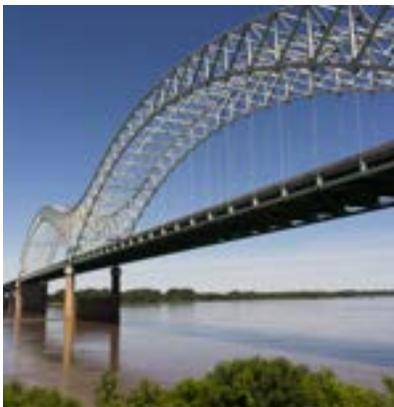


2025

IMPACT REPORT



Arkansas Democrat  Gazette
COMMUNITY
JOURNALISM PROJECT

Arkansas Democrat Gazette

The Arkansas Democrat-Gazette is the state's largest newspaper and one of the last remaining statewide newspapers in America. Family-owned and operated by a fourth-generation Arkansan, the newspaper has served communities across Arkansas with thorough, thoughtful and objective reporting for more than two centuries. Guided by its [core values](#), the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette delivers trusted news coverage seven days a week while maintaining a clear and intentional separation between news and opinion.

With an extensive digital presence, the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette reaches more than 800,000 users each month across mobile, desktop, tablet and smart TV platforms. This broad reach ensures that Arkansans have access to credible, fact-based reporting that informs civic life and strengthens democracy. The newspaper prides itself on unbiased coverage and a commitment to accuracy at a time when public trust in media is increasingly fragile.

As pressures mount across the journalism industry to produce content faster and cheaper, the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette remains steadfast in its commitment to community news. Where others may sacrifice quality, our newsroom continues to invest in in-depth reporting that holds institutions accountable and elevates the voices of the people we serve. For generations, our dedicated journalists have stood as a beacon of truth in Arkansas. The Arkansas Democrat-Gazette is not just a news outlet—it is a guardian of transparency, accountability and public trust.



Turn to the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette. You can count on us to deliver serious, thoughtful journalism based on our craft's time-honored principle of objectivity in reporting. That work is challenging and costly. Donations to the Community Journalism Project help us expand our coverage. Donations help us dig deeper and do more. **Donations help us serve you and the people of Arkansas.**



LEE WOLVERTON
EXECUTIVE EDITOR





Arkansas Democrat Gazette COMMUNITY JOURNALISM PROJECT

Strong communities need strong local news. Residents with access to local news and information about their community are more likely to vote, contact local officials or run for office. Newspapers connect residents with trustworthy information about local government, schools, businesses, neighborhood events and more.

Changes to the newspaper industry as whole have created a gap in funding for in-depth local reporting. While hundreds of local newspapers across the country have either shuttered or sold to hedge funds, the owners of the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette have remained committed to keeping strong, independent reporting alive in our state. It is our mission to inform, entertain and empower our communities with quality news and information. We dive deep into the stories that shape our state. But to maintain this commitment to produce the best local news, the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette needs support from the community.

In August 2024, we partnered with the Arkansas Community Foundation to launch the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette Community Journalism Project. By treating community news not as a commodity, but as a public service, philanthropic funding can provide a sustainable path forward for local journalism. Donations support critical, time-intensive reporting as well as coverage that connects communities across the state. Your support ensures meaningful local stories are reported, shared and accessible to more Arkansans. Donations also make Community Journalism Project stories accessible online for the public at no charge.

The Arkansas Democrat-Gazette ensures reader and public trust in our community-funded reporting. The Democrat-Gazette editors and reporters operate independently of our funders and maintain full editorial control over content. Funders do not have special access to newsroom staff.

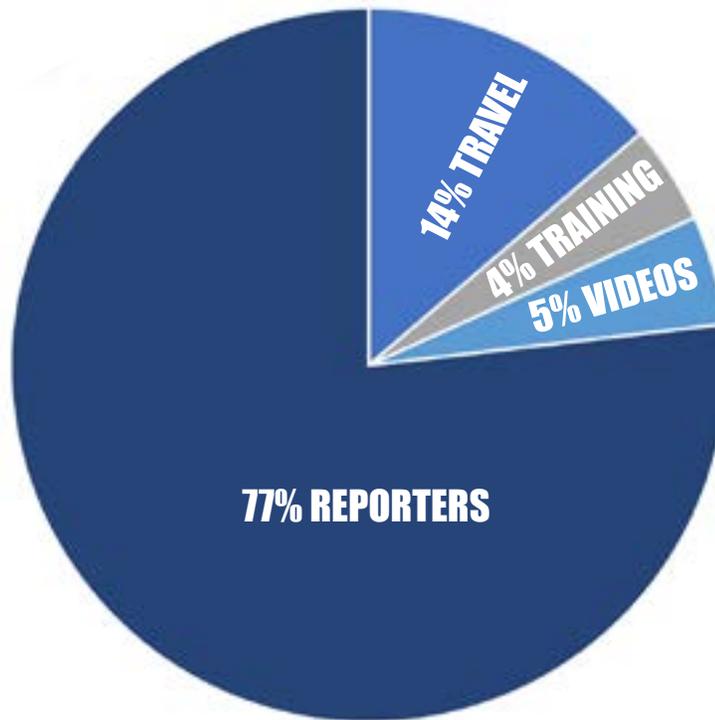
[To learn more, visit arcommunitynews.org.](https://arcommunitynews.org)



FUNDS USED IN 2024-2025

In 2025, the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette Community Journalism Project requested grants totaling **\$121,397.82** for the production of local news between the fund's launch on August 27, 2024 and December 31, 2025. This produced **461 stories**.

[Stories produced with CJP funds are available to the public at www.arkansasonline.com/cjp.](http://www.arkansasonline.com/cjp)



REPORTERS

Positions funded by Community Journalism Project funds include the Bob Holt Razorback Reporter, the Arkansas LEARNS Reporter and a Report for America corps member.

TRAVEL

Travel for editorial features included coverage of the christening of the USS Arkansas submarine in Newport News, Va; travel to cover Arkansas Razorbacks games and playoffs; and travel around the state for the Harvesting Arkansas agricultural series.

VIDEOS

The Arkansas Democrat-Gazette works with freelance videographers to expand coverage of community events, such as the Hispanic Heritage Festival, Capitol Tree Lighting, Downtown Food Truck Festival and the Keo Pecan Festival. These videos give readers an enhanced look at events around the state.

TRAINING

Reporters were able to receive training and newsroom skills development at the Columbia Journalism School Video Consortium, the Online News Association conference and the Society of Professional Journalists regional conference.

CJP HEADLINE HIGHLIGHTS OF 2025

LITTLE ROCK AMAZON FACILITY CLOSED INDEFINITELY DUE TO STRUCTURAL ISSUES

Amazon's fulfillment center at the Port of Little Rock closed in October because of structural engineering issues that Amazon has repeatedly declined to identify. This closure displaced 4,600 full-time and seasonal employees.

HELENA-WEST HELENA MAYOR VACANCY CAUSING FUNDING ISSUES

Helena-West Helena, a city plagued by water infrastructure issues, was having issues finalizing millions of dollars in water infrastructure money following the removal of the city's mayor earlier that summer. Local officials worried that the court-appointed interim mayor didn't have the legal authority to sign the city into long-term contracts, like the water loans. Gov. Sarah Sanders appointed a new mayor one week after the story was published.

EDUCATION FUNDS USED ON GAME CHAIRS AND PURCHASES THROUGH TIKTOK, ACCORDING TO ARKANSAS DATA

This story gave readers possibly their first detailed look at what state taxpayer money was buying for students with Educational Freedom Accounts. Details from the story have been publicly condemned or defended by lawmakers, education officials and by Arkansans in public comments on proposed changes to what purchases the program will allow.

MCMAHON HAILS PLAN TO DISMANTLE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

LEARNS Act Reporter Josh Snyder spoke with U.S. Education Secretary Linda McMahon, Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders and U.S. Sen. Tom Cotton about the state of education in Arkansas and nationally. McMahon talked about her goals for education across the country and praised Sanders for her efforts to expand school choice, giving readers a preview of what they could expect from changes at the federal level. Very few local news outlets were granted a sit-down interview with McMahon during her visit.

ARKANSAS FOOTBALL: FANS, FORMER PLAYERS TALK RYAN SILVERFIELD HIRING

During the welcome ceremony for new Razorback football Coach Ryan Silverfield, former Arkansas football players and fans shared what mattered most to them in a pivot to a new staff.

APRIL DELUGE FLOODS NORTHEAST ARKANSAS FARMS, AGAIN

Part of the Harvesting Arkansas series, this story looked at challenges after an unusually heavy storm system dropped historic rainfall across the Mid-South, triggering widespread river flooding that inundated fields and farm infrastructure in northeast Arkansas.

ALMOST 100 MICROSCHOOLS NOW REGISTERED IN ARKANSAS

In 2025, nearly 100 microschoools are registered in Arkansas' Educational Freedom Accounts program this school year, with about 1,500 approved students being served by those institutions. This issue raises more questions about accountability and monitoring of the state's Educational Freedom Accounts.

**THE COMMUNITY JOURNALISM PROJECT HELPS ENSURE OUR
STATE'S STORIES ARE TOLD, OUR LEADERS ARE HELD ACCOUNTABLE
AND OUR HISTORY IS PRESERVED FOR GENERATIONS TO COME.**

CJP FUNDED REPORTING



LUCAS DUFALLA - REPORT FOR AMERICA MISSISSIPPI RIVER BASIN REPORTER

This year, I've reported on economic development and environment stories about Eastern Arkansas. My reporting has taken me up and down the map, from Lake Village in Southeast Arkansas to Blytheville and Osceola in Northeast Arkansas. Community Journalism Project funding has allowed me to travel and given me the freedom to pursue stories that other news organizations haven't. Throughout the year, I've heard from many Arkansans, not just those who live in the Delta, who are grateful to the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette for publishing stories that cover the entire state, not just Little Rock and Central Arkansas.

I want to say thank you for donating to the Arkansas Democrat Gazette's Community Journalism Project. Your donations allowed me to travel across the state to report on stories that matter to Arkansans. Without these donations, I wouldn't have been able to cover Helena-West Helena's fight to repair its aging, leak-prone water system or the ascendant steel industry in Northeast Arkansas. Journalism is a public service, and you're helping to create a more informed Arkansas.

MATT BYRNE- BOB HOLT RAZORBACK REPORTER

I joined the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette sports desk in March and quickly got to work covering the Arkansas baseball team's run to the College World Series. Community funding greatly supported my in-person bylines from Omaha, Neb., and they graciously didn't end there. I've flown to schools such as Tennessee, LSU and Texas during football season alongside Tom Murphy. Together, we speak with Arkansas athletes and coaches right after their games and retell those conversations online the day of or the following morning in print for our readers.



My normal routine is to send a photo to my family group chat from every press box in stadiums and basketball arenas I visit. As they reply with excitement, I think of the empowering feeling of having a community backing – and counting – on me from home in Arkansas to deliver informative and interesting stories. **Thank you so much for supporting our efforts to constantly keep up with teams that matter to you and those around the state.**



JOSH SNYDER - ARKANSAS LEARNS ACT REPORTER

I became the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette's LEARNS Act reporter in June. For these first six months, I focused much of my attention on three questions:

1. What does the LEARNS Act do, and how does that affect everyday Arkansans?
2. Who is using the Educational Freedom Account program, and how are parents spending those account funds?
3. What does education accountability look like under the Arkansas Teaching and Learning Assessment System (ATLAS)?

Reporting full-time on the LEARNS Act means diving deeply into a sweeping, 145-page piece of legislation that touches on everything from teacher salaries to school choice to campus safety. Taking such a deep dive into a single subject would be impossible without the support of the Community Journalism Project.

Your support makes it possible for us to dig into issues that affect Arkansas, whether in the halls of the Capitol, in the classroom or around the kitchen table. Thank you.