

LOCAL EVENTS

ARTHUR MARKS  
CHEESY TRADITION



DONNETTE BECKETT PHOTOS, LEE ENTERPRISES

Jenny Vinger and the Curd Herd crew, based in Springfield, bring a Wisconsin-based cheese to the festivals they attend. “It’s actually curd, not fried cheese cubes,” she said. “And it’s in a beer batter we came up with.”

52nd annual Cheese Festival continues through Monday

DONNETTE BECKETT  
donnette.beckett@lee.net

ARTHUR — Mattoon residents Jerry and Shirleen Vail were the first visitors to get a package of free cheese on Saturday shortly after the opening of the Arthur Amish Country Cheese Festival. “It’s Colby jack and cheddar,” Shirleen Vail said, opening the plastic bag. The couple have attended the festival for years, because of their family connection to the village. “My mom and dad used to live here,” 78-year-old Jerry Vail said. “That was a long time ago,” his 71-year-old wife said. This year marks the 52nd annual Cheese Festival, which is held throughout Labor Day weekend. Vine Street, the village’s main thoroughfare, was lined with ven-

dors and mobile food units as well as free cheese activities. Cheesy competitions included cheese curling and cheese eating contests on Saturday. Other contests planned for the remainder of the festival include a cheese carving competition on Sunday, and a curd spitting contest on Monday. Other non-milk-based activities included inflatables, a zipline, live music and pony rides. According to Rod Randall, village president, cheese is fundamental for the festival. “But there’s all kinds of food,” he said. The Cheese Festival began more than 50 years ago to honor the nearby cheese factory. “We also had cheese stores here,”

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Stephanie Wiseman, chairman of the Arthur Cheese Festival, shows off her stash of cheese on Saturday, Aug. 30, 2025.

AGRICULTURE | CLIMATE

‘There’s  
just more  
variable  
weather’

Climate change, hotter nights can make growing corn dicier

MELINA WALLING AND JOSHUA A. BICKEL  
Associated Press

PAW PAW, Mich. — Robb Rynd and his brother grew up farming and wanted to do more of it outside of their day jobs, so they went in together on what’s now a little over 200 acres of corn, soybeans, wheat and sorghum. Last year was a good year, and Rynd said he enjoyed walking the fields with his kids to see how the corn was doing. This year is a different story. All summer he’s been scouting for brown and wilting leaves or ears of corn with kernels missing, and now it’s becoming clear that every kernel will count this harvest. “It’s almost kind of depressing to go out there and look at it and say, ‘oh yep, it does look bad,’” he said.

Across major corn-growing states, climate change is fueling conditions that make watching the corn grow a nail-biter for farmers. Factors like consistently high summer overnight temperatures, droughts and heavier-than-usual rains at the wrong time can all disrupt the plants’ pollination — making each full ear of corn less of a guarantee and more of a gamble. Overall, corn growers got lucky this year with late-season weather that contributed to what is now predicted to be a record crop. But experts say bouts of extreme weather are intensifying the waiting game during a critical time of year between planting and harvest.

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FEMA

Review  
council eyes  
reforms, not  
dissolution

GABRIELA AOUN ANGUIERA  
Associated Press

Four days after starting his second administration, President Donald Trump floated the idea of “getting rid of” the Federal Emergency Management Agency, which manages federal disaster response. But at a meeting this past week, the 12-person review council he appointed to propose changes to FEMA seemed more focused on reforms than dismantlement. FEMA must be “reformed into an agency that is supporting our local and state officials that are there on the ground and responsive to the individuals that are necessary to help people be healed and whole through these situations,” Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem said, who co-chairs the council. But, she added, FEMA “as it exists today needs to be eliminated.” However, the meeting in Oklahoma City offered hints of what types of reforms the council might present to Trump in its final report. Members mainly focused on conventional and oft-cited opportunities for change, such as getting money faster to states and survivors and enhancing the capacity of local emergency managers. But some moves by the administration in the past several months have already undermined those goals, as mitigation programs are cut and the FEMA

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