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Taryn Echols, assistant superintendent at Hot Springs School District, tells the school board about the district's new school-level improvement plans during the Aug. 19 meeting at the Jones School Administration Building. (The Sentinel-Record/Brandon Smith)

Hot Springs School District targets literacy, math growth

BRANDON SMITH
THE SENTINEL-RECORD

Hot Springs School District leaders outlined their school-level improvement plans at the Aug. 19 school board meeting, emphasizing literacy and math growth, support for students in the bottom quartile, early literacy commitment, and culture and staff retention.

School improvement plans help educators identify challenges, set

goals and implement actions to improve student learning and overall school effectiveness, according to the Arkansas Department of Education.

Assistant Superintendent Taryn Echols said the district's mission and vision are centered on setting the standard for education in the district.

"I think everybody really is on trend with our theme this year about making every day count," Echols

said. "We've met with all six of our school principals and their teams."

Superintendent Mike Hernandez noted a new approach this year, with district teams visiting each school to meet with principals and staff to discuss and refine their plans.

"We actually went on-site as a district team, met with each individual school and their assistant principals and other staff, and had a little more detail to the conver-

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John and Miranda Goff, owners of 501 Fitness, are shown inside the center. (The Sentinel-Record/Donald Cross)

501 Fitness expo, fair set for Sept. 6

JACOB MILLER
THE SENTINEL-RECORD

PEARCY — Supporters and members of 501 Fitness, 3422 Airport Road, are invited to participate in a customer fair event on Sept. 6 at 10 a.m.

The event will serve as an expo showcasing over 30 small businesses from and around Garland County, as well as an appreciation for members and supporters of the gym, owners John and Miranda Goff said.

"We've had many people support us," Miranda Goff said. "This is a way we can give back to all of those people who have supported us over the last four years."

The Goffs opened 501 Fitness in 2021 after originally hosting offseason workouts for their son's travel football team at another gym.

"It all started with football, and then the parents got involved," John Goff said. "We were able to make it on our own and build a brand for ourselves."

From there, the venture expanded to include adults and participants of all ages in the Goffs' boot camp-style workout sessions. The business opened a second facility next to the first in 2022.

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Habitual offender gets 12-year term

STEVEN MROSS
THE SENTINEL-RECORD

A reportedly homeless man arrested in January for two home invasions and several thefts was sentenced to 12 years in prison Wednesday after pleading guilty to multiple charges in Garland County Circuit Court.

Philip Tad Ogden, 59, who has remained in custody since his arrest and who listed "city streets" as his address at the time, pleaded guilty to two counts of residential burglary, reduced from original charges of aggravated residential burglary, and was sentenced to the maximum of 20 years in prison, with eight years of it suspended, on each count, to run concurrently.

Ogden also pleaded guilty to three felony counts of theft of property and was sentenced to the maximum of six years in prison on each count, to run concurrently with each other and with the burglary sentences. He was also ordered to pay a total of \$2,050 in restitution in the form of a civil judgment to the victims and \$380 in court costs and fees.

Ogden was sentenced as an habitual offender in the cases. According to court records, he was convicted of two felony counts of robbery in August 2015 and was sentenced to 10 years in prison, with three years suspended, and had prior misdemeanor convictions for theft of property which upgraded the new theft charges to felonies.

According to the probable cause affidavit, on Jan. 1, around 2:30 p.m., a local man reported hearing someone in the driveway of his residence on Fox Run Circle and saw a red Ford Ranger pickup truck leaving his driveway. He then discovered his power washer miss-

See **OFFENDER**, Page 2A



OGDEN



Garland County Library Public Relations Coordinator Jessamyn Carter points out some of the artwork in the library. The library will be partnering with the Central Arkansas Library System, North Little Rock Library System, Faulkner County Library, Pine Bluff/Jefferson County Library System and Saline County Library for an expanded Power of the Card program that will allow library card holders to get discounts and free items at participating businesses across the state. (The Sentinel-Record/Donald Cross)

Garland County Library participates in regional Power of the Card program

JAMES LEIGH
THE SENTINEL-RECORD

Garland County Library patrons will be able to see more benefits in September as the library is joining with several other libraries across central Arkansas for the Power of the Card program.

Each September, libraries across the country encourage people to sign up for a library card, and the Garland County Library started its own push in 2022 called Show Us Your Card.

"Kari Lapp of the Saline

County Library, she actually started their version of National Library Card Sign-up Month," Jessamyn Carter, the public relations coordinator for the Garland County Library, said. "It's called Power of the Card. They started that back in either 2018 or 2019. We actually noticed that they were doing that, which is when we started in 2022."

This year, Lapp reached out to all of the libraries in central Arkansas, asking if they would be interested in expanding their programs

and joining Power of the Card. Central Arkansas and North Little Rock library systems last year for Bookworm Bargains, which was their National Library Card Sign-up Month program.

"We are going to be partnering with North Little Rock Library System, the Central Arkansas Library System, Pine Bluff/Jefferson County (Library System), Faulkner County Library, which is in Conway, and then Saline County Library," Carter said. "That's a big change for us, be-

cause last year, your Garland County card only worked in Garland County areas. Now it will work all the way up to the North Little Rock Library System. That can be any place, like we have Love Spell Tattoo. They're doing things up there. I know in the Pine Bluff/Jefferson County area, they have Red Lobster. They have a lot of local places partnering."

Carter said several businesses that have participated in the past are returning this year.

"We have long-time part-

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Reimagined: Embassy Suites debuts major renovations

DAVID SHOWERS
THE SENTINEL-RECORD

Embassy Suites by Hilton Hot Springs debuted the finished product of a nine-month renovation Thursday, the hotel's first major overhaul since it opened in late 2003.

"What wouldn't they notice has changed," General Manager Ashley Brozenic said of the first impression the refresh would have on regular guests of the hotel. "It's completely different. We painted all the way up to the ceiling. It's all new carpet. The elevator shafts are painted. Everything has completely changed."

The renovation increased the hotel's event/meeting space to more than 8,000 square feet and upgraded all 246 rooms. Building permits

See **EMBASSY**, Page 2A



The atrium of the Embassy Suites by Hilton Hot Springs was part of the renovation the hotel debuted Thursday. (The Sentinel-Record/Thomas Buckman)



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