): Participants will learn the basics of Japanese language and culture including how to introduce

themselves, make Japanese food, count yen and more while exploring some of the cultural norms and unique aspects of Japanese society.

- **Studio Art Camp:** Campers will engage in different artistic process including observational drawing, collage, painting, ceramics and more.

- **Ignite Camp:** Campers will discover a little bit of everything ASMSA has to offer through hands-on activities in multiple content areas while meeting a variety of ASMSA faculty and

staff.

All camp activities — including tuition, housing, meals and class supplies — are free for participants. Housing and meals will be provided in ASMSA's Student Center, where nightly fun activities will be planned by members of the school's residential life staff.

To apply for Summer@ASMSA, visit <https://asmsa.me/summeratasm> or call 501-622-5116.

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