

## Features



TOP

# Bloomfield Chamber Holds Ribbon Cutting for Wildflower Boutique

NOVEMBER 15TH 2023 BY DEE LOFLIN

## Bloomfield Chamber Holds Ribbon Cutting for Wildflower Boutique

The Bloomfield Chamber of Commerce held a ribbon cutting for the The Wildflower Boutique located in downtown Bloomfield.

Owner is Amanda Fortner and she has recently opened the Wildflower Boutique on the courthouse square.

She carries clothing from small to 3xl along with shoes and accessories.

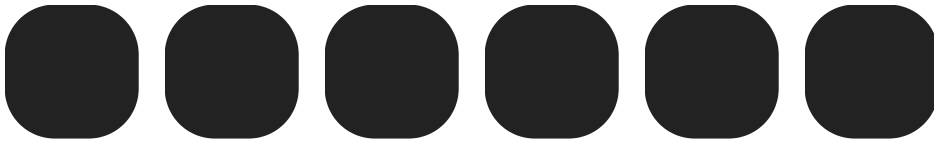
This is small-town shopping at its finest is what you will experience here at the boutique," commented Fortner. "We offer a wide selection of clothing items, accessories, and shoes that cater to every style and taste."

The Wildflower Boutique is nestled in the heart of downtown Bloomfield just across from the courthouse.

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## Puxico R-8 Schools Veterans Day Assembly 2023

NOVEMBER 15TH 2023 BY DEE LOFLIN

### Puxico R-8 Schools Veterans Day Assembly 2023

The annual Puxico School District's Veterans Day Assembly was held on Wednesday, November 8, 2023. The District was out on Friday so they held it earlier in the week.

Students who participate in FCCLA (Family Career and Community Leaders of America) club welcomed visitors and veterans. They also prepared a luncheon of ham, green beans, corn, mashed potatoes, gravy, dessert and drinks for approximately 80 veterans and their family members.

Laney Porter opened the ceremony while Austin Harbin and Zach Jones presented the colors. The Pledge of Allegiance was held by Ziti Boyco and the Puxico High School band played the Star Spangled Banner.

The guest speaker was Robert Wake of the Wake Foundation in Poplar Bluff. He was a veteran of Iraq and was wounded in combat being awarded a Purple Heart. He was also born and reared in Kennett, Missouri and now lives in Poplar Bluff, MO

On May 16, 2004, Sgt Wake was wounded severely when his detail received intense enemy fire.

“At about 3 o’clock in the morning, after moving back from a machine gun nest on the roof of a police station, me and the medic decided to have an MRE in the dark,” Wake said. “We had been in a 17-hour gun battle. We were fighting very hard being up on the roof. There were 16 of us and about 5,000 of them. The medic lit a cigarette and I heard a bomb come down the tube. It exploded between me and the medic.”

That was the beginning of an his long road to recover. This incident left Wake with 141 bits of shrapnel in his body.

"I really remember the bright flash and I remember feeling like a big part of my body was on fire," stated Wake. "It broke my nose, it knocked out my upper front teeth, shattered my right ankle and blew out my left knee and tory my frontal lobe."

Wake was in and out of consciousness for hours.

“Somehow I had crawled across the roof. I realized I was still alive, and I just said, ‘God. If you just help me get home ...’ And I went out again. The last time I came to, I had all my gear on and I had fallen backward through a window into this room ...” Filled with frightened Iraqi policemen, he explained.

“I went out and when I came to again, the Army had me in a stairwell,” Wake said. “I could hear them calling my name over the radio, reporting there was blood coming from my ears, nose, eyes and I said ‘This is not good.’

“My best friend and another gentleman carried me five flights of stairs. I have no memory of it. They got me into a Humvee and we went through another ambush before I could get out. Something I thought was five minutes lasted more than five hours. That’s how much time I lost during that ordeal. I was then awarded the Purple Heart on July 4th in Baghdad.”

VFW Post Commander Duane Martin help present the Quilt of Honor

Former Puxico R-8 Schools Superintendent George Sifford, 96, a World War II U.S. Navy veteran and “the oldest man in town” was awarded a numbered and recorded Quilt of Honor to commemorate his service to the United States. He received a standing ovation from the crowd.

Sifford was assigned to an aircraft carrier and spent 16 years as superintendent at Puxico School District.

Tonna O'Dell received the Teacher of the Year. She is a junior high social studies teacher.

Martin stated, "This is an annual event with the school and our organization sponsors programs dedicated to patriotism among students, the Patriot Pen and Voice of Democracy writing contests. The community support and the school support we have are overwhelming.”

Alyssa Owens earned the Patriot Pen Speech winner and Ella Duncan won the Voice of Democracy Speech. Both reach their speeches to the audience.

Andrea Clark and Caiden Jackson accepted Patriot's Pen second and third place. Stephanie Day and Aricka Robinson placed second and third in the Voice of Democracy category.

Each were honored with medals and certificates of merit from the VFW and Auxiliary.

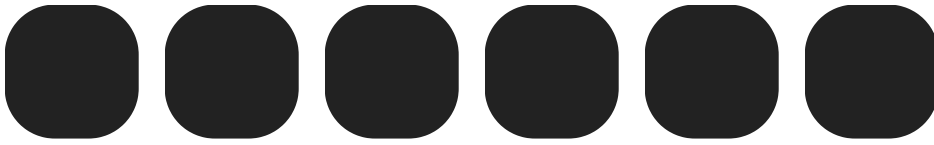
Rachell McGill recognized the winners of the Coloring Contest. Each student came to the stage for a group photo.

The Puxico Band played America the Beautiful and Taps was played by Joshua Simons to close the event.

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## 2023 Bloomfield Chamber of Commerce Board

MARCH 30TH 2023 BY DEE LOFLIN

### 2023 Bloomfield Chamber of Commerce Board

The Bloomfield Chamber of Commerce Board from left Vice President Janis Traugher, Board Member Dee Loflin, Board Member Zach Pounds, Secretary/Treasurer Karen Griffin and President Amy Haas.

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## Las Brisas Named Bloomfield Chamber Business of the Year

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MARCH 30TH 2023 BY DEE LOFLIN

### Las Brisas Named Bloomfield Chamber Business of the Year

The Bloomfield Chamber of Commerce held their annual awards banquet on Thursday, March 30, 2023 at the Boathouse Wine Company.

Las Brisas opened its Bloomfield location in 2018. This was their 10th restaurant to open. This November they will celebrate 19 years of being in the restaurant business.

The Chamber and its members are so incredibly proud to have them in our community and we are thankful for all of our local citizens who support them.

The founding of Las Brisas has been a real embodiment of the American Dream and the entire Marquez family is incredibly grateful.

They were able to stay open during much of the Covid-19 pandemic utilizing their drive thru and keeping their employees working.

They have been a huge supporter of several Chamber Banquet events and have supported the Halloween Trunk or Treat event.

And they have given back to the community by supplying all of the Bloomfield school teachers with gift cards.

Their goal in the beginning was to provide us with delicious food and great service and they have accomplished that. They have crafted a place where one can come and enjoy eating with family. I believe it's a great place to feel at home. The food is delicious and the service is excellent.

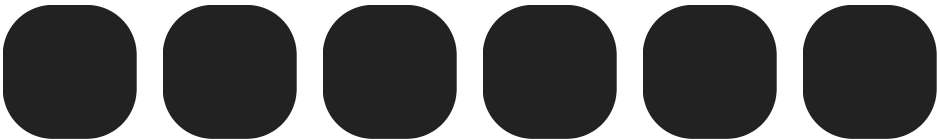
The Bloomfield Chamber would like to recognize Gustavo Marquez, owner of Las Brisas, his family, and manager, Mr. Cesar Marquez by honoring Las Brisas with the Bloomfield Chamber Business of the Year Award.

Photo provided

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# Peter Coutavas Named Bloomfield Chamber Man of the Year

MARCH 30TH 2023 BY DEE LOFLIN

Peter Coutavas Named Bloomfield Chamber Man of the Year

The Bloomfield Chamber of Commerce held their annual awards banquet on Thursday, March 30, 2023 at the Boathouse Wine Company.

This “young” man is originally from New York, but he married a southeast Missouri gal named Maryann and ended up in Puxico, Missouri.

He recently became the Administrator of the IDA - Industrial Development Authority of Stoddard County in 2021. However he has served on the board for nearly 19 years. His main function is to create jobs, promote industry and promote tourism.

The IDA of Stoddard County office is located in Bloomfield on the Courthouse Square.

He was the former mayor of Puxico and currently serves as a city alderman. He is a veteran of the United States Air Force and is a member of the Dexter Elks Lodge. He also attends Chapel on the Hill Church.

You might think why is a Puxico man receiving a Bloomfield award. Well his latest endeavor has been working with the Chamber through the IDA in filling the empty buildings in downtown Bloomfield. He attends many Commissioner meetings and is always putting in effort to “rent out” the buildings that belong to the county so downtown Bloomfield will hopefully thrive again.

He also attends most every Chamber event and ribbon cutting and he has assisted with financial funding to many of the businesses in Bloomfield utilizing IDA monies. He is a huge supporter of Bloomfield and we are thankful for his endeavors in helping Bloomfield thrive.

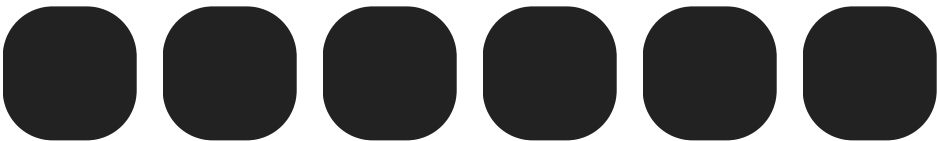
The Bloomfield Chamber would like to recognize and honor Peter Coutavas with the Man of the Year Award.

Photo provided.

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