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Three Rivers Edition

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Front & Center

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Doyle Batey

New state Legion commander serves fellow veterans

Carol Rolf

Doyle Batey has a heart for veterans. He is a 20-year Navy veteran himself and knows the needs of his fellow veterans. Batey, 70, is the new state commander of the American Legion Department of Arkansas. He was elected June 23 at the 101st Arkansas Department State Convention in North Little Rock. In his role as state commander, Batey said, he will travel across Arkansas, encouraging members of the state's various posts or chapters. "This has been a big year for the American Legion," Batey said. "We are celebrating our 100th anniversary." Arkansas celebrated the event durin...

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front & center



STACI VANDAGRIFF/THREE RIVERS EDITION

Doyle Batey of Beebe is the new commander of the American Legion Department of Arkansas. Elected in June, he will spend the year traveling the state and visiting with members of more than 100 American Legion posts across Arkansas.

Doyle Batey

New state Legion commander serves fellow veterans

BY CAROL ROLF
Contributing Writer

Doyle Batey has a heart for veterans. He is a 20-year Navy veteran himself and knows the needs of his fellow veterans.

Batey, 70, is the new state commander of the American Legion Department of Arkansas. He was elected June 23 at the 101st Arkansas Department State Convention in North Little Rock.

In his role as state commander, Batey said, he will travel across Arkansas, encouraging members of the state's various posts or chapters.

"This has been a big year for the American Legion," Batey said. "We are celebrating our 100th anniversary."

Arkansas celebrated the event during its state convention in June, including a parade on June 22; individual posts have held various activities as well.

According to the website legion.org, the American Legion was chartered by Congress in 1919 as a patriotic veterans organization. Today, membership is said to be approximately 2 million in more than 13,000 posts nationwide, with the posts organized into 55 departments — one each for the 50 states, along with the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, France, Mexico and the Philippines.

The American Legion began its 100th anniversary at the national convention in August 2018 and will continue the celebration through Veterans Day in November.

"I have known and worked with Doyle Batey ever since I was department commander in 2011-2012," said Glen Minor of White Hall, current finance officer and past commander for the American Legion Department of Arkansas and current commander of White Hall American Legion Post 232.

"He was an outstanding adjutant, and I look forward to working with him as department commander during the coming year. He has a good sense of humor and is a great person to work with and to work for," Minor said.

"He wants to do what is right, and he likes helping veterans. He will do anything and everything he possibly can to help a veteran," Minor said. "Doyle served as deputy director of the Arkansas Department of Veterans Affairs prior to coming to the American Legion, so he knows the VA rules and regulations better than anyone I know. This makes him uniquely qualified to help veterans and active-duty military [personnel]."

"I know he'll do a great job as state commander, leading our organization into our second century of service."

I hope to help increase our membership during the coming year. We are actively seeking younger members."

Doyle Batey

NEW COMMANDER OF THE AMERICAN LEGION DEPARTMENT OF ARKANSAS

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PRINCIPALS

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Jacksonville to work and raise my family.”

Jones is beginning her 16th year in education. She started as a teacher at Arnold Drive Elementary School at Little Rock Air Force Base, where she taught prekindergarten through second grade.

Jones also taught kindergarten through fourth grade at Pinewood before being hired as assistant principal at Adkins.

“I was there through the transition from the Pulaski County Special School District to the Jacksonville North Pulaski School District,” Jones said.

She’s excited to transition from the pre-K facility to being a principal at an elementary school, Jones said.

“I am looking forward to building on the system and structures that are currently in place by the outgoing principal,” she said. “She and her staff worked hard to create a culture of high learning for students and staff. I am excited to take them — students and teachers — from where they are currently and continuing to grow them. I want to continue the pattern of building strong, sustainable relationships with the staff, students and their families, and we want to grow the students and create lifelong learners who will eventually give back to our community.”



MARK BUFFALO/THREE RIVERS EDITION

The Jacksonville North Pulaski School District has new head principals at four schools this year. They are, from left, Shana Loring, Murrell Taylor Elementary School; Megan Brown, Homer Adkins Pre-K Center; April Turner, Warren Dupree Elementary; and Lindsey Jones, Pinewood Elementary.

Jones earned a bachelor’s degree in early-childhood education from the University of Central Arkansas in Conway, a Master of Arts in Teaching degree from Harding University in Searcy and a master’s in educational leadership from Arkansas State University in Jonesboro.

“I am so excited about the successes and growth of the Jacksonville North Pulaski School District in just three short years,” Jones said. “I am even more excited about the work that is yet to be done.”

Jones and her husband,

Kenny, have been married for eight years. They have a son, Colton, 5, who will be in kindergarten this year at Pinewood.

APRIL TURNER

April Turner, a 1999 graduate of Magnolia High School, comes to Warren Dupree after serving as assistant principal at Jacksonville Middle School for four years. She replaces Jamie Reed, who left the district following the 2018-19 school year.

“I am truly excited for this year,” Turner said. “I can’t wait to meet my scholars and

their families at open house.” This is Turner’s first head-principal job.

“I will ensure that all students work, discover, excel and soar through meaningful, rich learning,” she said.

Turner received a bachelor’s degree in early-childhood education in 2003 from Southern Arkansas University in Magnolia. She earned a master’s degree in education with a major in reading in 2006 from Harding University in Searcy and a master’s in educational leadership in 2013 from Arkansas State University in Jonesboro.

This is Turner’s 15th year in education, having taught first, second, third and fifth grades. She was also a literacy facilitator for two years.

Turner and her husband, Calvin Turner Jr., have three children: Calvin III, 14; Addyson, 9; and Carter, 1.

SHANA LORING

Shana Loring, who is originally from Illinois, is a graduate of Jacksonville High School. She comes to Murrell Taylor for her first principal’s job. She is replacing Myeisha Haywood, who is now elementary alternative learning education administrator for the Jacksonville North Pulaski School District.

Loring has a bachelor’s degree from the University of Central Arkansas in Conway and master’s and Education Specialist degrees

from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock.

“I have been in education for 19 years,” she said. “I have held a variety of positions in public schools — secretary, bookkeeper, teacher, instructional facilitator, assistant principal, curriculum coordinator and now principal.”

Loring started her career in the Pulaski County Special School District and also worked in the Little Rock School District for 14 years. This is her third year in Jacksonville.

“I am looking forward to working with parents, teachers and students to create a culture of excellence at Taylor,” Loring said. “I grew up in this neighborhood. My mother worked at this school, so I already feel like I’m a part of this community and want to help Taylor be the very best it can be.”

Loring said she is passionate about education.

“I am passionate about children and sincerely believe that education is the pathway to greatness,” she said. “I want to ensure that these students have everything they need to be successful, productive, global citizens.”

Loring and her husband, Keenan, have four children: Kendal, Kady, Keenan Jr. and Kiara. They also have three grandchildren: Kingston, Kennedi and Kruz.

MEGAN BROWN

Megan Brown comes to

Adkins after serving as assistant principal at Bayou Meto Elementary School for a year. She replaces Jones, who is now principal at Pinewood.

Brown is from Jacksonville and attended Sylvan Hills High School in Sherwood. She earned a bachelor’s degree in early-childhood education from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock and a master’s degree in educational leadership from Arkansas State University in Jonesboro.

This is Brown’s sixth year in education. She taught kindergarten at Dupree for three years. She also taught first grade at Arnold Drive Elementary School in Jacksonville.

“This is my first year as a head principal,” Brown said. “I look forward to working with teachers, students and parents collaboratively to focus on high levels of student learning, social and emotional support, and kindergarten readiness. We will focus on implementing various activities and programs to increase parental involvement that incorporates parents into the instructional program.”

Brown and her husband, Jeremy, have two children: Jeter and Skylar.

“I am excited to lead Adkins Pre-K for the 2019-20 school year,” Brown said.

Staff writer Mark Buffalo can be reached at (501) 399-3676 or mbruffalo@arkansasonline.com.

BATEY

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Originally from Blytheville, Batey took a circuitous route to enlist in the Navy. An overdose of antibiotics as a child left him deaf in his left ear and nearly cost him a career in the military.

“I grew up around the [Blytheville] Air Force Base. I dreamed of being in the Air Force ... being on those airplanes. ... I tried to enlist in the Air Force, but the recruiter turned me down,” Batey said.

“I went to the Navy recruiter, who gave me an early entry ... 120 days to enter. My hometown gave me a going-away party. I went in to start the induction process. ... They sent me down for my physical ... and they rejected me,” he said, referring to his hearing loss.

“They sent me down to another officer. I said, ‘Sir, I can’t go home. ... They gave me a going-away party. ... I can’t go home. I’ve always wanted to be in the military. ... I can’t go home.’ So he signed me up and flew me to boot camp,” Batey said, smiling.

“I’ve been able to fly in an Air Force trainer. ... I retired as the highest enlisted officer possible,” he said. “I worked on the F-14 Tomcat aircraft ... the one Tom Cruise flew in *Top Gun*. I was there when they filmed that movie. That second lieutenant that allowed me to enter the Navy, despite my hearing loss, did me a favor. I’d like to tell him, ‘You changed my life.’ ... I’ve been able to travel ... to live my life’s dream?”

Batey graduated from Blytheville High School in May 1998 and enlisted in the Navy in February 1969 during the Vietnam War, although he never served in Vietnam. He served in the Navy honorably for 20 years, retiring in April 1989. He attained the rank of master chief petty officer and served on four aircraft carriers and in six aircraft squadrons. Most of his time in service was working on the Grumman F-14 Tomcat aircraft, part of the cadre of Navy personnel who introduced the F-14 to the Navy fleet.

“I went into the Navy as an E-2,” Batey said. “During my delayed entry time, I got married.

“I progressed on up to E-9, retiring at the top grade for an enlisted officer. I’ve been blessed.”

His last assignment was at Millington Naval Base near Memphis, Tennessee.

“I was the assistant training officer,” he said. “It was a good assignment. I had told Debbie if she would agree to 20 years in the military with me, I would retire after that. It was time for me to retire and spend more time with my family.”

Batey parlayed his military experience into a civilian career that reflected his concern for his fellow veterans.

He managed the men’s clothing department at the Little Rock Air Force Base Exchange in Jacksonville from 1998 to 2004.

“I especially took an interest in helping members of the military and their families with [purchasing] their medals and ribbons,” he said.

That job led him to the Arkansas Department of Veterans Affairs, where he served in several capacities from 2004 to 2010, including as deputy director from 2006 to 2010. He worked veterans’ claims and represented veterans at the Board of Veterans’ Appeals and had the responsibility for two veterans homes and two state veterans cemeteries.

“I loved that work,” he said. Batey left his job with Veterans Affairs to serve veterans in another capacity. In August 2010, he became the adjutant for the American Legion, Department of Arkansas.

“The adjutant handles all of the paperwork for the Legion,” he said, adding that he was also appointed by the governor to serve as director of the Arkansas Veterans Child Welfare Service Office during that time. “I served seven years at the state adjutant.”

Batey is a paid-up-for-life member of the American Legion. He serves as first vice commander of M.M Eberts American Legion Post 1 in North Little Rock and is a life member of Ye Steivos, the American Legion’s National Association of Department Adjutants. He is also a life member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and of the Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada, United States, aka ANAVICUS.

Batey is married to his high school sweetheart, the former Deborah Jan Wadkins of Gosnell, who is a member of the American Legion Auxiliary. The Bateys will have been married 51 years in October.

Their children include Laura Jones, 50, of North Little Rock; Renee Butler, 47, of Beebe, who has two children, Christiana, 26, and Tessa, 18; and John Batey, 32, Marie Batey, 30, and Michael Batey, 28, all of Beebe.

Batey said he “retired” from the state adjutant’s job to travel with his wife.

“She had her bucket list,” he said, laughing. “We went to Mount Rushmore. We visited with family. We’ve done other things, too.”

Batey said he was approached by several past department commanders, post commanders and post members to run for the office of state commander.

“You have to campaign for this job,” he said, laughing,

as he gave visitors campaign buttons he used in the race. “It was a close race, but I came out the winner.

“I hope to help increase our membership during the coming year. We are actively seeking younger members, those who have served in the more recent wars. We are seeing some now who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan. We hope to even start some new posts in the state.”

Batey and his wife will leave soon for the American Legion National Convention, set for Aug. 23-29 in Indianapolis, Indiana.

“That convention is always a lot of fun,” Batey said. “I am proud to be able to represent Arkansas at that event.”

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