

ARKANSAS MAY LIFT MASK MANDATE

ALEX CLARK

LIFE EDITOR

On top of lifting nearly all current COVID-19 restrictions, Gov. Asa Hutchinson will lift the mask mandate by the end of March if COVID-19 numbers stay low.

Hutchinson announced Friday that capacity limits on businesses and large gatherings are recommendations and no longer enforceable by law. The limits being lifted include capacity limits for bars, restaurants, gyms and other large venues; however, Hutchinson left open the possibility of reinstating the restrictions if there's another surge in cases.

According to the governor, the goal is to give businesses more flexibility to tailor public health guidelines to better fit with their day-to-day operations.

The statewide mask mandate will be lifted by March 31 if the state's COVID-19 positivity

rate is below 10% with at least 7,500 specimens tested on average daily. If less specimens are tested, the mandate would end if fewer than 750 Arkansans are hospitalized with the virus.

Despite this plan, Hutchinson is extending the state's public health emergency for another 30 days. This way, the state can once again impose restrictions if cases start to rise.

In regards to schools, mask mandates will be at the discretion of the school board. Schools will, however, be permitted to host indoor events such as prom and graduation ceremonies.

The UK variant of COVID-19 has been found in Arkansas, and Arkansas Secretary of Health Dr. Jose Romero said, "This is not something that we did not expect, I'm surprised we hadn't found it earlier. It reinforces the need to immunize. Without immunization, we won't be able to protect against these variants."

Romero also emphasized

that wearing a mask is still important, even if it is no longer mandated.

A-State is hosting a free vaccine clinic Saturday for Phase 1-A and 1-B Arkansans. Phase 1-A includes health care workers, residents and staff at long-term care facilities and these high priority groups: EMS, fire and law enforcement who serve as first responders, primary care, urgent care, college/university student health center, K-12 health clinics and school nurses, dental clinics, pharmacies, home health, private care/personal care, hospice care, dialysis centers, correctional staff involved in patient care and transfer, morticians/funeral home staff involved in direct contact or conducting transports and blood donation centers.

Phase 1-B includes Arkansans who are 65 or older as well as those who work in education including K-12, child care and higher ed and those who work in food manufacturing.



Photo by: Alex Clark | Life Editor

This photo was taken almost a year ago, at the beginning of the COVID-19 panic. Products such as toilet paper were flying off the shelves as people prepared for lockdown, uncertain of what was to come with the pandemic. Now, Gov. Asa Hutchinson is talking about lifting the mask mandate if cases stay low.

Empowering documentaries for Women's History Month



PHOTO COURTESY OF IMDB

"I Am Greta" (2020, dir. Nathan Grossman)

"I Am Greta" follows Swedish teenage climate activist Greta Thunberg as she works to get people around the world to listen to science about climate change.

"Knock Down The House" (2019, dir. Rachel Lears)

"Knock Down The House" revolves around the 2018 congressional primary campaigns of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Amy Vilela, Cori Bush and Paula Jean Swearengin, four progressive Democrats who ran grassroots campaigns against incumbents in that year's midterm elections.



PHOTO COURTESY OF GOOGLE

As of Tuesday, Mar. 2, the latest update of A-State active cases (currently in isolation)				
STUDENTS LIVING ON-CAMPUS	STUDENTS LIVING OFF-CAMPUS	EMPLOYEES	VENDORS/CONTRACTORS	TOTAL
1	5	0	0	6

PHOTO COURTESY OF ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY

A-State currently only has one active case of COVID-19 on campus, and five off campus. Monday, there were no cases on campus. A-State's active cases have stayed low the past few weeks, which Chancellor Dr. Kelly Dampousse attributes to our campus following Return to Learn guidelines.

Lady Gaga's dog walker shot, dogs stolen

ALEX CLARK

LIFE EDITOR

Two of Lady Gaga's three dogs were stolen after her dog walker was shot Feb. 24 in Los Angeles.

Ryan Fischer, Gaga's friend and dog walker, was walking her dogs when two people got out of a white sedan and approached him. One person allegedly held him while the other shot him, and then they left with two of Gaga's dogs, Koji and Gustav. Gaga offered a \$500,000 reward

for the return of her dogs.

The third dog, Asia, had reportedly fled, before returning to the scene and laying next to Fischer.

Fischer was in critical condition when he got to the hospital Feb. 24, but by the next day was stable. Gaga is paying his medical expenses, and has called him a hero.

Feb. 26, a woman who is thought to be unassociated with the crime, returned Gaga's stolen dogs to Los Angeles' Olympic



PHOTO OF RYAN FISCHER COURTESY OF PEOPLE.COM

Community Police Station unharmed.

Fischer is expected to make a full recovery and looks forward

to "the future and the moment when I get bombarded with kisses and licks (and maybe even an excitement pee?) from Asia, Koji and Gustav."

LAPD is still searching for the individuals responsible for the attack.



PHOTO COURTESY OF BAY (Left to right:) Lady Gaga's dogs Asia, Gustav and Koji prior to the crime Feb. 24. Gustav and Koji have been found unharmed.



Photo by: Alex Clark | Life Editor

Something Pawsitive in Paragould is a cat lounge which provides rescued cats the opportunity to be adopted. The cats come from Ozzie's Legacy, a local non-profit animal rescue service. Patrons can visit Something Sweet and pay to spend time in the lounge for 15 minutes to an hour. Something Pawsitive is located at 223 S. Pruett St. in downtown Paragould.

Interested in reporting? Join us every Monday at 5 p.m. in room 224 in the Communications Building.

WHERE A-STATE STANDS ON CONCEALED CARRY

ALEX CLARK

LIFE EDITOR

Montana legalized permitless concealed carry, also called constitutional carry, which allows people to carry concealed firearms without a permit in most locations. A permit would still be required to carry concealed firearms in state and local government buildings. This law goes into effect immediately, but colleges and universities won't see these changes go into effect until June.

The rules for college campuses will limit how college administrators can regulate the carrying of weapons on campus. While institutions can no longer prohibit individuals from concealed carry or open carry of a firearm on campus, there are exceptions to the new policy.

University and colleges can prohibit the possession of firearms at events on campus where alcohol is being served, or at athletic or entertainment events open to the public with controlled access and armed security. Institutions can also prohibit firearm possession in a dorm room if the roommate objects and by individuals that have discipline actions due to the individual's interpersonal violence or substance abuse. Those who want to conceal car-

ry a weapon on campus will also need to follow training requirements under the Montana University System Board of Regents.

WHERE DOES A-STATE STAND ON CONCEALED CARRY?

On A-State's campus, people can carry a concealed handgun if they are licensed to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Arkansas and have also completed the Arkansas State Police-approved enhanced training and received an endorsement. This law went into effect Sept. 1, 2017. According to the weapons policy, a "handgun" is, "any firearm, other than a fully automatic firearm, with a barrel length of less than twelve inches (12") that is designed, made or adapted to be fired with one hand."

When carrying a concealed handgun, the licensee must carry a valid concealed handgun carry license (CHCL) with the endorsement and a valid ID. The only people allowed to

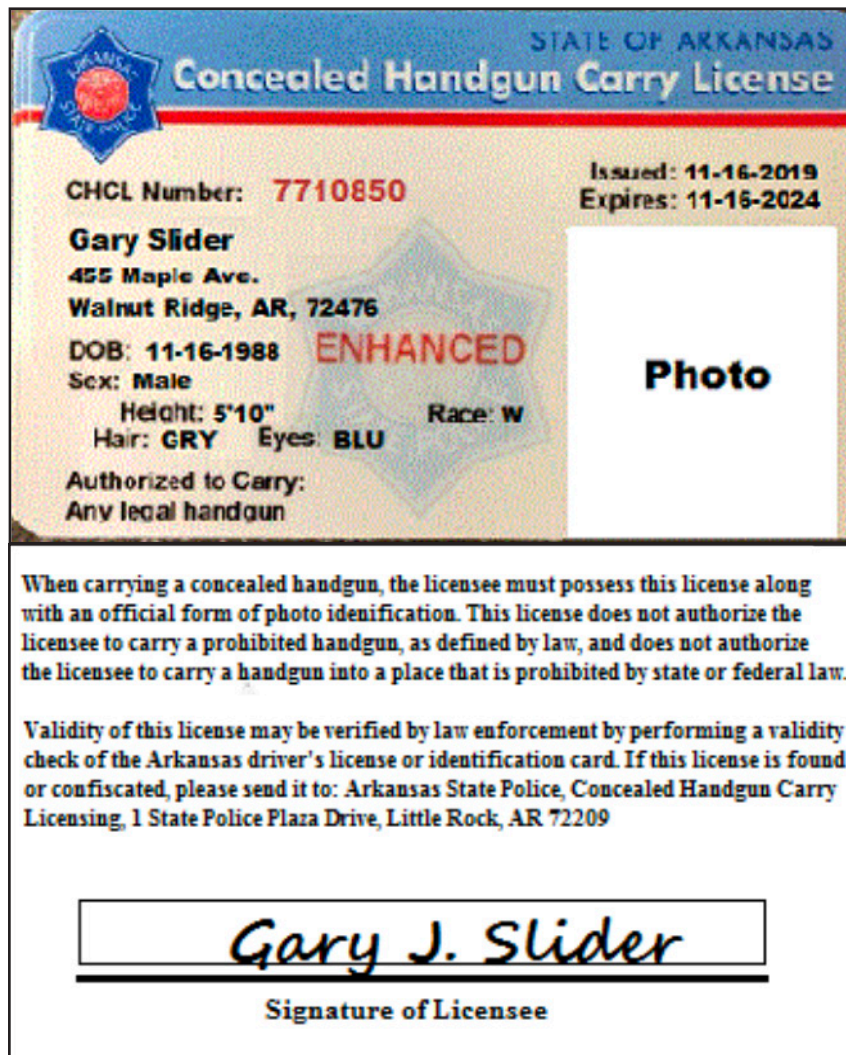


PHOTO COURTESY OF HANDGUNLAWS.US

Above is an example of an Arkansas CHCL.

openly carry firearms on campus are law enforcement officers, including University Police, Cam-

pus Police and Public Safety officers. Open carry is not allowed on campus, and if individuals see

an openly carried gun by anyone other than law enforcement, they should call 911.

A-State has limitations on where handguns can be stored and where on campus they can be carried, however. For any more information on A-State's concealed carry policies or to determine eligibility to carry a concealed handgun on campus, see <https://www.astate.edu/a/student-conduct/weapons-policy/>.

WHERE CAN I STORE MY HANDGUN?

- In your own locked and unattended motor vehicle in a publicly owned and maintained parking lot
- You may not store your handgun in a university or college-operated student dormitory or residence hall
- You may not store a handgun in a locked office or desk drawer
- You may not store a handgun in an ASU vehicle

WHERE CAN I NOT CARRY MY HANDGUN?

- A posted firearm-sensitive area, such as a collegiate athletic event, that have security plans

approved by the Arkansas State Police (a "collegiate athletic event" is a sporting or athletic contest, event or practice of an individual or team in which one or more individuals or a team sponsored by, funded by, represented by or associated with a public or private university, college or community college competes against themselves or another individual or team)

- Certain grievance and disciplinary meetings conducted in accordance with university procedures
- A public school K-12, pre-kindergarten or daycare facility
- Private educational institutions, such as the NYIT College of Osteopathic Medicine
- Centennial Bank Stadium
- First National Bank Arena
- Cooper Alumni Center
- Fowler Center
- Pavilion
- Tomlinson Stadium

THIS WEEK'S POP PICK

"Scared To Death"



PHOTO COURTESY OF SPOTIFY

Husband and wife pair Dan and Lynze Cummins bring on the spooks every week in "Scared To Death."

In "Scared To Death," each week Dan prepares two horror tales to scare his wife Lynze, on the premise that whatever is in the story could be 100% true. Following Dan's creepy stories, Lynze shares two to three stories emailed in by fans of the show, sharing their true experiences with the paranormal.

Each story is unique, though sometimes there are recurring themes of shadow people, alien abductions, black-eyed children and doppelgangers.

"Scared To Death" is available wherever you listen to podcasts, as well as on YouTube if you like the visual elements.



PHOTO COURTESY OF YOUTUBE

Dan shares a story with Lynze during an episode of "Scared To Death."

HOROSCOPES

ALEX CLARK

MYSTIC CORRESPONDENT

<p>ARIES + (March 22 - April 19)</p> <p>You are recovering from a rough patch. Accept support from others to ease you forward.</p>	<p>TAURUS (April 20 - May 20)</p> <p>You can get through this. Don't let the little things knock you down.</p>	<p>GEMINI (May 21 - June 20)</p> <p>It's OK to romanticize little parts of life. Live everyday to the fullest.</p>	<p>CANCER + (June 21 - July 22)</p> <p>It may be time to become more independent. Stop avoiding important decisions.</p>
<p>LEO (July 23 - Aug. 22)</p> <p>Don't hold yourself back from trying new things. New experiences will bring positivity right now.</p>	<p>VIRGO (Aug. 23 - Sept. 22)</p> <p>It's hard to avoid burnout. Give yourself a break or it's going to get worse.</p>	<p>LIBRA + (Sept. 23 - Oct. 22)</p> <p>Things won't always go as planned. Accept failure without giving up.</p>	<p>SCORPIO (Oct. 23 - Nov. 21)</p> <p>Allow yourself to really feel your feelings, even if they are negative. The only way out is through.</p>
<p>SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 - Dec. 21)</p> <p>Follow the things your heart wants. A little self-indulgence is OK, as a treat.</p>	<p>CAPRICORN + (Dec. 22 - Jan. 19)</p> <p>If you are grieving something, allow yourself to feel it. You will bounce back.</p>	<p>AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 - Feb. 18)</p> <p>Things are going your way right now. Look at life with a more optimistic approach.</p>	<p>PISCES + (Feb. 19 - March 21)</p> <p>Listen to your intuition. You know the right choices to make if you just trust yourself.</p>