

# OUR TOWN

THE MORNING NEWS

SECTION H • SUNDAY, JAN. 29, 2006

## HOMETOWN HAPPENINGS



Jeannie Smith

My week started off with a bang! I attended Suzie Stephens' annual birthday bash at George's Majestic Lounge with the No. 1 Beatles tribute band in the world, 1964, and they were great!

The food was provided by Toothpicks Chop House of Fayetteville just down the street on Dickson. I sampled some delicious beef brisket while I watched part of the band's performance from the bar room on the television screens. It is a cool set up!

The joint was jumping when I got there, and I was lucky to get Suzie off the dance floor long enough to snap a photo!

I also visited with the lovely and elegant Elizabeth Jordan and friends while I listened to the band.

Donations were taken for The Healing Path, a program of recovery for victims of sexual assault. You might remember my last trip to George's was for the calendar launch party of Hangin' Out in Hog Country. The calendars featured 13 scantily clad small business owners in Fayetteville, and they were on sale again at the birthday bash.

That prompts me to challenge any Springdale charity to follow Fayetteville's lead; I think we could raise some money and sell quite a few calendars of our own if Bob Caudle would just pose in one photo.

How about it, Bob? Could we get you to pose? Maybe a photo at your desk, you could pose with nothing but your ... pen?

On Thursday night, I made the drive to the 2006 Eureka Springs Chamber of Commerce Banquet. There is not a chamber of commerce in Northwest Arkansas more eclectic or fun in my opinion.

Members were introduced to the 2006 board and chamber officers, and goals for economic development were laid out while guests dined on tossed salad, baked chicken, stir fry veggies and, for dessert, yummy chocolate mousse.

The 2006 board of officers and development includes: **Mardell Bland**; **Connie Featherstone**, treasurer; **Ruth Hagar**; **Sam Kirk**; **Ann Martin**; **Joe McClung Jr.**, chairman elect; **Jack Moyer**, second vice chairman; **Dan Mumaugh**, secretary; **Bill Ott**; **Mendee Spence**; **Greg Thurman**; and **Wade Williams**.

**Lynn Berry**, executive director of the City Advertising and Promotion Commission, and **Dave Jeffrey**, immediate past board chairman, serve as ex-officio members of the board.

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AARP CHAPTER CONTRIBUTES \$6,000 TO CASA PAGE 6H

DOODLES TAKE CENTER STAGE PAGE 5H

T-SHIRT DESIGN CONTEST OPEN TO AREA CHILDREN PAGE 10H

# The Art Of Living

## ROGERS GALLERY OWNER HELPS BRIGHTEN COMMUNITY

By Marla Hinkle  
THE MORNING NEWS • MHINKLE@NWAONLINE.NET

**ROGERS**  
The path in Nita Larimore's life has taken many turns. From a woman visionary in a man's world to a respected and recognized business leader in Rogers, Larimore has impacted those around her.

Paths in life are not straight, but winding, Larimore said as she shared the story behind her favorite Thomas Kinkade painting, "The Garden of Prayer."

The tranquil garden depicts Kinkade's vision of the Garden of Eden, Larimore said. Known as "The Painter of Light," his version of paradise features shafts of sunlight, creating a pattern of golden bars along a buttery-soft green pathway leading to a gate.

"When my husband, Larry, was sick, it was refreshing for me to look at this painting. The thing I love most about Kinkade's paintings is that they are so peaceful." Forrest Gipple "Larry" Larimore died at age 85 in 2003.

Nita Larimore is not just an avid collector, but also a Thomas Kinkade dealer since 1995. Her gallery, Shelby Lane, is the only Signature Gallery for Thomas Kinkade in Northwest Arkansas.

The artist usually appears annually at the gallery. Larimore describes him as very sincere. And when he speaks to groups, he doesn't use notes.

"He speaks from the heart," Larimore said.

Many friends say the same of her. Colleagues nominated her for the 2005 Louise Thaden Woman of the Year award, an honor that has been presented at the Northwest Arkansas Business Women's Conference luncheon since 1999.

Thaden was recognized in Northwest Arkansas and around the world as an aviator who set the women's world flight record. The Bentonville Municipal Airport is named for Thaden.



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Nita Larimore was awarded the Louise Thaden Woman of the Year award at the 2005 Northwest Arkansas Women's Business Conference in Bentonville. Larimore, owner of the Shelby Lane Thomas Kinkade Gallery, has been a Rogers resident since 1966.

The award is bestowed on women who exemplify the winning body, mind and spirit Thaden possessed.

Another honor came at the request of U.S. Rep. John Boozman for Larimore to represent Arkansas at a roundtable in Washington, D.C. She joined about 400 participants in discussing issues affecting women, especially in business.

She was relieved to hear little mention of women not receiving the same pay as their male counterparts, she said. Instead, the focus was on how much women have become a part of the workplace.

That wasn't the case in the 1960s, when Larimore found herself the only woman working with 500 men. Her mentor was Kemmons Wilson, founder of Holiday Inns of

America. His advice: "Pay attention and watch the bottom line."

Her design career began as co-owner of Southern Kitchens in her hometown of Memphis, Tenn. She worked for Wilson through a subsidiary entity, Innkeeper Supply, providing interior design services for Holiday Inns throughout the United States.

"I had to prove myself."

### Drive To Succeed

Oneida "Nita" Larimore was precocious in her youth. She played career-oriented games with her brother, Jimmy Waldron of Houston and Rogers.

She would portray a business owner, and her brother would take the role of a nurse. When she was "business office lady,"

### NITA LARIMORE

Oneida "Nita" Larimore maintains strong ties to the Rogers community. She is vice chairwoman of the Rogers Advertising & Promotion Commission and a member of Main Street Rogers, Philanthropic Education Organization, Rogers-Lowell Area Chamber of Commerce and Central United Methodist Church. She has served as chairwoman of the church council, building and finance committees. Larimore has taught adult Sunday school classes for 25 years.



he was her office boy.

Interestingly, Larimore said, her play acting came true. She was born in Memphis to James Aubrey and Cylisia Shelby Waldron. Larimore said she was lucky to have both sets of grandmothers living in their home.

"It was a blessing to have them around. They were devout Christian people."

Larimore has two sons from a previous marriage, Jimmy Brown of Rogers and Robert Brown of Tampa, Fla., and one stepdaughter, Lynn Stanberry

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## Local Volunteers Work For Pets' Sake

### GROUP PROMOTES ANIMAL WELFARE

By Marla Hinkle  
THE MORNING NEWS • MHINKLE@NWAONLINE.NET

**SPRINGDALE** — When Leslie Ray wanted to volunteer with her local animal shelter, she discovered there were no positions available. So she called fellow animal-lover Laurie Beckman to start a new organization with furry friends in mind — For Pets Sake.

"We wanted to benefit the animals and the community," said Ray.

Beckman's dogs, Maxwell Smart and Stuart Little, bound around the back yard and rush into her home, where the two women agreed to meet for an interview.

Both have careers in addition to starting the nonprofit, which was founded in September 2004. Beckman serves as the group's president and works at Arvest Bank in Lowell. Ray, vice president, is the owner of Angel Pet



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Leslie Ray, left, joins Laurie Beckman with Maxwell Smart, left, and Stuart Little.



COURTESY PHOTO

**Melissa Siemens**, a For Pets Sake volunteer, holds Butterfly, a black Labrador/dachshund mix.

Sitters, a professional pet-sitting service.

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**YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD.  
YOUR NEWS.**

### WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

To report local stories or events, contact **Our Town Editor Tammy Tucker**. Call 872-5049. E-mail: [ttucker@mwaonline.net](mailto:ttucker@mwaonline.net)



### WEB WATCH

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