

Hughes office wins statewide award for organ donor support

Brodie Johnson
T-H Staff Writer

During National Donate Life Month in April, Arkansas Department of Finance and Revenue agencies across the state decorated their offices in blue and green as part of a competition started by the Mid-South Transplant Foundation.

On Wednesday, the Department of Revenue in Hughes was recognized as the winner of this year's contest.

Several residents from across the Delta attended the pizza party celebrating the win and shared their experiences with organ donation.

St. Francis County Assessor Ginadell Adams explained that organ donation is special to her due to her sister receiving two heart transplants.

"Organ donation is very near and dear to me because my sister, Allison Fogg, was a two-time heart transplant recipient," said Adams. "Her first heart lasted 10 years and she was blessed to receive a second heart that lasted eight years. It allowed her to see her son graduate high school and move him to college. I never really thought about organ donation until it hit our family the way that it did."

According to Adams, it is important for people to make the decision to register as donors ahead of time when dealing with

organ donation.

"It is very important to make that decision ahead of time," said Adams. "It is a lot easier on the family when they have to make that decision if it comes to that point. We are very thankful and blessed that their families had made that decision and that other families had made that decision. The more we can get the word out about organ donation the better. It is not just major organs that are donated. The eyes, skin, arteries, you can help so many people with one donation."

Mid-South Transplant Foundation Community Outreach Coordinator Zola Burgess shared that in addition to informing the public about the importance of organ donation, the agency also works with people to register for donation.

"My duties are to educate the public regarding the importance of organ donation and to drive them to the registry so they can register to be an organ and tissue donor," said Burgess. "I have been working this for a long time. My sister received a heart transplant back in September of 2011. She was also the representative in this area."

According to Burgess, the decoration contest winner was decided by the state and the Hughes Department of Revenue



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The Hughes Department of Revenue recently won a statewide decorating contest for Donate Life Month. Mid-South Transplant Foundation representative Zola Burgess, left, presents DOR Agent Kimberly Baack a trophy at a gathering on Wednesday celebrating the win.

was selected as the winner.

"April is Donate Life Month, so we thought whoever had the best decorations, we would celebrate them," said Burgess. "We decided to send that to the state to have them make the decision of who won because we didn't want to have to make that decision ourselves. This was a statewide contest. All of the Department of Finance and Revenue offices across the state

had the opportunity to take part in this competition."

Sammy Robinson, a heart transplant recipient from Hughes, shared his story of both the struggles and blessings of organ donation. Robinson stated that he was blessed to have received a heart.

"It was a big experience," said Robinson. "You never know how life will go when you are"

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NEWS NOTES

Public meetings set for next week

The St. Francis County Quorum Court's Budget Committee is scheduled to meet at 4 p.m., Tuesday at the courthouse.

Also on Tuesday, the Forrest City City Council will meet at 6 p.m., at city hall.

The Forrest City School Board is scheduled to meet at 5:30 p.m., Thursday, on the junior high campus.

Palestine Council agrees to seek grant for park

Brodie Johnson
Managing Editor

Members of the Palestine City Council this week voted unanimously to apply for a new fun park grant through the state.

According to Palestine City Clerk Valerie Parker, the grant is based on a point system and due to the city receiving one of the grants in the past 11 years, the city loses points toward their

application each year.

"We apply for this every year and we have been turned down for the past seven or eight years," said Parker. "We lose points because we have had one in the last 11 years. In the next month, we are probably going to have to have a community meeting to decide where to put the park. Now that we have the new community building, we need to

decide where to put it."

Parker told council members that the decision on the grant will not be made until October and that she doesn't believe they will receive it, but wants to continue to apply for it each year.

"It comes with an awning and a pavilion, so you might want it there," said Parker. "I think we

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Wynne man sentenced

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experiencing a situation like this. You never know how to go through things like heart, liver and kidney transplants. My mom, dad and two brothers went through similar things, but they never got the chance to receive anything like this. I am just blessed by God to receive a heart."

According to Robinson, his donor was from Helena-West Helena and was tragically killed.

"It was tough because you can't receive anything unless someone passes," said Robinson. "The family that donated the heart to me, I feel some type of way for them. They really didn't want to do it at first, believe it or not. The mom said that her son wanted to be a donor, and I was blessed to be in line for it. My donor was killed at the dorms at Arkansas State University in Jonesboro. They never did find out who did it."

Robinson said he speaks with his donor's mother on a regular basis and she now calls him her son.

"I am blessed to have another chance at living and I will never take it for granted," said Robinson. "It is a struggle, but I

am going on 15 years now. There have been some downs, but I can't complain about anything. The donor and his family were from Helena-West Helena and still live there, 28 miles down the road. I talked to his mom this morning. She says I am her son now and so I say she is my mom."

Kathy Davenport of Horseshoe Lake helped with the decorations that helped the Hughes Department of Revenue win the competition. Davenport, who lost her son in 2010, shared that he had already registered himself as a donor before he was killed in a motorcycle accident.

"My son was a donor in 2010," said Davenport. "On Sunday, September 29, he was riding his motorcycle when a young man pulled out in front of him. He was at the Med in Memphis for three days before the donation took place. We knew on the second day that he would not survive. He had already gone online to the registry and registered himself, so the questions involved with him being a donor were erased at that time."

Davenport said her son's

donations saved the lives of four people and his heart made its way to a woman in Kankakee, Ill.

"That is why I promote the registration and to let your family know and make everyone aware that you want to pass on your gifts of life to other people," said Davenport. "My son saved four people. A grandmother that received his pancreas and kidney, another kidney went to another person, a retired fire captain in Oxford, Mississippi received Bryan's liver and Eleanor Franks in Kankakee, Illinois, received his heart."

According to Davenport, the job all humans have on earth is to do good and to be good and that it is important for people to leave their gifts of life behind so that others might have a chance to live.

"The heart was the first organ that I knew would be donated and that is what kept my family and me going," said Davenport. "To be able to let him go because his heart was going to Chicago. It has been a brutally beautiful experience. I was blessed to have my son for 26 years. We lost a huge part of our family. My whole family is very big into honoring his legacy, and doing

this with Kimberly has really driven home that we are here for only a short time and we have a job to do on this earth.

"That is to be good and do good," continued Davenport. "Leave your gifts so others can live. His eyes gave sight to a gentleman and lady in their 80's and his bones went to St. Jude so that they can graft his healthy bone tissue into the cancerous bone tissue in sick children. It has been an education and a love. More than anything, honoring my son and meeting recipients. I am so thankful to be here today."

Tonya Moore, who works at the Marion Department of Revenue, shared that her nine-month-old grandson had a heart transplant when he was six months old and is doing great.

"My grandson's left ventricle vein was messed up and doctors thought it would be best to go ahead and do a transplant," said Moore. "He is now nine-months-old and on oxygen, but he is slowly coming off of his meds. He is doing wonderful. He is off all sedation medicines and is doing awesome. They are over around Marion so they are close to home."

REZONING

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"This is a very low impact development," said Spurgeon. "Really, all we'd be doing to change the culture of his land is putting steel four to six feet into the ground and mounting solar arrays."

The power generated by the project would be sent to a nearby Entergy substation and distributed through Entergy's local network, according to Spurgeon.

The company is seeking an at-use variance because the land for the project is currently zoned residential and would need to be zoned commercial.

"They're requesting an at-use

variance so if they do leave or if they surrender the property it would revert back to its original residential zoning," Forrest City Code Inspector Kendall Pettus told commissioners.

Commissioners also heard from Austin Hastings with Hastings Real Estate, requesting at at-use zoning variance for the former ABC School at 1000 N. Division St., to create a climate-controlled storage facility.

"The school gave it to a church and the church is looking to sell the property," said Hastings. "We need a variance to go from residential to commercial and turn this property into something

useful."

Hastings explained the company is trying to obtain the necessary approvals so that they can move forward with their plans.

"We're not 100% certain we'll do it at this point because the school has first right of refusal on this. They (school board) meet the 19th, so if all goes well and they do not want to buy it back for the same price we were buying it for then we can build it," Hastings told commissioners.

Records at the St. Francis County Courthouse show the Forrester City School District deeded the property to the Breath of Life Christian Center Church Inc., in 2019. Because the church has a tax-exempt status, the value of the property was unavailable.

Hastings explained that if the company is allowed to proceed with its plans, the building would be remodeled for the storage facility by removing all of the windows and creating units but

retaining the building's brick exterior.

"I don't know how many units we'll be able to get in there because of the way the building is laid out," said Hastings. "We will install a fire alarm system and fire wall breaks so that if one section ever catches on fire it will stop before it gets to another section."

"It's nice somebody is trying to do something with it," said Rice. "I think it's a good idea to bring something new to town."

"That's a good idea for that building. I would have never thought of it," added commissioner Lee Henderson.

Pettus said Hastings Real Estate has completed numerous projects in Forrest City. "Everything they've ever touched, they've made look nice. They do a good job," he said.

"We've done a lot of projects in Forrest City and have 40 to 50 properties here," said Hastings. "We go the extra mile."

PARK

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need to do it pretty quick. I don't think we will get it, but I want to keep applying for it just in case. We won't know if we received it until October. We have to do some community service and two or three other things to apply. That is just something you all have to decide pretty quick.

held at the next council meeting on Tuesday, July 8, and she would still have time to apply for the grant.

"You all could do it at the next council meeting. The deadline is at the end of August," said Parker. "We have to have the information to put in the application. You could hold the community

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