Hometown, USA: A Community Economic Digest about Searcy, Arkansas, Fourth Edition

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HOMETOWN, USA
A Community Economic Digest about Searcy, Arkansas

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Searcy, Arkansas
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INTRODUCTION
A Moving Experience

Local tradition has it that about 60 years ago, then-Mayor Frank Headlee appeared on a Little Rock television talk show program to promote Searcy, Arkansas. Proclaiming that the town was indeed “rich,” in a colorful play on words he went on: “Every blade of grass has a ‘green’ bulk, every bird has a ‘bill,’ the chimneys have their ‘drafts,’ the streets are ‘flushed,’ the lawns get a ‘rake off,’ the clouds have a ‘silver lining,’ and every flower has at least ‘one scent.’”

When this writer moved to Searcy, Arkansas from south Texas nearly 44 years ago, the local realtor provided this sage advice, “Once you become a Searcian, you can never leave.” At that time, I didn’t fully know what he meant. Now, as this publication goes through its latest metamorphosis spanning four decades, I truly know what the realtor meant. Today, one might add that “…the banks give legal tender loving care.”

The researching and editing of this comprehensive digest may never end, due to all the dynamic changes that necessitate a new edition every few years. It is truly a labor of love, a perpetually “unfinished symphony” that has sold me on Searcy for the duration.

What a pleasure it has also been over the past four decades to get to meet and know so many of Searcy’s civic and business leaders! A colleague loved to remark, “Here, thousands live as millions wish they could.”

Alas, having also lived for the first 24 years of my life in Los Angeles, a county of 12 million people (three times the population of Arkansas), I can only reply, “Amen to that!”
Location and climate, economic as well as natural, have combined to position Arkansas at the right place at the right time. This community economic digest can be a significant factor in recruiting a proper mix of people and industry necessary to move Searcy forward. I commend all involved to commit themselves to such a mandate.

This monograph has become a relevant, practical and interesting experience and, at the same time, it helps Searcy by providing a thorough but condensed course of city information available to business and industry, individuals, and families considering Searcy as a possible site for location and home.

Because of the unique relationship between our wonderful community and Harding University, “HOMETOWN, USA – A Community Economic Digest about Searcy, Arkansas,” is one of the many positive things that have happened along the way to bring Searcy and Harding University closer together.

Thanks go to the many subject matter experts that contributed to this project. Special thanks for the significantly updated features of this edition go to Brenda Davis, our superb in-house Research Assistant and Editor, to Chamber of Commerce President Buck Layne, and also to Mayor David Morris.

Additional appreciation goes to illustrator Arni Anderson, a retired art educator and artist living in Edmond, Oklahoma. An alumnus of Harding University, he is currently working on a series of coloring books about places he knows, loves, and in which he has lived and worked, including Searcy. Enjoy!
1. The Natural State

Arkansas is truly an ideal spot in our great land. Situated at the buckle of the Sun Belt, Arkansas is benefitting from the northeast-to-southwest shift of population in the United States. The migration from Frost Belt to Sun Belt and the economic emergence of the southern tier of states have thrust our Natural State into the middle of the action.

Forty percent of the U.S. population is within a 550 mile radius of the borders of Arkansas. More than 1,000,000 people live within a one-hour's drive of our state capitol, Little Rock. This capital city and hub of its air, rail, highway and waterway networks lies about halfway between Chicago and Houston and is somewhat east of center between Los Angeles and New York. A retirement haven, Arkansas’ percentage of older citizens (14.4%) is ninth in the nation.

Arkansas lays claim to a relatively low cost of doing business and also a low cost of living. Arkansas is ahead of 29 other states in the number of Fortune 500 companies, with six list-makers located within its borders: Walmart Stores, Tyson Foods, Murphy Oil, Dillards, Windstream and J.B. Hunt Transport Services.

Among the nation’s 48 contiguous states, Arkansas’ business climate has consistently ranked well in the South Central region and nationally in annual studies. Arkansas exports billions of dollars in goods and services annually, including aerospace equipment, farm products, chemicals and port and freight services. In fact, Arkansas’ goods exports have grown more than two times faster than GDP in the last decade.
Primary global exporting partners include Canada, Mexico, China, Japan, France, and Korea. International exports and imports support more than 325,000 Arkansas jobs. These trade-related jobs are at large and small companies, on farms, in factories, and at the headquarters of Arkansas’ globally engaged firms.

Arkansas is a thriving rural center of commerce and agribusiness. In good times, the Arkansas economy may not always surge at the rate of the U.S. economy. However, we usually experience milder recessions than the rest of the nation.
2. Tax Base and Income

In Arkansas, industry receives a handshake, not a shakedown. Companies enjoy reasonable tax obligations through a variety of incentives, exemptions, credits, and refunds. State and local governments have also aided the era of industrialization by providing incentives on the one hand, while exercising tight fiscal controls on the other hand.

Act 529, the state’s 1985 investment tax credit of 7% for manufacturers who invest more than $5 million, has contributed significantly to the creation of tens of thousands of jobs and billions of dollars in additional spending for plant and equipment. Did this tax credit cost? No, it paid for itself many times over.

The entire state of Arkansas is now essentially one large enterprise zone with its respective tax credits incentive. Local municipalities, with the help of voters, are now able to finance their respective campaigns to build the brick and mortar social capital necessary to attract industry. Other incentive and loan programs favor small businesses, daycare centers and the Delta.

The wide range of tax exemptions that are offered in Arkansas include:

- Utilities used for qualifying agricultural structures and qualifying aquaculture and horticulture equipment
- Sales of dental appliances to or by a dentist, orthodontist, oral surgeon, maxillofacial surgeon, or endodontist
- The first $50,000 of the purchase price of eligible purchases of timber harvesting equipment
Utilities used for commercial grain drying and storage

Other tax incentives include:

- A partial refund of 1% of the state sales and use tax paid on the purchase of machinery and equipment or replacement parts purchased to modify, replace or repair existing manufacturing machinery and equipment and some associated labor costs

- A reduction of the state sales and use tax rate for electricity and natural gas used in manufacturing by certain eligible manufacturers

A study of tax and fee policy, along with a conservative approach to tax increases, shows that the tax climate in Searcy is reasonable for locating in the city. Specifically, there is a 6.5% state sales tax, a 1.5% county sales tax, and a 1.5% city sales tax.

The 40.6 mills real estate tax (based on 20% of assessed value) computes to an effective tax rate per $1,000 of market value of $7.62. There is a state personal income tax with variable rates of 1% to 7% of net income and a corporate income tax of 6.5% of net income in excess of $100,000.

At just over $21,500, White County per capita pre-tax income typically is about 98% of the state average, or 77% of the national average. Interestingly, after adjusting for comparative living costs and taxes of all types, some of the seemingly affluent states have slipped toward the bottom of the list, according to estimates of relative purchasing power.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2012</th>
<th>White County</th>
<th>Arkansas</th>
<th>U.S.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Income per capita</td>
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<tr>
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<td>$181,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population growth since 2000</td>
<td>14.76%</td>
<td>9.07%</td>
<td>9.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median income growth since 2000</td>
<td>28.59%</td>
<td>25.94%</td>
<td>26.32%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Searcy of Yesteryear

Searcy, the county seat and largest city in White County, was originally known as White Sulphur Springs, named for the natural springs in the area that have since run dry. It established itself as a city in 1836, when John Howerton and his wife opened the first store, along with a little inn. Soon after them came “Uncle Billy” Jones who opened a grocery store, and M.M. Morris who operated the county’s first steam mill and the town’s second blacksmith shop.

When it was appointed county seat on November 23rd, 1837, it was officially named Searcy in honor of Richard Searcy, a judge for the Superior Court of the Arkansas Territory. A few years later in 1849, the first steamboat docked at the point where Gin and Deener Creeks empty out into the Little Red River. The point became known as “Searcy Landing,” currently near the 14th green of the River Oaks Golf Course, and probably a final resting place for some Union Army soldiers.

That same year, the first school opened in Searcy. It was called the “Polytechnic Institute, Incorporated.” In the years following, business and infrastructure grew significantly and on August 6, 1851, the city was officially incorporated. W.B. Carter migrated from Virginia and opened a boot shop. Stephen Brundidge Sr. also came to Searcy with a brick-making machine. Using clay from the riverbank he started to build brick buildings, some of which still stand today. James C. Holland was the first doctor to come to Searcy in 1853.

Israel Moore, who had traveled west from Philadelphia, was in charge of laying out Searcy’s original streets. The major streets of Searcy were named for those of downtown Philadelphia near
Independence Hall; Race, Arch, Market, Vine, Spring. For the cross streets, he chose various types of trees, including Cherry, Spruce, Locust and Pine.

During the American Civil War, the Battle of Whitney’s Lane was fought near Searcy, though the exact site is disputed. At the outbreak of the Civil War, Searcy had a population of 700. However, the following is noted in Raymond Lee Muncy’s bicentennial book, Searcy, Arkansas: A Frontier Town Grows Up With America (must reading):

Federal troops some twenty thousand strong camped on the north side of Little Red River from Prospect Bluff (Judsonia) to Searcy Landing and sent out companies of men to scout the countryside around Searcy.

In 1877, relates Dr. Muncy, Belle Isbelle commented on Searcy’s progress and predicted a promising future:

Now we can boast of good schools, churches and other magnificent buildings. Our schools cannot be excelled anywhere in the West. It is true that our school houses, church houses, and hotels are comfortable, but not first class buildings, but we anxiously look forward to no very distant day when Searcy will bloom like the rose. New and magnificent colleges, church houses and hotels will be reared instead of the old ones. Then we can begin to realize that our beautiful city is reaching her future destiny.
4. Our Town Today

Indeed, the predictions of Belle Isbelle proved to be accurate. During World War II Searcy’s population increased dramatically from 3,670 in 1940 to over 5,000 in 1950, and continues to grow, increasing over twenty percent since 2000.

Geographically, White County is the second largest county in this state. Searcy is the largest community in the county with a population of over 27,000, and is also the county seat. Searcy, Arkansas, one of Arkansas’ prominent hometowns, is a thriving trade center of commerce and agribusiness. The economy of Searcy works because White Countians work hard. The composite Searcian appreciates the opportunity to have a good job. He wants to help his company grow; quality consciousness is a way of life.

The Arkansas Economic Development Commission (AEDC), which has repeatedly certified the town as an Arkansas Community of Excellence (ACE), cites Searcy 96th out of 540 of Arkansas’ faster growing cities. Searcy is a major manufacturing, distribution, education, and health care hub for north central Arkansas.

The community is a desirable place to live and work amid natural beauty free from urban pressures. Most future jobs may come from small business, light manufacturing, food processing, tourism, technology, services. The most significant customer for small business is big business. So, Searcy will continue to attract some capital intensive firms requiring greater worker skill levels.

Over three dozen federal, state, and local government offices are headquartered in Searcy. The government of White County is administered by
the Quorum Court, the county’s elected officials. The current Arkansas Constitution provides for the traditional executive, legislative, and judicial type of government.

The City of Searcy operates under a Mayor-Council form of government. The Mayor serves a four-year term and is responsible for management of all the city’s departments and funds. Eight Aldermen serve two-year terms. City administration is with Council approval.

Searcy is a likely area of the state for future commercial development. Connected to Little Rock, the state’s economic nerve center, by 50 miles of super highway, Searcy is increasingly becoming a bedroom community for Little Rock.

The state of Arkansas has a “Free Port” law, which applies to finished inventories maintained by manufacturers located within the state and stored in warehouses in transit through Arkansas to destinations outside the state. Recently, the City Council passed a resolution to allow an Enterprise Zone to be activated in the city.

In 2014, an additional 1% sales tax was implemented, set to sunset after eight years. This revenue will make possible significant and necessary improvements in a multitude of areas that impact citizens’ daily lives. The tax includes purchase of new vehicles and equipment for the street, fire, sanitation, and police departments, along with drainage improvements, construction projects, and new recreational opportunities.
The funds are allocated as follows:

The city is served by more than 200 workers in Street, Sanitation, Code Enforcement, Parks and Recreation, White County Regional Library, Searcy Municipal Airport, Animal Control, Engineering and Information Technology Departments.

Residents of Searcy enjoy a variety of services that make living here clean, safe, and convenient. The Sanitation Department provides twice-weekly trash pickup, free brush and junk removal, and special pickup for heavy items and hazardous chemicals.

The Searcy Recycle Center is one of only six electronic recycling locations in the state, accepting over 1,650,000 pounds of recyclable material per year, generating thousands of dollars for the city. The Center picks up recyclables weekly, or materials can be dropped off. A commercial shredder is also available. Items are accepted such as TVs, VHS and DVD players, computers, computer hardware, cameras, cell phones, and fax machines. E-Cycling prevents hazardous materials contained in many of these items from contaminating soil, ground water, and the air.
Communication is also a priority for the city. The 2014 addition of a new sports station, KRZS-AM, “The Champion,” brought the total to eight radio stations located in White County:

- KAWW ------- 1370 AM
- KEAZ------- 100.7 FM
- KFLI ------ 104.7 FM
- KOAR ------- 101.5 FM
- KRZS------- 1300 AM
- KSMD------- 99.1 FM
- KVHU------- 95.3 FM
- 1660 AM
- 99.9 FM

Searcy is served by seven television stations out of Little Rock and scores of additional stations through a wide choice of cable and satellite providers.

Computer users looking for additional information on Searcy can go online to www.searcy.com. Two daily newspapers are available: The Daily Citizen, the oldest continuously operating paper west of the Mississippi, (www.thedailycitizen.com) and the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, also an excellent and well-respected statewide print publication (www.arkansasonline.com).

Searcy is truly a diverse community, connecting its citizens with over 50 churches, and 120 civic, professional, and interest groups.
5. Infrastructure


U.S. Hwy 67/167 is a modern, four lane, divided highway running through the south-eastern part of Searcy. It serves as the corridor to Little Rock to the south and Jonesboro to the north. Little Rock, St. Louis, and Dallas are directly accessible on U.S. 67. Memphis, Tulsa, and Oklahoma City are reached via U.S. 64. U.S. Highways 64 and 67 actually bypass Searcy, eliminating through traffic and reducing accidents and noise.

There are currently four major access points (exits) off of U.S. 67 into Searcy, and a fifth exit will be available with the completion of the Hwy 13 Loop. U.S. 67/167 also leads to U.S. Hwy 64 with Memphis, Tennessee to the east and Oklahoma City, Oklahoma to the west.

In 2015, the completed extension of Arkansas State Highway 13 will run from the intersection of Highway 267 to Highway 67/167, known as the Connector Route creating a “loop around the city.” This new route will improve traffic flows, reduce congestion in the downtown area, and will contribute to the convenience and safety of the thousands that travel through and around the city.

In addition, the connector route will serve as a tremendous new “economic engine” for the area and its construction has, and will, create many new short and long term jobs. It will bring the city and surrounding areas a boost in economic and business development and growth, and will open up new areas for business and residential development.
State Highway 36 is a five lane road running east and west through the center of Searcy. The southern border of the campus of Harding University lies along a section of this highway. A widened and improved State Highway 16 exits Searcy to the northwest and leads to Heber Springs, an area of abundant outdoor recreational opportunities.

Commercial air flights are available in and out of Little Rock, just 50 miles south. Searcy is home to one of Arkansas’s best general aviation airports, serving charter and business air flights that originate from all fifty states and Canada, bringing businessmen and families to visit the area.

The Searcy Municipal Airport, owned and operated by the City of Searcy, is also considered one of the fastest growing airports in the state. Guiding this growth is a 20-year master plan. A new terminal was opened in 2013 as part of a multi-million dollar improvement program that resulted in a 6,008 by 100 foot precision instrument runway with a full instrument landing system and the latest in a new weather system.

Approximately 100 passengers pass through the facility each day, and annually, more than 31,000 take offs and touch downs occur on its runways. Over 100 aircraft are based there that provide corporate and private business operations. It also serves charter flights, fire-fighting, medical transplant and rescue operations, as well as training for fixed wing and rotor craft.
The airport can handle virtually all types of business aircraft. Flight instruction is available, along with an interior upholstery shop, a maintenance shop, and a variety of aircraft available for rent.

Searcy is served by a complete rail system for freight transportation through a local company, the Shortline Doniphan, Kensett, and Searcy Railroad. There are 7.1 miles of track which connect 4 miles east with the Missouri Pacific Railroad’s main line at Kensett. The Union Pacific Railroad is 2.89 miles to the east of the DK & S. Five major freight lines, with two terminal facilities, provide service to major points surrounding Searcy.

The largest police department in the county, the Searcy Police Department has 46 officers along with two grant funded positions, for a total of 48 police officers. The department operates 50 vehicles, and is also equipped for bicycle and motorcycle patrols. There are five divisions: Dispatch, Patrol, Criminal Investigation, Support, and Narcotics. The Searcy Police Department also operates the Central Arkansas Drug Task Force serving the counties of White, Lonoke, and Prairie.

The Searcy Fire Department consists of three fire stations, three pumper trucks, one aerial truck and several back-up apparatus. The Searcy Fire Department became an Accredited Agency through the Center of Public Safety Excellence in March 2009, and achieved the Insurance Service Office (ISO) Class 1 rating in November 2010, and again in 2014 by the Commission on Fire
Accreditation International, making Searcy one of only nine fire departments in the world that is accredited with an Insurance Services Offices class 1 rating. Together, these put the Searcy Fire Department in the top one percent of fire departments in the nation.

The department consists of 52 career line personnel, two paid per call personnel, and five staff personnel. The SFD provides fire suppression, rescue, hazardous materials response, and emergency medical services as first responders.

In his 2015 State of the City address, Searcy Mayor David Morris stated that all city departments and services are continuously “sustaining good and efficient operation, and that city leaders will continue to make tweaks and adjustments from time to time to better refine the city’s daily operations.” Morris also said that the effectiveness of city government lies with its people and not just with its equipment.
6. Progressive Leadership

In 2014, the United States Chamber of Commerce again named the Searcy Regional Chamber of Commerce an accredited organization, an honor bestowed on only about four percent of Chambers in the country. Their mission is clear: to do whatever is necessary to keep the area’s economic condition at a level where businesses will risk their resources here in hope of making a profit.

In Searcy, as in any other city, the profitable operation of business is the source of all other benefits. Only by succeeding in this fundamental goal can the Searcy Chamber provide the jobs and produce the wealth to finance all the governmental, civic, educational, cultural and charitable needs that a city is faced with every day.

The Searcy Regional Chamber of Commerce is a catalyst— a common vehicle through which business and professional people work together for the corporate good of the community. Accordingly, the Chamber Board developed a Master Plan of 24 goals to promote sound economic growth for business and agriculture, along with efforts to improve the economic wellbeing and quality of life for all residents.

The Searcy Chamber’s Leadership Program identifies and motivates potential leaders, acquaints them with community needs, problems and opportunities, offers a forum of exchange of
alternative methods for dealing with those needs, problems and opportunities, and challenges potential leaders with community involvement and decision making. The Chamber’s “Business After Hours” program has become a popular place to gather, socialize and exchange information in the Searcy business community.

Additionally, Searcy’s Chamber supports the Searcy Public Schools by encouraging involvement and interaction of business leaders. The Chamber supports financial needs and requirements necessary for quality education programs. It also maintains good relationships, works with and supports Harding University, Arkansas State University–Searcy, Arkansas Technological Institute and Arkansas State University–Beebe.

Simultaneously, area chambers of commerce in the Natural State, with private sector encouragement, launched leadership institutes. These forward-looking institutes identified and motivated potential leaders, acquainted them with community needs, problems and opportunities, offered a forum of exchange of alternative methods for dealing with those needs, problems and opportunities, and challenged potential leaders with community involvement and decision-making.

These efforts have resulted in frequent recognition of Searcy. The Arkansas Historic Preservation Program biannually presents the Main Street Arkansas award to people and projects in Arkansas in recognition of outstanding achievements by individuals, organizations and communities in helping to revitalize their downtown areas. Searcy received this award in 2014 for the Best Total Building Renovation.
A program of civic development has been sparked by the enthusiastic support of the Searcy Regional Chamber of Commerce. Industry has been attracted to the city by its progressiveness and interest which is evidenced by financial support of new industry through the Searcy Regional Economic Development Corporation.

The Searcy Regional Economic Development Corporation (SREDC) “100 For the Future” is an organization made up of a group of business and professional people who are concerned with the economic and industrial growth of Searcy and White County. The “100 For the Future” organization helps subsidize the economic development efforts of the SREDC. Current membership stands at 113 and each contributes a minimum of $250 annually.

The SREDC is the policy-making organization for the industrial development efforts of Searcy and is responsible for the overall economic development efforts. The SREDC may purchase, lease, rent or sell and receive bequests or donations of real or personal property. They can enter into contracts, borrow money and issue bonds in the establishment or expansion of an industry.

The goals of the SREDC are:

1) To attract new employers and to expand existing industries and business.
2) Identify strengths and weaknesses of Searcy and the trade area and then work to build upon the strengths and correct the weaknesses.
3) Work to improve communication and cooperation between governmental agencies on city, county, state and federal levels, and to involve the business com-
munity, educational institutions, cultural organizations and the citizens in working toward creation of a better Searcy.

4) Seek to expand the base of financial support for economic development, realizing that all citizens benefit from sound, planned economic growth.

5) Actively seek both large and small industry for Searcy. Activities include seeking new business development, encouraging local business expansion and retention, collecting and maintaining data, responding to prospect inquiries, meeting with industrial prospects, marketing and sales, advocating infrastructure development and coordination of economic development efforts.

For additional information on the Searcy Regional Chamber of Commerce, go to www.searcychamber.com, and for information on the SREDC, visit www.arkansasedc.com.
Industry is a vital part of Searcy’s success. From its earliest days, industrious entrepreneurs have settled in Searcy, bringing their ideas and desire to produce and distribute goods that benefit not only the city, but the region, and indeed, the world. Today’s strategic focus on industry growth was especially keen as early as the 1970’s, as cited by Raymond Muncy in *Searcy, Arkansas: A Frontier Town Grows Up with America*:

Searcy’s established industries continued to prosper for the most part in the 1970s. The Searcy formula which attracted attention in Arkansas was S L + C C C = G & P: Sound Leadership plus Concerned, Cooperative Citizens equals Growth and Progress.

Searcy is the home for many industrial facilities, including Bryce, Eaton, ElectroCraft, Land O’Frost, Matthews International, Conway Manufacturing, Schulze and Burch Biscuit Company, Walmart Distribution Centers (2), and Yarnell’s Ice Cream Company.

Producing such products as filters, packaging, plastics, freight trailers, food products, electric motors, hydraulic valves, and many other high-demand products, these companies contribute significantly to the city’s economy. More than 10 percent of the county’s 33,000 plus workforce is employed in manufacturing or distribution.

The Bryce Corporation has invested more than $100 million in capital improvements over the last decade, and they recycle more than 99 percent of materials from their facility. Walmart’s significant Searcy presence has resulted in frequent recog-
nition, including multiple Distribution Center of the Year awards, the “Helen R. Walton Community Award,” and the Safety Center of the Year.

Natural gas exploration has impacted the local economy in the Fayetteville Shale Play. BHP Billiton, Halliburton, and Southwestern Energy have significant presence in the area and have become ingrained with their financial investment and community involvement. Each company has invested millions of dollars through royalties, leasing options, employment and financial contributions.

Industrial sites are available at about $30,000 per acre. Average construction costs are approximately $36.00 per square foot (minimum $18.00). Average lease cost per square foot is $10.00. Available in Searcy’s Industrial Park is a 10-inch water line, a 14-inch sewer line, and electric primary lines which run from the Entergy Substation. The sewer system is very ample with a 30% surplus capacity. Gas lines and railroad sidings are also available.

Future growth into the mid-south will probably come from the continued migration of manufacturing, and private-service industries to take advantage of our region’s relatively lower wages, taxes, energy costs, land costs, and mild climate. The national population is also expected to increase significantly in our region.

While focused on industrial growth, Searcians are equally committed to the environment. To jump-start its efforts, the Searcy Regional Cham-
ber of Commerce developed a special initiative called “Searcy Energy Smart” with help from a committee made up of 38 community leaders and representatives from the state energy office and the University of Arkansas.

The mission of Searcy Energy Smart is to save energy and reduce the environmental impact of the city and the surrounding area, through education and energy efficiency programs. That mission also led Searcy to being named the 2013 Arkansas Business City of Distinction winner of the Green Initiatives category for cities with populations greater than 20,000.

Since August 2012, Searcy Energy Smart has made an impact on the city’s financial and environmental success. The implementation of the initiative has resulted in $571,000 in one-time cash incentives being invested in energy efficiency improvements to local households and businesses, with a further $409,600 in utility bill savings through 2013, and even more potential to grow to over $4 million.

Also worth noting is the major reduction of CO₂ emissions by 3.7 million pounds. Over 870 tons of newspaper, cardboard, plastic, paper and tin have been recycled in Searcy.
8. Economic Development Incentives

Recently, CNBC ranked Arkansas as the 20th best state for business, with the 2nd lowest cost of doing business, 5th lowest cost of living, 11th best workforce, 20th best economic climate, 28th best educated workforce, 31st best infrastructure and the 32nd friendliest regulatory environment.

According to Buck Layne, Searcy Regional Chamber of Commerce president, “The economy is good [in Searcy] because we have such a diverse economy. Our medical, educational, retail, agriculture and housing markets are paramount to the economy.”

"Small town” does not always mean small business. Searcy is home to Arkansas’ 4th largest bank, 10th largest medical center, 14th largest commercial property management firm, and 13th most successful real estate sales teams.

A more recent economic boom has been the exploration of the Fayetteville Shale Play. Millions of dollars resulting from employment, leasing options, and royalties have been brought into the region, contributing to Searcy’s economic growth.

Business leaders and economic development professionals in 12 Central Arkansas counties have joined together to form the Metro Little Rock Alliance (MLRA). Promoted as the “New Center of the South”, the 12 county area (known as the Little Rock Metro Region) includes a population of approximately one million people.

MLRA markets the region nationally and internationally in an effort to recruit site consultants and business leaders to consider the MLRA metropolitan area. “Economic development,”
according to the Arkansas Economic Development Council (AEDC), may, in fact, be one of the most commonly discussed, but least understood, issues. As the AEDC has pointed out, we all want economic development. Without it, our children move away, our towns die, and roads deteriorate.

The first step in the economic development process begins with the local community. The AEDC is correct in reminding us that no federal or state government program, however well-meaning or well-planned, can be effective in economic development without the initial commitment and efforts of the local community to the creation and maintenance of jobs.

Neighboring states are aggressively recruiting industrial growth. To meet that competition, Arkansas offers many economic incentives to attract and retain industry. These are summarized, in part, as follows:

TAX INCENTIVES

- Tax Back (Sales and Use Tax Refund) Program -- Provides sales and use tax refunds on the purchase of building materials and taxable machinery and equipment to qualified businesses investing at least $100,000.
- InvestArk (Sales and Use Tax Credit) -- Available to businesses established in Arkansas for two years or longer which invest $5 million or more at a single location in plant or equipment for new construction, expansion, or modernization.

JOB CREATION INCENTIVES

Arkansas’ job creation incentives are based on payroll and use a tier system based on poverty rate, unemployment rate, per capita personal in-
come and population growth to determine qualification criteria and benefits.

- Advantage Arkansas -- Offers a state income tax credit for job creation based on the payroll of new, full-time, permanent employees hired as a result of a project.

DISCRETIONARY INCENTIVES

Additional incentives are negotiated by AEDC on a case-by-case basis in highly competitive situations.

- Create Rebate Program -- Provides annual cash payments based on a company’s annual payroll for new, full-time, permanent employees.

- ArkPlus -- A state income tax credit program providing tax credits of 10% of the total investment in a new location or expansion project. ArkPlus requires both a minimum investment and a minimum payroll of new, full-time, permanent employees hired as a result of a project.

TARGETED BUSINESS INCENTIVES

Qualified targeted businesses may be offered special incentives designed to help new, knowledge-based, start-up businesses in one of six targeted emerging technology sectors:

1. Advanced materials and manufacturing systems

2. Agriculture, food and environmental sciences

3. Information technology

4. Biotechnology, bioengineering and life sciences
5. Transportation logistics

6. Bio-based products

These incentives provide:

- A refund of sales and use taxes paid on the purchase of building materials and machinery and equipment associated with the approved project.

- A transferable income tax credit equal to 10% of payroll for up to five years.

- A transferable income tax credit equal to 33% of eligible research and development expenditures.

SPECIAL INCENTIVES

- Sales and Use Tax Refund for Targeted Businesses -- Provides a refund of sales and use taxes paid on the purchases of building materials and taxable machinery and equipment associated with the approved project for targeted businesses investing at least $100,000.

- Payroll Income Tax Credit for Targeted Businesses -- Assists start-up businesses in targeted sectors that pay significantly more than the state or county average wage of the county in which the business locates. The benefit for a qualifying targeted business is a 10% income tax credit based on its annual payroll.

- Payroll Rebate for Targeted Businesses -- Targeted businesses with payrolls exceeding $250,000 may be offered rebates of five percent of payroll for up to ten years.
Targeted ArkPlus -- Businesses creating new payroll exceeding $250,000 may be offered income or sales and use tax credits based upon investment.

RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT INCENTIVES

Arkansas’s Research and Development incentive programs are intended to provide incentives for university-based research, in-house research, and research and development in start-up, technology-based enterprises.

- University Based Research and Development -- An eligible business that contracts with one or more Arkansas colleges or universities in performing research may qualify for a 33% income tax credit for qualified research expenditures.

- In-House Research and Development -- New and existing eligible businesses that conduct in-house research that qualifies for federal research and development tax credits may qualify for in-house research income tax credits.

- Research and Development in Area of Strategic Value -- For qualifying businesses investing in in-house research in an area of strategic value, or a research and development project offered by the Arkansas Science and Technology Authority.

R&D TAX INCENTIVES

- In-House Research by a Targeted Business -- Income tax credits equal to 33% of the qualified research and development expenditures incurred each year for up to five years.
ADDITIONAL INCENTIVES

• Equity Investment Incentive Program -- a discretionary incentive targeted toward new, technology-based businesses paying wages in excess of the state or county average wage. This program allows an approved business to offer an income tax credit to investors purchasing an equity investment in the business.

• Arkansas Tourism Development Act -- Provides state sales and use tax credits and income tax credits to businesses initiating approved tourism attraction projects.

• Digital Production/Film -- Financial incentives to foster the development of the digital and traditional film industry in Arkansas allowing for a rebate of 20% of eligible expenditures for approved projects.

• Tuition Reimbursement -- A 30% state income tax credit to eligible companies for reimbursements they make on behalf of employees for approved educational expenses.

• Child Care Facilities -- Tax incentives for businesses that provide childcare for their employees.

• Recycling Equipment -- An income tax credit for the purchase of equipment used exclusively for reduction, reuse or recycling of solid waste material for commercial purposes, whether or not for profit, and the cost of installation of such equipment by outside contractors.

Entergy Corporation noted that many factors enter into the fight for industry in the area:
• Labor force (including skills of employees and the wages the employees will demand)
• Transportation
• Proximity to customers and raw materials
• A business climate that makes it easy to operate
• Energy costs
• Availability of existing “spec” buildings for prospects

Continued economic and industrial growth is vital to the quality of life in our state and for the future of our children. Therefore, the Entergy Corporation announced 30 years ago their program, “Teamwork Arkansas,” a $10-15 million commitment to creating more jobs for the state. “Teamwork Arkansas” represented a coordinated private sector commitment to support public efforts through a plan to address specific goals and needs in the areas of industrial prospecting, community development, and national advertising and public relations.

Administered through the Entergy Corporation Marketing Department, “Teamwork Arkansas” worked in concert with the AEDC, the state and local chambers of commerce, and other groups dedicated to Arkansas’ future. It incorporated the findings from in-depth research in studies initiated by the report of the “Jobs for Arkansas’ Future” committee, which provided with key guideposts in directing economic development efforts.

Economic development may begin with the local community, but it cannot end there. As the AEDC has noted, it is no longer adequate to just be a “nice place to live.” But it is a good start, for sure.
9. Manufacturing

Many people believe that the manufacturing sector is becoming less important to the Arkansas economy. Actually, just the opposite is true. Manufacturing is very important to Arkansas as a generator of jobs and income.

Manufacturers in Arkansas account for over 16 percent of the total output in the state (GSP), employing 14 percent of the workforce. Total output from manufacturing was $15.6 billion in 2012. Manufacturing compensation, averaging $55,000 per year, is more than $16,000 higher than other private non-farm employers in the state.

Arkansas' percentage of workforce in manufacturing is sixth in the nation. That may seem to make it more vulnerable to swings in the business cycle. However, the state is diversified into recession-resistant industries.

As Arkansas counts manufacturing as one of its major economic factors, each newcomer is accompanied by certain basic needs for housing, services, and retail establishments, to name just three. According to the NAM, for every $1.00 spent in manufacturing, another $1.32 is added to the economy, the highest multiplier effect of any economic sector.

Business is good in Arkansas, and it will get better as new jobs create new needs, which in turn create more new jobs. Such are the makings of real opportunities. Over half the employees in manufacturing in Arkansas live in communities with a population of less than 2,500.

The personal income derived from manufacturing has a great impact. Without these payrolls, says the AEDC, many communities would face
difficult economic times. The local and state tax bases would erode, leading to declining services and fewer educational opportunities.

The impact of manufacturing jobs is highly significant when total earnings are examined. According to the Arkansas State Chamber, for every 100 new manufacturing jobs created in a community, 64 non-manufacturing jobs are created: 45 jobs in wholesale and retail, entertainment and recreation; seven jobs in transportation; three in finance, insurance and real estate; three in repairs and services; three in construction; and three in public administration.

All manufacturing employees earn about $6 billion; $4 billion are injected into small towns, as 60% of our manufacturing workers come from small towns. It is fair to assume that without these paychecks, many small towns would languish and lose population.

Manufacturing and Distribution plays a vital role in Searcy’s economy. Approximately 10% of the workforce is employed in these areas. The community was thrilled when one of its oldest manufacturers, the Yarnell Ice Cream Company, was acquired by Schulze and Burch Biscuit Company in 2012. Yarnells had been family owned and operated in Searcy from 1932 until 2011. Under the new ownership, they began production using the original recipes and many former employees.

Searcy’s industry is diversified. It is a distribution center for Walmart, the nation’s largest discount chain. Searcy-made pumps, hydraulic valves, steering booster assemblies, bronze memorials, frozen foods, food industry packaging, AC and DC small electric motors, cereal bars, crackers, toaster pastries, and fruit snacks, freight
trailers, industrial roller rubber, industrial grade solenoids, valves and coil windings, leather products, feeds, and other articles are shipped to distant corners of the world.

In Arkansas, perhaps as in no other state, it is appropriate to observe that population growth and economic development have become one of those “Which came first-- the chicken or the egg?” propositions. All newcomers do indeed arrive complete with multiple needs for housing, services, and retail establishments, etc.

Like a developing country, the south has reached the “takeoff” stage of its economic growth. The south has been an underdeveloped region in the past, but it is catching up; it has a better growth potential than many other regions of the country.
10. Retail Sector

Searcy is a convenient distance for 10 nearby counties to travel for shopping, health care, recreation, and dining. In the last decade, retail sales in Searcy have increased about 30 percent. There are many reasons for doing business in Searcy. Most shoppers’ needs can be fulfilled, and by doing business in the community, the sales tax dollars come back to the city to maintain the many services.

Searcy has a vital downtown area which forms a town square around the oldest active courthouse west of the Mississippi River. Since joining the Main Street Arkansas program in 2005, this historic downtown has seen a gain in new and relocating businesses, growth in retail sales and an overall increase in pedestrian traffic. There are a variety of major retail anchors in several shopping centers located throughout the city. Most amenities are within a 20-minute drive from one side of town to the other. Local merchants are eager to help newcomers and provide personal service to make visitors feel welcome.

Shoppers are friends and neighbors to local business people. Businesses support the activities which interest the public. Shoppers receive personal attention and courteous service. Shopping is easy, comfortable, and safe in Searcy. One can save time and money when buying here. The local business people are reliable and dependable. Consumers find great selection and variety of services in Searcy stores:
• convenient shopping facilities accessible to a large trade area
• a large array of fabrics
• ladies’ ready-to-wear
• men’s clothing
• fine shoe stores
• children’s shops
• bridal and formal attire
• cosmetics and cosmetologists
• department stores and discount houses providing thousands of items and nationally known brands
• jewelry stores with exquisite gems, watches, crystal and silver
• professional florists
• antique shops providing yesteryear décor
• supermarkets open 24 hours a day
• appliance stores with televisions, computers, video equipment and DVD’s
• modern machinery and equipment for farm and home
• automobile dealers with excellent new and used car bargains
• automotive and farm implement parts, and skilled mechanics and technicians

Excellent commercial banks serve the financial needs of Searcy and White County. Most of these institutions have branch offices as well. Many of the banks, and also representatives of a few securities firms, provide financial planning and access to the securities markets for individuals and companies. Searcy features over 30 insurance agencies to meet the needs of area residents.
Searcy has many excellent realtors to assist with a move to the county. There is a very fine legal community in Searcy. About 80 restaurants are located within the city limits of Searcy. Restaurants in Searcy are predominately the fast food variety, although there are at least 25 full service restaurants.

Seventeen facilities are capable of handling meetings or banquets arranging up to as many as 1,000 people, in the case of the Harding University Cafeteria. Private cab, chauffer, and medical transportation services are available.
11. Labor Force Demographics

As of the 2010 census, White County has a population of 77,000, which is 14.76% more than it was in 2000. The population growth rate is much higher than the state average rate of 9.07% and the national average rate of 9.71%. The population of 77,000 makes it the 10th largest county in the state, and the county seat, Searcy, has the largest population in the county, with about 24,000 residents. Fifty-four percent of the county is classified as rural.

There are about 33,000 people in White County’s labor market; 54% male and 46% female. The population and civilian labor force are growing about 2% a year. The recruiting area covers a 35 mile radius and includes six adjoining counties. Another benefit for Searcy workers is convenience. A commuting pattern survey of representatives of Searcy employees shows that 70% travel 10 miles or less to work.

Arkansas is one of 24 states which has passed the Right to Work Law (RTW). The 24 states which ban compulsory unionism continue to out-distance the 26 states which do not have Right to Work Laws. Since 1990, most states with fastest wage growth are RTW. Right-To-Work states make up eight of the top 10 states for employment growth.
White Countians are employed in the following percentages:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>32,776</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Male:</strong></td>
<td>17,760</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management, business, science, and arts</td>
<td>4,023</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>2,451</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales and office</td>
<td>2,888</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural resources, construction, and maintenance</td>
<td>4,113</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production, transportation, and material moving</td>
<td>4,285</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Female:</strong></td>
<td>15,016</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management, business, science, and arts</td>
<td>4,877</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>3,225</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales and office</td>
<td>5,873</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural resources, construction, and maintenance</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production, transportation, and material moving</td>
<td>908</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Business is good in Arkansas, and it will get better as new jobs create new needs, which, in turn, create more new jobs. Such are the makings of real opportunities. In fact, based on migration patterns, economic growth, and other factors, job growth in Searcy could grow 28% by 2025.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sales, office, administrative support</td>
<td>28.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production, transportation, material moving</td>
<td>11.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education, library</td>
<td>9.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food preparation, serving</td>
<td>9.13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management, business, finance</td>
<td>9.02%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction, extraction, maintenance/repair</td>
<td>8.92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare practitioners and technology</td>
<td>6.31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering, computers, science</td>
<td>4.04%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal care</td>
<td>4.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts, design, media, sports, entertainment</td>
<td>1.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building maintenance</td>
<td>1.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firefighters, law enforcement</td>
<td>1.42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare support</td>
<td>1.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community, social services</td>
<td>1.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal</td>
<td>0.84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farming, fishing, forestry</td>
<td>0.04%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
12. Harding University and Harding Academy

Harding University in Searcy is a Christian, liberal arts, co-educational senior university. With an enrollment of about 6,300 students from 50 states and 50 foreign countries, it is the largest private university in the state.

Harding is also a high-demand university that has been listed in recent issues of three national directories: Peterson’s Guide to Competitive Colleges, Best Dollar Values in American Colleges, and 200 Most Selective Colleges. For over 20 consecutive years, Harding has been ranked by U.S. News as one of the best universities in the South.

Harding aims to be non-sectarian in spirit and practice. It desires to admit students who are academically capable, who have high character, and who accept the aims and objectives of the University.

More than 100 undergraduate degrees with numerous sequences of specialization are offered, including 14 pre-professional programs. Over 25 graduate degrees including fully certified programs in Physical Therapy, Nursing, Pharmacy and Physician’s Assistant are also available, as well as Doctoral programs in Ministry and Education.

There are also seven international branch campuses:
• Harding University Latin America (HULA)
• Harding In Zambia (HIZ)
Harding University Australia (HUA)
Harding University England (HUE)
Harding University Florence (HUF)
Harding University Greece (HUG)
Harding In Paris (HIP)

Harding’s respected and accredited MBA program is the third-largest in the state. With a mission of Faith-based Learning for a Faith-based Life, the program seeks to improve leadership and management skills through a Christian faith-based M.B.A. program providing upward mobility and a competitive edge.

Harding recognizes the need for balance among work, family, church and community and strives to provide a flexible program that allows fulfillment in all aspects of life. Both classroom and online courses are available, allowing students to set their own pace. Evening continuing education and professional development classes are available in many other areas of study, along with summer courses.

Harding is a member of the NCAA Division II Great American Conference. Men’s teams include football, baseball, basketball, track, cross country, tennis, golf, and soccer. Women’s teams include basketball, cross country, golf, soccer, softball, tennis, track, and volleyball. Harding consistently leads the conference in the number of athletes selected for GAC All-Conference Academic awards.

Providing service to others on campus and in the Searcy community is a way of life at Harding. Named to the President’s Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll each year since 2008, the spirit of volunteering is exemplified through the student body, faculty and staff. More than 175,000 hours of community service have been given to Searcy and around the world each year.
A day of service, known as Bisons for Christ Day, is an annual event where Harding students roll up their sleeves and work with people in the community. Over 2,000 students participate each year on more than 150 projects around the city.

In addition to the Day of Service, students, faculty and staff are also involved each year with numerous other activities, including local, regional, and international disaster relief, and blood drives. For over 20 years, Harding has hosted the Special Olympics Summer Games of Arkansas. Nearly 2,000 athletes from areas around the state compete over the three-day event.

A 90-year history of educational excellence at Harding University has provided the atmosphere for free enterprise education in a nation that was founded upon Christian principles of faith, liberty and human dignity.

Harding University strives to enhance the appreciation of that heritage through the University’s American Studies Institute, its quality program in American citizenship education. Additionally, the Belden Center for Private Enterprise Education encourages appreciation of freedoms on which our country is built, by translating traditional values into practical education programs. The Belden Center emphasizes a particular area of economics-- the idea of freedom applied to the marketplace.

Additional information on the University can be found at www.harding.edu.
Harding Academy, a private Christian school for students in pre-school through 12th Grade, is fully accredited by three organizations: AdvancED Accreditation Commission, Arkansas Non-Public School Accrediting Association (ANSAA), and National Christian School Association (NCSA).

With Harding Academy’s enrollment of approximately 700 students, increasing numbers are coming from surrounding communities. Boarding facilities for Harding Academy are provided for a limited number of students in grades 9-12.

Academy students are high achievers. They regularly score significantly above state and national norms on standardized achievement tests, and more than 95% enter college upon graduation from high school. A co-operational program allows students to earn dual credit with Harding University, and over $2 million in scholarships are awarded each year.

Harding Academy attempts to promote Christian attitudes and ideals among the student body. All students are expected to adhere to a reasonable code of dress and conduct. High moral standards, respect, kindness, and courtesy are promoted by the faculty and student body. The majority of Harding Academy students have been raised with wholesome, positive Christian attitudes.

The quest for excellence spills over into every facet of Academy life. Athletic teams consistently win county and district championships in basketball football, softball, tennis, and track, with state
championships coming in baseball, basketball, cross country, football, golf, tennis, track, and volleyball.

The school’s chorus continually receives highest rating in state-wide competitions and has performed in 38 states and at Carnegie Hall. The art program consistently produces local and state winners. Harding Academy students also do well in competition in drama, music, speech, business games, and Future Business Leaders of America.

The Wildcat Robotics program, Team 3937 “Breakaway,” is focused on strengthening and refining skills, not only in the engineering field, but also public speaking, marketing, research and development. The program participates in FIRST® (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology), an international competition that combines all 50 states and numerous countries. Team 3937 has won two regional and world championships.

Wildcats International is a Harding Academy club designed to help foreign students adjust to the new culture around them, while also giving them the chance to share their culture with others. A number of additional clubs and organizations provide Harding Academy students with ample opportunities for academic, social, and spiritual development.
13. Harding’s Economic Impact

Harding University includes 50 buildings located on 350 acres of land comprising a $153 million campus physical plant. In the fall of 2014, Harding University marked the fifth consecutive year of enrolling more than 1,000 new students, with a total enrollment of approximately 6,100.

There are approximately 4,500 undergraduate and 1,600 graduate and professional students from 50 states and 44 foreign countries. A higher than average freshman to sophomore retention rate of 81.5 percent contributed to a record undergraduate enrollment for the fourth consecutive year. About 3,400 undergraduate students reside on campus.

Harding is recognized by Peterson’s Cool Colleges and has been ranked for 20 consecutive years by U.S. News & World Report as one of the South’s best universities in the magazine’s annual America’s Best College issue. The University is also recognized by Princeton Review as one of the best universities in the Southeast.

Enrolled in 96 bachelors and 23 graduate degree programs, Harding University and its students, provide a significant percentage of consumer spending in Searcy and White County. The 6,100 students now spend locally an estimated average of $1,500 each per year, totaling over $9 million. Harding Public Safety reports 3,750 student vehicles registered.

To assist the students in meeting the cost of private education, Harding University employs students in 2,000 part time positions, annually spending approximately $3 million in the Student...
Work Program. Harding University also has 850 full time employees and a $46 million annual payroll.

The overall 2014-2015 budget of Harding University is $118 million. If an economic multiplier of 2 is used (i.e. a mathematical constant times which any type of spending ripples through an economy to result in a greater change in a macro aggregate such as GDP), and factoring in the $9 million in average student expenditures, the campus generates about $250 million a year for the general economy.

Separate from the above estimates are offsetting factors: local revenue generated by visitors at major Harding functions (for example, some local restaurant managers and motel operators have noted a significant increase in revenue during the three-day Homecoming and Spring Sing weekends), and conversely, some individual and institutional expenditures which would not be classified as “local purchase.”

However, there are other ways that a university campus has economic impact on its region, such as assisting local industries. The Harding University campus increases the area’s attractiveness by providing a supply of well-trained people, additional cultural amenities, and more.

The previously mentioned nationally recognized and award winning American Studies Institute (ASI) complements the curriculum of the university with educationally beneficial presentations by internationally known authorities. Broadly, ASI also encompasses thousands of individuals and corporations who participate in the program each year. Bringing prominent lecturers to the Harding campus, the ASI Distinguished Lectureship Series
was recently touted as “....one of the most prestigious lecture series in the south” by Wall Street Journal Senior Editorial Board Member Stephen Moore, speaking to Arkansas Business.

A unique approach to citizenship education in contemporary national and international affairs, the ASI Lecture Series offers insight into current trends in political and economic development affecting the American way of life. A recent keynote speaker was Dr. Ben Carson.

Guests of the American Studies Institute Conference Center in the David B. Burks American Heritage Center can attend sessions in the 500-seat Heritage Auditorium or in one of five multi-purpose rooms. In addition, banquet rooms are designed to accommodate groups ranging from 100 to 1000. Located in the same building, the Heritage Inn provides 100 guests with easily accessible lodging during their visit to Harding.

The 3,686-seat George S. Benson Auditorium is a modern, well-equipped venue for concerts, theater productions, and community events. Frequent performances by popular performers, speeches by national and world leaders, and other events bring visitors to the campus from around the state.

At the eastern edge of the campus of Harding University is Harding Place, a Christian independent living retirement community. It consists of 115 residential units with the choice of studio, one, or two bedroom suites. Each unit has a fully-equipped kitchen, 24-hour emergency response system, and community medical facilities. Three meals are provided daily, along with regularly scheduled housekeeping service and courtesy van transportation.
14. Public Schools

The White County Central School District is composed of 27 separate schools distributed in 11 cities, with each possessing a complete educational system. Searcy has the largest enrollment in the county. The Searcy Special School District is made up of six schools, employing approximately 450 persons and has a total enrollment of about 4,300 students.

The Searcy Special School District seeks to prepare responsible, productive citizens in schools where the abilities of every child are understood, nurtured, and developed. The Board of Directors emphasizes that students should complete school in full possession of skills, knowledge, and insights necessary for responsible, productive participation in society. Consequently, the board has adopted the following educational outcomes for students in graduating from the 12th grade in the Searcy Special School District:

- Mastery of reading, writing, listening and speaking skills, mathematics computation, scientific facts, critical and creative thinking, study skills, and problem solving strategies.
- Ability to use instructional technology tools at an effective, efficient level.
- Ability to use knowledge of historical, geographic, political, cultural, literary, and scientific information.
• Ability to locate and use needed information from print and non-print resources to expand knowledge and insights.

• Ability to be a self-directed lifelong learner, demonstrating self-respect, self-understanding, respect and tolerance for the view of others, and appreciation of arts and humanities.

All schools in the Searcy School District are fully accredited by the Arkansas Department of Education and AdvancED with no deficiencies. The Searcy School District’s motto is: Striving for Educational Excellence. This motto is demonstrated through specific criteria:

• The students in the Searcy School System consistently and significantly score above the national average on normed tests.

• The student/teacher ratio is 17/1.

• The grade levels are divided into elementary (K-3), middle school (4-6), junior high (7-8), and high school (9-12).

• An intensive computer technology program has been implemented throughout the school district.

• Searcy public schools spend $12,476 per student, more than the U.S. average of $12,435.

Searcy School District strives to provide a wide range of programs and services for students. These include Federal Entitlements (Title I and Title IIA), Gifted and Talented, Career/Technical Education, Special Education, Alternative Learning Environments, a behavioral program, English
as a Second Language (ESL), nutrition programs, and after school tutoring programs.

The Riverview School District consists of four schools, employing approximately 200 persons and has a total enrollment of about 1,400 students. The District’s motto is “Educating for Excellence by Reaching for Tomorrow, Today.”

Riverview School District seeks to produce graduates who are college and career ready with strong leadership skills, a social conscience, and the desire for continual growth. The District creates a collaborative culture of learning that attracts students and professionals because of their innovative curriculum and expansive opportunities for student success.

The District has the following core beliefs:

• All students can learn in order to be successful
• The greatest impact on improving education is effective teachers
• Education should be student-centered
• Education should be collaborative
• Parental and community involvement are essential
• School should be a safe and positive environment, reflecting the importance of quality character and strong discipline

All schools in the Riverview School District are fully accredited and score above average on state and national exams. The four campuses are
divided into the following grade configurations: two elementary schools (K-6), one junior high (7-8), and one high school (9-12). Riverview High School is a New Tech school with a 1-to-1 laptop initiative.

Numerous programs are available for student participation: After school tutoring/activities; several sports; vocational programs; robotics; competitive band and choir; food and clothing; alternative education; gifted and talented; English as a Second Language; as well as parent involvement.

Arkansas State University-Beebe offers a variety of options for students wanting to pursue an associate’s degree or technical certificate, transfer to a four-year university, or enter the workforce. Centrally located, the university has campuses in Beebe, Searcy, Heber Springs and the Little Rock Air Force Base.

With an average semester enrollment of more than 4,500 students, ASU-Beebe is the only two-year college in the state with residence halls for students. The Little Rock Air Force Base campus offers 8-week classes.

Arkansas State University-Searcy, a technical campus of ASU-Beebe, has a primary focus on technical and occupational programs for students who are working toward a technical certificate, a certificate of proficiency or an associate degree. The campus enrolls over 450 postsecondary and 250 secondary students.

Training for EMT, paramedics, pharmacy tech, licensed practical nursing and certified nurse assistants is also available, as well as customized business and industry education and training programs.
Students can complete most of the programs in about one year and earn a technical certificate. These credits will also apply to the Associate of Applied Science in General Technology degree for those who want to continue their education after the technical certificate.

ASU-Searcy also offers programs, such as machining, auto body, business, and nursing. Classes toward an Associate of Science in Business are offered at night. The Regional Career Center at ASU-Searcy offers programs to high school students in areas of interest, such as medical professions, welding, and computer aided drafting and design.

Adult Education classes are available for students seeking a General Educational Development diploma, and Continuing Education offers a variety of non-credit courses, such as computer software training, leisure arts, and industry certification.

Additional information can be found at www.asub.com
15. Agribusiness

In Arkansas, agribusiness is big business. It is the state’s largest industry, and accounts for nearly one quarter of the state’s economic activity ($16 billion annually), providing one out of every six jobs.

Arkansas leads the nation in baitfish production and the production and exportation of rice. The state is second in the production of commercial broiler chickens, and third in catfish, cotton and turkey production. Arkansas is the number five producer of timber, the number eight producer of eggs, and the number ten producer of soybeans and grain sorghum.

Although there are big operations in agribusiness, the individual farmer still plays a key role. Literally thousands of Arkansas farmers grow commodities on contract for major companies, thus avoiding the economic pressures that have forced most of their counterparts off the land they love.

According to the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture, the market value of agricultural products sold in White County has more than doubled to over $120 million since 2000. The right kind of soil and the right amount of moisture come together in the southeastern quadrant of the state to make it the nation’s rice bowl. Arkansas rice accounts for 49% of rice production in the U.S. An estimated 5% to 10% of each year’s crop is barged down the Mississippi and thence to foreign markets.

The opposite, northwest, corner of the state is the nation’s poultry house. Scientific growing methods have cut the growing time nearly in half
to help feed Americans whose per capita consumption of chicken is growing 50% faster than red meat.

White County topography is unique. The eastern one-third of the land in the county is rich, flat alluvial and terrace bottomland. The western two-thirds of the land area lies along the edge of the gentle, rolling Ozark foothills. This land grows lush pasture and has clear streams which supply excellent conditions for poultry and livestock production.

The agriculture industry in White County provides nine percent of total jobs. The county boasts over 2,100 farms totaling nearly 412,000 acres. Primary crops include corn, rice, soybeans, and hay.

White County ranks fourth in beef production. Annually, the sales of crops produced in the county exceed a value of $120 million, in addition to the revenue generated through the area agriculture businesses that provide crop inputs, farm services, and production capital. National figures indicate that every dollar earned by local farmers eventually means an additional seven dollars in the community.

Agriculture is also changing. In the last half decade, beef cattle, rice, soybeans, blackberry, blueberry, broiler and commercial egg production enterprises have expanded rapidly. Agriculture enterprises in White County are very diversified. They include those crops mentioned above plus landscape plants, sod, edamame soybeans, goats and hair sheep. At the same time, dairying, and strawberry enterprises have been on the decline.

At the east border of White County in Augusta, and 80 miles west of Memphis Tennessee, is
the White River, navigable on a year-round basis for exporting agricultural and forest products. The White River connects with the Arkansas, Mississippi, and the Ohio inland water systems.

Agriculture is a mainstay of White County’s local economy. A positive agriculture industry improves the local economy when local farmers purchase from local businesses items such as clothing, automotive and farm supplies, and household goods,
16. Health Care and Senior Care

A wide range of medical and surgical services are available in Searcy: special services such as cancer treatment, women’s care, same-day surgical services, laser surgery, sports medicine, 24-hour emergency service with physicians on staff, home health services, a rehab center, hemodialysis and permanent Magnetic Resonance Image (MRI) equipment. Substance abuse treatment and nursing home facilities are also available.

Unity Health-White County Medical Center (Unity Health-WCMC) is one of the largest employers in a six-county area with more than 1,750 associates. The facility has a combined total of 438 licensed beds and a medical staff of more than 150 physicians that specialize in various areas of healthcare, along with three certified physician assistants.

Unity Health-WCMC’s mission for excellence in healthcare has been recognized twice with the prestigious Governor’s Quality Award and is the only hospital to do so. The award is the highest level of recognition presented to state organizations that have demonstrated excellent performance through their practices and achievements.

As the leading healthcare provider in a six-county area, Unity Health-WCMC associates strive to improve the quality of health and well-being for the communities it serves through compassionate care and innovative approaches to medicine. Services include:
• 24-hour Emergency Care at a Level III Trauma Center
• AR SAVES (Arkansas Stroke Assistance through Virtual Emergency Support) providing immediate care for stroke victims
• Cardiac Intervention
• Clearview (senior psychiatric care)
• Compass (adult psychiatric care)
• Comprehensive Cancer Care at White County Oncology inside the Cancer Center of Excellence
• Critical Care with eICU® care Services
• Diabetes Education Program, certified by the American Diabetes Association
• Durable Medical Equipment
• Home Health Agency, named a Top 500 Agency by HomeCare Elite
• Inpatient Hospice
• Inpatient Rehabilitation
• Imaging Center with 64-slice CT, MRI, ultrasound
• New Life Center
• Outpatient Rehabilitative Services
• PrimeTimes, a program for senior adults ages 55 and older
• Sleep Center, accredited by the American Academy of Sleep Medicine
• Sports Medicine Program
• Surgical Services, including one of the most advanced robotic da Vinci® Surgical Systems in Arkansas
• Wound Care Center
In planning for the future, Unity Health-WCMC has partnered with physicians, clinics and other area providers to provide a variety of services and care for patients in a high-quality and cost-effective manner. Unity Health-WCMC also houses the Advanced Care Hospital of White County, one of only eight long-term acute care hospitals in Arkansas.

Partnerships help to streamline the continuum of care for patients. One such partnership is the Cancer Center of Excellence. Through the collaboration of the hospital, White County Oncology, CARTI and RAPA/Searcy Breast Center, patients receive high-quality cancer care from a dedicated team of physicians and nurses. This comprehensive approach to cancer diagnosis and treatment, combined with a serene atmosphere and advanced technology from each healthcare partner, creates an optimal healing environment for patients.

Searcy has its own VA Clinic on Main Street, and the Veterans Hospital in Sherwood is just 40 minutes away. More than 150 doctors practice in Searcy, including specialists in oncology, cardiology, radiology, allergies, diabetes, rehabilitation and orthopedics.

Urgent care is provided by the Unity Health-WCMC Urgent Care Clinic, McAfee Urgent Care, the Sherwood Clinic and PrimeCare, as well as one of the state’s CARTI facilities. NorthStar EMS provides paramedic advanced life support service, with a highly qualified staff of EMTs paramedics, dispatchers and office staff. LifeFlight is accessible to transport patients to Little Rock.

Three local facilities, Sunshine School, White County Group Homes, and New Hope Specialized Industries provide the bulk of services to the
mentally and developmentally handicapped of the area. The three programs meet the needs of the handicapped from infancy through adulthood. Their overall aim is to prepare students to be contributing citizens of the community and to live as independently as possible.

“If I could rest anywhere, it would be in Arkansas,” once declared Davy Crockett. The number of Arkansans 65 or older represents 14.4% of the state’s total population, the 9th highest such population by state in the U.S. Searcy offers excellent services and care for seniors. The greater Searcy area has a combined 730 bed capacity in six private nursing homes and assisted living centers.

The White County Aging Program, Inc. provides core services to Searcy’s older adults, including meal programs, transportation, socialization, health & wellness, and family caregiver services. The mission of the WCAP is to develop, coordinate and operate a unique and diverse system of services designed to improve and enhance the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual quality of life of senior citizens regardless of race, color, creed, ethnicity, gender, religion, or financial status.

Their desire is to assist seniors in living with dignity, in the least restrictive environment, and to maximize the time a senior can remain functionally independent and continually productive members of the community. In an effort to be a “one stop shop for senior care” better serving a growing and diverse population and meeting the many needs of Searcy seniors, WCAP has grown tremendously, offering additional services such as:

- In-home care, including personal care, homemaker, respite, adult companion
• Care management and home care for adults with physical disabilities
• Housing for low-income seniors
• Transportation for non-emergency medical needs for those on Medicaid
• Foster grandparent
• Ombudsman program
• Assisted living
• Employment assistance
• Medicare education and enrollment assistance

The John E. Lightle Center is the second largest senior citizen center in Arkansas, representing a strong commitment on the part of the city to have a facility for senior citizens. The Center provides a place for seniors to meet and enjoy events such as BINGO, exercise programs, crafts, dancing, games, exciting trips, and many more. White County Cooperative Extension Service works in conjunction with the Lightle Center to provide exercise, nutrition, and gardening programs and other assistance.

At the eastern edge of the campus of Harding University is Harding Place, a Christian independent living retirement community. It consists of 115 residential units with the choice of studio, one or two bedroom suites. Each unit has a fully-equipped kitchen with ample storage, full-sized refrigerator/freezer, oven, range, and garbage disposal. A 24-hour emergency response system is provided in each apartment, and award-winning community medical facilities are nearby.
Three meals are provided daily, along with regularly scheduled housekeeping service and courtesy van transportation to local shopping, banking, and medical facilities. Also included are all utilities, cable television, and covered parking. The facility also offers a computer center, crafts room, library/study, beauty/barber shop, and private areas to host guests.

From exercise classes to onsite entertainment to computer classes and a book club, there is a wide variety of recreation options, overseen by a full-time activities director. With Harding University nearby, plays, musicals, speakers and events are frequent and convenient.

Each Harding Place resident receives a Lyceum Card that provides entrance to a wide variety of events, including American Studies Institute speakers, such as presidents and other world leaders. Also included is access to concerts, as well as the University weight room, swimming pool, library and much more. Card holders are also invited to a weekly Sunday luncheon at Harding University.

Find out more about Harding Place at www.hardingplaceretirement.com.
17. Housing and Recreation

With its desirable quality of life, and living expenses lower than the national average, Searcy is a great place to call home. While growing with the addition of many new neighborhoods, the city strives to maintain its small town character.

Approximately 350 homes are normally for sale in Searcy. In 2012, there were 220 single family homes sold in Searcy, with an average price of $141,399. Home construction costs start at about $90+ per square foot.

Over 1,200 apartments are available in Searcy, consisting of one, two and three bedrooms, furnished and unfurnished, in multi-unit buildings and town houses, with a median monthly rent of around $600. The retirement community is rapidly developing, with a number of facilities available.

Searcy has 14 motels offering over 850 rooms ranging from $59 to $175 per night. There are also several recreational vehicle parking areas are within 17 miles of Searcy.

There are more than 200 public assistance housing units, with additional housing available for low income and elderly residents through individual apartment complexes or the Searcy Housing Authority.

There are plenty of things to do in and around Searcy throughout the year. The Searcy Sports Complex became a reality in 1986 with the initial purchase of 50 acres next to Searcy Industrial Park. Local businesses, industries, and individu-
als helped finance the construction, and state and federal grants along with private revenue sources have contributed over $700,000 per year for continuing development and improvements.

Since 1998, the complex increased to 123 acres with the addition of a 30 acre soccer complex, along with additional baseball and softball fields, basketball courts, a walking track, disc golf course, upgraded parking lots, lighting, etc. The complex serves at one central location all of Searcy’s athletic events with 17 ball fields, 18 soccer fields, 4 concession stands, and 4 restroom buildings.

Plans are underway for an athletic-sized indoor swimming facility near the sports complex. The ability to use this facility year-round will provide opportunity for private memberships, swimming tournaments, and private party rentals which will subsidize maintenance costs.

The Carmichael Community Center is a popular recreational facility that is operated throughout the year. Through the Carmichael Community Center and numerous private organizations, a broad array of athletic facilities, courts, and programs are available to the public, including two Christmas craft fairs with over 140 vendors.

The Parks and Recreation Department annually registers more than 2,600 youths and 500 adults for city-offered athletic programs. Additionally, 450 children sign up each year for non-league events.

Outdoor enthusiasts have a variety of options. Riverside Park has 95 acres, including a boat launch for access to the Little Red River, two covered pavilions, eight cookout picnic table setups,
restrooms, playground, barrier-free paved trail for wheel chair or elderly, a river overlook, and miles of natural trails. The park is being considered for significant development, possibly including zip lines, a restaurant, camping area, disc golf, miniatures golf, splash pad, and more.

A marker in front of the historic Benjamin Clayton Black House at 300 Race Street is the starting place for a three-mile “Walk Through History” trail. The trail features 16 historic properties, many of which are over 100 years old. Citizens and visitors can access an interactive story map by scanning the QR (Quick Response) code on signs along the walk.

Nearby Greers Ferry Lake offers great fishing, and holds the world’s record for walleye and hybrid striper. Other activities include motor and sailboating, scuba diving, houseboating, swimming, waterskiing, and camping.

Hunting and fishing can also be found at wildlife refuges in the area. The Henry Gray/Hurricane Lake Wildlife Refuge offers some of the finest mallard duck hunting or watching. Over 17,000 acres provide a beautiful setting for hunting and fishing. The Bald Knob National Wildlife Refuge is a newer area. Over 14,800 acres serve as home for wintering waterfowl, and about half of the area for hunting.

Camp Wyldewood is a favorite spot for rappelling for those who want to take on the challenge of B Rock, or conquer the high ropes course. Many other activities are available for small or large groups alike.

Searcy offers over 200 acres of parks for family recreation in three locations around town. Berry-
hill Park includes a lighted walking-jogging trail, picnic areas, playground equipment, a fountain, a baseball field, a pavilion and numerous tennis courts. Spring Park is a historic site with pavilions, a picnic area, walking path, and playground. Yancey Park provides playground and picnic areas, tennis courts, and walking trails.

The Searcy Art Gallery is located in the historic Benjamin Clayton Black House on the corner of East Race and Locust streets. The house was completed in 1874 by Captain Benjamin Clayton Black. The two-story pre-Civil War Victorian house has a highly decorative veranda and is on the National Register. The Gallery hosts six major exhibits every year featuring local professional and aspiring artists.

Pioneer Village is a recreated 1880’s settlement, drawing some 3,000 visitors each year. The village was the result of a cooperative effort of the White County Fair Board, the White County Historical Society, and other interested individuals. Their goal was to recreate and preserve antiquities from the pioneer days.

Beginning with the donation of the 1870s Gordon log house, the Village now includes a jail, the Little Red School, an old post office, a smokehouse, a barn, a blacksmith shop, a railroad terminal building, and an outdoor toilet all located at 1200 Higginson Street, across the street from the City of Searcy Parks and Recreation Sports Complex. A visit to Pioneer
Village allows visitors to step back into the way of life for people in the 1800’s.

Two 18-hole golf courses, River Oaks Golf Club and Searcy Country Club, and a driving range provide golfers with nearly year-round opportunities to play. For the walking-jogging-cycling enthusiast, there is a five-mile jogging trail running partially around Searcy, parallel to Deener Creek and Gin Creek.

Those who prefer indoor fun can find it at Searcy Skate featuring popular music and a highly skilled staff, led by the owner, himself, a world-class in-line speed skating champion. Family-friendly fun can also be found in the 6,000 square foot Lazer-cade laser tag facility, or on the lanes and at the snack bar at Searcy Super Bowl.

The Searcy Cinema 8 shows the latest movies in a modern, comfortable multi-theater complex with the latest audio and video systems. The historic Rialto movie theater originally opened in 1923. In 1939, the Rialto Theatre received a beautiful Streamline Moderne style facelift, complete with a new facade, neon-lit large marquee and elegant interior decor. The Rialto Theatre was again remodeled in 1949.

The Theatre is now owned by the city of Searcy and leased. It is one of only a small number of single-screen historic movie houses in the state that still operates daily and features weekend matinees.

Entertainment, culture, and community activities are alive and well in Searcy. Social and
cultural opportunities include the American Studies Lecture Series and Spring Sing at Harding University, Fall Music Program, Lyceum Culture Series, Reader’s Theater, Searcy Arts Council, Searcy Summer Dinner Theater, and Center on the Square Theater.

Searcy offers year-round festivals and events to enjoy and celebrate seasons and holidays. Freedom Fest, an annual event each May, is a day-long community event featuring a 3-on-3 basketball tournament, entertainment, food, and a fireworks show. The Independence Day holiday is celebrated in and around Searcy with live music, parades, food and fireworks. Another popular July event is the Cardboard Boat Race in nearby Heber Springs. Trick or Treat on the Square attracts kids to the Downtown area for safe candy-gathering, games, train rides and a costume contest.

December brings an annual Holiday Craft Fair where shoppers can choose from a wide array of hand-made products and tasty food treats. The Living Nativity brings over 10,000 people each year driving through a re-creation of the City of Bethlehem on the grounds of the First Assembly of God. Live animals, professionally crafted scenery, and a large cast of actors carry visitors back to the time of Jesus’ birth. Harding University becomes a winter wonderland with thousands of lights draping the trees and buildings on campus.

Main Street Searcy organizes the annual Get Down Downtown festival, a free two-day music and street fair event held downtown in late September or early October. The event features multiple stages with live entertainment, over 100 vendors, children’s games, and family-friendly activities. The Main Street Searcy Farmers’
Market opens each Saturday morning throughout the spring and summer on the east side of courthouse square in Downtown Searcy. The market features local farmers that sell USDA certified meat, herbs and home-baked goods as well as artists making handmade arts and crafts.

Searcy is also the home of White County Fairgrounds, and host for the annual White County Fair held each September. This event offers a variety of competitions, events, a horse show, and a midway with carnival rides and games. A parade kicks off the event in downtown Searcy.

The Fairgrounds also host a variety of other activities, including motorsports, some of the largest and most popular bi-annual consignment sales, concerts, equestrian competitions, gun shows, and community events.

As the travel guides suggest, “…from opera to bluegrass to nationally ranked athletic teams, and from Ozark native art festivals to elegant, candlelight dining, there is plenty to entertain and enlighten Searcians the year around.”
18. Land and Climate

Paramount among things that attracted this writer to Arkansas in the 1970’s were excerpts from promotional literature of the day, such as the following:

…Arkansas is a testimonial that man and nature can live in harmony and even improve on one another’s handiwork...

…Arkansas is richly endowed with natural attributes-- a climate of four distinct but temperate seasons, sparkling streams fed by springs and man-made lakes replenished by ample rainfall, prolific bauxite deposits and the only diamond mine in the nation, and more than 18 million acres of forest land prized by lumberman and vacationer alike...

…The hill country, with its attraction to the tourist, artist, sportsman, and vacationer, encompasses roughly half of the state. North of the Arkansas River are the Ozark and Boston Mountains, believed to be among the nation’s oldest. Every fall, these northern hills burst into spectacular shades of autumn...

…To the south are the pine-covered Ouachita Mountains. Petit Jean Mountain sports a grand 75-foot waterfall. Trout fishing on the Little Red River and canoeing down the white waters of the Spring and Buffalo Rivers bring great pleasure…
Arkansas ranks near the top nationally in duck hunting, and White County has excellent duck hunting. White County also ranks near the middle in deer killed for the state. It ranks third in the number of quail bagged. Considering its versatility of terrain and abundance of different game, the Searcy area of White County can be considered an excellent area for hunting...

White County is a mixture of hills and flat agricultural areas which account for its hunting versatility. There is outstanding squirrel and rabbit hunting in the hardwood bottomlands. The popular sport of dove hunting is very plentiful due to the abundance of milo and maze...

In the foothills of Arkansas’ Ozarks, a half hour’s drive from Searcy, stands Greer’s Ferry Dam. Behind that structure, dedicated in October 1963 by the late President Kennedy, glistens one of the foremost recreational areas in the middle United States, Greer’s Ferry Lake...

Paved access roads lead to the numerous parks which include drinking water, toilet facilities, boat launching ramps, parking areas, fireplaces, trash containers, tent and trailer spaces, charcoal grills, and picnic tables for the general convenience of everyone. There are also public boat docks which provide boat and motor rental services, fuel, food, and other boating supplies and services...

The climate of the area around Searcy is classified as a humid subtropical climate, characterized by relatively mild temperatures. Rainfall is
usually abundant throughout the year, although deficiencies or excesses are especially common during the summer months. Most precipitation is frontal in origin, occurring along the zone or “front” where two unlike air masses meet. Winters are usually short and mild, but have cold periods of below freezing of a few days’ duration. The area has an average frost-free growing season of about 215 days.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average Summer Temps</th>
<th>70 F - 94 F</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average Winter Temps</td>
<td>30 F - 49 F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Rain Total</td>
<td>50 in.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Annual Snow Total</td>
<td>less than 4 in.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Searcy has an average daily maximum temperature of 73 degrees; the average daily minimum temperature is 52 degrees. The average percentage of normal humidity (mean daily noon-time) is 57%. There are approximately 75 days when a maximum temperature is reached at 90+ degrees, and 45 days when the minimum temperature is 32 degrees and under.
Finally, I have been impressed with a brief article in an issue of “City & Town”, the official publication of the Arkansas Municipal League. It is entitled “My Town.”

My town is the place where my house is found, where my business is located, and where my vote is cast. It is where my children are educated, where my neighbors dwell, and where my life is chiefly lived. It is the home spot for me. My town has a right to my civic loyalty. It supports me, and I should support it.

My town wants my citizenship, not my partisanship; my friendliness, not my dissensions; my sympathy, not my criticism; my intelligence, not my indifference. My town supplies me with protection, trade, friends, education, schools, churches, and the right to free moral citizenship. It has some things that are better than others. The best things I should seek to make better. Take it all-in-all, it is my town, and it is entitled to the best there is in me.

The bottom line, or end of the matter, is that business is good in Arkansas. It will get better as new jobs create new needs, which in turn will create more new jobs. Such are the makings of real opportunities.
So, there is plenty to do—something for each and every one of us to do. Then, the coming generations, who will be the true judges of what we do today, will find us worthy of our tasks.
SELECT ORGANIZATIONS, ADDRESSES, AND PHONE NUMBERS

Emergency Numbers
For Fire, Police, Ambulance, and Sheriff.................................................. 911

City of Searcy Services
Animal Control
300 West Arch ................................................. 279-1099

City Hall
401 West Arch ............................................. 268-2483

Fire Department (Non-emergency)
501 West Beebe Capps................................. 279-1066

Humane Society of Searcy
112 Johnston Road........................................ 268-3535

Police Department (Non-emergency)
300 West Arch ............................................. 268-3531

Recycling Center Office
409 Beebe-Capps.......................................... 279-1070

Searcy Public Library
Spring Park....................................................... 268-2449

Street & Sanitation Department
405 Beebe-Capps.......................................... 279-1000

White County Sheriff’s Office (Non-emergency)
411 North Spruce.......................................... 268-3543
Special Services

Goodwill Industries
3707 East Race..........................268-2047

Longwood Intermediate Care
96 N. Sawmill Rd. .......................279-2586

Newhope Specialized Industries
1223 Linden................................268-5448

Sunshine School
304 S. Sowell St.
901 Airport Loop.........................268-9227

Health Care Services

911 Emergency Service
417 N. Spruce .........................268-4810

Pro-Med Ambulance Service
1115 S. Benton ..........................268-2323

Unity Health-White County Medical Center
3214 E. Race ............................268-6121

Unity Health-White County Medical Center South
1200 S. Main St. ..........................278-3100

White County Aging Program, Inc.
The Lightle Center
2200 E. Moore .........................268-2587
Public Education

Searcy Public Schools
Superintendent’s Office
801 N. Elm.................................268-3517

McRae Elementary School
609 McRae Ave. .........................268-3936

Sidney Deener Elementary School
163 Cloverdale Blvd. ....................268-3850

West Side Elementary School
512 Country Club Rd.....................268-0111

Southwest Middle School
1000 W. Beebe Capps Expy ............268-3125

Ahlf Junior High School
308 W. Vine ................................268-3158

Searcy High School
301 N. Ella.................................268-8315

Riverview Public Schools
Superintendent’s Office
800 Raider Drive .........................279-0540

Judsonia Elementary School
916 Judson Ave .........................729-5196

Kensett Elementary School
701 W. Dandridge.........................742-3221

Riverview Jr. High School
820 Raider Drive ..........................279-7111

Riverview High School
810 Raider Drive ..........................279-7700
College, Technical, and Other Opportunities

ASU-Beebe Branch
1000 W. Iowa St., Beebe ..................882-3600

ASU-Searcy Branch
1800 E. Moore..............................207-4075

Harding University
915 E. Market Ave.........................279-4000

Searcy Beauty College
1004 S. Main ................................268-6300

Private Education

Cornerstone Christian Academy
2447 State Highway 16...................279-3006

Crosspointe Preparatory School
900 North Main Street ....................278-5964

Harding Academy
P. O. Box 10775
1529 E. Park Ave..........................279-7200

Liberty Christian School
1202 Benton Ave..........................268-4848

Car/Driver Information

Arkansas State Revenue Office
402 W. Vine ..................................268-2802

Business and Employment

Department of Workforce Services
501 W. Arch ..................268-8601

Searcy Regional Chamber of Commerce
2323 South Main .........................268-2458
Communication

Chanel 3 Television
1913 Beebe-Capps Exp. ....................... 268-6262

Channel 16 Television
Harding University ............................ 279-4040

KSMD 99.1 Radio
111 N. Spring ................................. 305-0991

KWCK 99.9-FM Radio
111 N Spring St.......................... 279-7999

KAWW 100.7 Radio......................... 268-7123

Big Country 101.5 Radio ................ 305-1015

KOOL 104.7................................. 268-1047

The Fix 105.7 Radio ....................... 268-9700

KFFB-106.1 Radio......................... 723-4861

Newspapers

Arkansas Democrat-Gazette
Little Rock, AR ......................... 378-3456

The Daily Citizen
3000 E. Race .............................. 268-8621

The Merchant Shopper
705 Marion ............................... 268-0700

The Searcy Sun ......................... 305-4040
104 N. Spring St ......................... 279-0944
Utilities

AT&T (business & residential) ......800-499-7928

CenterPoint Reliant Energy (gas)
2802 East Race ...................... 1-800-992-7552

Entergy of Arkansas (electric)... 1-800-368-3749

Searcy Water & Sewer
300 North Elm..........................268-2481

Vue Inc (wireless internet) ..........278-5040

WEHCO Video (cable & internet)
Residential............................268-4117
Business ................................538-5008

Civic Organizations

Junior Auxiliary of Searcy
junior.auxiliary@yahoo.com
Searcy .......................................281-2788

Kiwanis Club of Searcy
jeffreysheets@att.net
P.O. Box 141............................. 230-1193

MOPS – Mothers of Preschoolers
searcymops@yahoo.com
900 N. Main ............................590-8617

Rolling Thunder, Inc. Chapter #1 Arkansas
bmortonj@hotmail.com
P.O. Box 2331........................... 230-9385

Searcy Lions Club
lselliott@harding.edu
P.O. Box 784............................ 591-2533
Searcy Morning Optimist Club
dcasteel@dciplasma.com
907 E. Market Ave .......................278-5001

Searcy Rotary Club
irene_gray@hotmail.com
P.O. Box 555.................................268-8841

White County Business to Business Referral Network
b2b@thebusinessrevelation.com
1316 Rehoboth.............................278-5122

White County Creative Writers
wcwriters@hotmail.com
P.O. Box 9122

White County Historical Society
wchistory@swbell.net
PO BOX 537.................................278-5010

County and State Offices

Cooperative Extension Service
411 North Spruce..........................268-5394

Department of Human Services
608 Rodgers Drive..........................268-8696

Department of Workforce Services
501 West Arch.............................268-8601

Health Department
112 Brantly Road..........................268-6102

Revenue Office
402 West Vine..............................268-2802

Social Security Office
410 North Apple............................268-5305
State Police
411 North Spruce........................................279-6238

Tax Collector’s Office
119 West Arch.........................................279-6206

U. S. Post Office (Main Station)
600 West Academy.................................268-2189

Veteran’s Service Office
411 North Spruce.................................279-6210

Voter’s Registration Office
Courthouse..................................................279-6207

White County Aging Services
2200 Moore Street.................................268-2587

White County Court House
Arch Street...............................................279-6200

There are more detailed lists readily available on the following: Financial Institutions, Motels, Restaurants, Utilities, Public Services, Apartments, Realtors, Building Contractors and Supplies, Churches, Schools, Day Care Facilities, etc.

For further information and a map of Searcy and White county, please contact the Searcy Regional Chamber of Commerce, 2323 South Main, Searcy, Arkansas 72143, (501) 268-2458, www.searcychamber.net.
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Arkansas Departments of Finance and Administration, Labor, and Parks and Recreation.


Arkansas Newsletter, Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce/Associated Industries of Arkansas. Select editions.


“Arkansas State and County Economic Data,” Institute for Economic Advancement, University of Arkansas at Little Rock, Select editions.

Best Dollar Values in American Colleges, ARCO Publishing. Select editions.


Burks, Matt, “Local Experts: Signs Point to Economic Improvement.” Daily Citizen, Searcy, Arkansas. 28 Nov 2013: Local, pg. 1A, 7A.

Burks, Matt, “Searcy Named 2013 City of Distinction.” Daily Citizen, Searcy, Arkansas. 27 Dec 2013: Section A, pg. 3A.


Center for Business and Economic Research. Sam M. Walton College of Business, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville.


Comparative Data Cost of Living Index, American Chamber of Commerce Research Association.


Entergy Corporation, Economic Development Department, Little Rock, Arkansas.


General Manufacturing Climates, Grant Thornton, Accountant and Management Consultants.


ABOUT THE AUTHOR

In his 44th year, Dr. Don Diffine is currently Professor of Economics at Harding University in Searcy, Arkansas, Director of the Belden Center for Private Enterprise Education and Senior Research Associate of Harding’s American Studies Institute (ASI). Dr. Diffine is listed in the Heritage Foundation’s Guide to Public Policy Experts. He presently has 11 books and 25 monographs in print.

Dr. Diffine has provided Congressional testimony on business problems, economic impact statements, and inflation-recession dilemmas. He is a member of the Governor’s Council of Economic Advisors.

Diffine served for a decade on the Board of Directors of the Arkansas Council on Economic Education, as a member of the International Platform Association, and has spoken frequently for conventions, management clubs, stock-holders’ meetings, trade associations, and chambers of commerce.

A former United States Air Force Captain and Squadron Commander, Diffine’s formal education includes a Bachelor’s Degree in Economics from California State University at Long Beach, Master’s Degree in Economics from St. Mary’s, San Antonio, Texas, and a PhD from the University of Mississippi.

He also received two in-residence fellowships from the Foundation for Economic Education, Irvington-on-Hudson, New York. His Adjunct Professor stints include Pepperdine University, Webster University, University of Arkansas at Little Rock, Arkansas State University and the Mid-South School of Banking.
The recipient of the $7,500 Freedoms Foundation Principle Award for Excellence in Private Enterprise Education, Dr. Diffine has received 16 additional Freedoms Foundation awards in the categories of Non-profit Publications, Economic Education, Public Affairs-Advertising, Public Address, and Published Works. Recipient of the National Flag Foundation’s New Constellation Award, he is also the faculty winner of a $1,000 First Place prize in a National Essay Contest judged by Nobel economist Milton Friedman.

In 2000, Diffine was inducted into the Samuel Moore Walton Free Enterprise Hall of Fame. In 1995, he received the Champion of Enterprise award and became the first inductee into the National Students In Free Enterprise Hall of Fame in Kansas City. The First Annual Distinguished Scholar Award was also presented in 1988 to Dr. Diffine in Cleveland, Ohio, by the Association of Private Enterprise Education.

Dr. Diffine has been married for 50 years to the former Dion Hillman of Kailua, Hawaii, a retired math teacher from the Searcy Public Schools. The Diffines have two children: David, who is a medical doctor, and Danielle, who is an accountant. Six wonderful grandchildren round out the family tree: Katie Elizabeth; Ridge Tyler; Lillie Ann; Piper Dion, Emery Rayne, and Gatlyn Sayge.