2020, A look back at a year like no other

By Shelia Kirven

January 2021 Issue

We will never forget the year 2020. Surely, it will be recorded in the history books from this day forward as a time the modern world struggled daily to navigate life under the threat of a cherry-picked pandemic.

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JANUARY

• Former Choctaw Chief Allen Wright was inducted into the Oklahoma Hall of Fame.
• The Choctaw Nation continued its 2020 Census campaign.
• New construction projects continue, with the largest being the 10-story Sky Tower at the Durant Casino and Resort and the new community center in Durant.
• The Choctaw Nation and Bell Textron Inc. announced an agreement to add Bell to the CNO GISPP team and begin testing Bell innovations and systems on CNO-owned property as part of the Federal Aviation Administration Unmanned Aircraft Systems Integration Pilot Program. The Choctaw Nation became the first tribal government to be recognized by the FAA as a public aircraft operator and was selected to be a lead participant in the BEYOND project.
• The Choctaw Nation Recycling Program celebrated ten years of operation, processing a total of 25 million pounds of recyclable materials from centers located in Durant and Poteau.

FEBRUARY

• The Hunting and Fishing compact was extended through Dec. 31, 2020.

MARCH

• Choctaw Casino and Resort temporarily suspended operations to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Soon after, wellness centers, community centers, travel plazas, and administrative offices closed. All employees received pay and benefits during the temporary closure.
• Choctaw Nation frontline employees worked hard to ensure essential services and that the Nation could still operate during the pandemic. Several programs continued to provide tribal services to tribal members.
• Travel plazas, country markets, community centers, food distribution centers, clinics and the Poteau Prescription Refill Center all remained open with associate volunteers’ support. A slight increase in staff members allowed 5,400 hours during the COVID-19 pandemic.
• Health Care Services began seeing patients through telehealth visits and administered COVID testing at health care locations.
• Choctaw Casino & Resort in Poteau donated more than $4,000,000 of fresh food to local schools in partnership with Keystoner Food Services.

APRIL

• The Geographic Information Systems Team created an online map to help Choctaw Nation authori- ties determine the potential success of the 2020 U.S. Census through daily updates on response rates for every city and county within the Choctaw Nation. The team also created a map to help track the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic within the Nation.
• Over 500,000 perishable funds were donated by Choctaw Casino & Resort in Durant to a nearby shelter, helping more than 250 families.
• Walmart partnered with the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma to provide thousands of fresh fruits and vegetables to CEDH cardholders throughout southeastern Oklahoma. Southeastern Ice Company used its trucks to deliver food to areas throughout the Nation’s jurisdiction. Over 100 CNO staff members volunteered to help.
• Choctaw Nation Health Services Authority (CNO-HSA) opened COVID-19 testing to the general public at its McAlester clinic to help individuals and health systems better combat the spread.
• Choctaw Nation announced associate blood donations since 2004 totaled 39,190 whole blood units, saving up to 122,200 lives. In addition, 237 red blood cell units saved 43,420 lives for a combined total of up to 165,620 lives saved from 2004 through February 2020.

JUNE

• Phase 2 of the recovery plan began as Choctaw casino operations, and Casino Too locations in Durant and Poteau.

JULY

• The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in the case of McGirt v. Oklahoma – a historic win for American Indian rights at the Supreme Court – prompting changes to the role the state government plays in the lives of many Oklahomans.
• The 33rd annual Choctaw Nation Labor Day Festi- val was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
• Summer Youth Employment Program went virtual, giving 6,500 children returning to school a chance to stay active.

AUGUST

• Choctaw Nation Tribal Police officer, Matt Barre- ras, saves the life of heat stroke victim.

SEPTEMBER

• Chautahaul Swiss Plazas introduced the new Chautahaul Rewards app. The first-ever loyalty program for the Chautahaul Travel Plazas.
• The first-ever virtual State of the Nation Address was delivered to the Choctaw people by Chief Gary Batton via a video message.
• Choctaw Nation associates from January 2020 to September 2020 were awarded over 2,500 units of blood potentially saving 7,000 lives.
• The State of the art 101,000 square foot Cultural Center in Durant nears completion with an open- ing date of early 2021.
• The Choctaw Nation Forestry Department fire- fighters help in California to help fight wildfires.
• Choctaw Judge Rebecca A. Cryer passed away, leaving a legacy for generations to come.
• Chief Batton announced the formation of the Sovereignty for Strong Community Commission in the wake of the U.S. Supreme Court’s landmark McGirt ruling, establishing an initial $2 million budget to upload online and order on reservation.

OCTOBER

• The Choctaw Nation Health Services Authority gave flu shots at no cost to the public in southeast- ern Oklahoma.
• The Bureau of Indian Affairs presented 19 tribal police officers Special Law Enforcement commen- diations, giving them federal authority, above their tribal authority, when working major Crimes in the jurisdiction of the Choctaw Nation.
• A new childcare center in Poteau opened to serve 68 children and create 20 new jobs.
• The Choctaw Nation Tribal Council enacted new codes designed to strengthen and increase tribal sovereignty. In addition to jury selection guidelines and the establishment of a Public Defender’s Office, Council amended the criminal code, allowing the Nation to prosecute offenses listed in the federal Major Crimes Act and a legal authority to issue warrants of arrest and issue a parole for offenses committed within the Nation’s jurisdiction.

NOVEMBER

• The annual Veterans Ceremony was held virtually, with an online message from Chief Batton.
• Choctaw Tribal Council established an annual Choctaw Nation Flag Day.
• Irish farmers gave over $300,000 to the Trump and Biden campaign fund to pay forward the Choctaw people’s kindness.
• Choctaw Community Centers distributed Than- ksgiving meals curbside to Choctaw nation citizens.

DECEMBER

• CNO Community centers gave out Christmas gifts to Choctaw children curbside in place of annual Christmas community parties.
Hunting and Fishing Compact Extended

Happy New Year, everyone! I hope you can find a wonderful and safe Christmas. As I reflect on 2020, I realize that despite many challenges, one thing remained true: we remained resilient. Though the times have been challenging and uncertain, we remained resilient and determined. Like our ancestors before us, we kept our heads up and kept moving forward, looking toward the future with hope. Remembering our ancestors’ approach to challenges is a light for our Creator for our Choctaw people and all mankind.

A recent announcement from the U.S. Department of the Interior, in coordination with the Choctaw Nation and the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife, listed the Choctaw Hunting and Fishing Compact, effective through December 31, 2021.

This agreement is a win for both the Choctaw Nation and the State of Oklahoma. It provides an opportunity for Oklahomans to enjoy the outdoors through hunting and fishing that are part of our rich cultural traditions.

Choctaw tribal members who hold a Choctaw Hunting and Fishing license in 2020 and still meet the compact requirements will have their license automatically renewed for 2021. The State Department of Wildlife Conservation will begin processing these auto-renews and any new tribal member applications received for 2021.

Choctaw tribal members who are 18 and older and interested in a 2021 state hunting and fishing license, but who did not have a license in 2020, are encouraged to apply online. Visit Choctawnation.com/huntingfishing to apply for a license.

Oklahoma Choctaw Hunting and Fishing Licenses are available on the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife, wildlife.gobiodiefok.com, to be printed or downloaded as needed. For additional convenience, there is now an app on the Oklahoma Choctaw app on iOS or Android devices. To get the app, go to your device’s app store and search Choctaw Hunting and Fishing.

If you have household members who live here and you have not previously contacted us, please email call (excluding Christmas Ornament and Yearly Calendar)

CIRCULATION@CHOCTAWNATION.COM 800.522.6170 EXT. 4028

TRIBAL MEMBER MASS MAILINGS

In an effort to reduce waste, Choctaw Nation will transition most mass mailings to one per address.

If your household includes tribal members and you have not previously contacted us, please email call (excluding Christmas Ornament and Yearly Calendar)

CIRCULATION@CHOCTAWNATION.COM 800.522.6170 EXT. 4028

For more information, call 800.522.6170

OR EMAIL:
HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT SERVICES@CHOCTAWNATION.COM

We are here to assist our students with academic information to promote education and/or career path beyond high school.

For more information, call 800.522.6170

Additional Content

Faith, Family, Culture

Chief Gary Batton

I’m proud to say that we experienced no gaps in services to our tribal members throughout the global pandemic. The Choctaw Nation was able to maintain essential operations without laying off or furloughing associates. Choctaw Nation frontline employees worked hard to ensure essential services and that the Nation could operate smoothly during the shutdown. Our travel plans, country markets, community centers, food distribution centers, clinics and the Petoskey Prescription Center all remained open with associate volunteers’ support. A total of 715 volunteers staffed 5,147 hours during the pandemic response. We are truly blessed to have such caring and loving people working for the Choctaw Nation. I am so proud and thankful to our associates for showing the true meaning of the Chahta spirit this past year.

Our goal was to help as many Choctaws as possible with our CARES Act funding during the pandemic. All CARES programs closed Nov. 30. Choctaw Nation received 141,750 total applications for $50 million in funds. Of that funding, 29% went to food programs, 34% for student assistance, 36% for employment training, and 1% for utility assistance. The remainder went to small business and housing support.

We also accomplished another mission to keep providing essential food services. Our Food Distribution Program staff created a drive-thru mobile service for the safety of clients, staff and volunteers. Volunteers also provided food delivery services to tribal elders to help package groceries or delivering food or elders visiting in their cars. Through these services, a total of 205,300 households were served per month; 406 family members were served per month, and the total food value per month was $2,086,000. Also, the Summer Food Service Program distributed 71,800 meals. Our Snack Nutrition Program provided Native American elders aged 60 and older with a balanced weekly meal, except for Talihina, which serves five meals per week. Getting food to our members wasn’t our only concern in 2020. We wanted to build up our younger generation and their communities as well. We partnered with Walmart to provide thousands of pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables to our Choctaw Nation students in southeastern Oklahoma.

Throughout the year, the Choctaw Nation won several prestigious awards. The Choctaw Nation Recycling Center was awarded Level I, Silver-Tiered Flexibility Award, the highest level recognition that a community can receive under the Oklahoma Recycling Center Program. The Choctaw Nation Hospital was awarded a five-star rating from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. The Choctaw Nation Recycling Center was awarded Level I, Scissor-Tailed Flycatcher, the highest-level recognition a community can receive under the Oklahoma Recycling Center Program.
On election night, CNN referred to the Native American voters as “something else.” This didn’t sit well with Indigenous people across the country, who have fought long and hard to maintain our place and existence in this world. We have fought long and hard to maintain our place and existence in this world. We have fought long and hard to maintain our place and existence in this world. We have fought long and hard to maintain our place and existence in this world.

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By Kendra Germany-Wall

On election night, CNN released an exit poll depicting ethnicities who participated in the 2020 election. Among ethnicities listed were white, Black, Latino, Asian and some-thing else. This didn’t sit well with Indigenous people across the country, who have been lumped into and often times classified as “other” in datasets for centuries.

The Native American Journalists Association (NAJA) demanded an apology from CNN, saying, “Being Native American in a political classification—merely a race—underrepresented Native nations have been given no government-to-government relationship-ship with the United States since the country’s earliest days. To refer to Indigenous voters in another category than their race identifies the US government’s continued lack of recognition and support for our voices.”

CNN’s gaffes subsequently happened on the third day of Native American Heritage Month and many issued a contrite statement about how Indigenous people are referenced and understood in this country.

The National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) said there is a crucial need for accurate, meaningful, and timely data collection in American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities. The NAIA also stated that accurate data collection and community-based planning capture true needs, thus driving larger program-focused funding resulting in cost-effective use of federal resources.

‘Dear Mr. Zucker, On behalf of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma (Choctaw Nation), I am writing to express my profound disappointment with CNN’s lack of respect and dignity provided to Native Americans voters during the 2020 election.

As CNN exit polls rely on election night, Native Americans across the nation were shocked and deeply offended in the use of reporting on critical Native American voters being referred to as “something else.”

Native Americans play a critical role in the elections of this great country. Yet for centuries, our votes have been consistently disregarded, leading to an underrepresentation of our communities and the communities we serve. This underrepresentation has resulted in many votes left uncounted.

Despite these challenges, we have continually turned out in unprecedented num-bers, demonstrating that our voices matter. To ensure that our voices are heard, Native Americans have proudly spent countless hours canvassing, phone banking, volunteering and voting to ensure that we have our voices heard.

This bill would clarify that the Department of Veterans Affairs must reimburse VA facilities and tribal health systems who are serving veterans for the purchase of train passes. Rep. Ruben Gallego (D-AZ), who sponsored the bill, said that it would help veterans who are retired veterans.

In Arizona, Coconino County, home to the Navajo, Hopi, Hualapai-Kaibab-Pauma tribes, Apache County, home to the Navajo, Zuni and White Mountain Apache tribes, and Pima County, home to the Tohono O’odham and Pima Yuma tribes, all voted overwhelmingly for Biden. Native Americans compose 1.5% of the state’s population.

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Talking about the bill, Chief Gary Batton said, “We need to do everything within our power to make sure that our veterans get access to federal medical centers.

By Chris Jennings

The Choctaw Nation Color Guard stand at attention in front of The Wall The trials resulting in May 2019, 4.5% of recent house votes has put forth bills that could improve Native and non-Native veterans’ lives.

A trio of House votes in November could have an apparent in the 2020 election.

By Chris Jennings

Series of House votes help aim to help Native American veterans

The House also has passed the Improving Safety and Security for Veterans Act (H.R. 327), sponsored by Rep. Sara Jacobs, D-Calif., said providing free passes would both help veterans who are retired veterans.

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January 2021    Wildcat Month – Koinchush Hvshi
District 3

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma (CNO) continues to be at the forefront of emerging drone technology.

CNO recently announced its selection for participation in the Federal Aviation Administration’s (FAA) BEYOND program. This program is a part of a follow-up effort to the FAA’s UAS Integration Pilot Program (IPP), over the past three years, CNO’s UAS program has accomplished several milestones in the IPP including being recognized by the tribal government designated as a lead participant in the IPP, the first tribal government recognized as a UASIPP (Part 107) holder, and the first FAA Approved Volunteer Organization (AVO) Holder.

CNO is looking forward to more success in the future as they prepare for the next phase of the FAA’s BEYOND program.

“Our work is focused on collaborating with partners and stakeholders to be successful in the future as we prepare for the next phase of the FAA’s BEYOND program.”

CNO also recently announced an agreement with Bell Textron Inc., a Textron Inc. (NYSE: TXT) company (Bell). Bell will begin testing some of Bell’s mobility systems, like the Bell Autonomous Vertical Flight (AVF) concepts, and associated technology on the CNO test site located in rural southeastern Oklahoma.

“The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma (CNO) has accomplished several milestones in the FAA’s UAS Integration Pilot Program (IPP). It is now participating in the BEYOND program as a part of a follow-up effort to the IPP, which is focused on advancing critical aspects of UAS operations and the quantification of those operations. It will also focus on the steps necessary to facilitate scalable and economically feasible Beyond Visual Line of Sight (BVLOS) operations. It will study data collection, measurement and response efforts related to UAS operations and the quantification and measurement of those operations and the economic impact of various UAS operations.”

Chief Gary Batton recently commented on CNO’s collaborative participation. “The Choctaw Nation of Oklahomaviews the BEYOND program as an opportunity to continue participating in assorted programs and projects with our ongoing collaboration with Bell Textron Inc. and other partners. We believe that the BEYOND program will provide the opportunity to continue our collaborative engagement in emerging aviation technologies and our efforts to identify and grow economic opportunities for our region.”

The CNO BEYOND team consists of a mixture of industry, non-profit and academic partners such as the Noble Research Institute, Bell Plight, Oklahoma State University, University of Oklahoma, Public Service Company of Oklahoma (PSO) and AIR2030.org (part of GE Aviation).

“The CNO team will continue to collaborate with Oklahoma State University to conduct UAS weather research focused on improving the understanding of weather and winds at low altitude. Additionally, CNO is working with the FAA’s Advanced Technology Initiatives (ATI) program to support the ONAW project, which will address the challenges the team has identified and developed a plan to address.”

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I am truly blessed to be Choctaw. And very thankful for all the blessings the Choctaw and God have given me. Thanks to everyone and have a blessed Christmas.

Joan Abbott

January 1 2021    Wildcat Month – Koinchush Hvshi BISKINIK 5

Thank you. You helped us.

By the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.

I would like to thank the Choctaw Nation and the higher education program for supporting me with funds to help me achieve my goals. I graduated from St. Edward’s University in Austin, Texas in December 2019 with a bachelor’s degree in Accounting. I also recently started my first job in the accounting field at the University of Texas.

BISKINIK is a free service to our tribal members. We want to be an outlet for all members to share their successes with the rest of the tribe.

Please send your submissions to us at biskinik@choctawnation.com

The Biskinik is a nonprofit publication of the Choctaw Nation for their generous help! So proud to be a Choctaw!

Linda J. Dean-Scholar

BISKINIK Announcement Guidelines

We accept milestone birthday greetings for ages 3, 5, 10, 15, 21, 25, 30, 35, 40, 45, 50, 55, 60, 65, 70, 75, 80, 85, 90, 95, 100 and 105 years. Couples may send announcements of silver wedding anniversary at 25 years of married life, golden wedding anniversary at 50 years, or 60+ anniversaries. We do not post wedding announcements.

News from graduates of higher education only and sports submissions will be welcome.

We welcome all letters from Choctaw tribal members. However, because of size restrictions we are unable to publish all letters our readers send. Let us know if you wish publication. We will review your letter to consider publication. We require full contact information. Only the writer’s full name and city will be published.

All letters sent to the BISKINIK will run the month the letter is received or the month prior to the event if the event falls on the first of the month.

Mail to: BISKINIK P.O. Box 1270 Durant, OK 74702
e-mail: biskinik@choctawnation.com

The BISKINIK is printed as a service to tribal members and the BISKINIK reserves the right to refuse to accept any material which it deems contrary to its purpose or morally unacceptable. Copy may be edited for space, grammatical errors, or clarity. Copy will be printed only if submitted in readable form, but, where possible, it is requested that copy be typed and double-spaced. You must include an address and phone number where your mailing address no longer stands. Due to space limitations and the quantity of article submissions, we are unable to include everything we receive. Those not accepted will be notified. Modified copy may be returned.

In the event of a dispute, the choice of the publisher shall be final.

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On Saturday, November 28, 2020, the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma held its regular Council meeting to conduct official business.

If you are interested in applying for a loan contact a representative at the:

Coalgate: Thursday, Saturday and Tuesday 10:00 – 12:00

Durant: Monday, Wednesday and Friday 10:00 – 12:00

Choctaw Revolving Loan Fund

Choctaw Nation Vocational Rehabilitation

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Thank you. You helped us.
Harrell was well on her way to becoming a full-fledged nurse. Her journey took her on a path that led her to becoming named 2016 Top Psychiatric Nurse of the Year for Oklahoma. This recognition was due to her dedication and hard work in the field of psychiatric nursing.

Harrell was born and raised in McAlester, Oklahoma, a small town located in the southeastern part of the state. She grew up in a family of four children, and from an early age, she knew that she wanted to help others. Her mother, who was a nurse, played a significant role in shaping her career path.

After finishing high school, Harrell attended the University of Oklahoma, where she majored in nursing. She chose this field because she had always been interested in helping people and making a positive impact on their lives. During her time at the university, Harrell was active in several nursing clubs and volunteered at local hospitals.

After graduation, Harrell began working as a nurse at a local hospital in McAlester. It was during this time that she discovered her true passion for psychiatric nursing. She found that she loved working with patients who had severe mental illnesses and was able to make a real difference in their lives.

Harrell’s hard work and dedication paid off when she was named the Top Psychiatric Nurse of the Year for Oklahoma. This recognition was a testament to her excellence in her field and her commitment to helping others.

Harrell has no plans to stop working in the field of psychiatric nursing. She is currently working at Lifebridge Geri Psych of McAlester Regional Health Center and plans on continuing her education to learn and grow in her profession.

To sum up, Harrell’s journey from a small town in Oklahoma to becoming a top psychiatric nurse is a testament to her hard work and dedication. Her story is a reminder that anyone can achieve their goals with determination and a willingness to work hard towards them.
Scott graduates from APU

Haley Alexandre Scott graduated from APU in December 2020, with a bachelor’s degree in Communications. She hopes to pursue a career in graphic design and social media management. Haley would like to thank the Choctaw Nation for supporting her educational endeavors.

Mulford turns 90

Jackie Dean Mulford turned 90 on Nov. 19, 2020. She is the mother of Linda, Cindy, Danny and Scott, and the grand- mother of Kaylan, Dana, Tracy, Tracy, Shane and Mickey. Mulford lives in Paula Valley, Okla., and enjoys hunting, seeing her UGC Thunder, Kansas City Chiefs, George Strait, Clearlake, Chuck Norris and Robert Fuller.

Bailey Stewart named MVP

Pittsburg-Pa. Fastpitch Conference coaches nominated sophomore Bailey Stewart of Stuart Public Schools, Stuart, Oklahoma Most Valuable Player of 2021 and the USFAA Fastpitch conference announced her as an All-State recipient as well. Stewart finished inside the circle with an 8-4 record, striking out 90 batters and walking 34, breaking the school record for strikeouts. She earned her High School Fastpitch career with a 1.067 ERA, while also batting a .410 with an on-base percentage of .786.

Bailey will be continuing her education and softball career at Eastern Oklahoma State in the fall. Bailey’s parents Michael and Cheryl Stewart, along with family and friends, are proud of Bailey’s accomplishments and can’t wait to see what the future holds.

McGowan ranked number 1

Christian McGowan, Eastern Oklahoma State University Softball’s new pitcher from number one in the Top-100 Prospects for the 2023 draft and now leads the Class at this point in the evaluation process.

At his best, the 6-foot-2, 220-pound right-hander runs his fastball into the upper 80s, while sitting mostly 90-95 MPH. He backs up his heater with a mid-80s slider and a quality, low-80s changeup.

Stewart graduates from SWAGU

Brittany Noakes graduated from Southwestern Assemblies of God University Dec. 4, 2020, with a bachelor’s degree in Sports Management. Brittany would like to thank the Chocow Nation for their support during this time.

Hawkins publishes poetry

Chockie poet J. Todd Hawkins is proud to announce the publication of his first full-length collection. This Geography of Thorns: Blues Poetry from the Mississippi Delta & beyond

The book was published by the Poetry Society of Texas after winning the PSI’s 2020 Catherine Case Lubbe Manuscript Contest. The collection offers a unique perspective on the places, people, and sounds of the American South.

Hawkins lives in Crowley, Texas, with his wife and children. He reads publicly at venues throughout his home state and beyond, sharing his love of poetry. He is a regular visiting poet at a local elementary school, where he leads “chap talks,” empowering young students to find their own voices and encourage them to explore creative opportunities.

This Geography of Thorns was released on Amazon Kindle and is available on the platform through the sponsorship of the Poetry Society of Texas. It can be purchased from Amazon, the author, and other outlets. J. Todd Hawkins can be reached for readings, workshops, presentations, and readings at jthodawkins@gmail.com or www.jfordawkins.com.

James wins NexGen Under 30

Derrick James was named a 2020 Oklahoma NexGen Under 30 winner.

The annual NexGen Under 30 listing is another opportunity to recognize Oklahoma’s upcoming individuals who demonstrate talent, drive, and service to their communities. More than 70 other Oklahoma residents, 30 and younger, were also selected this year in several categories. James is a staff writer at the McAlester News-Capital in McAlester, Okla. He covers sports for the MNC winning the Oklahoma Press Association’s top award for newspapers in the state each of the past two years. James has won awards for his coverage of events in southeastern Oklahoma through the Associated Press, Oklahoma Press Association, Society of Professional Journalists, and a Native American Journalists Association member.

Chockat students inducted into National Honor Society

Eastern Oklahoma State College has inducted Chockat students Eliza Stender Joan, Brittany Brewer, Michelle Evans, Riley Ayers, Shanna Spencer, Krew Tison, and Maddie Wall into the Phi Theta Kappa national honor society.

James graduated from APU in May 2020 with a degree in journalism.

This Geography of Thorns was released on Amazon Kindle and is available on the platform through the sponsorship of the Poetry Society of Texas. It can be purchased from Amazon, the author, and other outlets. J. Todd Hawkins can be reached for readings, workshops, presentations, and readings at jthodawkins@gmail.com or www.jfordawkins.com.

Are You Ready For This?

This is the last opportunity to register online for the training program of the same name, which will be held June 23 to 25 at Crowder College’s Pittsburg campus.

Call 417-336-6688 ext. 211 to register. For more information, visit crowder.edu/nextgentraining.
Rhoda Anderson


She was preceded in death by her parents, brother Ricky Don Moore and sister Carol Moore.

She is survived by her sister, Sharon Anderson; daughter-in-law Sherry Nored; grandchildren Levi Billy Jack Nored, Teresa Canada, Alice, and Billy Franklin and spouse Melinda; sisters- in-law Misty Vorpagel and spouse Thomas; son Rickey Nored and spouse Amy; nieces and nephews, cousins, and a host of friends.

For the full obituary, please visit For the full obituary, please visit Maple Hill Funeral Home.

James L. Vann Sr.


Jimmie was born Sept. 3, 1946, in Kansas City, Mo., to Carlbet and Ethel Vann.

He was preceded in death by his parents, siblings Carvil and Virginia, Ray and Walter, Robert and Mildred, and a host of friends.

Jimmie is survived by his wife, Shirley; children, John Vann Jr., and Amanda; grandchildren, Missy Hurtt, and Jason Brown; 34 great-grandchildren; and many grandchildren, nieces, and nephews.

For the full obituary, please visit For the full obituary, please visit Maple Hill Funeral Home.

Jasney Wade

Jasney Wade, 76, passed away April 30, 2021.

Jasney was born April 18, 1946, to Eddie and Melita Peters and was a lifetime resident of Madison County.

He was preceded in death by his parents, married with two children in Kentucky.

Jasney is survived by his wife, Bonnie; children, John Vann Jr., and Amanda; grandchildren, Missy Hurtt, and Jason Brown; 34 great-grandchildren; and many grandchildren, nieces, and nephews.

For the full obituary, please visit For the full obituary, please visit Maple Hill Funeral Home.

James Lee Ireland

James “Jim” Lee Ireland, 72, passed away March 28, 2020.

He was preceded in death by his parents.

Jasney is survived by his brother Haydn Ireland Jr. and his spouse, Sharon, and a niece, great-nephew, and great-niece.

For the full obituary, please visit For the full obituary, please visit Maple Hill Funeral Home.

Barbara Grant


Barbara was the last of 10 children of Leon and Martha Hudson. She is preceded in death by her parents, married with two children in Kentucky.

Barbara is survived by her husband Ronald Lee Spring, and 2 children, 4 grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

For the full obituary, please visit For the full obituary, please visit Maple Hill Funeral Home.

Gwendy Leflore

Gwendy Leflore was born June 19, 1936, in Horton, Texas, to Charles and Ethel Leflore.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Joe Leflore Sr.; her mother, Mary Barker.

Gwendy was a member of the James Lee Church of Christ.

For the full obituary, please visit For the full obituary, please visit Biskinik.

Ricky Allen Nored


Ricky was born Nov. 7, 1955, in Ardmore, Okla., to W.B. and Elaine (Lee) Nored.

He was preceded in death by his parents; brother Ricky Don Moore and sister Carol Moore.

Ricky is survived by his wife, Dawn (nee Bowen); brother, Joseph Nored and spouse Marcy; and a host of friends.

For the full obituary, please visit For the full obituary, please visit Biskinik.

Obituary Policy

Obituary submissions are for Choctaw Nation citizens. The Biskinik will only accept official notice notices from funeral homes or published in local newspapers. The Biskinik will only accept obituary notices from funeral homes or published in local newspapers. The Biskinik will only accept obituary notices from funeral homes or published in local newspapers. The Biskinik will only accept obituary notices from funeral homes or published in local newspapers. The Biskinik will only accept obituary notices from funeral homes or published in local newspapers. The Biskinik will only accept obituary notices from funeral homes or published in local newspapers.

Send official obituary notices to:

Biskinik

PO Box 120

Durant OK 74702

or email: biskinik@choctawnation.com

January 2022

Wildcat Month – Koinchush Hvshi

Vero Ann Mackey

Vero Ann Mackey, 67, passed away Jan. 12, 2022. She was preceded in death by her parents, brother Ricky Don Moore and sister Carol Moore.

Vero is survived by her brother, Barry Nored; her sisters, Misty Vorpagel and spouse Thomas; and many grandchildren.

For the full obituary, please visit For the full obituary, please visit Maple Hill Funeral Home.

Roscoe Jackson


Frank was born Jan. 30, 1965, in Greenville, Miss., to James and Ethel (Taylor) Nored.

He was survived by his parents; brother Ricky Don Moore and sister Carol Moore.

Frank is survived by his significant other, Susan Samuels; brothers Howard Brown Jackson and Roscoe Jr. Jackson; and sisters-in-law Misty Vorpagel and spouse Thomas; and many grandchildren.

For the full obituary, please visit For the full obituary, please visit Maple Hill Funeral Home.

Viola Ellen Zumwalt

Viola Ellen Zumwalt, 64, passed away Aug. 8, 2021.

She was preceded in death by her parents; brother Bu-

Viola was a member of the Greater Metro Community Church.

For the full obituary, please visit For the full obituary, please visit Bowden Funeral Home.

Shirley Lowman


Shirley was born Nov. 30, 1964, in Ardmore, Okla., to Bobby and Lillian (nee Le-

Shirley was preceded in death by her parents; sisters Ethel and Phyllis; brother Rich-

Shirley is survived by her husband, Jimmie Lee Ireland; her children, Joe Ireland and spouse Mary; son Jimmy Vann; and a host of friends.

For the full obituary, please visit For the full obituary, please visit Biskinik.

Jack Griffith


He was preceded in death by his parents; siblings Ricky Don Moore and sister Carol Moore.

Jack was preceded in death by his parents; brother Ricky Don Moore and sister Carol Moore.

For the full obituary, please visit For the full obituary, please visit Biskinik.

Marie Deirdre Heacock


She was preceded in death by her parents; brother Bu-

Marie was born Dec. 13, 1952, in Talihina, Okla., to James “Jim” and Ethel (Taylor) Nored. Marie is survived by her parents; brother Ricky Don Moore and sister Carol Moore.

For the full obituary, please visit For the full obituary, please visit Restland Funeral Home.

Margee Neil Williams


Margee was born Dec. 13, 1930, in Post, Texas, to John and Mary (nee Lee) Bean. Margee is survived by her parents; brother Ricky Don Moore and sister Carol Moore.

For the full obituary, please visit For the full obituary, please visit Biskinik.

Dawson Conover


Dawson was born Nov. 7, 2001, in Talihina, Okla., to James and Elmer (nee Chol) Marjorie Miller, Imagene Swimmer, Nathaniel Anderson; and siblings Mary

Dawson is survived by his parents; brother Ricky Don Moore and sister Carol Moore.

For the full obituary, please visit For the full obituary, please visit Biskinik.

Stacie Jane Smith


Stacie was preceded in death by her parents; brother Bu-
Over the next year and a half, Iti Fabvssa will be running a new series on Choctaw history that will cover the period from the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek, where many Choc- taws have lived for generations, to the present. In this series, we will explore the challenges and triumphs of the Choctaw people in Oklahoma. Although our current territory is not where we came from or where hundreds of generations of our ancestors have been laid to rest, we have transformed it into our new home filled with important histories, ideas, and relations. Over the past 190 years, we have accomplished much by creating a new society. In Indian Territory, Oklahoma, we have established and operated systems of government and laws in ways that align with the values and traditions of our ancestors. It is a rich history that we wish to explore in depth with our readers.

Over the course of this series, we hope to clear up some misconceptions about Choctaw history and provide better context. For instance, some think that when Choctaw people first arrived in Oklahoma, they were poor and had no history. Although the immediate time after removal was difficult, Choctaws drew on collective knowledge to create a new society in this new homeland. Over the 1820s and 1830s, Choctaws shared knowledge with Europeans and Latin Americans, of which Choctaw authors have contributed. While the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek, many Choctaws have lived in what is now known as Oklahoma, the laws and the largest school system west of the Mississippi River. Over the past 190 years, Choctaws have experimented and innovated with new forms of government and laws in ways that align with the values and traditions of our ancestors. It is a rich history that we wish to explore in depth with our readers.

The story of Oklahoma is one of renewal and resurgence, adapting and overcoming challenges created by colonialism to establish new relations and pathways toward the future. Telling this history requires Choctaws to be our own historians—which we have always been. We know that individuals do not have a degree to be a historian. Our grandparents, aunts, uncles, and parents are historians. As community members and scholars have long pointed out, telling history is not a neutral project. History has high stakes. People have often been excluded from telling our story of history because it would contradict grand narratives about how the United States came into being. We also know there is so much more to American history that has not been fully examined.

While this series will cover some of the major events, this is by no means a comprehensive Oklahoma Choctaw history. Our history in Indian Territory is rich and we want to give it the attention it deserves. Our next Iti Fabvssa article will focus on the treaty of 1830, which covers the first part of removal and the early experiences in the new homeland secured to us by U.S. treaties. We will see how Choctaw Nation Services/Historic Preservation, the Choctaw Language Department, and Choctaw Nation museums work to protect and promote Choctaw history.

This month, I would like to address our rental assistance service that is available to Choctaw Nation members. In recent years, the Choctaw Nation has worked to ensure that our tribal members who reside in rental property outside those owned by the Choctaw Nation are in safe and sanitary housing. This month, I would like to address our rental assistance service that is available to Choctaw Nation members. In recent years, the Choctaw Nation has worked to ensure that our tribal members who reside in rental property outside those owned by the Choctaw Nation are in safe and sanitary housing. This month, I would like to address our rental assistance service that is available to Choctaw Nation members. In recent years, the Choctaw Nation has worked to ensure that our tribal members who reside in rental property outside those owned by the Choctaw Nation are in safe and sanitary housing. This month, I would like to address our rental assistance service that is available to Choctaw Nation members. In recent years, the Choctaw Nation has worked to ensure that our tribal members who reside in rental property outside those owned by the Choctaw Nation are in safe and sanitary housing. This month, I would like to address our rental assistance service that is available to Choctaw Nation members. In recent years, the Choctaw Nation has worked to ensure that our tribal members who reside in rental property outside those owned by the Choctaw Nation are in safe and sanitary housing. This month, I would like to address our rental assistance service that is available to Choctaw Nation members. In recent years, the Choctaw Nation has worked to ensure that our tribal members who reside in rental property outside those owned by the Choctaw Nation are in safe and sanitary housing. This month, I would like to address our rental assistance service that is available to Choctaw Nation members. In recent years, the Choctaw Nation has worked to ensure that our tribal members who reside in rental property outside those owned by the Choctaw Nation are in safe and sanitary housing. This month, I would like to address our rental assistance service that is available to Choctaw Nation members. In recent years, the Choctaw Nation has worked to ensure that our tribal members who reside in rental property outside those owned by the Choctaw Nation are in safe and sanitary housing. This month, I would like to address our rental assistance service that is available to Choctaw Nation members. In recent years, the Choctaw Nation has worked to ensure that our tribal members who reside in rental property outside those owned by the Choctaw Nation are in safe and sanitary housing.

By Bobby Yarvell

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Hooked on trout fishing in Southeastern Oklahoma

By Christian Toews

If you ask any fisherman, the sport holds more than catching fish. There is something peaceful and refreshing about the entire process. The company or the solitude. Time spent in nature’s glory. The excitement of catching a new personal record fish. Although fishing can seem simple, there are many reasons people get hooked on the sport.

People have enjoyed fishing for centuries. Although there are many ways to catch fish, one of the most challenging and rewarding ways is fly-fishing. The Lower Mountain Fork River offers the most challenging river in the area and the perfect place for catching a fish. The fish are small and tricky and the river is filled with weeds that can be difficult to fish. The fisherman (also known as an angler) will cast his line over his head in a beautiful rhythmic motion that will imitate an insect flying and landing on the water. Even if you don’t fish, watching someone fly fish is a mesmerizing experience. Watching the fly go back and forth over the angler’s head and then finally rest on the water and flow downstream.

The angler decides what fly to use and how to make his gear mimic an insect. Most anglers will agree, catching a fish is simply a bonus to being on the water and挂 out and sunbathe,” said Preddy. “If you don’t come in with a guide and without doing your homework, you’re guessing. We take the guesswork out of your day,” stated Preddy. “I have been fishing my whole life; if I’m going somewhere I’m not familiar with, I will hire a guide,” he continued.

Preddy is a fly-fishing guide on the Lower Mountain Fork River. He is the toughest river I have ever fished. It tests you as an angler,” said Preddy.

Jeff Preddy is a fly fishing guide on the Lower Mountain Fork River. Fishing is in his blood. Jeff’s father is an outfitter and a guide, and he grew up fishing and hunting. Jeff has guided fishing trips across the country and said the Lower Mountain Fork River is one of his favorite spots to fish because it’s a challenging river.

“I have fished all over the United States, several big saltwater fisheries, and the Lower Mountain Fork is the toughest river I have ever fished. It tests you as an angler,” said Preddy.

Although he has fished with all kinds of equipment, Preddy said that fly fishing is unique and challenging as a sport.

“You're standing in the river. Listening to the sounds of the river, you're watching nature at its finest,” explained Preddy. “You’ll see deer cross, bears swim through, ducks; you have a ton of outdoor activity surrounding you. There is nothing more therapeutic to me than standing in a river and listening to nature.”

Maybe you want to fish for trout for the first time, or perhaps you’re a long-time fly-fisherman who wants to try the Lower Mountain Fork. Either way, hiring a guide is a practical way to get familiar with the area and learn a thing or two. Preddy said that hiring a guide is a great idea no matter where you end up. “It helps in several ways. A guide already has the proper gear; they are paying attention to the weather, and knowing what flies are in season. A guide is already going to have all that stuff figured out. If you don’t come in with a guide and without doing your homework, you're guessing. We take the guesswork out of your day,” stated Preddy. “I have been fishing my whole life; if I’m going somewhere I’m not familiar with, I will hire a guide,” he continued.

Preddy explained that during the warmer months, the trout would find the cooler water deeper in the river, but you have a better chance of catching large fish during the winter months.

“You get into your larger fish during the winter months. If you are looking for a small trout, just hit up in ankle-deep water and bang out and sunbathe,” said Preddy.

Fishing might seem like a summer sport, but winter is one of the best times to fish for trout. Preddy explained that during the warmer months, the trout would find the cooler water deeper in the river, but you have a better chance of catching large fish during the winter months.

Maybe you want to fish for trout for the first time, or perhaps you’re a long-time fly-fisherman who wants to try the Lower Mountain Fork. Either way, hiring a guide is a practical way to get familiar with the area and learn a thing or two. Preddy said that hiring a guide is a great idea no matter where you end up. “It helps in several ways. A guide already has the proper gear; they are paying attention to the weather, and knowing what flies are in season. A guide is already going to have all that stuff figured out. If you don’t come in with a guide and without doing your homework, you're guessing. We take the guesswork out of your day,” stated Preddy. “I have been fishing my whole life; if I’m going somewhere I’m not familiar with, I will hire a guide,” he continued.

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Chapter Nation to have official Flag Day

By Chris Jennings

At the Nov. 14 Tribal Council session, a resolution was passed with a unani-
ous vote to set Oct. 16, 2021, as the first Choctaw Nation Flag Day. This day will celebrate and reflect on the importance of the flag of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma every year.

“The idea for a national flag day was brought to Councilman Robert John by Kurt Jackson. O’Leary’s family has a deep and impactful history in the Choctaw Nation. He is the great-grandson of Chief Allen Wright, who helped name Oklahoma and his grandfather worked for the Bureau of Indian Affairs. His mother was the first woman elected to the Choctaw Tribal Council while statehood and Hill was responsible for Native People of America also known in his grandfather’s footsteps, working for the BIA.”

When asked why he thought it was important that the Choctaw Nation have a Flag Day Kurt said, “Well, I feel proud in our tribe’s past and in our future in the running and providing for the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma’s pride in our history.”

Today there is great change for Native tribes across the United States, the idea of a na-
tional flag day is important and timely.

Following a resolution reaffirming the Choctaw Nation’s and reservation status, the O’Leary family and I believe a Choctaw Nation flag day will be very important. It will grow our people a special day for the Choctaw Nation’s population for tribe’s flag, the Choctaw Nation was the first tribe to adopt an national flag. Be-

A year in review

Continued from 1

2020 in Numbers

*Numbers represent totals for 2020

• Food Distribution Program staff created a drop-in curbside service for the safety of clients and staff with 11 staff volunteers. Volun-
tees provided food delivery to tribal elders, either by helping package groceries or deliver-
ing food to elders waiting in their cars.

• 2935 Total Household Serviced Per Month

• 7854 Family Members Serviced Per Month

• $264,439 Total Food Value Per Month

• Choctaw Nation Child Development Centers provided children to 328 children and sup-
ported jobs for over 100 staff in seven centers.

• Talihina Child Care Center expanded to serve additional children and create ten additional positions.

• The Summer Food Program Service distributed 7,080 meals, participating in the USDA Sum-
ner Food Program and At-Risk School Meals.

• The Youth Empowerment and Advisory Board received 425 RFP participation.

• The Chahta Foundation awarded 422 scholar-
ships totaling $29,075.

• The John H. Maloney School provided 15,499 students.

• Choctaw Nation Education Program Awarded 7,058,437.21 to 315 students.

• The Tribal Enrollment Team served 388 stu-
dents.

• Collins Freshman Year Initiative (FYI) served 141.

• Health Education served 15 teachers.

• Jones Academy had 151 students and ten grad-
uates.

• The STAR Program awarded $310,760 to 6,600 students.

• The Student Activity and Advisory Program Awarded $306,483 to 3,498 students.

• The Pipeline for Advanced Training Health Sci-
ence Department (PATHS) award to 133 students totaled $450,000.

• This year, the Nation added mental health pro-
fessionals to the Department of Public Safety, counselors trained in crisis prevention, de-
escalation, and trauma response, will be available for tribal members or as tribal members in high-risk situations.

• The Native American Housing Authority assisted more than 6,153 tribal households in the past year. Those services included five time leases, elder homes, rental units, lawn care, and home repair.

• The Senior Nutrition Program distributed $280 mil-
lion in Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding. A majority of relief funding went directly to member support programs.

• The Career Development Program served 11,046 participants in the total amount of $2,103,095.

• Employment Training Services served 1,066 student participants.

• High School Student Services served 4,050 stu-
dents during the pandemic.

• Early Head Start served 100 children through four locations.

• Head Start served 310 children through 13 loca-
tions.

• Early Head Start served 108 children through four locations.

• Talihina Child Care Center expanded to serve additional children and create ten additional positions.

• High School Student Services served 4,050 stu-
dents during the pandemic.

• The Senior Nutrition Program provided Native American elders aged 55 and older a weekly
meal.

• The Growing Hope Program helps make it ant and timely.

To learn more about the Growing Hope Program call contact Jacquelyn Patten at 580-389-1979.

In the November 2020 Tribal Council meeting, Tribal Council voted unanimously to name Oc-
tober 16 Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Flag Day. Choc
An update on sovereignty in Oklahoma

By Bradley Germond

Potawa is a virtue, particularly in regard to the status of tribal sovereignty. Following this summer's U.S. Supreme Court decision in McGirt v. Oklahoma, the resolution and a related one, which found the Muskogee (Creek) Nation continues to exist as a reservation, may soon apply to the Choctaw Nation as well.

The court's ruling in McGirt, which was issued in July, was written narrowly to apply only to the Creek. Experts say the basis for the ruling—that Congress never acted to terminate their reservation—likely applies to all tribes. Legal cases now working their way through lower courts may soon determine this.

Chief Gary Batton has established a sovereignty commission consisting of representatives from across the Choctaw Government. Its task is planning for all eventualities, including the possibility that the Choctaw Nation may gain added roles and responsibilities.

As the Creeks are finding, the first impacts of their newly affirmed tribal sovereignty are in matters pertaining to Indian child welfare, justice and law enforcement. Actions already taken by the Choctaw Nation in preparation for this include hiring an additional 10 police officers and seven social services workers. It has also deepened its relationship with the U.S. District Court in Eastern Oklahoma, and with law enforcement agencies across southeastern Oklahoma.

In Washington, D.C., lawmakers are working toward funding, or authorizing, the federal government's spending for the rest of its fiscal year, which concludes on Sept. 30, 2021. Progress thus far has been rocky, with two options appearing the most likely: either lawmakers authorize spending for the rest of the fiscal year by passing a full budget, or pass another continuing resolution to authorize spending at existing levels, with no increases or decreases. The federal government has been operating on a continuing resolution, rather than a full-year budget, since Sept. 3, 2020.

An in-between hybrid of the two may also present itself. Congress may pass a budget for the rest of the fiscal year for certain programs or agencies, and an extended continuing resolution for all others. Each of these three scenarios present potential opportunities and pitfalls for federal funding in Indian Country.

Certain services provided to Native Americans are paid with federal dollars, and if the Choctaw Government agencies will be providing these in the future, rather than the ties and pitfalls for federal funding in Indian Country.

An update on sovereignty in Oklahoma

By Sheila Kivan

The 77th annual session of the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), the oldest and largest national organization of American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments, was held virtually this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic November 8-13.

However, not being able to meet in person did not stop the General Assembly from adopting a historic resolution, which affirmed in the resolution that, "since time immemorial, each Tribal Nation retains the inherent sovereign right to determine its own citizenship..." NCAI further outlined its resolution, to establish a Tribal Citizenship Protection Task Force for study, education, and development recommendations about issues of Indigenous tribal citizenship.

Choctaw tribal member and Executive Director for the Association of American Indian Affairs (AAAIA), Shannon O’Loughlin, said about the passage of the historic resolution, that it “powerfully affirms both sides of the tribal citizenship coin: The Indigenous human and civil rights to belong and the inherent tribal sovereign right to decide who belongs.”

O'Loughlin stated, “It is time that our Nations be the example of what it looks like to the world to protect human rights and cultural sovereignty.”