

MUSEUM: Sponsors needed for historic photo banners. **3A** | **PREP FOOTBALL:** Playoff-caliber games seen Friday. **1B**

Regional water conference set for Sept. 29

Water management to be discussed in Springfield

BY DEBBY WOODIN
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SPRINGFIELD, Mo. — Regional stakeholders in the area's water supply will meet in Springfield later this month for the annual Southwest Missouri Regional Water Conference. Topics include changing federal

priorities, implementation of the region's long-term water supply strategy and data centers.

Members of the organization include water providers, municipalities, organizations and others to discuss water resources and the region's efforts to develop a reliable, long-term water supply. The conference theme of "Water — What Do You See?" highlights the different perspectives and priorities that shape water planning and management across Southwest Missouri, according to conference

organizer Roddy Rogers, executive director of Southwest Missouri Water.

The meeting will be held Sept. 29 at the Darr Agricultural Center, 2401 S. Kansas Expressway in Springfield.

The conference is a collaborative effort of Southwest Missouri Water, including the Tri-State Water Coalition, the Southwest Missouri Joint Municipal Water Utility Commission and Missouri State University.

Rogers said that a reliable and

SEE **WATER**, 2A



This aerial view shows Stockton Dam. Stockton Lake is owned and operated by the Army Corps of Engineers and has been approved as a source of drinking water for communities in Southwest Missouri.

GLOBE FILE

Creating clear path

Joplin Salvation Army hosts grand opening for Opportunity Center

BY JOHN HACKER
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The Opportunity Center got a ceremonial kickoff Tuesday at the Salvation Army's Community Center, 320 E. Eighth St.

The Opportunity Center offers individuals and families facing homelessness, poverty, financial hardship and other life challenges access to essential services, supportive resources and opportunities for long-term stability.

Capt. Larry Carmichael, of the Salvation Army of Jasper and Newton Counties, said the Opportunity Center had a soft opening Aug. 1.

"We wanted to get our legs underneath us and see how this was going to look and be," Carmichael said. "Now that we're feeling pretty confident and pretty excited about it, we've said, 'Hey, community, show on up, let's celebrate community. Let's celebrate getting to be together and working toward something even bigger together.'"

Carmichael said the center welcomes people experiencing homelessness as well as anyone navigating difficult circumstances and seeking support. He said through collaboration, compassion and practical assistance, the Opportunity Center is designed to help turn moments of crisis into pathways toward stability, independence and hope.

"The Salvation Army Opportunity Center reflects



Capt. Larry Carmichael (far left), of the Salvation Army for Jasper and Newton Counties, speaks to a crowd of about 40 people who attended Tuesday's ribbon-cutting for the new Opportunity Center.

GLOBE | JOHN HACKER



Lynsay Lea, with Brush and Blade, a hair salon in Joplin, cuts Debby Harris' hair Tuesday at the new Salvation Army Opportunity Center.

GLOBE | JOHN HACKER

what is possible when a community chooses collaboration over isolation," Carmichael said. "By bringing more than 21 organizations together in one welcoming location, we can meet immediate needs with dignity while building relationships

that help our neighbors move toward recovery, responsibility and lasting restoration. No single organization can do this work alone, but together we can create a clearer pathway from crisis to stability and hope."

The Opportunity Center

is open primarily on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, and it brings groups like Access Family Care, Ozark Center, Brush and Blades salon, the Economic Security Corp., Lafayette House, Children's Haven, Prater's Pharmacy and others to a place where people in need gather for breakfast and lunch to offer their services.

Layne Bourgeois, Joplin's director of homelessness response for the region, said this was one of the first projects identified as something needed in the community after he started his job about two months ago.

"What we realized is that there are so many people already doing the work but they were doing it siloed or independent of each other," Bourgeois

SEE **PATH**, 2A



Debbie Fitzgerald, director of crisis services at Ozark Center, speaks about the Caravan of Hope, which is traveling across Newton and Jasper counties this week to raise awareness of the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

GLOBE | JOHN HACKER

Team promotes hotline during Suicide Prevention month

BY JOHN HACKER
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NEOSHO, Mo. — Ozark Center's Caravan of Hope is traveling Newton and Jasper counties this week to promote a hotline people can call if they're having an emotional or mental crisis.

The Caravan of Hope — a team of people who staff the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at Ozark Center — traveled to Freeman Neosho Hospital, Neosho High School, Seneca High School and the Walmart in Neosho on Tuesday explaining the 988 hotline and how it works, as well as giving away cups, pens, notebooks and other trinkets and knickknacks to help remember that 988 exists.

"The idea is to bring awareness to people so that they don't have to come to Ozark Center or a Freeman location necessarily," said Debbie Fitzgerald, director of crisis services at Ozark Center. "We will be going to several locations and setting up a table that has 988 resources to let people know to call 988 if they're struggling. We interact with the public. We ask them if they're aware of how large the problem of suicide is in Missouri."

"Most people are shocked to know that in 2024 we lost three Missouri citizens a day to suicide," Fitzgerald said. "And nationwide, a suicide occurs every 10.8 minutes. Jasper County ranks really high for death by suicide, and we want to bring awareness to the problem."

SEE **HOPE**, 2A

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