

WESTERN ARKANSAS THE ARKANSAS RIVER

HOPE BUILDS FOR END TO WESTERN DRAUGHT!

Here in western Arkansas, the Arkansas River runs deep and swift. It has long been a source of transportation, irrigation, and litigation for the general populace. At one time, it was considered the very edge of civilization. The river and Judge Isaac Parker's court were the only things protecting law abiding citizenry from the rascals, scoundrels and outlaws who fled into the Oklahoma territory to escape justice. For decades, it served as the dividing line between law and lawlessness, community and isolation, education and ignorance.

Despite its continued strength and presence, the Arkansas River has been unable to relieve the area of a certain kind of draught. Its waters have not been sufficient to quench a building thirst in the community. That thirst is for knowledge and understanding, for reading and writing, for learning and leadership. It is a thirst that can only be filled by the works of organizations such as the Arkansas Reading Association.

Enter in a trickle of fresh water, if you will. A small stream of ideas, hope, and energy known as the Western Arkansas Chapter of the Arkansas Reading Association encompasses Crawford county. At one time, this stream ran on course. Its way was blocked, and eventually the water dried up altogether, resulting in the draught. Recent rains have fed into it again, and there are four drops of water in particular that are working to bring a steady flow level back to the chapter.

The board members of the Western chapter are President **Amanda Snow**, Vice President **Karen Allen**, Secretary/Treasurer **Dee Dee West** and Membership Chair **Morgan Waldrop**. These educators have undertaken the task of establishing an active, working ARA in Western Arkansas. Their goals for this year will center on educating their peers and the community about the ARA, building an active membership, and outlining programs for next year.

Even though its history is sparse, the Western chapter has high hopes for its future. By providing an avenue for the exchange of ideas and leadership, the ARA will foster continued education in the community. Education is the key to civilization, much as those first drops of rain signal the beginning of a growing season. That rain multiplies from individual drops into small streams, collaborating with other drops, trickles and springs. It is from small streams that mighty rivers grow, and here on the western banks, there is one stream that is rushing to make a difference.

