

LADIES' JOURNAL

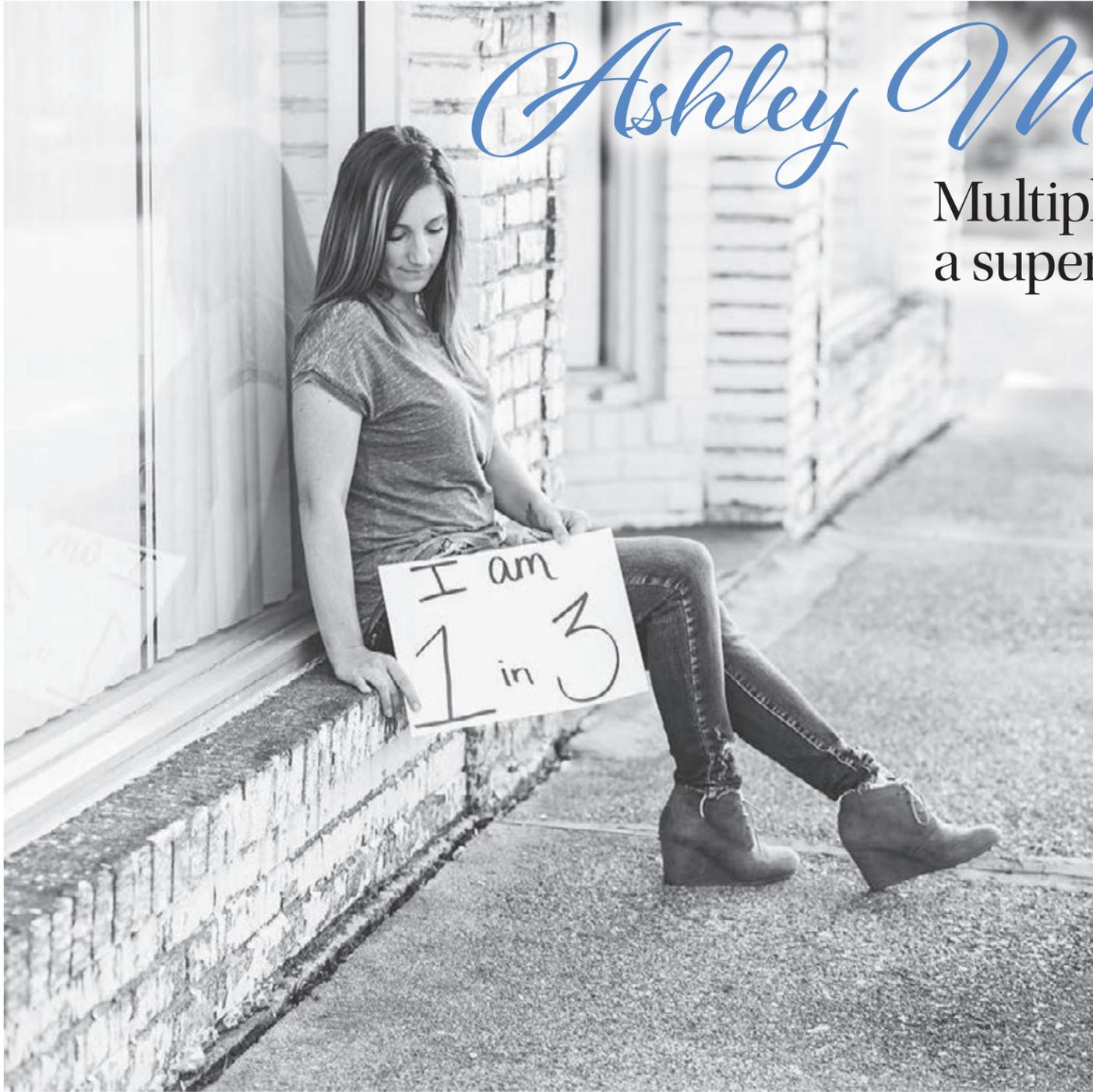
A SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT TO THE

BUFFALO REFLEX
& DALLAS CO. REPUBLICAN
EST. 1869



NOVEMBER 9, 2022

© 2022 PHILLIPS MEDIA, LLC



Ashley McCowan:

Multiple jobs make her a superhero for many

**Domestic Abuse
HOTLINE
417-313-4148**

The McCowan family keeps very busy with the children's sports and activities, including band, baseball, volleyball, softball, cheerleading and softball. The family runs all the time and some weeks are going to a sporting event every day. Yet, she still makes time to be a board member of the Buffalo Baseball Club.

McCowan taught herself photography and has taken family photos, infant, pregnancy, engagement, senior and statement photos. She started taking the statement photos once she left her abuser. Some of these art photos went viral, with over 8 million viewings. Several photos are included with this profile story.

McCowan is well known in the region for being a domestic violence advocate. She founded The First Step Victim Services of Dallas County to serve victims of domestic violence. She works with law enforcement and individuals to seek help for women and men who are abused by a spouse or significant other. The hotline number is 417-313-4148, and everyone is encouraged to keep this number in case someone needs help. In addition, victims are encouraged to reach out for help.

There is an emergency shelter in Dallas County now. Plus, there is a support group for victims. Call the hotline at 417-313-4148 for information about either. Meeting times and locations are not published to keep victims safe from their abusers. Also, victims may reach the program leaders by email at tfsdallasco@gmail.com.

McCowan can always use volunteers to help with the victims' organization. She needs volunteers to manage the hotline, pick people up and take victims to where they need to go in the middle of the night and during the day. In addition, she needs help finding emergency and immedi-

Ashley McCowan is a professional photographer. She started taking statement photos once she left her abuser. Some of these art photos went viral, with over 8 million viewings. PHOTOS BY AMP PHOTOGRAPHY

By Joy Beamer
joyb@buffaloreflex.com

For many reasons, Ashley McCowan had multiple nominations to be featured in the 2022 Ladies Journal. The first reason is being a mother to six children from 7 to 17 in a blended family with her husband, Bradley McCowan. She said that she felt she was never wife material. Nonetheless, here she is with six children, undoubtedly keeping her busy doing tons of laundry, bags and bags of groceries, housework and meals every day for eight people. Plus, they are in the middle of building a larger home to accommodate the family. The nominations describe McCowan as a great mother

and a devoted wife. This girl has many more things going on from day to day. Listed below are her other jobs:

- Paraprofessional at Buffalo Prairie Middle School.
- Cheerleading coach for high school with two squads: varsity and junior varsity.
- Pep club sponsor.
- Board member for the Buffalo Baseball Club.
- Professional photography business.
- Domestic violence advocate.

Through these paid and volunteer jobs, McCowan helps turn lives around through many avenues. McCowan has worked as a paraprofessional since 2014. She grows close to the students she helps each

day. She's trying to create positive relationships throughout the middle school, even if it is just in the hallway or playing with them in PE. She said, "Some kids don't have positive adult interactions. So my kid's friends are like a second set of friends for me." She is a natural cheer coach, having participated in cheerleading when she was going to school. She is coaching what she described as 21 spicy girls and one male. She loves to help these teens get through the hard years of being a teenager. She wants to be the person she needed when she was that age. So often, she hears things that she rather not have heard, but she is a support system for them and helps them smile through difficult times.

Primary Medical and Behavioral Health Care for All Ages

406 S Dallas St, Urbana, MO

OZARKS COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER ozarkschc.com

Medical 417-993-1002 | Fax 417-993-1006

JESSICA NYBERG & ASSOCIATES LLC

Caitlyn Smith, Marketing Specialist

Jessica Nyberg, American Family Agent

Shelby Brewer, Loyalty Specialist

South Side of the Square
Buffalo, MO 65622
Bus: (417) 345-6129
jnyberg@amfam.com

AMERICAN FAMILY INSURANCE
AUTO • HOME • BUSINESS • LIFE • FARM

American Family Mutual Insurance Company, S.I. & its Operating Companies, American Family Life Insurance Company, 6000 American Parkway, Madison WI 53783 CA-4117 11/20



ate housing, finding long-term housing and meeting victims to help them fill out ex partes. Volunteers might take victims to doctor appointments, accompany them to court appearances, stay at court, go grocery shopping if needed and run the support group.

One of the board members had this to say about McCowan, "Ashley McCowan is one of the most dedicated public servants I have had the pleasure of working with. She has tirelessly dedicated her life to advocating on behalf of domestic violence victims. Her leadership and organizational efforts have been invaluable to our community. Without her guidance, effort and insight, there would be no outreach or services available to domestic violence victims in Dallas County. In founding and leading The First Step, she has been the driving force in providing much-needed victim services to our citizens and has made our county a much better place. I am very grateful for her leadership and dedication."

"Ms. McCowan has worked without fatigue in helping women in dangerous and often violent situations. She has also labored intently to educate young women on the warning signs of domestic violence and the dynamics surrounding violent relationships. McCowan is a warrior. She has sacrificed limitless time and resources of her own to lead the stand against domestic violence," said Jonathan D. Barker, Dallas County prosecuting attorney.

He continued regarding the board, "I am lucky to be a part of this. Ms. McCowan has surrounded herself

with people who are passionate about providing these sorts of services to domestic violence victims. The board members have worked very hard and have been very effective at marshaling local resources to aid these victims."

The First Step Victim Services takes many hours of volunteer time. She holds the hotline and always answers the phone to answer questions or seek additional help. The group struggles to find a place to put their victims in a crisis and long-term housing. When the hotel is full, the victim is taken to another town. Some are helped by getting them back to family out of state. The experiences with victims are humbling.

They have helped women and their children get birth certificates, find a rental house and provide a month's rent and deposit. Safety planning with victims is a goal for each woman or man to help them be safe and find a way out of their crisis.

Reports of abuse usually worsen during holidays. Everyone is pretending around the family that everything is good. Then, the abuser will explode once they get behind closed doors again. Abusers want to ruin holidays for the victim to control them. Abusers are natural narcissists wanting undivided attention.

McCowan was convinced she wasn't worthy due to her abuser's manipulation and control over her. He had her believing that staying was better for the children. She lived in that relationship for eight years and felt selfish that she was leaving. A lot of other women are in the same boat.

Today, she knows she is worth something to the victims of Dallas County and her family, plus the victims' families she helps. Some victims are coming back and joining her to fight for more victims.

Recently one of the victims died, and the death shook her to the core. McCowan wanted to give up on the project and quit but realized "the show must go on." McCowan knows the show of abuse will continue and the victims have a better chance of survival with her than without her.

The service averages about 125 victims yearly, including hotline calls, police station visits, safety planning and domestic violence advice. The group has partnered with Burrell Health, Buffalo Police Department, Dallas County Sheriff's

Office and the DIVAS. Recently the group picked up service to Hickory County when that victims' group folded.

With McCowan's activities, her favorite group all lives under the same roof — her family. She describes Bradley as a great husband and organizer; he is supportive and patient, helping whenever possible. He is still there after 10 years together. The family is fun, according to McCowan, and gives her a full and complete life.

She said, "Life is big!"

As a teen, she didn't want kids. After Cole (the oldest), she wanted him to have siblings, so he would always have someone and never to be alone.

Eight people in a family definitely means never being alone.





Empowered Female Leaders
OF DALLAS COUNTY

<p>Buffalo HWY 65 1108 S. Ash Street Buffalo, MO. 65622</p>	<p>Buffalo Downtown 101 N. Maple Buffalo, MO. 65622</p>	<p>Urbana 109 N. Main Urbana, MO. 65767</p>
--	--	--

www.OakStarBank.com





ASHLEY LEWIS:

math curriculum specialist

Ashley Lewis sits at her desk in the new Dallas County Technical Center, contemplating the future of math at Dallas County R-1 Schools. REFLEX PHOTOS BY JOY BEAMER

By Joy Beamer
joyb@buffaloreflex.com

Ashley Lewis is a veteran math teacher serving students for 11 years. She is currently the math curriculum specialist with a master's in mathematics. In addition, she is teaching dual-credit math. Her classroom is in the new Dallas County Technical Center. In addition, she helps DCTC instructors with embedded math planning and curriculum.

She works with teacher Jennifer McCorkill in planning math goals for the district. First, they purchased a new kindergarten through eighth-grade curriculum. Now, they are working through implementation and transitioning to the classroom.

Buck Shockley, assistant superintendent and her direct supervisor, said, "Ashley is a kindhearted woman

who strives to become a better person each day. She is the type of person you would want your daughters to turn out to be just like. She is a remarkable asset to the district and sets the bar high when it comes to kindness, compassion for students, and dedication to her career."

Lewis was nominated to be featured in this special publication of the Buffalo Reflex for the exact description that Shockley quoted. Mothers and graduates explained that Lewis had positively influenced their children with kindness and compassion, making lifelong relationships with those who passed through her class.

Lewis said that building relationships is her favorite thing about teaching. She doesn't have as many face-to-face students in her new role in the district. Now Lewis works behind the scenes, planning the math path for all grade levels. As a result, she can evaluate

which practices are working and what is not. Lewis continues to build relationships with those she works with and teaches them to develop lifelong relationships. Whether they are putting up hay together or at community events, she now sees her students having families and careers and enjoying the relationship she built while they were in her class.

For example, she built relationships with the Jeff Strickland family. Recently, she bought earrings from one daughter, had lunch with the girls and got to know the parents better through Buffalo Rotary.

"I am good at developing relationships with kids," Lewis said. "Math is not everyone's favorite subject, and I try to make math fun and laid-back. Developing good relationships can make the math concepts more receptive, and I can do more in the classroom."

Lewis said she believes if a teacher has low expectations in the classroom, the student will also have low expectations. Therefore, she tries to be an encourager and stay positive. In Lewis's classroom, she tries to have fun and keep it all lighthearted even though teaching is a serious subject. She teaches the students that even though math might not be their favorite subject, they accept that fact and continue to give it their all.

Math is Lewis's primary focus, and helping students succeed is the goal. Unfortunately, the pandemic affected math learning and has left schools with three years to catch up. Every grade is trying to catch up and at the same time, learn new material. The students are not on the same level of understanding math within their grade level. Students are not experiencing retention, and teachers must repeatedly go over the same things. The teachers are working

Is there a Shelter agent working for you?

Set an appointment and arrange for a free insurance review today.

Strickland Insurance Agency, LLC
Tracy Strickland
Woods Shopping Center, Buffalo, MO
417-345-2608

We're your Shield. We're your Shelter.

MEDICARE Annual Enrollment Period Oct. 15th thru Dec. 7th

Leslie Haney
Licensed Insurance Agent
417-733-5384

Angelia Owens
Licensed Insurance Agent
417-733-1247

Sherry Bennett
Licensed Insurance Agent
417-733-7121

Do You Know What Your Plan Covers???

Most Medicare Plans change from year to year. Please give one of us a call to make sure your plan still meets your needs.

Central States Insurance Specialists

Find us on the Southeast corner of the Buffalo Square under the RED Awning!

MEDICARE HEALTH • LIFE • LONG TERM CARE

"We do not offer every plan available in your area. Any information we provide is limited to those plans we do offer in your area. Please contact Medicare.gov or 1-800-MEDICARE to get information on all of your options."

By responding to this ad you will be contacted by a licensed sales agent.

on vertical learning. For example, a fifth-grader is not retaining what they should have retained from fourth grade but can't remember. Retention will be an ongoing problem until the teachers find ways to reach students to start retaining the math processes.

Last year, Lewis stepped back and evaluated her life, concluding she was overdoing it. She wanted to spend more time with her child and slow things down. She prayed for what God wanted her to do and then resigned with no job to go to. She trusted God would have an answer.

Then, Dr. Tim Ryan, Dallas County R-1 superintendent, came up with a new position for her. She has a master's degree, and the math curriculum specialist job seemed to fit like a glove. He even offered her four days a week so she could spend more mommy time with her little girl.

Ryan explained his thoughts about her, "Ashley is by far one of the most talented and caring teachers I have ever witnessed. As our only teacher with a master's degree in mathematics, she was the obvious choice to fill our districtwide mathematics resource position. We are very pleased to have her in this role and anticipate our students will benefit from her unique skill set."

Lewis said she felt the school district values her work ethic, teaching methods and management skills. She accepted the position and felt it was a "God thing." Currently, she works with Ozarks Technical Community College on the Lebanon campus, too. She returned to sponsor Interact for Buffalo High School students with a co-sponsor, Emily Richardson, a former Interact student.

The Interact students are a cut above the others, she reflected. The Interact club members do extra and do not expect anything in return, and all of them are involved in other activities. They spend their spare time and energy helping the community, and Lewis enjoys doing all those things alongside the students.

Lewis said that the Interact board members are amazing; with every advancing year, the students get better. The entire club is ready to get in there and work. That work ethic makes Buffalo Rotary a great companion because the Interact group sees adults active in their community. The group helps with the Rotary's pulled pork dinners on Election Day, concessions at ball games and Mary's Meals 5K. This year they had 45 participants to serve 18 children for a year. The group also looks forward to helping and playing with special education students who are not integrated into the regular classroom. Interact members play games and make crafts with the disabled students.

Jordon Lewis is her husband, with a daughter, Audrey, who is 4 years old. Joe and Julie King, Elkland, are her parents. Family is most important to Lewis.

Lewis didn't grow up attending church weekly. She was raised Jewish because her father is a Jew and her mother is a Christian. However, she met Jordon in junior high and started dating. Jordon was the person who led her to Christ. Later, the couple was married. Today, she describes their household as having strong faith and attending church at Marshfield First Baptist. The couple resides in the Elkland area near her parents.

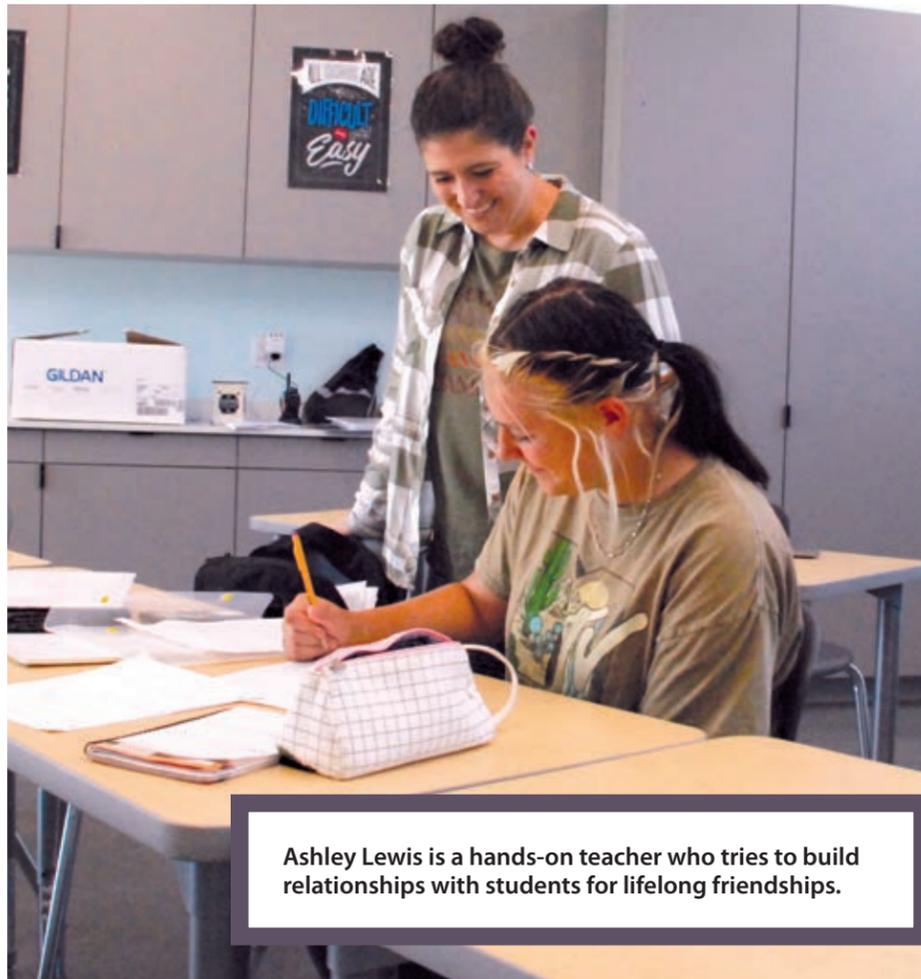
As a kid, Lewis didn't want to go to college. Earning a master's degree was not in the plan, nor working in Buffalo or living in Elkland. Then, she saw the importance of education as her sister became an emergency medicine doctor

with the Air Force in San Antonio. She went on to get a teaching degree and master's degree from Missouri State University in Springfield. Living in Elkland and family became very important because she didn't want to miss out on living away from her home.

She started working in the second semester in January, after graduating from MSU, in the Lebanon school district and is thankful for that experience. However, she found out that Debby Dryer was the principal at Buffalo High School and told Dryer she wanted to come home and teach the Bison.

It's hard to believe that Lewis does not consider herself outgoing and shy. She loves spending time at home and doesn't get out much to community events. Family, church and school is the circle Lewis travels each week. However, she loves working with the Interact club, which gives her hope for the future with upcoming business leaders leading local businesses and using their time, money and resources for the community. Training and spending time with the Interact students makes her feel good because she loves seeing people helping others.

To contact Lewis, call 417-345-2222 and follow the school's menu prompts.



Ashley Lewis is a hands-on teacher who tries to build relationships with students for lifelong friendships.



Experts in caring for women.

The CMH Breast Care Center is dedicated to detecting breast disease at its earliest stage to give patients their best opportunity for a complete recovery. We offer some of the latest technology in a warm and comfortable environment with friendly and compassionate health professionals.

What makes us so special? If you are diagnosed with cancer, the sooner you begin treatment, the better. The CMH team works closely with the specialists you need so that in most cases, you can begin treatment within 14 days. **Mammograms can help find breast cancer early. Is it time to schedule your next screening? Give us a call today at 417-328-6261.**



EXPERT IN BREAST CARE

Radiologist Jana Horner, M.D., is the Medical Director of the CMH Breast Care Center, located in the Kerry and Synda Douglas Medical Center. She is board certified and completed a residency at the Cleveland Clinic and is fellowship trained at the renowned MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, Texas.

CMH Breast Care Center
417-328-7860 | citizensmemorial.com





Traci McGregor

Third-grade tackle football

WOULD YOU ANSWER THE PHONE CALL?

By Joy Beamer
joyb@buffaloreflex.com

Traci McGregor was on vacation starting to relax and chill out for a well-deserved break. She went ahead, answered the call, even though vacation dreams were floating around her head.

The caller asked her if she would want and be willing to volunteer to lead an effort to keep the younger children's football league going. McGregor's son played one year in Mighty Mites football, and it did not make her an expert, or a volunteer parent anymore. Nonetheless, McGregor loves football and decided she wanted to be a part of training the younger students in an educational league to help prepare for football as they enter junior high and on to Buffalo High School.

Mike Zanzie helped start the program during the pandemic. Today, coach Ed Phillips is president of the league and head football coach for Buffalo High School. She hired BHS football players as referees. High school students are on the chain gang, and an announcer for the home games was appointed.

No one can compare elementary football to junior high and high school teams. Boys and girls play and are learning the fundamentals with volunteer coaches and the support of parents and guardians.

Jennifer Taylor and Melissa Haberman have been a great help to her as she coordinates the home game concessions and the cheerleading squads. Parents are always lending a hand, including McGregor's mother, who watches the front gate and takes entry fees.

The flag football players are in kindergarten to second grade. Third through sixth grades play tackle football and train on the fundamentals.

Students could volunteer to cheer for the league, which works out with large families. The cheerleader would get to perform for their siblings.



Flag football

Cheerleaders came from kindergarten to sixth grade with help from Jennifer Parker.

This year there were nine coaches for tackle football and 13 for flag football. McGregor cooked a lot of hamburger for walking tacos and other food offerings with help from volunteer concession workers. She took responsibility for purchasing and cooking the food. The Buffalo Youth Football games are scheduled on Saturdays. McGregor would wake up between 4-4:30 in the morning. She got busy making biscuits and gravy and walking tacos. Everything will be quick and easy.

McGregor said, "You never know how many people are going to show up. Sometimes we sell out." After Mighty Mites folded, the organizers of

the new league had to take out a loan to pay for expenses. Many students don't have the money for equipment, so the league purchased everything they needed. They purchased footballs and all the gear along with insuring the league. A local bank, O'Bannon Bank, sponsored the loan.

Registration has been possible with a partnership with Dallas County R-1 Schools to hand out flyers and accept registration for league play and cheering. At the football stadium, there is plenty of seating, the parking lot ample and the facility is impressive, making it a welcoming place for out-of-town guests.

"These kids are my kids. I treat them like they are my own," McGregor explained.

Fifth-grade tackle football



The football players are part of the Show-Me South Youth Football League based in Nixa. That's where the rule book comes from.

She tells the coaches the top three areas of training should be sportsmanship, rules and respect. She hopes the players are learning these skills in the league and understand that the games are educational.

"We're not out for the win. We are out for the experience," she said.

The teams and cheerleaders comprise a nice-size niche group of footballers. The tackle teams have 57 players. The cheerleaders' numbers were

30, and flag football had 55 players.

Each team has two coaches along with USA-certified: Heads Up Certification and a background check. The league wants the experience to be safe and for parents to have peace of mind.

The league pledges a no kid left behind status. Sometimes coaches will take kids to games or bring them home or take them to practice. All student participants sell candy bars to help scholarship the players who cannot pay. In addition, the candy bars sales help pay for the bank loan.

McGregor said there has not been many injuries over the past three years, at least nothing major

and no broken bones.

Home and family

While her spare time is volunteering for the football teams, she is an accountant and tax preparer. She works from her home and can stay home as her children grow up, and she never misses any of their games.

All sports take priority for their family. If one child is at an away game and another at home, grandma splits the night. One goes with the eighth-grader and the other with the ninth-grader.

She loves being able to feed the boys and their friends; and feed them again and again. McGregor is excited to be able to do things for the kids.

She moved into town to help with her parents. She said that her dad fought a long battle.

She elaborated, "Dad had more than nine lives. Nine times they called in the family. Morris was a fighter."

She enjoys living beside her parents, and many days they have meals together. Their family is very close.

McGregor makes it to all her children's games. She is one of those parent cheerleaders one can hear from the stand encouraging the players. She wants to make sure to thank Zanzie for helping to start the league. Also, thanks to all the coaches, workers, board members and parents involved in the games, especially for being willing to travel for farther destinations.

Thank you

She concluded, "I LOVE football and love this league. There are not a lot of extra things for the kids in Buffalo. This league is all for the kids. We sign up for the homecoming parade and opening night at the high school games."

She encourages everyone for next season to come out and watch the students learn the rules of football and attend BHS games and be community support.

For more information or to volunteer for next season, email McGregor at traci.mcgregor23@gmail.com.

Proudly Supporting Women in Dallas County

BECAUSE WE LIVE HERE, TOO

From boosting businesses to leading local organizations, women are impacting their communities, teams and households now more than ever. In truth, women make 90% of household financial decisions – and that's not just groceries and home improvements, but investments and philanthropic donations.

At OMB, we're proud to support women as strong, altruistic and motivated, and we mean it – women make up 72% of our employees and hold key positions at every level. So when we say it's *because we live here, too*, it's more than a tagline. It's our word.



PENNY MORGANS
Branch Manager & Loan Officer
NMLS #174838



Community Banking Made Better

OLDMISSOURIBANK.COM | (417) 345-6111 | 1200 W. DALLAS ST., BUFFALO

LOBBY HOURS Mon–Thurs: 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. | Fri: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. | Sat: 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. **DRIVE THRU HOURS** Mon–Fri: 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. | Sat: 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.

EQUAL HOUSING LENDER MEMBER FDIC



By Joy Beamer
joyb@buffaloreflex.com

Amy Saylor has been in charge at the New to You Shop for three years. The community drops off clothing and items to help recycle and reuse items that are not ready for the trash bin. Along with an army of volunteers, they take these treasures and display them like any retail store. The store is clean and organized, even on the weeks that they have overstocked items. Saylor helps recycle, resale and upcycle community treasures, affecting the environmental impact of Dallas County.

The prices are low, with profits paying for overhead and three people. The rest goes back into the community for special projects.

Garage sale enthusiasts and Mr. Fix-its often buy items at the store. From there, they clean, repair and make works of art. People who can hem a dress or put on a button can save lots of dollars. The chain of reuse helps lessen Dallas County's green footprint.

Saylor is kind to each volunteer and helps teach some how to work in retail. She is making profits for the Dallas County Neighborhood Center, which owns New to You. She is an all-around go-getter worker and manager for this institution.

Ron Locke, Dallas County Neighborhood Center board member, said, "Amy Saylor is simply the best manager I believe we've ever had at New to You. She has reinvigorated the volunteers and remodeled the entire workspace/store to better serve all. She is always looking for better ways to improve the operation and help those in need throughout our community."

Saylor said when she finds what a volunteer enjoys, they build on that interest and skill. She allows everybody to do their "thing" with no microman-

aging. She said that when a team of volunteers feels free to be creative and set up their area, the work is beneficial to everyone.

Once a volunteer figures out what area they enjoy, Saylor will hash out what each volunteer wants to do and makes a decision together from there. She wants to empower the volunteers through self-guided work tasks.

Her volunteers include both men and women. Also, there are special needs volunteers with their aides. They live in group homes, and many have a knack for organization. A business like the New To You Shop needs and wants to be very organized.

New to You is open from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Tuesday to Friday. Saturday, the store is open from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Drop-off is at the side of the building where the garage doors open to the lower level. She asks that you drop things to donate during those hours.

New to You Shop doesn't take old box TVs or mattresses. Only furniture in good condition is accepted, or donations will be sent back.

Everyone is invited to shop at the store. People come from all walks of life, including singles to large families. Many times people come shopping just to loaf, relax and chill out. The wide variety of products available makes it interesting to shop every time. Saylor likes to think of the store as a garage sale that is organized.

Saylor was a caretaker for 31 years for all ages of special needs. She was working in that field before she came to the New to You Shop. She finds that her special needs volunteers are rule-oriented and know where things should go. The group doesn't break any rules because they try extra hard trying to be normal.

She plans activities for them to do on their volunteer days. All are good workers, and she is happy to help them progress in training. Saylor's desire is to establish a sheltered workshop in

Saylor has caught some bugs

Buffalo and run it under the New to You umbrella.

Rita Hibler also provides volunteers who are 55 and older. Hibler's program is similar to what was known as Green Thumb. They work with training programs and nonprofits to retrain seniors for jobs.

Originally from Philadelphia, Saylor and her husband came here in 1998 and fell in love with the region. They have four kids working and learning at home, extending their education. The children were all home-schooled.

Moving from the city to rural Missouri was a major life decision. The major reason to leave the city was to get the kids out of the city and live a more relaxed, positive lifestyle.

The skills she learned while she was a caretaker translate well in working with volunteers at the not-for-profit. Both require dealing with people and helping them.

One of her nominations told the Buffalo Reflex that she drives to Fair Grove to pick up loads of food to hand out at the People's Pantry and to the volunteers and customers. The practice started when one of the volunteers said she would bring a little produce from the Fair Grove church she goes to. They put the overflow food out for the customers.

Saylor made a connection with a man who has a heart for Buffalo. Now, she will get a call from him, and she heads out to a church in Fair Grove, meets them and brings the food back to Buffalo. She volunteers to do this service on her dime. Saylor's servant heart shines through this ministry of sharing food with the community.

Saylor was a military girl and loves travel and adventure. She enjoys seeing places and people new to her. She started school in Germany — it might have been where she caught the bug to travel.

She never had roots before moving to the rural Ozarks. She tried living in Arkansas one month but became homesick

for the first time, and they traveled back to the area.

Living here she saw that the people in the area were committed to community service. She tried it and caught another bug — community service by helping others.

When asked where or how she likes to help, she responded, "Each day is different, wait and see and go with the flow. Then, I help with what is available."

Her No. 1 passion is her family. Recently, she did a self-check of things to keep in balance. She throttled back and started addressing things at home. She wants to keep in balance personally and attempt to live a

work and home balanced lifestyle.

Her family likes to spend time outdoors. They bought an outdoor movie projector. They made an at-home drive-in at their house and even watch movies in the car in the winter.

Her kids run around in the woods and play paintball. The group sings karaoke in various genres and sets it up for birthday parties and such.

All of them are big game players and enjoy card games. They like going to Campbell's corn maze and creating authentic costumes. They wish there was a Comic-Con closer each year so they could wear their sci-fi costumes.

Saylor's hobbies include canning, cooking, reading and a huge library of books. She has been sorting them and putting them into totes because she has so many.

The entire family is creative in their own rights. All of them are artists with some drawing, some writing, others creating and inventing, plus the love of music and songwriting.

She lives in a house with creative souls where every person has the creativity bug.

Saylor has many bugs — travel bug, community service bug, creative bug and work bug. Stop by and meet her at the New to You Shop at 1104 Blaine Street, Buffalo.



Chelsey Ownby, Lisa Zook, Crystal Tucker, Chyan Simpson, Jennifer Parkhurst, Melanie Astarita, Kaiya Stepp, Teresa Phillips, Rebecca Lawson

Our home-like setting & caring staff will make you feel welcome right from the start.

Pine RESIDENTIAL CARE
Lodge

A place to call Home!

Pinelodge967@yahoo.com
Marcus and Chelsey Ownby
Owners/Operators

967 N. Maple
Buffalo
417-345-0310



SPOOKY REMODELER, caring business owner



ABOVE: Urbana Group Home

INSET: Katie Heflin

By Joy Beamer
joyb@buffaloreflex.com

Originally from Blue Springs, Katie Heflin made her home in the Ozarks in 2009. She moved to the Bennett Spring area to be closer to her aging parents, who owned a camping business. Her son, Dylan, went to Long Lane grade school, but she soon found out the culture shock from Blue Springs to a small rural school was too much and decided to move to Urbana to attend a larger rural school, Skyline.

She graduated from nursing school in 2007. She worked as a hospice nurse and skilled care nursing in the beginning. She loved working as a hospice nurse, but soon she saw the long days were not the best for raising a son alone. She covered an area that included Bolivar to Branson and up I-44 to Rolla, Salem and Fort Leonard Wood, putting around 300 miles in the car daily.

She explained that hospice is a challenging field with burnout higher than most nursing jobs. Generally, a nurse will work from five to six years in hospice before they leave. Heflin loved hospice nursing and felt she was good at it. However, the job takes a toll and she wants to be an influential mom, too. Working 18 hours a day wasn't cutting it to be home with her son.

Family

Being a mother is her No. 1 priority. Her boys are the motivation in her life. Dylan is now 20, and her youngest, Wyatt, is 3 years old.

Often, Wyatt is referred to as the miracle baby. Heflin was eight months pregnant before she realized that a baby was coming. She only had a month to get ready for the precious surprise baby boy.

Heflin owns Christian Home Care,



Urbana Group Home, Windyville General Store and Canning Barn and Shirts & Giggles.

Christian Home Care

Christian Home Care (CHC) is a consumer-directed services agency on a contract with Missouri Medicaid. Disabled individuals may choose their caregiver. CHC assists in the process by paying the attendant, maintaining state-mandated compli-



Katie Heflin owns the Windyville General Store and Canning Barn and is in the process of restoring the buildings. CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

ance, and helping them coordinate their care with their chosen caregiver. Spouses cannot be the caregiver, but another family member can be the caretaker. The CHC provides the means for caregivers to clock in and out, help with any problems, provide policy clarification and keep everything in compliance.

She wanted to own her own business to make her own hours. So she started it from scratch, working every night and weekend while keeping a full-time nursing position. It took her two years to get approved.

Today, CHC has 140 clients. The

See **HEFLIN**, Page 10

We Salute Women!

Katrina's Flowers & Gifts

417-345-4671

Mon., Tues., Thurs., Fri. 8-5 Wed. & Sat. 8-noon

1 block south of square

209 S. Maple, Buffalo

Maple Leaf Day Care

Infant • Pre-School • School Age
State Licensed • State Pay
6 a.m. - 6 p.m.
719 W. Jefferson, Buffalo

417-345-8541

Proud To Serve Dallas County!

Carol Johnson
Dallas County Public Administrator

Paid for by Carol Johnson

HEFLIN

Continued from Page 9

business grew slowly over time. Once they received the first reimbursement, she could start developing the business one client at a time. Most of them are between Bolivar, Hermitage, Urbana, Lebanon and Long Lane. There is one client who is close to the Arkansas border. To the north, CHC provides services to Jackson County, Sedalia and then straight down to Arkansas.

CHC's primary goal is to keep people independent in their homes, and CHC tries to do everything to assist the client.

With over 1,600 agencies in Missouri, CHC is in the top 12 percent of agencies.

Urbana Group Home

The owner of the Urbana Rest Home sought Heflin out because he wanted to sell the business to someone who genuinely cared about the residents. The residents were like family to the owners.

She received an email from the owner's granddaughter. She had known her son Dylan from school. She asked her if there was any interest in buying the facility. She went to look, more out of respect than interest in a new project.

The owner made a good offer, and she said, "It seemed silly not to buy after she ran the numbers."

Heflin purchased the facility in April 2022. She had to learn a new set of mandates, but the experience has been rewarding.

The residents chose a new name, Urbana Group Home. The majority of clients have a dual diagnosis. There are 20 different personalities and 20 different medications, and all are trying to make it work as a big family. The previous owner, Tim Bailey, had told her that it was a big family, and Heflin agrees. She hopes to make a difference with their abilities and do what they can to make a good life for them.

Heflin told Tim Bailey, "You forever have a plate at the table at Urbana Group Home."

Heflin's dad was a union construction worker, and her mom was a nurse. The apple didn't fall far from either tree. Heflin enjoys fixing up buildings. Right now, she is putting all the profits back into the building, purchasing two new ovens and new floors, painting and fixing it up and making things modern.

Cloe Stidham has been with Dylan since junior high. She said, "Katie has a good heart. She acts tougher than she is. She cares deeply about the residents and clients and goes above and beyond. She is fixing the building, and they (the residents) are so happy. Some of the residents have been there for 20-plus years."

Windyville General Store

In 2015, Heflin bought the Windyville Store. It took two and a half years to fix it up, including taking it down to the studs, creating a new well, new plumbing, new electricity, and cutting out the rotten and any water damage. She salvaged for the bathroom walls and brought the ceiling down. They reused what they could from the knockdown. For instance, the hallway and bathrooms look like barnwood from the original siding. Her dad helped with the renovation.

Initially, she started renovating



Katie Heflin is close to her family. In the photo is her son Dylan, enjoying some family time.



Brothers Dylan and Wyatt spending time together with their mom.
CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

the store for hotel guests to spend a night in the country at an old general store. Now, the only people who stay overnight are family or friends.

No one wants to spend the night alone there, even Heflin. At the same time, old historical structures settle and have moans, cracks and groans, all that sound like ghosts. The Windyville area is known regionally for many spooky hauntings

and real-life human tragedies still in court.

Once, Lebanon Schools brought students to the School of Metaphysics, and the store provided ice cream treats for their trip. The field trip allowed the kids to see what a retail store might have looked like during the last century.

Bryce Bradley sold her the old canning factory property, with the land, the day before he died.

Shirts & Giggles

Heflin is not operating her T-shirt printing company, Shirts & Giggles. She closed down after she purchased the Urbana Group Home. She only uses the equipment now for special projects and fundraisers.

Heflin enjoys making shirts, but now she uses the equipment as a hobby. When Dylan was in school, he played sports. She found that making the shirts herself was cheaper than buying them from a vendor.

Recently, a volunteer from Skyline Schools asked if she would do a fundraiser for the Dust family, who was in a tragic car crash. Of course, she said yes and was doing it for the cost. However, after she found out the price of the T-shirts, she decided to donate all the funds so the organizers would not have to be out anything for the fundraiser.

Heflin was tight-lipped about this project because she gives from the heart and didn't want recognition or accolades for doing the right thing.

She believes when hearts are in the right place, God will bless a project.

Heflin said about faith, "I love Jesus, but I cuss a little. I'm a work in progress and continue to do better every single day."

Conclusion

Heflin's priority is her children. She hopes to have a significant impact on their lives.

Her nominations for the section were mentioned repeatedly about her kind heart and giving spirit.

Heflin concluded by saying, "I'm blessed with businesses that have worked out. I don't have the resources every time to give, but everyone can give. It's the volunteers; all the people volunteering is just as big of contribution, charity: dads, moms and coaches devoted to a cause. Time is the best gift you can ever give. We help out where we can."

Loss, Life and Love



Mr. and Mrs. William Gronniger will celebrate their 34th wedding anniversary on Dec. 17. Willie's dad and Shannon's grandpa were both born on that day in 1922. The wedding was set for that date as a special memorial to the two special men in their lives.

PHOTO BY STEVE JOHNSON

Shannon Gronniger's faith in God is her strength

BY STEVE JOHNSON
stevej@buffaloreflex.com

Shannon Gronniger knows what it is like to face emotional and spiritual struggles throughout life. She has lived some pretty rough moments. But she is thankful for the grace of God that gives her strength to push through those times to carry on and help others in their time of need.

"God has blessed me with a life of servitude. I feel it is important for me to be a light to those who are in a dark place. When I see someone struggling, I have to talk about my Lord because He is what I base everything in my life on and around," said Gronniger who experienced the tragic loss of her 15 year old son to heart failure. "At that time I didn't think I could pull through, but leaning on my faith was all that kept me going."

Today, Gronniger is a beacon of love for everyone that comes into her life.

A girl grows up influenced by life's events

Gronniger describes her childhood as difficult for her after her parents divorced. But that event in her life just drew her closer to her grandmother, Maxine Boyd, who was her inspiration through her developing years. Her grandmother constantly reinforced the philosophy to put God first, family second and everyone else before yourself.

"It really was nothing more than the golden rule, 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you and love your neighbor as thyself,'" Gronniger related. "That is how I try to live my life everyday."

Her grandmother had struggled with a handicap for most all her adult life. In November of 1963, Maxine Boyd lost both hands and most of her arms to a fire explosion as she was starting the morning fire in the wood stove to warm the morning chill off the house. She was 34 years old. Her oldest grandchild, Shannon would be born seven years later.

Gronniger learned early how to be a

care giver. She was her grandmother's right hand, (literally both hands) for several years. This was the beginning of her on-hand training for what would become her passion of taking care of others when they could no longer take care of all their own needs.

Growing up in the Charity (Hog-eye) area, it should be no surprise that 14 year old country girl, Shannon Boyd, would meet a country boy that would fall head over heels in love with her at the Charity Country Store. Among the shelves of merchandise, young William Gronniger laid eyes upon the girl, who he swore to himself would become his wife. It was a long four year courtship before Mr. and Mrs. "Willie" Gronniger would set up their own home a half year after Shannon graduated from Buffalo High School.

The newlyweds discussed the idea of children, and both were content to share their whole lives with just each other. But God had different plans for the young couple who had so much love to share. While they were both working at Key Industries in Buffalo, the Gronnigers found they were expecting their first child. A baby girl, Hayley, would be born in December 1997. That pregnancy was difficult for Shannon as she would suffer much from excessive mood swings, including postpartum depression after the baby was born. Eventually she adjusted, and life returned to normal.

Serving others is her life

In November 2000, another baby arrived in the form of a tiny little boy, born with Dextro-Transposition of the Great Arteries (or d-TGA). D-TGA is a birth defect of the heart in which the two main arteries carrying blood out of the heart, the pulmonary artery and the aorta, are switched in position, or transposed. It is a serious and rare heart problem that often proves fatal. Little Aaron Jerome Gronniger, named after his great grandfather Francis Aaron Boyd and his grandfather Bernard Jerome Gronniger, would experience a major heart attack at 11 days old and his first open heart surgery at six weeks old. He was not expected to live.

"I knew at that point, it was going to

be either God or the grave," said Aaron's mother, meaning she had to leave it in God's hands. Her faith was greatly tested, but she gave it all to God, and she believed the outcome would be God's will. God's will turned out that they would be blessed with 15 years of Aaron sharing life with them..

Gronniger quit her job at Keys to take care of her children. She also began to visit her elderly neighbors and offer assistance to them as she could. Sometimes that just meant running to the grocery store for them or cleaning their houses.

On February 18, 2016, Aaron Gronniger died of heart failure. The Gronniger family was distraught. That following year was a blur for Shannon, but salvation from the grief came in the form of a question from a dear family friend.

She was sitting in her recliner that she uses for prayer and meditation, asking God if it was time for her to go back to taking care of people. She had just gotten the words out, "God, please let me know," when a dear longtime friend and neighbor knocked on her door. Jack Dill had a question to ask her. He knew she was going through a hard time, but would she consider helping his mother take care of his elderly failing father? She became Alvie Dill's caregiver in his home until he passed away. Then she was Alvie's wife, Betty's caregiver

until she moved into the nursing home at Marshfield.

Betty, along with other such widows named Alice, Dorothy and Grace, had each lost children to death. They needed her, and she needed them. They were great counselors to her. They would listen and pray with her, and they knew how she was feeling. Her heart was set on fire to make sure these women who were dear to her had their daily needs met.

In July 2020 during the coronavirus pandemic year, Gronniger joined the environmental services department at Colonial Springs Healthcare in Buffalo. God put her on a new path to meet and share with many more her love and testimonies of God. It was a hard decision for her, but all her friends and loved ones agreed it was the right time and the right thing for her to do. She had been a caregiver so long to her community, now she needed to spread the love.

"I always felt like with each new person that was put in my pathway, God was making me ready and able for the next person's care. He has put the right people in my life at the time I needed them," Gronniger confides. "Everyday, everyone that crosses my path, I ask myself if have done everything that I can do for them. I'm just a sinner saved by grace trying to do the best I can for my Lord, because He gave His all for me."



TAKING
CARE OF
BUSINESS



NIMMO
INSURANCE AGENCY, INC.
345-2103

Established 1937 • Southwest corner of the Square • Buffalo, MO

BANK ON OUR LADIES



Brenda Webster
Strafford



Judy Bruton
Strafford



Natalie Young
Strafford



Paula Burchfield
Strafford



Vicki Shalloup
Strafford



Darci Wilson
Pleasant Hope



Alexandria Pickney
Buffalo



Casey Shelton
Buffalo



Julie McClain
Fair Grove



Angel Scott
Fair Grove



Courtney Clopton
Fair Grove



Chandra
Oldfield-Clark
Pleasant Hope



Charli Miller
Pleasant Hope



Jan Richer
Pleasant Hope



Hollie Fielder
Buffalo



Mary Hitchings
Buffalo



Amy Wisdom
Buffalo



Hannah Eagleburger
Buffalo



Lauren Cunningham
Fair Grove



Kelsey Doty
Buffalo



Jessica Hurtt
Buffalo



Holly Glor
Buffalo



Amber Abercrombie
Buffalo

*For All Your
Financial Needs*



Denise Worsham
Buffalo



Katelin Truster
Buffalo



Amanda Fraser
Buffalo



Shellie Craig
Buffalo



Jennifer Deckard
Buffalo



Martha Lewis
Buffalo



Rachel Somirs
Buffalo



Maegan Roberts
Buffalo



Roberta Ikerd
Buffalo



Debbie Breshears
Buffalo



Cindy Frantz
Buffalo



Jessica Lankford
Buffalo



Lea Keith
Buffalo



Janet Turner
Buffalo



Fay Howe
Buffalo



Shiloh Elliot
Buffalo



Renee Bradford
Buffalo



Sherry Claspill
Buffalo



Nancy Dollins
Strafford



Kristen Johnson
Pleasant Hope



Paige Wilson
Buffalo



Baliegh Caughron
Fair Grove



Mindy Starkey
Buffalo



Laura Stewart
Buffalo



O'Bannon Bank
A Tradition of Personal Service
Since 1905



BUFFALO
417-345-2251

STRAFFORD
417-736-2251

FAIR GROVE
417-759-2251

PLEASANT HOPE
417-267-2251

SPRINGFIELD
417-881-2251