



# Spinal Connection

## Spinal Connection

Spinal Connection is published quarterly by the Arkansas Spinal Cord Commission.

1501 N. University Ave., Suite 470, Little Rock, AR 72207

Spinal Connection is an official publication of



### Executive Director

Terra Patrom

### Newsletter Editor

Adam Burnstone

### ARKANSAS SPINAL CORD COMMISSIONERS

#### Chairman

Ronnie Wheeler

#### Vice Chairman

Mike Cranford

#### Commissioners

Jimmy Ashley

Jon Bruning

LeDanté Walker

## From the Director ~ Terra Patrom

### 2019 Legislative Session Brings New Beginnings

As much of the recent trends push for equality, personal safety, and inclusion, I watched many Bills that were brought forth this Legislative Session that strived to get there (some... almost, not quite) while others surpassed what some thought would be a brutal death. Yes... we will finally get our speed limits increased but with that comes stricter laws, stern enforcement, & increased penalties.

One law that surprised me was the new mandatory enforcement of limiting cell phone use in school zones. If many of you were like me, I REALLY thought that requirement was already in place. It was, but as a secondary offense. With Act 288, it becomes a primary offense, which means law enforcement can pull you over (detain a driver) and ticket you if they see you using your cell phone (the Law states it's a handheld wireless telephone) while operating a vehicle when passing a school building or school zone during school hours when children are present. The Law states you can use your cell phone for an emergency purpose (example... dialing 911). Now my brain makes sense and matches what I thought was already in effect.

Act 738 creates additional enforcement and penalties for distracted driving. If you are under 18 years of age, basically touching your cell phone is a "Big No, No". Just put it away, in a glove box or the back seat of your car. If you are at least 18 through 21 years of age, basically the concept is the same but you can use a hands-free cell phone (wireless telecommunication device) to communicate. Those over the age of 21 are also limited. No one is allowed to use their

## Contact Information

---

**Phone:** (800) 459-1517

**Email:** [ascc@arkansas.gov](mailto:ascc@arkansas.gov)

**Website:** [ascc.ar.gov](http://ascc.ar.gov)

## Donations

---

The Arkansas Spinal Cord Commission accepts tax-deductible donations to support ASCC.

Send your donation to:  
AR Spinal Cord Commission  
1501 North University Ave.,  
Suite 470  
Little Rock, AR 72207

## Events & Groups

---

Hot Springs Area Support Group - 3rd Wed. each month at Spa Area Independent Living (SAILS)

## In this issue...

---

From the Director	Page 1
Medically Speaking	Page 3
Condolences	Page 4
TRIUMPH Help Line	Page 4
Ms. Wheelchair AR	Page 5
New Staff	Page 6
Army Corp Hunt	Page 7
Telecom Access Prog.	Page 8



cell phone in a school zone or highway work zone. The key concept of this Law is if it takes more than pressing a single button to initiate or end a voice communication (command), it's not safe and it's not allowed.

Amending the law concerning distracted driving brought Arkansas in compliance with requirements under Federal Law. Basically, there is a strong push across the country to ensure distracted driving does not take another life. Everyone's life means something, including yours. No matter your age, always be conscientious of driving distracted. Even if you're skipping to the next song on your play list, glancing to see who just texted you - it just takes a "Split Second"- your eyes are off the road. That split second can and has changed lives.

Another Legislative Bill you need to be aware of is with regard to service animals. SB 654 authorizes a civil penalty to misrepresenting an animal as a service animal or service animal-in -training to a person or entity that operates a public accommodation. Individuals can face civil penalties as high as \$250 for each violation. Hence, remember there is a difference between a service animal and a companion/emotional support animal. If you have a companion/emotional support animal, please remember to represent them as such.

I mentioned this final Bill briefly in our previous edition. The Transformation and Efficiencies Act of 2019. This Bill will merge the numerous State Agencies, Boards, and Commissions that serve and report to the Governor down to 15 Cabinet Members. Hence, the 2019 Legislative Session ended with the passage of the major undertaking "transformation" creates. As previously stated, it's change; change is hard for some to accept. But... "one steadfast remains... We are here to serve the residents of the State of Arkansas that meet out medical criteria. Our services shall be to the best of our abilities within the procedures and guidelines set by laws and regulations."

Challenge Accepted! Let's move toward the goal of evolving State Government. It will allow us to be the best at serving you!

## Medical Marijuana

Medically Speaking

Thomas Kiser, MD

Should you use marijuana to manage your spasticity or pain if you have a spinal cord injury? It is being advertised and pushed as the next best thing to help people in pain and as a substitute for narcotics and spasm medication. I frequently get questions in my clinic about its use and benefits. It has suddenly moved from being illegal to recommended with little scientific proof of efficacy or benefit other than several small studies and anecdotal evidence.

Like many controlled substances, marijuana has significant adverse effects. It can induce dizziness, panic attacks, nausea, vomiting, hallucinations, and temporary learning and memory impairments. Regular use increases the risk of substance dependency, and if smoked, smoking-induced respiratory symptoms. It can also increase the risk of injury due to impaired coordination and cognition. Various studies have shown an increased risk of motor vehicle crashes with cannabis use with even higher risk when combined with alcohol.

Two reviews, of the literature support the observation that when compared to nonusers, regular users of marijuana have diminished executive function, attention, learning, memory and motor skills that persist for varying times after abstinence. There is evidence of permanent neurological changes associated with marijuana use that begins prior to age 21. Unfortunately, stopping cannabis use did not fully restore the diminished neuropsychological functioning present in those who began use prior to age 21. There was an average 6-point decrease in intelligence quotient (IQ) from childhood to adulthood as compared with nonusers. A recent review article noted that chronic marijuana use was associated with abnormalities in mood and thinking that could be seen on functional brain imaging in what appears to be a dose-response relationship. The abnormalities in thinking in chronic marijuana use under age 21 did not resolve with abstinence like it did for those older than age 21, suggesting that the developing, maturing brain suffers long term changes if marijuana is used at a young age. Chronic cannabis use, especially during adolescence, is also associated with an increased risk of developing schizophrenia. The mechanisms responsible for the association between cannabis use and schizophrenia remain unclear. For all these reasons, I would recommend avoiding marijuana use under age 21.

Smoking has been the means of administration of cannabis for many users, but it is not suitable for the use of cannabis as a medicine as it can cause chronic cough and bronchitis. In a study comparing the mainstream and side stream smoke of cannabis vs. tobacco, the cannabis sample's smoke yielded ammonia at a rate of 20 times higher than that in tobacco smoke, possibly due to usage of synthetic nitrate fertilizers. Formaldehyde and acetaldehyde were generally less concentrated in cannabis smoke than in tobacco, but butyraldehyde titers were higher. Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons were



qualitatively similar. Levels of nitrous oxide, hydrogen cyanide and aromatic amines concentrations were 3–5 times higher in cannabis smoke, which could potentially increase the rate of mutations and cancer.

It is difficult to predict the pharmacological response to cannabis because the concentration of cannabinoids varies widely, there are different ways of preparing it for consumption (smoked, applied as oils, eaten, infused into other foods, or drunk) and there are no production controls. Oral intake with eating cannabinoids can lead to variable blood concentrations due to the absorption into fatty tissue, from which it is released slowly, and the variable metabolism of the cannabinoids in the liver.

Over 120 of the 500 chemicals in marijuana are psychoactive compounds, termed cannabinoids. Assays for THC content of street marijuana have shown increasing concentrations of cannabinoids that now exceed 10% THC (up from 3-4%) on average, but illicit extracts of cannabis like hash oil have much higher THC content and cannabis concentrate extracts may contain up to 80% THC. The concentration of cannabinoids can also vary greatly in extracts purchased online. In a Sample of 84 cannabidiol extracts purchased online, 69% (n=58) had mislabeled cannabinoid content. With combustion the chemicals in cannabis undergo pyrolysis and hundreds of new chemicals are generated. Vaping and use of e-cigarettes may result in inhalation of even higher concentrations of cannabinoids than produced by smoking.

The FDA has approved several drugs derived from marijuana. Epidiolex, which contains a purified form of the drug substance cannabidiol, is approved for the treatment of seizures. Marinol and Syndros are approved for the treatment of anorexia associated

## Our sincere condolences to the friends and family of...

Talmage V. Spence 01/13/18  
Johnny D. Cooper 01/17/18  
Willie B. Harris 02/15/18  
Damon J. Cline 03/30/18  
Tonya Carpenter 09/10/18  
Danny R. Omans 09/24/18  
Kenny R. Arbuckle 11/05/18  
Teresa F. Robbins 11/22/18  
Bettye J. Brown 12/02/18  
Raymond S. Torres 12/08/18  
Robert K. Homan 12/11/18  
C. W. Crawford 12/11/18  
Janet M. Peters 12/16/18  
Horace Shankwiler 12/19/18  
Don. F. Rickenbacker 12/26/18  
Beverly A. Nelson 01/11/19  
Ricky Maricle 01/15/19  
Randy K. Ego 01/17/19  
James L. Woods 01/22/19  
Gary W. Moore 01/24/19  
Elnoah Moore, Jr. 01/27/19  
David E. Jelks 01/31/19  
Tina K. Henderson 02/08/19  
Ricky J. Hill 02/10/19  
Willie A. Greenlaw 02/11/19  
Stephen B. Owen 02/11/19  
McElree Russell 02/12/19  
Virgle W. Thompson 02/15/19  
Keith Hawkins, Jr. 02/16/19

**Have a medical question?**

**Experiencing issues and need immediate answers?**

**TRIUMPH Help Line**

**1-855-767-6983**

**FREE 24 / 7 Access**

**Help & Information  
for Arkansans with Spinal Cord  
Injury & Healthcare Providers**

with weight loss in AIDS patients. Marinol and Syndros include the active ingredient dronabinol, a synthetic tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) which is considered the psychoactive component of cannabis. Cesamet, for the management of chemo therapy related nausea, contains the active ingredient nabilone, which has a chemical structure similar to THC and is synthetically derived.

The efficacy of medical marijuana treatments has not been adequately studied. There are no randomized clinical trials substituting cannabis for opioids in patients taking opioids for pain management. In one large 4-year cohort study of cannabis use, it was associated with more pain and less self-efficacy for managing pain and no reduction in the use of opioids. Medical marijuana does not appear to be more beneficial in managing spasticity and pain than other medications presently available to you.

What is the answer? It is like Pandora's box, or the wild, lawless West of old- we are in uncharted waters with a street drug more potent than what was available to the previous generation. We must move slowly and carefully. We need better studies and an FDA approved stable product before it can be used safely as a medical treatment. Several things from the latest literature are helpful. Do not use marijuana if you are 21 years-old or younger, don't smoke it, and don't trust the labeling and marketing of online products. If you choose to add marijuana to your medical treatment, you need to start at a low dose, monitor for side effects and avoid driving after using marijuana, at least until the side effects are better known and the amount you can use and still drive safely has been better determined.

For article sources, please visit the PDF article link here:  
<https://tinyurl.com/kiser-med-marijuana>

---

### Arkansas Medical Marijuana Information - Arkansas Department of Health

For information related to Medical Marijuana in Arkansas, including application, fees, and frequently asked questions, please visit:

<https://www.healthy.arkansas.gov/programs-services/topics/medical-marijuana>



#### Ms. Wheelchair Arkansas 2019!

Congratulations to Erica Graser-Gates!

Through her platform, "1 Mentor, 1 Community," Erica wants to make sure new SCI patients know they have someone that is there either while they are at Rehab or through their Case Managers soon after coming home. She wants them to know there is someone else like them and they aren't alone.

## New Staff at ASCC

---

### Jean Foster

Jean went to school in Jackson, Mississippi and graduated in 1971. She majored in business administration at Westark Community College in Fort Smith, AR. Before joining the Spinal Cord Commission, Jean worked at the Western Arkansas Employment Development Agency (WAEDA), Area Agency on Aging, and finally, as a Parish Administrator at St. Bartholomew's Episcopal church for 17+ years.

When asked about her favorite place, Jean said she'd been to Australia for three weeks and she loved it! She enjoys reading, cooking, and being a grandma. Jean has two kids, Michael and Cindy, whom she is very proud of. Sugar, her Wirehaired Dachshund, is a rescue and keeps her in good company. Being close, Jean and her kids refer to themselves as The Three Musketeers. She thanks God for everything she's done, learned, and will do going forward.

Jean is passionate about encouraging young people to get involved, go to college, and help make the world a better place.



---

### Allen Herd

"I was born and raised in West Helena, Arkansas. I attended and graduated from Central High School in 2002 which is also located in West Helena. I furthered my education by attending the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff. I received my B.A. in Social Work in 2008. Upon graduation, I was a case manager working with juveniles. After a year in the work field, I decided to go to graduate school part time while working a full-time job. I received my M.S. in Addiction Studies from the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff. I moved to Maumelle, AR in 2012 because it was more convenient for me due to working two jobs in Little Rock. Upon moving here, I started working with the State of Arkansas in 2013 as a Rehabilitation Counselor at the Arkansas State Hospital with Act 911 patients. My passion was to always work with juveniles so after working with adults for two years at the Arkansas State Hospital I was blessed to receive another opportunity working with juveniles as a Youth Service Advisor for the Division of Youth Services. After working with juveniles for the past 11 years, God had something else in store for me. He led me to the Arkansas Spinal Cord Commission which is challenging. I have always had a passion for helping individuals. I believe this is my calling from God. I am excited to be an employee with the Arkansas Spinal Cord Commission and look forward to helping individuals."





U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

# NEWS RELEASE

BUILDING STRONG®

Release No: 14-19  
Release: Immediately  
Feb. 26, 2019

Contact: Laurie Driver,  
501-324-5551  
[laurie.T.Driver@usace.army.mil](mailto:laurie.T.Driver@usace.army.mil)

## CORPS PLANS HUNTING OPPORTUNITIES FOR MOBILITY IMPAIRED HUNTERS

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. - The Army Corps of Engineers will soon begin accepting applications for our 2019 Arkansas special deer hunts that provide hunting opportunities for mobility impaired hunters. The hunts are organized on specific days from mid-October through early December at a number of Corps lakes and properties throughout Arkansas.

The application period will close Aug. 15 and will be followed by a drawing in September to award the available hunting opportunities. Applicants may apply for up to three different hunt locations, with successful applicants limited to one awarded hunt.

To be eligible, an applicant must have a permanent physical disability that impairs mobility and requires physical assistance from ambulatory or adaptive devices such as wheelchairs, crutches, prosthesis, or other similar devices. Disabled veterans with at least 50 percent physical disability which severely limits mobility as evaluated by the VA may also be eligible.

A doctor's verification letter must be submitted along with the application.

Application packages with a list of hunt locations, dates, and harvest methods will be available in early May. To request a package, clarify eligibility requirements, or obtain additional information on the special deer hunts, please contact Gerald Judge, district forester for the Corps' Little Rock District, at 501-324-5675, or by email at [gerald.p.judge@usace.army.mil](mailto:gerald.p.judge@usace.army.mil).

---

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS – LITTLE ROCK DISTRICT  
700 West Capitol, Little Rock, AR 72201  
<http://www.swl.usace.army.mil/Media/NewsReleases.aspx>



Spinal Connection (Spring 2019)  
Arkansas Spinal Cord Commission  
1501 North University, Suite 470  
Little Rock, AR 72207

PRESORTED  
STANDARD  
US POSTAGE PAID  
LITTLE ROCK, AR  
PERMIT # 3168

**ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**

- Change name or address on address label
- Please add me to your mailing list
- Please remove me from your mailing list

## Telecommunications Access Program (TAP)

---

Could you use an iOS, Android, or other assistive device to better communicate with friends, family, or colleagues? If so, be sure to check out the TAP program! They have recently added Android devices to the list of available equipment. Check the eligibility requirements and apply at: <https://arktap.org/eligibility/>



The Telecommunications Access Program (TAP) provides free telecommunication equipment to eligible Arkansans who are deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind, or who have a speech, visual, mobility, or intellectual impairment. TAP removes the barriers to telecommunication access through the provision of accessible communication technology.

Phone: 501-686-9693 | Toll Free: 1-800-981-4463 | <https://arktap.org/>