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Voucher pause still in effect for HS Housing Authority

DAVID SHOWERS
THE SENTINEL-RECORD

The pause on reissuing unused housing choice vouchers remains in effect for the Hot Springs Housing Authority, contributing to one out of five tenant-based vouchers it administers going unused last month.

The housing authority reported 137 of the 665 tenant-based vouchers the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development allocated to it were unused in April. Vouchers cover the difference between the 30% of adjusted gross income participants in the Section 8 program contribute to rent and the payment standard based on fair market rent HUD established for the area.

The Housing Authority Board of Commissioners set a standard of 105% of fair market rent. It had been as high as 120%



The offices of the Hot Springs Housing Authority, 1002 Illinois St., is shown. (The Sentinel-Record/File photo)

to bring more landlords into the program. Executive Director Linda Langan said voucher programs nationwide are in short-

fall as a result of the premium HUD encouraged housing agencies to offer landlords.

Programs are in shortfall

when rent and utility assistance paid to landlords is projected to exceed the subsidy they receive through their annual contributions contract with HUD. The contract specifies the maximum subsidy for the term and the administrative fee that housing authorities receive for each occupied Section 8 unit in their jurisdiction.

The local housing board increased the standard to 120% of fair market rent in 2023.

"That year they were telling us, 'Lease, lease, lease,'" Langan said at Monday's regular meeting of the board of commissioners. "The next year they said, 'Don't do that.' HUD said, 'Increase the payment standard.' Then we go into shortfall, and we had to lower it."

Numerous agencies are under a moratorium despite the

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Sheriff's deputies investigate two fatal shootings in 24 hours

WILL LIVINGSTON
THE SENTINEL-RECORD

The Garland County Sheriff's Office investigated two fatal shootings that took place within 24 hours of each other on Tuesday night and Wednesday afternoon.

A Hot Springs man was arrested Tuesday night after he allegedly shot another man at his residence on Hacienda Road.

Julius Jakrie Robinson Lark, 27, who lists 260 Hacienda Road as his address, was taken into custody at the residence shortly before 8:30 p.m. and later charged with second-degree murder, punishable by up to 30 years in prison.

He was being held on a \$150,000 bond and was set to appear Wednesday in Garland County District Court.

According to the probable cause affidavit, the Garland County Sheriff's Office received a 911 call at 8:04 p.m. in reference to a shooting that had occurred at the Hacienda Road residence. The caller said Lark had shot Madison Jefferson, 38, in the back. Deputies responded and found Jefferson unresponsive inside the house, and he was pronounced dead at the scene.

Deputies observed two visible gunshot wounds on Jefferson's lower back, with three spent casings at the scene. Lark was later questioned at the sheriff's office after he was read his Miranda rights.

Lark allegedly stated he had been downstairs in his living quarters playing video games when he heard "a commotion" and what he believed to be his girlfriend, 24, yelling. Lark said he grabbed his gun and went into the stairwell, and from there he could see Jefferson with Lark's girlfriend and noted Jefferson was in her face.

Lark's girlfriend reportedly had a knife in her hand and was telling Jefferson to back up. Her grandfather, 63, was at the residence as well and was trying to hold Jefferson back.

Lark said he told his girlfriend to come downstairs, which she did, but she later went back upstairs. Lark

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LARK



Sterling Dilks and her friend, Evelyn Aughenbaugh, enjoy a little hands-on fun at Moku Playland. From wooden toys to imaginative play spaces, Moku Playland is all about creativity, exploration and kids simply being kids. (Courtesy Hot Springs Sister City Program)

Wooden toy playland returning to Spa City June 1

FROM STAFF REPORTS

After the success of the Hanamaki Toy Museum's visits to Hot Springs in 2024 and 2025, Moku Playland is returning to the Spa City on June 1.

The month-long pop-up will be at 831 Central Ave. and will be open Thursday

through Tuesday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., according to a news release.

"Moku Playland is an interactive wooden play experience featuring handcrafted play structures, imaginative activity areas, climbing features, train displays, and collaborative spaces designed to encourage

creativity, movement, and open-ended play," the release said.

Visitors to the playland are encouraged "to touch, build, create, and explore through hands-on interaction and imaginative play," it said, noting the playland was "designed as

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U.S. military boards Iranian-flagged ship in Gulf of Oman

BEN FINLEY
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — The U.S. military said Wednesday that it boarded an Iranian-flagged oil tanker in the Gulf of Oman that was suspected of trying to violate the American blockade, the latest action by the Trump administration to try to push Tehran to reopen the Strait of Hormuz.

But President Donald Trump is facing his own pressure at home for shipping to resume through the vital corridor off Iran's coast. Fellow Republicans in Congress are battling political headwinds ahead of November's midterm elections as gasoline prices skyrocket and global energy markets churn.

Meanwhile, the Senate on Tuesday advanced legislation seeking to force Trump to withdraw from the Iran war, with a growing number of Republicans defying the president in the 50-47 vote.

U.S. Central Command said on social media that the M/T Celestial Sea was searched and redirected after being suspected of trying to head to an Iranian port. It's at least the fifth commercial vessel to be boarded since the Trump administration imposed the blockade on Iranian shipping in mid-April, several days into a ceasefire, to pressure Tehran into opening the strait and accepting a deal to end the war.

The military boarded the tanker after Trump said

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Mountain Pine seniors pass ceremonial torch

GABRIEL BASS
THE SENTINEL-RECORD

MOUNTAIN PINE — Mountain Pine High School's Class of 2026 passed the torch to this year's junior class Monday during a ceremony that recognized 42 seniors and included the presentation of scholarships and class awards.

The tradition began in 2018, according to Lillian Alderman, who serves as MPHS's school counselor.

Before the event, Alderman told *The Sentinel-Record* that "our seniors come up, and they'll take the stage, and they'll have a little candle that'll be lit, and then we have a little ceremony that proceeds talking about how they're passing their light to the next group. And then they will light ... the candle of the junior classmate."

The event is "kind of a culmination of all the years that we've been here," she said. "I've worked here for 10 years. I went to school here, so I've

known most of these kids their whole life."

Chris Gray, a Mountain Pine history teacher and softball coach who is also the senior class sponsor, said the event serves to "hopefully impress on (the junior class) the importance of having a strong year."

For departing seniors, "if they take it seriously, it's a really cool ceremony for them because we're handing the legacy over to (the junior class), and I think that's great," he said.

The ceremony "symbolizes a lot of things, not just the physical aspect but the emotional," Joy Higdon, MPHS principal, said. "The seniors this year were strong leaders, and they're passing that responsibility on to the juniors, and that's a big part of what this symbolizes."

Superintendent Tish Reed said, "It's like their whole schooling comes to a head, ... and it just gives them an opportunity to shine."

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Juniors at Mountain Pine High School carry candles lit by members of the outgoing Class of 2026 during Monday's annual candle lighting ceremony. (The Sentinel-Record/Thomas Buckman)



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