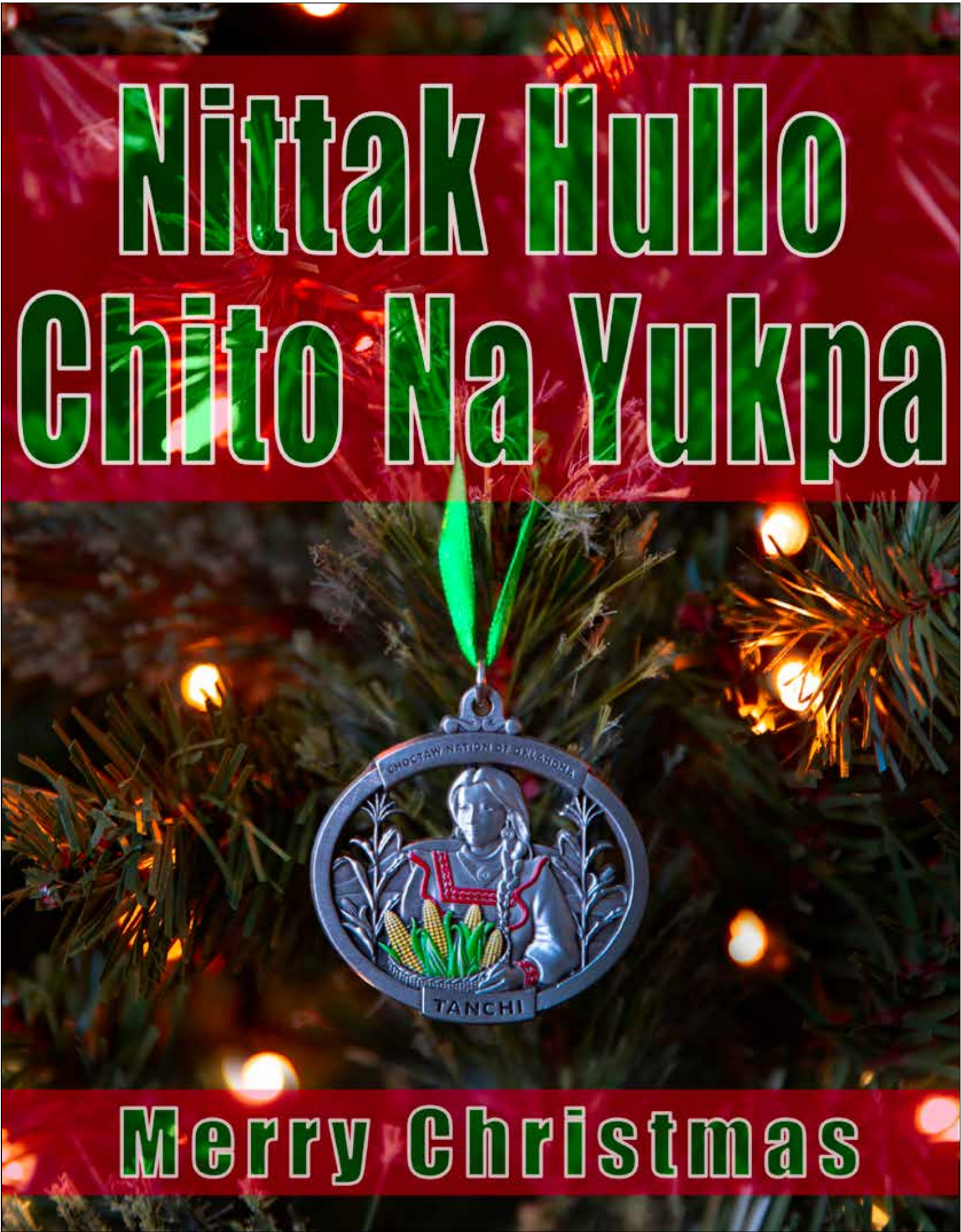




December 2021 Issue



The Choctaw Nation shows the spirit of giving for the holidays

By Christian Toews

The holiday season is a time of gift-giving and community. It is a time where we slow down and reconnect, giving back to the community around us. The recent years have been challenging for many people because of the global COVID-19 pandemic, and we need a season of cheer more than ever. The Choctaw Nation and its employees have continued to show generosity and a spirit of community through these difficult times. This holiday season is no different. The Choctaw Nation is giving back to the Choctaw people and the surrounding areas in many ways. Food, clothing and toys for children are just some of the ways the Choctaw Nation gives back during the holiday season. Angela Connor is the Director of Foster Care and Adoptions. She works with over 200 foster children in the Choctaw Nation's custody and in the State of Oklahoma's custody. Connor said that her entire department had gathered gift cards for foster children across the state of Oklahoma. She noted that many employees are motivated to attain as many gift cards as possible for these children. "One employee today, notified us that she has attained 30 gift cards," she said. According to Connor, Christmas gifts will be distributed during three events held in Durant, McAlester and Oklahoma City to reach as many foster care families as possible. The gift cards aren't the only way this department is giving back. Connor said they have also partnered with the Wellness Centers who have placed bins at every location to collect toys for the foster children within the Choctaw Nation. Chase Henson is the director of the wellness centers. Henson said that the toy drive had been a huge success in past years, and he expects this year to be the same. According to Henson, they've hosted competitions in the past where all of the proceeds from the competition were donated to the Chahta Foundation. The Chahta Foundation would match their donation and give those funds to help the children in the Choctaw Nation's foster care program. Due to COVID restrictions, these competitions were canceled this year. He

said he is thrilled they can still do something impactful this year. The toy drive is not the only way the Choctaw Wellness Centers are giving back this year. According to Henson, they also have bins at every location for canned food and winter clothing. These items will be distributed to the local communities where each wellness center is located. "Every location works with their district and donates this food and clothing. We just want to give back to the local community," he said. According to Henson, in previous years they have been able to raise thousands of dollars, thousands of canned goods and hundreds of coats, hats, gloves and scarves that help the local community during the holiday season. The Choctaw Nation's Recycling Center is hosting a used toy drive this year as well. While the toys from the Wellness Center will go directly to the Foster Care program, the toys collected with the Recycling Center's drive will go to the Choctaw Nation and the surrounding community through a local nonprofit called Native American Ministries, according to Jason Lilley, Recycling Manager with the Choctaw Nation. This is the ninth year the toy drive has been held. Last year the recycling center donated 541lbs of toys to Native American Ministries. Lilley said they are hoping to exceed last year's donation amount. Collection boxes for gently loved, clean and unbroken toys will be located at tribal facility locations throughout the Choctaw Nation service area. While these are just a few of the ways the Choctaw Nation is giving back this year, the Choctaw people have a long history of generosity. From helping the Irish people during a famine, helping to grow the economy across the State of Oklahoma and providing programs and services to tribal and non-tribal members– Choctaw is there to lend a helping hand. The Holiday season is a special time of generosity and giving back to those in need. However, the vision of the Choctaw Nation has always been living out the Chahta spirit of faith, family and culture. The Choctaw Nation offers services to its tribal members year-round. To find out more about services and programs available, visit www.choctaw-nation.com/tribal-services.



Photos by Chris Jennings
Choctaw Nation associates and volunteers prepare a meal for tribal members at the Battiest Choctaw Community Center. In November, the Choctaw Nation served thousands of curbside Thanksgiving meals to tribal members throughout its reservation.



The Choctaw Nation collected non-perishable food items from November 1 to November 22. These items were donated to food pantries throughout Southeastern Oklahoma.



Gently used toy donations are collected by Choctaw Nation Recycling every Christmas. Toys collected are given to children in need throughout the area.

Faith, Family, Culture



Chief Gary Batton

Native November

Halito, November is a month of spending time with family and giving thanks. November is also special because it's Native American Heritage Month.

On November 14, 1990, President George H.W. Bush declared the month of November as National American Indian Heritage Month to honor the hundreds of Native American tribes in the United States.

Native American Heritage Month makes me think about our Chahta ancestors, and how they laid the foundation for who we are today.

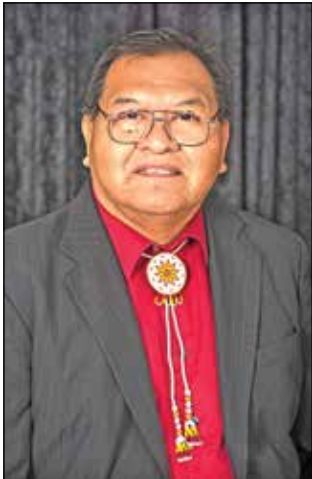
The sacrifices they made and the struggles they endured, motivate me to protect our sovereignty and perpetuate our Choctaw culture.

Our culture is what makes us unique and defines who we are as Chahta people.

I encourage you to take some time and reflect on who we are. Channel the Chahta spirit not only during

Native American Heritage Month, but every day, so that we can leave a legacy for our children.

Yakoke and God bless!



Pastor Olin Williams
Employee Chaplain

Covenant of Salt

Salt was and is used for the seasoning of food (Job 6:6). “Can that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt? Or is there any taste in the white of an egg?” All meat offerings were seasoned with salt “And every oblation of thy meat offering shalt thou season with salt; neither shalt thou suffer the salt of the covenant of thy God to be lacking from thy meat offering: with all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt” (Lev. 2:13).

To eat salt with one is to partake of his hospitality and derive sustenance from him; and thus he who did so was bound to look after his host's interests. New born children were rubbed with salt (Ezekiel 16:4).

A covenant of perpetual obligation was called a “covenant of salt.” When people ate together, they commemorated their friendship with a covenant of salt.

Salt was used as a form of payment when Roman soldiers were paid with salt. The modern word salary came from this practice of paying with salt. God is providing

land for the Levite priests and He seals it with a “covenant of salt” (Numbers 18:19). Again when God gave the kingdom of Israel to David, He does it by a “covenant of salt.”

In the New Testament, Jesus is speaking to the disciples during the sermon on the mount (Matthew 5:13), and He says, “Ye are the salt of the earth....” Modern Christians have entered into a covenant with God when they became believers. It is a perpetual agreement to preserve, purify and permeate the Gospel on earth.



Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr.

Merry Christmas

We have made it to December, the last month of the year!

The holidays are upon us, and it's such a wonderful time of the year. It is a time to celebrate with our friends and family.

Often, we make the holiday season stressful, worrying about gifts and preparing the house for guests. However, December is National Stress-Free Family Holidays Month, and I encourage you to enjoy the time you have with your family and friends.

The Choctaw Nation is all about giving, and Santa's helpers are collecting gifts for Jones Academy students for their annual Christmas Party.

We have so much to be thankful for and to celebrate. This is the perfect time of the year to create traditions and memories that will last a lifetime.

Enjoy this holiday season and God bless.

DOJ announces more than \$73 million to help crime victims and improve safety in Native communities

WASHINGTON– The Department of Justice today announced that it will award 137 grants to 85 American Indian and Alaska Native communities, for a total of \$73 million, to improve public safety and serve crime victims. The announcement was made during the White House Tribal Nations Summit taking place virtually today and tomorrow.

These funds are designed to help enhance tribal justice systems and strengthen law enforcement, improve the handling of child abuse cases, combat domestic violence and support tribal youth programs.

“The Justice Department is pleased to make the Coordinated Tribal Assistance Solicitation available to federally recognized tribes, providing a transparent and simple process to apply for grants that best align with their community's needs,” said Associate Attorney General Vanita Gupta. “This one-step application makes it possible for tribes to access critical resources to help them meet the critical public safety needs of their communities.”

More than four in five of American Indian and Alaska Native adults have experienced some form of violence in their lifetime, according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics. This equates to nearly three million people who have experienced stalking, sexual violence, psychological aggression or physical violence by intimate partners.

“Each year, the department invests millions of dollars to help our Tribal partners confront the challenges of violent crime and domestic abuse in their communities and strengthen their public safety infrastructure,” said Acting Assistant Attorney General Amy L. Solomon for the Justice Department's Office of Justice Programs. “We are pleased to support the critical work that Tribal nations are undertaking in communities across the country.”

More than \$73 million will be awarded under CTAS, a streamlined application which helps tribes apply for tribal-specific grant programs that enhance law enforcement and tribal justice practices, expand victim services and sustain crime prevention and intervention efforts. CTAS grants are administered by OJP (\$48 million) and the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) (\$25 million).

“These grants provide vital resources to Tribal law enforcement and their communities by offering equipment and training, along with resources to help officers understand and better serve their communities in areas of domestic abuse, stalking and sex trafficking, and alleviate the detrimental effects that substance abuse and crime have on individuals and their families,” said Acting Director Robert Chapman of the COPS Office.

The COPS Office also awarded \$400,000 to Western Oregon University to create a structured and tribal-centered innovative approach to enhance the operation of the criminal justice system to address the concerns of the American Indian and Alaska Native communities regarding missing and murdered indigenous people, particularly missing and murdered women and girls.

In addition to CTAS funding, OJP has awarded more than \$100 million through the Tribal Victim Services Set-Aside to improve services for crime victims in Tribal communities. OJP's Office for Victims Crime is supporting tribal grantees with capacity building, training and technical assistance (more than \$6.8 million) and an update of the Tribal Resource Tool (\$199,999), which maps the availability of victim services in tribal communities. An additional \$2.9 million will be awarded under the Children's Justice Act Partnership to tribes to enhance the handling of cases centered around criminal child abuse and neglect.

The department also funded \$6.5 million through OJP's Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending Registering and Tracking to help Tribes comply with federal law on sex offender registration and notification.

Information about FY 2021 grant awards from the Office of Justice Programs can be found online on the OJP Grant Awards Page. The page will be updated as awards are made.

Information about FY 2021 grant awards from the COPS Office can be found online at the COPS Grant Page.

The Office of Justice Programs provides federal leadership, grants, training, technical assistance and other resources to improve the nation's capacity to prevent and reduce crime, advance racial equity in the administration of justice, assist victims and enhance the rule of law. More information about OJP and its components can be found at www.ojp.gov.

The COPS Office is the component of the U.S. Department of Justice responsible for advancing the practice of community policing by the nation's state, local, territorial and Tribal law enforcement agencies through information and grant resources.

More information about the COPS Office can be found at www.cops.gov.

Award-winning film opens door of 1903 removal from Mississippi to Ardmore

By Shelia Kirven

“Ikhaiyana La Chi (I Will Remember),” a film directed by freelance filmmaker Mark Williams and produced by the Choctaw Nation, tells the story of the last Choctaw removal to Oklahoma in 1902-1903 and the cultural impact it had on the Choctaw people and a certain Oklahoma community. It tells of the betrayal from an Indian Territory attorney who went all the way to Mississippi, promising transportation and new lands to a trusting people, and the arrival of 287 Choctaws by cattle train to Ardmore, where they survived a brutal winter imprisoned in a dilapidated warehouse called the Love Building.

The story might have lain sleeping in time had it not been for Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Historic Preservation associate Deanna Byrd reading one vague sentence about the removal of Choctaws to Ardmore in an historical article. It sparked curiosity about her own family removal history and research of an entire department. It has since opened the door to historical documentation and preservation of the facts of the removal, reconnecting family members lost for generations, contributions to the Choctaw Cultural Center and an award-winning film.

The Ardmore story is a part of the Trail of Tears journeys, explained Deanna Byrd, NAGPRA Liaison for Historic Preservation Office, and Misty Madbull, Director of the Choctaw Nation Historic Preservation Department. Byrd said, “For Choctaw people, we see a full 70-year plus span for the Trail of Tears. A lot of people think it was just in the 1830s and it was not. We had many Choctaw people removing from Mississippi in the 1840s, 1850s, 1860s, all the way up to the last removal of 1903. When we think of the Trail of Tears, we need to remember all of the Trails or Removals. In this way, we honor all the ancestors who came.”

The Love Building in Ardmore, Oklahoma, is now a shell with no plans of being renovated. The door to the building, called the Love Door, was donated to the Choctaw Nation and is on display at the Choctaw Cultural Center in a moving Trail of Tears exhibit. Byrd explained, “The door is special because it has a lot of symbolism. That was the door of opportunity they thought, but at the same time it imprisoned them.”

The story in detail, “The Last Choctaw Removal to Ardmore,” can be read at <https://www.choctawnation.com/history-culture/history/iti-fabvssa>.

Mark Williams, Mississippi and Oklahoma Choctaw, from

Bennington, Oklahoma, is the filmmaker responsible for “Ikhaiyana La Chi.” His company, Digital Feather Media, has been in business since 2017 and works with tribes to tell their stories and share their cultures.

Williams said, “The stuff these elders are saying, I’m just excited to know and hear about. I tell people I can’t believe I’m doing this for a living. I have found with elders, they have these stories, and they have this wisdom if people will just sit down and talk to them. They want to talk about it.” He chuckled when he said, “I will forget there’s cameras in front of us. I forget there’s lights there at that point. I’m just enjoying their company and their conversation. And before you know it, we have their interview done.”

Though the Choctaw Nation Historic Preservation Department already had their research, Williams said they wanted to go out into the families and get stories that had been passed down through the generations.

The department was able to emphasize in the film the resilience of the Choctaw people through their warrior spirit and to pull out those spirits of the people who were interviewed.

The 36-minute short film has been receiving astounding recognition since its premiere. It has received the award for Achievement in Native Film Making at the 2021 NatiVisions Film Festival in Parker, Arizona and received recognition from the Bare Bones Film Festival as well.

It has also been nominated at the L.A. Skins Festival in Los Angeles for Achievement in Short Filmmaking.. “Ikhaiyana La Chi” also recently won the award for Best American Indian/First Nation/Indigenous Feature at the Will Rogers Motion Picture Festival in Claremore, Oklahoma.

Screenings have taken place in Wichita, Kansas at the alterNative Film Festival as the featured film and at the American Indian Film Festival in San Francisco. It has also been screened at the Fort Smith International Film Festival and the Holba Pisachi Native Film Festival.

The deadCenter Film Festival virtually screened the film on their website and it replayed during the month of November for Native American Month.

Byrd said of the film, “One of the best experiences in showing the film so far in our community is a little boy who said, ‘oh, I’ve got to talk to Grandma’ when the credits rolled. I thought, ‘we did it!’ It made the younger generation want to talk to the older generation. We wanted to really do something gentle with telling of dark history and we think it works. It was a creative way to tell a dark story but focus

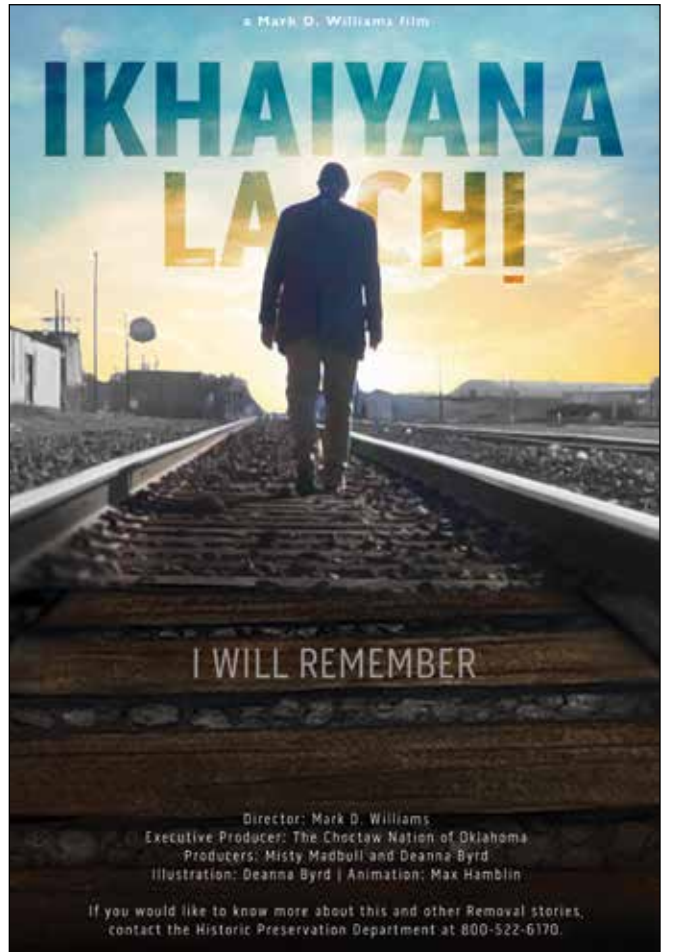


Photo Provided

“Ikhaiyana La Chi (I Will Remember),” a short film directed by freelance filmmaker Mark Williams and produced by the Choctaw Nation, has received recognition since its premiere.

on the resilient spirit of Choctaw people.”

The film is shown at the Choctaw Cultural Center in Durant, Oklahoma. Call ahead at (833) 708-9582 for a schedule, to reserve for a group showing or visit the website at <https://choctawculturalcenter.com/>. It can also be viewed online at <https://www.choctawnation.com/tribal-services/cultural-services/historic-preservation>.

Christmas gifts from the heart

By Shelia Kirven

In this special Christmas column, Shelia Kirven gives readers some gift-giving tips and ideas that will last a lifetime.

Christmas is just around the corner. Observing the real reason for the season and celebrating family and friends is important. The pandemic has taught us to be more thankful than ever for those we love. It also has hit pocket-books hard, and many people might not be able to give the types of gifts to their loved ones that they have in the past.

Gift-giving doesn’t have to be too costly or over-the-top. There are many ways to make Christmas extra special with inexpensive gifts that will last in the hearts and memories of the recipients.

Family Christmas letters are a lost art that deserve resurrection, as they were very popular years ago. Shared with family and friends, they can become valued heirloom items after years of family members writing, telling what their family has been up to for the year and including photos of the family each year.

Nothing says holiday goodness like food. Hot spiced tea and hot chocolate mixes, coffees, homemade cakes, pies, cookies and candies are always a hit. Preparing make-ahead freezer meals for the elderly or shut-ins is also a very thoughtful way of saying that you care.

But remember, food items do not have to be homemade. They can be purchased and dressed up in decorative sacks or boxes and tied with colorful ribbons.

If you are cooking goodies, be sure to write down the recipe and pass it on with the gift in the event the recipient wants to make their own later.

Handmade gifts like scarves, stockings, Christmas tree skirts, ornaments, blankets, quilts or wall hangings are all great gifts. Even if you’re not crafty, there are many tutorials for handmade gifts on Youtube.

When we lose loved ones, over time we begin to forget some of their stories. Writing out stories from their time in the military, how they met their spouse, birth of their children, hobbies, how they earned their living, vacations, etc. are wonderful to hand

down in families. Preserving them in a folder or booklet makes keeping them together for future generations easy.

Elder interviews and printing up their stories along with photos become priceless keepsakes. There are sample questions available on the internet for interviewing family members that can be used. If you can’t write the stories out yourself, record them and have someone help you to email the recordings to your family members. These types of keepsakes mean so much and are irreplaceable.

Clione Ramos of the Choctaw Nation Genealogy Department said she thought it was a great idea to share this type of gift with family members.

Ramos, who is retiring from the Choctaw Nation after 37 years, is quite the expert in family documentation. After spending 31 years in the CDIB/Tribal Membership Department, she spent the last three years researching in the Tribe’s Genealogy Department.

According to Ramos, the Choctaw Nation Genealogy Department is a great place to begin family research.

Staff can provide ancestry information from the Dawes Commission Rolls to verify lineage and advise where to look for additional records.

Ramos said researchers can call the office at 800-522-6170 or email genealogy@choctawnation.com for assistance.

“If they want information on their (original) enrollee, we also have the application jackets that we can send out to them.”

According to Ramos, the jackets sometimes have really good information for use in family research and documentation.

Ramos advises those who may not have done any type of genealogy work to “Start on their parents. If their parents are still alive, they can ask them, but they can also go on the internet to find out a lot. I have found a lot on my family way back that I didn’t even know.”

There are helpful printable brochures and a genealogy assistance request form on the program’s webpage that can be accessed at <https://www.choctawnation.com/tribal-services/membership/genealogy>.

Don’t forget that the internet can be your best friend in family research. You can get started by typing in something as simple as, “how to begin



Photo Provided

There are many ways to make Christmas extra special with inexpensive gifts that will last in the hearts and memories of the recipients.

genealogy research” or “building a family tree” and get thousands of hits of tools, helpful hints, and historical search sites.

The National Archives’ online website is also a great place to download and print blank forms and charts for genealogy documentation, even with family tree charts for kids to use. The website has free genealogy research information and tools. Once completed, charts and trees can be copied for family gifts.

Traditional Choctaw artwork and jewelry make beautiful gifts, whether handmade by yourself or others. Visit Choctaw Nation’s new Cultural Center in Durant for inspiration and instructional classes, check out the gift shop or visit their website at www.choctawculturalcenter.com.

If you want to gift Choctaw traditional items but don’t want to make them yourself, a list of Choctaw artists who sell their items can be found at <https://www.choctawnation.com/history-culture/people/artist-registry>.

COVID-19 and flu vaccines available at CNO Health Clinics

DURANT, Okla. – The Choctaw Nation Health Services Authority (CNHSA) is providing vaccinations to keep viruses at bay this winter season. Providing both the COVID-19 vaccination and applicable additional doses, along with the seasonal flu vaccine, will protect the community from potentially dangerous viral symptoms.

“The COVID-19 vaccination, with the combination of the seasonal flu vaccination, will help protect everyone from serious illness,” says Clinton Bullock, Chief Pharmacist for CNHSA. “It’s highly encouraged for anyone eligible to get vaccinated. The winter months bring everyone inside, creating more opportunities for viruses to spread quickly.”

The seasonal flu vaccination is available at all Choctaw Nation Clinics for patients with a Certified Degree of Indian Blood (CDIB) card.

According to the CDC, it is safe to get a COVID-19 vaccination and flu vaccination at the same time. The data collected shows generally similar possible side effects when given together or alone.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommend adults who meet eligibility criteria get a booster dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. The booster dose is in addition to the previously approved

www.choctawnation.com/history-culture/people/artist-registry. The Choctaw Store also sells handmade and tribal souvenir items. For more information, visit <https://www.choctaw-store.com/>.

Lastly, don’t forget that simple acts of kindness such as cleaning someone’s home, doing yard work, offering to fill out and mail Christmas cards, giving someone a book of stamps and some stationery, running errands, making dinner, offering to decorate someone’s house for the holidays or wrapping their Christmas presents, caroling at a neighbor and family home, and offering to walk or keep friends and neighbors’ pets are gifts from the heart that never go out of style.

This year, why not save money and make your gifts to others more personal? Make this Christmas a simple, homemade Christmas, one that will be remembered for years to come.

third dose for immunocompromised patients (potentially receiving four doses of the vaccination), which eligible patients could receive 28 days after their 2nd dose. The patients who received the Pfizer or Moderna brand vaccinations and meet one of the following should get a booster dose six months after their 2nd dose in the initial series or 3rd dose for those who are immunocompromised:

- 65 years and older
- Age 18+ who live in long-term care settings
- Age 18+ who have underlying medical conditions
- Age 18+ who work or live in high-risk settings

For patients who received the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine, booster shots are also recommended for those 18 years and older who were vaccinated two or more months ago. It is approved to “mix and match” any of the three approved vaccinations (Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson), giving patients the freedom to get what is available to them or what they prefer.

You can make an appointment to receive the COVID-19 vaccine by calling 800-349-7026 ext. 6, using your myCNHSA app, or visiting my.cnhsa.com. Call your local clinic for details on how to get your flu vaccine.

COVID-19 & FLU VACCINES

AVAILABLE

PROTECT YOUR FAMILY

Choctaw Nation

Health Services



James Dry

District 9

Halito from District 9. I hope everyone had a wonderful Thanksgiving with family and friends. We recently opened our community center for meals, and it’s been great to see all the smiling faces and laughter from our elders. We look forward to all the activities once again and fellowship.

Our new Childcare center opened in Durant and will accommodate 272 of our children in District 9. This provides a great service to our kids and has also created over 100 new jobs. We have also recently broken ground to expand our Durant Food Distribution Center. This will allow us to meet the needs of our tribal members in the area.

Tribal Council unanimously approved a council bill for the development of new housing in Calera, Oklahoma, with funding of up to \$23,048,210. This will help our tribal members and associates with homes in our area.

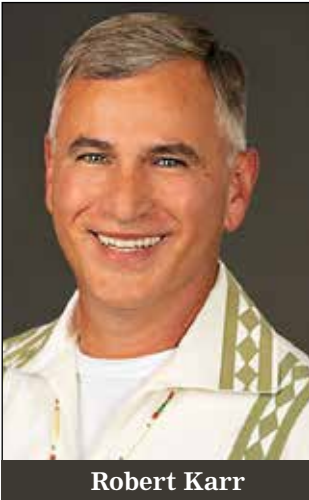
The development will consist of the following:

- 54 Three-bedroom single-family homes
- 13 Four-bedroom single-family homes
- 57 Two-bedroom Townhomes
- 26 Duplexes (52 living units)

We currently have 10 LEAP homes under construction and 30 more that will start after the first of the year. I encourage anyone to apply at <https://www.choctawnation.com/LEAP>. This has been a great program to help with our housing needs. We will have eight Independent elderly units starting very soon as well.

The growth of the Nation continues, and I appreciate working with our Chief, Assistant Chief and Tribal Council. I would like to wish everyone a very merry Christmas and happy New Year.

God Bless.



Robert Karr

District 11

Season’s Greetings from District 11. As we come to the end of 2021, I would like to wish you and your family a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. Enjoy this special time with loved ones, be thankful for our blessing and the reason for the season—Jesus!

We’ve been busy in the last few months with many tribal events, and it’s always nice to visit with our Choctaw people not only in District 11 but across the nation. Our seniors were excited to see Chief Batton and Assistant Chief Austin serving the curbside meal October 27. We met with the City of McAlester officials that morning before lunch to reinforce the tribe’s commitment to partnering with our local communities.

October 28, we had a spooky time with kids during the drive-thru trick or treat. November 11, the Veterans Day ceremony to honor our veterans at Tuskahomma was very patriotic. Yakoke to all Choctaw veterans who served our country. The Thanksgiving senior meal with smoked meat and all the fixings was delicious on November 17. Our senior wellness classes have started back up with chair volleyball, exercise sessions and cornhole. Come out to the wellness center on Mondays and Thursdays 9:30 a.m.-11 a.m. to lose those pandemic pounds and work out with your fellow seniors.

In-person dining for our seniors will start January 5 at the center. We will be having speakers to inform you of different programs, planning activities, trips and cultural classes. I look forward to reporting to you about the happenings of the council and tribe at these lunches. The senior Christmas meal is December 8, and the children’s Christmas party is December 16; they both will be curbside.

February 5, we’re planning a Native American Arts & Craft show at our center. Local Choctaw artists will be selling authentic products, so come and support them. The McAlester Choctaw Clinic expansion is a much-needed service for our area, and we’re anticipating it to start in 2022. We are adding 30 LEAP homes in Krebs that are currently under construction and seven Affordable Rental homes in McAlester in 2022 to provide quality homes for our people.

Yakoke for allowing me to serve the great people of the Choctaw Nation and District 11. A single twig breaks, but a bundle of twigs is strong (TOGETHER, WE ARE MORE). Please contact me anytime at rkarr@choctawnation.com.

Chihowa vt Achukma!

Robert Karr

Ribbon-cutting held for new Child Care Center

DURANT, Okla. – Shovels turned in the spring of 2020, breaking ground for a new Child Care Center in Durant. On Friday, October 22, a ribbon-cutting ceremony was held for the new state-of-the-art Choctaw Nation Child Care Center.

The 41,186-square-foot building holds 19 classrooms, serves 252 children, and brought 106 new jobs to the area. Included in the facility is a large saferoom that also serves as a child sensory room.

Chief Gary Batton spoke about the importance and purpose of the new facility, saying, “We’re giving our kids a good strong educational and cultural foundation, showing them at an early age what it means to be Choctaw.”

The Child Care Center aims to provide each child with an environment that promotes learning in a fun way. In addition to traditional learning activities, teachers incorporate the Choctaw culture into activities like storytelling, Choctaw language lessons and serving traditional foods.

For additional information about Choctaw Child Care Centers, visit www.choctaw-nation.com/Child-Care-Centers.



Chief Gary Batton, Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr., Tribal Council members, community leaders and center students and teachers were all in attendance to celebrate the opening of the new Durant Child Care Center.

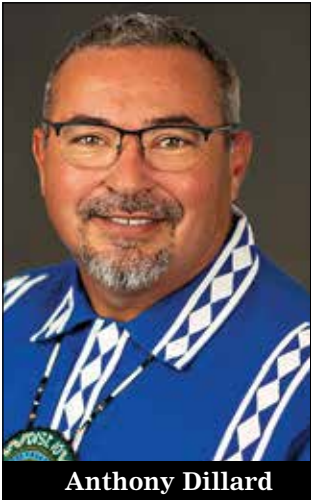
TEACH TO REACH PROGRAM

FOR NATIVE AMERICAN TEACHER EDUCATION STUDENTS

Teach To Reach is a program available to assist Native Americans who have been accepted into the teacher education programs at the following partner universities
ECU, NSU, OSU, OU, SOSU or UCO.

Choctaw Nation

Career Development



Anthony Dillard

District 10

Halito, Chim Achukma from District 10.

As we find ourselves in another Holiday season with Thanksgiving and Christmas rapidly approaching, we remember the reasons to be thankful for all the blessings in the Choctaw Nation. We just finished our Thanksgiving drive-thru senior meal, and it was a great success. Yakoke to all that helped to make it successful!

We are excited to gather back at our senior lunches; we plan to offer inside fellowship or curbside pickup for our Wednesday lunches. I know our seniors are very anxious to get back to their regular activities. They have been missing senior volleyball and the fellowship that comes with gathering on a regular basis. As we gather, we need to remember the pandemic is still a thing to consider. We want to remind everyone that booster shots are now available through our clinics. Also, be mindful that it is flu season, and those shots are also available at the clinics.

I want to remind you to apply for your ARPA dollars through the programs that the Tribe initiated (current response rates for elder food is at 48%, adult economic is at 56% and dependent is at 105%). These dollars are federal pass-through dollars meant to help mitigate the effects of the pandemic, and whether we realize it or not, inflation is affecting us all. I encourage everyone to apply for these programs and if any assistance is needed, get in touch with your community center.

The Choctaw Nation is in a solid financial condition right now, but we must remain vigilant in the care of our assets. The national economy is showing signs of inflation, and some may be due to the supply chain issues that the pandemic has caused. As we continue to grow our footprint in our tribal boundaries, we feel the effects of building material prices continuing to rise. We must continue to do our part to raise the standard of living for our Choctaw people by providing opportunities for good quality jobs here in the reservation boundaries.

Choctaw Global, our investment arm of the Choctaw Nation, invited Council to tour through central Texas and visit some of our investment properties in those areas. Our trip started off by visiting Stacy Point Multi-family investment in Allen, Texas, and then to Dallas to tour our Multi-family investment on McKinney Avenue. The next leg of our trip took us to Waco, Texas, to tour our Senior living Emerald Cottages and finish up the evening with dinner with JTS Capital partners. We then made our way to Kyle, Texas to spend the night and be ready to tour our multi-family investment where construction is well underway. We then headed toward College Station, Texas to our land development property, where we are selling residential lots. Big shout out to the Global Investments team and the work they are doing to help bring more dollars to the investment portfolio for the Tribe!

I wish you, and your families, a happy Thanksgiving and a very merry Christmas. I pray that God richly blesses you and your families.

Yakoke!

CHOCTAW NATION COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS DINNERS & PARTIES

Christmas Dinners

December 1, 2021
Battiest
Community @4:30 p.m.

Coalgate
Senior @ 11 a.m.

December 8, 2021
Atoka
Senior @ 11 a.m.

Broken Bow
Senior @ 11 a.m.

Crowder
Senior @ 11 a.m.

Hugo
Senior @ 11 a.m.

McAlester
Senior @ 11 a.m.

Spiro
Community @ 11 a.m.

Wilburton
Community @ 11 a.m.

Wright City
Senior @ 12 p.m.

December 14, 2021
Antlers
Senior @ 12 p.m.

Stigler
Community @ 11 a.m.

December 21, 2021
Talihina
Community @ 11 a.m.

December 22, 2021
Durant
Senior @ 11 a.m.

Poteau
Senior @ 12 p.m.

Smithville
Community @ 11:30 a.m.

Children’s Parties

December 3, 2021
Coalgate @ 3:30 p.m.

December 5, 2021
Tushkahomma @ 2 p.m.

December 6, 2021
Battiest @ 4:30 p.m.

December 9, 2021
Atoka @ 4:30 p.m.

December 11, 2021
Crowder@ 1 p.m.

Wilburton@ 2 p.m.

December 13, 2021
Broken Bow @ 6 p.m.

December 16, 2021
Heavner @ 5 p.m.
(Heavner cafetorium)
McAlester @

December 19, 2021
Wright City @ 2 p.m.

December 21, 2021
Smithville @ 5 p.m.

Events are subject to change. For more information, please contact your local Choctaw Community Center.

Limited-time free delivery with \$50 purchase!

Kick shopping to the curb. Start your order today!

CHOCTAW

COUNTRY MARKET CURBSIDE +DELIVERY

Choctaw Nation Vocational Rehabilitation

December 1	Antlers	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
December 3	Crowder	By Appointment
December 7	Wright City	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
December 8	Poteau	11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.
December 10	Atoka	8:00 a.m. - 11 a.m.
December 10	Coalgate	1 p.m. - 4:30 p.m..
December 14	Broken Bow	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
December 16	Talihina	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
December 21	Idabel	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
December 28	Wilburton	10:00 a.m. - 2 p.m.
December 29	McAlester	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
December 29	Stigler	By Appointment

Durant: Monday, Wednesday and Friday
Call 580-326-8304 for an appointment



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At Choctaw Nation, we constantly try to improve our services and look for better ways to serve you, our Tribal Member.
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- Biskinik
 - Birthday Card
 - Calendar
- Christmas Ornament
 - Member Letter

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CHOCTAW NATION CIRCULATION DEPARTMENT
800-522-6170

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma • TOGETHER WE'RE MORE •

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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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.

EYEGLASSES, DENTURES AND
HEARING AID PROGRAM (EDH)

CHOCTAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA TRIBAL MEMBERS OF ALL AGES ACROSS THE U.S. ARE ELIGIBLE FOR ASSISTANCE WITH EYEGLASSES, DENTURES AND HEARING AIDS.

CALL FOR MORE INFORMATION
(800) 522-6170 OR (800) 349-7026

Choctaw Nation Health Services

CHOCTAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA
TRIBAL COUNCIL
REGULAR SESSION AGENDA
November 13, 2021

1. CALL TO ORDER
2. OPENING PRAYER/FLAG SALUTE
3. ROLL CALL
4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
 - a. Regular Session October 9, 2021
5. WELCOME GUESTS/SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS
 - a. Veteran of the Month, District #2 – Austin Jefferson
6. PUBLIC COMMENTS
 - a. Faith Parra – Individual Speaker – Dealing with Choctaw Youth, Love and Loss
 - b. Nellie Meashintubby – Individual Speaker – Keeping Tribal Citizens Informed
7. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES
8. NEW BUSINESS
 - a. Appointment Letter for Amy Pierce to District Court Judge of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Judicial Branch.
 - b. Approve the Funds and Budget for FY20 Indian Community Development Block Grant (ICDBG). *Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed*
 - c. Approve the Funds and Budget for the Emergency Native Language Project. *Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed*
 - d. Approve the Funds and Budget for COVID-19 Emergency Response for Suicide Prevention (ERSP) Grant. *Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed*
 - e. Approve the Funds and Budget for Year One of Four for the Addressing Opioid Overdose Deaths (AOOD) Program. *Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed*
 - f. Approve the Funds and Budget for FY20 Transitional Housing Assistance for Victims of Domestic Violence, Stalking, or Sexual Assault (Project HOUSE). *Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed*
 - g. Approve the Funds and Budget for FY21 Tribal Homeland Security Grant Program (THSGP). *Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed*
 - h. Approve the Funds and Budget for National Children's Alliance Children's Advocacy Center (CAC) Subaward Program. *Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed*
 - i. Approve the Funds and Budget for the FY21 Wetland Program Development Project. *Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed*
 - j. Approve the Funds and Budget for the FY21 Hazardous Waste Management Grant Project (HWMGP). *Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed*
 - k. Approve the Funds and Budget for Year One of Two for the FY21 Environmental Regulation Enhancement (ERE) – Protection Services Code Development and Outreach. *Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed*
 - l. Approve Application to the FY22 Indian Community Development Block Grant (ICDBG). *Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed*
 - m. Approve Council Bill Adopting and Enacting the Choctaw Nation Health Services Authority Privacy and Security Code of 2021. *Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed*
 - n. Approve the Sale of Bourg Booklet Makers Located at Choctaw Print Services in Durant, Oklahoma. *Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed*
 - o. Rescind CB-90-21 and Approve the Creation of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Tribal Conservation District. *Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed*
 - p. Approve Grazing Lease No. G09-2001 in Favor of Janet Dalton and CJ Winn on Land Held by the USA in Trust for the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations in Pittsburg County, Oklahoma. *Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed*
 - q. Approve Council Bill to Amend the Choctaw Nation Criminal Code. *Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed*
 - r. Approve a Capital Contribution of \$13,200,000 to Choctaw Global, LLC for Investment in Uptown at Plum Creek Multi-Family Development. *Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed*
 - s. Approve Funding for Housing Development in Calera, Oklahoma. *Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed*
9. OTHER NEW BUSINESS
10. OLD BUSINESS
11. ADJOURNMENT
12. CLOSING PRAYER

EVENTS

Choctaw Art Market – December 10 and 11

For all your Christmas needs, purchase beautiful and unique handmade gift items by Choctaw artists at one of our holiday art markets.

December 10, 2021
10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
CNO Headquarters
1802 Chukka Hina Drive
Durant, Oklahoma

December 11, 2021
12:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Choctaw Cultural Center
1919 Hina Hanta Way
Calera, Oklahoma

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 are interested in applying for a loan a representative will be available at the:

Crowder Community Center
December 10, 2021
9:00 – 11:00



Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

What is your
favorite way to
spread cheer?

Scan here to share your answer.



CHOCTAWNATION.COM/TOGETHER-WE'RE-MORE

Together we're more

Chahta Anumpa Aiikhvna
December Language Lesson

Nittak Hullo Chita isht Annoa
The Christmas Story

Luke Chapter 2

7. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger: because there was no room for them in the inn.
8. And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.
9. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.
10. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

11. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.
12. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

Luk Chaptā 2

7. Mihmvt ishi ahpi kv̄t v̄lla nakni osh in tola cha, yvmmak ash na h̄ilahli ǫ a bonulli mvt, aboha anuka yano ai asha yvt iksho hoka, issuba aillhpita yǫ fohkit bohli tok.
8. Yohmi ma yakni yvm-mak inli ka chukfvlh-poba aspesvchi v̄leha hvt vlhpoba apesachi hosh ninak ā haiaka yǫ ai asha tok.
9. Yvmohmi tuk ǫ CHI-HOWA im enchil vt ayvt im v̄la na CHI-HOWA im a tohweke-li chinto kv̄t ai on tommit talaia ma, okla nukshopa fehna tok.

10. Hivha enchil ash ot, Hvchi nukshopa na; vno vt anumpa na yukpali a chinto fehna okla moyuma ka im aya he mak ǫ isht hvchim aya li hoke.

11. Himak nitak ā nan okchalinch̄i, yvmmvt Klaist Chitokaka mak osh Lewi in tmaha ha ā hvchim ai v̄tvshke.

12. Yohmi ka atokowa kv̄t ilvppak ǫ yakohmi ha chi hoke: V̄losi vt na h̄ilahli ǫ a bonunta hosh, issuba ai ilhpitta yǫ fohkv̄t itonla hǫ ont hvsh pisa ch̄i hoke, im achi tok.

www.choctawschool.com

John Fletcher Casey

John Fletcher Casey, 79, passed away Sept. 22, 2021.

John was born Dec. 15, 1941, in Long Beach, Calif., to Harvey and Idell (Swafford) Casey.

He was preceded in death by his parents; sisters Wanda Chastain and Patricia McIntosh; nephew Rick McIntosh; and great-nephew Tim Rose.

John is survived by brother-in-law Richard McIntosh; nephews Bob Bennett and spouse Vicki, Steve Rose and spouse Nancy, and David McIntosh and spouse Cindi; niece Lori McIntosh Pistey and spouse Wayne; 18 great-nieces and great-nephews; nine great-great-nieces and great-great-nephews; along with numerous cousins and friends.

For the full obituary, please visit [Mallory-Martin Funeral Home](#).

**James Quintus Maytubby**

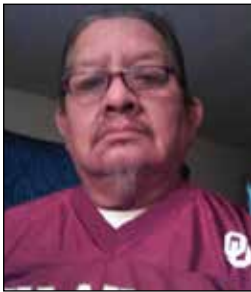
James Quintus Maytubby, 63 passed away Sept. 18, 2021.

James was born Feb. 9, 1958, in DeQueen, Ark., to Williston Sr. and Cinderella “Cindy” (Battiest) Maytubby.

He was preceded in death by his parents; brother Charles Watson; sister Avis Blackman; and nephew Jonathan Martinez.

James is survived by his wife Frances; sons Chris Maytubby and spouse Teola, and Dominic Jones; daughters Tina Carney and spouse Pete, and Makayla Maytubby; brothers Vince Maytubby and spouse Melissa, Lance Maytubby and spouse Karen, and Williston Jr. and spouse Bonnie; sisters Mayda Largo and spouse Tom, and Liz Lee and spouse Lloyd; brother-in-law Daniel Blackman; several nieces and nephews; and a host of other relatives and friends.

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

**Marcus Fochick Polk**

Marcus Fochik Polk, 43, passed away Sept. 19, 2021.

Marcus was born Feb. 2, 1978, in Talihina, Okla., to Willard and Sharon Jo (Nowabbi) Polk.

He was preceded in death by his paternal grandparents James and Melvina (Roberts) Polk; maternal grandparents Franch and Nora (Oshter) Johnico; and aunts Martha Polk and Verla Hatchery; and cousin Miko Nowabbi.

Marcus is survived by his parents; his children Rayvan and Rhyon Polk, and Layla Nicholson; siblings Kerry (Polk) Steve and spouse Morris, Timothy Polk, Micah Polk and spouse Natasha, and Vivian (Polk) Hopkins and spouse Nick; nephews Sam and Alex Steve, Malachi Polk, Cameron and Caden Hopkins, and Axel and Isiah Polk; nieces Morgan Steve, Mackenzie Polk, and Carmen and Casey Hopkins; and great-nieces Norra Wilson and Isabella Steve.

For the full obituary, please visit [Holmes-Coffey-Murray Funeral Home](#).

**Charlotte A. Walls**

Charlotte A. (Baggs) Walls, 62, passed away Sept. 20, 2021.

Charlotte was born Aug. 13, 1959, in Talihina, Okla., to Burl and Ruth (Greenwood) Baggs.

She was preceded in death by her parents; grandmother Ida Greenwood; brother Harold Dean Baggs; and nephews Jeremy Barnett, Nanih Waiya Wayne Fry, and Henry Cathey.

Charlotte is survived by her special friend Tim Hogan; children Shasta Shea and fiancé Jonathan, and Quentin Walls; sisters Wanda Cathey and spouse Kelly, Cheryl Fry and spouse Jeffrey, Penny Middleton, Eunice Chamberlain, and Susan Baggs; grandchildren Tyler Wayne Boyett, Hayden Harris, Cydni Barcus, and grandson on the way Zaxton Graham Webb; nephew Tripp Miller; niece Shauna McArthur and spouse Chance; and great-niece and great-nephew Chayden and Aver; along with numerous other relatives and friends.

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

**Andrew Morris Choate**

Andrew “Andy” Morris Choate, 88, passed away Sept. 23, 2021.

Andy was born July 9, 1933, in Bennington, Okla., to Rufus and Mollie (Brokeshoulder) Choate.

He was preceded in death by his parents; sisters Fran Muskrat and May Varner; and brothers Rufus Choate Jr. and John Henry Choate.

Andy is survived by his wife Norma (Williams) Choate; daughters Jackie Choate Quiver and Janie Choate; sons Warren Choate and Edward Choate; granddaughters Holly Meorado and spouse Michael, and Kari Quiver; great-granddaughter Briony Meorado; sister Ruth Morgan and spouse John; brothers Franklin Choate and Melvin Choate; and a host of nieces and nephews.

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

**Sandra Reeder**

Sandra (Schornick) Reeder, 79, passed away Oct. 1, 2021.

Sandra was born Nov. 2, 1941, in Snomac, Okla., to C.F. and Pauline (Dills) Schornick.

She was preceded in death by her husband A.J. “Jack”; her parents; brothers Jack Schornick, Joe Schornick, and Buck Schornick; and sisters Peggy Rowe; Sharon Hutto; and Bobby Costello.

Sandra is survived by her children Bobby Harris and spouse Kasey, Bruce Harris and Diann Brewer, and Brenda Brown and spouse James; grandchildren Kara Ellis and spouse Derek, Hunter Harris, Trey Harris and spouse Kindra, Sara Kennedy, Brandon Coffin, Austin Harris, Callie Harris, Elle Harris, and Drew Brewer; great-grandchildren Kierstin Coffin, Kasen Harris, Corley Coffin, Hagan Harris, Emerson Harris, and Loudon Harris; brother Yogi Schornick; sister-in-law Joyce Schornick; and numerous nieces and nephews.

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

**Foster Joe Southerland**

Foster “Joe” Southerland, 63, passed away Sept. 10, 2021.

Joe was born Feb. 27, 1958, in Perryton, TX., to Eldon and Vivian Southerland.

He was preceded in death by his daughter Sandi Southerland Lucas; his parents; brothers Jackie, Eldon, Wayne, Adrian, and Richard; and nephew Chris.

Joe is survived by his wife Donna; daughter Stephanie Dodson and spouse Jeremiah; grandsons Ashton Lucas, Dalton Dodson, Lathan Dodson, and Connor Lucas; sister Kathy McMillan; brother Paul Southerland; and many nieces and nephews.

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

**Michael Anthony Jones**

Michael Anthony “Tony” Jones, 62, passed away Oct. 16, 2021.

Tony was born July 29, 1959 in Altus, Okla., to Thomas and Tommie (Davenport) Jones.

He was preceded in death by his aunt Ruby Wiginton; and nephew Brady Andersen.

Tony is survived by his parents; son Christopher Jones PA-C and spouse Dr. Michelle Jones; grandchildren Gavin and Mackenzie Jones; brothers Jimmy Jones and spouse Waynell, and Jeffery Jones; sister Susan Andersen and spouse Dennis; numerous aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, and other loving family members.

For the full obituary, please visit [Lawton Ritter Gray Funeral Home](#).

**Jimmie Grant Gibson**

Jimmie Grant Gibson, 71, passed away July 30, 2021.

Jimmie was born Nov. 24, 1949, in Henrietta, TX., to Raymond David Gibson and Maimie Jane Lloyd.

He is survived by his wife Julia Gibson; daughters Adrean Rowell and Lutishia Cline; son Steven Gibson; and granddaughters Primrose and Amaryllis Rowell.

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

**Samuel Ray McBride**

Samuel Ray McBride, 64, passed away Sept. 28, 2021.

Samuel was born May 15, 1957, in Talihina, Okla., to Wilmer “Sam” and Drucille (Ritter) McBride.

He was preceded in death by his parents; sisters Cynthia Holderfield, Gail Mayer, and Neva Tackett; and brothers Mackey McBride and Ray McBride.

Samuel is survived by wife Sue; daughter Shalonda Jones and spouse Jim; sons Jeremy McBride and spouse Ashlee, and Terry Carshall and spouse Tiffany; grandchildren Shawn Washington II, Brian Jones, Caleb Jones, and Ashlynn Jones; sisters Pat Vinson, Sammie Thompson, Shirley Ford, and Becky Maxwell; brother Tim McBride; and numerous nieces, nephews, other relatives and loved ones.

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

**Geneva Gail Gibson**

Geneva Gail Gibson, 40, passed away Sept. 18, 2021.

Geneva was born Aug. 22, 1981, in Ada, Okla., to Audie Derek and Lucilla June Aaron Gibson.

She was preceded in death by her mother; and brother Alan Gibson.

Geneva is survived by her father; daughters Sheradawn Gibson and Shaylynn Gibson; brother and sister-in-law Adam and Alicia Joy Gibson; sister Stephanie Gibson; several nieces and nephews; and a host of extended family and friends.

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

**Barbara Woodruff**

Barbara Woodruff, 78, passed away Nov. 4, 2021.

Barbara was born Nov. 27, 1942, in Oakland, Calif., to Stanley and Opal Chilcoat Haskins Bartee.

She was preceded in death by her parents; and her brother Tommy Haskins.

Barbara is survived by her husband Howard; sister Pat Bartee/McKay; daughter Hollie Kee; son and daughter-in-law Jim and JoBeth Kee-Rees; grandchildren and spouses include Janeen and Sam Jones, Jeffrey Archer and Margaret McKinney, Christian and Laura Archer, Kate, Carson, Sophia, and Luke; and great-grandchildren Cole, Miles, Parker, and Mia.

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

**Franklin Delano Simpson Sr.**

Franklin Delano Simpson Sr., 84, passed away Oct. 6, 2021.

Franklin was born April 23, 1937, in Hugo, Okla., to Bernard and Fannie Cravatt Simpson.

He was preceded in death by his parents; his wife Mary Lee; son Milton Simpson; and great-grandson Michael Simpson.

Franklin is survived by his son Franklin Jr. and spouse Regina; daughter Wanda Bustamante; grandchildren LaDonna Battiest, Linda Noah, Charlie Simpson, Franklin Simpson III, Darnell Williams, Russell Simpson, Bryan Simpson, Tallulah Villeda, Juanita Bustamante, Santiago Bustamante, and Carmen Litchford; several nieces and nephews; and a host of other relatives and friends.

For the full obituary, please visit [Brumley Funeral home](#).

**Greg Dee Willie**

Greg Dee “Chief” Willie, 63, passed away Oct. 1, 2021.

Chief was born May 21, 1958, in Talihina, Okla., to Herbert Dee and Norma Jean Gipson Willie.

He was preceded in death by his parents; and brother William Willie.

Chief is survived by his wife Sandra; son Gregory Willie II and spouse Beth; daughters Sara Factor and spouse Jimpsey, Shannon Reynolds, Laura Park and spouse Reginal, and Kathy Abney and spouse Micah; sister Latricia Rangel and spouse Jerry; grandchildren Kyle William, Elijah, Aidan, Amiya, Beans, Madison, Maddox, Kilaya, Gianna, Axton, and Luca; several nieces and nephews; along with a host of other relatives and friends.

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

**Randle Lawrence Durant**

Randle Lawrence Durant, 71, passed away Aug. 20, 2021.

Randle was born Oct. 12, 1949, in Port Hueneme, Calif., to Randle Lawrence Durant Sr. and LaRue Taylor.

He was preceded in death by his parents; and sister Randa Cleckner.

Randle is survived by his wife Cindy; son Justin Durant and spouse Heidi; daughter DeeDee Waldner and spouse Dave; stepdaughter Maria Morris; grandchildren Derek Durant, Beckett Durant, LaRanda Waldner, Hector Rivera, and Ricky Rivera; and sister Linda Reynolds and spouse Jim.

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

**Judie Renee Runnels**

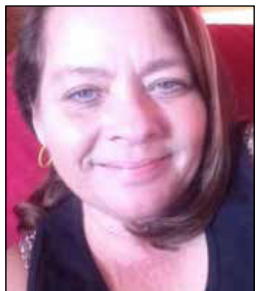
Judie Renee Runnels, 57, passed away Sept. 23, 2021.

Judie was born March 4, 1964, in Loraine, Texas, to John Hall and Reeda (Ashley) Hall.

She was preceded in death by her parents; and granddaughter Lindsey “Peaches” Runnels.

Judie is survived by her husband Johnny Carrasco; children Ashley and Tye Runnels; stepson Brad Runnels; grandson Jaxon Treadway; sisters Jackie Kidd and Julie Berryhill; and several nieces, nephews, and their children.

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

**Natasha Dawn McCaulla-Cole**

Natasha Dawn McCaulla-Cole, 41, passed away Sept. 18, 2021.

Natasha was born Oct. 30, 1979, in Muskogee, Okla., to Michael and Cheryl McCaulla.

She was preceded in death by her father; grandparents; great-grandparents; and other family members.

Natasha is survived by her spouse Jason Cole; sons Corbin, Damon, and Collin Cole; daughter Katlynn Cole; granddaughter Sahari Cole; her mother; brothers Mike McCaulla and Dakota Fox; nephew Michael McCaulla; many cousins, other family members, and many, many friends.

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

**Ronald Edward Ledbetter**

Ronald Edward Ledbetter, 88, passed away Oct. 5, 2021.

Ronald was born February 14, 1933.

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

**Andrew Dennis Dutterer**

Andrew Dennis Dutterer, 43, passed away Sept. 25, 2021.

Andrew was born Sept. 15, 1978, in Washington D.C., to Dennis and Judy Dutterer.

He is survived by his wife Caitlin; son Henry; his parents; sister Emily Klinger and spouse Nick; nephew Charlie; and niece Anna.

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

**James E. Wheeler**

James E. Wheeler, 78, passed away Oct. 3, 2021.

James was born Nov. 8, 1942, in Erick, Oklahoma to M.E. and Murray (Hart) Wheeler.

He was preceded in death by his parents; sisters Phyllis Helmer and Carolyn McElroy; brother Ed Wheeler; and in-laws Ray and Erlene Fogleman.

James is survived by his wife Regina; son Don; daughter Shanda Wheeler Kelso and spouse William; grandsons Aaron James Wheeler and Brody Peyton Kelso; sister Charlotte Garlington; and numerous nieces and nephews.

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

**Mary Lou Wright**

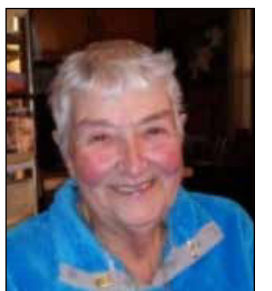
Mary Lou Wright, 86, passed away Oct. 26, 2021.

Mary Lou was born Jan. 10, 1935, in Duncan, Okla., to Rupert Brown and Marie Schults Hannah.

She was preceded in death by her husband Carl; and brother Riley “Rom” Brown.

Mary Lou is survived by her children Carl Calenberg, Jackie Wright, Clay Wright, Lee Wright, and Shelley Wright; 12 grandchildren; several great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren.

For the full obituary, please visit [Martin and Hightower Funeral Home](#).



Dolores Elain Neal

Dolores Elain Neal, 62, passed away Oct. 10, 2021.

Dolores was born Dec. 19, 1958, in Lamar, Colo., to Windell Stewart and Josephine Elizabeth (Cole) Stewart.

She was preceded in death by her father.

Dolores is survived by her children William Shawn Neal, Windell Chad Neal and spouse Alesha, and Leslie Elizabeth Neal; her mother; brother Charles Stewart and spouse Cindy; sister Sherry Bouher and spouse Mark; and grandchildren Kaden Clay, Taia Harris, David Hammon, Lexi Hyde, Nolen Lien, Kenyon Johnson, Kade Hyde, and Keyara Johnson.

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

**Terry Patton**

Terry Patton, 65, passed away Oct. 11, 2021.

Terry was born May 30, 1956, in Coalgate, Okla., to William Otto and Lorene (Murphy) Patton.

He was preceded in death by his parents; and sisters Lavonda Jaynes and Jeneane Grimes.

Terry is survived by his sister Carla Grimmitt and spouse Jimmy; brother Kent Patton; aunt Roz Zable; numerous nieces, nephews, cousins, several great-nieces, and great-nephews; as well as buddies from the KOI group home.

For the full obituary, please visit [Prater-Lamp-ton-Mills and Coffey Funeral Home](#).

**Michael Tanner Vernon**

Michael Tanner Vernon, 25, passed away Sept. 28, 2021.

Michael was born March 9, 1996, in Ada, Okla., to Danial Gene and Jamie Dawn (Beard) Vernon.

He was preceded in death by his grandfather Jimmie Jo Mann; great-grandparents Melvin “Smooth” and Meady Mae Vernon, Harold and Laverne Morris, and Beatrice Posey.

Michael is survived by his parents; sister Rebecca Buck and spouse Joey; niece and nephew Sutton and Tripp; grandparents David and Lois Vernon, Patricia and Gary Dean, and Donna Beard; uncles Lee Vernon and Michael Beard; aunts Shawna Mann, Tera Johnson, Missy Corey, and Randi Mann; special great-uncle and great-aunt Kenneth and Donna Hitt; and numerous friends, cousins, and other family.

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

**Debbie Ann Hatfield**

Debbie Ann Hatfield, 62, passed away Sept. 14, 2021.

Debbie was born Aug. 11, 1959, in Talihina, Okla., to Bud and Lenora (Perry) Davis.

She was preceded in death by her parents; mother-in-law and father-in-law Norvil and Vera Hatfield; sister Margaret Hargis; and brother Larry Perry.

Debbie is survived by her husband Carl; daughters Stephanie Stubblefield, and Tiffany Trantham and spouse Jonathon; grandchildren Cambrie and Dylin; sisters Debra Brown, Rita Hargis, Shirley Honeycutt, and Diane Davis; brothers Neil Perry and Junior Davis; and numerous nieces and nephews.

For the full obituary, please visit [King and Shearwood Funeral Home](#).

**Kyle Randal Tate**

Kyle Randal “Randy” Tate, 52, passed away Oct. 10, 2021.

Randy was born Dec. 17, 1968, in Talihina, Okla., to Jimmy Norman Tate and Sisteline Lucy Scott Kusler.

He was preceded in death by his mother; stepdad Jim Kusler; brother Greg Tate; and uncles and aunts.

Randy is survived by his wife Carla; sons Kyle Tate and spouse Megan, and Josh Tate and spouse Brooke; daughter Kyla Tate and boyfriend Jacob; grandchildren Jax Tate, Holden Tate, Lindri Tate, Rexley Rorex, Mason Lance, and Marlie Dean; his father; brother Jimmy Michael Tate; sisters Cheree Lindamood and Kimberly Henley; several nieces and nephews; and three aunts.

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

**Bobby Jones**

Bobby Jones, 84, passed away Sept. 11, 2021.

Bobby was born July 17, 1937, in Talihina, Okla., to Frank Jones and Bertha May Morgan.

He is survived by his wife Joyce; daughter Debi Sneed and spouse Mike; son Mark Jones and spouse Michelle; three grandchildren; five great-grandchildren; brother David Jones; and numerous nieces and nephews.

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

**Gary Noah**

Gary Noah, 73, passed away Oct. 11, 2021.

Gary was born May 29, 1948, in Talihina, Okla., to Esaias Harry Noah and Marsuise Colbert.

He was preceded in death by his parents; son Clinton Noah; brother Larry Noah; sisters Hazel Willis, Arma Jean Billy, Louisa Resendiz, Mildred Cusher, and Brenda Shotkey.

Gary is survived by son Richard Noah; grandchildren Bree Noah, Amber Walters, Shouden Noah, and Erin Noah; great-granddaughter Haven Luster; several nieces and nephews; and a host of other relatives and friends.

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

**Clinton Dale Noah**

Clinton Dale Noah, 43, passed away Oct. 11, 2021.

Clinton was born July 6, 1978, in Talihina, Okla., to Gary Noah and Ava Mae Battiest Baken.

He was preceded in death by his father.

Clinton is survived by his mother; daughter Erin Noah; brothers Richard Noah and Lester Battiest and spouse Sherry; sister Eza Carol and spouse Richard “Ricky” Owens Jr.; granddaughter Haven Luster; several nieces and nephews; and a host of other relatives and friends.

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

**Fern Jean Stafford**

Fern Jean Stafford, 72, passed away Oct. 17, 2021.

Fern was born Oct. 7, 1949, in Talihina, Okla., to Jessie Willard Stafford and Louisa Dyer.

She was preceded in death by her parents; grandchildren Jesse Johnson and Kingsley Rogers; brothers Richard Stafford, Virgil Stafford, Vernon Stafford, J.D. Stafford, and Charlie Stafford; and sister Geraldine Stafford.

Fern is survived by life partner Ray Tushka; her children and their spouses Shane and Candice Rogers, Gary “Bubba” and Kimberley Rogers, Kristi Rogers and Gerald Tee, Rhonda and Lee Roy Sparkman, and Brandon and Kimberly Rogers; grandchildren Taylor Rogers, Cameron Webb, Chet Taylor, Paisley Rogers; Payton Rogers, Daekin Johnson, Aiden Johnson, E.J. Bizzell, Dakota Rogers, Samantha Rogers, Lukas Rogers, Brandon Keith Caraza, and Remy, Manny, I-see-o, Tearsha and Harlem Rogers; 20 great-grandchildren; dear friend of 40 years Frances Pollard; several nieces and nephews; and a host of extended family and friends.

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

**Robert Taylor**

Robert Taylor, 85, passed away Oct. 17 2021.

Robert was born July 28, 1936, in Pryor, Okla., to Harry and Maudette “Maud” Taylor.

He was preceded in death by his parents; sister Harriette Jane Krayenvenger; and brother Jack Taylor.

Robert is survived by his wife Dena; children Scott Taylor and spouse Lisa, and John Taylor and spouse Mary Beth; grandchildren Magdalene, Mary Grace, Wyatt, and Blake Taylor; sister Billie Bean; and several nieces and nephews.

For the full obituary, please visit [Lake Ridge Chapel](#).

**Richard Alan McCasland**

Richard “Rich” Alan McCasland, 55, passed away Oct. 10, 2021.

Rich was born April 27, 1966, in Concord, Calif., to Richard H. McCasland and Karen (Derrick) Roberson.

He was preceded in death by his grandparents.

Rich is survived by his wife Miriam; children Jeremy McCasland and spouse Makayla, Austin McCasland and spouse Amanda, Elisabeth Lee and spouse John, Gabriel Taylor, and Thomas Knapp; grandchildren Audrey McCasland, Grant McCasland, Grady McCasland, Rachael McCasland, baby McCasland, and baby Lee both on the way; his parents and Darrell Roberson; siblings Jerry McCasland and spouse Michele, John McCasland, Derrick Roberson and spouse Tierra, Zach McCasland, and Eli McCasland.

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

**Leslie Nicole Shomo**

Leslie Nichole Shomo, 39, passed away Oct. 4, 2021.

Leslie was born July 13, 1981, in Talihina, Okla., to Deroy and Fay Willis Shomo

She was preceded in death by her father; uncles Charles Willis, Glenn Willis, Jimmy “Coon” Willis, Van Shomo, Tim Shomo, and J.D. Shomo; aunts Sarah Salisbury, Shirley Wickson, Betty Morales, Nellie Shomo, and Doris Shomo; grandmother Annie Mae Wilson; great-grandmother Julia Tims; and grandfather Jimmerson Willis.

Leslie is survived by her partner David Steel; her mother; brother Franklyn Shomo; sisters Carrol James and Frances Shomo; uncles Sherrill Shomo, Andrew Willis, and Nathan Willis; aunts Rosie Williston, Kay Shomo, and Minnie Jones; cousins Dewayne Shomo and children Latasha, Jacqueline, and Tristan, Valerie and Mike Holt and children Kayla, Keshia, and Lance, Stephanie Shomo and Robert and children Maria and Joshua, Jimmy Shomo and children Monica, Jared, Justin, and Tye, Sherrill Shomo Jr. and children Joselyn, Leigha, and Ashton; and a host of extended family and friends.

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

**Stacey Pair**

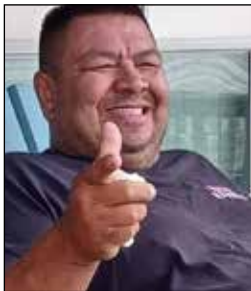
Stacey “Big Chief” Pair, 50, passed away Oct. 22, 2021.

Stacey was born March 15, 1971, in Durant, Okla., to Johnny Weldon and Barbara Sue (Presley) Pair.

He was preceded in death by his parents; brothers Mark Pair and Weldon Pair; sister Johna Pair; grandmother Rosie Pair; and father-in-law Marvin Gross.

Stacey is survived by his wife Tammie; sons Slader Pair and Sabastian Pair; daughters Shoshauna Pair, Stacia Pair, Destiny Rogers, and Meagen Rogers; step-daughters Kari Gross and boyfriend Joseph Dunlap, and Baylea Gross; sisters Loucinda French and spouse Homer, and Tina Taylor and spouse Steve; brother-in-law Marvin Gross and spouse Liz; sisters-in-law Betsy Stinson and spouse Josh, and Katie Gross; mother-in-law Betty Gross; grandsons Xavior Pair and Sulphur Ned; numerous nieces, nephews, and other extended family and friends.

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

**Vance Cornelius Tipton**

Vance “Neal” Cornelias Tipton, 68, passed away June 24, 2021.

Neal was born Aug. 27, 1952, in Bakersfield, Calif., to Norma Jean Harkins and L.C. Vance Tipton.

He was preceded in death by his parents; and sister Laurel Tipton.

Neal is survived by his wife Wanda (Heinze); children Jeremiah Tipton and spouse Cecilia, Jennifer Kiley and spouse Darby, and Annalee and Jessica Tipton; sisters Maurise Scharton and Tammi Tipton; stepmother Betty Tipton; stepchildren Tiffany Elliott and spouse Chance, and Michael and Mark Diemart.

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

**Billy Joe Tidwell**

Billy Joe Tidwell, 91, passed away Oct. 22, 2021.

Billy was born Sept. 3, 1930, in Bennington, Okla., to Charley Houston Tidwell and Mary Magalene Lebew.

He was preceded in death by his parents; son Billy Lee Tidwell; brothers Ray, Paul, Bobby, and Charles; and grandsons Jason, Arron, and Jeremy Tidwell.

Billy is survived by his wife Gloria; children Judy Elmore and spouse Arnie, Jim Tidwell and spouse Donna, Nancy French, and John Tidwell and spouse Karen; daughter-in-law Nancy Tidwell; eight grandchildren; 12 great-grandchildren; two great-great-grandchildren; and numerous nieces and nephews.

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

**Berta Lee Johnson**

Berta “Lauren” Lee Johnson, 89, passed away Oct. 24, 2021.

Lauren was born Dec. 18, 1931, in Oklahoma City, Okla., to Luther Emery Gray and Edith Bernice (Armour) Gray.

She was preceded in death by her parents.

Lauren is survived by her husband Danny; her children Dr. David Roberts and spouse Fahaa (Baden) and Mark Roberts and spouse Karen (Hutchins); grandchildren Bronwen Roberts and spouse Victor Maldonado and Clifton Roberts; granddaughter Aria Roberts; sister Ann Victory and spouse Howard; nephews and nieces Joe Victory and spouse Kourtney, LeeAnn Victory and spouse Ricky Burns, Joseph and Emma Victory, and Amelia Burns.

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

**Marilynn Marie Pebsworth**

Marilynn Marie (McKee) Pebsworth, 65, passed away Oct. 2, 2021.

Marilynn was born Jan. 20, 1956, in Antlers, Okla., to Wilburn and June “Anna” McKee.

She was preceded in death by her parents; and grandson Zach Pebsworth.

Marilynn is survived by her husband James; son Wesley Pebsworth and spouse Kristin; daughter Mari-la Miller and spouse Monte; stepdaughter Shawn Pebsworth; stepson Zane Pebsworth and spouse Angela; grandchildren Ryan, Montgomery, Meredith, Melanie, Britany, Dusty, Jesse, and Shepard; great-grandchildren Kason, Jaxon, Braylon, Addison, Zoey, Kye, Zachary, and Reagyn; sister Carolynn Smith and spouse Graylan; brother Dannie McKee and spouse Debbie; and a host of other family, friends, and loved ones.

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

**Micheline Elizabeth Pesantubbee**

Micheline Elizabeth Pesantubbee, 67, passed away July 13, 2021.

Micheline was born Sept. 13, 1953, in Enid, Okla., to James Howard and Annie Mae (Cricklin) Barrows.

She was preceded in death by her parents; sister Mary A. Reece; grandmothers Mary Daisy Cricklin and Elizabeth Barrows; and nephew Jonathan Moses.

Micheline is survived by sisters Carolyn S. Moses, Catherine J. Bolin and spouse Darrell, Cheryl L. Hensley, and Valerie M. Orcutt and spouse Mike; nieces Amy Reece, Shawn Dixon, Catherine Moses, Dailen Snake, Tracey Settlemire, and Philica Parker; nephews Jason Reece, Austin Moses, Jeremy Punkett, Ivan Goad, Roy Bolin, William J. Hensley, and Shane Foster; numerous great-nieces and great-nephews; and special friends Mary Churchill, Lisa Larosa and children, and Sydney R. Switzer.

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

**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

Hull crowned National Miss United States Agriculture



Cambrey Jo Hull was named 2021 National Miss United States Agriculture in Orlando, FL, in June. Hull is a senior at Roland, High School in Roland, Oklahoma. Her platform during her tenure will be Planting Seeds of Success with Disabled and At-Risk Children. Hull has a unique understanding of these hardships because of her hearing disability and speech impediment. With her title, she will be able to teach, inspire and advocate, not only for American agriculture but children just like her.

Jamison shows off successful Growing Hope crop



Jude Jamison, a 16-year-old tribal member living in Cincinnati, Ohio, planted the Tanchi Tobhi seeds his family received from the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Growing Hope program. Jude is pictured with his Tanchi stalks and fruits. Following harvest, Jude and his family dried the Tanchi for flour making. Jude was excited to bring a part of the Choctaw Nation to Ohio.

Oxford turns 99

Jack Oxford, Medford, Oregon, turns 99 years old on January 9. Oxford was born in Oklahoma and married the former Cleta Turnbol. The couple had five children Sharon, Linda, Dorothy, Billy and Clifford. All of Jack's children live nearby in Oregon. Jack has 14 grandchildren; multiple great-grandchildren; and several great-great-grandchildren. Oxford's family wants to wish him, whom they consider the best father in the world, a very happy birthday!



Emily Walden would like to thank the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma for their gracious and appreciated scholarships that supported Emily in finishing her doctoral degree. Emily graduated in June 2021 with her Ph.D. in school psychology from the University of Oregon's College of Education, following a one-year clinical internship. Currently, she is completing her residency year to be a licensed psychologist. She enjoys providing therapy to children, adolescents and families; she is especially focused on concerns related to anxiety, depression, trauma and parenting skills training. Emily is proud to be a member of the Choctaw Nation!

Walden earns Ph.D

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Kenneth and Willie Steel celebrated their 60th anniversary on Sept. 30. They met and fell in love in Texas and throughout the following years, they raised their children, Vickie Osburne of Talihina, Oklahoma, Jairus (Trish) Steel of DeQueen, Arkansas, Kenneth Jr. of Tacoma, Washington, Charlie (Kathy) Steel of Wetherford, Texas, and Kimberly (Juan) Cacho of Adamsville, Tennessee. They are loved by their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Steels Celebrate 60 years

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Marshall to be published in 'Chronicles of Oklahoma'

DURANT, Okla. – For Nathaniel Marshall, what started as a research project and paper has turned into an article that has been accepted for publication by The Chronicles of Oklahoma. "Gefangen: The Lived Experience at Camp Tonkawa, Oklahoma," is the title of the article written by Marshall, a senior history major at Southeastern Oklahoma State University. The Chronicles is a publication of the Oklahoma Historical Society (OHS). The article is about a World War II Prisoners of

War Camp which was located in Tonkawa, Oklahoma. Tonkawa is near Ponca City in northern Oklahoma. "The story focuses on what the prisoners said about their experiences there," Marshall said. "The Tonkawa Historical Society provided a great deal of assistance to me. I did research at the (McCarter) museum there and was able to read letters and postcards written by the prisoners. I was then able to correspond with some of their family members in Germany to gain additional insight."

The camp was built in late 1942 and closed in 1945. "Publishing in the Chronicles of Oklahoma is an accomplishment for any historian, but for Nathaniel to do so as an undergraduate is even more impressive," said Southeastern history professor Dr. Brooks Flippen. "Nathaniel has written an interesting article that adds to our knowledge about Oklahoma's past and deserves the wide audience it will surely receive." First issued in 1921 as the official journal of the OHS, The Chronicles of Oklaho-



ma is mailed to members and subscribers quarterly. Each issue contains scholarly articles, book reviews, meeting minutes and notes and documents.



Betty Ann (Ayers) Weaver was born on Dec. 24, 1941, in Vinita, Craig County, Oklahoma. Betty turns 80 years young on Dec. 24, 2021, and will be celebrating with her family. She is a loving sister, mother, grandmother and friend to all. Betty loves to laugh and have fun with family and friends, playing board games, video games, watching NASCAR or football. Betty enjoys drawing, needlework and woodworking. She is a registered Choctaw artist and is proud of her native heritage. Betty is a descendant of Chief Apukshun-nubbee of 1740-1824. He is her fifth great-grandfather. Happy Birthday Betty, Momma, Nanee! We Love You!

Weaver turns 80

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Moore inducted into Hall of Fame

Billy Jack Moore from Union, South Carolina, was inducted into the Union County High School Hall of Fame Oct. 8, 2021. Billy Jack coached high school sports in South Carolina and Georgia for 47 years. In those 47 years, he coached five South Carolina State Championships in football and one South Carolina State Championship in baseball. Billy Jack is a former resident of Sulphur, Oklahoma, and a 1958 graduate of Sulphur High School. He went on to graduate from Panhandle State University, where he earned a full scholarship playing football. Billy Jack was inducted into the Panhandle State University Hall of Fame in 2010. He and his wife Kathryn now reside in Union.

Kaden James Heitt

Kaden James Heitt was born nearly seven weeks early on Tuesday, August 17, 2021, weighing 4 lbs. 1 oz. and measuring 17 inches long. He spent 11 days in the NICU at the OU Children's Hospital in Oklahoma City, where he fully embraced his name's meaning of "fighter."



Kaden is now growing well in Norman, Oklahoma, with his proud parents, Briton Heitt and Ramona (Hale) Heitt, and siblings, Brielle and Robert Heitt. His living grandparents include Ramona Hale, Martin Heitt and Paige Martin. His deceased, beloved grandfather (and fellow tribal Choctaw member) was Robert Hale. Living great-grandparents include James Heitt, Mary Doyle, Geneva Simmons and Benjamin Espinosa. His deceased great grandparents include (fellow tribal member) Louis Hale, Dorothy Koos and Gary and Sally Warner.

October Veteran of the Month

Walker Davis, resident of McCurtain County, Oklahoma is October's Veteran of the Month.

Davis, previously the Outstanding Elder of the Choctaw Nation for 2008-2009, served in the U.S. Navy for six years, beginning Sept. 24, 1956. He achieved the rank of E-4 Boatswain Mate.

He served aboard the USS Cape Esperance and USS Oriskany as helmsman and served with the "five-minute team" in Midway where a plane left every five minutes. He served as a 5-inch 38-gun mount captain aboard the USS Oriskany and served on a demolition team.

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma holds our Veterans in the highest esteem and appreciates the sacrifices and contributions they have made to preserve our freedoms and the way of life we hold dear.



Wright City cross country team makes history

The Wright City Lady Jax won the All Stars Cross Country Championship in Chickasha, Oklahoma. These Lady Jax medaled and the team won the State Championship for the first time in Wright City School history. All five runners are members of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.



Pictured, left to right: Kenlie Zilliox, Cecilia Tisho, Mia Reich, Poppy Christie and Falyn Martin.

November Veteran of the Month

Austin Jefferson, of Bethel, Oklahoma, was November's Veteran of the Month.

Jefferson joined the United States Army in 1977 and achieved the rank of Sergeant E-5 Specialist. He was stationed at Ft. Jackson, South Carolina for basic training and basic electrical schooling; at Huntsville, Alabama for AIT for Tow and Dragon wire guided missile systems, where he tested missile systems to ensure proper functionality; and then at Ft. Riley, Kansas as part of the 701st Maintenance Battalion Golf Company where he oversaw five maintenance trucks to maintain the TOW and Dragon wire guided missile systems.

He joined the Army Reserves in 1980 in Antlers, Oklahoma where he was given the rank of Sergeant and was a lithographer.

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma holds our Veterans in the highest esteem and appreciates the sacrifices and contributions they have made to preserve our freedom and the way of life we hold dear.



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ITI FABVSSA

A New Chahta Homeland: A History by the Decade, 1900-1910 (Part II)

Iti Fabvssa is currently running a series that covers the span of Oklahoma Choctaw history. By examining each decade since the Choctaw government arrived in our new homelands using Choctaw-created documents, we gain a better understanding of Choctaw ancestors’ experiences and how they made decisions that have led us into the present. This month, we will be covering Part II of the 1905-1910 period, when Choctaws were preoccupied with the creation of citizen rolls, allotment, and Oklahoma statehood.

In 1889, the “Unassigned Lands” (present-day western Oklahoma) opened to white settlement in an event now known as the Oklahoma Land Run. Authorized by the 1862 Homestead Act, settlers were allowed to claim 160 acres of public land and receive title to it after five years of working and living on that parcel of land. Originally, these lands were reserved for the possible relocation of Plains nations, but with increasing demands for land by Americans, Congress redesignated this land for settlers. After the infamous April 22 land run, Congress passed the Organic Act of 1890, which organized those lands into “Oklahoma Territory.” Before any place could be made into a state and brought into the United States, it first had to meet the requirements to be a U.S. territory. After fulfilling another set of requirements, a territory could become a U.S. state and join the United States of America. The territorialization of Oklahoma Territory, a major step toward statehood, only increased the pressure on the Five Tribes to allot their lands in neighboring Indian Territory (present-day eastern Oklahoma), especially with the increasing influx of white intruders entering their lands. The move towards combining Oklahoma and Indian Territories into a single state seemed inevitable after the proposed State of Sequoyah failed to pass Congress in 1905, which was reviewed in last month’s Part I of the 1900-1910 period of this series.

In 1906, Congress passed the Five Tribes Act as part of an effort to further assimilate their citizens into U.S. society by changing how tribal governments operated. It did this by moving control over numerous offices from tribal governments to the U.S. government. For instance, the U.S. became responsible for land offices and the entire school systems that the Five Tribes had built since their arrival in their new homelands. Although the Five Tribes Act tried to end the governments of the Five Tribes, that section was repealed with later legislation. Another important change came from Section 6 of the Five Tribes Act, which stated that if any of the Five Tribes chiefs refused or neglected to do his duty, he may be removed, and the U.S. President would fill the vacancy. This legally allowed the President to begin appointing every chief not long after the act’s passage. Although we do not review all the parts of this act here, it is still an important piece of legislation that affects Choctaws today.

The Five Tribes Act also set March 4, 1907 as the closing date for the Dawes rolls. After that date, no additional citizens could be added to the rolls. As mentioned in Part I, the Dawes Commission was responsible for developing Choctaw rolls to give allotments to every citizen. Not all the lands owned by Choctaw Nation were allotted. Townsites, timberlands, coal and mineral lands were all exempted from allotment. These lands that were not included in the allotment process were to be sold by the U.S. government. The proceeds from their sale would later be distributed to Choctaw and Chickasaw citizens in the form of per capita payments. Because of massive pushes by U.S. citizens and members of Congress to complete the allotment process in Indian Territory, the Dawes Commission had not even completed the final rolls for the Five Tribes before they had to start issuing allotment parcels to individual citizens. This only increased the chaos and disorganization of the process. The next major task was dividing the lands into allotments and assigning them to people.

When Choctaws received their allotments, some of the allotted lands were good for farming and some were not. Because of this, allotment sizes were determined by the quality and value of the land. Since Choctaw and Chickasaws were united by treaty their lands were evaluated together. All Choctaw-Chickasaw allotment parcels had an average value of 320 acres, meaning that after getting the value of all the Choctaw-Chickasaw lands and dividing it by the number of citizens, this was the equal value of the land. In practice, this meant that sometimes an individual would get 500 acres of rocky and unfarmable land while another person might get 80 acres of very good farmland. Sometimes people received parcels of land that were in completely different places than where they lived at the time of allotment. Choctaw-Chickasaw allotments were also divided into two categories: homestead and surplus. The logic behind this organizational method was that Choctaws would have land to live on land (homestead) and land on which they could improve upon for financial gains (surplus).

Another important fact about Five Tribes’ allotments was that they were held



Crowds waiting to register for their allotments outside the railcar set up for the Dawes Commission. Image courtesy of the W.P. Chaney Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.

in a special legal status, “restricted.” The restricted status prevented Choctaw individuals from being able to sell, lease, or effectively manage their allotted land without the approval of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The logic behind making allotted lands “restricted” was that the federal government believed Native people were not smart enough to understand how to manage their lands properly. Therefore, they needed government supervision for how they managed their lands. Many educated members of Choctaw society who ran their own businesses often vehemently opposed these restrictions because they undermined their ability to manage their own affairs. These restrictions would become a major point of contention and would be continually renegotiated and renewed for certain groups of Choctaws decades after the original 1898 Curtis Act, which outlined the original terms for restrictions.

There were also different groups of people who received allotments with different sets of conditions. For instance, orphaned children and individuals with disabilities often needed guardians for their allotments. This proved to be an area in which white men took advantage of Five Tribes citizens to gain more lands and make money for themselves. There are accounts of numerous white men who became professional guardians that would manage the lands and money of numerous Choctaws with restrictions for a profit. In 1908, Congress passed legislation that changed the jurisdiction of Indian minors’ estates from federal courts to Oklahoma probate courts. Those familiar with Oklahoma probate courts opposed this shift, arguing that these children’s cases would be plundered. These protests went unheeded, and the prediction came to pass. These issues would continue through the 21st century to the detriment of many of their descendants today.

Despite generations of Choctaws that fought against their incorporation into the United States, Indian Territory was combined with Oklahoma Territory, and on November 16, 1907, Oklahoma became a state and joined the United States. With Choctaws’ lands allotted despite great opposition, Choctaw society in the new homeland fundamentally changed. One of the intents behind allotment was to separate and weaken the Choctaw community. But despite all these major events, Choctaws worked to prevent that. Next month, we will look at the various ways that Choctaws continued to meet and organize to demand that the U.S. government fulfill its treaty and other legal obligations even though many of the powers of their government had been stripped away.

Additional reading resources on this period are available on the Choctaw Nation Cultural Service webpage (<https://choctawnationculture.com/choctaw-culture/additional-resources.aspx>). Follow along with this Iti Fabvssa series in print and online at <https://www.choctawnation.com/history-culture/history/iti-fabvssa>. If you have questions or would like more information on the sources, please contact Megan Baker at meganb@choctawnation.com.

YAB

YOUTH ADVISORY BOARD

EMPOWERING STUDENTS TO INSPIRE POSITIVE CHANGE THROUGH SERVANT LEADERSHIP

CONTACT A LOCAL YAB CHAPTER TODAY:
CHOCTAWNATION.COM/YAB

FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK: FACEBOOK.COM/CNYAB

CONTACT: (800) 522-6170 OR YAB@CHOCTAWNATION.COM

Housing Headlines

By Bobby Yandell

This month, I would like to highlight our rental assistance service.

Rental assistance provides tribal members the opportunity to rent safe and sanitary housing outside of Choctaw Nation-owned rental properties.

Rental assistance is available throughout the reservation area of the Choctaw Nation.

Applicants must submit a completed application along with their tribal membership card and income verification (other documents may be required). Those who are under the income guidelines may then be eligible to receive rental assistance for one year. After the one-year period, applicants must come off the program for one year, allowing the Housing Authority the opportunity to serve as many tribal members as possible with rental assistance. Exceptions to the one-year rule are elders (55 and older), disabled families and college students (who may be served for up to 4 years as long as they are enrolled full-time and maintain at least a 2.50 GPA.)

Currently, there is no waiting list for rental assistance as the Tribal Council appropriated additional funding this year to alleviate the backlog.

Each rental unit must undergo a Housing Quality Services (HQS) inspection prior to being placed on the program, ensuring the landlord keeps the unit maintained in a safe and sanitary condition. Units will be inspected at least annually.

The Rental Assistance program also administers the Veteran’s Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) program. VASH is a collaborative effort between two federal entities, HUD and the VA, to provide housing vouchers to Native American tribes to house homeless veterans. Currently, the Choctaw Nation has 20 vouchers.

Applications for all Housing programs are located at each community center and can be found online.

Stay Connected

CHOCTAWNATION.COM

Housing Authority

YOUTH WORK OPPORTUNITIES

Experience in service learning and work environments. Including apprenticeships, internships, mentorships, job shadowing and other on the job opportunities.

Please be prepared with the following:
CDIB/Tribal Membership card, Utility Bill (water, electric, natural gas) or copy of lease agreement to verify address, proof of income of household adults, social security card, youth aged 16-17 accompanied by parent/guardian. If you have a laptop or tablet, bring it.

APPLY ONLINE AT:
CHOCTAWNATION.COM/EMPLOYMENT-TRAINING-SERVICES

OR AT ONE OF THE CHOCTAW COMMUNITY CENTERS ON THE DATES LISTED

Antlers	February 15 & 24	2-7 PM	McAlester	January 5, 19	2-7 PM
Atoka	February 22	2-7 PM	Poteau	January 3, 10, 24	2-7 PM
Battiest	February 3 & 17	2-6 PM	Smithville	February 8 & 21st	2-6 PM
Broken Bow	January 6, 13	2-6 PM	Spiro	January 17	2-7 PM
Coalgate	January 12 & February 9	2-7 PM	Stigler	January 11	2-7 PM
Crowder	January 31st	2-7 PM	Talihina	February 2 & 28	2-7 PM
Durant	January 7 & 25	2-7 PM	Willburton	January 18 & February 7	2-7pm
Hugo	January 28 & February 23	2-7 PM	Wright City	February 11	2-6pm
Idabel	January 20	2-7 PM			

Applications also available every Friday in January and February Employment Training Services located in Durant Headquarters, available from 8:30 AM - 3:30 PM

APPLICATION CLOSES ON APRIL 1, 2022

Choctaw Nation Summer Youth Employment Services

PROGRAM FUNDED BY PUBLIC LAW 102-477

Making holiday meals healthier

By Chris Jennings

Staying healthy during the holidays is always a struggle. After many families skipped large gatherings in 2020 due to the pandemic, it could be even harder to resist the temptation in 2021.

The simplest thing to do is plan ahead. Don't skip meals leading to family gatherings, instead eat something before going to curb your appetite and stop you from snacking away on a table full of pre-meal snacks with questionable health benefits.

Skipping meals can also have harmful consequences for people with diabetes. As blood sugar drops, your body begins to crave more carbohydrates, leading to more unhealthy choices, especially when snacking while waiting for the main meal to begin.

Sodium intake should also be monitored by people who have been diagnosed with diabetes. The American Diabetes Association recommends people with diabetes limit their sodium intake to 2,300 milligrams (one teaspoon of table salt) per day.

There are several ways to reduce your sodium intake when choosing how to eat certain foods. Chase Ward, a registered dietician with the Choctaw Nation says, "Packaged or prepared foods contain loads of sodium. If you prepare those items yourself, you can easily cut that sodium down because you're the one in control."

Salt is often used as a preservative in canned vegetables. Switching to frozen instead of canned can reduce or eliminate sodium.

One tablespoon of butter contains about 91mg of salt. When cooking a recipe that requires butter, switching to unsalted is a better option.

"Most of the recipes we use contain butter, so switching to unsalted butter for recipes will make a huge difference," said Ward.

When it's time to get together with the family, you can get ahead of the game by bringing some healthy alternatives for everybody to enjoy.

Swap out one or two pies on the dessert table with some grilled fruit.

Another option is to replace cream cheese dip with hummus. Cream cheese dip can have around 50 calories from fat and 14 grams of cholesterol per serving. Load the plate with an assortment of veggies to dip with, and you get the added benefit of a more filling snack, which could lead to less overeating of the main course.

Serve a pumpkin pie pudding instead of pumpkin pie to cut out the carbs in the crust.

Using fresh cranberries instead of canned cranberry sauce can eliminate a lot of added sugar. Cranberries are high in antioxidants, vitamins C, E and K. They also contain fiber, so go ahead and load up.

Instead of traditional eggnog, you can drink premade nog with almond or oat milk. Oat milk is more environmentally friendly, using less water than almonds do to grow.

Instead of hot chocolate, drink cinnamon or chai tea to get the holiday flavor.

You can also make substitutions while cooking to "healthify" some of your favorite holiday meals.

For cakes, cookies and quick breads, try using egg whites or cholesterol-free egg substitutes instead of whole eggs. Two egg whites or ¼ cup cholesterol-free egg substitute can be used in many recipes in place of one whole egg.

You can mix whole wheat flour with half the called for all-purpose flour.

Instead of fruit canned in a heavy syrup, use fresh fruit or fruit canned in its own water or juice.

When a recipe calls for white or brown sugar, use half the called-for amount in cake and cookie recipes. Switch to unsalted or salt-free soups or broth.

Ward jokingly referred to condensed soups and broth as just fancy names for salt. "You can lower sodium drastically by using the low-salt, salt-free or unsalted soup stock or broth," said Ward.

On the right side of this page, you'll find a few heart-healthy recipes that don't skimp on flavor to try during the holiday season.

Instant Pot Turkey Tenderloin


- 2 T dried parsley flakes
- 1 T olive oil
- 3/4 tsp salt
- 1 tsp black pepper
- 1/2 tsp dry mustard

- 24 oz turkey breast tenderloin
- 1/2 cup low-sodium chicken broth

Preparation

1. Combine parsley flakes, olive oil, salt, pepper, and mustard in a small bowl. Rub evenly over turkey.
2. Place turkey in a 6-quart pot and add chicken broth.
3. Cover Instant Pot and, using the manual setting, set to 18 minutes on high pressure, making sure the pressure valve is sealed. When done, let the pressure slowly release.
4. Let stand for at least 5 minutes before slicing.

Recipe courtesy of Jessica Ivey, RDN, LD via www.todaysdietitian.com



Easy Pumpkin Soup

- 1 T olive oil
- 1/2 cup finely chopped sweet onion
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp ground nutmeg

- 1/4 tsp black pepper
- 2 (15-oz) cans pumpkin purée
- 3 cups unsalted chicken stock
- 1 (12-oz) can nonfat evaporated milk
- 3 T maple syrup

Preparation

1. Put olive oil in a large pot over medium heat. Add onion and sauté for 5 minutes.
2. Add garlic, salt, cinnamon, nutmeg and pepper. Sauté for 3 minutes.
3. Add pumpkin and stock. Stir to combine and ing to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce heat to low and simmer for 20 minutes.
4. Stir in evaporated milk and maple syrup.
5. Let the soup cool for 10 minutes. Once cooled, transfer to a blender and process until smooth.
6. Return soup to pot and heat.
7. Serve hot.

Recipe courtesy of Jessica Ivey, RDN, LD via www.todaysdietitian.com



Cranberry Apple Hazelnut Crumble


- 12 oz fresh cranberries
- 3 apples, peeled, sliced
- 1 orange, zest and juice
- 1/2 cup coconut palm sugar (or brown sugar), divided
- 1 cup old-fashioned oats, gluten-free
- 1/4 cup whole grain,

- gluten-free flour (quinoa, sorghum or millet flour)
- 1/3 cup hazelnuts, chopped
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 1 tsp cardamom
- 1/2 tsp ginger, ground
- Pinch salt (optional)
- 1/4 cup coconut oil, melted, cooled

Preparation

1. Preheat oven to 375° F.
2. Mix cranberries and apples together in a medium bowl. Add the zest and juice of one orange and the sugar and toss well.
3. Pour filling into a 9-inch pie dish.
4. In a small bowl, mix together oats, flour, hazelnuts, cinnamon, cardamom, ginger, and salt (optional). Stir in coconut oil with a fork to make a crumbly mixture.
5. Sprinkle crumb topping over cranberry-apple filling and bake uncovered for 1 hour.

Recipe courtesy of Sharon Palmer, MSFS, RDN via www.todaysdietician.com



CHOCTAW NATION FOOD DISTRIBUTION

WAREHOUSES & MARKETS

Open 8:00 a.m.- 4:00 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday

Thursday: 9:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m.

November 2021

All markets open weekdays, December 1-28

Closed: December 15, 23-24 & 29-31.

Nutrition Ed & Food Programs subject to cancellation

Participants can request a calendar at their location.

ANTLERS 400 S.W. "O" ST., 580-298-6443
Nutrition ed and food demos December 7

BROKEN BOW 109 Chahta Rd., 580-584-2842
Nutrition ed and food demos December 9

DURANT 2352 Big Lots Pkwy., 580-924-7773
Nutrition ed and food demos December 14

MCALESTER 3244 Afullota Hina, 918-420-5716
Nutrition ed and food demos December 21

POTEAU 100 Kerr Ave., 918-649-0431
Nutrition ed and food demos December 2

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Keeping track of your family health history

By Chris Jennings

Knowing your family health history can help prevent disease or potentially find them early. If there is a family history of heart disease, cancer, diabetes, or stroke, you should speak to your doctor about early screening. Finding these diseases early on can often mean better health in the long run.

A family history of a particular disease doesn't mean you will get it. However, taking time to talk to family members about their health history and getting familiar with the health history risk of your family can help current and future generations.

Write down the names of your close relatives from both sides of the family: parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, nieces and nephews. Talk to these family members about their health history and at what age the conditions were first diagnosed. You might think you know about all of the conditions in your parents or siblings, but you might find out more information if you ask.

- Some common questions to ask family members are:
- Do you have any chronic diseases, such as heart disease or diabetes?
 - Do you have health conditions like high blood pressure or high cholesterol?
 - Have you had any other serious diseases, such as cancer or stroke? What type of cancer?
 - How old were you when each of these diseases or health conditions was diagnosed? (If your relative doesn't remember the exact age, knowing the approximate age is still useful.)
 - What is your family's ancestry?
 - What were the causes, and ages, of death for relatives who have died?

You can use the Centers for Disease Control's online tool, My Family Health Portrait, to keep track of your fam-

ily health history. The website will also allow you to share this information easily with other family members and doctors. You can find it at <https://phgkb.cdc.gov/FHH/html/index.html>.

By sharing this information with your primary care physician, they can decide if you or future generations are at an increased risk. If so, they may choose to start mammographies and colorectal screenings at an earlier age.

It's common knowledge that you can improve your health by maintaining a healthy diet, getting regular physical activity, and not smoking. Taking the time to talk to your family can also increase your chances of living a long and healthy life.



Photo Provided

It is important to know your family's health history. This holiday season is the perfect opportunity to discuss health history with your family members.

WIC OFFICE LOCATIONS

LOCATION	DAYS	HOURS
Antlers 580-298-3161	Every Tuesday	8:30am - 4:00pm
Atoka 580-889-5825	Monday, Wednesday, Thursday & Friday	8:00am - 4:30pm
Battiest 580-241-5458	1st Tuesday of the Month	8:30am - 4:00pm
Broken Bow 580-584-2746	Monday - Friday (except 1st Tuesday & 2nd Thursday of the Month)	8:00am - 4:30pm
Durant 580-920-2100 ext 83852	Monday - Friday	8:00am - 4:30pm
Heavener 918-974-1820	Tuesday, Thursday & Friday	8:00am - 4:30pm
Hugo 580-326-9707	Monday - Friday	8:00am - 4:30pm
Idabel 580-286-2600 ext 4113	Monday - Friday	8:00am - 4:30pm
McAlester 918-423-6335	Monday - Friday	8:00am - 4:30pm
Poteau 918-647-4585	Mon, Wed & Friday Tuesday & Thursday	8am - 4:30pm 8:30am - 5pm
Smithville 580-244-3289	2nd Thursday of the Month	8:30am - 4:00pm
Spiro 918-962-3832	Thursday & Friday (3rd, 4th & 5th Wednesdays of the month)	8:00am - 4:30pm
Stigler 918-967-4211	Monday - Tuesday (the first two Wednesdays)	8:30am - 4:00pm
Talihina 918-567-7000 ext 6792	Monday - Friday	8:00am - 4:30pm
Wilburton 580-642-7588	Monday and Wednesday	8:30am - 4:00pm
Mobile Van 580-380-5679	Dates & times vary due to weather & travel (Service in Boswell, Coalgate and Clayton)	

Choctaw Nation Health Services



CHILDREN'S FOOD PROGRAMS

SUMMER FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM AND AT-RISK CACFP

ANYONE IS ELIGIBLE TO COME GRAB A BAG OF SHELF-STABLE FOOD ITEMS FOR A WEEK. STOP BY THE NEAREST LOCATION TO YOU. MUST BE A PARENT OR GUARDIAN OF A SCHOOL-AGED CHILD(REN) AND MUST PROVIDE THE CHILD(REN)'S FIRST NAME(S) UPON PICK-UP.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT:
CHOCTAWNATION.COM/CHILDRENS-NUTRITION-PROGRAMS

PROGRAMS END ON THE LAST DAY OF SCHOOL ACCORDING TO THE LOCAL SCHOOL'S CALENDAR. CHECK WITH EACH SITE FOR INFORMATION ON HOLIDAY HOURS. HOURS AND LOCATION ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Choctaw Nation Health Services

CNHSa offers intergrated behavioral health services, building a healthier Nation

By Chris Jennings

According to Mental Health America, over half of adults with a mental illness do not receive treatment. The Choctaw Nation Integrated Behavioral Health Care program aims to improve that among tribal members living within the boundaries of the Choctaw Nation.

Integrated behavioral health is a term for having behavioral health therapists in a primary care setting. Carly Blemmel is one of the five integrated behavioral health therapists for the Choctaw Nation.

According to Blemmel, this is an essential service. “By having an integrated behavioral health clinician or an integrated behavioral health therapist in a primary care setting, you’re treating the whole person by treating their physical, emotional and mental needs,” explained Bemmell.

Primary care physicians increasingly rely on the services of integrated health therapists. This increased access to therapists across the Nation improves treatment planning while reducing the stigma associated with seeking mental and behavioral health treatment.

This more holistic approach to health care ensures that patients walk away more satisfied and better able to deal with the conditions that require a medical visit.

It’s not just the patients that benefit from this. Providers are also more satisfied that their patients will get the care they need when an integrated health therapist is available to work with patients.

Mary Boerner, a Certified Physician Assistant at the Women’s Health Clinic in Talihina said, “Integrated Behavioral Health is a game-changer for both the patient and the provider. An integrated therapist increases my confidence that all the patients’ needs are being met when they come into my clinic.”

Blemmel adds, “By addressing it in a primary care setting and providing education and resources and brief interventions for that patient, we can keep patients out of the emergency room.”

An integrated health therapist can help with things like pill swallowing and fear of needles.

If someone is afraid of needles, their stress levels can go up when visiting a doctor. The therapist can do brief sessions with that patient in the clinic or hospital to reduce their anxiety levels. They can also do short sessions on pill swallowing for both adults and children.

“One of the biggest predictors of health outcomes is patient behavior. Doctors can give a diagnosis and prescribe medication, but if the patient doesn’t take the medication or doesn’t

adhere to the behavior recommendations, then their health outcomes aren’t likely to improve,” said Blemmel.

An integrated health therapist can also help with things like goal setting. A patient may be having a tough time following their doctor’s recommendations or taking their medications. If they are, they can speak with an on-site integrated health therapist who can help the patient with some brief goal-setting suggestions to help make sure they follow through with the doctors’ recommendations.

In many cases, this is all they need. “They just need somebody to get them moving in the right direction,” said Blemmel.

Other times it may not be as simple as that.

As many as 80% of patients with behavioral health problems go to the emergency room or a primary care clinic. While an emergency room is the best place to get emergency care, they’re not often the best care solution for behavioral health problems. Many patients in a behavioral health crisis don’t need medical care. They haven’t physically injured themselves and don’t have any other health conditions.

The providers in those settings don’t always have the resources to address these problems, especially when dealing with depression, grief, or suicidal ideation.

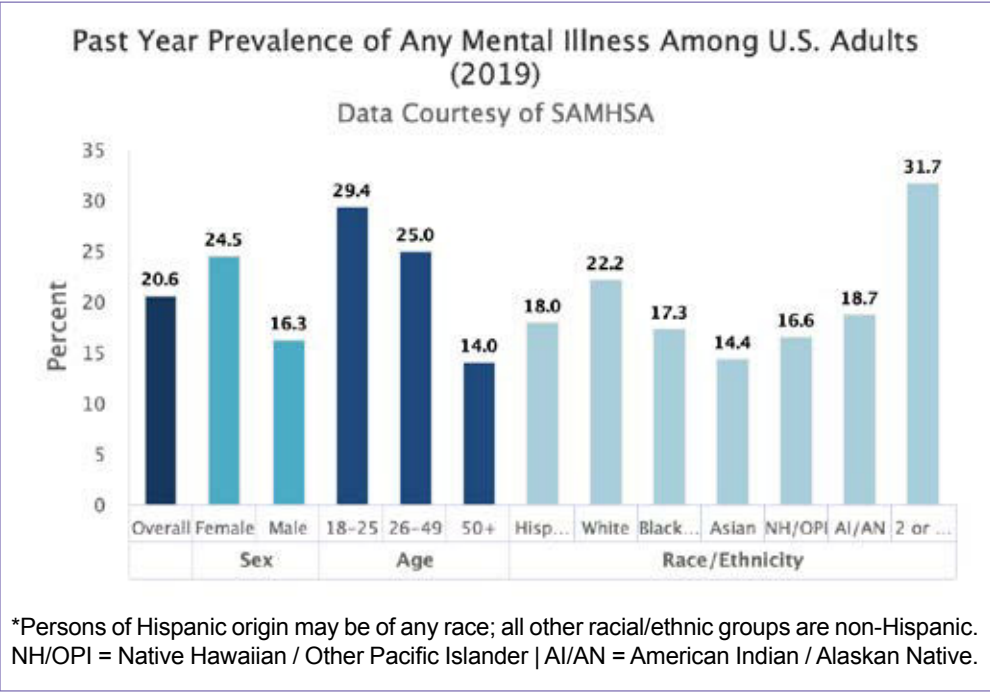
The COVID-19 pandemic has been responsible for millions of deaths and infections due to the virus. That brought extra, or new, anxiety, stress and grief to many people’s lives. An integrated therapist can help individuals get the proper care with a referral to support groups to get the help they need.

One of the places Blemmel spends a lot of her time as an integrated therapist is at the Women’s Clinic in Talihina. She says the Women’s clinic is more fully integrated where the provider and the therapists are collaborating more on treatment. “In the women’s clinic, integrated therapists are used to support many health outcomes in a holistic approach, not just for depression and anxiety,” said Blemmel.

One of those ways is by talking to women after giving birth Taylor Best delivered her son at the Choctaw Nation Health Care Center in Talihina recently and was pleased with every part of her labor and delivery experience. There was one part that she found to be extremely helpful, though.

“The day after I delivered my son, Carly came to check in on my mental well-being. I cannot stress how important and crucial her services were as I was navigating so many new thoughts, emotions and my new role in motherhood,” said Best.

“In the women’s clinic, I do a lot of



prevention. We talk about postpartum support and communication along with some family systems things that we do,” said Blemmel.

Best says she’s grateful for having Blemmel help her through recovery.

“Because this was my first time having a baby, I thought having someone like her to talk to was the standard. Mental health goes hand in hand with physical health,” said Best.

Integrated therapists can also identify non-medical issues that may pose a risk to patients, preventing them from getting the care they need. Blemmel gives an example saying, “It’s hard to focus on something like your sugar if you don’t have a roof over your head or food to eat. We’re also

making sure that we’re connecting patients to all that they need so that they can be their healthiest selves.”

The Nation has many services available to people for help. Sometimes navigating those services while also under the stress of a medical or behavioral health visit is difficult. Integrated therapists can serve as a sort of middleman, relieve some of the stress and help to ensure treatments are successful.

By making clinic visits and emergency room care less stressful for both the patient and provider, the Choctaw Nation integrated health therapists are helping to build a healthier Choctaw Nation.

Children 5-11 now eligible for COVID-19 vaccinations

DURANT, Okla. (November 10, 2021) – Parents have gained another weapon in their arsenal for their fight against the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and Centers for Disease Control (CDC) have approved the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccination for pediatric patients aged 5 to 11 years old.

The Choctaw Nation Clinics will be administering the pediatric version of the Pfizer vaccination to anyone who would like to obtain one, regardless of residency or tribal status. You can make an appointment to receive the vaccine by calling 800-349-7026 ext. 6, using your myCNHSA app, or visiting my.cnhsa.com.

“With school activities being allowed and increased back to near pre-pandemic levels, unvaccinated children will be the most likely to carry and spread the disease,” said Dr. Jason Hill, Chief Medical Officer of Choctaw Nation Health Services Authority (CNHSA). “Previously, the only thing that stood between the kids and the virus was a mask. The vaccination will provide their immune systems the extra protection needed to be able to ward off any potentially serious symptoms.”

Following the vaccine roll-out for adolescent patients, parents have been waiting on a way to protect their younger children. Since July 2021, the number of cases for children 14 years of age and younger have spiked,



Photo Provided

The FDA and CDC recently approved COVID-19 vaccinations for children ages 5-11.

leading to over 60,000 deaths of children 17 years old and younger (CDC data).

For any child not already established as a CNHSA patient, please bring proof of guardianship to your appointment. This can be a birth certificate or Department of Human Services (DHS) paperwork (petitions will not work).

To find the closest Choctaw Nation clinic near you visit www.cnhsa.com.

CHAHTA INCHUKKA

Home-Based Parenting

For information call (800) 522-6170 or visit <https://bit.ly/outreach-services>

DOWNLOAD THE MYCNHSA MOBILE APP NOW

ACCESS YOUR HEALTHCARE 24/7

The app is available to anyone who is a patient at any Choctaw Nation Health facility. Available now through the Apple App Store or Google Play.

Use your smartphone to scan the code and download the app.



COVID-19 VACCINE AVAILABLE TO CHILDREN

The Pfizer brand COVID-19 vaccination is now approved for children ages 5 and older.

Talk to your pediatrician about making an appointment at any Choctaw Nation Clinic.

To make an appointment to receive the vaccine, call 800-349-7026 ext. 6, use your myCNHSA app, or visit my.cnhsa.com.

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

CHOCTAW LANGUAGE SECOND SPEAKERS SURVEY

PLEASE CONSIDER TAKING THIS SHORT SURVEY IF YOU SPEAK OR UNDERSTAND CHOCTAW.

A second-language learner/speaker is one who spoke English first, but who has learned or is learning to speak Choctaw.

Use your smartphone camera to scan this code and take the survey.

bit.ly/language-speakers-survey

QUESTIONS OR FEEDBACK MAY BE EMAILED TO TBILLY@CHOCTAWNATION.COM

Choctaw Nation School of Choctaw Language

Check out dazzling lights and coffee shop delights in Choctaw Country

By Christian Toews

The holiday season always brings some much-needed downtime. Many people use this time to relax and spend time with family and friends. The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma has many unique and beautiful places to spend some time this Christmas season.

Choctaw Country is a diverse landscape with friendly and welcoming people living in all parts of the Choctaw Nation. People travel from all over the United States to take in the wonder that the area offers.

Choctaw Country has several perfect destinations for you to celebrate the holiday season. So, grab your friends and family, see the dazzling light displays, grab a cup of excellent coffee or both.

One of the main attractions during Christmas time is Christmas in the Park hosted by the Choctaw Nation. Christmas in the Park takes place at the Choctaw capitol grounds at Tvshka Homma.

The capitol grounds sit in a valley surrounded by the area’s stunning tree-covered hills. Each year, these hills transform into a vibrant display of fall colors. If you’re lucky, you might even see these colors in December.

Christmas in the Park will be open from December 3 to December 31 this year. Hot chocolate will be available on Friday and Saturday nights from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. on the weekends of December 3-4, 10-11 and 17-18. This drive-thru light display is a perfect way to spend an evening with your family or friends this holiday season.

While you’re in the area, stop by My Crystal Chandelier Coffee House & Gift Shop in Talihina. This coffee shop is a great place to stop on your way or after viewing Christmas lights. Letha Tipps owns and operates the coffee shop, and she said that she wanted to bring premium coffee to the southeast Oklahoma area.

She opened the doors in October of 2020 and said the tourists who come to see the Talimena Drive or other attractions in the area helped her get the business off the ground.

Now that she has been in business for a year, Tipps says she has a large group of regulars from the local community. My Crystal Chandelier Coffee House & Gift Shop serves Topeca Coffee. Tipps says she chose to serve Topeca, in part because it’s a local brand to Oklahoma.

“Not only is it a premium product, but it’s also out of Oklahoma, and we believe in supporting as local as we can,” she explained.

Tipps invites everyone to stop by and give the coffee a try.

“Stop in and experience the difference. In our geographical area, we are providing something that hasn’t existed by providing premium coffee and excellent service,” said Tipps.

If you travel northeast of Talihina this holiday season, you’ll find another popular holiday attraction– Lights on the Island at Wister Lake State Park in Wister, Oklahoma.

Located on Quarry Island within the park, this light display attracts people from across the country.

Lights on the Island is surrounded by water which provides a unique Christmas light display experience. This drive-through light display has something for everyone and is open nightly from November 12 through December 25, from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

If you are looking for delicious coffee near Lights on the Island, look no further than The Coffee Cup in Poteau. This unique coffee shop serves various specialty coffee drinks and uses premium beans from Onyx Coffee roasters out of Bentonville, Arkansas. The Coffee Cup is the perfect place to visit before or after your trip to see the Christmas lights in Wister.

We wish you a safe and happy holiday from all of us in Choctaw Country. For more information on winter activities in the area, visit <https://choctawcountry.com>.



Photo Provided

This December, check out the Choctaw Nation’s Christmas in the Park at Tvshka Homma. This is just one of the many spectacular light displays open this holiday season in Choctaw Country.



Photo Provided

Treat yourself with a deliciously warm cup of coffee from My Crystal Chandelier Coffee House & Gift Shop in Talihina.

School of Language introduces live online classes

By Kellie Matherly

The Choctaw Language School, Chahta Anumpa Aiiikhvna, is expected to begin its first ever live online language classes using Zoom web conferencing technology on January 16, 2022. The school has run online classes before, but they were presented as a series of pre-recorded lessons students watched on their own. With the addition of live web conferencing, students and teachers will be able to interact in real time.

According to Teresa Billy, Assistant Director of Education Services for the Language Department, the main goal of the new online format is to remove barriers that prevent students from learning the Choctaw language in the most effective ways. With live classes shut down under COVID-19 restrictions, Zoom offers an alternative for students who benefit from a live classroom environment, where they can ask questions, speak to their instructors and other students, as well as form study groups. Zoom classes also open the door for students who live outside the Choctaw Nation to learn the language alongside other students from across the country or even overseas.

The course’s developers worked closely with language departments at other tribes as well as a language professor at the University of Oklahoma to research the best way to deliver the course material. Billy stressed the need for a safe and open learning environment that encourages students to listen and respond as a group to prevent anyone from being singled out.

Students will begin the session in a large group where the instructor presents the basic information for the lesson. The class will

then divide up into breakout groups where they will practice the material using a pre-determined task list. Finally, the students will return to the large group to finish the lesson.

In addition to the live online classes, the curriculum includes access to a resource board, which houses digital and downloadable flash cards, timed drills and videos for lesson review.

The first round of classes will be Level I Choctaw, with Level II planned for release in March. Students will access the course through the Chahta Anumpa Aiiikhvna website at a set day and time each week. Each session will last for about an hour, and the class will run for 10 weeks. Initially, classes will be capped at 20 students each.

Students who complete the course and score 80% or higher on the final assessment will earn a certificate. There will be no limit on the number of times students can take the course, so anyone who does not score highly enough for certification can return to the class and try again.

There will be no outside resources required for the class, but students may wish to utilize tools on the Chahta Anumpa Aiiikhvna website. Audio clips of vocabulary, a free Choctaw dictionary, Word of the Day emails and a Choctaw language search engine are all available publicly.

For more information on the Chahta Anumpa Aiiikhvna or to access public language resources, please visit choctawschool.com. Enrollment for the January classes begins December 1 at <https://choctawschool.com/classes/zoom-classes.aspx>. The Language School also has a new Facebook page where updates and language activities can be found.



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#TogetherWe'reMore

Throughout 2021, the Choctaw Nation collected stories from tribal members, community partners, associates and anyone else who is Choctaw Proud. Here are a few of the responses to the Together, We're More project.

How has the Choctaw Nation Wellness Center improved your health?

"I started training with Ms. Janet in Idabel last year. I did the six-week program, five days a week at 5:00 a.m. every morning. I have heart issues and asthma; she worked the program to suit my needs. I have never felt better. I wore a size 18, and when I finished the program, I had to buy a size 11 in pants. The main goal was to help with stress—not only stress of 2020, but I have a highly stressful career, and I needed a positive way to deal with it. My mentality became "Just Go" instead of overthinking it. I am thankful that the Choctaw Nation has provided this resource and provided me a healthier body and state of mind."

– Jennifer Frady



What are you doing today to improve tomorrow?

"Our 11-year-old son collects cans and bottles. He turns them all in for money to donate. He's donated funds to local animal shelters, food distribution centers for people in need, families displaced by fires and other areas where he sees the need. He's been doing this since he was four. He's been very supported by our family, friends and the community. He's doing so much to improve the tomorrows. We are so proud of him, but he helps us see what we can do to help tomorrow for many."

– Stacey Davis Jones



What is your favorite way to connect with Choctaw Culture?

"Connecting with my family who are also Choctaw, collecting pictures & information about our deceased original enrollee members, attending the Labor Day festivals, reading books & articles, proudly displaying Choctaw Nation plates on my vehicles and most recently purchased a beautiful new gravestone, "Felihkatubbee," to replace the simple metal markers they had for decades at the Finley cemetery."

– Jimmy Felihkatubbee Nichols



How has Choctaw Nation Education Services helped you overcome challenges?

"The Choctaw Nation has done more for me and my family than I could ever thank them for. I am proud to be Choctaw! In 2015, I started school at SOSU, and with the Choctaws' help, I was able to graduate with my bachelor's in elementary education in 2017. They have helped with clothing and technology during COVID for my son who is in kindergarten this year. We are grateful for the Choctaw Nation and proud to be Choctaw."

– Chaeli Pettitt



How do you celebrate Choctaw heritage?

"I celebrate my heritage through art. As a writer and literary artist, I draw inspiration from the great Chahta storytelling traditions. We are a people of stories, and the ones passed down from our elders are so often not the ones that come from history books. I try to bring those stories, in my own way, to the Chahta and others alike. Unfortunately, for some—like myself—connections to our heritage have been fragmented by time, distance, and social pressures. I hope that through storytelling, poetry, and art—and through understanding, empathy, and outreach—I can help others bridge the gap between past and present."

– Todd Hawkins



What doors has the Choctaw Nation opened for you?

"I returned to college as a non-traditional student at the age of 34. When I did not qualify for grants through FAFSA, the Choctaw Nation provided me with a scholarship every semester through graduation to help pay my tuition. They are now providing a scholarship for my daughter in college. I completed a degree in special education, and she is on a path to become an English teacher. Yakoke."

– Victoria Wallace



Look for more Together, We're More highlights in the January 2022 edition of the Biskinik!



CASTING CALL

We are looking for people who are Choctaw Proud to participate in upcoming commercials, radio spots and video projects.
HAVE QUESTIONS? EMAIL [MULTIMEDIA@CHOCTAWNATION.COM](mailto:multimedia@choctawnation.com)

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Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma



LABOR AND DELIVERY DEPARTMENT

Our daughter was born in June of 2020, right at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on healthcare facilities. As a new mom, this was an incredibly challenging environment to bring a new baby into! The entire team at Choctaw Nation Labor & Delivery made sure that we were cared for and listened to, despite the extenuating circumstances. Thank you, Choctaw Nation, for providing such an amazing service!

Choctaw Nation Health Services



SCHEDULE A RIDE WITH TRIBAL TRANSIT

Did you know?

You can schedule your ride on the Tribal Transit vehicles through your **myCNHSA app** or online at **my.CNHSA.com**.

Rides are available for non-emergency medical visits to those living within the Choctaw Nation reservation. They must be scheduled 5 business days in advance. The full list of eligibility and procedures is available in the app or online.

If you are experiencing any symptoms of a contagious disease, such as coughing, fever, loss of taste or smell, etc., you will not be able to use the Transit rides and will need to provide your own transportation to your appointment.

Choctaw Nation Tribal Transit

CNO Veterans Day Ceremony

By Kendra Germany-Wall

On November 11, the Choctaw Nation hosted its first Veterans Day Ceremony since 2019.

This year’s in-person ceremony took place at the historic Tvshka Homma Capitol Grounds. The ceremony paid tribute to all military personnel who have served and are still serving in the United States military.

The Choctaw Nation Royalty were also in attendance, performing the Lord’s Prayer.

During this year’s program, guest speaker Col. Michael F. Hammond, Commander, McAlester Army Ammunition Plant, gave a special speech to the crowd of veterans, tribal members, family, associates, Tribal Council, leadership and guests.

Another special aspect of this year’s ceremony was the induction of World War I hero Pvt. 1st Class Joseph Oklahombi into the Oklahoma Military Hall of Fame.

Oklahombi’s great-great-nephew, Joe Watkins, and other family members were in attendance to accept the award.

The Oklahoma Military Heritage Foundation (OKMHF), sponsor of the Oklahoma Military Hall of Fame, was founded in 1999 by Major General Douglas O. Dollar, USA (retired). OKMHF is an all-volunteer 501(c)(3) non-profit organization having the purpose of honoring those Oklahomans, living

or deceased, who serve or have served in the military with records of extraordinary service and/or sacrifice to our nation. The induction is held annually in celebration of Veterans Day.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, they were forced to cancel last year’s ceremony. So, to still honor Oklahombi, Capt. John Farris and Col. Kelly Zachgo were in attendance to induct Oklahombi into the Oklahoma Military Hall of Fame.

The new Chahta Tvskha flag was also unveiled during the ceremony. This flag was designed in honor of all Choctaw veterans.

Seth Fairchild, Executive Director of Cultural Services, presented the Heart of the Warrior Scholarship to Army Staff Sgt. Zachary Moore.

The Heart of the Warrior scholarship helps active duty and retired U.S. armed service veterans who are seeking postsecondary higher education.

The ceremony also included a 21 Gun Salute and Taps, conducted by the Choctaw Nation Honor Guard.

A special drawing for Choctaw veterans was also held.

The ceremony concluded with a benediction by Councilwoman Jennifer Woods and a grab-and-go lunch provided by the Choctaw Nation.



The Choctaw Nation Honor Guard perform a 21 gun salute at the Choctaw Veterans Day Ceremony at the Tvshka Homma capitol grounds.



Choctaw veterans line up for special gifts that were given to them in honor of their service.



Madison Jade Cossey, Milena Amos and Adelyn Brown perform the Lord’s Prayer.



The Choctaw Nation Honor Guard presented the colors to open the Veterans Day Ceremony.



Left, Army Staff Sgt. Zachary Moore was presented with the Heart of the Warrior Scholarship. Right, Captain John Farris and Colonel Kelly Zachgo presented Joe Watkins, the great-great-nephew of Joseph Oklahombi a plaque commemorating Oklahombi’s induction into the Oklahoma Military Hall of Fame.

BISKINIK

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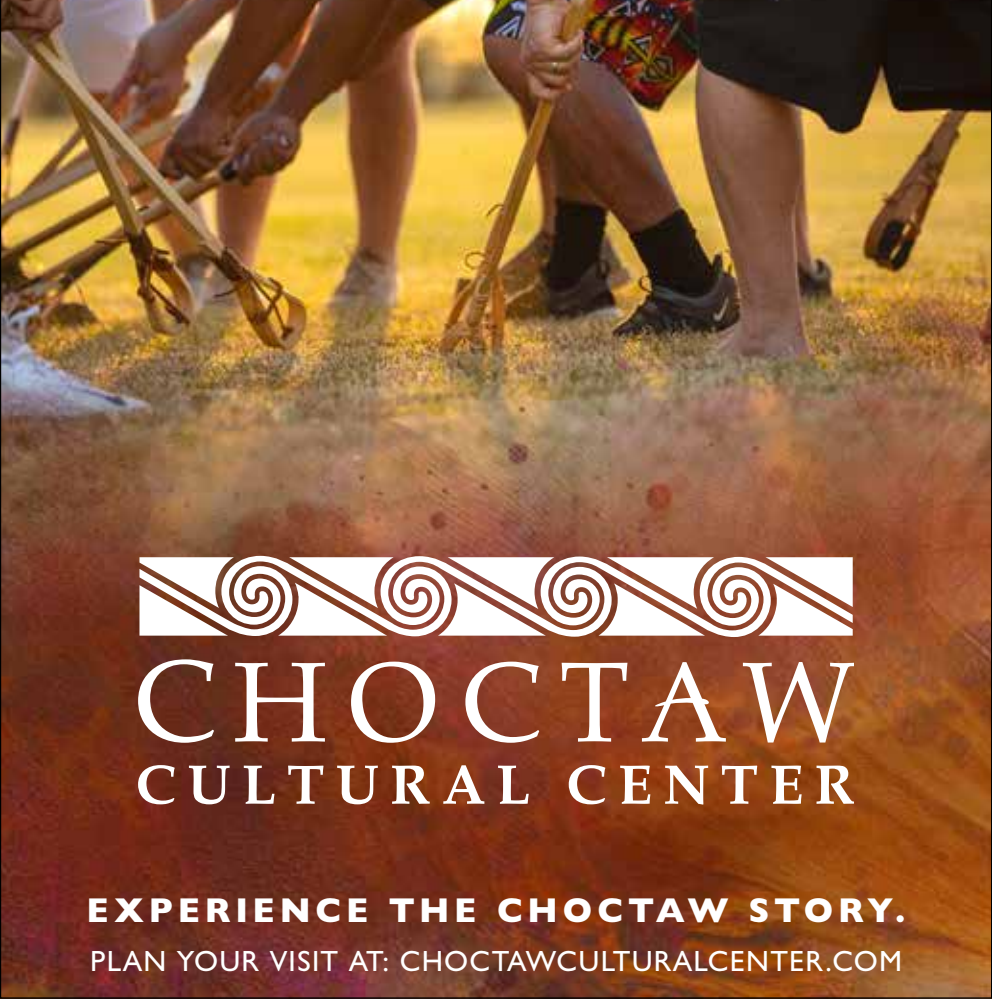
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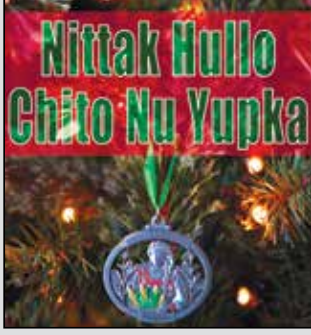
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