THE HERALD

INFORMING THE CAMPUS AND COMMUNITY SINCE 1921 | VOL. 106, ISSUE 9 | WEDNESDAY, NOV. 11, 2026

astatetheherald.com | @astateheraldnewspaper | @astateheraldnewspaper | @AState_Herald | The Herald Newspaper



PHOTO, 4B
Orange, yellow and Red Wolves

Paisley Rea crowned at 52nd annual "Miss Arkansas State" pageant

ROBYN CANARD
SPECIAL TO THE HERALD



PHOTO COURTESY OF MISS A-STATE INSTAGRAM

The 2027 Miss Arkansas State, Paisley Rea celebrates after being crowned during the pageant. Rea is a junior communication sciences and disorders major from Benton, Arkansas.

Pi Kappa Alpha presented the 52nd Annual Miss Arkansas State at the Fowler Center. Emceed by Cori Keller, winner of Miss A-State 2018 and Miss Arkansas 2023, the night started with the National Anthem, performed by Miss A-State 2020, Apple Dennie.

The pageant not only takes the winner to the Miss Arkansas pageant in June, it also supplies scholarships to the participants.

"Every year, the Miss Arkansas organization awards $300,000 in scholarships, and Miss A-State awards a $5,000 scholarship among other scholarship opportunities. Beyond that, you learn so many other things that will grow you, not only in your years at A-State, but in the years to come in life and in your professional endeavors," said Ellie Smith, executive director of the pageant and Miss A-State 2019.

The welcoming ceremony began with a choreographed number by the Arkansas State Spirit Squad then transitioned into the Opening Parade of Contestants.

All contestants identify a Community Service Initiative (CSI) that's special to them which is part of their on-stage question portion of the competition and interview. They also show off their talent during the competition.

Contestants, CSIs and talents included:

• Shawna Whitehurst: Junior strategic communications major from Jonesboro, Arkansas. Her CSI was "The Challenge of Dyslexia," which advocates for individuals with learning disabilities. She performed a vocal rendition of "Rainbow" by Kacey Musgraves.

• Chloe Harpole: First-year business major from Jonesboro, Arkansas. Her CSI,, "Peace Through the PACK," promotes art, connection and knowledge as a path to better mental health at A-State. She performed a vocal rendition of "Never Enough" from The Greatest Showman.

• Sara Grace Taylor: First-year agriculture business major from Jonesboro, Arkansas. Her CSI, "Choose The Safe Route," advocates for and educates on safer driving habits. She performed a vocal rendition of "I've Seen It" by Olivia Dean.

• Gretchen Goodwin: Senior radiologic sciences major from El Dorado, Arkansas. Her CSI, "Beyond The Beat," encourages college-aged students to understand the importance of prevention and healthier habits for better futures. She performed an American Sign Language interpretation of "Never Enough" from The Greatest Showman.

• Reese Carr: First-year radiologic sciences major from Campbell, Missouri. Her CSI, "#SeenNotMissed," brings awareness to both the signs of ADHD in young girls and the girls themselves. She performed a vocal rendition of "Beauty and the Beast."

• Hadleigh Surprenant: Junior psychology major from Cabot, Arkansas. Her CSI, "Kids Who Serve Too," supports military children and families. She performed a vocal rendition of "The Climb" by Miley Cyrus.

• Alexia Loudermilk: Sophomore animal sciences major from Trumann, Arkansas. Her CSI was "H.U.S.H. – Hear Us, Support Hashimotos," which raises awareness about Hashimoto's disease and supports those living with it. She performed a dance routine to "Money" from Cabaret

• MaryBeth Penter: Junior radiologic sciences major from Trumann, Arkansas. Her CSI was "Letters of Hope: Early Intervention for Children with Dyslexia," which promotes early identification, spreads awareness of, and inspires children with dyslexia. She performed a cheer stunt routine to "9 to 5" by Dolly Parton.

• Kennedy Johnson: Junior nursing major from Batesville, Arkansas. Her CSI, "Healthcare Without Boundaries," promotes primary prevention education and expands access to healthcare resources for all ages and backgrounds. She performed a contemporary dance routine to Maya Angelou's "Still I Rise."

• Tessa Yielding: Senior communications disorder major from Sherwood, Arkansas. Her CSI was "Let's Talk About It," which aims to spread suicide awareness by breaking down the stigma surrounding the topic of suicide. She performed a vocal rendition of "The Greatest Star" from Funny Girl.

• Paisley Rea: Junior communication sciences and disorders major from Benton, Arkansas. Her CSI, "MVP: My Value is Permanent," promotes mental wellness and support for athletes. She performed a contemporary dance routine to "I Didn't Know My Own Strength" by Whitney Houston.

The Competition

Contestants went through the on-stage conversation portion of the pageant where they were asked questions primarily about their CSIs. The health and fitness portion followed, intended to assess competitors' physical health and promote active lifestyles. Contestants took the stage in appropriate, similarly styled activewear.

This year's talent competition saw contestants performing vocally or choreographically with songs. This portion of the competition shows both the judges and the audience the variety of talents the contestants possessed.

For many contestants, the talent competition is the most stressful part of the pageant because of heightened performance nerves.

"As far as rehearsals in comparison to actually competing goes, it's very different," said contestant Tessa Yielding, "I can rehearse all I want, but I know things are going to be different once I'm in front of the judges, especially when it comes to talent. I can have my motions and plan down to a T, but my nerves will always get to me a little bit. My main goal when I am actually competing is to remain confident despite anything not going as planned."

The evening wear competition began with an opening by Miss Arkansas 2026 Ava Weeks, as members of Pi Kappa Alpha escorted the competitors onto the stage. The competition showcased the contestants' elegance and beauty. Following the competition, Miss A-State 2026, Reese Worthington, shared a farewell video as she prepared to pass the proverbial torch, followed by a number from Weeks.

Awards and Crowning

The pageant concluded with the awards and crowning of Miss Arkansas State 2027.

The awards went as follows:

• People's Choice Award: Chloe Harpole

• Social Media Promotions Award: Reese Carr

• Congeniality: Tessa Yielding

• Academic Excellence Award: Sara Grace Taylor

• Community Service Award: Alexia Loudermilk

• Spirit of a Red Wolf Award: Hadleigh Surprenant

• On-Stage Conversation Winner: Kennedy Johnson

• Talent Winner: Paisley Rea

• 4th Runner-Up: MaryBeth Penter

• 3rd Runner-Up: Reese Carr

• 2nd Runner-Up: Shawna Whitehurst

• 1st Runner-Up: Kennedy Johnson

• Miss Arkansas State University 2027: Paisley Rea

Paisley Rea said her being announced as the winner of both Miss A-State 2027 and the talent portion of the pageant was surreal, both for different reasons.

"Winning Talent was such a special moment because I had put so much time, practice and heart into preparing my routine," Rea said. "Hearing my name called for Miss Arkansas State University was something I don't think I will ever forget. I was completely overwhelmed with gratitude and excitement. I never imagined walking away with the crown. It was a reminder that all of the hard work, late nights, and hours of preparation were worth it."

Rea asserts that winning Miss A-State is more than just winning a crown.

"It's about being involved, building relationships, supporting the community, and making people feel proud to be a Red Wolf. I want to take every opportunity to show others what makes A-State so special. I can't wait to represent my university and share my love for A-State wherever this year takes me."



PHOTO COURTESY OF MISS A-STATE INSTAGRAM

The contestants for the 2027 Miss Arkansas State pageant pose for a photo during their rehearsal, thanking the pageant's sponsors.

THIS WEEK IN THE HERALD:

OPINION, 2A

- Hold your politicians accountable; you have not won yet

NEWS, 3A

- "Study Like a Star" in LA headlines Summer 2027
- Education and industry leaders meet for Catalyst NEA
- A stormy day on Arkansas State campus
- "Grunt Spades" brought to A-State campus

ARTS & E, 4A

- National Young Readers Week in the midst of a literacy crisis
- The Cat in the Hat: Exactly What You Thought It Would Be and Less

LIFE, 1B

- The A-State Garden Gnomes host a three-day plant sale
- Students Speak: "What color are the subjects?"

SPORTS, 2B



- A-State drops first home game to ULM in 25 years
- SNAPSHOTS: Ceremonial tee-off for the A-State golf facility groundbreaking at Ridgepointe
- Red Wolves drop match against No. 20 Alabama in Pannone's return to Tuscaloosa
- Women's basketball falls to FGCU in 89-59 blowout

Follow us on Instagram