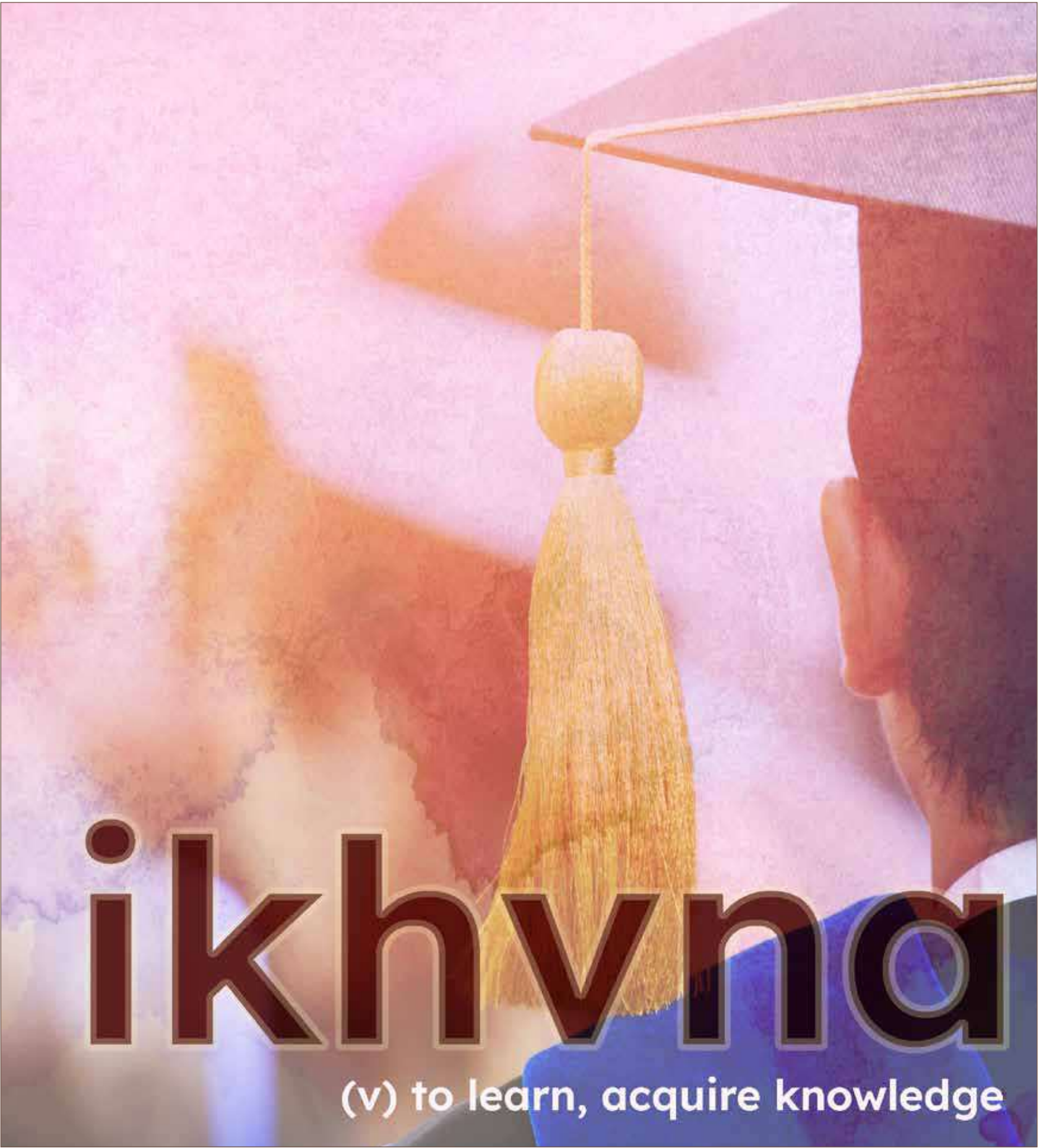




September 2025 Issue



Choctaw education programs empower students for academic success

By Christian Chaney and Shelia Kirven

It is hard to believe that summer break has come and gone so quickly. With the end of vacation time comes the beginning of a new school year.

As a new school year begins, we take this opportunity to remind tribal members of the many educational resources available through the Choctaw Nation.

Whether it is early childhood services or college support programs, these resources are here to help students succeed at every level.

From facilitating academic excellence reimbursement to extending grants for school supplies and offering higher education guidance, the Tribe is dedicated to supporting the educational journey of its tribal members.

Choctaw Nation's Executive Director of Education, Amanda Johnson, shared her thoughts on the year ahead and the wide-reaching efforts of the Education Department.

"The beginning of a new school year is always filled with excitement and anticipation. The Education team is in full swing supporting Choctaw tribal members from early childhood to post-secondary education," said Johnson. "We are proud to stand beside our Choctaw students at every stage of their education journey. With a new academic year underway, the Choctaw Nation Education team remains dedicated to empowering tribal members through education, cultural enrichment, and personalized support."

Now is the perfect time to explore the programs to determine what your student may be eligible for.

Head Start

The Head Start program provides educational, health, nutritional, social and other necessary services to promote school readiness in children aged 3-5.

The child must be 3-4 years old before September 1, with preference given to Native American and income-eligible children.

Jones Academy

Jones Academy is a residential school for grades 1-12 in Hartshorne, Oklahoma, administered by the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.

Students must be members of a federally recognized tribe or have proof of at least 1/4 degree of Indian blood. Applications are accepted year-round, and school begins in August and ends in May.

Johnson O'Malley (JOM)

The JOM program provides funding for supplemental programs through contracts with public schools within the Choctaw Nation service area to meet eligible students' specialized and unique educational needs.

Participants must be Native American students within the Choctaw Nation service area, aged 3 through grade 12.

The child or parent must be a member of a federally recognized tribe, verified by a tribal membership card and a valid CDIB card.

College Freshman Year Incentive (College FYI)

College FYI closely monitors and assists Choctaw students throughout their first year at college and fosters success through graduation.

To be eligible, the student must be a Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma tribal member and a first-year enrolled student at Southeastern Oklahoma State University, Carl Albert State College or Eastern Oklahoma State College.

High School Student Services (HSSS)

HSSS serves students in grades 9-12, providing them with academic information promoting their education and career paths after high school.

HSSS services include school visits, student advising, parent-teacher conferences, scholarship information, student success planners, ACT prep workshops, pre-approved reimbursements and more.

The student must be a Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma tribal member, attending an accredited high school, grades 9-12, and have a signed Student Record Release on file with the Choctaw Nation HSSS program.

Chahta Himmak Pila Pehlich (CHPP)

This program is designed to support Native American youth ages 14-24 in Battiest, Rattan and Wright City public schools by promoting school engagement and encouraging exploration of cultural identity and personal growth. It aims to build self-confidence and leadership skills while preparing students for post-secondary education and employment. Support services include after-school tutoring, counseling, mentorship, and a summer leadership training internship camp.

To be eligible, the student must live in the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma service area and be between the ages of 14 and 24.

Partnership of Summer School Education (POSSE)

POSSE is a 23-day summer learning program for Kindergarten to 3rd-grade students within the Choctaw Nation's tribal jurisdiction. It offers targeted reading and math intervention in the mornings and engaging enrichment activities like STEM, art, music, nutrition and physical education.

The free hands-on and immersive program provides daily meals, basic school supplies, a camp shirt, and take-home books. To qualify, students must need reading intervention based on the Oklahoma Reading Sufficiency Act (RSA).

Adult Education

The Adult Education Department assists individuals in completing their High School Equivalency Diploma.

Participants must be members of a federally recognized tribe, aged 16 and up, and provide a copy of a CDIB or tribal membership card and a copy of a current driver's license or state-issued ID. Prospective online academy students outside the Choctaw Nation area must be Choctaw tribal members to participate in the online academy.

Higher Education

The Higher Education Program offers financial assistance to eligible Choctaw tribal members actively pursuing higher education at an accredited college or university. To qualify, individuals must be a CNO tribal member, actively working towards at least an associate degree, enrolled in a minimum of three credit hours, and maintain a GPA of 2.0 or higher in the previous semester.

The program is also open to concurrent high school students taking college courses. Program participants must complete an online application each semester and provide the required documentation to receive assistance.

Teach To Reach (T2R)

This program trains Native Americans to enter teacher education programs to become highly qualified educators.

Participants must be a member of a federally recognized tribe, accepted to a teacher education program or within one year of acceptance, and enrolled at a partner university: East Central University, Northeastern Oklahoma State University,

Oklahoma State University, Southeastern Oklahoma State University, University of Central Oklahoma or the University of Oklahoma.

STAR Program

The Success Through Academic Recognition Program (STAR) is an incentive initiative to reward and encourage academic excellence for Choctaw members in grades 2-12. Eligible students must be enrolled in the specified grades and possess a CNO tribal membership card. Incentives are distributed at the end of each semester, including a \$50 gift card for all A's, a \$25 gift card for all A's and B's, and an additional \$25 for perfect attendance. The STAR program serves as a motivating force, recognizing and celebrating the academic achievements of Choctaw students.

Technology Assistance

The Technology Allowance program extends a one-time payment of \$500 to Choctaw tribal members nationwide enrolled in accredited colleges or universities. Eligibility requirements include a CNO tribal membership, possession of a high school diploma or equivalency, completion of 12 cumulative credit hours at an accredited institution, and active enrollment in a minimum of 3 credit hours with a minimum GPA of 2.0 in the most recently completed semester.

Career Development

The Career Development Program enables CNO tribal members to obtain industry-recognized certifications. Services offered under Career Development include career counseling, career planning, job and salary outlook, financial aid counseling, tuition assistance and more. With no deadlines, the program assists students year-round.

Career Development provides financial assistance for training, a comprehensive array of career guidance services, workforce skills development, and academic skills enhancement. Participants must be CNO tribal members pursuing an industry-recognized credential, certification or licensure and not enrolled in high school unless participating in a Career Tech concurrent incentive.

College Clothing Allowance

The College Clothing Allowance is a one-time financial assistance program offered to Choctaw tribal members nationwide who are currently enrolled in accredited colleges or universities. Eligibility criteria include being a CNO tribal member with a high school diploma or equivalency, having completed a minimum of 12 cumulative credit hours at an accredited institution, maintaining a minimum GPA of 2.0 in the most recently completed semester, and being actively enrolled in a minimum of three credit hours for the current semester.

Vocational Department

Vocational Development assists Native Americans who reside within the CNO service area in obtaining full-time educational training at a program-approved college, training institute or career tech. Participants must be at least 1/8 Native American, have a CDIB showing the degree of Native American blood, and possess a high school diploma or GED.

Choctaw Nation programs empower and serve students across the United States, epitomizing the Choctaw Nation's commitment to educational success.

Check out all the applications for each program on the Chahta Achvffa Member Portal at www.choctawnation.com. For more information about each program and eligibility requirements, visit <https://www.choctawnation.com/services/>.

Faith, Family, Culture

Na Yimmi, Chukka Achvffa, Im Aivlhpesa



Chief Gary Batton

Reflecting on 2025 Tribal Elections

The 2025 Choctaw Tribal Election cycle results are official. In the general election, incumbent Jess Henry won his District 4 race. District 12 will have a new representative as we welcome Regina Mabray to the Council. The runoff election held Aug. 9 resulted in Jennifer Turner being declared the winner in District 5. We welcome the tribal council members, and I look forward to working with them. All five amendments to the Choctaw Constitution failed due to Article XVIII, Amendment, Section 2 of the Constitution of the Choctaw Nation, that says “Adoption of not less than fifty-one percent (51%) of the total number of qualified voters of the Nation voting in the last Chief’s election shall be required to amend this Constitution.” 21,808 tribal members voted in the last Chief’s election on July 11, 2015, and that meant 11,122 votes in the affirmative were required to pass each amendment to the Constitution of the Choctaw Nation. None of the proposed amendments reached the required vote total for approval. The Proposed Amendments were:

- Amendment 1: Changing the Description of the Reservation Boundaries
- Amendment 2: Removing References to Oklahoma and the Federal Government in Some Parts
- Amendment 3: Removing the Detailed Description of the 12 Council Districts
- Amendment 4: Amend the spelling from Tuskahoma to the original Choctaw spelling of “Tvshka Homma” (the Capitol)
- Amendment 5: Removing the Need for Approval by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior for Amendments

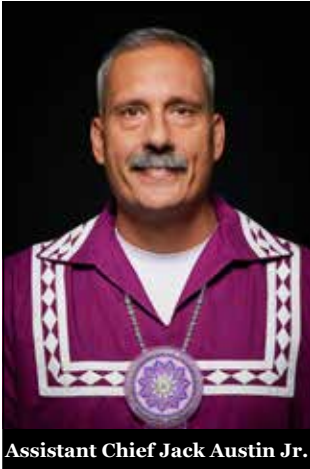
Yakoke Fehna to the Chahta who voted in this election, your vote does count, and you performed a valuable service for your tribe by voicing your opinion. Nothing highlights our ability to remain a strong and sovereign tribe than holding free and fair elections. Holding free and fair elections for the Choctaw Nation is still the best way to steer our path forward for a new generation. The Choctaw Nation will continue to grow in strength and worth if our tribal members help us lead the way. Yakoke and God Bless!

Chief throws first pitch at Texas Rangers Choctaw Night

Chief Gary Batton represented the Choctaw Nation by throwing out the ceremonial first pitch at the Texas Rangers game during Choctaw Night at Globe Life Field. Hailey Wright, a Choctaw tribal member and former The Voice contestant gave a powerful performance of the National Anthem. Also joining the celebration were Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr., Choctaw Princesses, Youth Advisory Board students and many tribal members.



Photos by Christian Toews



Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr.

Gathering winter foods is how our ancestors spent this time

Our ancestral Chahta tribe instilled a sense of preparation in our people that resonates today. Our tribe expected the best but always prepared for the worst, so our people would thrive in good and bad times. The tribe would tackle food preparation in many ways to ensure that our people would not go hungry in the lean winter months. Our ancestors’ approach was to gather and preserve food using multiple agricultural practices and utilizing the wild resources available to them. Corn, beans, and squash were the staples of the Chahta diet. Corn was stored in storage containers raised on poles, to ensure freshness and to keep ground rodents away. Beans and squash were dried in the sun and placed in storage bins or hung from rafters in houses, according to Choctaw Nation Cultural Services. Corn was processed into hominy, a staple dish, by grinding and adding wood ash lye, enhancing its nutritional value. Wild foods like Hickory nuts, pecans, walnuts, chestnuts, and acorns were gathered and stored, serving as important sources of nutrition. They were often parched to dry them out and kill any potential insect eggs. Wild fruits such as strawberries, blackberries, huckleberries, plums, and persimmons were gathered in season. Persimmons were particularly valued as they ripened after the first hard freeze and were dried and used in stews. Starchy tubers like greenbrier roots and wild plants like poke salet, sour dock, and wild onions were also gathered when available. Drying preserved fruits, vegetables, and meat removed moisture and prevented spoilage. Meat was smoked, dehydrating it and adding flavor for longer preservation. Seeds, nuts, and corn were ground into flour and stored in various containers. Some foods like teas and corn pudding were preserved through fermentation. Our Chahta ancestors were expert farmers and invented agricultural methods and built implements that are still being used in modern agriculture today. It just goes to show that our ancestors were keen survivalists and used their intellect as hunters and gatherers to ensure the tribes’ survival and created a thriving community that could weather the long winters and come out stronger in the spring. If you want to learn more about our Chahta ancestors, I encourage you to visit the Choctaw Cultural Center and learn the ancient ways of our people. It is a fun and educational experience that your whole family will enjoy. Yakoke!



TRIBAL MEMBERSHIP PROCESS UPDATE

Tribal Membership Process Updates – Effective October 1, 2025
Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

What’s changing?
Starting October 1, 2025, the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma will streamline the Tribal Membership process. All applications will be fully handled by the Tribal Membership Department. Membership requirements will not change; applicants must still prove direct descent from an original Choctaw enrollee on the Dawes Roll.

Why does this matter?

- Faster Processing**
 - In-Person Submissions: Completed applications delivered in person may be processed the same day.
 - Online/Mail Submissions: All other applications will be processed more quickly than before, though not same day.
 - Internal workflows have been streamlined to reduce delays and confusion.
- Lineage Integrity Maintained**
 - All documents are carefully checked by the Choctaw Nation using a two-step review process.
 - This helps protect the honesty and history of our tribal membership.

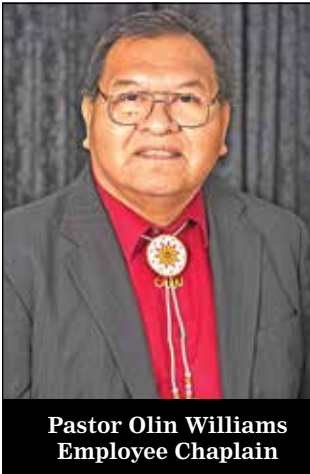
What to expect:

- Updated Membership Cards**
 - Cards issued after October 1, 2025 will display Choctaw Nation blood quantum in place of the former CDIB details.
 - Both old and new card formats remain valid.
- Application Improvements**
 - Faster turnaround on all applications.
 - Clearer instructions and simplified procedures.
- Continued Access to Services**
 - Tribal member services and benefits will not change.
 - Most external agencies accept federally recognized tribal membership for Native American eligibility.

Visit the Tribal Membership Department webpage for more information on Choctaw Nation Membership requirements and processes.

Choctaw Nation Division of Tribal Services

Listening out the Chahta Spirit: FAITH • FAMILY • CULTURE



Pastor Olin Williams
Employee Chaplain

The Vision

The prophet Ezekiel is describing the vision he had of a “living creature” in Ezekiel 1:10. “As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man and the face of a lion on the right side; and they four had the face of an ox on the left side: and they four had the face an eagle.” Later, the Church took the four faces described by the prophet and distributed them among the four Evangelists, giving Matthew the face of a man, Mark the face of a lion, Luke the face of an ox and John the face of an eagle. This was according to a resemblance of the gospel brought by each disciple and the thing symbolized by each face. These faces symbolize four traits of character that are required of a person to serve others. The face of a man illustrates humanity. True humanity reaches downward to those below us in rank or ability or opportunity. It reaches upward to those above us and reaches outward to those around us. True humanity is without selfish living. It will transcend the bounds of kinship, friendship or even race. The face of a lion symbolizes courage. Courage is the willingness to endure for the sake of some end in view. Courage is admired by the man in low estate as well as the man in high esteem. Courage is not always a heroic action. Sometimes it is a decision made. Moses said to the children of Israel, “Be strong and of good courage, and fear not, nor be afraid of them.” The next face is that of an ox, which represents work, drudgery and patient perseverance. The ox plods along never hurrying, never worrying and seems perfectly content with his lot in life. He has learned to toil. The last face is the face of an eagle. This face symbolizes aspiration. This is the energy in the soul that lifts one to broader horizons. It has nobler conduct and recognizes and loves ideals. The life that aspires not beyond the line of material things is poverty-stricken. We are here to see the beauty of God’s creation. We are here to think thoughts after Him and to feel the workings of His love in our hearts. Have the stars, trees and rivers no message for us? Has nature stopped its appeal to our senses? There are creations of arts, literature, history, patriotism and many more. Rome did not fall because of lack of wealth. Rome fell because of lack of ideals. The society cared for nothing but food and games and became idle. They desired physical comfort and entertainment. The ideals of a people are the gods that give security. The moment they depart from God, ideals depart. Life sinks below the line that is called life; it becomes merely existence like the life of a brute.

WELCOME

There’s something for you here.

Choctaw CAREERS

Apply at [Careers.ChoctawNation.com](https://careers.choctawnation.com)

LET’S LEARN SOME COMMON CHAHTA PHRASES

SCAN THE QR CODE TO CHECK OUT THE NEW SITE!

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

Choctaw journalism students intern in Washington D.C.

By Shelia Kirven

Choctaw tribal members Kylie Caldwell of Frisco, Texas, and Emma Rowland of Oklahoma City, recently interned in Washington, DC, as part of the Gaylord School of Journalism summer internship program. Both students attend the University of Oklahoma.

The duo participated in the annual Summer in Washington, D.C. program, which immerses Gaylord College students into the culture of government and politics in the Nation’s capitol.

Students are exposed to campaign, governance and interest group politics through periodic gatherings, featuring political practitioners and national political journalists. Students receive practical experience in, and exposure to national politics as interns through various Washington offices. The internship is provided through the Gaylord News, OU’s student powered news outlet.

The internship lasted from May 20 to August 20, and all student expenses were paid through the University of Oklahoma and Gaylord News.

Caldwell, a journalism major with a history/theatre double minor, specializes in Indigenous affairs and news reporting on multimedia platforms. She recently completed her sophomore year and maintained a 4.0 grade point average.

Rowland plans to graduate in May 2026 with a major in journalism and a minor in editing and publishing.

Caldwell was encouraged to apply for the Gaylord News internship by her professor and program advisor, while Rowland learned about it through word of mouth and was urged to apply by a mentor.

The two spent their time during the internship inside the Capitol or around “the Hill,” working alongside professional journalists, at pitch meetings or producing fast-paced stories for the outlet.

According to Caldwell, the duties were independently based, but the duo got to spend time meeting law makers and witness every major event in this historic session of Congress.

“Standing in the middle of history while trying to write it down in real time is overwhelming but confirms my decision that this is the right industry for me,” said Caldwell. “I have become more of a politically charged reporter through this first-hand experience, and I have a feeling I will be back.”

Rowland explained that through the program, students are

given congressional press credentials and can report from inside the Capitol, covering the Oklahoma delegation and other relevant national stories.

“This summer, Kylie and I had the opportunity to sit in the Supreme Court’s press gallery to witness opinions being handed down and write stories about their impact,” said Rowland.

While their duties changed from day-to-day, their primary focus was finding stories that connected back to Oklahoma. Whether it was federal legislation, a Supreme Court decision, or an Oklahoma figure making news in D.C., they worked to highlight how national issues impact the state.

“It’s been an incredible experience to report alongside major national outlets like The New York Times and The Washington Post. I’ve grown in so many ways this summer, not just in my reporting and writing, but also in my communication skills, political knowledge, and overall confidence,” said Rowland. “This is the longest I’ve ever been away from Oklahoma, and it’s shown me that I’m capable of thriving in new and challenging environments.”

Caldwell and Rowland are positive that the internship helped them not only as a journalists but as a tribal members.

“A lot of my reporting has focused on Indigenous rights and communities. Being here, I realize how truly underrepresented the Native community is here in Washington and am beyond proud to be a voice of those typically unheard,” said Caldwell. “There aren’t enough Indigenous reporters in national spaces, and I want to be part of changing that. We need our stories told with context, respect and truth. It’s one thing to read policy from afar- it’s another to see how it unfolds behind closed doors. D.C. has taught me how power, pressure and people shape the news we see back home.”

Rowland shared similar sentiments.

“One of the most meaningful parts of this internship has been covering legal issues that directly affect the Choctaw Nation and other tribes in Oklahoma,” said Rowland. “I’ve seen how important it is for tribal citizens to have access to accurate and relevant news, and it makes me even more passionate about continuing this kind of work. I love knowing that my stories are helping others stay informed and feel represented.”

Both students are excited to continue their journalism journeys and are thankful for the university offering them this opportunity to learn first hand.

Caldwell hopes to return to D.C. as a congressional reporter



Photo Provided
Choctaw tribal members Emma Rowland and Kylie Caldwell, University of Oklahoma journalism students, served as interns on Capitol Hill during the summer.

on the Hill. She is also eager and curious to experience a wide range of journalism, especially in the entertainment and creative industries, after earning a master’s degree.

Rowland wants to keep writing and telling stories that matter and would love to continue reporting on legal issues if that opportunity comes again.

Boswell Native Kamden Edge Signs with Kansas City Royals

By Christian Chaney

Boswell native and Choctaw tribal member Kamden Edge is officially taking the next step in his baseball journey.

After years of hard work, setbacks and sacrifice, Edge signed with the Kansas City Royals and is preparing to begin his first professional season.

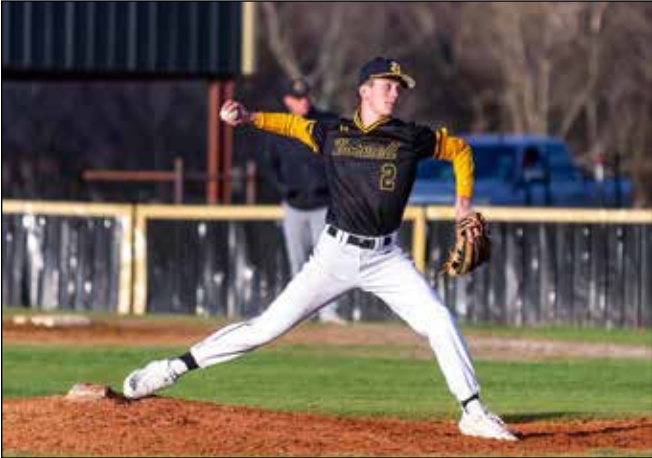
From the time he was old enough to hold a glove, Edge knew baseball would be part of his life.

“My dad was a coach back in the day, so I was always learning from him,” he said. “We’d play catch in the yard, or I’d play wall ball, even when I was three or four.”

That early start quickly grew into a lifelong love for the sport. By high school, Edge was excelling on the field, but his senior season brought unexpected adversity.

A UCL tear cut his final high school season short and required surgery and nearly a year of recovery. A UCL tear is a serious and sometimes career-ending injury for pitchers.

Edge underwent Tommy John surgery in Florida and spent nearly 11 months rehabbing.



Photos Provided
Edge takes the pitching mound for the Boswell Scorpions during his high school career.

“It was a battle with myself, honestly,” Edge said. “I couldn’t throw for five months. It really made me reevaluate everything, if this was something I truly wanted. And it was. That setback gave me a new kind of love for the game.”

Edge leaned into rehab and used his redshirt year to get stronger, smarter and more focused.

In the summer of 2024, he made his return to the mound in the Hudson League in Kansas, earning all-star recognition and proving he was ready for more.

“Hudson was a great experience,” he said. “I threw about 20 or 25 innings and made the all-star team. It was huge for my confidence.”

That fall, Edge joined the pitching staff at Northern Oklahoma College and quickly made his presence known.

“I wasn’t there to redshirt again,” Edge said. “I wanted to prove I was ready, and I did.”

He went undefeated in both the fall and spring, finishing the spring season 12-0.

His standout season drew attention from 21 MLB teams. This altered his plans of transferring schools to continue his collegiate career, and he entered the draft instead.

On draft day, Edge received the call that the Kansas City Royals had selected him in the 20th round.

His lifelong dream of playing in the MLB became a reality, proving that the years of hard work and adversity had been worth it.

But that dream was fueled by more than ambition alone. Edge credits much of his strength and drive to his older brother, Kollin, who passed away unexpectedly when Kamden was in high school.

The two were incredibly close, spending their summers working side by side on the family farm.

“We used to work on the farm together in the summers, and he always pushed me to play baseball,” he said.

Kollin encouraged Kamden to join a travel baseball team and chase his potential.

“Ever since he passed, I’ve held onto that,” said Edge. “It felt like a sign. If he believed in me that much, then I had to keep going.”

Growing up in Boswell, a small town not known for churn-



Photos Provided
Kamden Edge signs his contract with the Kansas City Royals.

ing out pro athletes, Edge knows how rare his story is and how important it is to others who may dream of a professional sports career.

“There’s a lot of doubt that comes with being from a small school or being Native,” he said. “But this proves that if you put your mind to it and stay disciplined, you can make it happen. You’ve got to think and train like a pro if that’s what you want to be, even in junior high.”

Edge is currently training six days a week in Arizona, preparing for activation.

From there, he could remain in Arizona, head to South Carolina for Low-A ball (the fourth-highest level of play in Minor League Baseball), or make his way to Iowa for High-A (the third-highest level of play in Minor League Baseball).

His goal for his first season is to “pound the zone” and show people he’s there for a reason.

“I’m not just a JUCO pitcher from a small town,” said Edge. “I’m a professional baseball player.”

As he steps onto the mound for his first pro season, Edge carries with him the pride of his family, hometown and Choctaw heritage.

Choctaw Cultural Center Anniversary

DURANT, Okla. (July 26, 2025)– The Choctaw Cultural Center commemorated its fourth anniversary July 26 with its annual celebration event.

Visitors could participate in games and demonstrations, enjoy delicious food and explore the cultural center’s offerings.

For more information on the Choctaw Cultural Center and upcoming events, visit <https://choctawculturalcenter.com/>.



Photos by Rylee Tollett and Christian Toews





District 11

Halito Chim Achukma,
In District 11 we’ve had plenty of rain and hot temperatures since I wrote my last article, but summer is over, and we are hoping for a nice Fall season. The last three months went by fast and kept our tribal council on a busy schedule, with many exciting things going on in Choctaw Nation and District 11.

June 26 was the Chahtaprenuer Awards Dinner in Durant. Our Small Business Development team recognized 12 Chahtaprenuers one from each district, as well as crowning one as the Choctaw Nation Chahtaprenuer of the year. I’m glad to announce the highest honor went to District 11’s Jamie Ragan of Izabellas Learning Center. Izabellas Learning Center is listed as a 5 Star Level

Daycare Program by Oklahoma Human Services. The Center provides childcare to up to 60 kids from infants to 5-year-olds.

Congratulations to our three new District 11 princesses. The June pageant winners are Sr. Miss Jenessa Dugger, Jr. Miss Alexandria McFarland, and Little Miss Leigha Scott. I wish them the best as these three young ladies compete during the Labor Day Festival. The overall winners in each category will go on to represent the Choctaw Nation as ambassadors until next year’s Festival.

July 24 was a good day for many tribal members in our District. That’s when we had the ribbon cutting for 26 new Leap homes in Alderson and Hartshorne. It’s always nice to see tribal members move into new homes, but it was special to see it in District 11. Most were young working families excited to receive the keys to their new home. August 26 was another ribbon cutting at our McAlester campus with the opening of a new Childcare center. This center will be a blessing to parents who work and need child daycare.

At the August Council meeting, we recognized a Choctaw Veteran and Choctaw speaker of the month from District 11. Congratulations to Dale Cantrell, who served for over 38 years in the United States military. Dale is still working with the DAV in Krebs for the Chapter’s Honor Guard while also helping other veterans sign up for benefits. Roxie Whitelance will be honored as the first speaker of the month. She is proud of her Choctaw heritage and loves to speak Choctaw to her family and friends. During the meeting, I had the honor to present them awards and read the citations of these two outstanding District 11 Choctaws.

I will continue to look for opportunities that will make District 11 a better place to live, work and raise a family. I appreciate all the support I have received from you and count it a privilege and honor to serve the Great Choctaw Nation and District 11.

Yakoke, Chihowa vt Achukma.

Cantrell is August Veteran of the Month

Dale Ray Cantrell, District #11, is Choctaw Nation’s Veteran of the Month.

He was born in McAlester, raised in Krebs and completed high school at McAlester.

Cantrell joined the U.S. Army in 1968, completed Basic Training at Fort Polk, LA., attended Jump School at Fort Benning, GA., and was assigned to the 101st Airborne Division. He completed jumps at Fort Campbell, Fort Bragg, and in Puerto Rico, including a notable jump from a jet aircraft.

In 1969, he departed for Vietnam, where he was assigned for one year. In 1970, he volunteered for a second tour with the 101st Infantry, 326 Combat Engineers, which provided improved conditions, permanent barracks and electricity.

His career includes service as a Military Policeman at Fort. Sill, Fort. Riley, Fort Bliss, Fort McCoy in Germany, Camp Chaffee, Camp Shelby, Panama, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait. He served as First Sergeant for the Military Police located at the Murrah Federal Building in Okla. City following the 1995 bombing.

From 2002-2008, he served with the NCIOC Task Force Democracy, 2-290th 479th Field Artillery Brigade, Fort Sill (Reserve mobilized) acting as Observer Controller Trainer and Unit Liaison Officer for mobilization of Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marine units in support of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). In 2004, he served as NCOIC of Task Force GITMO 5.5, Fort Dix, N.J., as Observer Controller Trainer for joint forces supporting Operation at Guantanamo Bay, and from 1996 to 2002 was Military Police Team NCIOC with the USAR- Oklahoma City as Observer Controller Trainer for 14 units in five states (10 National Guard Units and four Army Reserve units). From 1973-1995, he continued to serve with dedication.

He earned the Vietnam Service Medal, Vietnam Campaign Medal, Combat Infantry Badge, Army Commendation Medal, Overseas Bars, Army Service Ribbon, Army Reserve Component Achievement Medal, Humanitarian Service Medal, Army Reserve Component Overseas Training Ribbon, National Defense Service Medal with Bronze Star, NCO Service Star, Bronze Star Medal; and various awards for his exemplary work at the Murrah Federal Building. His diverse assignments included undercover work intercepting contraband, support during Desert Storm, and final missions covering the OKC bombing aftermath.

After over 38 years of service, MSG Cantrell retired and returned to McAlester, where he served as a guard at the Oklahoma State Penitentiary, and worked with Disabled American Veterans. He still meets with Veterans every week.

He and his wife of 52 years, Linda, have two daughters, Teresa Briggs (deceased) and Tina Mullens, and grandchildren Gage, Gannon, Grant, Calli, Austin and Trey.

Cantrell strives to lead by example and advises young people looking for guidance and direction to consider joining the military, saying it is a great way to discover purpose.

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



Sealy is August First language Speaker



Roxy Sealy Whitelance from District 11 is the First Language Speaker of the Month. She is the granddaughter of McCormick and Lorene Sealy. Her parents were Leroy J. Sealy, Sr and Mary Sealy.

Roxy has three daughters and one son who is deceased, and two grandchildren. Her parents had five children, three girls and two boys, which are now deceased. Roxy was raised around Choctaw elder speakers and spoke Choctaw daily.

Before his passing, her older brother, Leroy J Sealy Jr. always told her to be proud of her language and to not be ashamed.

COUNCIL MINUTES

CHOCTAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA TRIBAL COUNCIL REGULAR SESSION AGENDA

August 9, 2025

1. CALL TO ORDER
 2. OPENING PRAYER/FLAG SALUTES
 3. ROLL CALL
 4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
 - a. Regular Session July 12, 2025
 5. WELCOME GUESTS/SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS
 - a. eteran of the Month, District #11 – Dale Cantrell
 - b. Choctaw Language Speaker, District #11 – Roxie Sealy Whitelance
 6. PUBLIC COMMENTS
 - a. Phillip Lewis – Individual Speaker - Achukmaka Nowvt Anya (Wellness Journey Ministries)
 7. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES
 8. NEW BUSINESS
 - a. Letter of Appointment for Donald Chitwood to serve on the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Gaming Commission
 - b. Letter of Appointment for Vickie McClure to Serve as a Trustee of the Housing Authority of the Choctaw Nation
 - c. Letter of Appointment for Vickie McClure to Serve as a Commissioner of the Housing Authority of the Choctaw Nation
 - d. Approve the Disposal of Surplus Capital Assets – Equipment
 - e. Approve the Disposal of Surplus Capital Assets – Vehicles
 - f. Approve the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act (NAHASDA) of 1996 Indian Housing Plan (IHP) for Year FY2026
 - g. Approve the Application to the United States Department of Health & Human Services for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program for FY2026
 - h. Council Bill Rescinding CB-37-89 and CB-12-95 Enacting the Choctaw Nation Membership Act
 - i. Authorize Drawdown of Investment Bonds Account Held by the United States for the Benefit of the Nation
 - j. Approve the Demolition of 3625 South 9th Street in Durant, Oklahoma
 - k. Approve Application for the 2025 Technology to Support Services for Victims of Crime
 1. Approve Application for the FY25 Energy and Mineral Development Program (EMDP)
 - m. Resolution to Approve Premature Sale of Bonds
 - n. Resolution for Confirmation of Honor Guard Commander Bruce Jessie, Sgt. Major of the Army, Retired, to Serve on the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee on Tribal and Indian Affairs
 - o. Resolution for Nomination of Stacy Shepherd to Serve on the National Advisory Council on Indian Education
9. OTHER NEW BUSINESS
 10. OLD BUSINESS
 11. ADJOURNMENT
 12. CLOSING PRAYER
- All votes passed unanimously

Elder Chair Volleyball Regional Qualifier Tournament

DURANT, Okla. (July 24, 2025) – The Durant Wellness Center hosted the Regional Qualifier Tournament for Elder Chair Volleyball on July 24, bringing together over 30 spirited teams from across the Choctaw Nation. The event was filled with energy, friendly competition, and community pride as teams gave it their all to represent their districts.

Elders ages 55 and older who actively participate at their local wellness or community centers competed for a coveted spot in the Championship Elder Chair Volleyball Tournament held at the Choctaw Labor Day Festival. The tournament will be held on Friday, August 29, from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. in the Healthy Living Tent.



Photos by Mallory Jackson



HALLOWEEN STICKBALL

OCTOBER 25, 2025
6:00 PM - 8:00 PM

Scan for additional details

CHOCTAW CULTURAL CENTER

CHOCTAW COLLEGE CONNECT

Choctaw Nation's Higher Education program is hosting the 2025 College Connect on November 8, 2025, at the CNO Headquarters. All parents and students, tribal and non-tribal, are encouraged to attend this college fair experience.

TO REGISTER FOR THIS FREE EVENT, VISIT OR SCAN QR CODE
[CHOCTAWCOLLEGECONNECT.COM](https://choctawcollegeconnect.com)

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

2025 CHR FALL FESTIVAL

SEPTEMBER 17, 2025 | 9:30 AM
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FOR MORE INFORMATION, EMAIL OR CALL
OCLAY@CHOCTAWNATION.COM
800.522.6170

Scan to learn more about the program.

Choctaw Nation Community Health Representative Program

Woodrow Ridge Felihkatubbe

Woodrow Ridge Felihkatubbe was born to David Felihkatubbe and Rachel Robles on June 7, 2025, at 2:42 a.m. Weighing 7lbs 1oz and 19 1/2 inches long. He is the great-grandson of Coleman Ray and Eva Felihkatubbe. Woodrow is the brother of Ford, Beau, Loretta and Forest Felihkatubbe.



Wilson wins gold at the McAlester Special Olympics

Josh Wilson recently won the won a gold medal in softball throw and a Silver medal in Cornhole at the McAlester Special Olympics on June 13, 2025.



CNO tribal member wins Mars Society poster contest

The Mars Society (June 10, 2025) – The Mars Society is pleased to announce that Tasia Cobbs, a graphic artist and entrepreneur from Twin Falls, Idaho, has been selected as the winner of the 2025 Mars Society Poster Contest.

Known professionally as “TASIA,” Tasia is a registered Choctaw artist with a strong passion for technology, space, and the effort to make humanity a multi-planetary species. Her dynamic and visionary poster design will be used as a key promotional graphic for the 28th Annual International Mars Society Convention, taking place October 9–11, 2025, at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles. The artwork captures the excitement and ambition of human exploration of Mars, serving as a visual centerpiece for this year’s global gathering of scientists, engineers, students, space professionals, and policy leaders. It will appear across digital platforms, social media, press materials, and on-site signage, helping to bring attention and energy to the Mars Society’s largest annual event. Congratulations to Tasia Cobbs! Her creativity, talent, and passion for space exploration shine through in her design, and we’re proud to showcase her work as a symbol of the bold future we’re building—on Mars and beyond. To learn more about our Mars Society convention, please visit www.marssociety.org.



Choctaw tribal member appointed to Merced County Supreme Court

Ashley Albertoni Sausser, from Merced County, California, has been appointed to serve as a Judge in the Merced County Superior Court. A Democrat, Albertoni Sausser has been an attorney at Albertoni & Associates since 2015. From 2010 to 2015, she held multiple positions at Fagalde, Albertoni & Flores, including roles as an attorney and a law clerk. In 2011, she also served as a part-time lecturer at California State University, Stanislaus. Albertoni Sausser earned her Juris Doctor degree from the Humphreys Drivon School of Law. She now fills the vacancy left by the retirement of Judge Shelly Seymour.



Bishop graduates from Vanderbilt

Lauren Bishop graduated from Vanderbilt University with a Bachelor of Arts in Ecology, Evolution, and Organismal Biology. During her time at Vanderbilt, Lauren served as president of the Vanderbilt Indigenous Scholars Organization, a dedicated mentor to students with disabilities, and a lead ambassador in the Next Steps Program. She also worked as a Team Lead at the Wond’ry Innovation Center, providing environmental consulting services for minority-owned small businesses. Lauren led two experimental research projects in the Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences and served as a Learning Assistant for both General Chemistry and Green Earth: Biodiversity and the Evolution of Plants. She was actively involved in sustainability efforts through her work on the Student Government Environmental Affairs Committee. Beyond campus, she gave back by volunteering two summers as a counselor at Camp Kesem, supporting children whose families have been impacted by cancer and teaching swim lessons to children with special needs. Lauren is deeply grateful for the support she received from the Choctaw Nation throughout her academic journey.



Luna Rose Tran

Heather and Christopher Tran proudly celebrate their daughter’s third birthday, Luna Rose Tran. Luna celebrated her birthday on July 20 and recently received her tribal membership card. Luna is the cherished first granddaughter of Donna Taylor, James Dalke, Quynh Nguyen and Bao Tran.



Jimenez graduates from basic training with honors

Airman Lexi M. M. Jimenez graduated from basic military training on June 26, 2025. Jimenez earned the Honor Graduate designation, in the top 10% of her class of more than 800 graduates. She was also the top female graduate overall for physical fitness training, earning the Warhawk Challenge Coin and being awarded the privilege of running with the Color Guard at the Airmen’s Run before graduation. After training in Radar Air and Weather Systems (RAWS) at Kessler Air Force Base, Jimenez will rejoin the Kansas Air National Guard 184th Wing, and her full-time employment with Federal Express. She will also resume her part-time duties as a lifeguard with the YMCA as obligations allow. Jimenez is the daughter of Kile Byington and the granddaughter of Daniel (Phil) Byington. Jimenez follows in the military footsteps of her great-grandfather, Robert (Bob) Squib, her grandfather, Phil Byington, and her aunt, Joni Chamberlain. Jimenez follows the physical fitness lead of her grandfather Phil, who still runs regularly at age 75, and her mother Kile, who recently completed her first 100-mile race and raised over \$1,000 for the American Indian College Fund. "Congratulations, Airman Jimenez, and Hooyah Bulldogs!" – **The Byington Family**



Butler is Texas track All-State Scholar

All-State Scholar and Straight A Star, Jonas “Tank” Butler shines bright on and off the track. As the only Freshman on the Varsity track team, he excelled as a true Student-Athlete, placing sixth in the 6A District with a personal best of 15.71 in the 110m hurdles and earning a spot on the Academic All-State Track and Field Team. He was awarded a plaque for his excellence in maintaining straight A’s throughout his entire educational career thus far. He looks forward to the upcoming years in both school and track. He plans to continue to work hard, determined to achieve his ultimate goal of taking his speed and smarts to the D1 collegiate level. "With his exceptional drive and talent, there is no doubt this young man is destined to do great things," said his mother, Tara Weathers.



Jones graduates from UMW

Gianna Noelle Jones recently graduated from the University of Mary Washington with a Bachelor of Arts in English and Creative Writing. Jones graduated in the top 10% of her class, Cum Laude, with honors. Jones is thankful for the scholarships she received from the Choctaw Nation, which helped her achieve her educational goals. She plans to further her education with master’s and doctoral degrees, and eventually become a writer and editor. Jones’ Choctaw heritage comes from her great-grandmother, an original enrollee, Eva Blanche Southard.



Perry turns 95

Mona Lee Perry recently celebrated her 95th birthday. Mona was born August 12, 1930, in Hodgen, Oklahoma, to Charles Raymond Perry and Lula Adelaide Thorne. She had three brothers, Charles Hardy, Billy Donald and Lynn Allen, and two sisters, Patricia Ray and Dema Lou. Upon graduating from Heavener High School in 1950, she moved to Kansas City and began to make her mark. For more than 60 years, Mona lent her voice to furthering civil rights and diversity, inclusion for American Indians and all minority and ethnic groups. She worked as an employment specialist with the American Indian Center in Kansas City and has volunteered with a myriad of organizations, including the Homeless Service Coalition, Stand for Children and KC Harmony. Perry has received four certificates of service as a member of the Missouri Advisory Council for the US Commission on Civil Rights. In 2014, Mona was honored with the Martin Luther King Olathe, Kansas NAACP Hero of Diversity Award. In 2019, Mona was selected for the University of Missouri Starr Women’s Hall of Fame, which recognizes extraordinary Kansas City women, and the AARP Oklahoma Indian Elder Honors, which celebrates a lifetime of service by distinguished Native American elders who exhibit a love of family, dedication to culture, and respect for all people. Mona is extremely proud of her Choctaw heritage and happy to be back in the Choctaw Nation!



Bergin says 'yakoke'

“I am Choctaw Proud because I carried the strength of my ancestors while earning my doctorate in Educational Administration and Leadership from Southern Nazarene University. The Choctaw Nation didn’t just help me fund my education — they believed in me. Their support helped me show my children that it’s never too late to pursue what sets your soul on fire. I am proud to belong to the Choctaw Nation, a people that values education, service, and identity — that sees its members not only for who they are but for who they are becoming. Yakoke, Choctaw Nation, for helping me rise.” – **Paige Bergin**



Rankin celebrates 80th birthday

Ulton Rankin of Austin, Texas, celebrated his 80th birthday on May 7, 2025. Here's to the next 80!

Leflore turn 90

Theodore "Ted" Roosevelt LeFlore recently celebrated his 90th birthday and was honored for his years of dedication and service to his country and Nation. He was born June 16, 1935, in Atoka County, Oklahoma, went to Jones Academy and at 18 years old, he joined the United States Navy. Ted served during the Korean War as a Seabee from January 13, 1954, to February 20, 1962. Ted is a full-blooded Choctaw and is not only proud of his Native American heritage but also proud to be an American, Oklahoma and veteran. Ted voluntarily mows the cemetery near his home and keeps flags on the graves of the 22 veterans who are buried there. He was selected as Chahta Nation Veteran of the Month in July 2021 and remains active in Tribal Affairs. On June 14, 2025, his family hosted a reunion and 90th birthday celebration for Ted. The celebration included a family lunch, the posting of colors by the Choctaw Honor Guard and Chantelle Standefer singing the National Anthem in Chahta. The Choctaw Nation presented LeFlore with an elder's blanket. Choctaw Nation's District 10 Councilmember Anthony Dillard and Historic Project Manager Judy Allen were present. Oklahoma Representative Justin Humphery attended to present LeFlore with an official State of Oklahoma Citation for his service and dedication signed by Humphery and Oklahoma Senator David Bullard.



WILDLIFE & OUTDOORS

By Matt Gamble

September 1 is here, and with it, the arrival of dove season has kicked off fall hunting seasons. Dove hunting is a time-honored tradition that incorporates camaraderie with friends and family and skilled wing shooting. For successful hunters, it also brings some fine table fare. Combining a dove hunt with pre-season deer scouting makes for a great September day. Spending time in the field and scouting for hunting locations is a great way to improve your odds for success. When exploring a new property, scouting before you even get outside is the best way to start. How do you do that? Studying topographical and aerial maps can help you pinpoint places you may want to check out on foot. I usually start by looking for ridges, saddles, and pinch points that may funnel deer into an area. Once I locate those areas with topography features, I'll then look at aerial imagery to further narrow my search. This can be done through various online mapping resources. Should you not have online access, your local library may be of assistance. The next step is getting out there. I usually travel light—hiking boots, insect repellent, binoculars, and water. Don't forget the water. September heat can dry you out very quickly, so be sure to stay hydrated. Explore the places found through the map searches, looking for food sources, water sources, trails, rubs (new and old), scrapes (new and old), and droppings. Binoculars can be worth their weight in gold. They will help scan treetops for acorns or determine if that distant tree has a rub on it. Binoculars can save many footsteps when out scouting. Once you find a place with the right sign, it is time to set up your spot. Stands, blinds, and saddles are some of the options available. When picking your spot, remember to note the prevailing winds, where you expect deer to appear and how that will affect your hunt. Access to and from your spot is also critical. Trim a small, inconspicuous path to your spot so you aren't spooking game on your way in and out. It may take some fine-tuning to get your setup dialed in, but this scouting process can cut a lot of poor areas out of consideration. Check out <https://www.choctawnation.com/services/wildlife-conservation/> for rules, regulations, and all things Choctaw Nation Wildlife.

Choctaw Nation Wildlife Conservation

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ChoctawCulturalCenter.com

Redwine swings big in youth golf

Annie Kate Redwine of Kingfisher, Oklahoma, competed in the Lake Hefner Club Championship in Oklahoma City on June 25-26.

She won the 11 and under girls division by shooting a 39 (4 over par) and a 37(1 over par) over two days with a 76 finish overall. She won by two strokes and beat last year's club champion.

Annie Kate had back-to-back days of shooting her personal best and even chipped in from the bunker for her first career eagle. She also began competing in the 25-26 season of qualifying for the Drive, Chip, Putt Nationals on June 25 in Enid, Oklahoma, at Oakwood Country Club.

The path to the National Finals at Augusta includes advancing through the local, sub-regional, and regional qualifiers. She took first place overall at the Oakwood local qualifier, competing against two other girls in the 7-9-year-old girls division. On July 10, she moved on to compete in the sub-regional at Lincoln Park in OKC. She placed first overall against 11 other girls in her division and punched her ticket to the regional qualifier.

The regional qualifier will be held October 5 at Fields Ranch in Frisco, Texas, at the PGA headquarters. Lincoln Park is one of the seven sub-regional qualifiers, with the top two advancing to regionals. Annie will compete against 13 other girls for a chance to represent the South Central region at the Augusta Nationals, the Sunday before Masters week next April.



Walker turn 95

June Walker hit a milestone 95th birthday on February 12, 2025.

She had a joyous celebration in Davis, Oklahoma, where family and friends gathered from near and far to honor a woman whose presence has been a cornerstone of their lives.

The occasion was marked by food, cake and fellowship. Five generations were in attendance, as well as many other family members and friends from the Choctaw community.



Walker brothers have successful end to high school sports careers

Brothers Cash and Sam Walker both graduated this May from Kingston High School.

Cash was All-State in Track and Field, winning gold in both the 110 hurdles and the 300 hurdles. He set a new state meet record for a 2A large school. Cash will attend OSUIT to pursue a degree in automation engineering.

Sam was All-State in football, making a name for himself during his time at Kingston High School. Sam signed and accepted a scholarship to play for Southeastern Oklahoma State University Football.



Heying crowned rodeo princess

Ava Heying, 7 years old, of Lawton, Oklahoma, was recently crowned Rodeo Princess for Reed's Red Dirt Ranch.

Ava has been riding horses with Reed's for the past five years. She competes in barrel racing, pole bending, and mutton busting events.

Ava is very proud to represent the Choctaw Nation while she competes.



Fugitt shows Choctaw pride on the track

On July 17, 2025, 12-year-old Choctaw tribal member Asa Fugitt of Mooresville, North Carolina, earned first place in the Blue Rookie class at Race #4 of the North Carolina Quarter Midget Association (NCQMA) Summer Series.

Asa began his racing journey in March 2025 and quickly made his mark by winning his first three Red Rookie races before moving up to the more competitive Blue Rookie class, where he has won two.

Asa is proud of his Choctaw heritage, which he honors by displaying his "Star Choctaw Student" sticker on his car, affectionately named The Mule after race car driver Ken Miles' legendary GT40, and by representing the Choctaw Nation with integrity and pride both on and off the track.



Choctaw Housing Authority designated a Seven Star Community for their ConnectHome Program

DURANT, OKLA. — The National Digital Inclusion Alliance (NDIA) honored the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Housing Authority (HACNO) ConnectHome program as one of their inaugural Seven Star Communities. Seven Star communities are models of excellence for sustainable connectivity solutions that address the educational, health, economic, cultural, and social needs of their Tribal community. HACNO was one of eight organizations to have received this award and had one of the highest-scoring applications.

HACNO's ConnectHome was launched in 2015 to address the digital divide that residents face on rural reservations. The program offers internet access, devices, and digital literacy training to individuals in over 1,500 properties, including those within its lease-to-own program, Affordable Rentals, and Independent Elder homes. In February 2025, the program was expanded to include Choctaw Nation employees.

"We are thrilled to have received the Seven Star community award. ConnectHome has worked hard to help bridge the digital divide with our tribal communities and cannot wait to see what the future has in store for the tribe," said Brooke Miller, HACNO's ConnectHome Assistance Director.

"ConnectHome will continue to expand its efforts to link tribal members, employees, and communities on the reservation, in line with Choctaw Nation Chief Gary Batton's 2020-2025 strategic plan emphasizing broadband expansion across the CNO reservation," said Miller.

Williams and Team USA take home bronze

CARONNO PERTUSELLA, Italy (July 5, 2025) – The U.S. U-15 Women's National Team (WNT) bounced back in dominant fashion on Saturday at the 2025 World Baseball Softball Confederation (WBSC) U-15 Women's Softball World Cup, securing the bronze medal in a 4-0 shutout victory over Mexico. The Eagles close out the tournament with a 7-2 record and earn their second medal in U-15 World Cup history – earning gold in the 2023 edition.

The win was powered by a strong performance on both sides of the ball, highlighted by a three-run home run from McKenzie Thomas (4 RBI) and a no-hitter in the circle from Maci Barnes. Scoreless through the first three innings, Thomas broke the bats open in the bottom of the fourth with a three-run blast to left field before tacking on a fourth RBI via a bases-loaded walk in the sixth. Khloe Williams (2-for-3) added support at the plate with a single and a double, helping the U.S. offense stay steady through seven innings and tabbing the only multi-hit performance of the day.

Barnes was electric in the circle — striking out 10 and tossing a complete-game no-hitter to shut down the Mexico offense. Behind her, the Eagles' defense remained sharp, playing error-free softball — leading the U.S. to a bronze medal victory in Italy.

The U.S. offense put up strong numbers throughout the tournament, accumulating a .386 team batting average and a combined 78 hits while outscoring its opponents 74-8. Leading the U.S. at the plate was Khloe Williams with a .526 batting average, followed by Michaela Landers (.458) and Ashleigh Bronowicz (.455). The U.S. pitching staff of Barnes, Leona Eichholz, Braelyn Johnson and Lucy Reis proved to be dominant throughout the tournament with six shutout wins and a combined 49 strikeouts, while allowing 23 hits through nine games.

Brizzis celebrate 50th anniversary

Keith and Linda Brizzi celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on June 28, 2025.

The couple was married in Jonesboro, Arkansas, in 1975, and moved to Pine Grove, California, in 1976. Together, they raised two daughters and are the proud grandparents of four grandchildren. They are amazing examples of Christians who love God and love others, happily serving their community.

Linda, now retired, worked for the state of California for 35 years in various computer-related roles. Now she enjoys spending time with her family and traveling. Keith retired from the local phone company in 2015 while continuing to serve as the town's volunteer fire department chief until 2020. He loves to keep himself busy maintaining the grounds of their church and working on home projects. Keith and Linda enjoy taking yearly trips to Hawaii with friends or family.

On June 28, 2025, in Pine Grove, Keith and Linda enjoyed an anniversary party with over 80 friends and family members.

Their family wishes them many more years together and is so happy to have shared this amazing milestone with them.



Locke earns Texas bar admission after Texas Supreme Court approval

WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. — Nelson A. Locke's admission to the Texas bar wasn't just the culmination of a personal quest but a victory of persistence that could pay off for others. Locke was sworn in July 24 by Judge John Roach Jr. at the Collin County Courthouse in McKinney, Texas.

His odyssey may help pave the way for other nontraditional law school graduates to be admitted to practice in Texas.

"This ceremony marked the final step in a four-year journey to bar admission in Texas," Locke said. "It confirmed the fact that the Texas Supreme Court found my legal training and performance acceptable. I am the result of the outstanding education I received at Purdue Global Law School. Now it's on to the next challenge."

For Locke, of Plano, Texas, becoming a lawyer was not a career he anticipated pursuing for the first 50-plus years of his life. The U.S. Marine veteran and former retail executive was enjoying a successful career as a mortgage industry entrepreneur until he became frustrated by regulations he found confusing and unjustly applied, and he decided to go to law school.

In 2005, Locke enrolled part time in Purdue Global Law School (previously known as Concord Law School), the nation's first fully online law school. Locke pursued his legal education diligently, often studying four to five hours a night while running his mortgage company full time.

He graduated in 2011 and, in 2013, passed the California bar exam and founded his law practice.

In 2014, Locke moved his family to Texas and built a thriving national law practice focused on federal mortgage compliance, with clients in 26 states.

In 2021, Locke sought admission to the Texas bar by motion — a process typically available to attorneys who have practiced for at least five years in another jurisdiction.

However, the Texas Board of Law Examiners (TBLE) denied his application, citing their view that Texas' rules prohibited admission of graduates of online law schools. The American Bar Association will allow a campus-based law school to offer



CNO's The Children Matter Program wins safety award

DURANT, OKLA. — During the 2025 Oklahoma Traffic Safety Summit, the Oklahoma Highway Safety Office presented the 2025 Tavia Dooley Memorial Award to the Choctaw Nation's The Children Matter Injury Prevention Program for its dedication to protecting children.

The Tavia Dooley Memorial Safe Communities Award is presented to an individual or organization who's shown outstanding involvement with a Safe Communities group and/or the community at large.

The Children Matter's program focuses special attention on activities to prevent and reduce the occurrence and severity of injuries within the Choctaw Nation and the local community.

These activities include providing, installing and educating the public on the importance of car seats. At their monthly



Photos by USA Softball

The Team USA U-15, and Choctaw tribal member Khloe Williams, secured the bronze medal at the 2025 World Baseball Softball Confederation U-15 World Cup in Italy.

Khloe Williams

Khloe Williams is a sophomore at Broken Bow High School. The infielder has accomplished a lot in her young career as a part of Team USA. She received awards for most runs scored and most runs batted. You can keep up with Khloe's career on X (Twitter) at @KhloeWill2028.

USA Softball

To learn more about USA Softball, visit <https://www.usasoftball.com/>.



Williams turns 98

Tribal member Napoleon (NK) Williams celebrated his big 98th birthday Sunday, July 13, 2025, with his son Keven and friends at the Arkansas State Veterans Home at Fayetteville, Arkansas.



Kelley turns 99

Martha Jane Kelley recently celebrated her 99th birthday surrounded by family and friends.

Martha was born on August 27, 1926, and according to her family, she embodies Choctaw tribal values and is beloved by all.

"We are so thankful God has allowed us to have her near for another year. Happy Birthday to a remarkable woman!" – **Martha's Family**



Photo provided by Sherry Sutton

an online program but will not yet allow a fully online law school to pursue ABA approval.

Undeterred, Locke embarked on a multiyear journey. In 2022 and 2023, he was again rejected by the TBLE twice — with the TBLE shifting its reasoning from an outright ban on online education to questioning whether Locke's legal practice was exclusively federal due to his serving some California clients.

The turning point came in early 2024 when Locke's team petitioned the Texas Supreme Court, requesting an administrative review of the TBLE's previous decisions and their interpretations of Texas' bar admission rules.

On May 6, 2025, the Texas Supreme Court issued an order ruling in Locke's favor, finding that he should have been granted a waiver to be admitted notwithstanding having attended an online law school.

Pritikin said Locke's advocacy and the detailed information provided about Purdue Global Law School will likely inform the Texas Supreme Court's thinking as it considers moving away from relying exclusively on ABA approval as its criteria for eligibility for bar admission upon graduation.

Moving forward, Locke plans to continue expanding his legal practice, serving his 250-plus clients across the country. He also intends to advocate for other online law graduates facing similar hurdles in their pursuit of licensure, particularly as the Texas Supreme Court currently reviews the state's bar admission rules.

For more of Locke's story, visit <https://www.purdue.edu/newsroom/2025/Q3/purdue-global-law-school-alums-perseverance-leads-to-admission-to-texas-state-bar/>



car seat checks, an average of 70 car seats were installed.

The Children Matter's Child Passenger Safety (CPS) advocacy included partnering with the Oklahoma Highway Safety Office's "31 Backpack Tour," which demonstrated that each CPS fatality data point is tied to a life and that even losing one child is one too many.

Delores Donnette Walker

Delores Donnette (Murk) Walker, 82, passed away June 29, 2025. Delores was born Dec. 2, 1942, in San Diego, Calif., to Donal C. Murk and Eileen Buckholts. She was preceded in death by her parents.

Delores is survived by her husband Wayne Walker; son Danny Walker; daughter Donna Kay Walker Powell and spouse James Powell; sister Jacqueline Murk; grandchildren Brittany Walker Maxey and spouse Daniel, Bryan Walker, Mitchell Powell and spouse Jennifer Scarberry Powell, and Brysen Powell and spouse Amy Forbes Powell; great-grandchildren Keilee Maxey, Crimsyn Maxey, Bracelyn Walker, Camden Walker, Eli Walker, Olivia Powell, Elijah Powell, Aysa Powell, and Holdyn Powell; former daughter-in-law Tina Ann Willenborg Walker; and numerous nieces, nephews, cousins, extended family, and dear friends.



Charles Douglas Hitchcock III

Charles Douglas “Dougie” Hitchcock III, 56, passed away July 13, 2025. Dougie was born July 20, 1968, in St. Louis, Missouri, to Charles Douglas Jr and Kathleen Su (Adams) Hitchcock.

He was preceded in death by his parents; and brother Michael. Dougie is survived by wife Nadia; daughter Mary Kathleen Hitchcock; son Ryan Anthony Hitchcock; siblings Mark, Cindy and spouse Mark, Kathleen and spouse Matthew, Becky and spouse Glenn; very special Aunt Sharon; lifelong friend Chuck; in-laws Dan and Bambi Brazinski; and other relatives and many friends.



James A. Blake

James “Jim” A. Blake, 87, passed away July 13, 2025. Jim was born Aug. 18, 1937, in Seminole, Okla., to Samuel and Bertha Blake.

He was preceded in death by his parents; his first wife Marlene; second wife Carole; and granddaughter, Allison. Jim is survived by wife Jimmie; sons James and Craig; daughter Terri; grandchildren Britney, Allison, Brice, Sarah, Emma, Molly, Ava, and Bella; and Jimmie’s children and grandchildren.



Judy Carol Jacoby

Judy Carol Jacoby, 73, passed away July 14, 2025. Judy was born May 24, 1952, in Talihina, Okla., to Elijah and Rosie Mae Parrish. She is survived by her husband Fred Jacoby; daughters Beth Spore and Carol Norton; and three grandchildren.



Algenis Andres Rodriguez

Algenis “Haney” Andres Rodriguez, 46, peacefully passed away July 19, 2025. Haney was born Oct. 3, 1978, in Claremore, Okla., to Domingo and Donna Rodriguez. Haney is survived by his wife Trisha Rodriguez; his parents; his daughter Emily Rodriguez and fiancé Chris Kingston; brothers Daniel Rodriguez, and Antonio Lewis and spouse Trea; sister Crystal Rhone and spouse Greg; mother-in-law Alice Thomas; nephew Bronx Rodriguez; nieces Cambryn “Cami Jo” Rodriguez and Adi Daisy Lewis; special friend Elizabeth Tobias; and a host of other relatives and friends.



James Lee Colbert

James Lee Colbert, 71, passed away July 26, 2025. James was born Dec. 11, 1953, in Antlers, Okla., to Sampson Lee Colbert and Christine Irma Thomas Colbert Ludlow. He was preceded in death by his parents; and brothers Darrell Colbert and Jimmie Barcus. James is survived by wife Jane Colbert; sons Dennis and spouse Amy, and Jeremy and spouse Mary; daughters Samantha Ward of Watson, Oklahoma, Robin John and spouse DeWayne, and Mary-Jane Lopez and spouse Codi; brothers Garry Colbert, and Nolan Colbert and spouse Lisa; sisters Ruthie Bohanon, Rita Mayo and spouse Bob, Marquita Kirby, Janis McKinney and spouse Karl McKinney, Audrey Kessler and spouse Todd, and Elois Barcus; 11 grandchildren; several nieces and nephews; and a host of other relatives and friends.



Donald Ray Blake

Donald Ray Blake, 88, passed away July 25, 2025. Donald was born Aug. 2, 1936, in Howe, Okla., to Robert and Sarah (Caldera) Blake. He was preceded in death by his parents; and siblings Robert Blake, Anita Blake and Delores McCann. Donald is survived by his wife Flora; son Michael Blake; daughter Karen Sue Rodenberger; grandchildren Cody Rodenberger, Rikki VanOrsdol and spouse Glenn, and Jarrett Rodenberger and Misty; and numerous nieces, nephews, and cousins.



Alfred Watson Davis Nakishi Jr.

Alfred Watson Davis Nakishi Jr., 70, passed away April 3, 2025. Alfred was born Dec. 3, 1954, to A.W. Davis Nakishi Sr. and Katherine Ruth Johnson Nakishi. He was preceded in death by his parents; brother Freeman Ray Jessie; sister Nancy Lee (Jessie) Taylor; niece Carmen Marie Taylor; great-nephew Caleb Taylor; and cousins Lola Wesley, Rozella Wesley, and Tina Willis. Alfred is survived by his wife Bessie; daughters Tiffany Renee and Jennifer Rose Nakishi; stepchildren Teresa Coon, Rico Coon, and Jason Coon; four grandchildren; nephew Steven Lee Jacobs and family; niece VerLinda Kay and Robert Lemuel Winship Jr., and family of Holly Creek; nieces Nicole Tyne Taylor and children, and Kathy Anne Taylor; nephews Terry Wayne Jessie and family, and Gerren Keith Jessie; sister-in-law Geraldine Jessie; his best cousins Joy Recendiz and family, Gwen Pond and family, “Tootie” Wilma Wesley and family, and Willis Wesley; and special great-niece Vanessa May Noah and children.



G. Kendal Wilson

G. Kendal Wilson, 81, passed away July 20, 2025. Kendal was born Aug. 12, 1943, in Kermit, Tex., to Gordon Kendal Wilson Sr. and Eunice Lee Trout Wilson. He is survived by his wife Brenda; son Clay, and Brent and his fiancé Natasha; daughter Kendra; grandson Avery Michael; Natasha’s daughter Ray; his brother Keith; nephews Nathan and Andrew; mother-in-law Joyce Shadid; brothers-in-law Tad Shadid, spouse Debbie, and their children Laney and Kyle, and Jeff Shadid, wife Renae, and their children Nicole and Nathan; as well as numerous extended relatives and friends.



Marvin Banduch Jr.

Marvin Louis Banduch, Jr, 60, passed away July 25, 2025. Marvin was born June 7, 1965 in Hugo, Okla., to Marvin Louis Banduch and Katherine (Williams) Battiest. He was preceded in death by his parents. Marvin is survived by his siblings Beverly (Battiest) Nelson, Deborah (Battiest) Tomasi, Larry Battiest, Cathy (Brown) Davidson, Darryl Brown, Jeanette (Banduch) Coker, and Sherra Kaye “KK” (Banduch) Taber; and a host of nieces, nephews, loved ones and friends.



Cheryl Lanette Deramo

Cheryl Lanette (Baker) Deramo, 48, passed away July 31, 2025. Cheryl was born Sept. 21, 1976, in Talihina, Okla., to Aryon Elum Baker Sr. and Ramona Jean (Bilby) Baker. She was preceded in death by her parents; brothers Marlin “Rabbit” Baker, Aryon Elum Baker, Jr., Terry Baker, and Ricky Baker; sister Stephanie Wingfield; and nephew Bradley Lowe. Cheryl is survived by her husband Shane Deramo; children Hunter Baker and Piper, and Shane Deramo, Jr. and Summer; grandchildren Kinslee Baker, Elijah Deramo, Tucker Deramo, and Owen Deramo; siblings JoAnna Baker and spouse David, Michelle Lowe and spouse Donny, Tina Baker, Carol Suggs, and Jeff Baker and spouse Sherri; and numerous nieces, nephews and relatives.



Wilma Beatrix Miller

Wilma Beatrix McCurtain Miller, 93, passed away June 7, 2025. Wilma was born Dec. 19, 1931, in McAlester, Okla., to Julia Ward McCurtain and Greenwood Mitchell McCurtain. She was preceded in death by her parents; brothers Greenwood D. McCurtain and Julian M. McCurtain; and sister Elizabeth L. Ellis. Wilma is survived by her brother Ward C.C. McCurtain (Edna Earl); children Marilyn Bain, Richard Miller Jr. (Lynn), Wade Miller, and Randall Miller; five grandchildren; and nine great-grandchildren.



Mark Pond

Mark Pond, age 66, passed away Aug. 4, 2025. Mark was born April 24, 1959, in Foreman, Ark., to James and Mary Laverne White Pond. He was preceded in death by his parents; daughter Christina “Tina” Willis; brothers J.W. Pond, Earl Pond, Jamie Pond, and Walter Pond; sisters Mary Hoover, Sissie Lovewell, and Tincy Lovewell; sisters-in-law Rozella Wesley and Lola Wesley; and nephews Jade Wesley and Albert “Pee Wee” Lovewell Jr. Mark is survived by wife Gwen; sons Mark “Bubba” Wesley and William “J.P.” Pond; brother Robert Pond; sister Martha Braddock and spouse Jerry; grandchildren Alyssa Willis, Ashton Willis, Akeiley Willis, and Ashur Willis; great-grandchild Lillian Willi; sisters-in-law Wilma Wesley and Joy Resendiz; special nieces and nephews Megan Noah, Kim Tims, Samantha Tims, Tina Thompson, Alicia Schee, Donnie Lovewell, Kris Tisho, Cody Noah and Bobby Hoover; other nieces and nephews; relatives and friends.



Jim Freeman Hearon

Jim Freeman Hearon, 105, passed away Aug. 5, 2025. Jim was born Jan. 22, 1920, in Rubottom, Okla., to Walter C. and Essie V. (Langley) Hearon. He was preceded in death by his wife Nadine; brothers George and Orion; sister Hazel; infant son Timmy Dean; and son-in-law Gary Melton. Jim is survived by daughters Jimmie Pottberg and spouse Robert, and Ginger Melton; sister Roberta Jo Moore; four grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren; and seven great-great grandchildren.



Geraldine Pittman

Geraldine “Jerry” Pittman, 91, passed away July 28, 2025. Jerry was born Jan. 21,1934 in Oklahoma, to Samual Douglas and Fanny Myrtle (Lee) Turnbull. She was proceeded in death by her parents; and brother Rev. Douglas Lee Turnbull. Jerry is survived by her husband Raymond Pittman; children Raedeane (Frank) Pegoraro, Peggy (Steve) Henry, Doug (Mira) Pittman, and Carol (Daniel) Trujillo; sisters-in-laws Barbara (Turnbull) Brown and Alma Pittman-Bass; brother-in-law Keith (Nancy) Pittman; twin sisters Rose Bollig and Kathy Wells; numerous grandchildren; great-grandchildren; and nephews, nieces and cousins.



Betty Ann Hawk

Betty Ann Hawk, 90, passed away Aug. 2, 2025. Betty was born June 7, 1935, in Mead, Okla., to Frances Marjory “Frankie” and Samuel Wesley Franklin, Jr. She was preceded in death by her parents; twin brother Robert Drury Franklin; uncles Charles Franklin, Joe Franklin, Bruce Gooding, and June Gooding; aunts Melba James and Doris Rabun; and cousin, Glen Rabun. Betty is survived by daughters Julie Edgerton and spouse Larry, Susan Sexton and spouse Rusty, and Karen Howerton and spouse Matt; grandchildren Blake Edgerton, Heath Edgerton and fiancé Emily Wirth, Alyssa Edgerton Boutwell and spouse Cullen, Samantha Howerton, and Holly Howerton; her loyal terrier Mackie; and dear friends from each church in which she served as an elder, deacon or Sunday school teacher, fellow bridge players in each town in which she lived, and educators in each school in which she taught.



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

Full obituaries can be seen at www.biskinik.com



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580-642-8451 | [BIT.LY/CNO-VETERANS-ADVOCACY](http://bit.ly/CNO-VETERANS-ADVOCACY)

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

TOGETHER WE'RE MORE

ITI FABVSSA

Culture on the Prairie

By Choctaw Historic Preservation

Oktak, the prairie landscape, carries deep cultural and ecological significance for many Indigenous communities, especially the Choctaw.

Through cultural memory and ecological intimacy, the prairie reveals a landscape alive with spirit and transformation.

Each hill and stream expresses its own presence. Prairie plants shift weekly in blooming cycles, weaving a vivid tapestry of life. Close observation uncovers countless stories embedded in plants, animals, and insects. The expansive prairie sky, with its ever-changing light and color, enriches this experience.

Many people overlook the prairie ecosystems within the Choctaw homeland, which spans the southern two-thirds of Mississippi and the western third of Alabama.

Before the Trail of Tears, the Blackbelt and Jackson prairies covered over 1.5 million acres of Choctaw lands. Shallow chalk layers in the soil prevented trees from taking root, allowing grasslands to flourish. Nineteenth-century observers described these prairies as seas of wildflowers rising and falling with the wind. Choctaw ancestors expanded and maintained these ecosystems through intentional fire management.

In the southern third of the homeland, the long-leaf pine belt functioned as a fire-dependent savanna, where tallgrass prairie species thrived beneath an open canopy of pine trees.

Choctaw oral traditions link the formation of the Blackbelt prairie to the giant animals of the last Ice Age. For centuries, ancestral Choctaw communities thrived in and around these prairies.

During the Battle of Mabila, Choctaw ancestors and allies resisted the De Soto expedition, demonstrating the cultural and political importance of these landscapes. Spanish chroniclers recorded the Choctaw ancestors’ unwavering commitment to freedom, noting their willingness to fight to the last person rather than submit to colonization.

In response to European-introduced diseases and slaving raids, Choctaw communities reorganized their settlements in Mississippi. Tribal towns emerged in prairie regions, which provided essential resources. For example, women in the early 1700s wore the vlhkuna, a skirt made from dogbane fiber and bison wool—materials sourced directly from the prairie.

The Choctaw language reflects a profound ecological awareness, naming prairie species with precision and poetic insight. Words like hatapofokchi (kestrel), kofi (bobwhite), and tohkil (sensitive briar) reveal how speakers perceive and relate to the prairie’s inhabitants. The term tohkil, for example, refers to the plant’s eyelash-like leaves that close when touched, evoking the image of squinting eyes.

Fossil clam shells often erode from the calcareous soils of the prairies in the Choctaw homeland.

The Choctaw name for these shells, opahaksun, appears to derive from the phrase opa ola ikhanklo—“doesn’t hear the cry of the screech owl.” Given the owl’s cultural association with death, this name invites reflection on how Choctaw people understood and encoded relationships between land, life, and mortality.³ Such linguistic expressions



Photo by Ian Thompson

Remnant Prairie at the Choctaw Cultural Center.

preserve not only ecological knowledge, but also philosophical and spiritual perspectives embedded in the landscape.

After the Trail of Tears, many Choctaw people relocated to southeastern Oklahoma—a region often mischaracterized as lacking prairie.

Yet early accounts, such as those by naturalist Thomas Nuttall in 1819, document small prairies and buffalo trails throughout what is now the Choctaw Nation Reservation.

Choctaw families established the Nation’s capital, Tushkahoma, in one of these prairie zones. Larger prairie belts stretched along the Red River and extended northward from present-day Durant to McAlester.

Upon arrival, some Choctaw families settled in these areas, building farms and ranches that helped rebuild the Choctaw economy.

In the 1830s, George Catlin painted his famous “Ball-play of the Choctaw – ball up” in a tallgrass prairie near what is today, Poteau, Oklahoma.

Today, tallgrass prairie ecosystems in southeastern Oklahoma face critical endangerment.

Agricultural development, overgrazing, fire sup-



Courtesy of the Smithsonian American Art Museum

“Ball-play of the Choctaw – ball up” by George Catlin.

pression, and tree encroachment have nearly erased these landscapes. Only 5–10% of the original tallgrass prairie survives, mostly in the Flint Hills of Kansas and northeastern Oklahoma. This ecological collapse threatens species like the monarch butterfly and bobwhite quail, as well as Choctaw cultural practices rooted in prairie interaction.

The few remaining prairie remnants within the Choctaw Nation hold immeasurable value. These landscapes connect people to Choctaw and Caddo history, offer opportunities for cultural and ecological engagement, and support biodiversity and vital ecosystem functions. Restoration demands intensive labor and long-term commitment, highlighting the urgency of preservation.

The Choctaw Cultural Center grounds in Calera host one of the highest-quality tallgrass prairie remnants in the region.

On October 11, 2025, the Historic Preservation Department, in partnership with the Oklahoma Biological Survey, Okies for Monarchs, and the Cultural Center, will be hosting a BioBlitz on this remnant.

Participants will take guided walks through the prairie with biologists and cultural people to see and learn about prairie species that have deep importance in Choctaw culture as well as Oklahoma ecology. This event is free and open to the public.

To learn more please visit the Event page on ChoctawCulturalCenter.com.

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BUSINESS

CHAHTAPRENEUR

CHIT ♦ CHAT

Small Businesses, BIG Impact: Investing in Our Community's Future

By Brad Erwin

One of the first businesses I worked with after stepping into this role recently closed its doors. I remember our first meeting; the owner had a solid plan, a dream, and a real commitment to serving their community. They showed up ready to work and poured everything they had into making it happen. Seeing those doors close wasn’t just about one business shutting down; it was about a lost opportunity for all of us. A business like that brings jobs, opportunities, and local investment. When it closes, it’s not just their dream that ends; it’s what the community could have gained that disappears with it. That’s why shopping local matters more than most people realize. When you shop locally, you’re not just buying a product or service. You’re investing in your community. Local businesses allocate more of each dollar back into the local economy than national chains or online giants. That money helps pay local wages, fund youth programs, sponsor school events, and even repair roads. It’s not just about money. It’s about identity. Local businesses give our communities character. They’re where you find handshakes instead of hold music, where someone might stay open a little late because they know your kid has a game. These aren’t faceless corporations, they’re your neighbors. They’re the folks cheering in the stands, donating to fundraisers, and putting their whole heart into making something of their own, right here at home. The truth is that small businesses face an uphill climb. Competing with online convenience, next day delivery, and corporate pricing isn’t easy. They don’t have marketing teams or na-

tionwide ad campaigns. What they do have is hustle, heart, and a deep connection to their communities, if we give them a chance. Many local owners are wearing multiple hats a day, managing inventory, answering phones, doing the books, and still finding time to sponsor the high school football team. They’re not looking for a handout, just a hand up. Every time someone chooses to shop locally, they’re giving that business a chance to survive and grow. Supporting local businesses doesn’t have to be complicated. It can be as simple as grabbing lunch at the diner down the street instead of a drive-thru, buying a gift from the boutique downtown instead of adding to your online cart, or leaving a positive review for a business that treated you right. Tell your friends, share their posts, stop in and say hi. These small moments of support ripple out more than you realize. You’re not just helping one business; you’re helping the whole community grow stronger and more self-sustaining. At the end of the day, strong communities don’t happen by accident. They’re built, one decision at a time. The choice to shop locally is one of the simplest, most powerful ways to make a difference. Because when we support local businesses, we’re not just buying goods or services. We’re investing in our neighbors, our identity, and our future. The strength of our community depends on the choices we make; let’s choose to build together. If you enjoy supporting small businesses, please check out our Facebook page at ChoctawSmallBusiness and visit our website at www.choctawsmallbusiness.com. If you have any questions, comments, or would like to learn more about a specific topic, don’t hesitate to reach out. We’re here to help!

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Housing Headlines

By Bobby Yandell

One of the most successful programs Housing now has is our voucher program for home rehabilitation. There are two types of vouchers: the Rehab Voucher and SHIP Voucher. These vouchers allow the homeowner the ability to have repairs made on their home themselves by utilizing a voucher provided by the Tribe. The Homeowners Rehabilitation Services Rehab Voucher provides assistance to homeowners for home repairs and ADA accessibility items to single-family homes. Eligible repairs are based on a priority list provided through a home inspection conducted by the Housing Authority of the Choctaw Nation. Homeowners must meet eligibility requirements based on income, age, disability, and family size. Voucher amounts are up to \$10,000.00 and up to \$15,000 for disabled persons (if ADA work is needed) or veterans. You can apply and qualify for three consecutive years up to \$30,000.00 in total assistance or \$45,000.00 for veterans/ADA repairs. The homeowner receiving the voucher is responsible for contacting contractors for bids and entering into a contract with the contractor to complete the work according to the priority list. Once the job is complete, the signed approved voucher is submitted for payment and work is confirmed through an inspection. This program is available within the boundaries of the Choctaw Nation and does NOT require a lien to be filed on your property. The Homeowners Rehabilitation Services SHIP Voucher provides assistance to participants who do not meet the requirements for the Rehab Voucher. This program assists tribal members who may have higher income, live in a family home or participants who are non-tribal homeowners but have custody of a tribal child. Participants must still meet eligible requirements based on income, age, disability, and family size. Voucher amounts range from \$5,000.00 to \$15,000.00, depending on circumstances and eligibility. You can apply and qualify for three consecutive years. The homeowner receiving the voucher is responsible for contacting contractors for bids and entering into a contract with the contractor to complete the work according to the priority list. Once the job is complete, the signed approved voucher is submitted for payment, and the work is confirmed through an inspection. This program is available within the Choctaw Nation Reservation and does NOT require a lien to be filed on your property. Applications can be obtained online, at Choctaw Community Centers or at the Housing office. Visit <https://www.choctawnation.com/services/home-rehabilitation-services/> for more information or call the CNO Housing Authority at 580-326-7521.

Choctaw Nation

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Housing Authority

Taking steps to be ready in emergencies can save lives

By Chris Jennings

There’s no time of year when the potential for disaster to strike is not present.

At the beginning and end of every year, winter storms with heavy snow, ice, and high winds blow through.

Tornadoes and severe weather can strike in the spring and early summer.

Wildfires often occur in the dry summer months, and hurricanes are typically in the late summer and fall.

The Choctaw Nation wants tribal members to be prepared for these disasters and has some tips on how to get ready. The First 72 on You campaign is meant to bring awareness and preparedness so that they can get through the first three days before help may arrive.

Choctaw Nation Emergency Management Coordinator and meteorologist, Chris Nunley, Ph.D., says, “The campaign is to make our tribal citizens, and really everybody in South-eastern Oklahoma, more resilient to withstand the impacts of a natural disaster or a disaster in general.”

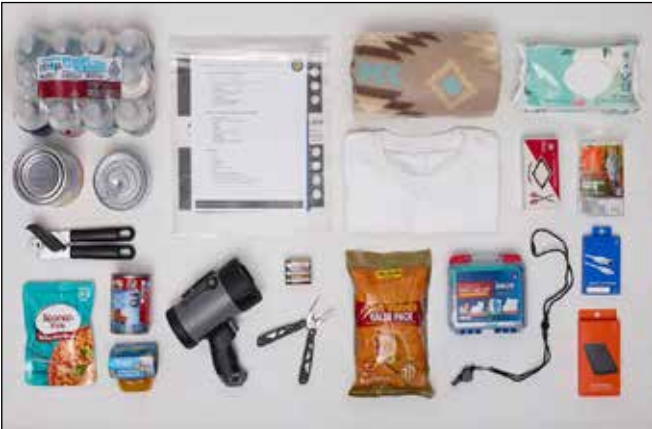
The first step in preparing for disaster is familiarizing yourself with what might happen where you live.

Next, taking the time to put together an emergency kit ahead of time is important.

Nunley says when disaster strikes, you probably won’t be thinking clearly and won’t have the time to assemble everything from different spots in the house.

There are several different ways to put a kit together. One common item used to store an emergency kit is a hard-sided tote. Backpacks are also popular, especially for one or two people. Nunley likes to recommend a suitcase.

“I feel like an old suitcase that has wheels is a really good storage area. You can just put everything in there, and then you’re able to grab it and go whenever you’re asked to,” Nunley said.



Choctaw Nation photo
Being prepared means getting together items like food, water and other supplies to last at least 72 hours after a disaster. Most items commonly recommended for an emergency kit are inexpensive and easy to find.

Being able to grab it and go quickly is particularly important for elders who may not be able to pick up a heavy tote or carry a backpack.

The list of what you need to have ready should be personalized to specific needs.

When putting your kit together, it’s also important to consider pets.

“You also want to make sure that you have canned food or even dry food in a Ziploc bag for your pets,” said Nunley. “You want to make sure that you have a leash and collar for your pet.”

When it comes to what to put in a kit first, Nunley’s top five items are medication, water, food, a flashlight and a NOAA Weather Radio. Everybody can follow some basic guidelines

to put their emergency kit together.

Nunley recommends going through a kit every year to make sure nothing has expired or needs to be replaced. Choosing items for the kit that are less perishable is important. Lithium batteries will typically have a longer shelf life than alkaline batteries, and canned foods should be able to last a whole year before needing to be taken out and put in new ones.

BASIC ESSENTIALS

- Water (at least 3 days of water, 1 gallon per person/pet)
- Non-perishable food (at least 3 days)
- Can Opener
- Extra cell phone battery or charger
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- First aid kit
- Prescription medication & glasses
- Important family documents

ADDITIONAL ITEMS

- Multi-purpose tool
- Sanitation and personal hygiene items
- Whistle
- Matches
- Clothing

- Battery Operated/ Crank Radio
- Pet Items
- Map of Area
- Items Specific to family members

PET SUPPLY LIST

- Food
- Water
- Medicine
- First Aid Kit
- Collar with ID tag
- Leash
- Travel bag, crate, or sturdy carrier
- Sanitation needs (pet litter and litter box)
- A picture of you and your pet (in case you become separated)
- Familiar items (favorite toy, treats, or bedding)

The website www.ready.gov offers some important do’s and don’ts when it comes to emergency food.

THINGS TO DO:

- Keep food in covered containers.
- Keep cooking and eating utensils clean.
- Throw away any food that has come into contact with contaminated flood water.
- Throw away any food that has been at room temperature for two hours or more.
- Throw away any food that has an unusual odor, color or texture.
- Use ready-to-feed formula. If you must mix infant formula, use bottled water or boiled water as a last resort.

THINGS TO NOT DO:

- Do not eat foods from cans that are swollen, dented or corroded, even though the product may look safe to eat.
- Do not eat any food that looks or smells abnormal, even if the can looks normal.
- Do not let garbage accumulate inside, both for fire and sanitation reasons.

The Choctaw Nation is quick to respond to assist people during disasters in Southeast Oklahoma, but it can’t be everywhere at once.

“It’s best if they’re able to survive on their own for the first three days or first 72 hours after a disaster,” said Nunley.

There’s also a large portion of the tribal members who don’t live on the reservation. Nunley says it’s important they’re informed too.

“Even though we’ve rolled it out here in southeastern Oklahoma, it’s not confined to just the Reservation, said Nunley. “We want all of our citizens of the Choctaw Nation to be prepared and to be more resilient to natural disasters.”

Emergency preparedness is important for minimizing losses, saving lives, and ensuring recovery during and after

Prepare Everywhere

01 HOME

Keep this kit in a designated place and have it ready in case you have to leave your home quickly. Make sure all family members know where the kit is kept.

02 OFFICE

Be prepared to shelter at work for at least 24 hours. Your work kit should include food, water, comfortable walking shoes, and other necessities like medicines.

03 VEHICLE

In case you become stranded, keep a kit of emergency supplies in your car.

emergencies. By taking steps to get prepared, tribal members can reduce fear and anxiety in the event of a disaster.

For emergency assistance and information, contact Choctaw Emergency Management at 844-709-6301.

More information on getting prepared can be found at <https://www.choctawnation.com/about/first-72-on-you/> and

Expanded Health Services Now Available to Broken Bow!

The Ruby Choate Health Clinic has officially expanded and is now offering new, convenient health services to all patients, both tribal and non-tribal.

Now Available:

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Visit us today for fast, convenient care.
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580.208.2204

Choctaw Nation Health Services

TOR RECOVERY WALK

Join us Friday, September 26, from 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM at Headquarters Pavilion.

CEREMONY & RECOVERY WALK

At 11:30 a.m., let’s come together to celebrate those on their journey to recovery from substance misuse. We’ll have a heartfelt ceremony followed by a brief walk to show our support.

Meet the Tribal Opioid Response Team at our Information Fair, where you’ll find valuable resources, fun surprises and chances to win exciting door prizes!

Remember to wear purple. Come out to show your support and learn more about recovery resources.

Choctaw Nation Behavioral Health Services

SHOW. YOUR. FITNESS

TVSHKA TRIALS

AUG 4 - OCT 24, 2025
EVENT LOCATION: ONLINE

• All participants will go through the Choctaw Nation Foster Care and Adoption Program.
• Three divisions: B.Y. (Bachelors), S.Y. (Seniors), and P.Y. (Presidents).
• Open to Choctaw Tribal Members and Choctaw Wellness Center Members (CNC).

FOR MORE INFORMATION: [FACEBOOK.COM/TVSHKATRIALS](https://facebook.com/tvshkatrials)
FOR TICKETS: [TVSHKATRIALS2025.EVENTBRITE.COM](https://tvshkatrials2025.eventbrite.com)
REGISTRATION: AUG 4 - OCT 17 | FEE: \$20

Scan to learn more about the program.

Choctaw Nation Health ServicesCHOCTAWNATION.COM

CHOCTAW NATION FOOD DISTRIBUTION	
MARKET HOURS Open 8:30 a.m.- 3:30 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday Thursday: 9:30 a.m.- 5:30 p.m. <i>Markets will be closed the last two days of each month for inventory.</i>	
September 2025 All markets open weekdays, September 1-26 Closed: September 29 & 30 Nutrition Ed & Food Programs subject to cancellation Participants can request a calendar at their location.	
ANTLERS 400 S.W. “O” ST., 580-298-6443 FOOD DEMO SEPTEMBER 10	
BROKEN BOW 109 Chahta Rd., 580-584-2842 FOOD DEMO SEPTEMBER 19	
DURANT 2352 Big Lots Pkwy., 580-924-7773 FOOD DEMO SEPTEMBER 23	
MCALESTER 3244 Afullota Hina, 918-420-5716 FOOD DEMO SEPTEMBER 17	
POTEAU 106 B St., 918-649-0431 FOOD DEMO SEPTEMBER 24	
<small>This institution is an equal opportunity provider.</small>	

Choctaw Nation Vocational Rehabilitation		
September 2	Antlers	10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
September 5	Wright City	10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
September 9	Broken Bow	10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
September 10	Talihina	10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
September 12	Atoka	9:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.
September 12	Coalgate	12:30 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.
September 16	Poteau	11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
September 17	McAlester	10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
September 23	Idabel	10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
September 24	Stigler	By Appointment.
September 26	Crowder	By Appointment
September 30	Wilburton	10:30 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
Durant: Monday, Wednesday and Friday Call 580-640-6007 for an Appointment		

WIC OFFICE LOCATIONS		
LOCATION	DAYS	HOURS
Antlers 539.316.5089	Tuesday	8:30 am – 4:00 pm
Atoka 539.316.2050	Daily Monday – Friday	8:00 am – 4:30 pm
Battiest 580.920.7061	1st Tuesday of every month	8:30 am – 4:00 pm
Broken Bow 539.316.3011	Daily Monday – Friday (Except the 1st Tuesday & 2nd Thursday of the Month)	8:00 am – 4:30 pm
Durant 539.316.3517	Daily Monday – Friday	8:00 am – 4:30 pm
Heavener 539.316.4784	Monday, Tuesday, Thursday & Friday	8:00 am – 4:30 pm
Hugo 539.316.5089	Monday, Wednesday, Thursday & Friday	8:00 am – 4:00 pm
Idabel 539.316.4313	Daily Monday – Friday	8:00 am – 4:30 pm
McAlester 539.316.2431	Daily Monday – Friday	8:00 am – 4:30 pm
Poteau 539.316.4606	Daily Monday – Friday	8:00 am – 4:30 pm
Smithville 580.920.7063	1st Thursday of every month	8:30 am – 4:00 pm
Spiro 918.962.5134	Wednesday, Thursday & Friday	8:00 am – 4:30 pm
Stigler 918.967.4211	Monday & Tuesday	8:30 am – 4:00 pm
Talihina 539.316.6792	Daily Monday - Friday	8:00 am – 4:30 pm
Wilburton 580.642.7588	Wednesday	8:30 am – 4:00 pm
Mobile Van 580.745.4330	1st Tuesday – Boswell 3rd Tuesday – Coalgate 4th Tuesday – Clayton	9:00 am – 3:00 pm
Scan to learn more about the program.		
Choctaw Nation Health Services		

Mosquitoes infected with West Nile Virus found in Southeastern Oklahoma

DURANT, Okla. (August 11, 2025) – The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma (CNO), in collaboration with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH), has expanded its mosquito-to surveillance efforts across the reservation to monitor and mitigate the risk of mosquito-borne illnesses—including West Nile Virus (WNV) and Eastern Equine Encephalitis Virus (EEEV).

Mosquitoes in Bryan, LeFlore, and Coal counties tested positive for WNV as of early August.

The initiative builds on groundwork laid in 2024, with enhanced support this year from CDC field experts and entomologists.

Their visit focused on helping identify optimal trap sites and to improve specimen collection procedures throughout the Choctaw Nation’s reservation.

Choctaw Nation Environmental Protection Services and public health teams place mosquito traps across tribal lands and collect specimens weekly.

These are shipped to CDC labs for species identification and viral testing.

While there’s no set minimum for triggering alerts, any positive mosquito pool result prompts a public health advisory to alert and protect the community.



Cyndi Johnson with the Choctaw Nation Environmental Protection Service observes mosquitoes collected for testing.

Although the CDC does not release rate-based data, the Choctaw Nation entered into a data-sharing agreement this year with the Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH) to ensure mosquito surveillance data is shared between agencies.

This partnership allows for more responsive public health actions across southeastern Oklahoma.

No human cases of WNV or EEEV have been confirmed this season within the Choctaw Nation, but officials are emphasizing early detection and prevention.

“We’re casting a wide net,” Emert said. “Our goal isn’t to collect a specific number of mosquitoes, it’s to collect as many as possible to protect our people. That’s why the CDC’s guidance is so important.”

Choctaw Nation Public Health officials continue to promote prevention strategies to reduce the risk of mosquito-borne infections, including the CDC’s recommended “Four Ds”:

- Drain standing water
- Dress in long sleeves and pants
- Avoid outdoor activity at dusk and dawn
- Use DEET or other EPA-registered insect repellents

“West Nile and EEEV can both cause severe illness in rare cases,” said Rikki LaRoche, Public Health Director for CNO. “Our surveillance helps us act before that happens. We’re committed to protecting the health of tribal members and all residents across our lands.”

More information about the state’s surveillance program and data can be found at <https://oklahoma.gov/health/health-education/acute-disease-service/viral-view.html>.

More information on Choctaw Nation’s effort to “Fight the Bite” can be found at <https://www.choctawnation.com/news/posts/choctaw-nation-fights-the-bite/>.



Choctaw Nation Environmental Protection Service staff members take a closer look at mosquitoes collected in one of their traps set across the Choctaw Nation Reservation.

Guide to help prevent tickborne illnesses

DURANT, Okla. (July 16, 2025)– The Choctaw Nation Public Health Department has released a new Choctaw Nation Tick Guide in response to growing concerns about tickborne illnesses within the reservation.

The guide provides valuable information for the community to stay informed and protected while enjoying the outdoors specifically in Southeastern Oklahoma.

Over the last year, in partnership with Oklahoma State University (OSU) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Choctaw Nation Public Health collected 690 ticks from across the reservation to identify and test for disease. The most common tick identified was the Lone Star Tick, which is an aggressive tick known to transmit several serious illnesses, including Alpha-Gal Syndrome (AGS), Heartland virus, Bourbon virus and ehrlichiosis.

“While not all ticks carry disease, it only takes one bite to make you sick,” said Mason Emert, Epidemiologist for Choctaw Nation. “Our goal with this guide is to raise awareness and help our communities stay safe while connecting with nature.”



Alarminglly, public health data indicates that rates of Alpha-Gal Syndrome – a tick-related food allergy to red meat – are higher within the Choctaw Nation than in both Oklahoma statewide and the U.S. as a whole. This underscores the urgent need for proactive tick bite prevention strategies.

The Choctaw Nation Tick Guide offers practical tips for avoiding tick bites, including:

- Wearing long sleeves and pants when outdoors
- Using EPA-approved insect repellents
- Checking for ticks after spending time outside
- Showering soon after returning indoors
- Keeping yards and play areas well-maintained

For more information, visit <https://www.choctawnation.com/news/news-releases/guide-to-help-prevent-tickborne-illnesses/>

Corey Berlin, Marathon Runner

By Kellie Matherly

Choctaw tribal member and competitive runner Corey Berlin defines himself as a dedicated follower of Jesus Christ, husband to Stacie, and proud father to three boys—Bryce, Colby, and Caleb. He is also committed to improving the health and wellbeing of others. For the past 20 years, Corey has served his community as a physical therapist. His work is rooted in the belief that “movement is medicine,” a philosophy he lives out both professionally and personally.

Corey first learned how critical athletic trainers and physical therapists were in helping athletes recover from injuries during his time playing football at Louisiana Tech. This sparked his passion for the field of physical therapy—a perfect combination of his love for sports and his desire to help people rebuild their lives after injury or surgery.

“It’s great to work with someone at a very vulnerable time,” said Corey. “It’s very satisfying to help people in that low point—give them hope, give them something to look forward to.”

Corey acknowledges that others describe him as a competitive person, and he agrees. But college football and daily workouts gave way to getting married and having a family, and he found that he wasn’t able to compete like he had in his younger days.

With the encouragement of some friends, Corey began running competitively just before his 40th birthday. Although he never thought of running as an enjoyable pastime, he jumped in with both feet, so to speak, and began training for a half marathon. He discovered a love for racing, driven by his athletic background and discipline.

What started as a one-time challenge evolved into a lifestyle of early mornings, intense training, and self-improvement. “My competitiveness just took over. I saw that I could not only compete with myself but compete against other people, compete against the clock,” said Corey.

Now in his mid-40s, Corey is a seasoned marathoner who has competed in world-renowned races like the Boston,

Berlin, London, New York City, and Chicago marathons. He has his sights set on completing the six World Marathon Majors and dreams of becoming the fastest 50-year-old marathon runner in the U.S.

Balancing his roles as a father, husband, physical therapist, and elite runner requires discipline and sacrifice.

His day often starts at 4:30 a.m., ensuring he can train without giving up time with his family or patients.

He believes deeply in modeling hard work and perseverance—values instilled in him by his own father, a pastor in Shreveport, Louisiana.

“I was taught by my dad that great things can only happen through hard work. Nothing is given to us, especially in athletic events or competitions. You have to work harder than everybody else if you want to get the result that you’re looking for,” said Corey.

As a father, Corey has tried to instill the value of hard work in his sons by setting a good example and including them in his devotion to healthy behaviors.

“You can’t just roll out of bed and do it. You have to put in the work. And that hard work and that dedication is something that I hope they are seeing,” he said.

Corey’s passion for running has taken him across continents and introduced him to a global community of runners, but more importantly, it has become a platform for ministry.

The family motto, “To God be the glory. The best is yet to come,” guides his mindset daily.

Faith remains at the center of everything Corey does. Whether he’s working with post-surgery patients, training at dawn, or crossing a finish line, he sees each moment as an opportunity to be a light in the world. Corey and his running group have incorporated prayer into their daily runs, transforming each mile into a spiritual journey. For Corey, running is not just physical—it’s mental, emotional, and spiritual. It’s a metaphor for life and faith: full of challenges, setbacks, and triumphs.

“I believe that my sole mission in



Choctaw Nation Photo

Corey Berlin is an accomplished marathoner aiming to complete the six World Marathon Majors and become the fastest 50-year-old U.S. marathon runner.

life, no matter what I’m doing—if I’m working as a physical therapist, if I’m running, if I’m being a husband and dad—I should be an ambassador for Christ,” Corey said.

Through running, Corey has found a deeper connection with others and a means to inspire. Whether it’s a patient recovering from surgery or a fellow runner struggling with self-doubt, he encourages people to believe it’s never too late to start. His message is simple but profound: be consistent, embrace discomfort, and keep moving forward—physically, spiritually, and mentally.

As he looks to the future, Corey hopes his journey not only glorifies God but also encourages the next generation to live with purpose, resilience, and faith. His story is one of transformation: from football player to physical therapist, from non-runner to marathoner, from individual pursuit to community and ministry. Corey Berlin is running for a purpose—one that he hopes will leave a lasting positive impact on his family, friends, and his community.



Choctaw Nation Photo

Exclusive Travel Plaza snack line to include over 70 products.

grab-and-go options for busy travelers,” said Marshall Wright, senior director of commerce marketing – retail. “Our aim is to curate a line where there’s truly something everyone will enjoy.”

2025
INDIGENOUS
ARCHAEOLOGY DAY

OCTOBER 11, 2025 | 10:00 A.M. – 3:00 P.M.
CHOCTAW CULTURAL CENTER | 1919 HINA HANTA WAY | CALERA, OK

Dive deep into Choctaw artforms and lifeways during this all-day educational and fun event.
All ages are welcome at this free event.

- Pottery making
- Textile education
- ATL-ATL throwing
- Children's events
- Flint knapping
- Educational Presentations
- BioBlitz on the prairie with the Oklahoma Biological Survey
- Weapons demo
- Stickball
- Resource Tables: Growing Hope | Oklahoma Public Archaeology Network (OKPAN) | Choctaw Nation Forestry | Okies for Monarchs

Scan to learn more.

Samples of traditional foods will be prepared onsite and offered throughout the day.
Don't miss the Growing Hope Garden walkthroughs at 10:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m.

CHOCTAW CULTURAL CENTER

NEW BOOK RELEASE
AVAILABLE SEPT. 1

CHOCTAW FOOD:
Remembering the Land, Rekindling Ancient Knowledge
2nd Edition by Ian Thompson

Choctaw Nation Cultural Services

Choctaw Travel Plazas launch new Choctaw Signature Line

DURANT, Okla. (July 15, 2025)– Choctaw Travel Plazas are launching Choctaw Signature, their premium private label line of in-store items.

Choctaw Signature will feature over 70 products, including returning items like trail mix, as well as a range of new items, such as jams, salsas and barbecue sauces.

Choctaw Signature will also feature baked goods, with fry bread and pancake mixes year-round, and seasonal items like pumpkin spice bread.

A majority of Choctaw Signature’s line can already be found in Choctaw Travel Plazas, but the new baked goods will be in stores in August.

“We’re excited to launch our rebranded line of exclusive in-store items with so many delicious

CHOCTAW
NATION IS RAISING
A FLAG TO SHOW
AIR QUALITY IN
OUR AREA.

The Air Quality Flag Program uses brightly colored flags based on the U.S. EPA’s Air Quality Index to notify communities about outdoor air quality conditions. Choctaw Nation Head Starts will raise a flag each day that corresponds to their local air quality forecast that helps create public awareness of outdoor air quality conditions.

Scan to see your local air quality.

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

Chahta Foundation awards 2025 scholarship

By Christian Toews

Over \$1.8 million in scholarships was awarded to Choctaw students at the 2025 Chahta Foundation Scholarship Banquets. These scholarships helped more than 400 Choctaw students reach their higher education goals in the past year.

The Chahta Foundation is the non-profit arm of the Choctaw Nation.

It works to create opportunities for the Choctaw people through programs and services in education, health and wellness and cultural citizenship.

The mission of the Chahta Foundation is to empower the next generation with knowledge through education.

Every project aims to produce high-impact initiatives that bring positive change to the Choctaw community.

Each initiative is designed to educate and evolve with Choctaw people to enhance the overall well-being of the citizens of the Choctaw Nation.

These scholarships are funded

through donations from individuals, which are matched dollar-for-dollar by the Choctaw Nation.

The scholarships are highly competitive, with many applicants each year.

During one of the award banquets, Angela Palmer, the Executive Director of the Chahta Foundation, congratulated the recipients.

“You are here today because you earned it,” said Palmer. “The Chahta Foundation scholarship program is competitive, which means that not everyone who applies gets one.”

A wide range of scholarships is available to students in nearly every field.

“We award degrees to any accredited school in the U.S., from technical to doctoral levels. Some are one-year scholarships, while others are renewable, supporting students through graduation,” said Tesia Nickles, the Program Director for the Chahta Foundation.

Visit chahtafoundation.com for more information on the Chahta Foundation.



Photos by Christian Toews

Chahta Foundation scholarship recipients pose with Chahta Foundation board members and scholarship donors at the Durant, Oklahoma awards banquet.



Chahta Foundation scholarship recipients pose for a photo at the Tsvkhahomma, Oklahoma awards banquet.



Executive Director of the Chahta Foundation, Angela Palmer speaks during the Durant awards banquet.

CNO’s drone program celebrates proposed FAA rule

DURANT, Okla. (August 6, 2025) – The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) proposed a new rule Tuesday that addresses and enables Beyond Visual Line of Sight (BVLOS) operations for drones, also called unmanned aircraft systems or UAS. This is part of larger efforts to safely integrate new emerging aviation technologies into the national airspace system.

This proposed regulation will usher in new opportunities for facilities like the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma’s (CNO) Emerging Aviation Technology Center (<https://cnoaa.com/>) on Daisy Ranch, and more broadly, the CNO reservation.

The CNO Emerging Aviation Technology Center is a one-of-a-kind test facility in southeastern Oklahoma that utilizes 44,600+ acres of remote, tribally owned land. The facility supports innovation in emerging aviation technologies, including drones and advanced air mobility.

“This Part 108 rule enables regulation that will allow the United States to have a path toward safe and normalized operations of drones,” said James Grimsley, executive director of advanced technology initiatives for CNO. “This is one of the biggest leaps forward in FAA regulations to address this emerging technology in decades. We applaud the FAA for bringing the Part 108 rule forward.”

Previously, drone operators were required to request individual waivers or exemptions to operate drones for BVLOS applications.

These were approved on a case-by-case basis, and the process was cumbersome and expensive.

“Package delivery, agriculture, surveying, innovative healthcare and public safety are just some of the uses we expect to see grow in the UAS space as a result of eliminating previous re-



Choctaw Nation Photo


The FFA recently proposed a new rule allowing Beyond Visual Line of Sight operations for drones, a decision welcomed by the Choctaw Nation’s Drone Program.



Photo by Christian Toews

strictions,” said Grimsley. “We’re looking ahead to all the additional research and development we will be able to do under these guidelines.”

The proposal also includes a clear regulatory path for manufacturers, operators and UAS traffic-management (UTM) services to keep BVLOS operations safely separated from each other and legacy manned aircraft.



**PUBLIC NOTICE of Official
Special Runoff Election Results for District 5**

To the Tribal Members of The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: After 4:30PM on August 13, 2025

In accordance with the Chief and Tribal Council Election Ordinance, approved by CB-24-25, notice is hereby given.

The contest period for Irregularities or Fraud (Article XIX) and Recount (Article XX) closed at 4:30pm on August 13, 2025. No contests or recounts were filed. Accordingly, the Election Board has formally concluded the Special Runoff Election for District 5 with the certification and signing of the final Special Runoff Election Results, which will be submitted to the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The duly certified results are listed below:

Tribal Council District 5 Winner: Jennifer Turner with 563 votes (56.13%).

In compliance with the Election Ordinance, Article XXIV, Section 2, the certified winner of a special election shall be installed into their office three (3) business days after the election. The oath of office shall be administered by the presiding Judge of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Tribal Court.

For more information about Choctaw Nation elections, visit <https://www.choctawnation.com/elections> or contact the Election Board Secretary by email at ElectionBoard@choctawnation.com or by phone at (580) 634-0679.

Choctaw Nation Election Board



**COMMUNITY MEETING
BROWNFIELDS
DISCUSSING HOMER CHAPEL**

SEPTEMBER 3 | 5:30 PM - 7:30 PM
BOSWELL PUBLIC SCHOOLS CAFETERIA | BOSWELL, OK


Learn about past uses, environmental assessments, and cleanup plans. Share your ideas for potential redevelopment and help shape the site’s next chapter. Submit a survey for a chance to win a tote! Must be present to win.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT
[CHOCTAWNATION.COM/ABOUT/EPS/BROWNFIELDS](https://choctawnation.com/about/eps/brownfields)
580.924.8280



Scan to learn more

Choctaw Nation Environmental Protection Service




Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma ♦ TOGETHER WE'RE MORE ♦

September (Siptimba) 2025


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Boswell Native signs with Kansas City Royals.



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First 72 On You Campaign helps tribal members better prepare for disaster and emergency situations.

Stay Connected to the Nation

CHOCTAWNATION.COM

