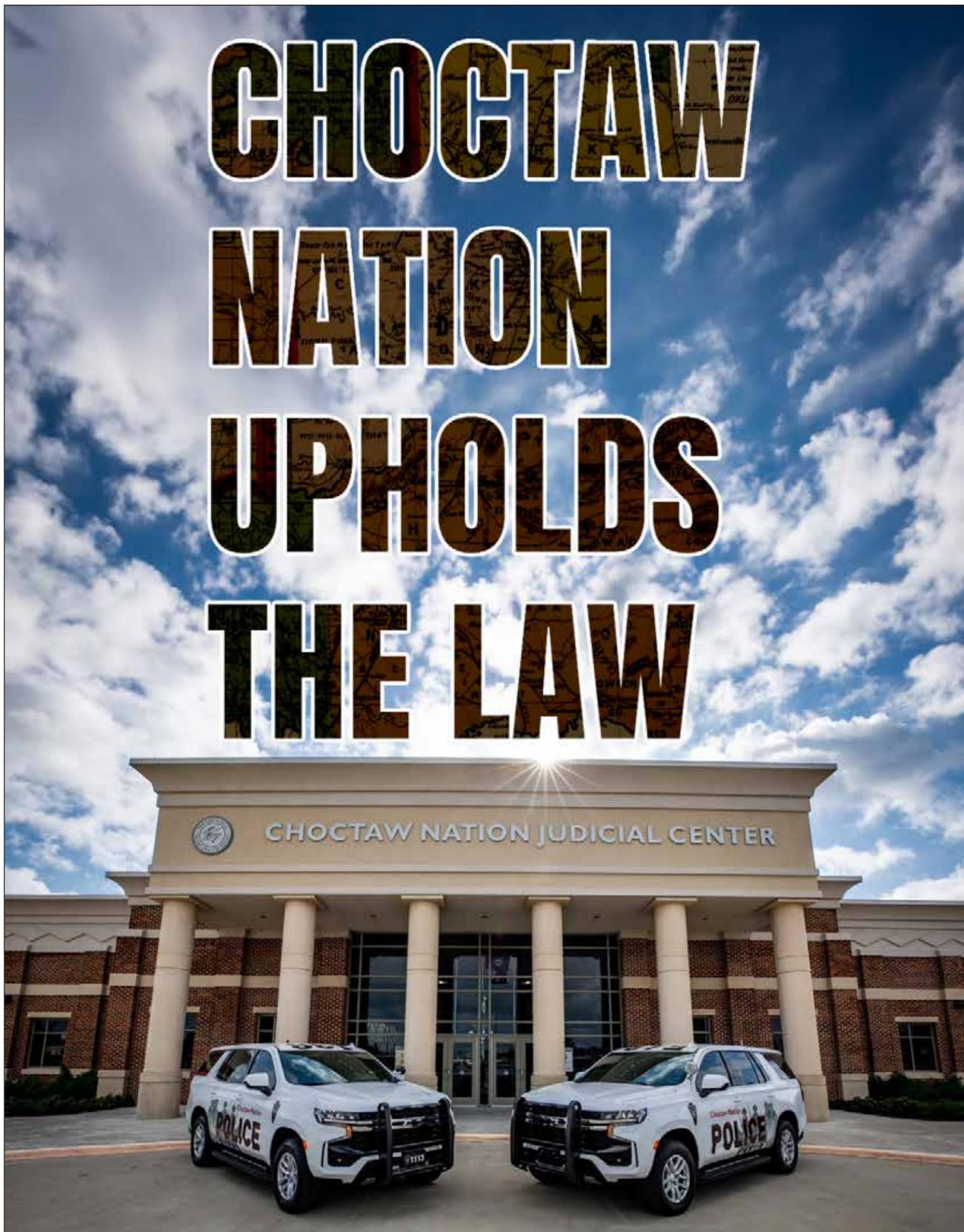




March 2024 Issue



CNO continues to enforce law and order, despite claims from Oklahoma Governor

By Kendra Germany-Wall

On December 22, 2023, Oklahoma Governor Kevin Stitt announced a new task force aiming to “protect public safety,” adding that “...the McGirt decision has created confusion and tension among those that work to serve that function.”

The December 22 executive order signed by Stitt created the One Oklahoma Task Force.

This task force will be comprised of 13 members, including appointees from the governor’s office, county jail trusts, Oklahoma Highway Patrol, and representation from tribal governments.

No tribal leader has been guaranteed a seat.

This announcement was made after a disagreement between Muscogee Lighthorse Tribal Police and Okmulgee County Jail staff earlier this year when Muscogee Lighthorse Police tried to arrest a jailer accused of assaulting an officer.

Tribal officers tried to take the jailer into custody, and a fight erupted when the Okmulgee County Jail refused to receive them.

The State has been at odds with tribal governments for years following the McGirt Ruling and the April 2021 Sizemore Decision, which applied the US Supreme Court’s McGirt Ruling (2020) to the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma (CNO) and affirmed the sovereignty of the Five Tribes.

Within 45 days, Stitt wants the task force to produce a report with recommendations for what the legislature and other state agencies should do to solve a quote “broken system” created by the McGirt decision. He also wants to see agreements between jails, sheriff’s offices and tribes.

Tribal Response

Following the governor’s announcement, the Five Tribes released a joint statement, rejecting the task force.

“Dear Governor Stitt,

As the Inter-Tribal Council of the Five Civilized Tribes (ITC), an organization that unites the tribal governments of the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Muscogee (Creek) and Seminole Nations, we are dedicated to advancing public safety for our citizens and all of our neighbors in Oklahoma. We welcome opportunities to collaborate with state, federal, local, and tribal governments towards this goal. We have a long track record of this collaboration, both before and after the McGirt v Oklahoma decision.

While we hope the State of Oklahoma will join our collaborative approach, we must stand in opposition to Governor Kevin Stitt’s task force on McGirt as presented in Executive Order 2023-32. After reviewing the language of the Executive Order and structure of the proposed task force, we conclude that it is designed to divide rather than unify and to make political points rather than seek genuine solutions. This task force cannot adequately serve the public good unless these flaws are corrected.

At its core, the McGirt v Oklahoma decision is a pro-public safety ruling. By restoring tribal jurisdiction that the State had illegally usurped for well over a century, the decision has increased police and prosecutors and empowered tribal courts to enforce the law and deliver justice for victims. Rather than cause uncertainty and wreak havoc, as the Executive Order claims, the McGirt decision has finally restored legitimate legal jurisdiction under clear federal laws and the U.S. Constitution.

Unfortunately, rather than focusing on how to incorporate tribal authority to benefit the public, the State has wasted time and energy trying to evade, reject, or delay compliance with the law.

We call on you and the State of Oklahoma to make a good faith effort at practical solutions for working with tribes to improve public safety. That means setting aside politicized rhetoric and denials of tribal sovereignty. The structure of any task force must also reflect respectful government-to-government dialogue with each of the 38 unique tribes in Oklahoma. The State has no authority to mandate any Tribe to defer to another Tribe to speak on its behalf.

When we have a willing partner at the State of Oklahoma, we are fully prepared to move forward. We are eager to work with our friends and neighbors to improve coordination in public safety efforts. What we cannot do is participate in an effort that spreads falsehoods about the law, attempts to minimize tribal voices, and engages in political attacks instead of constructive government-to-government dialogue.”

Choctaw Nation Continues to Uphold the Law

The Choctaw Nation has been upholding law and order successfully within the Nation’s boundaries since McGirt and Sizemore went into effect.

Check out some of the 2023 CNO Judicial System statistics below:

CNLP recently honored several of its members for going above and beyond the call of duty.

Officer Christian Minyen saved an infant from choking, Officer Brenton Hall and Officer Robert Rocha saved someone who tried to commit suicide, Officer Danny Smith and Sergeant Jeff Bryant both used Narcan to revive someone who overdosed, Sergeant Jacob Heath revived a man with his defibrillator, and Sergeant Cody Donoley and officer Zach Chavez performed CPR and used a defibrillator to save a life.

Exercising Your Sovereignty

Tribal elections are instrumental in upholding our sovereignty. Eligible tribal members not currently registered to vote will receive voter registration packets in the mail.

To vote in the next Choctaw election, please complete the packet and return it to the Voter Registration Department.

To view your current Voter Registration information, visit the Chahta Achvffa Member Portal.

Registering to vote in state and local elections is an essential part of exercising your sovereign rights as well.

Visit <https://vote.gov/> for information on how to register your state.

CHOCTAW NATION JUDICIAL BRANCH 2023 STATISTICS AND FACTS

For more information on the Choctaw Nation Judicial Branch and the services they offer, visit <https://www.choctawnationcourt.com/>.

<p>In 2023, the Tribal Prosecutor hosted eight roundtable meetings with the following agencies participating:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation Haskell County Sheriff’s Office Oklahoma Highway Patrol Poteau Police Department Choctaw Lighthorse Police Choctaw Juvenile Services Arkoma Police Department Atoka County Sheriff’s Office Atoka Police Department Durant Police Department Bokchito Police Department Johnston County Sheriff’s Office District 19 District Attorney Investigator Tushka Police Department Haileyville Police Department Latimer County Sheriff’s Office Calvin Police Department Coalgate Police Department Bryan County Sheriff’s Office Calera Police Department Wilburton Police Department Spiro Police Department Keota Police Department Panama Police Department Federal Bureau of Investigation 	<p>Choctaw Lighthorse Police (CNLP) 2023 Statistics:</p> <p>37,696 total calls for service.</p> <p>Of the 37,696 calls for service, 3,738 were Agency Assist (law enforcement agencies other CNLP, such as sheriff’s departments, municipal agencies and Oklahoma Highway Patrol).</p> <p>5,152 total reports were taken.</p> <p>Of the 5,152 taken or generated, 217 tribal members were arrested, and 96 non-tribal members were arrested.</p>
<p>CNO Judicial System Cases Filed in 2023:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Felony - 784 Misdemeanor - 807 Traffic and Wildlife Tickets - 1396 Civil - 57 Small Claims - 7 Protective Orders - 178 Divorce - 143 Paternity - 34 Adoption - 42 Adult Guardianship - 16 Minor Guardianship - 93 Juvenile Deprived - 22 Juvenile Delinquent - 18 Juvenile Supervision - 8 Juvenile Treatment - 0 <p style="text-align: right;">Total = 3599</p>	

Faith, Family, Culture



Chief Gary Batton

Ancestors' winter preparation is a blueprint for today

The winter of 2024 is shaping up to be wet, cold, and even dangerous for travel on some of the most extreme of bad-weather days. Since the Christmas season, the Choctaw Nation has closed its administrative offices twice due to icy conditions. The difficult weather conditions have also led to water outages due to frost cracking water pipes in various locations in the reservation – a Yakoke Chito to maintenance crews working in difficult conditions to restore freshwater service. And thanks also to the great preparation, readiness, and support provided by our Office of Emergency Management and Department of Public Safety before, during and after the storms on behalf of our tribal members dealing with the challenges that a winter storm can deliver.

The winter weather conditions caused many across the reservation to hunker down in their warm homes with trips to a Choctaw Country Market or Travel Plaza ahead of the storm to stock food and nest away from the low temperatures and howling winds.

In the 'more things change, the more they stay the same,' category, the need to plan and prep for a winter storm is a long-standing tradition in the Choctaw Nation. For instance, the Choctaw Cultural Center recently offered the public an opportunity to "mud" a traditional Choctaw winter home. Early-day Choctaws gathered mud and water from nearby rivers and creeks and used hay or grass to make sticky clay. The clay was used as insulation against natural elements. Much like homeowners of today prepare their homes for winter by checking their door seals and windows to keep out the winter chill.

As the frost set in, our Choctaw ancestors stockpiled food from gardens. The vegetables were dried, stored, or cooked to last through the winter months. Some of the vegetables were incorporated into breads to help with food preservation.

In late December and early January, our ancestors dug sassafras, witch hazel, buckeye and snake root for medicines and teas, and puccoon, walnut, maple, native indigo and poke roots for dyes.

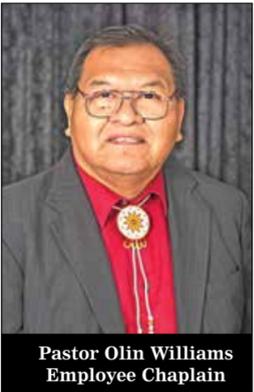
By late January, the ancient Choctaw tribe's supply of breads, dried meats, nuts, potatoes, pumpkin, and corn stored against the winter was running low. Game sought by the Choctaw hunters were in hibernation or had drawn back so deeply into the swamps that they were hard to find and kill.

By February, there was a meager amount of food left to sustain the hunters who sought meat for the tribe. This was Chafu Chito or "big famine" time. Meals were less regular until the land began to turn green. The women of the family could pick fresh greens such as poke salet, sour dock, lambs' quarter, sheep shank and wild onions, and game began to become more plentiful.

A typical Choctaw winter is very much like we prepare today for the cold. We stockpile food, prepare our homes, and make sure our supplies will get us through a winter emergency. If you follow in the steps our Choctaw ancestors laid out for us, the winter months become bearable until the sun creates new life.

Fortunately, for the Choctaw Nation harsh winters don't happen very often, but as a nation we are prepared for whatever Mother Nature throws at us. We are a tribe that takes care of each other. A sovereign nation that forges our own path of self-empowerment taken from a blueprint laid out by our ancestors.

Yakoke and God Bless!



Pastor Olin Williams
Employee Chaplain

Conformity Versus Transformation

After an individual receives Christ into their heart comes the duty of Christian life and service.

Romans 12: 1 and 2 reads, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what that is good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

Verse one is the mission statement and verse two is the instruction in how to complete the mission. It teaches that the mind must be renewed. Why?

Romans 8:7 says, "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."

1 Corinthians 2:14 reads, "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

The two words, "conform" and "transform" must be considered.

"Conform" means to be similar or identical. An actor can conform to the image of the character being portrayed.

"Transformation" means change in the form, appearance or character of state. It is a metamorphosis effect like a caterpillar changing into a butterfly. So to perform the mission of service to Christ, one must not conform or imitate like an actor with the natural mind like Nicodemus did in John chapter 3. He looked real and was considered by others as genuine. However he knew there was a void deep within. This is why Jesus tells him, "Ye must be born again."

Born again is the process of being transform or regenerated. It is a change of state. However moral, gifted, or refined, the natural man is blind to spiritual truth, and impotent to enter the kingdom; for he can neither obey nor please God.

The new birth is not a reformation of the old nature. It is a creative act of the Holy Spirit. Through the new birth the believer becomes a partaker of the divine nature and the life of Christ Himself. The believer has the mind of Christ or has been transformed. Many people think being conformed through service is salvation but it is not. Salvation is being transformed first and then service.



Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr.

Navigating Mental Health and Substance Misuse

Each year the Choctaw Nation hosts the "Annual Navigating Mental Health and Substance Misuse Conference" at Choctaw Casino & Resort – Durant. This year's event will be held on March 11-12, registration begins at 7:45 a.m. This conference, which began in 2020, aims to foster collaborations with law enforcement personnel, mental health providers, prevention experts, and judicial professionals through emphasizing strong educational values and innovative practices.

Some of the topics to be discussed in just the first day of the two-day event include:

- "High in Plain Sight" addresses current alcohol, drug, and concealment trends and identifiers. In this training, participants will receive education pertaining to drug trends, legal drugs to avoid detection/drug tests, alcohol/drug clothing and alcoholic energy drinks.
- The Texas Department of Public Safety (TXDPS) developed a training course, Interdiction for the Protection of Children (IPC), to help law enforcement officers identify and rescue endangered or exploited children and identify those who pose a high-risk threat to a child.
- Attendees will be educated on the many facets of drug use and abuse through the many social media avenues.
- Information about how to identify the need for psychological assessment among Native Americans and how to utilize a culturally informed assessment approach.
- When it comes to your mental health, self-care can help you manage stress, lower your risk of illness, and increase your energy.
- The audience will gain an awareness of the concept of Cultural Humility as a valuable approach to working effectively with clients and communities whose cultural practices, beliefs and experiences are different than one's own.
- The history, epidemiology, legal status, effects, intoxication, withdrawal and treatment of kratom, tianeptine, gabapentin, xylazine, nitazines and antihistamines.
- Dr. Charla Hall (Cherokee) spent a semester at Cornell University as an Indigenous Visiting Scholar, during that time, she developed programs for students, faculty, and staff.
- A traumatic story of domestic violence, forgiveness and resiliency. A discussion concerning the children left behind, responding to calls for service, advocacy and community partnerships.
- Drew Robinson, a former Major League Baseball player, is passionate about advocating to prioritize our mental health, working towards accessible mental health care, and encouraging peer-to-peer support so people can share their stories and find the necessary support they need.
- "Brain Chemistry: It's What Drugs of Abuse Mess With": When we are talking about drugs, we are talking about "external psychoactive substances", i.e., something that we take into our bodies to change our perceptions, moods, consciousness, cognition and/or our behavior.
- Domestic Violence 101 will explore what domestic is, the laws surrounding it, and the overall mental health effects on victims and their children.
- "ContrADDITION" looks at the physical, mental, and emotional impact of youth addiction. Years of examining peer-reviewed journals and research have been distilled into this webinar and presented in an interesting and engaging way.

There will be more discussions and opportunities for substance abuse counselors and law enforcement officials to interact and share notes to make sure those attending know the signs of someone in distress from substance abuse. We invite you to attend and learn more about navigating mental health and substance misuse.

First CNO DAISY Award winners announced

DURANT, Okla. – The Choctaw Nation Health Services Authority (CNHSA) awarded the first DAISY Awards for nurse associates working at one of the facilities. Of the 47 nominations meeting specific criteria, Michelle Heil, RN, in the hospital inpatient unit and Dan Risenhoover, RN, the Stigler Health Clinic nurse manager, were selected for the prestigious award.

The DAISY Award was developed by the wife of Patrick Barnes, who struggled with an autoimmune disease which landed him in the hospital for eight weeks before he passed away. The care and compassion shown to him led the family to develop the award for nurses who go above and beyond the routine care for their patients. DAISY stands for Diseases Attacking the Immune System and has grown into a worldwide tool to recognize exceptional nurses.

Heil was nominated by the parents of a 23-month old patient who was struggling with RSV, pneumonia, and a double ear infection. One night, the toddler's oxygen saturation dropped drastically. Heil, even though she wasn't assigned to the room, rushed in with the team to develop a solution to bring her oxygen level up and keep her comfortable. "She obviously cared deeply for our baby," says the family's nomination. "Michelle's knowledge and skills, as well as her bedside manner and compassion were evident. We are very thankful for her."

Risenhoover was nominated by a patient who has had numerous encounters with him over the years as well as friends and family who have experienced his kindness and expertise. The nominator recalled a time when she went in with a spider bite. Risenhoover stepped in to help the clinic treat her since they were short-staffed and busy. Another time he had her remain at the clinic after an appointment after noticing her blood sugar dropping. He helped stabilize her and the doctor even commented that he probably saved her life. His nominator said, "Dan has always showed such professional care with the highest degree of



Choctaw Nation Photos

Nursing staff gather to celebrate Michelle Heil winning the DAISY Award. Left to right: Jennifer Turner, Beth Brinkley, Michelle Heil, family who nominated her, Gary Lawrence, Leslie Hall, Charli Wallis, and Kelly Mings.



Choctaw Tribal Council Member Ron Perry (left) celebrates with the nominator, Dan Risenhoover (holding award), and Gary Lawrence.

respect and modesty."

"We are excited to bring the DAISY Award to CNHSA," says Beth Brinkley, program administrator. "Having a platform to acknowledge our wonderful nursing staff adds another layer of recognition to the health system and one that benefits the award recipients beyond just the recognition. The DAISY Foundation has built benefits into their system that includes access to discounts for the winners for continuing education classes and nursing tools."

Anyone can nominate a CNHSA nurse for the DAISY Award through an online form or printed forms located throughout the facilities. CNHSA will award a nurse from an inpatient unit and an outpatient unit (clinic) each quarter.

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Big E: Dominating on the court and navigating life as a 7-foot-2 player

By Christian Chaney

Erik Madrid, also known as Big E, stands at 7 feet 2 inches, making him one of Oklahoma's tallest high school basketball players.

At 18, this tall center for Tulsa Union High School has become a standout player, contributing significantly to his team's impressive 20-2 record and a remarkable 13-game win streak.

Throughout the current season, Madrid has dominated with an average of 15 points and nine rebounds per game. His goal is to lead Union to its first state title in over a decade.

Off the court, Erik faces unique challenges due to his extraordinary height.

With a wingspan of 7 feet 4 inches and a shoe size 19, shopping for everyday items, especially shoes, becomes challenging.

Madrid shares his struggle, stating, "I can't just go to a store."

Even if I find something online, it isn't the color or style I want."

The limited options in clothing and furniture designed for average-sized individuals create these challenges.

Despite these hurdles, Erik Madrid is committed to taking his basketball career to the next level.

The 7-foot-2 center has chosen to play for Oklahoma Baptist University in Shawnee, Oklahoma, starting in the fall. His decision to join OBU is deeply rooted in family and the sense of home

he felt during his visit.

Erik appreciates the coaching style that values big men, team atmosphere and unity among his future teammates.

While undecided on his academic path, Madrid is determined to pursue his passion for basketball.

He expressed his aspirations to go pro, even if he has to play overseas.

He draws inspiration from basketball legends like Shaquille O'Neal, Steven Adams and Boban Marjanovic.

Madrid is Choctaw, Cherokee, Cree and Chippewa. He is the great-great grandson of original Choctaw enrollee Thomas Robert.

Beyond the basketball court, Erik Madrid leads the life of an average teenager, enjoying video games, attending church and participating in pickleball during his free time.

In a recent interview with High School Sports Illustrated, Rudy Garcia, Madrid's coach, commended his intelligence and understanding of the game, describing him as a "very smart kid" who contributes significantly to the team's success.

As Erik Madrid continues to dominate on the court and navigate the challenges of his unique stature, his journey looks to be filled with athletic achievement and personal growth.

Madrid is inspired by his favorite scripture, Deuteronomy 31:6, he lives by the words "Be strong and courageous."



Photos by Blu Madrid

Above: Erik Madrid signing to Oklahoma Baptist University.

Right: Madrid, a 7-foot-2 center, scores a layup on defenders.

Below: Madrid shows off his OBU gear on signing day.



Game wardens play a critical role in CNO's wildlife conservation efforts

By Christian Toews

The Choctaw Nation's game warden recently collaborated with state and federal game wardens on a waterfowl case within the Choctaw Nation reservation.

The discovery of a pond heavily baited with corn, a highly illegal act, led the wardens to investigate. During the investigation, the wardens observed the pond for three days until a group of hunters returned to the pond. The wardens contacted the men, and 26 illegally taken ducks were confiscated.

According to Jay Harvey, the Game Warden for the Choctaw Nation, one man was cited for placing and hunting over the bait, and two others were cited for not having the proper licenses. Other charges are pending on other individuals who helped place the bait.

Cases like this are among the many reasons the Choctaw Nation has begun to dedicate resources to wildlife conservation.

At the end of 2021, Oklahoma Governor Kevin Stitt announced he would not renew the standing hunting and fishing compacts with tribal governments after they expire at the end of 2021.

These compacts were the country's first state-tribal agreements of their kind, capturing millions of federal dollars for wildlife management. Over its lifetime, the Choctaw Compact accounted for \$6 million in funding.

The Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation dedicated that funding to wildlife management planning and operations, law enforcement, and conservation efforts, which benefits all Oklahomans, Native and non-Native.

When Governor Stitt canceled the compact renewal, the Tribal Council unanimously voted to amend the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Fish, Game, and Animals Code. The Tribal Council said it will continue to adjust the Nation's laws to maintain good stewardship of its resources because wildlife conservation is an evolving field that requires constant attention and study.

While the Choctaw Nation currently only has one Game Warden, he works closely with Choctaw Lighthorse officers and even state and federal officials to enforce Choctaw Tribal Law and State Law.

Harvey was a Game Warden with the State of Oklahoma for 30 years before coming to the Choctaw Nation.

According to Harvey, the job can be a lot of work but very fulfilling. "Game Wardens don't have the same resources that some large departments have, so when investigating something, I often have to gather the evidence myself, which can slow the investigation," Harvey said. "Most of the time, my days involve patrolling and following tips from hunters, landowners, Lighthorse or other agencies," he said.

Harvey is thankful for the support he receives from other state and federal organizations when working on an investigation.

According to Harvey, many tribal members are still unaware of the laws, and he hopes to educate and help people avoid doing anything unlawful. He said one of the biggest challenges they face is education about where to report a harvest.

Many tribal members are still reporting their harvests on the State's website, and Choctaw Nation regulations require tribal members to register their harvest



Photo by Christian Toews

Choctaw Nation Game Warden Jay Harvey bring 30 years of experience to the Nation.

via the Choctaw Nation wildlife conservation website.

According to Devin Lindley, Conservation Education Outreach Coordinator for the Choctaw Nation, these harvest numbers are essential to wildlife conservation because these numbers help to set limits and regulations to preserve the Choctaw Nation's resources appropriately.

The Wildlife management programs have significantly impacted the numbers of hunters within the Choctaw Nation's reservation.

"We've seen a lot more hunting and fishing from tribal members," said Lindley. "We have seen an increase in female hunters and a large increase in 11 to 15-year-old hunters. Both are well above the national average."

One of the services offered by the Wildlife Conservation Department is a Hunter Education Course. This online course is free and available to anyone. After completing the course, you will receive a hunter education card valid for life in all 50 states.

According to Lindley, it is also recognized all over the world.

"I know people like to travel and hunt so that will help them out," he said.

Whether you are a new hunter or have been hunting your whole life, knowing the law is an essential part of hunting.

As a Choctaw Nation Tribal member, staying informed on the regulations and conservation efforts is crucial because these can sometimes differ from the State's laws.

Harvey encourages all tribal members to visit the conservation website to learn more about how you can help protect Choctaw Nation resources.

You can see the website at www.choctawnation.com and click on the services tab.

Another way to stay informed is by following the Choctaw Nation Environmental Protection Service Facebook page.



Choctaw Nation Photo

In January, 26 illegally taken ducks were confiscated by Choctaw Nation, State and Federal Game Wardens after the discovery of a heavily baited pond.



CHOCTAW NATION DISTRICT PRINCESS PAGEANTS

- District 1:** Isabel Community Center | Tuesday | May 14, 2024 | 6:00 PM
- District 2:** The Landing in Hochatown | Thursday | May 9, 2024 | 6:00 PM
- District 3:** Tallhina Community Center | Thursday | May 23, 2024 | 6:00 PM
- District 4:** Poteau Community Center | Tuesday | May 14, 2024 | 6:00 PM
- District 5:** Strigler Community Center | Thursday | April 4, 2024 | 6:00 PM
- District 6:** Wilburton Community Center | Tuesday | April 16, 2024 | 6:00 PM
- District 7:** Wright City Community Center | Thursday | April 11, 2024 | 6:00 PM
- District 8:** Hugo Community Center | Thursday | May 16, 2024 | 6:00 PM
- District 9:** Choctaw Cultural Center | Tuesday | May 7, 2024 | 6:00 PM
- District 10:** Atoka Community Center | Thursday | April 18, 2024 | 6:00 PM
- District 11:** McAlester Community Center | Tuesday | April 9, 2024 | 6:00 PM
- District 12:** Coalgate Community Center | Tuesday | May 21, 2024 | 6:00 PM

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT
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Choctaw Nation Food Distribution

Choctaw Nation Among Top 50 on Forbes List of America's Best Large Employers for 2024

DURANT, Okla. — The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma (CNO) has been recognized on Forbes List of America's Best Large Employers for 2024. CNO is ranked at number 32 of 600 organizations, jumping 90 spots from last year's ranking, making them the highest-ranked in three categories: Government Service industry, Oklahoma-based company, and Tribal Nation.

"We are proud to be a tribal organization that associates enjoy being a part of and would recommend to their family and friends," said Chief Gary Batton. "We will continue to do our part to remain an 'Employer of Choice' by ensuring our associates are supported as we fulfill our mission and vision to improve the lives of tribal mem-

bers and strengthen our communities."

The ranking is based on a survey of about 170,000 workers at American companies and institutions with 5,000 or more employees. Participants were asked to evaluate their employer based on a range of criteria, including if they would recommend their current employer to friends and family, and to cite any other employer they would also recommend. New to the methodology this year was the inclusion of data from the past three years—with more recent data weighted more heavily—to better identify companies which have been consistently highly-rated over time. The final list ranks the 600 large employers that received the most recommendations.



McAlvain is Veteran of the Month

Harold McAlvain of District #5 is Choctaw Nation's Veteran of the Month. He was born in McAlester in 1946, moved to McCurtain in 1949, and graduated from school there in 1969. McAlvain was drafted into the U.S. Army and attended basic training at Fort Carson, Colorado. He remained there the duration of his military career.

He was a member of the Leadership Unit responsible for escorting dignitaries on base twice a week for public demonstration skills such as mountain climbing, transporting food to accident victims, walking across rope bridges and firing weapons. His unit delivered military rites for funerals and events and he was involved in training troops for duty in Vietnam.

Spec. 4 McAlvain returned from Colorado to Oklahoma City where he worked as a lead man for the Times Journal Publishing Company (owned by SWBT) making telephone books. He married Linda and they were married for 24 years before her passing in 2015. He has three stepdaughters, one daughter, and a son.

The Choctaw Nation holds our veterans in the highest esteem and appreciates their sacrifices and contributions to preserve our freedoms and the way of life we hold dear.

March 2024 Events

MAR 2 2024 9AM		United Way Be A Hero 5k/1-mile Come and support the United Way on this run through downtown Durant. 📍 Opera House Coffee
MAR 2 2024 9AM		Antlers Beekeeping Workshop Participants will learn beekeeping basics including how to get started, best practices, and general pollinator knowledge. 📍 Antlers Community Center
MAR 2 2024 10AM		Moyers Valley 5k Start the new year off by achieving your fitness goals. Sign up now! 📍 Moyers Baptist Church
MAR 3 2024 9AM		Futures of Football Showcase Open to competitive high school athletes grades 9-12. 📍 Southeastern Oklahoma State University - Paul Laird Field
MAR 9 2024 7AM		Vike Hike 5k/10k Enjoy an up and down run while enjoying the scenery. 📍 Carl Albert State College
MAR 9 2024 7AM		Vike Hike 5k/10k Enjoy an up and down run while enjoying the scenery. 📍 Carl Albert State College
MAR 9 2024 10:30AM		Chief Batton's Easter Celebration Please join us as we celebrate the Good News of Easter and enjoy fellowship with tribal members and their families. 📍 Tuskahoma Capitol Grounds
MAR 11 2024 8:30AM		Navigating Mental Health and Substance Abuse Conference Choctaw Nation's Behavioral Health team is hosting a conference designed for mental health professionals, law enforcement officers and anyone who would like to understand the impact of mental health and substance abuse in our society. 📍 Choctaw Casino & Resort – Durant - Magnolia Ballroom
MAR 12 2024 12PM		Honoring Female Native American Veterans March is Women's History Month, and Choctaw Nation would like to celebrate by reflecting on our proud history of Native American women's military service. Join us in honoring women veterans for their service to our country. 📍 Choctaw Casino & Resort – Durant - Ballrooms
MAR 18 2024 10AM		Virtual Tech IKBI Camp This virtual camp provides Choctaw tribal members grades 5-8 useful technical skills which can improve critical thinking and problem solving. 📍 Virtual Event
MAR 18 2024 10AM		YEA Art IKBI Camp Unleash your creativity! Open to Choctaw tribal members ages 10-18 interested in developing their art skills taught by local professional Choctaw artists. 📍 Choctaw Cultural Center
MAR 29 2024 10AM		Good Friday Tribal Holiday All Offices will be closed for a tribal holiday in observance of Good Friday. 📍 All Locations
MAR 30 2024 8:30AM		Shared Blessings 5k An opportunity for PACE members to compete in a local race. 📍 5th and Choctaw

BUSINESS CHAHTAPRENEUR CHIT + CHAT

Benefits of Having a Business Advisor

By Gary Johnson

A business advisor can provide numerous benefits to entrepreneurs and business owners. Here are some of the key advantages:

- Knowledge:** Business advisors typically possess experience and expertise in various areas of business management, including strategy, finance, operations, marketing, and more. They can provide valuable insights and guidance based on their knowledge and experience.
- Objective Perspective:** An outside advisor can provide an objective perspective on your business. They can identify obstacles, challenges, and opportunities that you may not have encountered due to being too close to the day-to-day operations.
- Strategic Planning:** Advisors can assist in strategic planning by assisting you in defining your business objectives, developing actionable plans to achieve them, and monitoring progress over time. They can also provide guidance on expansion, diversification, and other growth opportunities.
- Risk Management:** Business advisors can assist in identifying potential risks that may affect your business. These include market changes, regulatory compliance issues, financial challenges, or operational inefficiencies. They can offer strategies to minimize risk exposure and protect your business.
- Networking Opportunities:** Advisors often have contacts in various industries and sectors. Advisors can connect you with potential partners, suppliers, investors, and customers, which can be beneficial for business development and growth.
- Financial Management:** Advisors can provide guidance on financial management

practices. These include budgeting, cash flow management, financial analysis, and investment decisions. They can assist you in making informed financial decisions that support your business objectives and ensure lasting sustainability.

- Access to Resources:** Business advisors can provide access to resources and tools that can help you streamline operations, improve efficiency, and improve competitiveness. This could include software solutions, industry reports, training programs, or other useful resources.
- Accountability:** Having a business advisor can provide a level of accountability for setting and achieving business objectives. They can ensure that you are accountable for implementing set goals and are monitoring progress towards achieving desired outcomes.
- Personal Development:** Business advisors can serve as mentors and coaches, providing personal development opportunities for business owners and leaders. They can provide guidance on leadership skills, decision-making, communication, and other aspects of professional development.

Overall, having a trusted business advisor can be invaluable for navigating entrepreneurship, making informed decisions, and achieving long-term success.

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Choctaw Nation Small Business Development

2024 LABOR DAY TRIBAL MEMBER RV RESERVATION

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email address: _____

RV/Trailer description (All information must be complete for reservation consideration)

Trailer type:	Length of Trailer:	# of slide-outs:
<input type="checkbox"/> Bumper Pull <input type="checkbox"/> 5th wheel <input type="checkbox"/> RV		

Additional information: _____

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma
ATTN: Janita Jeffreys
Labor Day RV Reservations
PO Box 1210
Durant, OK 74702

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT, LABORDAY.CHOCTAWNATION.COM

NO PHONE RESERVATIONS WILL BE ACCEPTED. PLEASE INCLUDE A COPY OF YOUR CDIB CARD ONLY. SITES WILL BE ASSIGNED BY LOTTERY. DO NOT SEND ANY MONEY AT THIS TIME. ALL APPLICANTS WILL BE NOTIFIED BY MAIL OR EMAIL IN MARCH 2024.

Scan to reserve your spot today

#CHAHTALABORDAY
CHOCTAWNATION.COM

JONES ACADEMY RESIDENTIAL PROGRAM

Did you know the Jones Academy Residential Program provides housing in the dormitories for up to 188 students? The dormitory program serves as more than just housing. The program is designed to aid students in developing habits and routines, while instilling essential life skills and social habits. Jones Academy's commitment goes beyond traditional housing, fostering an environment that prioritizes student growth and community involvement.

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT JONES ACADEMY, PLEASE VISIT: JONESACADEMY.ORG

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

EMPLOYMENT TRAINING SERVICES

Do you need assistance finding a job or paying for job training?

The 477 Employment Training Services aim to help people succeed in the workforce by providing opportunities for employment, education and training.

Services are available within **Choctaw Nation Reservation.**

Scan to learn more and to apply!

Choctaw Nation 477 Program

NOTES

Indoor Air Quality Assessment
Request your free Indoor Air Quality Assessment! Public Health is partnering with Environmental Protection Services to provide a free air quality test for all tribal members living on the reservation. If you suspect issues like mold, moisture or radon in your home, contact Choctaw Nation Public Health today at 580-916-9140 ext. 83851. Any CDIB cardholder in the household makes the home eligible.

Drinking Well Water Testing in Atoka County
The Oklahoma Water Resources Center is set to conduct well water analysis for citizens in Atoka County. Samples will be accepted at the Atoka County Library from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. on Friday, March 1. The results of the tests will be provided directly to citizens. Well owners who would like to have their well water analyzed for free are encouraged to contact the Atoka County Library for information on how to collect a sample. The purpose of the well water screening is to help well owners better understand and safeguard their drinking water quality.

Native Beading Craft Day
April 6, 2024 10:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m. at the Durant Community Center, 2746 Big Lots Dr., Durant, OK 74701. A gathering for all Native crafters to have fun hanging out and working on your own individual projects. You must bring your own supplies. A small childrens section will be set up. Please bring a dish, snacks or drinks to share. \$1 raffle benefiting MMIW Chahta. RSVP at 972-481-4139



CHOCTAW CULTURAL CENTER
IBAIYA VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

BE AN ACTIVE PART OF THE CHOCTAW JOURNEY!

The Choctaw Cultural Center is looking for volunteers to help share our culture with guests. Volunteer benefits include:
Opportunities for personal and community enrichment, Ongoing training and learning opportunities related to Oklahoma history, Free or reduced admission to training activities, lectures, and workshops and much more!

SCAN THE QR CODE OR VISIT CHOCTAWCULTURALCENTER.COM FOR MORE INFORMATION



LIFE IS BETTER WITH BLOOD DONORS

Every two seconds, someone in our community urgently needs blood. This could be a child battling cancer, a trauma victim, a patient undergoing surgery, or someone with a chronic illness.

Imagine the hope, relief and second chance your donation can bring them and their families.

By becoming a blood donor, you can become a lifeline for those who desperately need it.

Join the Annual Blood Drive Challenge and help save a life.

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

Biskinik Announcement Guidelines

We accept milestone birthday greetings for ages 1, 5, 13, 15, 16, 18, 21, 30, 40, 50, 60, 65, 70, 75, 80 and above.

Couples may send announcements of silver wedding anniversary at 25 years of marriage, golden anniversary at 50 years, or 60+ anniversaries. We do not post wedding announcements.

News from graduates of higher education only and sports submissions will be accepted as space allows.

We welcome all letters from Choctaw tribal members. However, because of the volume of mail, it isn't possible to publish all letters our readers send. Letters chosen for publication must be under 150 words. We require full contact information. Only the writer's full name and city will be published.

All events sent to the Biskinik will run the month of the event or the month prior to the event if the event falls on the first of the month.

Mail to: Biskinik
P.O. Box 1210
Durant, OK 74702
or email: biskinik@choctawnation.com

Gary Batton Chief
Jack Austin Jr. Assistant Chief

The Official Monthly Publication of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma
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Kristina Humenesky, Senior Director
Kellie Matherly, Content Development Director
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Chris Jennings, News Reporter
Christian Toews, News Reporter

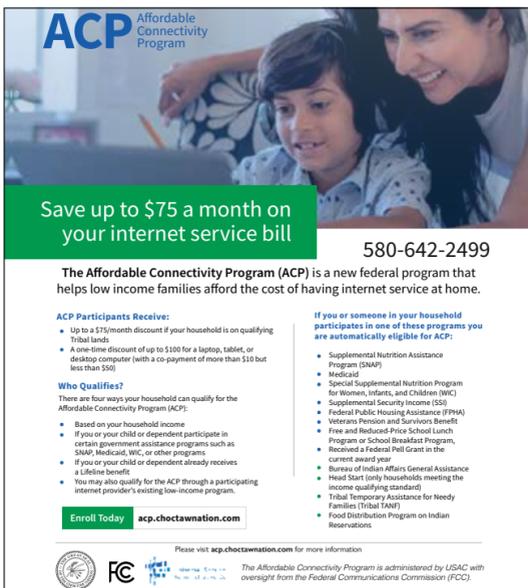
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Durant, OK 74702
580-924-8280 • 800-522-6170
www.ChoctawNation.com
email: biskinik@choctawnation.com

The BISKINIK is printed each month as a service to Tribal members. The BISKINIK reserves the right to determine whether material submitted for publication shall be printed and reserves the right to edit submitted material which it finds inaccurate, profane, offensive or morally unacceptable. Copy may be edited for space, proper grammar and punctuation. Copy will be accepted in any readable form, but where possible, it is requested that material be typewritten and double-spaced. You must include an address and phone number where you may be reached. Due to space limitations and the quantity of article submissions, we are unable to include everything we receive. Items are printed in the order received. Faxed photos will not be accepted.

If you are receiving more than one BISKINIK or your address needs to be changed, our Circulation Department would appreciate hearing from you at ext. 4028.

The BISKINIK is a nonprofit publication of the Choctaw Nation. Circulation is monthly. Deadline for articles and photographs to be submitted is the first day of each month to run in the following month.

Editor's note: Views and opinions in reader-submitted articles are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the Choctaw Nation.



ACP Affordable Connectivity Program

Save up to \$75 a month on your internet service bill

580-642-2499

The Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) is a new federal program that helps low income families afford the cost of having internet service at home.

ACP Participants Receive:

- Up to a \$75/month discount if your household is on qualifying Tribal lands
- A one-time discount of up to \$100 for a laptop, tablet, or desktop computer (with a co-payment of more than \$10 but less than \$50)

Who Qualifies?
There are four ways your household can qualify for the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP):

- Based on your household income
- If you or your child or dependent participate in certain government assistance programs such as SNAP, Medicaid, WIC, or other programs
- If you or your child or dependent already receives a Lifeline benefit
- You may also qualify for the ACP through a participating internet provider's existing low-income program.

If you or someone in your household participates in one of these programs you are automatically eligible for ACP:

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Medicaid
- Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Federal Public Housing Assistance (FPHA)
- Veterans Pension and Survivors Benefit
- Free and Reduced-Priced School Lunch Program or School Breakfast Program
- Received a Federal Pell Grant on the current award year
- Bureau of Indian Affairs General Assistance
- Head Start (only households meeting the income qualifying standard)
- Tribal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (Tribal TANF)
- Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations

Enroll Today acp.choctawnation.com

Please visit acp.choctawnation.com for more information

The Affordable Connectivity Program is administered by USAC with oversight from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).



Choctaw Landing is now hiring.
There's something for you here.

Visit one of our upcoming job fairs. For more information about job fairs, open positions or to apply today, scan the QR code or visit Careers.Choctawnation.com.

Choctaw CAREERS

- CHOCTAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA TRIBAL COUNCIL**
REGULAR SESSION AGENDA
February 10, 2024
1. CALL TO ORDER
 2. OPENING PRAYER/FLAG SALUTE
 3. ROLL CALL
 4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
 - a. Regular Session January 13, 2024
 5. WELCOME GUESTS/SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS
 - a. Veteran of the Month, District #5 – Harold McAlvain
 - b. First Language Speaker of the Month, District #5 – Gail Peterson
 6. PUBLIC COMMENTS
 - a. Nellie Meashintubby – Individual Speaker – Picking up the Pieces after COVID
 - b. Kelli Sam Henry - Individual Speaker – Underserving Tribal Citizens Outside the 10 ½ Counties
 7. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES
 8. NEW BUSINESS
 - a. Letter of Reappointment of Mitchel J. Mullin as Choctaw Nation Constitutional Judge
 - b. Approve the Funds and Budget for Year One of Five of the FY23 MOUD Clinic Expansion and Enhancement through Physical Training and Multidisciplinary Care Grant Program
 - c. Approve the Funds and Budget for Year One of Three of FY23 Himonasi Chahta Ikhvna (Learn Choctaw Now)
 - d. Approve the Funds and Budget for Year One of Five of the FY23 Adult Reentry Grant Program
 - e. Approve Application for the FY24 Community Opioid Intervention Program
 - f. Approve a Resolution for the Certification of Unserved Areas for the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program Grant
 - g. Approve the Funds and Budget for the FY23 Indian Community Development Block Grant (ICDBG)
 - h. Amend the Standing Rules for Public Comment at Regular and Special Sessions of the Tribal Council
 - i. Council Bill Amending CB-78-21 (McAlester and Idabel Child Care Center Additions)
 9. OTHER NEW BUSINESS
 10. OLD BUSINESS
 11. ADJOURNMENT
 12. CLOSING PRAYER
- All votes passed unanimously

- CHOCTAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA TRIBAL COUNCIL**
REGULAR SESSION AGENDA
February 10, 2024
1. CALL TO ORDER
 2. OPENING PRAYER/FLAG SALUTE
 3. ROLL CALL
 4. NEW BUSINESS
 - a. Executive Session
 - b. Approve Funding to Protect Gaming Market
 5. OTHER NEW BUSINESS
 6. OLD BUSINESS
 7. ADJOURNMENT
 8. CLOSING PRAYER

Chahta Anumpa Aiikhvna Mach Language Lesson

The Choctaw-speaking staff at the School of Choctaw Language is blessed with many opportunities to serve as 'language translators.' Translation requests coming from a wide array of people are honored and fulfilled. Responses may not reach persons who have similar requests; therefore, this forum displays the Choctaw Flag Salute translated into Chahta Anumpa (Choctaw language). This translation has been discussed and reviewed by three Choctaw language speakers; Hannah Bryan, Teresa Billy, and Lillie Ott. Their initials on the request form represent signatures, as mandated by the Tribal Council and the Language Department policy.

Choctaw Flag Salute

"I salute the flag of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma; whose members, characterized by tenacity, resilience, and belief in God, will forever honor its representation of FAITH, FAMILY, AND CULTURE."

Chahta Shvpha Aiokpvchi

"Oklahoma Chahta Okla i shvpha aiokpvchi li; ibafoka vhleha yosh kvllochit eshi, inla ahlakoffi, micha Chihowa i yimmi isht oktvni kvv NA YIMMI, CHUKKA ACHVFFA, MICHA IM AIVLHPESA ahobvchi ka holitombli na billiashke."

Oklahoma Chahta Okla	The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma (Identifies our tribe.)
i shvpha	its flag
aiokpvchi li	I salute
ibafoka	member
vhleha	(plural marker to include all members, present and future)
yosh	('y' inserted for euphemism)
kvllochit eshi	tenacity (strongly held together)
inla ahlakoffi	resilience (quick recovery from change)
micha	and
Chihowa i yimmi	belief in God
isht oktvni	characterized by (to be known by)
kvv – conjunction	(connects 'characteristics' with 'members')
NA YIMMI	faith
CHUKKA ACHVFFA	family
MICHA	and
IM AIVLHPESA	culture (customs, arts, shared values, achievements)
ahobvchi	represents
ka	that (which it represents)
holitombli	honor (continuously)
na	until
billiashke	will forever

www.choctawschool.com

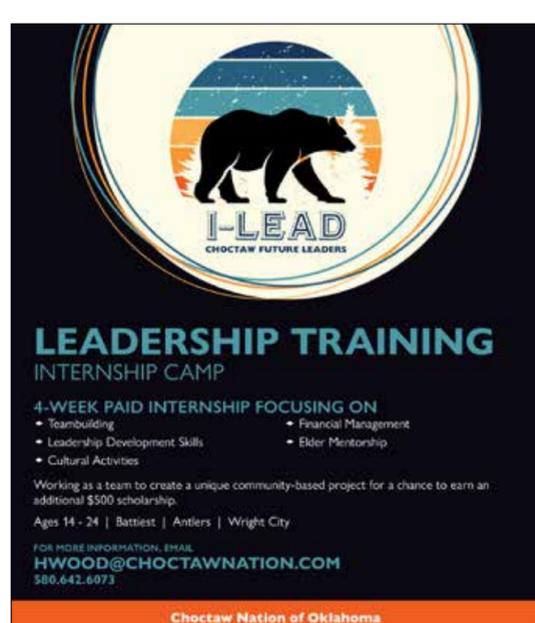


HONOR GUARD
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Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma



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- Teambuilding
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Working as a team to create a unique community-based project for a chance to earn an additional \$500 scholarship.

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580.642.6073

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

ITI FABVSSA

What did the sun and an eclipse mean to the Chahta people

On April 8, 2024, portions of the Choctaw Nation Reservation will experience a total eclipse of the sun. In Idabel, the sun will start to dim at 12:28pm, reach total darkness at 1:45pm, begin to regain daylight four minutes later, and be back to normal brightness by 3:06 PM. Poteau will see 1 minute 2 seconds of total eclipse. Areas in the northwest of the Reservation, such as McAlester, will experience a partial eclipse.

A total solar eclipse happens somewhere on earth about every year or two, but the one coming to Choctaw Nation is special. It will be the longest total eclipse over land anywhere on earth in a decade. We won't see another one in the contiguous United States until 2044. Statistically a total eclipse returns to the same location only every 360-410 years.

The eclipse coming to Choctaw Nation is a rare event. Huge numbers of people from all over the world will be coming here to experience it with us.

A solar eclipse happens when the moon passes between the sun and the earth. The moon being much smaller, but also much closer to earth than the sun can block the sun's light from getting to a small portion of the earth's surface for a short period of time. This is the total eclipse. A partial eclipse happens in places on the earth where the moon is lined up to block only a portion of the sun's light.

What does a solar eclipse look like from a traditional Choctaw perspective? Understanding this requires understanding a bit about how our Choctaw ancestors thought about the sun. At the time of first sustained contact with Europe, most Choctaw people believed in a supreme God and creator. One of his most common Choctaw names was Hvshthahili. This name is a contraction of Hvshi Atahli, meaning the Sun's Completed Order. In the sun, hvshi, Choctaw people saw God's eye. When the sun shone on the earth, it brought life and it illuminated Hina Hanta, the Bright Path to victory (Wright 1828:179). Choctaw diplomats preferred to address foreign leaders when the sun was shining brightly (O'Brien 2005:3).

Fire was sometimes referred to as Luak Hvshtahli Itichapa, meaning Fire the Partner of God (Wright 1828:179-180). This name captured the belief that fire was allied with the sun and communicated with God. Each Choctaw community maintained its own sacred fire, which was never allowed to go out except when it was ceremonially extinguished. People sought to maintain the purity of their community's fire through interacting morally with each other and with the earth.

Annually, the most important spiritual and social function was Luak Mosholi, Fires Extinguished, an event known in English as the Green Corn Ceremony. During this event, the fires were extinguished. The community cleansed, forgave each other for past wrongs, and new fires were lit. When an alliance was made with another community, burning coals were exchanged from the fires of each (O'Brien 2005:58).

With the sun being connected with God, being recognized for its role in sustaining life on earth, and being tied to the most important spiritual event of the traditional Choctaw calendar, it should come as no surprise that our Choctaw ancestors were keen observers of the sun. Some of the ways they thought about the sun are reflected in the Choctaw language. The direction east is called hvshi akuchaka, which literally means where the sun comes out, a reference to the Atlantic Ocean. West is hvshi aiokatula, meaning where the sun reclines into the water, a reference to the Pacific Ocean.

The Choctaw word for darkness, okhlili, is a contraction of oka ailli, which means died in the water. This also refers to the sun's reclining into the Pacific at night (Adair 1775:53; Mould 2004:85). The Choctaw word for time of the day, hvshi kanali, means movement of the sun. The Choctaw word for the winter season, hvsh-tula, literally means reclining sun. This reflects the observation that after the summer solstice, the sun progressively reclines farther and farther in the southern sky until the winter solstice, bringing cold weather. The moon is hvshi ninak aya, the sun that travels at night. The moon was considered to be female and was conceived of as the wife of the sun or the second eye of God (Cushman 1899:246; York 2013:49). The traditional Choctaw calendar is lunar based, and the Choctaw name for month, hvshi, probably refers to the sun that travels at night.

Today, there is an assumption that Choctaw culture



NASA's Scientific Visualization Studio

The total solar eclipse will be visible along a narrow track stretching from Texas to Maine on April 8, 2024. A partial eclipse will be visible throughout all 48 contiguous U.S. states.

was unchanging, that people didn't come up with new knowledge, that one Choctaw community didn't understand or do things a little differently than another community. This is, of course, not the case.

The following Choctaw oral story was recorded in the Bayou Lacomb community more than 100 years ago (Bushnell 1909). Unfortunately, the name of the teller was not recorded with it. Incorporating physical as well as spiritual elements, this story conveys how one community or perhaps one individual understood the sun to be. Pay attention to how it refers to some of the Choctaw words described above:

Tvshka and Walo were brothers who lived long ago. Every morning they saw the sun rise above the horizon, pass high overhead, and late in the day die in the west.

When the boys were about four years old they conceived the idea of following the sun and seeing where he died. So the next day, when he was overhead, they started to follow him; but that night, when he died, they were still in their own country, where they knew the hills and the rivers. Then they slept, and in the morning when the sun was again overhead they once more set off to follow him. And thus they continued for many years to wend their way after the sun in his course through the heavens.

Long, long afterward, when the two boys had become men, they reached a great expanse of water, and the only land they could see was the shore on which they were standing. Late that day, when Sun died, they saw him sink into the water; then they also passed over the water and entered Sun's home with him. All about them they saw women—the stars are women and the moon is Sun's wife. Then Moon asked the brothers how they had found their way so far from their home. They told her how for many, many years, ever since they were mere boys, they had followed Sun in his daily journey.

Then Sun told his wife to boil water. Into this he put the boys and rubbed them; this treatment caused them to turn red and their skin to come off. Sun then asked them whether they knew the way to return to their home, and they said, "No," so he took them to the edge, whence they looked down to the earth but they could not distinguish their home.

Sun asked why they had followed him, as it was not time for them to reach heaven. They replied that their only reason for following him was a desire to see where he died. Sun then told them that he would send them home, but that for four days after reaching their home they must not speak a word to any person. If they spoke during the four days they would die, otherwise they would then live and prosper.

A large buzzard was then called by Sun and the two boys were placed on its back. Buzzard then started toward the earth. The clouds are midway between heaven and earth; above the clouds wind never blows. As buzzard flew from heaven to the clouds the brothers could easily keep their hold; but from the clouds to the earth the buzzard was blown in all directions. All reached the

earth in safety, however, and the boys recognized the trees that stood about their old home.

They rested beneath the trees, and while there an old man passed by who knew the brothers. He continued down the road, and soon meeting the boys' mother, told her the boys had come back. She hastened to see them. When she saw them she began to talk and made them answer her. Then they told her that, as they had spoken during the first four days after their return, they would surely die. Knowing she had forced them to speak, on hearing this the mother was greatly worried. Then all went to the mother's home, and the brothers told of all they had seen and how they had followed Sun during many years. After they had told all, they died and went up to heaven to remain forever.

Given how much importance the sun had in Choctaw language and culture, when a solar eclipse occurred, it was a significant event. The Choctaw term for eclipse, hvshi kania, the sun goes away, doesn't convey a lot of meaning in the absence of the context shared above. In practice, when a solar eclipse occurred, on a day just like any other day without any warning, we can only imagine what kinds of thoughts and probably terror went through people's minds. The following comes from Israel Folsom, a Choctaw minister and Trail of Tears survivor:

When the sun began to get less in his brightness, and grow dark and obscure, they believed that some ethereal black squirrels of large size, driven by hunger, had commenced eating him and were going to devour him. With this belief, they thought it was their duty to make every exertion they could to save the great luminary of day from being consumed by them. Therefore, every person, both men, women, and children, who could make a noise, were called upon to join in the effort to drive the squirrels away.

To do this, they would begin in the same manner as persons generally do in trying to start a squirrel from a tree. Some would throw sticks towards the declining sun, whooping and yelling at the same time shooting arrows toward the supposed black squirrels (Swanton 1931).

Horatio Cushman, who grew up in Choctaw country before the Trail of Tears claimed to have seen Choctaw people respond to more than one total solar eclipse. He describes women shouting and banging metal pots together, dogs barking, and men calmly shooting their guns towards the sun to scare away the black squirrel (Cushman 1899-290-291).

Rather than black squirrels, other Choctaw communities thought of a solar eclipse as the sun cleansing itself to in order to be able to continue its important work, or thought of it as the sun resting. However you choose to experience the 2024 solar eclipse, remember that you are witnessing a part of history... and Choctaw culture.

To obtain a copy of this article's bibliography, contact the Choctaw Nation Historic Preservation Department.

Housing Headlines

By Bobby Yandell

Storm season is just around the corner! Do you have your storm shelter installed? The storm shelter program began in 2012, and to date, 7,991 storm shelters have been installed in Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas, Kansas, and Missouri. All tribal members in these states, regardless of income, 45 years of age, and older, are eligible to receive a \$3,500 voucher for an in-ground storm shelter with documentation they own their home. Those with ambulatory disabilities may receive a voucher for \$5,000 for the purchase of an above-ground shelter. All expenses over the voucher amount will be charged to the tribal member.

All tribal members in the five states listed above under the age of 45 who own their homes are eligible for a \$1,750 voucher. You are only eligible to receive this benefit once.

The application is available on the CHAHTA ACHVFFA portal, or you can contact our housing office for an application and return it with your tribal membership and a copy of your deed to your home (the tribal member's name must be on the deed). If all eligibility requirements are met, you will receive your voucher. Simply pick the contractor of your choice, and once they have installed the shelter to your satisfaction, present them with the voucher. The contractor will then submit the voucher to Housing for payment.

You may obtain an application by visiting the Choctaw Nation website at www.choctawnation.com, the CHAHTA ACHVFFA portal or by giving us a call at (580) 326-7521 or (800) 235-3087 to have one sent to you.

WILDLIFE & OUTDOORS

By Jay Harvey

In the McGirt-v-Oklahoma Supreme Court decision, the SCOTUS ruled the Creek Nation reservation had never been disestablished by Congress and, therefore, was still intact. Jimmy McGirt was a Seminole Indian who was convicted in state court for sexual abuse of a minor in the Creek reservation. His lawyer appealed to the Oklahoma Court of Criminal Appeals, which affirmed the State court's decision. The US Supreme Court granted certiorari, and in Justice Gorsuch's majority opinion, he began with the words, "On the far end of the Trail of Tears was a promise." The Nation had been promised a reservation and since it was never disestablished, it was still intact. McGirt was retried in Federal court and convicted. Later, in Sizemore v. the State of Oklahoma, it was ruled the Choctaw Nation reservation was also still intact.

What does this mean for the Choctaw Nation Wildlife Program? It means our sovereignty allows us to manage our plentiful and rich wildlife resources. In July of 2022, the CNO hired its first two wildlife employees: a Senior Manager of Wildlife Conservation and a Game Warden Manager.

Since then, three more wildlife employees have been added to the staff. The crew is diligently working to manage the wildlife resources in the Choctaw Nation. One aspect of wildlife conservation is enforcement of the wildlife laws that govern the fish and wildlife that are found within the CNO reservation.

Tribal Code 110 contains the wildlife laws passed to protect the fish and game in the CNO. These laws are an important part of the assurance the wildlife department is doing its utmost to conserve and protect the incredibly divergent and growing populations of wildlife within the reservation.

The department has implemented an electronic check-in system for deer, bears, elk, turkey, paddlefish, and alligator gar.

If a Choctaw tribal member harvests any of the above-listed species, they are required by tribal law to check it in through the Chahta Achvffa check system. This allows us to keep track of the harvest numbers for big game and two protected fish species within our reservation.

If a tribal member has an Oklahoma lifetime license, they cannot use the state system without breaking the law.

We need our tribal members to check in their game and fish with us to enable us to better manage our wildlife. Good wildlife management is our goal. Please help us help you.

DURANT LIVESTOCK SHOW

Swine Show

Overall Grand Champion: Maddox Henry, Caddo Reserve Grand Champion: Raylynn Parsons, Valiant Bronze Champion: Cameron McDonald, Bennington Jr. Showmanship: Presley Lewis, Broken Bow Sr. Showmanship: Gabby Marsh, Antlers

Berk

Breed Champion: Presley Lewis, Broken Bow Reserve Breed Champion: Baylee Wittrock, Kingfisher

Class I
1. Braylee Wittrock, Kingfisher 2. Cody Dennis Jr. Washington 3. Avery McGill Byng
Class II
1. Jacilayne Cassell Chatty 2. Reese Pierce Bennington 3. Cameron McDonald, Bennington
Class III
1. Presley Lewis, Broken Bow 2. Emily Storey, Rattan 3. Kylie Conn, Caddo

Chester

Breed Champion: Rylan Arnold, Madill Reserve Breed Champion: Mekayla Westbrook, Madill

Class I
1. Rylan Arnold, Madill 2. Maddox Henry Caddo 3. Raylynn Parsons, Valiant
Class II
1. Mekayla Westbrook, Madill 2. Emily Storey, Rattan 3. Kollins Hembree, Antlers

Duroc

Breed Champion: Raylynn Parsons, Valliant Reserve Breed Champion: Caden Tillman, Savanna

Class I
1. Denver Mitchell, Atoka 2. Tatay Bear, Calvin 3. Kylie Conn, Caddo
Class II
1. Brance Gray, Caddo 2. Kassin Hobson, Lexington 3. Mekayla Westbrook, Madill
Class III
1. Raylynn Parsons, Valiant 2. Caden Tillman, Savanna 3. Caden Tillman, Atoka
Class IV
1. Braylie Sapp Lindsey 2. Chloe Hutchins Stuart 3. Raylynn Parsons Valliant

Hamp

Breed Champion: Raylynn Parsons, Kingfisher Reserve Breed Champion: Kinlyn Hembree, Antlers

Class I
1. Cody Dennis Jr., Washington 2. Rylan Arnold, Madill 3. Sage McGlocklin, Tishomingo
Class II
1. Cameron McDonald, Kingfisher 2. Ace Wood, Byng 3. Zaden Hinton, Mill Creek
Class III
1. Jamie Parsons, Valliant 2. Brax Daniels, Tishomingo 3. Jazlyn Randall, Fort Towson
Class IV
1. Kinlyn Hembree, Antlers 2. Presley Roberts, Soper 3. Paisley Beshear Wister
Class V
1. Ally Dennis, Washington 2. Josie Fortner, Tupelo 3. Braylee Price, Atoka
Class VI
1. Chloe Hutchins, Stuart 2. Tracer House Coalgate 3. Ace Wood, Byng

Poland

Breed Champion: Braylee Wittrock, Other/Not Listed Reserve Breed Champion: Piper Worcester, Mill Creek

Class I
1. Braylee Wittrock, Other/Not Listed 2. Piper Worcester, Mill Creek 3. Kassin Hobson, Other/Not Listed

Spot

Breed Champion: Reese Pierce, Bennington Reserve Breed Champion: Gabby Marsh, Antlers

Class I
1. Gabby Marsh, Antlers 2. Jamie Parsons, Valiant 3. Emily Behrens, Caddo
Class II
1. Reese Pierce, Bennington 2. Mykah Parsons, Valliant 3. Kade Moody, Atoka

York

Breed Champion: Carli Upton Tishomingo Reserve Breed Champion: Kinlyn Hembree, Antlers

Class I
1. Kinlyn Hembree, Antlers 2. Teegan Wittrock, Other/Not Listed 3. Jenna Roebuck, Soper
Class II
1. Carli Upton, Tishomingo 2. Jamie Parsons, Valiant 3. Kade Moody, Atoka

Cross

Breed Champion: Maddox Henry, Caddo Reserve Breed Champion: Cameron McDonald, Kingfisher

Class I
1. Brighton Lanier, Mill Creek 2. Brooklyn Lanier, Mill Creek 3. Makenzli Hagle Marietta
Class II
1. Denver Mitchell, Atoka 2. Kinlyn Hembree, Antlers 3. Cody Dennis Jr., Wahsington
Class III
1. Brock Daniels, Tishomingo 2. Callie Gray, Caddo 3. Braylee Wittrock, Kingfisher
Class IV
1. Maddox Henry, Caddo 2. Cameron McDonald, Kingfisher 3. Carli Upton, Tishomingo
Class V
1. Braylee Price, Atoka 2. Maddox Henry Caddo 3. Teegan Wittrock, Kingfisher
Class VI
1. Cinsleigh Cole, Calera 2. Hannah Roebuck Calvin 3. Braylee Price, Antlers
Class VII
1. Braylie Sapp, Lindsay 2. Jaxton Fortner, Tupelo 3. Presley Lewis, Broken Bow
Class VIII
1. Chloe Hutchins, Stuart 2. Josie Fortner, Tupelo 3. Easton Conn, Caddo

Hereford

Breed Champion: Teegan Wittrock, Kingfisher Reserve Breed Champion: Kimberlin Gordon, Mill Creek

Class I
1. Teegan Wittrock, Kingfisher 2. Kimberlin Gordon, Mill Creek 3. Tracer House Coalgate

Goat Show

Doe

Breed Champion: Spencer Lewis, Silo Reserve Breed Champion: Presley Lewis, Broken Bow Bronze Champion: Brinley Nemecek, Allen

Division I
Class I
1. Spencer Lewis, Silo 2. Josey Milburn, Asher 3. Zakia Amix, Boswell
Class II
1. Spencer Lewis, Silo 2. Josey Milburn, Asher Mollie Burleson, Atoka
Class III
1. Jesslyn Broadrick, Fort Towson 2. Skye Gammon, Wright City 3. Brinley Nemecek, Allen
Division I Champion: Spencer Lewis, Silo Reserve: Josey Milburn, Asher

Wether

Division II
Class I
1. Presley Lewis, Broken Bow 2. Brinley Nemecek, Allen 3. Spencer Lewis, Silo
Class V
1. Berkle Gossen, Other/Not Listed 2. Stanten Broadrick, Fort Towson 3. Teleah Crow Rock Creek
Division II Champion: Presley Lewis, Broken Bow Division II Reserve: Brinley Nemecek, Allen

Grand Champion: Presley Lewis Broken Bow Reserve Grand Champion: Skye Gammon, Wright City Bronze Champion: Lucas Rezner, Silo

Division I
Class I
1. Josey Milburn, Asher 2. Cutter Teague, Rattan 3. Cutter Teague, Rattan
Class II
1. Skye Gammon, Wright City 2. Lucas Rezner Silo 3. Braxley Hudson Fort Towson
Class III
1. Presley Lewis, Broken Bow 2. Skye Gammon, Wright City 3. Spencer Lewis, Silo
Division I Champion: Presley Lewis, Broken Bow Reserve: Skye Gammon, Wright City

Lamb Show

Overall Grand Champion: Laney Alford, Tishomingo Reserve Grand Lexi Courtney, Mill Creek Bronze Champion: Lexi Courtney, Mill Creek Jr. Showman: Aailiyah Courtney, Mill Creek Sr. Showman: Lexi Courtney, Mill Creek

Class II

1. Kashen Beshear Wister 2. Jolie House, Coalgate 3. Aailiyah Courtney, Mill Creek
Class III
1. Sawyer Phelps, Calera 2. Madison Kelsey, Bennington 3. Jazalyn Hester, Valliant
Division I Champion: Kashen Beshear, Wister Reserve Division Champion: Gracie Newton, Paoli
Division II
Class IV
1. Division II, Coalgate 2. Aailiyah Courtney, Mill Creek 3. Hannah Adams, Inianola
Class V
1. Laney Alford Tishomingo 2. Jolie House Coalgate 3. Jay House Coalgate
Class VI
1. Lexi Courtney, Mill Creek 2. Jace Alford Tishomingo 3. Maggie Hunt, Tushka
Class VII
1. Laney Alford, Tishomingo 2. Camren Courtney, Mill Creek 3. Brooklyn Lanier, Mill Creek
Division II Champion: Laney Alford Tishomingo Reserve Division Champion: Lexi Courtney, Mill Creek
Division III
Class VIII
1. Mykah Parsons, Valliant 2. Mollie Burleson, Atoka 3. Braylon Pollard, Boswell
Class IX
1. Lexi Courtney, Mill Creek 2. Jace Alford, Tishomingo 3. Paisley Beshear, Wister
Class X
1. Mollie Burleson, Atoka 2. Natalie Shaw Coalgate 3. Hannah Adams, Indianola
Division III Champion: Lexi Courtney, Mill Creek Division III Reserve Champion: Mollie Burleson Atoka

Class I

1. Stanten Broadrick, Fort Towson
Class II
1. Mylie Cato, Savanna 2. Spencer Lewis, Silo
Continental Division Breed Champion: Kassidy Collins, Tishomingo Reserve Breed Champion: Mylie Cato, Savanna
Class I
1. Mylie Cato, Savanna 2. Candon Williams, Caddo 3. Chandler Laxton, Vanoss
Class II
1. Kassidy Collins, Tishomingo 2. Andrew Triplitt, Blanchard
Class III
1. Trevor Wiley, Pauls Valley 2. Spencer Lewis, Silo
Class IV
1. Keaton Herrington, Caddo 2. Anna Drinkard, Fort Towson 3. Josi Herrington, Caddo

Class I

1. David Workman, Stonewall 2. Harper (Hartin) Williams, Kingston
Class III
1. Kohen Varner, Tishomingo 2. Brock Daniels, Tishomingo
Class IV
1. Kimber Collins, Tishomingo 2. Addy Westbrook, Madill
Class V
1. Callen Slover, Tishomingo

Class I

1. Callen Slover, Tishomingo 2. Ava Sliger, Tupelo
Class II
1. Case Smallwood, Boswell 2. Katie Haysmer, Dale 3. Eli Sliger, Tupelo
Class III
1. Mekayla Westbrook, Madill 2. Bentley Teague, Moss
Class IV
1. Katie Haysmer, Dale 2. Andrew Triplitt, Blanchard

Class I

1. Raylynn Parsons, Valliant 2. Jet Baker, Kiowa
Class II
1. Keaton Slover, Tishomingo 2. Laynie Bowen, Silo 3. Laynie Bowen, Silo
Class III
1. Liz (Dana) Sliger, Tishomingo 2. Ava Sliger, Tupelo
Class IV
1. Andrew Triplitt, Blanchard

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Class I

1. Callen Slover, Tishomingo 2. Ava Sliger, Tupelo
Class II

WILBURTON LIVESTOCK SHOW

Swine Show

Overall:

Grand Champion Market Swine: Rachel Palmer, Palmer Academy
Reserve Grand Champion Market Swine: Kade Spears, Hartshorne
Bronze Market Swine: Rachel Palmer, Palmer Academy
Senior Swine Showmanship: Libby Pryor, Stigler
Junior Swine Showmanship: Kade Spears, Hartshorne

Berk

Class I
 1. Khloie Swindle, Wilburton
 Class II
 1. Tory Mason, Hartshorne
 2. Haleigh Hall, Battiest 3. Alyssa Kennedy, Whitesboro 4. Carlyee Martin, Harrah
 Class III
 1. Kaison Roath, Battiest 2. Caden Schaffer, Battiest 3. Kaygen Davidson, Clayton 4. Kenyan McAhren, Clayton
 Class IV
 1. Jenna Ward, Fanshawe 2. Jaiden Phillips, Jones Academy
Breed Champion: Tory Mason, Hartshorne
Reserve Breed: Jenna Ward, Fanshawe

Chester

Class I
 1. Libby Pryor, Stigler 2. Kinsley Williams, Fanshawe
 Class II
 1. Kade Spears, Hartshorne 2. Kynna King, Rattan
 Class III
 1. Kaylee McDonald, Rock Creek 2. Wyatt Medders, Red Oak
Breed Champion: Kade Spears, Hartshorne
Reserve Breed: Kaylee McDonald, Rock Creek

Duroc

Class I
 1. Ridge McGowen, Fanshawe 2. Mia McGowen, Wister 3. Sadie Craig, Whitesboro
 Class II
 1. Kaison Roath, Battiest 2. Kaylee McDonald, Rock Creek 4. Bronc Ward, Wister
 Class III
 1. Tory Mason, Hartshorne 2. Bryndle King, Rattan
 Class IV
 1. Rayli Brown, Panama 2. Paityn Beason, Cameron
Breed Champion: Tory Mason, Hartshorne
Reserve Breed: Kaison Roath, Battiest

Hamp

Class I
 1. Linley Collins, Whitesboro 2. Edlon Palmer, Clayton 3. Hoyt McGuire, Hartshorne 4. Easton Hernandez, Whitesboro
 Class II
 1. Kinsley Williams, Fanshawe 2. Tanner Hambricht, Spiro 3. Ayden Doyle, Leflore 4. Ruger Sennett, Leflore
 Class III
 1. Tripp McGowen, Fanshawe 2. Lashay Craig, Whitesboro 3. Alyssa Kennedy, Whitesboro 4. Jathen Harrison, Howe 5. Brooklyn Ashby, Wilburton 6. Rowdy Gardner, Clayton
 Class IV
 1. Alyssa Budzinsky, Hartshorne 2. Rachel Palmer, Palmer Academy 3. Blake Thompson, Stringtown 4. Alan Suttmiller, Canadian
 Class V
 1. Ridge McGowen, Fanshawe 2. Mathew Doyle, Leflore 3. Rylan Williams, Fanshawe 4. Mia McGowen, Wister 5. Brayli Beason, Cameron 6. Hagen Ritter, Heavener
 Class VI
 Tripp McGowen, Fanshawe 2. Kasen Krebs, Heavener 3. Preston Darneal, Spiro 4. Laramie Coffey, Spiro 5. Kash Janeway, Red Oak 6. Kaygen Davidson, Clayton
 Class VII
 1. Tyler Duncan, Heavener 2. Carlyee Martin, Harrah 4. Kohen Balentine, Rock Creek 5. Kate Burdick, Stigler
 Class VIII
 1. Kade Spears, Hartshorne 2. Zack Polk, Jones Academy 3. Jacob Sullivan, Spiro 4. Mikayla Hall, Heavener
 Class IX
 Kira House, Panama 2. Isabel Lujano, Jones Academy 3. Jayden Allen, Red Oak
Breed Champion: Kade Spears, Hartshorne
Reserve Breed: Alyssa Budzinsky, Hartshorne

Hereford

Class I
 1. Libby Pryor, Stigler 2. Kynna King, Rattan
 Class II
 1. Bryndle King, Rattan 2. Alyssa Kennedy, Whitesboro
 Class III
 1. Kynna King, Rattan 2. Kaygen Davidson, Clayton
Breed Champion: Libby Pryor, Stigler
Reserve Breed: Kynna King, Rattan

Poland

Class I
 1. Chase Melton, Red Oak

Class II

1. Kade Spears, Hartshorne
 Class III
 1. Tricity Armstrong, Rattan
 Breed Champion- Kade Spears, Hartshorne
 Reserve Breed- Chase Melton, Red Oak
Breed Champion: Kade Spears, Hartshorne
Reserve Breed: Chase Melton, Red Oak

Spot

Class I
 1. Brayleigh Brock, Clayton 2. Kira House, Panama 3. Rebel Hanson, Stigler 4. Lea Medders, Red Oak 5. Kayden McAhren, Clayton
 Class II
 1. Jayden Allen, Red Oak 2. Rylan Williams, Fanshawe 3. Kaden Marable, Battiest
 Class III
 1. Melody Guenther, Jones Academy 2. Kohen Balentine, Rock Creek 3. Jimmy Trejo-Rains, Jones Academy 4. Madison Johnson, Wilburton
Breed Champion- Melody Guenther, Jones Academy
Reserve Breed- Jayden Allen, Red Oak

York

Class I
 1. Kinsley Williams, Fanshawe 2. Scout McGuire, Hartshorne
 Class II
 1. Haleigh Hall, Battiest 2. Kohen Balentine, Rock Creek
 Class III
 1. Kaden Marable, Battiest 2. Caden Schaffer, Battiest 3. Rocky Schumann, Buffalo Valley
 Class IV
 1. Jaycee Hambricht, Spiro 2. Talon Scott, Haileyville 3. Kaylee McDonald, Rock Creek
Breed Champion: Kinsley Williams, Fanshawe
Reserve Breed: Scout McGuire, Hartshorne

Cross

Class I
 1. Rachel Palmer, Palmer Academy 2. Libby Pryor, Stigler 3. Haven Martin, Whitesboro 4. Easton Hernandez, Whitesboro 5. Boomer Collins, Whitesboro 6. Paityn Beason, Cameron
 Class II
 1. Blake Thompson, Stringtown, 2. Rylan Williams, Fanshawe 3. Eldon Palmer, Clayton 4.ENTRY Henry, Nashoba 5. Josten Harrison, Howe
 Class III
 1. Rachel Palmer, Palmer Academy 2. Elisha Crouch, Heavener 3. Weston Walden, Spiro 4. Caden Schaffer, Battiest 5. Wyatt Medders, Red Oak 6. Sadie Craig, Whitesboro 7. Raylin Ben, Tuskahoma 8. Aaden Ludlow, Whitesboro 9. Alan Suttmiller, Canadian
 Class IV
 1. Alyssa Budzinsky, Hartshorne 2. Bryndle King, Rattan 3. Brentlee McGuire, Hartshorne 4. Kasen Krebs, Heavener 5. Hannah Killian, Arkoma 6. Tanner Hambricht, Spiro 7. Kash Janeway, Red Oak 8. Annabell Craig, Whitesboro 9. Lea Medders, Red Oak 10. Calvin Palmer, Clayton
 Class V
 1. Blake Thompson, Stringtown 2. Kaison Roath, Battiest 3. Kate Burdick, Stigler 4. Luke Bray, Clayton 4. Brooksie Wilson, Buffalo Valley 5. Rayli Brown, Panama 6. Alan Suttmiller, Canadian 7. Jaiden Phillips, Jones Academy
 Class VI
 1. Madison Johnson, Wilburton 2. Tucker Coffey, Spiro 3. Tory Mason, Hartshorne 4. Tricity Armstrong, Rattan 5. Tyler Duncan, Heavener 6. Eva Cruishank, Jones Academy 7. Devry Ritter, Heavener 8. Talon Scott, Haileyville 9. Mikayla Hall, Heavener 10. Madison Johnson, Wilburton
 Class VII
 1. Bryce West, Hodgen 2. Tyler Duncan, Heavener 3. Mikayla Hall, Heavener 4. Talon Scott, Haileyville

Breed Champion: Rachel Palmer, Palmer Academy

Reserve Breed: Rachel Palmer, Palmer Academy

Goat

Overall:
Senior Goat Showmanship: Bradley Strain, Kinta
Junior Goat Showmanship: Kynna King, Rattan
Doe
Grand Champion Doe Goat: Jailey Sparks, Hartshorne
Reserve Grand Champion Doe Goat: Jailey Sparks, Hartshorne
Bronze Doe Goat: Bradley Strain, Kinta

Doe

Division I
 Class I
 1. Jaylee Kelso, Quinton 2. Jasper Shipman, Fanshawe
 Class II
 1. Jasper Shipman, Fanshawe 2. Jaylee Kelso, Quinton 3. Paislee Morris, LeFlore 4. Victoria Sharp, Howe
 Class III
 1. Kaci Elrod, Stringtown 2. Gauge Little, Arkoma 3. Khloie Swindle, Wilburton 4. Zoey Powell, Wilburton

Division I
 Class I
 1. Karlee Trammell, Washington 2. Josey Milburn, Asher 3. Brookelyn Cannon, Wilburton
 Class II
 1. Paisley Beshear, Wister 2. Kate Trammell, Washington 3. Ceejay Robison, Checotah
 Class III
 1. Kate Trammell, Washington 2. Bradley Strain, Kinta 3. Macs Harkins, Wilburton
 Class IV
 1. Bradley Strain, Kinta 2. Bryce West, Hodgen
Division II Champion: Bradley Strain, Kinta
Reserve Division II: Ty O'Daniel, Hartshorne
 Doe Goats Division III
 Class VII
 1. Jailey Sparks, Hartshorne 2. Quincy Pearce, Porum 3. Bryndle King, Rattan 4. Saylor Conrad, Spiro 5. Sophie Anglen, Arkoma 6. Markee Gryder, Wilson
 Class VIII
 1. Jailey Sparks, Hartshorne 2. Karlee Glover, Warner 3. Quincy Pearce, Porum
 Class IX
 1. Karlee Glover, Warner 2. Jayce Wilkett, Wilburton 3. Michael Gryder, Wilson

Weather
Grand Weather Goat: Jase Sparks, Hartshorne
Reserve Wether Goat: Annie Thompson, Stringtown
Bronze Wether Goat: Quinn Davison, Stuart
 Wether Division I
 Class I
 1. Bryndle King, Rattan
 Class II
 1. Annie Thompson, Stringtown 2. Quinn Davison, Stuart 3. Madison Johnson, Wilburton
Division I Champion: Annie Thompson, Stringtown
Division I Reserve Champion: Bryndle King, Rattan

Wether Division II
 Class III
 1. Quinn Davison, Stuart 2. Tucker Conrad, Spiro 3. Dane Wood, Stringtown
 Class IV
 1. Jase Sparks, Hartshorne 2. Kash Janeway, Red Oak
Division II Champion: Jase Sparks, Hartshorne
Reserve Division II Reserve Champion: Quinn Davison, Stuart

Lamb

Grand Market Lamb: Javen Sparks, Hartshorne
Reserve Grand Market Lamb: Javen Sparks, Hartshorne
Bronze Grand Market Lamb: Maddison Wynd, Moore
Senior Lamb Showmanship: Maddison Wynd, Moore
Junior Lamb Showmanship: Ali Price, Fanshawe

Division I
 Class I
 1. Rayleigh Effinger, Wister 2. Lucille Wann, Quinton
 Class II
 1. Ali Price, Fanshawe 2. Tanner Kiechel, Tuskahoma
 Class III
 1. Mazie Nagel, Clayton 2. Rayleigh Effinger, Wister
 2. Mazie Nagel, Clayton 3. Ali Price, Fanshawe 4. Dalton Peel, Stringtown 5. Rayleigh Effinger, Wister 6. Antonio Garcia, Stringtown
 Class IV
 1. Javen Sparks, Hartshorne 2. Maddison Wynd, Moore 3. Katlynn Figari, Poteau 4. Mazie Nagel, Clayton 5. Annie Thompson, Stringtown 6. Dalton Peel, Stringtown 7. Timber Olson, Porum
Division I Champion: Javen Sparks, Hartshorne
Division I Reserve Champion: Maddison Wynd, Moore

Division II
 Class V
 1. Maddison Wynd, Moore 2. Katlynn Figari, Poteau 3. Annie Thompson, Stringtown 4. Jordyne Work, Whitesboro 5. Tucker Kitchell, Tuskahoma 6. Timber Olson, Porum
 Class VI
 1. Javen Sparks, Hartshorne 2. Alyssa Kennedy, Whitesboro 3. Bradley Strain, Kinta 4. Traegan Ballard, Poteau 5. Kendra Work, Whitesboro 6. Kade Cooper, Poteau 7. Alyssa Kennedy, Whitesboro
 Class VII
 1. Maddison Wynd, Moore 2. Alyssa Kennedy, Whitesboro 3. Tory Mason, Hartshorne 4. Traegan Ballard, Poteau 5. Jordyne Work, Whitesboro
 Class VIII
 1. Traegan Ballard, Poteau
Division II Champion: Javen Sparks, Hartshorne
Division II Reserve Champion: Maddison Wynd, Moore

Heifer

Overall:
Grand Champion Heifer: Kinzi Adkison, Sulphur

Reserve Grand Champion Heifer: Tucker Conrad, Spiro
Bronze Champion Heifer: Rachel Palmer, Palmer Academy

English Division
 Class I
 1. Isaiah Sallee, Porum 2. JW Edelen, Rock Creek 3. Jaylee Kelso, Quinton
 Class II
 1. Jaylee Huff, Mena, Arkansas
 Class III
 1. Isaiah Salle, Porum 2. Kaleb Highfill, Stigler
English Division Champion Heifer: Isaiah Sallee, Porum
English Division Reserve Champ Heifer: Isaiah Sallee, Porum

Continental Division
 Class I
 1. Jade McPeak, Checotah 2. Jaylee Kelso, Quinton
 Class II
 1. Julie Emerson, Checotah 2. Rylee Williams, Tecumseh
 Class III
 1. Rylee Williams, Tecumseh 2. Jiles Whisenhunt, Eufaula 3. Julie Emerson, Checotah
 Class IV
 1. Jaylee Huff, Mena, Arkansas
 Class V
 1. Kinzi Adkison, Sulphur 2. Karoline Davis, Spiro
Division Champion: Kinzi Adkison, Sulphur
Division Reserve Champion: Jade McPeak, Checotah

AOB Division Heifer
 Class I
 1. Jace Bibee, Stigler
 Class II
 1. Tucker Conrad, Spiro 2. Rachel Palmer, Palmer Academy 3. Brinlynn Highfill, Stigler
 Class III
 1. Jacey Edelen, Rock Creek 2. Jaylee Kelso, Quinton 3. Kaeleigh Davis, Spiro
 Class IV
 1. Bret Butler, Keota
 Class V
 1. Jade McPeak, Checotah 2. Jace Bibee, Stigler 3. Larit Austin, Whitesboro
 Class VI
 1. Kinzi Adkison, Sulphur
 Class VII
 1. Saylor Conrad, Spiro 2. Cody Cantrell, Stigler 3. Myles McKee, Stigler
 Class VIII
 1. Kinzi Adkison, Sulphur 2. Dawson Whisenhunt, Eufaula 3. Saylor Conrad, Spiro
 Class IX
 1. Baylee Smith, Oktaha 2. Chloe Cantrell, Stigler
 Division Champion: Tucker Conrad, Spiro
 Division Reserve Champion: Rachel Palmer, Palmer Academy

Steer
Overall: Grand Champion Steer: Riggan Adams, Durant
Reserve Champ Steer: Kinzlie Barbre, Moss
Bronze Champ Steer: Riggan Adams, Durant
Senior Cattle Showmanship: Jade McPeak, Checotah
 Junior Cattle Showmanship: Jaylee Kelso, Quinton

English Division Steer
 Class I
 1. Ketch Coates, Tushka
 Class II
 1. Jiles Whisenhunt, Eufaula
 Class III
 1. JW Edelen, Rock Creek 2. Hagen Hambrick, Bennington
 Class IV
 1. Riggan Adams, Durant 2. Ketch Coates, Tushka
Division Champion: Riggan Adams, Durant
Division Reserve Champion: Ketch Coates, Tushka

Continental Division Steer
 Class I
 1. Jaylee Kelso, Quinton
 Class II
 1. Markee Gryder, Henryetta
 Class III
 1. Jaci Floyd, Durant 2. Tucker Kitchell, Tuskahoma 3. Jaylee Kelso, Quinton
 Class IV
 1. Kollins Coates, Tushka 2. Jiles Whisenhunt, Eufaula 3. Jace Bibee, Stigler
 Class V
 1. Riggan Adams, Durant
Division Champion: Riggan Adams, Durant
Reserve Division Champion: Kollin Coates, Tushka

Brahman Division Steer
 Class I
 1. Zoey Powell, Wilburton
Division Champion: Zoey Powell, Wilburton

AOB Division Steer
 Class I
 1. Kinzlie Barbre, Moss
 Class II
 1. Huck Hambrick, Bennington
 Division Champion, Kinzlie Barbre, Moss
 Reserve Division Champ Steer: Huck Hambrick, Bennington



Grand Champion - Kinzi Adkison, Sulphur



Grand Champion - Jailey Sparks, Hartshorne



Grand Champion - Javen Sparks, Hartshorne



Grand Champion - Jase Sparks, Hartshorne



Grand Champion - Riggan Adams, Durant



Grand Champion - Rachel Palmer, Palmer Academy

Bryant leaves his mark on the track

Stetson Bryant "Tasembo" is eight years old and lives in his hometown of McAlester, Oklahoma.

Stetson got his first go-kart for Christmas in 2021 to ride around in his yard, and it has turned into so much more.

Since then, he and his pit crew have gone full throttle with competitive go-kart racing.

He started his racing career in Nashoba, Oklahoma, at Kiamichi Mountain Speedway, where he won multiple races.

Stetson's parents then found other go-kart tracks around Oklahoma and Texas that he has raced at and showed how competitive he is.

He won the track championship at 3D Raceway in Haskell, Oklahoma. His home tracks are 81 Raceway in Minco, Oklahoma, during the summer and Outlaw Motorsports in Shawnee, Oklahoma, during the winter. He has brought home plenty of trophies between the two tracks.

In 2022, he brought home a third-place finish in points in the Jr. 1 class at Outlaw Motorsports, and in 2023, he



brought home a first-place finish in points in Jr. 1 and third-place in points in the Jr. 2 class at 81 Raceway.

In August 2023, Stetson raced at two tracks out of state. He and his crew made their way up to Illinois and Iowa to race at one of the year's biggest races against some national competition. They had a great learning experience and hope to return this year.

Over the last two and a half years of racing, Stetson has had 50+ wins and multiple second and third-place finishes. Stetson is currently first in points in the Jr. 1 class at Outlaw Motorsports and has three races left for the indoor season.

In his downtime, Stetson enjoys fishing, riding his yard kart around the house, playing football, learning the Choctaw language and racing sprint cars on the PS5.

He would like to say "y-akoke" to his sponsors and everybody who has helped him get as far as he has in his short racing career because without them, this wouldn't have been possible!



Lachlan Willow Frappier



Tribal member Alora Adams and her partner Zachary Frappier welcomed their son, Lachlan Willow Frappier, on December 19, 2023.



McCarty earns prestigious certification

Choctaw tribal member Paul McCarty has recently achieved the professional

credential of Certified Healthcare Facility Manager (CHFM) from the American Society of Hospital Engineers and the American Hospital Association.

This prestigious certification is based upon both education and experience and is the gold standard for hospital and healthcare facility management.

Paul McCarty currently serves as the Director of Physical Environment for the Winnebago Comprehensive Healthcare System operated by the Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska.

He has many years of experience in both tribal, state and federal government duties.



Toney named Associate Dean

Scott Toney has recently been named the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs at the Daniels College of Business, the University of Denver. He is a Teaching

Professor in Business Information and Analytics.

Toney earned a Bachelor of Science in Mathematics from the University of Texas at Austin in 1994 and a Master of Science in Applied Mathematics from the University of Texas at Dallas in 1997.

He has been teaching analytics at the University of Denver since 2007.

Toney is Married to Denice Toney. He has two children, Iris and Lillian. Iris is studying Engineering at Carthage College in Kenosha, Wisconsin. Lillian recently graduated from high school and is exploring her options.

His grandmother was a long-time Stonewall, Oklahoma resident and tribal member Thelma Toney.

UNITING GENERATIONS THROUGH CULTURE

CHOCTAW CULTURAL CENTER



Rolen turns 18

Happy 18th birthday, Kelsee! I'm so proud of who you've become! Keep reaching for the stars; all good things will come your way! We love you.

Love, Momma

Worley commits to SNU



Jaxon Worley is a senior quarterback from Kiefer. Jaxon is Choctaw and Osage.

He has had a great senior football season and has received several honors so far this year, including District 2A-7 Quarterback of the Year; 2A East All-Star by Class and OCA East All-State team.

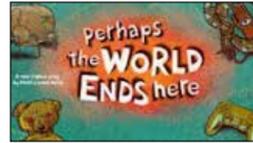
The Kiefer Trojans football team had a great season, going 13-1 and 7-0 in District play.

Jaxon has committed to Southern Nazarene University to play the position of quarterback.

He is the son of Trent and Ashlee Worley of Kiefer, Oklahoma.

Choctaw sci-fi epic comes to stage

Tisch drama stage presents "Perhaps the World Ends Here," a sci-fi epic, drawing from Choctaw culture and cosmology.



Tisch drama stage will open its spring '24 lineup with "Perhaps the World Ends Here," an original comedy written and directed by Daniel Leeman Smith. The production will run in the Abe Burrows Theater February 29 - March 9.

A sci-fi epic that blends video game culture and Choctaw cosmology in the style of Theatre of the Ridiculous, Perhaps the World Ends Here tells the story of Frankie Brown, a young Choctaw woman with big dreams and an even bigger destiny. Hopelessly devoted to becoming a professional video gamer and e-sports star despite some serious ineptitude, she pawns her personal belongings to pay rent and further her dreams. After unwittingly losing the key to the universe, she must undertake a journey of epic proportions accompanied by her queer best friend, her granddad, and a fearsome hopaiyai to prevent a great cataclysm.

Leeman Smith is a proud two-spirit citizen of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma currently based in New York City. He is a director, playwright, and theatre educator whose work is often positioned at the intersection of community, art, education, and activism with a focus on Native joy. He is making his TD STAGE debut developing Perhaps the World Ends Here for the stage, after it premiered as a commissioned screenplay at Local Classic Repertory in 2020.

"The Department of Drama is excited and honored to lift up the work of Daniel Leeman Smith, who teaches our course in Indigenous Theatre," said Tisch Drama Chair Tomi Tsunoda.

"Daniel's work as a playwright, director, producer, educator, and activist offers an incredible example to our students of the kind of artistic citizenship our curriculum aims to make possible."

She added, "In a moment when NYU is opening its new Center for Indigenous Studies, we are glad to be shining a light on this contemporary Indigenous play, which manifests its cultural legacies not only in the content of the story, but in the dramaturgy and process of the production."

Tisch Drama will also host a Zoom conversation exploring comedy and contemporary

Indigenous performance with Leeman Smith and other special guests. Watch for updates.

MY SCREENING MAMMOGRAM SAVED MY LIFE

I get to continue gardening. -Tonya

American Society of Breast Surgeons guidelines recommend women with an average risk get a mammogram annually beginning at age 40.

To schedule an appointment, call 918.567.7000 or 800.349.7026

Choctaw Nation Health Services

ACT & SCHOLARSHIP WORKSHOPS

IN-PERSON DATES

- Friday, October 20, 2023 | Durant Headquarters | 1802 Chukka Hina Drive, Durant, OK
- Thursday, Nov 30, 2023 | McAlester Kiamichi Technology Center | 301 Kiamichi Drive, McAlester, OK 74501
- Thursday, February 1, 2024 | Idabel Kiamichi Technology Center | 3205 Lincoln Road NE, Idabel, OK 74745
- Thursday, April 4, 2024 | Hugo Kiamichi Technology Center | 107 S. 15th Street, Hugo, OK 74743

VIRTUAL DATES (ON ZOOM)

- Wednesday, October 11, 2023
- Saturday, January 20, 2024
- Tuesday, March 19, 2024

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL 580.924.8280

FREE WORKSHOPS FOR HSS MEMBERS. LUNCH PROVIDED FOR IN-PERSON PARTICIPANTS.

Choctaw Nation High School Student Services



Pittman turns 90

Geraldine "Jerry" Pittman turned 90 on January 1, 2024.

She is a 70-plus-year member of the Odd Fellows Lodges of Colorado.

Jerry was honored to receive a "blanket of respect" from Chief Gary Batton for being an elder of the Choctaw Nation.



Smith turns 95

Geneva Jane Smith of Fanshawe enjoyed a big birthday party on December 24 as she celebrated her special day.

Wishing her a Happy Birthday and watching her blow out the candles were many family members and friends, including children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and great-great-grandchildren. Jane is the daughter of Martin and Ethel Duncan. Jane's mother was an original enrollee of the Choctaw Nation.

SUMMER 2024 INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

Want to be a part of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma team this summer?

Go to [Careers.ChoctawNation.com](https://careers.choctawnation.com) to see the 2024 internship opportunities and apply.

Deadline to apply is March 4, 2024.

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

LAWN CARE SERVICES FOR TRIBAL MEMBERS

APPLICATION NOW OPEN

- Must be between 18 and 64 years old with an ambulatory disability or 65 and older at the time the application is submitted
- Must meet income guidelines for the household
- Must be a tribal member residing in the Choctaw Nation's reservation boundaries
- Must be a homeowner or rental tenant, must be responsible for own lawn care
- Other restrictions may apply

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT [CHOCTAWNATION.COM/CHAHTAACHVFFA](https://choctawnation.com/chahtaachvffa)

Scan to learn more about the program.

Choctaw Nation Housing Authority

STAR PROGRAM APPLICATIONS NOW OPEN

Choctaw Nation's STAR Program applications are now available. Parents and guardians can apply for rewards on behalf of their students in grades 2 - 12 in the spring and fall semesters.

ALL A'S - \$50 GIFT CARD
ALL A'S AND B'S - \$25 GIFT CARD
PERFECT ATTENDANCE - \$25 GIFT CARD

APPLICATION PERIODS

FALL JAN 1 - APR 1	SPRING JUN 1 - SEP 1
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APPLY WITH CHAHTA ACHVFFA AT [CHAHTAACHVFFA.CHOCTAWNATION.COM](https://choctawnation.com/chahtaachvffa)

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT [CHOCTAWNATION.COM/SERVICES/STAR](https://choctawnation.com/services/star) 800.522.6170

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

Louis Wayne McIntosh

Louis Wayne McIntosh, 63, passed away Jan. 12, 2024.

Louis was born Oct. 6, 1960, in Oklahoma City, Okla., to Alvin and Vera (Burnett) McIntosh.

He was preceded in death by his parents; brother Tracey; and his maternal and paternal grandparents.

Louis is survived by brothers James, and Kenneth and spouse Sandi; sister Alma and spouse Charlie; nephews Cory McIntosh and spouse Corrina, and Kenny McIntosh and spouse Jessica; nieces Bailey Crossland and Jesi Pickle; great-nieces and great-nephews Reagan, Chase, Rylee, Emma, Colton, Abby, and Gunner; his beloved cat Samantha; and numerous extended family and friends.

For the full obituary, please visit [Clifford D. Garrett Family Funeral Home](#).

**Eugene George Smith**

Eugene George Smith, 91, passed away Dec. 25, 2023.

George was born May 2, 1932, in Texola, Okla., to Dick and Dora Mae Smith.

He was preceded in death by his wife Martha; his parents; and 11 of his 14 siblings.

George is survived by sons Mark Smith (Candy), Steve Smith (Kathy), and Les Smith (Amy); grandchildren Crystal Burchfield (Aaron), Cheyenne Thaggard (Joe), Colt Smith (fiance Cassandra), Kathrina Ocampo (Johnathan), Benton Smith, Andrew Smith (Anna), Jillian Gibson (Andrew), and Sarah Smith; great-grandchildren Reagan, Rhett and Reed Burchfield, Presley and Paige Thaggard, Reese and Hayden Smith, Olivia and Camilla Ocampo; and sisters Floy Stewart (Wendell) and Delnia Crum (Bryan).

For the full obituary, please visit [Dignity Memorial](#).

**Christine Irma Ludlow**

Christine Irma Ludlow, 96, passed away Jan. 29, 2024.

Christine was born April 9, 1927, in Smithville, Okla., to Isham Perry Thomas and Myrtle Zula Johnson Taylor.

She was preceded in death by her parents; sons Darrel Colbert and Jimmy Barkcus; grandson Jared Jefferson; great-grandson Gavin Hicks; and sons-in-law Randel Bohanon and Gale Kirby.

Christine is survived by sons James Colbert and spouse Jane, Garry Colbert, and Nolan Colbert and spouse Lisa; daughters Ruthie Bohanon, Rita Mayo and spouse Bob, Marquita Kirby, Janis McKinney and spouse Karl, and Audrey Kessler and spouse Todd; 28 grandchildren; 51 great-grandchildren; four great-great-grandchildren; several nieces and nephews; and a host of other relatives and friends.

For the full obituary, please visit [Bowser Family Funeral Home](#).

**Ida Maude Buys**

Ida Maude Buys, 90, passed away Dec. 13, 2023.

Ida was born April 8, 1933, in Henderson, TX., to Sidney Clifford and Stella Beth Maxwell.

She was preceded in death by her parents; and husband Earl M. Buys.

Ida is survived by her sons Ronald and spouse Kathryn, and Joel and spouse Jean; daughter Sherry; grandchildren Lauren Sorenson (Matt), Collin Buys (Kathleen), Ryan Buys (Amanda), Jordan Buys (Katelyn), Melissa Buys, Jarrod Buys, Jillian Bates (Justin), Jenna Buys (fiance' Cole Weber), and Julianna Buys; great-grandchildren Caroline, Callie, Keller, Ada, Bess, Crawford, and Jay; sister Patsy Benson and spouse Jerry; sister-in-law Shirley Talley; and numerous nephews and nieces.

For the full obituary, please visit [Restland Funeral Home](#).

**Clifford Burner**

Clifford Burner, 64, passed away Dec. 26, 2023.

Cliff was born Feb. 19, 1959, in Tulsa, Okla., to Rex E. Burner and Patricia L. Burner (Mathews).

He was preceded in death by his father; and brother Steve.

Cliff is survived by his mother; sister Venecia; brother Frank; daughter Jordan; son Clinton; granddaughter Thea; and eight nieces and nephews.

For the full obituary, please visit [Floral Haven](#).

**Beverly Elliott**

Beverly "Jane" Elliott, 84, passed away Jan. 14, 2024.

Jane was born April 2, 1939, in Electra, TX, to David and Lassie Bonifield.

She was preceded in death by husband William "Bill" Elliott; and her parents.

Survivors include son Greg Bonifield (Karen); daughter Sabrina Krieg (Timothy); grandchildren Lauren Lindley (William), Kathryn Bonifield (Lance Mahon), Kacy Hoopes (Justin), Maddie Bagwell (AJ), Blair Scott (TJ); and great-grandchildren Walter, Theodore and James Lindley, Ro Bonifield-Mahon, Willow, Harlow and Bowen Krieg-Hoopes, and Fields Bagwell.

For the full obituary, please visit [Boxwell Brothers Funeral Directors](#).

**Donald Edward Wood**

Donald Edward "Eddie" Wood, 80, passed away Dec. 12, 2023.

Eddie was born Aug. 7, 1943, to Donald and Lawan (Beal) Wood.

He was preceded in death by his parents.

Eddie is survived by his wife Dawn; daughters Laura Wood Raymond and spouse Robin Stillwagen, and Victoria Wood Cleveland and spouse Charles; grandchildren Gates Raymond and Avery Cleveland; brother Philip Wood; sister Jeani Schobert; nephew Chris Wood; nieces Sherry Schons, Georgia Scherlag, and Sandra Caldwell; and a multitude of great nephews and nieces.

For the full obituary, please visit [acremation](#).

**Bill D. Ott**

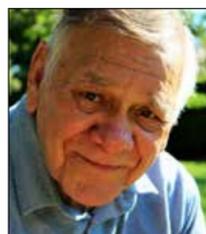
Bill D. Ott, 94, passed away Jan. 26, 2024.

Bill was born in 1929, in Comanche, Oklahoma.

He was preceded in death by his wife Joann Helen Nielsen.

Bill is survived by his children Capt. David Ott, Judith Lee, and Stuart Ott; and seven grandchildren.

For the full obituary, please visit [Fairfax Funeral Home](#).

**Corene Rouell**

Corene (Wood) Rouell, 88, passed away Jan. 19, 2024.

Corene was born July 19, 1935, in Keota, Okla., to Ona and Zena (Boatwright) Wood.

She was preceded in death by her parents; husband Webb Rouell; son Audrey Dan Rouell; brothers Charles Wood, John Wood, Dan Wood, Sam Wood, Glen Wood, and TJ Wood; and sisters: Hazel Downey and Jerrye Crawford.

She is survived by sons Gene Rouell and spouse Donna, and Allan Rouell and spouse Susan; daughters Sandy LeCompte and spouse Randy, and Debbie Hood and spouse Bruce; nine grandchildren; 16 great-grandchildren; four great-great grandchildren; sister Willene Tahkofper; brother Hermon Wood; and numerous nieces and nephews.

For the full obituary, please visit [Tribute Archive](#).

**Randall Scott Bohanon**

Randall Scott Bohanon, 38, passed away Jan. 29, 2024.

Randall was born March 7, 1985, in Ada, Okla., to Ricky Ray and Rolena Wallace Bohanon.

He was preceded in death by his parents; paternal grandparents Isaac and Lula Bohanon; maternal grandparents Josh and Minnie Wallace; cousin Cebrane Wallace; five uncles; and two aunts.

Randall is survived by his brother Jordan Bohanon; aunts Clara Bohanon, and Elaine Richter and spouse Chris; cousins Kathie Rolan and spouse Terry Jr., Vincent Wallace and spouse Nethia, Glenn Bohanon and spouse Krystal, Mark Bohanon, Wendy Frazier, Felicia Guinn and spouse Max, and Cherie Edmonds and spouse Trey; nieces and nephews Krichelle Mackenzey, Chase, Allee, Eli, Maleah, Kaylee and Jocelyn; and a host of other relatives and friends.

For the full obituary, please visit [Criswell Funeral Home](#).

**Eric Dominique Williston**

Eric Dominique Williston, 36, passed away Jan. 25, 2024.

Eric was born Jan. 14, 1988, in Talihina, Okla., to Donald "Manny" Ray Williston and Rosie Maria Brewer Williston.

He was preceded in death by his father; paternal grandparents Tom and Nancy Williston; and maternal grandparents Tommie and Martha Brewer.

Eric is survived by his parents; brothers DeWayne Shomo, Jimmy Shomo, and Sherrill Shomo Jr.; sisters and Valerie Holt and spouse Mike, and Stephanie Rodgers and spouse Robert Applegate; several nieces and nephews; and a host of other relative and friends.

For the full obituary, please visit [Bowser Family Funeral Home](#).

**Truman Jefferson**

Truman Jefferson, 77, passed away Nov. 24, 2023.

Truman was born July 17, 1946, in Bethel, Okla., to Preston and Annie Jefferson.

He was preceded in death by his parents; daughter Vicky Beard; brothers Huey Jefferson, Easis Jefferson, and Elliston Jefferson; and three sisters Serena Ward, Lucy Myers and Misann Bond.

Truman is survived by his wife Bertha Jefferson; son Robert Jefferson; daughters Priscilla Wallace and spouse Bob, April Burris and spouse Darrell, and Angela James and spouse Levi; brother Randell Jefferson and spouse Rebecca; grandsons raised as his own Brock Jefferson and spouse Sharonica, and Victor Jefferson; special cousin LilBit Dixon; 15 grandchildren; 29 great-grandchildren; his grand-dog Sadie Mae; several nieces and nephews; and a host of other relatives and friends.

For the full obituary, please visit [Bowser Family Funeral Home](#).

**Patsy Ruth Golden**

Patsy Ruth "Patti" Golden, 88, passed away Dec. 24, 2023.

Patti was born June 9, 1935, in Roosevelt, Okla., to William Nelson "Willie" Dunegan and Cue Belle (Freeman.)

She was preceded in death by her husband Buddy; her parents; and in-laws Mack and Agnes Golden.

Patti is survived by her sons Chad and spouse Linda, and Chet and spouse Jaymie; grandchildren Louie Golden, Cade Golden, Calen Golden, and Cierra Gilbert; great-grandchildren Charlie Golden, Carlee Golden, Ava Golden, Wyatt McConnell, Zialas Kooper, Cade Eugene Golden, Verity Golden, Kynzley Golden, Coy Gilbert, and Ava Gilbert; sister Wilma Strange; and many wonderful friends.

For the full obituary, please visit [Kincannon Funeral Home](#).

**Bill Watkins**

Billy "Bill" Ray Watkins, 93, passed away Feb. 1, 2024.

Bill was born Sept. 26, 1930, in Wewoka, Okla., to Wesley Watkins and Mamie (Williams) Watkins.

He was preceded in death by his parents; brother Clark Watkins; infant daughter Susan Renee; and granddaughter Maggie Lynn DuBios.

Bill is survived by his wife Lynda Watkins; children Patricia Allison and spouse George, Clark Watkins and spouse Diane, and Michele Martin and spouse Greg; stepchildren James N. Barnes and spouse Delise, Tammie Dooley and spouse Tom, and Lisa Hague and spouse Bob; grandchildren Kelsey Rhine and spouse Josh, Allie Hughes and spouse Michael, Will Allison and spouse Emily, Chase Watkins and spouse Cappie, Tess Chambers and spouse Bric, and Jake Martin; step-grandchildren John Johnson, Lane Pierce, Tyler Barnes, Zach Barnes and spouse Sarah, Logan Barnes, Morgan Barnes, Wyatt Barnes, and Charlie Burdett and Allie Lane; many beautiful great-grandchildren; and a host of other family, friends, and loved ones.

For the full obituary, please visit [Miller and Miller Funeral Home - Hugo](#)

**Larry Douglas James**

Larry Douglas James, 54, passed away Dec. 30, 2023.

Larry was born March 1, 1969, in Broken Bow, Okla., to Manuel and Wilma Earlene Kennedy James.

He was preceded in death by his parents; and son Kyle Chief-ton.

Larry is survived by daughter Jessica James; brothers Dennis James and Robert Lawson; sister Lisa Tollison; special friend Rebecca Tomlin; several nieces and nephews; and a host of other family and friends.

For the full obituary, please visit [Bowser Family Funeral Home](#).

**Virginia Mae Hammons**

Virginia Mae (McKee) Hammons, 94, passed away Dec. 26, 2023.

Virginia was born April 28, 1929, in Mud Sand, Okla., to Willie Dan McKee and Minnie Lee (Pickering) McKee.

She was preceded in death by her parents; daughter Darlene Durant; grandchild Dawne Neese; and siblings Genoma Morrow, Sue Satterfield, and Troy McKee.

Virginia is survived by her children Russell Gregg, Danny Gregg and spouse Debbie, Gary Gregg and spouse Starr, Sherry Nickel and spouse Ed, Carla Sigler, and Randy Hammons and spouse Christi; brother Stacy McKee; 16 grandchildren; 23 great-grandchildren; and 13 great-great-grandchildren.

For the full obituary, please visit [Serenity Funeral Service](#).

**Obituary Policy**

Obituary submissions are for Choctaw Nation tribal members only and are free of charge.

The Biskinik will only accept obituary notices from funeral homes.

Family members/individuals may submit funeral notices as long as the notice is from the funeral home or printed in their local newspaper through a funeral home service.

Full-length handwritten notices will not be accepted. The Biskinik strives to serve all Choctaws. Therefore, any handwritten notices received will be searched online for official funeral home notices. If none are found, efforts will be made to contact the family and make arrangements for an official notice.

Due to space limitations, there is a 150 word limit for obituaries. The online issue of the Biskinik will contain links to the full obituaries.

Send official obituary notices to:

Biskinik
PO Box 1210
Durant OK 74702
or email: biskinik@choctawnation.com

This one simple colorectal cancer test could save your life

By Chris Jennings

According to the American Cancer Society, 2024 will be the first year the US expects more than two million new cases of cancer or almost 5,500 cancer diagnoses a day. The society reports that overall cancer death rates are lower, but the common cancer incidences are increasing, including 6 of the top 10 cancers.

American Indians and Alaskan Natives (AIAN) have the highest overall incidence and mortality rate in men and women combined. Alaskan Native people have the highest colorectal cancer incidence and mortality in the world.

The death rate from cancer has decreased over the last 30 years partially because of things like a decrease in smoking, early detection and advances in treatment, sparing some four million lives in the United States.

One alarming statistic is the rise of colorectal cancer in people younger than 55. In the late 1990s, colorectal cancer was the fourth leading cause of cancer death in both men and women in this age group, and now, it is the first cause of cancer death in men younger than 50 and the second cause in women that age.

Natassia Zink, a cancer nurse with the Choctaw Nation, said the age that the Nation begins screening for cancer has decreased from 50-75 years old to 45-75 years old.

"They're showing how significantly cancer impacts that age group. So, before we were offering screening if you could show you were high risk or you have family members who had colon cancer. Then, they would start the screening earlier, but only if you were at high risk. Now they're starting it earlier, no matter your risk," said Zink.

A big factor in stopping cancer deaths is this early screening.

Almost one out of three people diagnosed with colorectal cancer before age 50 have a family history or genetic predisposition, and if colorectal cancer is found early, it is treatable.

The more widely known screening for colorectal cancer is a colonoscopy. Those require using a preparation solution or pills the night before and a driver the day of the screening because you will be under sedation during the procedure.

There's more than one way to screen for colorectal cancer, though. The Choctaw Nation offers a fecal occult blood test kit (FOBT) available from your doctor or pharmacy.

"We collect a stool sample, and then they test it for blood because blood is a good indication of polyps or something else going on more than just your normal bowel habits," said Zink.

Zink says there is an upside to getting the colonoscopy, though.

"If you're negative, that could cover you for ten years. The stool sample collection FOBT kits are a yearly test. So, you can collect your stool at home once a year every year," she said. "Which some people don't want to do, or you can do the prep and colonoscopy, and if there are no polyps, you're good for ten years."

Thanks to the Moonshot Grant, the Nation can offer these FOBT kits as a standing order.

"With this grant, we did get a standing order for it, so you don't even have to see your provider. You could call your provider's nurse or the pharmacy and just say, hey, I want to do this," said Michelle Gibson, the Director of Preventative Health at the Choctaw Nation.

According to Gibson, if you're having pain or bowel issues, it might be a good idea to request an FOBT kit.

In September 2020, in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, Yolanda Calvillo had some pain and

blood in her stool, so her doctor sent her for a colonoscopy. When the results came back, her life was changed at 31 years old.

"I knew what was coming; it was right in the middle of the pandemic, and the clinic wouldn't allow anyone else in with you unless it was a younger child," said Calvillo. "So that day, when I went back to get my results, they asked me if I was by myself, and I told them no, my husband was in the car outside, and they said go ahead and bring him in. I pretty much knew right then."

Calvillo said she went blank and couldn't process anything they said after she heard the words, "So, it does look like you have cancer."

She does remember what was going through her head at the time. She wondered if she was going to die and didn't know why or how she got cancer.

According to Calvillo, she was a healthy person and can't even remember the last time she got a cold.

For anybody who is diagnosed with cancer, it can be a struggle of a lifetime.

Calvillo says she relied heavily on her family to get through it.

"That's the only way I got through it; my family, my boys, my husband, they're the only ones that kept me sane. If it weren't for them, I would have given up because it was hard; It still is hard," said Calvillo. "It's so frustrating every time I go to the doctor, just not knowing what they're going to say."

One person whom Calvillo said was her rock and who she heavily leaned on was her mother.

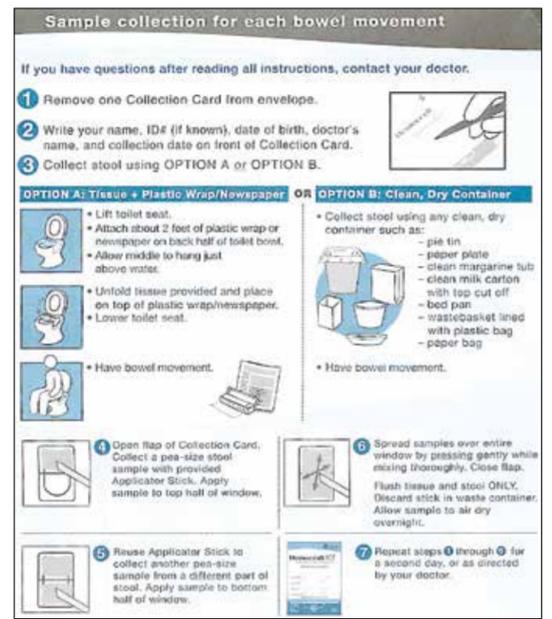
Unfortunately, right after Calvillo's cancer diagnosis, her mother was diagnosed with COVID-19 and spent a month in the hospital until her death.



Photo Submitted

Yolanda Calvillo says she got through her colorectal cancer treatment and the death of her mother while undergoing those treatments by relying heavily on her family.

"Me, my sister and my brother all rode in a car together with my husband to the hospital. We had to make the decision at that point to unplug her, but none of us could go in there. So we literally just had to tell her goodbye over the phone," Calvillo said. "That just made me more mad at my cancer. I



You can use the simple at home FOBT test kit to collect stool samples in the privacy of your own home. The test kit is then taken or sent to your provider where they will test the stool for abnormalities.

couldn't even hold my mom's hand and tell her bye. So that was really hard."

In Calvillo's case, the cancer was treatable, and she's been cancer-free for two years now.

Zink says if cancer is found early, it typically is treatable.

"If you find it in an early stage, they can likely treat it, and that's it," Zink said.

Sometimes, it's difficult to get people who may not be exhibiting any symptoms to get screening.

"You're not having symptoms; you're not having stomach pain; your labs aren't looking crazy, so there's really no reason to think you have colon cancer unless you get the testing," said Zink.

However, screening is the key to surviving. A lot of times, you don't have any symptoms until you're at stage four cancer. At that point, it's too late.

"If you let it get so far advanced that the mass gets so big that it goes through your colon wall into your lymph nodes, it can go straight to your liver. You don't want it to get that far," said Gibson.

During a colonoscopy, if a polyp is found, it's removed right away.

"They get rid of them, the polyp is gone, and then that polyp cannot become cancer," Zink said.

Colorectal cancer can mostly be treated if it's found early; the key to that is screening. Getting people to get the screening is an ongoing struggle for Gibson and Zink.

The ease of using the FOBT kit can alleviate some of that.

"I don't think there's enough knowledge out there that the FOBT at-home test kit is an option within Choctaw Nation. I think many people think their only option is a colonoscopy," Zink said. "You know, it's not the end-all-be-all. If you get a positive, you're still going to have to follow through to the end of it, but it is better than choosing to do nothing."

It's always a good thing to stay proactive when it comes to your health care. Ask your doctor about colorectal cancer screenings. These tests could save your life.

For more information on the Choctaw Nation Health Services Authority and its services, visit <https://www.choctawnation.com/about/health/>.

HEAD START NOW ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS

Providing educational, health and family services for eligible children and families, including children with special needs.

Available to all children who will be 3 or 4 years old by September 1, 2024.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL, **580.924.8280**

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

SAY THANK YOU TO YOUR NURSE!

Share your story of their compassionate and skillful nursing care. Scan the QR code from your smartphone camera to access the online nomination form.

FOR MORE INFORMATION WWW.CHOCTAWNATION.COM/THE-DAISY-AWARD/

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

WIC OFFICE LOCATIONS		
LOCATION	DAYS	HOURS
Antlers 580-916-5609	Tuesday	8:30 am – 4:00 pm
Atoka 580-889-5825	Daily Monday – Friday	8:00 am – 4:30 pm
Battiest 580-241-5458	1st Tuesday of every month	8:30 am – 4:00 pm
Broken Bow 580-584-2746	Daily Monday – Friday (Except the 1st Tuesday & 2nd Thursday of the Month)	8:00 am – 4:30 pm
Durant 580-916-2100 x83517	Daily Monday – Friday	8:00 am – 4:30 pm
Heavener 918-974-1820	Monday, Tuesday, Thursday & Friday	8:00 am – 4:30 pm
Hugo 580-326-9707	Monday, Wednesday, Thursday & Friday	8:00 am – 4:00 pm
Idabel 580-286-2510	Daily Monday – Friday	8:00 am – 4:30 pm
McAlester 918-423-6335	Daily Monday – Friday	8:00 am – 4:30 pm
Poteau 918-649-1106	Daily Monday – Friday	8:00 am – 4:30 pm
Smithville 580-244-3289	1st Thursday of every month	8:30 am – 4:00 pm
Spiro 918-962-5134	Wednesday, Thursday & Friday	8:00 am – 4:30 pm
Stigler 918-967-4211	Monday & Tuesday	8:30 am – 4:00 pm
Talihina 918-567-7000 x6792	Daily Monday - Friday	8:00 am – 4:30 pm
Wilburton 580-642-7588	Wednesday	8:30 am – 4:00 pm
Mobile Van 580-380-8193	1st Tuesday – Boswell 3rd Tuesday – Coalgate 4th Tuesday - Clayton	9:00 am – 3:00 pm

Choctaw Nation Health Services

CHOCTAW NATION FOOD DISTRIBUTION	
MARKET HOURS	
Open 8:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday	
Thursday: 9:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.	
<i>Markets will be closed the last two days of each month for inventory.</i>	
March 2024	
All markets open weekdays, March 1-26	
Closed: March 29	
Nutrition Ed & Food Programs subject to cancellation	
Participants can request a calendar at their location.	
ANTLERS 400 S.W. "O" ST., 580-298-6443	<i>Food demo March 5</i>
BROKEN BOW 109 Chahta Rd., 580-584-2842	<i>Food demo March 12</i>
DURANT 2352 Big Lots Pkwy., 580-924-7773	<i>Food demo March 21</i>
MCALESTER 3244 Afulotta Hina, 918-420-5716	<i>Food demo March 7</i>
POTEAU 106 B St., 918-649-0431	<i>Food demo March 14</i>
<i>This institution is an equal opportunity provider.</i>	

Choctaw Nation Vocational Rehabilitation		
March 1	Atoka	8:30 a.m. - 12 p.m.
March 1	Coalgate	12:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
March 5	Wright City	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
March 6	Antlers	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
March 8	Crowder	By Appointment
March 12	Broken Bow	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
March 13	Talihina	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
March 15	Atoka	8:30 a.m. - 12 p.m.
March 15	Coalgate	12:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.
March 19	Idabel	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
March 20	McAlester	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
March 20	Stigler	By Appointment
March 21	Poteau	11:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.
March 26	Wilburton	10:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Durant: Monday, Wednesday and Friday		
Call 580-326-8304 for an Appointment		

The Choctaw Bible now available in digital format

By Christian Toews

Two of the Choctaw Nation's core tenets are Faith and Culture. These two guiding principles come together in the Choctaw Bible.

Although the physical Bible has been widely used for generations, it has been impossible to find in digital format. This changed when YouVersion recently published the Choctaw Bible on their Bible App and bible.com.

Bradley Belyeu works for Life Church, the parent company of YouVersion Bible App and Bible.com.

Belyeu became passionate about this project after researching his family heritage and discovering that his great-grandmother was Choctaw, according to her birth certificate.

Having traced his family heritage on his father's side to the Wampanoag tribe, the discovery of his Choctaw heritage only spurred his desire to learn about his Native American roots.

According to Belyeu his family loves camping and decided to camp near Tvshka Homma. While in the area, they visited the museum at the Choctaw Nation capitol grounds. They came across a bible in the museum, which sparked his interest in helping make the Choctaw Bible more widely available.

His 11 years at Life Church's YouVersion has given Belyeu a vast network of connections in his work to help more people have access to the Bible.

"I'm really passionate about getting God's word into people's heart language," he said.

He began researching the oldest versions of the Choctaw bible and contacted the American Bible Society. He was surprised to find the earliest known translations of the Choctaw Bible in the British and Foreign Bible Society's (BFBS) library.

A representative from the BFBS happily helped Belyeu research these early texts. This had been a project that the BFBS already planned, so Belyeu's passion helped to speed along the process.

According to YouVersion's research, The Choctaw Bible translation began in about 1830. Books of the Bible (Holisso Holitopa) were translated into Choctaw by Cyrus Byington (1793-1868) and Alfred Wright (1788-1853), both of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM). These translators worked with native speakers, Captain Joseph Dukes (1811-1861), who had acted as an interpreter to Cyrus Kingsbury



Photos by Christian Toews

The Choctaw Holisso Holitpa (Bible) can be purchased in the Hvshi Gift Store at the Choctaw Cultural Center in Calera, Oklahoma.

(1786-1870), the pioneer-missionary to the Choctaws and W. H. McKinney (c. 1850-1900).

The Choctaw 1848 New Testament, the 1867 Pentateuch, the 1842 edition of Joshua, Judges, Ruth, and the 1886 Psalms were brought together for the first time as Chahta Holisso Holitopa 1886.

As the BFBS team began to digitize these early texts, they wanted to make sure they were completely accurate. This is where Dora Wickson, a language specialist at the Choctaw Nation, helped.

According to Belyeu, Wickson was very helpful in clarifying some language questions that the BFBS team had while digitizing.

Wickson said that all the translations were accurate overall, and they asked her about some small word placements.

Growing up, Wickson said that her grandfather and her father read the

Choctaw Bible to her.

According to Wickson, it's essential to preserve the Choctaw Bible because phrases and words used in the Bible are not commonly used, which maintains and expands current Choctaw speakers' vocabulary. Wickson is proud and happy to see the Choctaw Bible more widely available digitally.

Belyeu said YouVersion's Bible App was the first app in the world to have The Bible in 100 languages in a single app. He noted that the Choctaw Bible makes the 1,300th language that has been added.

"We celebrate every new language that is added," he said. "We are very passionate about connecting God's word to people's hearts."

You can download the YouVersion Bible App on Apple and Android devices.

You can also read the Choctaw Bible using the app or by visiting www.bible.com.



The Choctaw Holisso Holitpa (Bible) is now available on the YouVersion Bible App.

CNO partners to bring Preston Harbor to Lake Texoma

By Chris Jennings

The Choctaw Nation has been announced as a general partner in Preston Harbor, a master-planned community on Lake Texoma in Denison, Texas, just 30 minutes from the Choctaw Nation headquarters.

In January, Craig International announced that their partnership, Waterfall Development LP, has officially closed on the 3,114 acres the community will be built on. The project is estimated to have a \$6 billion ad velorum, or property tax.

When completed, Preston Harbor is expected to have 7,500 homes, including luxury single-family, active adult, and multi-family homes, a resort hotel, retail, restaurants, and an upscale marina.

General partners for Preston Harbor also include David H. Craig, Dave Johnson and N9 Capital Partners. Miles Prestemon, Chief Operating Officer and President of the Development Division of Craig International, will be the Project Manager of Preston Harbor.

"The Choctaw Nation is thrilled to be part of this investment into the North Texas economy and to partner with world-class developers on this incredible project that will have a powerful impact on Southeastern Oklahoma, North Texas, the City of Denison, and Lake Texoma for years to come," said Chief Gary Batton.

David H. Craig, Founder, Chairman, and CEO of Craig International, said, "Preston Harbor will transform Denison, opening the entire west side of the city to the 90,000-acre Lake Texoma. Not only do we have 9.5 miles of shore frontage on Lake Texoma, but there are also 27 internal lakes, with four lakes greater than 25 acres, as well as trees and topography, which will make Preston Harbor a stunning premier destination. We have been working diligently with the city to move this project forward and have a great partnership with Mayor Janet Gott, the City Council, and the City of Denison."

The land was purchased from Preston Harbor LP and Preston Harbor Homeplace LP.

The size of the North Texas project makes it one of the largest land purchases in Grayson County, according to Craig.

The City of Denison couldn't have been a part of this project without a long-term vision dating back 20 years or more.

"This development will reshape our entire region and provide a level of economic impact that very few cities will ever experience. Denison's economic strength and competitiveness will be enhanced for decades to come. Preston Harbor will establish Denison as the leader in the Texoma region, providing quality housing options, more lake access, recreation, new retail, and job opportunities. It perfectly aligns with our vision of creating quality of life for those who choose Denison as their home," said Denison Mayor Janet Gott.

Craig International also announced a \$100 million Margaritaville Resort for Preston Harbor. Hospitality partner Horizon Capital Partners, founded by Dave Johnson, former CEO of Plano-based Aimbridge Hospitality and a general partner in the project, will develop the location.

"The Margaritaville brand is the best in the industry, and there is nothing like this in the Texoma area," said Johnson. "We wanted a hotel partner with a reputation for delivering fun and laid-back luxury, which reflects the overall feel of Preston Harbor. They have been looking to get into North Texas for years, and it is quite the coup that we got to partner with them."

Jim Wiseman, President of Development at Margaritaville, said, "We're excited about our continued growth throughout the state of Texas and look forward to working with Craig International and the city of Denison to create a world-class destination with a Margaritaville vibe on Lake Texoma."

It's not just casinos that the Nation uses to ensure its economic growth.

The Choctaw Nation has worked to diversify its financial portfolio with Chili's restaurants, the Choctaw Country Markets and Choctaw Travel Plazas, Choctaw Print and Choctaw Defense Manufacturing.

"We are actively engaged in promoting strategic diversification by endorsing a mix of commercial, residential and recreational developments. Our dedication to innovation and economic progress aligns with the vision of Preston Harbor as a thriving and diverse hub," said Batton.

The Nation's approach to economic diversification involves



Photo Provided

Choctaw Nation announced as partner in new master-planned community on Lake Texoma in Denison, Texas.

fostering a range of activities to sustain long-term growth and prosperity.

By making this strategic investment in Preston Harbor, the Nation continues to diversify its economic portfolio, helping to expand revenue streams and establish a more stable foundation for the Choctaw Nation's economic advancement.

Preston Harbor is currently finalizing land planning and engineering. Groundbreaking is slated for late 2024.

EASTER EGGSTRAVAGANZA

MARCH 23, 2024 | 10:30 AM – 4:00 PM

Hop on over for an Easter celebration and EGGstra special fun. Don't forget to bring your Easter baskets! Egg Hunt starts at 11:00 am.

Egg Hunt, Easter Photos, and Children's Activities

CAFETERIA CLOSE-DOWN

The Ironroad Café will be closing temporarily to undergo renovations to provide a bigger cafeteria with faster flow and expanded seating for our customers.

To keep up with the progress and any special offers, visit the link in the QR code.

Also included online are other restaurant options in the area.

Choctaw Nation Health Services

SCHOOL OF CHOCTAW LANGUAGE END OF THE YEAR CELEBRATION

FOOD, FUN AND FELLOWSHIP!
For current high school Chahta language students and teachers.

TRY YOUR CHANCE AT WINNING SKVLI DURING THE SCHOOL OF CHOCTAW LANGUAGE!

First place: \$500 gift card. Second place: \$250 gift card. Third place: \$100 gift card.

WHEN AND WHERE
• March 26 | 10 AM - 1 PM
• Tvshka Homma Capitol Grounds

TO REGISTER, EMAIL
LANGUAGEDOCS@CHOCTAWNATION.COM

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

ENVISION CENTER VOLUNTEER INCOME TAX ASSISTANCE

Envision Center offers free basic tax preparation for tribal members with a combined household income of \$64,000 and below.

We are able to prepare the following tax forms:
W-2, W-2G, SSA-1099, 1099-R, 1099-G, 1099-C, Child Tax Credit, Earned Income Credit

We cannot prepare the following tax forms:
Itemized deductions, Schedule C, Schedule D, Self Employment

ENVIIONCENTER@CHOCTAWNATION.COM
580.380.9370

Scan here to schedule an appointment

Choctaw Nation Housing Authority

Southeastern Oklahoma Indian Credit Association & Choctaw Revolving Loan Fund

The Southeastern Oklahoma Indian Credit Association offers small business, home, home improvement and agriculture loans. The Choctaw Revolving Loan Program offers micro-loans, available for emergency home improvements and small businesses.

For more information, please contact Susan Edwards at (580) 924-8280 ext. 2161, ext. 2158 or toll-free (800) 522-6170.

Southeastern Oklahoma Indian Credit Association Loan
To Be Eligible to Apply:

- Must live within the 10.5 counties of the Choctaw Nation
- Must possess a CDIB card from a federally recognized tribe

Choctaw Revolving Loan Fund
To Be Eligible to Apply:

- Must live within the 10.5 counties of the Choctaw Nation
- Must possess a CDIB card from the Choctaw Nation

If you're interested in applying for a loan, a representative will be at the:
Crowder Community Center
March 22, 2024
9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Choctaw Nation publishes 2023 Year in Review

By Kellie Matherly

The Choctaw Nation published the 2023 Year in Review in February. This annual report shows the Tribe's operations throughout the fiscal year, which runs from October 1 to September 30. It also highlights tribal member stories, programs, services, sovereignty and cultural efforts and financial information.

This year's first Chahta Spirit in Action story centered on "Cowboy" Bill Parker, who was part of the first wave at Normandy Beach on D-Day during WWII. At age 96, Parker was awarded the French Legion of Honor, France's highest award, for his bravery and contributions to the liberation of France from Nazi occupation.

The Chahta Spirit in Action stories also highlighted Choctaw artist Bobby Von Martin and Kelbie Kennedy, the first ever National Tribal Affairs Advocate for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Bobby Von Martin uses art to honor his elders and encourage children who grow up around drugs, alcohol and violence to rise above their situation and seek out success. Kelbie Kennedy serves Native American tribes across the U.S., ensuring they have a voice in Washington, D.C. and advising FEMA administrators on tribal affairs and treaty and trust obligations.

In FY23, the Choctaw Nation Housing Authority served over 8,000 households through its various programs, including over 2,500 home repairs and over 550 storm shelters installed. The Housing Authority also built eight new Independent Elder homes, 55 Affordable Rental units and 90 Lease to Purchase (LEAP) homes. These new homes bring the Nation closer to its goal of having 600 housing units by the end of the 2024 fiscal year.

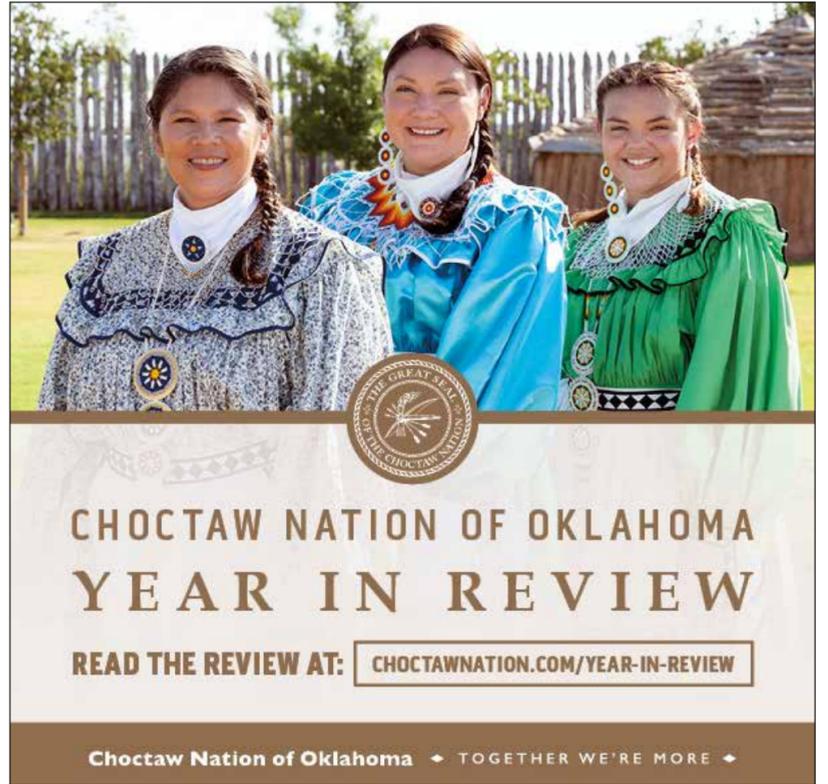
One of the most important pillars of a successful life is education. From the youngest tribal members to our elders and their communities, the Choctaw Nation has programs in place to encourage a love for learning throughout our lives. Education is not cheap, however, and the Nation is proud to offer financial assistance to tribal members looking to further their education. In FY23, the Chahta Foundation awarded 167 students with a combined \$458,300 in scholarships. In addition, the Career Development program disbursed over \$8 million in funds to 7,643 students. The Higher Education Scholarship Program approved over 12,000 applications and awarded over \$12.5 million.

The Choctaw Nation Health Services Authority (CNHSA) offers healthcare and prescriptions to the American Indian/Alaska Native population through its hospital in Tahihina, Okla., and eight outlying clinics throughout the reservation. CNHSA's mission is to prioritize communication, teamwork and preservation of the dignity, cultural values and health of each patient. With the cost of medication at record highs, the pharmaceutical program is in constant demand. Over 1.6 million prescriptions were filled in FY23 at no cost to patients. The health clinics and hospital also had over one million health encounters with patients throughout the year, including behavioral health encounters, which account for just over 30,000 of those encounters.

The Choctaw language is the heart of the Choctaw people's identity, and it is one of the most important ways the Tribe exercises sovereignty. Beginning with one satellite class at the University of Oklahoma in 1998, the Chahta Anumpa Aikhhvna (Choctaw School of Language School), has grown to employ several teachers and translators who served over 2,800 students per week in FY23 through the website and a wide range of classes. The Language Apprenticeship Program is also an important step in revitalizing the Choctaw language. Placed in an immersive environment where they only communicate in Chahta, these apprentices graduate as fluent speakers at the end of the program.

In July, the Choctaw Cultural Center will celebrate its third anniversary. The Center's ongoing efforts to promote and preserve the Choctaw culture have paid off in over 250 memberships, more than 50 volunteers, and over 50,000 visitors since it opened. In FY23, the Center hosted several events, including the Annual Art Show, Movies on the Patio, and a red carpet event celebrating the premiere of Marvel Studios' Echo.

Another important sovereignty win for the Choctaw Nation was the development and rollout of the new Choctaw Pledge. Written by tribal members, the pledge was first performed at the Veterans Day Ceremony at Tvshka Homma on November 11. In English, the pledge reads: I salute the flag of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, whose members, characterized by tenacity, resilience, and belief in God, will forever honor its representation of faith, family and culture.



On June 2, 2023, Choctaw Nation Law Enforcement renamed the police force "Light-horse" to honor the original Choctaw Lighthorsemen who served the Tribe generations ago. At the time of the 2023 Year in Review's publication, there were 733 total public safety positions and 461 within the Choctaw Nation's boundaries. There were also 76 cross deputization agreements in place with law enforcement agencies across the reservation.

Native American tribes across the country rejoiced this summer when the U.S. Supreme Court issued a decision upholding the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA). This law protects Native American children from being taken from their tribal communities in the event they must be removed from their homes. The Choctaw Nation works diligently to promote foster care and adoption programs within the reservation boundaries to ensure the cultural link is not severed when a child needs placement. At the time of publication, there were over 400 Choctaw children in State custody in Oklahoma. There are nearly 300 located in other states. Choctaw Foster Care has multiple options for those who would like to open their homes to Choctaw children in need.

Finally, the revenue the Nation takes in funds over 150 programs and services for tribal members, and numerous community and infrastructure projects. It also helps the Tribe foster relationships with local communities. Based on the 2022 Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Audit, revenue consisted of:

- 44% Business Operating Income (Net)
- 38% Federal and State Grants
- 13% Medicare and Third-Party Insurance
- 3% General Governmental Revenue
- 2% Housing Income

Overall, the Choctaw Nation had a productive fiscal year, placing tribal member safety and wellbeing at the forefront of its efforts in addition to protecting culture and sovereignty. To read the entire Year in Review, visit <https://www.choctawnation.com/news/posts/2023-choctaw-nation-annual-report/>.

Dallas Inter-tribal Center/Urban Inter-Tribal Center to reopen as Texas Native Health

By Kellie Matherly

Texas Native Health formerly known as the Dallas Inter-Tribal Center and the Urban Inter-Tribal Center of Texas, will celebrate its grand reopening ceremony on March 22, 2024, at its newly renovated facility in Dallas, Texas. The facility's upgrades are a testament to the organization's commitment to the Native American community and its desire to offer the highest level of care to tribal members in the area.

In the wake of the Indian Relocation Act of 1956, large numbers of Native Americans left their tribal reservations for urban areas. While the program was voluntary, the U.S. government strongly encouraged them to seed out employment, education and social services in large cities.

Unfortunately, as with many other U.S. federal policies regarding Native Americans, the Indian Relocation Act was a wolf in sheep's clothing. In essence, the Act served to reduce the federal government's responsibility for providing services on reservations, promote assimilation and diminish tribal sovereignty. The government failed to follow through on its promises of prosperity and opportunity for those who relocated, and as a result, many Native Americans encountered discrimination, homelessness, unemployment and poverty in their new homes.

What is now Texas Native Health (TNH) was created to help tribal members in the DFW Metroplex who did not have access to healthcare. According to TNH's website, the Center was originally staffed by volunteer physicians and operated out of the Dallas Indian United Methodist Church building. TNH officially opened its doors in 1971.

The official mission of TNH is "Strengthening and encouraging the health and well-being of Native Americans."

Toward fulfilling this mission, TNH has continued to grow and expand its services over the past 53 years. Today, the Center operates out of a 58,813 square foot facility in the Dallas Medical District and houses a wide range of resources, such as indoor and outdoor event spaces, pharmacy, behavioral health counseling, career services, primary care, diabetes management, dental care and much more at no cost to the patient.

Amber White, the Center's registered dietitian, is proud

of how far TNH has come since she joined the staff 10 years ago.

"I want people to know we are here and what services we provide. We provide top-notch services comparable to the rest of the healthcare industry," said White.

White works directly with patients daily to manage diabetes and promote wellness through education and simple changes to their lifestyles. A new state-of-the-art kitchen and demo area also allows her to teach tribal members how to cook nutritious meals that promote healthy blood sugar levels at home. These cooking classes take place on the third Wednesday of each month, and all materials are provided by TNH. It's a great way to meet and fellowship with people from other tribes over a delicious meal.

To learn more about diabetes management at TNH and eligibility requirements, including the shoe program, foot health, retinal eye screening and virtual ADCES accredited diabetes classes, visit their website at <https://texasnativehealth.org/services/diabetes-management/>.

Dental care is another popular program at TNH, and the latest expansion comes with more dental chairs for services. The Dental Clinic operates 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. While the center is still filling open positions for dental staff, the Clinic is currently taking patients for a variety of procedures, including routine examinations, radiographs, sealants, fluoride applications, fillings, simple extractions, cleanings, pediatric dental care and more. The Clinic does not provide sedation, dentures, orthodontics, cosmetic dentistry or root canals.

In addition to a broad range of medical services, TNH also staffs a robust Community Development Department. Serving 28 counties in and around the DFW Metroplex, the outreach programs housed in this department focus on education, workforce development and economic success.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) was signed into law on July 22, 2014, and is designed to help job seekers access support services, training, education and other resources to help them succeed in the modern labor market. TNH's WIOA program takes a community-centered approach in engaging with local stakeholders, educational organizations and employers to create



pathways to success for tribal members. This encompasses inclusive access for individuals who often face barriers to employment, including veterans, people with disabilities and those seeking to re-enter the workforce.

In addition to WIOA, TNH also operates the Native Pathways Program, a youth empowerment and education initiative. Supported by the U.S. Department of Education, this program promotes equity and cultural and community resiliency for American Indian/Alaska Native students in grades K-12 who live in Texas. Under Native Pathways, TNH offers 1:1 online tutoring services and learning apps, cultural workshops, language learning activities, STEAM learning adventures and more.

While TNH is largely funded by the Indian Health Service (IHS), it also receives funding from numerous grants and donations. The facility does take insurance to offset the cost of treatment, but patients are never responsible for copays, visit costs, outreach programs, or prescriptions they receive there.

Texas Native Health is located at 1283 Record Crossing Road, Dallas, Texas. To learn more about patient services, outreach programs or registering as a patient, visit texasnativehealth.org or call 214-941-1050.

Three Rivers Meat Company brings relief to LeFlore County food desert

By Shelia Kirven

Residents of Octavia/Smithville, Oklahoma, know that running to the grocery store has never been something you could do quickly in their area. You had to drive almost an hour to purchase items the local minute marts or Dollar General store did not carry. Also, opportunities for employment in the area have always been scarce. That is until now.

Choctaw Nation has partnered with area investors to build and operate Three Rivers Meat Company, which will increase the level of food availability and employment security within the area. It will be the only facility within 800 miles to offer high-quality custom meat processing, top-shelf value-added products, a café, a retail store, a fresh meat market and Oklahoma-sourced products under the same roof.

During the planning stage, visits were made to facilities in Oklahoma, Texas, Missouri and as far away as Wyoming to bring back ideas for the best features possible. In the construction phase, 90% of the contractors were local.

The company's workforce is made up of 60% Choctaw tribal members. The number increases to seventy-four percent when counting spouses of tribal members.

Andrea Goings, Three Rivers Meat

Company Food Safety Coordinator and Choctaw tribal member, previously drove from nearby Beachton to DeQueen, Arkansas, to work. She woke daily at 1:00 a.m. for her 3:00 a.m. shift at Pilgrim's Pride. "It's so nice not having to get up at one in the morning. I get to see the family more," she said.

Employees are taught to do business using the "Golden Rule." Managers strive to ensure the best work environment and accommodations possible and will train those who do not have experience.

Choctaw Tribal member Dusty Nichols is an investor, rancher, and Smithville native. He credits Tribal Councilperson Eddie Bohanan with understanding the area's needs and helping to get the project underway.

Other local investors include a professor of Meat Science and an industry leader in research and innovation in the meat industry worldwide, a deer processing facility operator, and an award-winning value-added product producer for over 25 years.

Three Rivers Meat Company is a USDA-inspected facility with a full-time inspector on-site to ensure animals are humanely treated and harvested, food safety and quality standards are maintained, and products are produced safely. According to Nichols, by being USDA-inspected, processed products and meat can be sold and shipped across state lines anywhere in the U.S.



Photos by Christian Toews

Choctaw Nation partnered with several others to build Three Rivers Meat Company to provide quality food and employment to area residents.

The animal you bring in for processing will be the animal you take home. A quality assurance track and weigh system is in place, with cameras, tip tags and weight confirmation documented on harvesting sheets at arrival, after harvest and at pickup.

The facility will process beef, hogs, lambs and goats. Seasonally processed wild game will be processed in a separate facility. The company will also process Choctaw Nation beef shipped to local schools and Choctaw Nation entities.

A full-service retail store in the facility will stock meat cuts, including steaks, chops, chicken, roast, hamburger, sausages and bratwurst, cheeses, deli meats and pre-cooked items such as smoked pork ribs, brisket, fajitas meats, smoked pork tenderloin, pulled pork BBQ, baked beans, stuffed jalapeños, cold salads and more. Grocery isles will be stocked with kitchen and camping essentials, including fresh fruits and vegetables, coffee, and canned foods. A freezer section with meat products, pizzas and ice cream will be available, along with an area for produce, dairy products, fresh meat and drinks.

Inside the 3500 square foot retail area is the Three Rivers Café, where customers can enjoy a great dining experience with fresh meats and ingredients produced in the facility. A certified kitchen will prepare deli items and daily lunch menu selections, and a salad bar, homemade desserts and self-serve ice cream will be available.

Three large on-site smokers and rotisserie, which can hold up to 900 pounds of meats, will prepare items to be enjoyed in the retail store, café or bulk ordered. Products, including beef jerky, snack sticks, sausages, bratwurst, and cured hams, will be made on-site and for sale in the storefront. They will also be sold in other retail establishments, including Choctaw Nation businesses. Three Rivers Meat Company is proud to have on board one of the best award-winning jerky and sausage makers in the industry.

Gift items available will include custom Three Rivers coffee mugs, insulated tumblers, water bottles t-shirts, hoodies, and caps. Oklahoma packaged products, such as candies, brittles, and snack crackers, will also be available. Three Rivers Meat Company signature BBQ sauce and seasonings will be available for purchase and online ordering will be available in the near future.

Individual and group tours of the entire facility are available, with window viewing providing a first-hand experience.

Three Rivers Meat Company's grand opening will be on April 4, 2024. Visitors can tour the facility, sample products, enjoy the café and shop the retail area.

Stay up to date with news and promotions by following Three Rivers Meat Company on Facebook and through their website www.threeriversmeat-company.com.



(Left to Right) Andrea Goings and Andrew Hagelberger display the large pellet smokers that can hold up to 900 pounds of meat.



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2024

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Mach 2024

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Regular screenings is key to beating colorectal cancer.

Biskinik Mission Statement: To serve as the source of information for Choctaw Nation tribal members by delivering community news through a variety of communication channels.

TRADITIONAL CHOCTAW SEEDS GROWING HOPE PROGRAM

REQUEST BY APPLICATION ONLY

Please check the **three** plants that you would like to receive seed for:

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<input type="checkbox"/> Tobi Smith Peas	<input type="checkbox"/> Hakchuma Perique Tobacco	<input type="checkbox"/> Hvshi Pakanli Seneca Sunflower
<input type="checkbox"/> Isito Choctaw Sweet Potato Squash		

Name: _____
 Address: _____
 City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
 Email: _____ Phone: _____

Seeds from the Growing Hope Program are intended for Choctaw People and Community members. They will be given out on a first come, first served basis while supplies last, hard copy mail in application only. **YAKOKE!**

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL THE GROWING HOPE PROGRAM MANAGER
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