

Building Arkansas

Official Magazine of the American Council of Engineering Companies of Arkansas & the Arkansas Society of Professional Engineers

A photograph of two men standing in front of a glass-walled building. The man on the left is white, with short brown hair, wearing a dark blue suit jacket over a white shirt. The man on the right is Black, with short black hair and glasses, wearing a dark blue suit jacket over a white shirt. Both are smiling slightly. The background shows green trees and a clear sky.

Co-workers, co-leaders

The presidents of the American Council of Engineering Companies of Arkansas and the Arkansas Society of Professional Engineers come from the same firm, Michael Baker International, but have very different backgrounds. Mike Stengel, P.E., left, ACEC/A's new president, grew up outside Paris, Arkansas, as a "country boy" helping his dad build cabinets. He wants to build on the success of the first ACEC/A-ARDOT Joint Partnering Conference. ASPE President Stephane Bossio, P.E., hails from the Democratic Republic of Congo and came to boarding school in the United States at age 14 speaking no English. He plans to revitalize the ASPE's scholarship fundraising efforts. Eventually, he wants to go home to the Congo and contribute his expertise. For now, Arkansas is home, too.

In the News

MCE joins South Carolina-based ESP Team of Companies

McClelland Consulting Engineers is now part of the ESP Team of Companies.

ESP (Engineering, Surveying, and Planning) announced the move June 15. It is based in Fort Mill, South Carolina. It also announced that it had acquired Austin, Texas-based Roadway Asset Services.

MCE said in a press release July 24 that it will retain its brand name and continue operating as an endorsed subsidiary of ESP. MCE has five locations in Arkansas.

MCE's addition expands ESP's service capabilities in water/wastewater and aviation engineering. MCE President Byron Hicks, P.E., is now president of ESP's new Water/Wastewater Business Unit, and MCE Executive Vice President Mitch Rose runs the new Aviation Business

Unit. MCE's Daniel Barnes, P.E. is now ESP's regional executive for U.S. Central markets and will focus on growth in Arkansas and surrounding states.

"MCE has always strived to provide quality design and personalized customer service that exceeds client expectations. ESP shares our values and our obsession with client outcomes," Hicks said in ESP's announcement. "MCE is designed to serve – a natural fit with ESP's mission to improve what people depend on."

ESP has operated for almost 40 years nationwide. It has more than 900 full-time members in more than 30 locations.

"MCE remains committed to the clients, communities, and Arkansas roots

that have defined our company for decades," MCE said in the press release. "This partnership allows us to broaden our reach and strengthen our internal network while providing additional resources and support to both existing and future clients. ...

"Guided by our motto, 'Designed to Serve,' this new chapter allows us to continue delivering high-quality service with expanded resources, a stronger team, and greater reach. Our commitment to client relationships, thoughtful design, and community impact remains unchanged. This partnership was approached with careful consideration and a shared goal of strengthening our organization while enhancing the level of service we provide. Over the coming months, we will continue to communicate openly as the integration of our combined resources progresses."

In the News continues on page 8



Hicks

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Building Arkansas

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16 Michael Baker International's Mike Stengel, P.E., left, is the new ACEC/A president, while his fellow Michael Baker engineer, Stephane Bossio, P.E., is the new ASPE president. The two shared their visions for their organizations, and a little about their life stories, in this month's cover features for Building Arkansas.

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The engineering firm has focused on structural projects like the Alice Walton School of Medicine and now is branching out to the civil sector.

16 *Cover / Stengel emphasizing partnerships*

ACEC/A's new president, Mike Stengel, P.E., of Micheal Baker International looks forward to building on the association's recent success.

Stengel took over the association's leadership months after it co-hosted the inaugural ACEC/A - Arkansas Department of Transportation Joint Partnering Conference. He wants next year's to be even bigger and better by recruiting new participants and improving some of the coordination.

19 *Building Arkansas receives ASAE award*

Building Arkansas received the Arkansas Society of Association Executives' Excellence in Communications award July 14 for its June 2026 issue. ASAE is the state's association for association executives.

20 *Cover / ASPE president: I can adapt*

Stephane Bossio, P.E., stepped off a plane one Wednesday at the age of 14. He was driven to his new home at a boarding school in South Kent, Connecticut, and the next morning he sat in history class. He didn't speak a word of English.

Now, he's a project manager with Michael Baker International and the president of the Arkansas Society of Professional Engineers.

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Partnership: More than just words

ACEC/Arkansas ended the 2025-26 year on an historic note with the inaugural ACEC/A and ARDOT Joint Partnering Conference April 7-8 in Springdale. From attendance to entertainment to technical content, I believe the event met or exceeded the expectations of most. The turnout of 357 attendees – representing dozens of engineering firms from Arkansas and adjacent states, ARDOT, and 30 exhibitors – clearly indicates the desire for those who support this industry to collaborate and learn from each other.

In addition to the overall experience, I really enjoyed the focus on partnership, and I saw numerous examples of that theme play out in the conference's planning and execution. Most of the technical sessions were conducted not by a lone presenter, but by a group of industry experts of different backgrounds working in concert to present each topic. The perspectives of engineers, contractors, ARDOT, and other key agencies provided a much deeper and broader dive than typical presentations. My firm, Michael Baker International, participated in four of the sessions, and the groups represented in just those four included the following variety of perspectives: alternative delivery specialists representing three engineering firms and ARDOT's alternative delivery division; construction/constructionability experts from two engineering firms, a contractor, and ARDOT's construction division; local public agency program experts from two engineering firms, ARDOT's LPA Program division, and the Northwest Arkansas Regional Planning Commission; and digital project delivery/3D design experts from three engineering firms and ARDOT's Roadway Division.

It was refreshing to see actual partnership in action, because too often in our industry, as I expect it is in others, partnership is used more as a promotional strategy than its name would suggest. "Strategic partnerships" between firms



Mike Stengel, P.E.
ACEC/A President

often are formed with the objective by one or both of the participants to gain access to another firm's clients, staff, or skill sets, more so than the stated goal of better servicing the client or project. The spirit of collaboration and teamwork takes a back seat to the firm's business development and recruiting goals, to the detriment of the other party, and even to the client.

Our industry is one of development, innovation, construction, and advancement of infrastructure. Owners, contractors, planners and engineers, along with various supporting agencies and service providers, all play a role. Each is both reliant and relied upon. This is evidenced in every single project. The owner defines the need. The engineering team translates it into a workable design. The contractor brings it to life in the field. And the agencies keep it aligned with public standards and safety, while often providing at least a portion of the funding. When any one of those links treats the others as competitors rather than collaborators, the whole effort suffers.

ACEC/Arkansas plays a significant role in this ecosystem both in Arkansas and nationwide, and as I enter into my eighth year serving on the board, I am looking forward to continuing this agency's focus on partnership – between the eight engineering firms currently represented on the board; between the more than 40 active member firms; between our peer professional agencies in Arkansas including the Associated General Contractors (AGC), the American Institute of Architects (AIA), the Arkansas Society of Professional Surveyors (ASPS); and certainly with ARDOT.

My hope for the year ahead is that we continue to treat partnership not as a slogan, but as a discipline – one measured by the strength of what we build together and the trust we earn along the way.

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From the Congo to ASPE

My name is Stephane Wa Bossio Bossio. As a native of a French-speaking country, I would traditionally write my name as Stephane Bossio Wa Bossio, since what is commonly referred to in the United States as a middle name is, in my culture, considered a post-name.



Stephane Bossio, P.E.
ASPE President

I was born and raised in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where I was fortunate to be raised by parents who placed an extraordinary value on education. They made tremendous sacrifices to ensure that each of their eight children received the best education possible. Inspired by their example and commitment, I began my journey in the United States at the age of 14, attending boarding school in South Kent, Connecticut, before continuing my studies at the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville.

That journey has now brought me to this meaningful moment, as I accept the honor and responsibility of serving as president of ASPE (NSPE Arkansas).

It is both a privilege and a humbling distinction to serve in this role at a young age and to do so as the organization's first president of African descent. My upbringing in the DRC has profoundly shaped my worldview, my appreciation for community, and my understanding of the importance of service. To be part of an organization dedicated to supporting professionals and advancing the engineering profession is an honor; to now have the opportunity to lead it is a responsibility I undertake with deep gratitude and sincere commitment.

During my time on the state board, I had the privilege of observing two excep-

tional leaders, Mary Fair, P.E., and Landon Miller, P.E., guide this organization with vision and purpose. While their priorities differed, both demonstrated a remarkable ability to set meaningful goals and achieve them. Mary successfully restored the conference to the high standards it had

maintained prior to the challenges posed by COVID, while Landon revitalized the long-dormant Northwest Arkansas Chapter. Their accomplishments have strengthened this organization, and I am honored to follow their example.

Our past leaders have established a strong foundation and set a high standard for those who follow. While it is an honor to build upon their work, it also brings with it the responsibility to maintain that momentum and continue raising the bar. I accept that challenge wholeheartedly.

I am grateful to undertake this role with the support of an outstanding team and dedicated colleagues. Individuals such as Angie Cooper and Kale Farmer, P.E., whose longstanding service to the organization has made them invaluable sources of knowledge and guidance, continue to be tremendous resources. I also deeply appreciate the support of Daniel Ellis, P.E., whose leadership experience is extensive, and Caleb Zimmerman, P.E., who, like me, has embraced leadership opportunities early in his career.

Together, we bring a combination of experience, energy, and commitment to service. I look forward to the work ahead and remain confident that, through our collective efforts, we will continue to strengthen this organization and advance its mission in the years to come.

Building Arkansas

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In the News (Cont'd)



Vocque



Bakunas

MCE's Vocque, Bakunas make publications' lists

Two MCE professionals recently have been featured in statewide publications in Arkansas.

Anna Claire Vocque, P.E., was included in Arkansas Money & Politics' 2026 Future Icon List. Vocque has been an integral part of the land development team at McClelland Consulting Engineers for the past four years, where she serves as a project manager and associate.

She has contributed to several notable Arkansas projects, including the Central Arkansas Library System's Main Library, Little Rock Central High School, and the Arkansas Children's Hospital expansion. She led the design of the Maumelle Pickleball Complex, which received the ASCE Small Project of the Year Award in 2024, and Wildwood Daffodil Plaza, which earned an ACEC Excellence Award the same year.

She earned a bachelor's degree in civil engineering from the University of Arkansas and a master's degree in geotechnical engineering from the University of Texas at Austin.

Chris Bakunas, PLA, is featured on Arkansas Business' 40 Under 40 list. Bakunas is the Land Development Department lead in the Fayetteville MCE office, where he has worked for the past 10 years. He earned his bachelor's of landscape architecture from the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, in 2012 and has been dedicated to improving his community since. Bakunas' portfolio spans several sectors, including parks and recreation, trails, master planning, sidewalks and streetscapes, medical facilities, schools, and commercial buildings. He



Oct. 15
ACEC/A Pickleball Tournament
Location TBD

Nov. 3
Central Arkansas Trap Shoot
Jacksonville Shooting Sports Complex
Jacksonville

April 6-7, 2027
ACEC/A - ARDOT Joint Conference
Northwest Arkansas Convention Center
Springdale

has directly contributed to northwest Arkansas staples including TheatreSquared, the Momentary, and LISA Academy.

Four professionals join MCE staff

McClelland Consulting Engineers has announced the addition of four employees to its staff.

Janae Cessor has joined the Little Rock team as a construction observer. Born and raised in Arkansas, Cessor has years of experience in project inspection and is certified through CTPP and ACI. She plans to earn her civil engineering degree.

Casey Nordgren returned to the Fayetteville Geotech Department in June as its newest construction materials testing technician. The Springdale native has certifications in soils, basic aggregates, and concrete fieldwork.

Eli Wood joined the Fort Smith office as a project designer in the Water/Wastewater department. He is from Oklahoma and earned his bachelor of science in biosystems engineering at Oklahoma State University. He is currently working on the I-612 utility relocation and Fayetteville S School waterline upgrade.

Bill Rodgers joined as a construction observer for the Geotechnical Department. Having lived in California and Texas, he now works out of the Fort Smith office. He has extensive experience in public works, and he also has a Class C water distribution license and a Class D wastewater license in Texas. Current projects include tennis courts, intersection improvements, and sanitary surveys.



Crafton Tull cuts ribbon for new Jonesboro office

Crafton Tull celebrated the opening of its new office location in Jonesboro in June with a ribbon-cutting ceremony and open house.

The company outgrew its first office in Jonesboro less than three years after it opened in 2023. The new office is in the old Hometronics building, now fully renovated, located east of the radio station on Parker Road. The Crafton Tull Jonesboro office includes civil engineers and surveyors and has an open position for a municipal engineer.

Crafton Tull did site work for chairlift bike park

Crafton Tull provided site development services for Oz Trails Bike Park, the first chairlift-served mountain bike park in Arkansas, which officially opened in June. The park is located at the intersection of Highway 71 and Mercy Way in Bella Vista.

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ENGINEERING ARKANSAS

**OZ TRAILS
BIKE PARK**
BELLA VISTA, AR



Crafton Tull

In the News (Cont'd)



The park features more than 20 miles of gravity trails ranging from beginner to advanced.

It includes a large outdoor plaza and Oz Trails HQ, a new building free and open to the public located at the bottom of the lift and serving as the park's social hub. OZ Trails HQ includes a full-service restaurant, bike rentals, a retail shop, and other amenities.

Crafton named to engineer licensing board



Crafton

Matt Crafton, P.E., president and CEO of Crafton Tull, was recently appointed by Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders as an engineer member to the Arkansas State Board of Licensure for

Professional Engineers and Professional Surveyors.

The board is composed of nine members with a mission to help protect the life, health, safety, and welfare of the public by licensing individuals providing engineering and land surveying services.

Garver's Mott named to State Licensing Board

Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders recently appointed Garver Director of Field Services Earl Mott, P.E., to the State Board of Licensure for Professional Engineers and Professional Surveyors.



Mott

we work in," he said. "This appointment is a chance to continue that service in a different way, and I'm thankful for it."

Over his 35-year career at Garver, Mott, who is also a member of Garver's Management Committee, has led a wide range of design and construction projects while collaborating with clients and partners across the United States. He has served as a civil and construction engineer, project manager, and director of field services. Major clients include the Bill and Hillary Clinton National Airport, the Arkansas Department of Transportation, the Tennessee Department of Transportation, and the Texas Department of Transportation.

Mott's gubernatorial appointment makes him Garver's third representative to serve in a statewide role of this kind. He follows Arkansas Water Team Leader Jerry Martin, P.E., who was appointed to the State Board of Health in April, and Director of Enterprise Solutions Jerry Holder, P.E., who was appointed to the Arkansas Economic Development Council in 2025.

Garver Aviation reaches 11th on ENR top list

Garver's Aviation Team has earned its highest ranking yet on Engineering News-Record's annual list of the nation's top aviation design firms, climbing four spots to No. 11 in rankings announced recently.

The recognition marks Garver Aviation's eighth year on ENR's Top 25 list, which ranks firms based on aviation-related revenue.

Mott will work with fellow professionals overseeing the licensing of engineers and surveyors.

"At the end of the day, it's about giving back to the communities and the professions

"Our climb to number 11 reflects our commitment to technical rigor and client alignment," said Frank McIllwain, P.E., director of aviation at Garver. "Garver Aviation teams across the country are delivering site-specific solutions for airports facing complex challenges that rarely look the same twice. Just as important, we continue to work as an extension of our clients' teams, adapting as conditions shift and consistently delivering excellence. That trust is something we never take for granted."

Garver's aviation work spans planning, design, construction services, environmental services, pavement management, program management, and other specialized services. It continues to support major commercial service airports, including the Clinton National Airport in Little Rock, Dallas Fort Worth International Airport, and Orlando International Airport. It also supports general aviation airports that serve smaller communities.

Garver also earned recognition across additional ENR Sourcebook categories this year including Transportation; Water Supply; Water Treatment, Desalination Plants; Water Transmission Lines and Aqueducts; Sewer and Waste; and Wastewater Treatment.

Two Benchmark engineers earn P.E. licenses

Two Benchmark Group engineers, Carlos Lemus, P.E., and Joshua Lunceford, P.E., recently earned their professional engineering licenses.



Lemus

Lemus, a graduate of the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville with a bachelor of science in mechanical engineering, joined Benchmark Group shortly after graduation and has contributed to

the design of HVAC, plumbing, and fire

In the News continues on page 12

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In the News (Cont'd)

protection systems for a wide range of commercial projects.

Lunceford earned a bachelor of arts in mathematics from Lyon College and a bachelor of science in electrical engineering from the University of Arkansas. After joining Benchmark Group as an intern in 2019, he transitioned to a full-time role following graduation and has contributed to the design and coordination of electrical systems for nationwide retail projects. He combines his engineering expertise with more than 10 years of experience as a licensed residential journeyman electrician.



Lunceford

Development Committee; and the Joint Budget Committee.

She currently serves on the board of directors for the Siloam Springs region of Arvest Bank.

Lundy earned a bachelor of accounting from Lipscomb University in Nashville, Tennessee. Over the course of a distinguished 35-year career in finance, he served as managing partner at Lundy Allard & Co. and BKD, LLP, where he oversaw corporate and high-net-worth client portfolios. He currently serves as treasurer of the board for Central Research, Inc. (CRI) and as president of Ozark Empire Distributors, Inc.

He formerly served a 12-year term as trustee for Northwest Arkansas Community College, as well as a two-year elected term as chair.

Benchmark's Colville promoted to BIM manager

Lee Colville was recently promoted to Benchmark Group's BIM (Building Information Modeling) manager.

With nearly three decades of experience, Colville has been an integral part of Benchmark Group since 2008, supporting major retail programs while advancing the firm's technology and design processes.

In his new role, he leads Benchmark Group's BIM strategy, technology initiatives, training programs, and process improvement efforts.



Colville

Benchmark to attend conferences

Benchmark Group will attend the 2026 FMI Energy & Store Development Conference Sept. 28-30 in Orlando. The conference is the premier event for grocery retail professionals focused on ener-

gy, refrigeration, sustainability, and store development.

Benchmark also will attend the 2026 AIA Arkansas State Convention Oct. 7-9 in Rogers. The event is the state's premier gathering of architects, engineers, designers, and construction professionals.

Burns & McDonnell celebrates move to new NWA office

Burns & McDonnell recently relocated its northwest Arkansas office to 2140 Orange Drive in Springdale, providing expanded space to support the firm's continued growth and collaboration with clients throughout the region.

To celebrate the move, the team welcomed clients, partners and community members to an open house in early July.

Burns & McDonnell's team continues to advance projects that improve mobility, connectivity and safety across Arkansas. Recent efforts include design and construction-phase services for the Creekside Trail & Park Trailhead in Farmington, where construction is now underway; design and construction-phase services for a Highway 112 widening project; and statewide implementation support for ARDOT's Vulnerable Road User Sidewalk, Trail & Highway Crossing Safety Improvements Program.

Burns & McDonnell is also advancing a citywide connected trail system (RAISE) project in Russellville, applying innovative project management, value engineering and accelerated delivery strategies to help bring a connected trail network to the community.

Burns & McDonnell is also advancing critical water infrastructure projects that improve system reliability, resiliency and capacity for communities across Arkansas. Current efforts include design of Phases 2-5 of the Fort Smith 48-inch water transmission line, which will provide additional system redundancy and capacity, as well as continued support of Fort Smith's consent decree program, where Burns & McDonnell has partnered with the utility for more than a decade on hydraulic modeling, flow monitoring,



Haak

Lundy

Benchmark Group names two to board of directors

BG Holdings, Inc., the parent company of Benchmark Group, Inc., a 100% employee-owned Arkansas company, has announced the appointment of northwest Arkansas natives Dr. Delia Haak and J. Mark Lundy, CPA, to its board of directors.

Haak, Ed.D., earned both a doctorate in education and a master of business administration from the University of Arkansas, as well as a bachelor of science in business administration from John Brown University. She served two terms in the Arkansas House of Representatives, where she was a member of the Revenue and Taxation Committee; the Agriculture, Forestry, and Economic



NEW HOME. Burns & McDonnell's Steven Beam, P.E., center, and Ryan Castor, P.E., left, visit with Arkansas Good Roads Foundation Executive Director Joe Quinn at an open house celebrating the firm's new Springdale office.

asset management and regulatory planning.

Additional work includes development of the long-range plan for the Siloam Springs Water Treatment Plant, the 2026 water master plan for Rogers Water Utilities to help prepare for future growth, and hydraulic modeling, flow monitoring and design services supporting the Mountain Road and Mill Street improvements for Springdale Water Utilities.

Sarah Foster named Olsson's new president



Foster

spearhead the delivery of Olsson's services to clients and will be responsible for the company's growth and performance.

"Time and again, Sarah has taken on complex challenges and delivered results," said Olsson CEO Brad Strittmatter, P.E. "Her combination of experience, knowledge, care and drive is not only unique, but foundational to who we are as a firm."

Sarah Foster, P.E., has been named president of Olsson.

Foster was previously the engineering and design firm's executive vice president of markets. She will

Foster joined Olsson in 2018. She worked in business development and then led the firm's western region and subsequently Olsson's water practice before elevating to executive vice president for all Olsson markets in 2023.

Based in Denver, Foster has three decades of experience in the engineering and design industry. She has played key roles in designing water infrastructure and serving programs focused on regulatory and compliance strategies.

She travels frequently to meet with colleagues and clients and has led Olsson employee resource groups for women and rising professionals. She is president of ACEC Colorado and leads Olsson's involvement in Engineers Without Borders.

Foster is a licensed professional engineer and earned a bachelor's degree in chemical engineering from the University of Colorado Boulder. She holds a master's degree in civil engineering from the University of Colorado Denver.

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**BURNS
MCDONNELL**

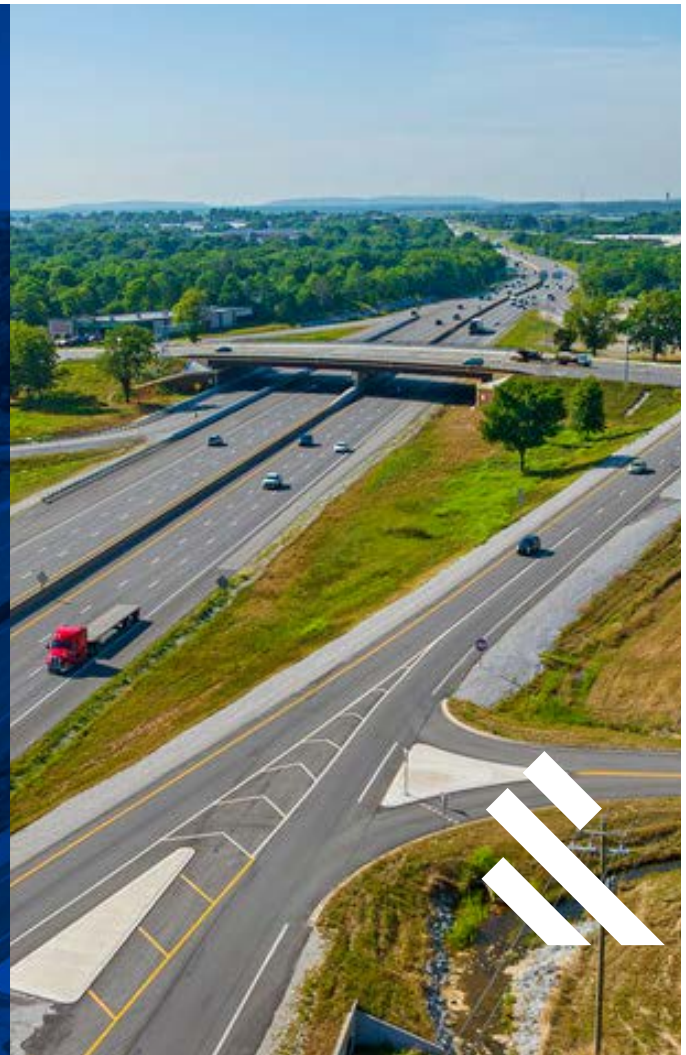
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ACEC/A Member Spotlight

Martin/Martin designed AWSOM school

Engineering firm has focused on structural projects like Alice Walton School of Medicine and now is branching out to civil sector

The acronym for the Alice Walton School of Medicine is “AWSOM.” Martin/Martin’s engineering work helped make it awesome.

Based out of Colorado, Martin/Martin Consulting Engineers opened its north-west Arkansas office in Bentonville about 10 years ago. It initially focused mainly on structural engineering, but in recent years it has branched out, hiring Ryan Gill, P.E., to be its civil lead two years ago. It now has a staff of about 10, including five professional engineers.

Ethan Nichols, P.E., the company’s structural lead, said the Alice Walton School of Medicine integrated architecture, landscaping, and art, while at the same time providing a place for students to learn. It features a continual green roof and a dramatic front cantilever and is designed to mimic the natural bluff of the surrounding region.

Nichols said the front cantilever proved to be the most challenging part to structurally engineer. Engineers used two-story cantilever trusses that reach out about 82 feet, supported by what Nichols called a super truss, which helps mitigate the differential deflection that could be caused by the design. They worked with the architect of record, Polk Stanley Wilcox Architects, to ensure that every piece of the structure was either hidden or celebrated throughout the building and not in conflict with the architectural design.

Martin/Martin also is the civil engineer for an apartment complex with a green roof on J Street adjacent to AWSOM and the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art. It also is working on the new Mandy and Bill Dillard II Hall classroom building for the Walton College of Business. It includes a partial walkout basement in addition to classrooms built with a tiered design. The firm also is de-



MARTIN/MARTIN projects have included the Alice Walton School of Medicine, top, the Market Center of the Ozarks nonprofit food production hub, center, and the Midtown Lane Office Complex, left. The Walton School of Medicine won this year’s ACEC/A Engineering Excellence Award in Category C: Structural Systems, Large Project.

and has done a number of smaller projects. It soon will be starting work on a 10-acre industrial plant in Skill, Oklahoma.

Gill said his work is “developer driven.” One challenging project has been a townhouse in downtown Rogers that occupies a small space.

Nichols and Gill said they appreciate Martin/Martin’s commitment to its employees and willingness to collaborate with other companies. Nichols said the firm has an excellent continuing education and learning program.

“And our office being small, it’s tight knit, and still fun even though you’re getting work done,” Gill said.

signing the Maple Hill North residence hall at the University of Arkansas.

Other Martin/Martin projects include the Midtown Lane office complex, the Market Center of the Ozarks nonprofit food production hub, and the Howard on Central apartment complex in downtown Bentonville.

Developer-driven civil work

The civil engineering side of the office has been in existence for about two years

In the News (Cont'd)

Crist's Moore named to state licensing board



Moore

Crist Engineers' Northwest Arkansas office leader, Josh Moore, P.E., has been appointed by Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders to the Arkansas State Board of Licensure for Professional Engineers and Professional Surveyors.

Moore, a 29-year engineering industry veteran, will join fellow board members in supporting the licensure of engineers and surveyors across the state, helping uphold the standards that protect the health, safety, and welfare of the public.



Jerry



McKay

Three engineers join Crist staff

Crist Engineers added three staff engineers in June.

Karson Jerry, P.E., joined Crist with two years of experience in coordinating research projects, preparing and presenting technical findings, conducting field inspections to evaluate concrete performance, and reviewing concrete mix designs to ensure compliance.

He previously was an intern for the Arkansas Department of Transportation. He earned a bachelor's of science degree in civil and construction engineering at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock.

Lucas McKay joined the company full-time after working part-time for six months. He assisted with engineering tasks related to fluid dynamics, pumping systems, and hydraulic performance.

He previously worked as a law enforcement officer and operated a videography business.



Bland

He earned a bachelor's of science in mechanical engineering degree at the University of Arkansas in May.

Zane Bland joined Crist Engineers with

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Stengel emphasizing partnerships

The new ACEC-A president wants to build on ARDOT Joint Conference's first-year success by making next year's even better.

By Mattie Brawner
Contributing writer

ACEC/A's new president, Mike Stengel, P.E., of Micheal Baker International looks forward to building on the association's recent success.

Stengel took over the reins of leadership months after it co-hosted the inaugural ACEC/A – Arkansas Department of Transportation Joint Partnering Conference. He wants next year's to be even bigger and better by recruiting new participants and improving some of the coordination.

"We had great representation at all levels," he said of the conference, which occurred April 7-8 at the Northwest Arkansas Convention Center. "The leadership was there. The engineering community was obviously there. It was really strong. I think the content was great. We had representatives of the construction industry. For a first year, I thought it was a slam dunk. I think it was a great event."

He wants to continue the ACEC/A's emphasis on partnerships. According to Stengel, partnering helps foster development and efficiency. He would love to see partnering events with the construction industry and architects.

Stengel first joined the ACEC/A board in 2016 after serving on the ARDOT Liaison Committee for several years prior to that. He had to leave the board while he was working in Dallas but, when he returned to Arkansas, was elected state director in 2022. He served last year as secretary and moved into the president's role because last year's president-elect, Lawren Wilcox, P.E., of Garver, retired.

Stengel has several areas on which he wants to focus. First, he wants to strengthen some of the organization's processes and create more standard operating procedures. He also looks forward to attending all the major events as well as



MIKE STENGEL, P.E., Michael Baker International's Arkansas office manager and the newly installed ACEC/A president, wants to attend as many events as possible this year. He said involved leaders demonstrate commitment.

smaller events. He feels leaders should be involved in those events because it demonstrates commitment.

"I don't have spectacular goals in mind for the board," he said. "I don't think we're going to break any new ground, but I do want to keep the momentum that we got last year and organize a few things. But I think just showing up is a big part of it, and I want to do that."

Stengel grew up a son of a farmer and cabinet maker seven miles outside of Paris, Arkansas. He was one of the "country kids," while the people in Paris, which today has a population of less than 3,500, were "the city kids."

He didn't have an interest in engineering growing up, but a friend's dad was a surveyor, and he seemed to enjoy his job. When it came time for college plans, Stengel chose civil engineering in hopes of finding something similar.

He graduated from the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville in 1995 and went to work for Garver as a construction engineer and inspector.

Though he didn't realize it at the time, his experience helping his dad build cabinets developed skills he would find helpful during his career. If contractors were struggling to build forms for a concrete device, Stengel could craft a solution.

"As a cabinet builder, just understanding how wood works and different things, and just being able to see it, there was some benefit in being able to see how things should work in construction," he said.

Stengel earned his professional engineering license five years later. He joined Garver's airport team because he liked the team members and enjoyed the engineering principles that came into play.

After a few years, a recruiter from South Carolina-based LPA Group reached out to him about starting an Arkansas airport team. The firm did a lot of work for airports and state departments of transportation. It already had a presence with the Arkansas Department of Transportation and wanted him to start up an Arkansas airport team. He took the opportunity,

Starting with a team of four, then five, Stengel slowly built the client base. A few years later in 2010, Micheal Baker acquired the LPA Group, and Stengel

and his team moved over. It wasn't a big change, as the team was already generating enough revenue that Micheal Baker was able to break it off into its own profit and loss center. This allowed the team to handle its own finances and decisions with final approval by regional leadership.

From managing four to 60

Stengel stills holds the same position of office manager that he held then – only now he leads a team of more than 60. Between then and now, he briefly took a position as office manager for the Texas office in 2019. He was in Dallas in 2021 when Micheal Baker's Fred Harper, P.E., discovered a fracture in the I-40 Hernando de Soto Bridge crossing the Mississippi River between Memphis and West Memphis. The discovery led to the months-long closure and repair of the bridge. Stengel was involved in several of the early coordination phone calls because of his relationship with ARDOT.

When Michael Baker started up its northwest Arkansas office, Stengel took the opportunity to come home to Arkansas and manage it. He also oversaw Michael Baker International's Little Rock office that is now being managed by Scott Thornsby, P.E.

He is also heavily involved with the airport team, which does projects in Texas as well as Arkansas. After a tornado struck the Jonesboro Municipal Airport, Michael Baker was involved in a major redesign that helped lead to the facility being named 2024 Arkansas Airport of the Year by the Arkansas Division of Aeronautics. The following year, Michael Baker completed an airport pavement reconstruction project in Hillsboro, Texas. It was named the 2026 Local/Basic Airport of the Year Award by the Texas Airports Council.

"So it was a really, really neat thing," he said. "Two of our biggest projects, and then they both got recognized."

Continues on next page



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“ I always felt like ACEC/A was the elite engineering group in the state. And I’ve invested, it’ll be 10 years, getting to this level. And so I don’t want it to just be fit in. I want it to be a focus for me this year. ”

Other big recent Michael Baker projects include the design of a big railroad overpass just north of the Jonesboro airport that is currently under construction. The firm’s bridge team is currently working on a major rehab of the Arkansas Highway 49 bridge over the Mississippi River in Helena.

Stengel says there is no “typical day” as an office manager. He still helps with complex designs, and he enjoys the technical writing, the process of pursuing clients, maintaining relationships, and being visible in the community. He also enjoys the ability it gives him to be involved with the ACEC/A and various conferences.

When he’s not at Micheal Baker or being involved with ACEC/A, he enjoys hiking or walking the dogs with his family, as his neighborhood is connected to the Northwest Arkansas Razorback Regional Greenway trail system. He also enjoys hunting yearly in his hometown of Paris.

As for his family life, he and his wife, Anna, met while both were attending college at the University of Arkansas, and they have two sons, Andrew and Gray.



PARTNER. Mike Stengel, P.E., is pictured at the inaugural ACEC/A-ARDOT Joint Partnering Conference in April. The event was a huge success, and Stengel hopes next year’s will be even better. He wants to continue emphasizing partnerships because they foster development and ef-

been able to attend some of his presentations. Gray, meanwhile, graduated with a biomedical and biology dual major. He now works for a pharmaceutical company as part of a small research team that’s involved in the poultry and food additives side of their business. He is also expecting Stengel’s first grandchild, a daughter who is due in September.

Stengel has no plans of slowing down or retiring anytime soon. Anna has been an elementary teacher for years and recently stepped into an administrative role. She plans to be there another decade, and he plans to continue working as long as she does.

For now, he plans to make the most of his time serving as ACEC/A president this year.

“I always felt like ACEC/A was the elite engineering group in the state,” he said. “And I’ve invested, it’ll be 10 years, getting to this level. And so I don’t want it to just be fit in. I want it to be a focus for me this year.”

In the News (Cont’d from page 17)

experience in preparing engineering drawings using CAD software, assisting with design development, coordinating with project teams, and supporting engineering projects through technical analysis and problem solving.

Prior to joining Crist Engineers, he worked as a mechanical engineering intern at McKee Foods for two years, where he gained experience in mechanical design, manufacturing support, and CAD-based engineering projects.

His education includes a bachelor’s of science in mechanical engineering at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville.

Andrew is a P.E. and structural engineer with Olson supporting its wastewater group. Stengel said he enjoys running into his son at conferences and has even



Freese and Nichols adopts trail section

The Freese and Nichols Rogers office this year adopted a 0.75-mile section of the Razorback Greenway in Rogers.

The adopted stretch follows part of Osage Creek and passes several familiar local landmarks, including Cross Church, Village on the Creeks, and Natural State Brewery. Each month, employees and their families volunteer their time to clean and maintain the area.

Giving back has been part of Freese and Nichols’ culture for 131 years. Since the Rogers office opened in 2022, local employees have logged 624 volunteer hours with organizations such as the Illinois River Watershed Partnership, the Salvation Army, the Bentonville Half Marathon, and others.

Building Arkansas receives ASAE award

Building Arkansas received the Arkansas Society of Association Executives' Excellence in Communications award July 14.

The magazine is the publication of the American Council of Engineering Companies of Arkansas and the Arkansas Society of Professional Engineers.

"ASAE is a big deal," said ACEC/A and ASPE Executive Director Angie W. Cooper. "It's the premier association for association executives across the country. ... ASAE is the Chamber of Commerce for association executives."

The June 2026 Building Arkansas issue won in Category 1, Single Piece, for associations with marketing/communications budgets under \$350,000. Single piece entries include brochures, newsletters, websites, podcasts, etc.

The June BARK issue featured coverage of the ACEC/A-ARDOT Joint Partnering Conference, the ACEC/A Awards

Banquet, and the ASPE Annual Conference.

"The ASAE Excellence in Communications award recipients represent the best of the best in association and non-profit communications," said Leigh Anderson, ASAE executive director. "The winning entries reflect exceptional planning, flawless execution and thoughtful evaluation. By collaborating with key leadership and constituents, these organizations achieved their communications goals and provided a template for excellence that others can follow."

Steve Brawner, Building Arkansas editor and publisher, accepted the award at a banquet at the Embassy Suites Northwest Arkansas Hotel, Spa & Convention Center.

"It was an honor to accept this award, and it's an honor to serve the state's premier engineering associations," Brawner said.



BUILDING ARKANSAS WINS AWARD. Editor and publisher Steve Brawner is pictured above with ASAE Immediate Past President Michelle Kitchens of the Arkansas Center for Health Improvement.

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ASPE president: I can adapt

Michael Baker's Bossio grew up in the Congo and someday hopes to return. In the meantime, he's designing roadways in Arkansas and leading the ASPE. One focus: more money for scholarships.

By Mattie Brawner
Contributing writer

Stephane Bossio, P.E., stepped off a plane one Wednesday at the age of 14. He was driven to his new home at a boarding school in South Kent, Connecticut, and the next morning he sat in history class. He didn't speak a word of English.

Now, he's a project manager with Michael Baker International and the president of the Arkansas Society of Professional Engineers.

Originally from the capital city of Kinshasa in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, he had grown up the son of a U.S. embassy worker with seven other siblings. His father was the highest ranked Congolese working in the U.S. embassy, and they lived a secure middle class life. Through relationships with former embassy workers, his dad was able to send him to a private school, where he excelled in math and physics. He hoped to become a pilot. But after scoring 100 on a national exam before entering high school, his dad gave him an either-or choice – doctor or engineer.

"I did not want to be at school for eight years to be a doctor, and those were my two options," he said. "So I went for engineering."

His dad decided to send him to boarding school in the United States. Through connections with former embassy co-workers who had moved back to the States, he was able to secure his son a slot at the South Kent School in Connecticut.

Which led to his fateful morning in the ninth grade when he sat in a history class full of other international students. He had grown up speaking Lingala, Kikongo, and French, but he had never spoken a word of English.



"YOU GOTTA DO WHAT YOU GOTTA DO." Congo-born Stephane Bossio, P.E., made all A's and one C-plus his first semester of boarding school by phonetically writing what he thought his teachers were saying and translating it into French.

He remembers running back to his dorm room after that class.

"I was like, 'This is insane,'" he said.

Not one to give up, he bought a notebook at the school store. In the coming months, he would write phonetically what he thought teachers were saying. Using Google and his dictionary, he would figure out the correct spelling and translate it into French.

"You gotta do what you gotta do," he said.

He somehow passed his first semester with A's in all classes except English, where he had a C-plus. Teachers wondered if he was cheating, but after meeting together decided he wasn't.

"I think one of my qualities, if I had to say, one of my qualities is to adapt," he said.

Being immersed in English, plus the three hours of English class offered each week, helped him acquire the language quickly. The task was made more difficult

because so many of his fellow students had foreign accents from Brazil, China, Russia and elsewhere. But he persevered. After three months, he had his first dream in English.

Though it was a school for international students, no one else spoke his language until his second year. There were a few French Canadians, but, he said, "Any French-speaking person would tell you that Canadians don't speak French." He spent his first summer attending an English program in Massachusetts. He called his family regularly. He wasn't able to visit home until his second Christmas (and only for three weeks), choosing instead to attend an English program his first summer. His mom and siblings visited him his second summer.

After graduating from the boarding school, he studied briefly at a college in Boston until transferring to the University of Arkansas, where his brother was also attending. He was offered a position at Michael Baker after graduation. He has

worked on several Highway 82 projects in south Arkansas and assisted with the Maumelle interchange.

A few months after joining the firm, he was invited to his first ASPE Central Chapter meeting by Landon Miller, P.E., then with Michael Baker and now with Freese and Nichols. Though he knew about ASPE because of its presence on the U of A campus, he had never been involved. He eventually became the Central Chapter president. His goal was to revive the organization after COVID. After having a few in-person Wednesday meetings, he decided his big push would be the annual luncheon in April 2023. Other engineering groups were invited. He said it helped ASPE, as well as the other organizations, overcome what he called the "COVID momentum."

"I think it was very successful because after the first luncheon, then all the other groups started having regular meetings, not only ASPE," he said. "So it kind of was the push that I think people needed to get

back the interest in getting out there and meeting other people. And that is probably what I think was the biggest achievement there."

He eventually moved on to the state level at ASPE, where he became secretary and now president. One of his goals is to

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“This is going to be the 250th anniversary of this country. It is huge. Congo is really has not had a chance to really be what it could be. ... One of my goals is to be able to go back and really get what I’ve learned here and put it in application there.”

revitalize the ASPE scholarship program. Growing up in a large household, he knows how financial aid can help someone graduate college. He said he has attended several conferences where one of the topics has been the shrinking engineering workforce. He hopes ASPE will one day be able to offer scholarships, not only to the University of Arkansas but also to students at other in-state schools.

“If you look at the root cause, people have the will to do it,” he said. “But it’s expensive. College is becoming more expensive every year. And a lot of people just drop out not because they’re not capable of it, but because they can’t afford it.”

Bossio wants to bring back mechanisms that provide for those scholarships. He says in the past the golf tournament was the best way to achieve that, but he’s willing to look at other ideas. He notes the success of the ACEC/A’s trap-shooting competition, and he is considering other ideas.

Bossio believes the ASPE Annual Conference greatly improved under the last two presidents – Miller and, before him, Mary Fair, P.E., of Garver. He hopes to continue that momentum. He is seeking input from members regarding if next year’s Annual Conference should be in northwest Arkansas, where it could attract more speakers and where attendees could enjoy interesting venues and activities. He liked how this year’s conference occurred at the newly renovated Central Arkansas Library System’s Main Library. He also hopes to help ASPE become more active and visible at the national level.

Michael Baker in the lead

While Bossio will be leading ASPE, Mike Stengel, P.E., also from Micheal Baker, is the incoming ACEC/A president.

Bossio is not surprised. He hopes the two organizations can better partner



ASPE PRESIDENT
Stephane Bossio, P.E., speaks at the ASPE Annual Conference in Little Rock in April. He is considering holding next year’s conference in northwest Arkansas. One of his main goals as president is to raise money for scholarships.

with each other. He referenced the company’s “wolf pack” philosophy, where the strength of the wolf is the pack, and the strength of the pack is the wolf.

“One thing about this company that I love is that we don’t only strive to lead the industry, but we also strive to really be a part of the community,” he said. “And by community, I don’t only mean the people in the street. It’s also the engineering community itself, and try to serve it as much as we can, to the best of our abilities. And seeing that Mike is leading ACEC/A and me ASPE, just reflects in general the whole idea of being a part of Michael Baker.”

Bossio has plenty to keep him busy. In addition to his work with Michael Baker and his leadership of ASPE, he also is a husband and a father. While in college Bossio reconnected with his now-wife, Angie, with whom he had grown up as a child. Her family had sent her to school in the United Kingdom, but during col-

lege she transferred to the University of Central Arkansas. They now have three young children, two girls and a boy, the oldest of which is age 5. They attend New Life Church in North Little Rock.

He also owns an engineering firm in the Congo, BSSS: Better Structures and Services. He goes home “not as much as I wish I could.” He currently has two projects, including a development project and a levee that’s on hold. He works remotely through technology and a good partner. He hopes to eventually return to his home country.

“It is great to be in America and see all the progress that this great nation that I have called home for over 15 years has done,” he said. “This is going to be the 250th anniversary of this country. It is huge. Congo is really has not had a chance to really be what it could be. ... One of my goals is to be able to go back and really get what I’ve learned here and put it in application there.”

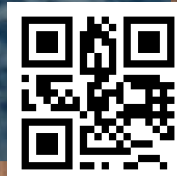


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