

Opening The Doors

Celebrating St. Bernards' New Surgical Tower



Plus:

James Best Branches Out

Another New Hotel

Sales Tax Figures

Banking News

Phasing It In

\$103M Surgical Tower Completed

St. Bernards Healthcare held an open house to celebrate the official grand opening for its new surgical and intensive care tower on December 10, 2019. The \$103M project completed Phase 3 of St. Bernards' 4-Phase plan to renovate the hospital. The cost of all four phases is \$137M.

"St. Bernards has seen tremendous growth throughout its 119-year history, and that progress continues with the opening of the new tower," said Chris Barber, President and CEO of St. Bernards Healthcare. "This is an exciting time for the entire St. Bernards organization as this tower helps provide us the additional capacity to care for even more patients in Northeast Arkansas and Southeast Missouri."

The addition means all surgeries at St. Bernards will take place in the new surgical tower. There are 14 cutting-edge surgical suites and 46 intensive care beds. There is room for expansion of both the surgical suites and intensive care beds.

Nabholz Construction and St. Bernards worked together to create a bright and beautiful facility. The all-glass front of the tower allows for plentiful amounts of natural light and excellent views of downtown Jonesboro from the upper floors. The waiting rooms are large and open, providing plenty of space for visitors and family. Other family-friendly amenities include a new cafe that serves Jonesboro's Shadrachs Coffee.

Governor Asa Hutchinson, who couldn't attend the event, sent a video message of congratulations.

"St. Bernards has grown from a six-room frame house in 1900 to a regional healthcare system, and today, 119 years later, we are cutting the ribbon on a brand new surgical and intensive care tower," Hutchinson said. "The work of St. Bernards in Jonesboro is more than treating the sick and injured. It's ministering to the body and soul."

The new surgical tower means more jobs in Jonesboro. As of early January, St. Bernards has added 57 positions to the payroll with more expected in the coming months.



Getting Some Ink

James Best's Latest Venture Is Fit to Print

James Best had all intentions of retiring after selling Best Manufacturing in 2017. Still, after several days of “retirement,” he quickly realized he didn’t like taking time off and was interested in finding a new opportunity. Along with his nephew and son, the three of them quickly found a path that merged their backgrounds perfectly.

“I enjoy being around people,” James said, “I was fixing to go get a job somewhere.”

The itch James needed to scratch led him to the steadily growing world of digital printing, specifically printing for corrugated products.

“It was new technology. Cutting edge technology that is going to change the industry. We hopped on, and here we are,” James said.

‘We’ is James, his son, Justin, and Troy, his nephew. They came up with a plan for what is now [Precision Digital Printing](#). Housed in a new, 100,000 SF facility on Moore Road in Jonesboro, Precision Digital Printing is up and running, printing thousands of corrugated sheets in a typical day.

Digital printing is the future. Troy Best, who’s background is in the corrugated industry, estimates that right now, only 10% of the printing industry for corrugated is using digital printing.

It’s an excellent time to be ahead of that curve. Multiple reports predict digital printing and digital signage will be worth between \$35B-\$38B nationally by 2026.

The centerpiece of James’ new venture is the Nozomi C18000, a \$4M digital printer that does ultra-high-speed single-pass inkjet printing. It is a quantum leap in terms of speed and cost. It takes away the need for expensive printing plates or adhesive labels. That removes several steps from the process, even allowing for changes in the middle of a print job.

Troy says the average turnaround for their customers is four days. With traditional plate printing, a similar order could take two weeks. When you combine the time saved with the quality of the printing job, it’s an easy sell to customers in the seven-state area Precision Digital Printing serves.

“Once we send that first shipment of printed sheets, they see the quality of it. It’s a no brainer from there,” James says.

Precision Digital is already growing. So far, they have hired 14 people with plans to add a dozen employees by the spring. They have the space for another Nozomi C18000 too.

“Digital is going to be the way to go. It’s the future. It really is,” James says.

And as we continue to move into an all-digital world, you can put that in ink.



Teaching Teachers

Educators Hit the Factory Floor

“It is amazing to see the diversity of jobs available and the benefits these companies offer their employees.”

That quote sums up the purpose and the success of Jonesboro Unlimited’s latest Industry Educators Externship. The drive behind the three-day program is to take Jonesboro-area educators and give them an authentic, inside look at the world of manufacturing. By taking part in the program, those teachers become equipped with crucial, hands-on knowledge of the kind of job opportunities their future graduates can seek out and encourage them to do so.

“We have so much information to take back to our students. Getting to view everything firsthand is very impactful,” said one of the teachers.

During their tour, 37 teachers and guidance counselors entered the world of modern manufacturing at Hytrol, Nestle, Nice-Pak, and Frito-Lay. Each participant spent a day-and-a-half at one of the four selected sites, a half-day touring the other three sites and, a third day which served as a debrief and discussion day where all 37 teachers [came together to compare notes](#).

It was information the teachers are eager to share when they get back to their classrooms.

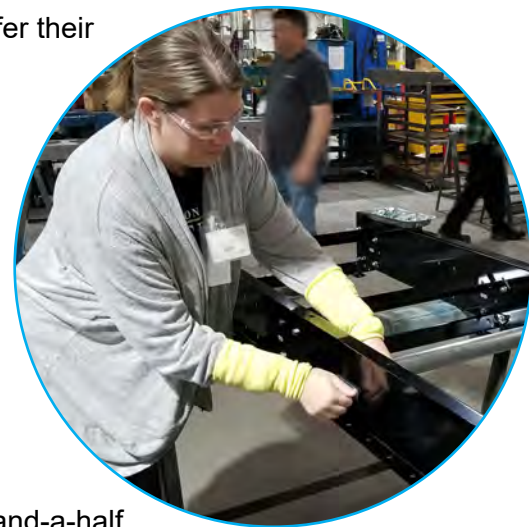
That’s what Shelle Randall, Jonesboro Unlimited’s Director of Workforce Development and Existing Industries, likes to hear. “Being able to reach out and engage these educators and immerse them in the world of manufacturing is an important step in developing our workforce.”

The program couldn’t happen without the support of the four companies taking part. Randall says this can be called contributing to the community as much as workforce development.

“Hytrol, Nice-Pak, Frito-Lay, and Nestle have a great understanding of how important this program is. By opening their doors to these dedicated teachers, they are showing their commitment to developing our future workforce and investing in Jonesboro,” Randall said.

Several suggestions came out of the time the teachers spent together comparing their experiences. Many of those ideas will be implemented for next year’s event.

If you would like more information about the program you can [contact Shelle Randall](#) at Jonesboro Unlimited.



Commercial Development

Armor Bank is getting ready to build on a new site in Jonesboro. The full-service branch will locate on Highland Drive next to Newk's. Armor Bank's home office is in Forrest City, with seven other offices across the state. Armor previously had a loan production office on Executive Square in Jonesboro.



A new Home2 Suites by Hilton is about to begin construction in Jonesboro. The 96-room hotel will occupy a two-acre lot behind the Red Lobster on Red Wolf Blvd. Hospitality Builders of America out of Memphis is building the hotel. According to the permit filed with the City of Jonesboro, the project has a value of \$6.9M.



FNBC will continue its expansion into Jonesboro by breaking ground on a new branch in 2020. The bank, headquartered in Ash Flat, announced in November a plan to build a full-service location on 1.3 acres at the corner of Race St. and Fair Park Blvd. FNBC opened its current Jonesboro office in 2018.



Iberia Bank has merged with First Horizon National Corporation of Memphis, TN, in a \$9B all-stock deal. Announced in November, the merger creates a banking company with \$75B in assets. Iberia Bank, headquartered in Lafayette, LA, has 16 branches in 11 states, including three in Jonesboro.

The new Embassy Suites and Red Wolf Convention Center officially opened on New Year's Eve. The 203-room, all-suites hotel is now taking reservations. The Houlihan's Restaurant opened in January. The nearly \$50M project held a groundbreaking in May of 2018.



Kenney Manufacturing has begun a significant addition to their plant on Krueger Dr. According to plans registered with the City of Jonesboro, the window hardware manufacturer is adding 132,000 SF of warehouse space to their existing facility.



Premier Bank has opened its new Jonesboro branch. Located on East Highland Drive, Premier Bank now has seven locations; six in Crittenden County and the new, full-service branch in Jonesboro. Premier Bank of Arkansas was formerly First Community Bank of Eastern Arkansas. The company went through a branding change in 2019.



Encore Bank has started its opening act in Jonesboro. The Little Rock-based bank has opened a full-service location in the Haag-Brown building at the Reserve at Hill Park. Michael Hallmark, with Encore Bank, says they will break ground on a new building in The Reserve at Hill Park in February with the goal of being completed by the fall.

JU Annual Meeting

Holloway To Headline Event

Our Annual Meeting is quickly approaching. It will be on February 12, at 11:30 a.m. at the Cooper Alumni Center at A-State.

This year's annual meeting will mark the beginning of the fourth year of Jonesboro Unlimited's five-year strategic plan.

We will have a special guest joining us this year, [Amy Holloway, from Avalanche Consulting](#). Amy and Avalanche Consulting guided us in the development of our 5-year strategic plan. Now, three years into our plan, Amy has assessed where we stand and will give us her feedback at the Annual Meeting.

We will also have exciting new employment numbers to present, and we will tell you where we will be going for our Community Leadership Visit this spring.

We hope to see you there. You can RSVP to the event by [contacting Donna Holt](#) at (870) 336-9080.



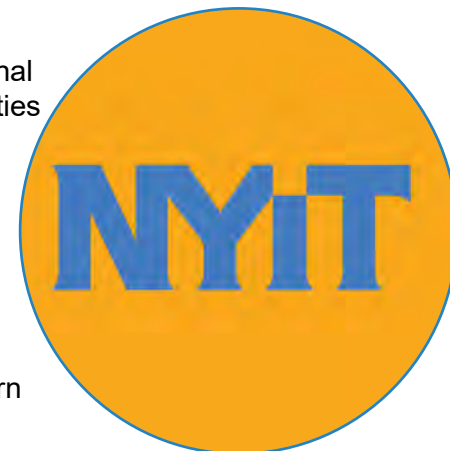
Healthcare

NYITCOM At A-State Puts Future Doctors To Work

Call it "on the job training" for a handful of future doctors from the NYIT College of Osteopathic Medicine at Arkansas State University. A new agreement between NYITCOM and Baxter Regional Medical Center in Mountain Home will allow NYITCOM's student doctors to train at BRMC facilities during their third and fourth years at NYITCOM.

Dr. Shane Speights, the Dean of NYITCOM, said, "I'm confident that BRMC and the Mountain Home community will enjoy hosting aspiring young physicians who are committed to giving back through medicine."

Baxter Regional Medical Center is the latest facility to partner with NYITCOM at A-State. Currently, the school has created over 150 partnerships with medical facilities in several southern states.



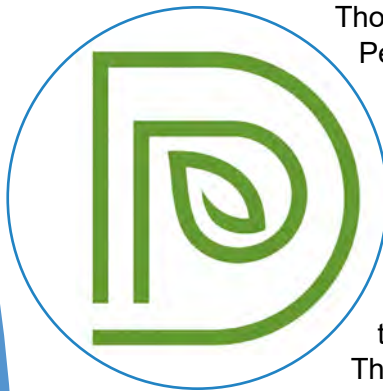
Project Updates

Ritter Data Center is On Schedule

Ritter Communications' \$8M Data Technology Center hit another milestone. Fifty-two truckloads of precast concrete panels are now in place. That completes the exterior walls and roof. The panels are steel-reinforced and interlocked and rest atop concrete footings 10 feet wide and 12 feet deep. The bunker-like structure is designed to withstand an EF3 tornado or a major earthquake. This level of construction was required in the planning of the facility to ensure customers' critical data will remain secure and available in the event of a disaster. [Construction is on track for a June 2020 opening date.](#)



Delta Peanut Is Up & Running



Thousands of harvested acres of peanuts are now being dried and stored in Jonesboro at Delta Peanut. The 70-acre site is still a working construction site with the focus now on [construction of the 115,000 SF shelling plant.](#)

Delta Peanut's Dirk Lindsey says over 85,000 tons of peanuts crossed the scales this fall. Lindsay says that crop will be dried and stored for 6-12 months in Jonesboro before being shelled. After that, the nuts will be shipped for processing at candy, snack, and peanut butter makers. Some of that product will also be shipped overseas.

Delta Peanut has eyes on hiring more people in the coming weeks. Lindsey says they have hired about 10% of the workforce they will need once the shelling plant is finished. He adds they will look to do more hiring in the next 90 days.

The shelling plant should be finished later this year. The \$70M project is expected to create over 100 new jobs.

Ready For Foot and Bike Traffic

Phase Three of Jonesboro's [Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan](#) is paved and ready for walkers, runners, and bikes. The trail runs from Craighead Forest Park along Pine Hill Cemetery before meeting up with Craighead Forest Road, heading to the east and ending at Bekah Drive. The work includes a new parking lot at the trailhead, which is steps away from Access Four. Jonesboro Parks and Recreation Director Danny Kapales says the ASU Trail is the next on the list. Kapales says 30% of the planning for the ASU Trail has been approved.



Annual Sales Tax Revenue

City & County Combined (2.0%)

\$40.4M

5%

2019 / *jan
thru
dec*

○ Increase in collections from
Q4 of 2018

\$38.4M

1.5%

2018 / *jan
thru
dec*

○ Increase in collections from
2017 (\$576K)

\$37.8M

3%

2017 / *jan
thru
dec*

○ Increase in collections from
2016 (\$1.2M)

Commercial Construction

Annual Totals 2017-2019



2019 / *jan
thru
dec*

- 48 permits for new construction.
Most since 2014 (50)



2018 / *jan
thru
dec*

- Biggest annual total since
2011 (\$239M)



2017 / *jan
thru
dec*

- Lowest annual total in permit
value since 2013 (\$83M)

Permit totals include: new construction, apartments, additions, alterations, & signs

Residential Construction

Annual Totals 2017-2019

2019 / *jan
thru
dec*

Value of permits for new home
construction (345 permits)



2018 / *jan
thru
dec*

Value of permits for new home
construction (360 permits)



2017 / *jan
thru
dec*

Includes \$6.4M in duplex
construction (42 permits)



Permit totals include: new homes, additions, alterations, duplex, storage, & swimming pools

New Home Sales

Annual Totals 2018-2019

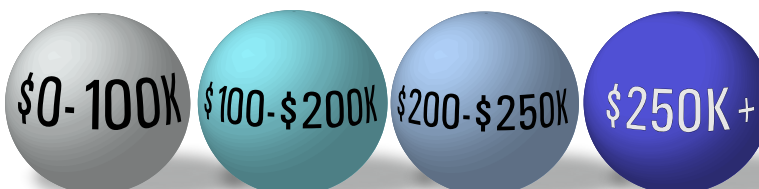
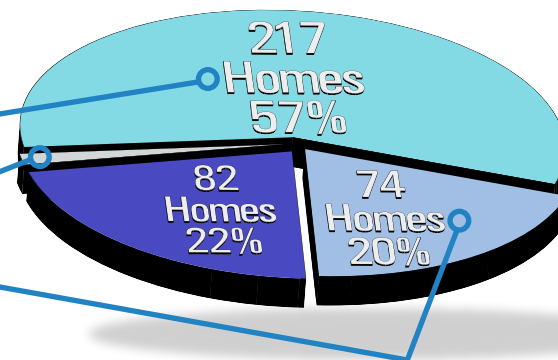
**379
Homes
Sold**

2019 / *jan
thru
dec*

7% Drop since 2018

67% Increase over 5 years

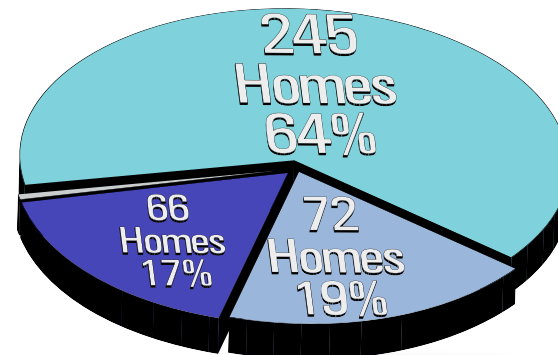
6 Homes
2%



**386
Homes
Sold**

2018 / *jan
thru
dec*

Highest total of new homes
sold on record



Existing Home Sales

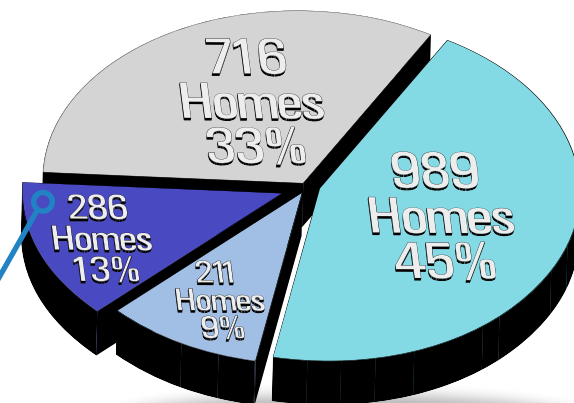
Annual Totals 2018-2019

2,202
Homes
Sold

2019/*jan
thru
dec*

Most homes sold in a year
in Jonesboro on record

84% increase
over last five
years



\$0-100K

\$100-\$200K

\$200-\$250K

\$250K+

1,961
Homes
Sold

2018/*jan
thru
dec*

290 more homes sold than
in 2017

221 Homes
12%

180 Homes
9%

