



# ITTIBACHVFFA

*To be one in unity of mind, thought or action.*



Alex West looks over the Cliffs of Moher in Cork, Ireland. West is one of two students who received the 2022 Choctaw-Ireland Scholarship.



Claire Green Young poses in front of the "Kindred Spirits" sculpture in Bailick Park in Middleton, County Cork, Ireland.

March 2022 Issue

## Born through a donation 175 years ago, the Choctaw-Irish bond remains strong today

By Christian Toews and Kendra Germany-Wall

The Choctaw Nation and the people of Ireland have a long and storied history. Although separated by thousands of miles, these two nations are forever entwined because of a small act of kindness nearly two centuries ago.

### Choctaw-Irish Bond

In March of 1847, Choctaw people met to raise money for the starving poor in Ireland. The Choctaw people had received word about the dire situation of the Great Potato Famine and could not stand by and not help. The Choctaws pooled together \$170, which was sent first to the Memphis Irish Relief Committee, then to the General Irish Relief Committee of the City of New York. The \$170 would be worth around \$5,000 in today's economy.

More than a million people died in Ireland during the Great Potato Famine when their potato crops were decimated. Another two million left the country when the potato crops failed in successive years. Potatoes served as a primary food source for almost half the population but primarily the rural poor. The gift from the Choctaw Nation directly impacted the survival of many in Ireland.

The gift to the Irish people was significant, considering the Choctaw people had recently been forced to walk the Trail of Tears between 1831 and 1833.

The Irish people have never forgotten the kindness of the Choctaws in 1847.

Throughout the years, many other donations have been made by the Irish and the Choctaws in honor of that donation so many years ago.

In 2020, the Irish people once again honored that sacred bond, giving back to Native American tribes hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Through a GoFundMe campaign, contributors have raised \$7,865,930 as of February 11, 2022, to help supply clean water, food and health supplies to people in the Navajo Nation and the Hopi Reservation, with hundreds of thousands of dollars coming from Irish donors, according to the organizers.

Many of the contributors have cited the Choctaw-Irish connection as the reason for their generosity.

The connection between the Irish people and the Choctaw Nation shows that a simple act of kindness can bring nations together. A donation made roughly 175 years ago is still making an impact today.

Chief Gary Batton commented on the tradition of the Choctaw Nation's spirit of giving, saying, "We are committed to continuing the legacy of generosity our ancestors began in the 1800s. We want to continue to help our tribal members, the state of Oklahoma, and the world."

For more information on the Choctaw-Irish connection, visit [bit.ly/3cWiqNR](http://bit.ly/3cWiqNR). Choctaw-Ireland Scholarship

Irish Prime Minister, or Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar visited the Choctaw Nation in March of 2018. During his visit, he announced a new scholarship program that would allow members of the Choctaw Nation to study in Ireland. This scholarship program began in 2019, and Jessica Militante was the first Chahta Foundation joint-sponsored scholar to Ireland.

The Chahta Foundation provides opportunities for Choctaw people. To date, over \$2.5 million in scholarships have been given nationwide to over 500 Choctaw students. Competitive scholarships are available for many educational endeavors, from the trades and first-year college students to doctoral degrees.

One of the Chahta Foundation's most prestigious scholarship opportunities is the Choctaw-Ireland Scholarship, which includes tuition and expenses paid by the Republic of Ireland for a Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma student.

Two young tribal members have been awarded scholarships this year for the first time. Claire Green Young and Austin West recently arrived at University College Cork, located in Ireland's second-largest city, for a full year of study.

The Choctaw-Ireland Scholarship was instituted in honor of the assistance provided by the Choctaw people towards the people of Ireland during the Great Famine of the mid-nineteenth century. This \$170 donation started a relationship between the two nations that has only deepened since the 1800s.

Simon Harris, the Government of Ireland's Minister for Higher Education, said, "I am really delighted to see the success of the Choctaw Scholarship program, with two Choctaw Nation students choosing to study in Ireland this year. The scholarship program was initiated to provide a big 'Yakoke' (thank you) to the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma to recognize the great act of generosity and humanitarianism shown towards the Irish people during the Great Famine. These scholarships help foster greater ties between our two nations, and I look forward to continued growth and cooperation. I would like to extend my congratulations to this year's successful scholars, Claire Green Young and Austin West, and I look forward to welcoming them to Ireland. I wish them both an enjoyable and productive time as they undertake their studies at University College Cork."

Young grew up in Wright City and is the daughter of Ellen Green Young and the granddaughter of R.C. Green and Sharon Green. The Wright City High School student was admitted to Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire. After gradu-

ation in 2017, she was involved in Native Americans at Dartmouth and, as a Senior Fellow, worked to recruit Native American students, among other activities.

Young said that she has a special connection to this scholarship because of her unique heritage.

"One of the reasons I was really drawn to the Choctaw Irish scholarship program was because I am of mixed Choctaw-Irish heritage," she said. "I knew that one of my great grandmothers, the Choctaw matriarch of my family, had married an Irish settler in Indian territory. So I knew the ancestry behind my family, and I knew what being Choctaw meant to me because I was lucky enough to grow up in my tribal community, but I didn't know a lot about what it meant to be Irish, and this scholarship program has both helped me grow more in my identity as a Choctaw person but at the same time bridge the gap between these two identities."

Young plans to work toward her master's degree in museum studies at Cork. She said she plans to seek a doctoral degree in Choctaw tribal history and religion in the future.

West earned an Associate in Arts in political science from Tulsa Community College, a Bachelor of Arts in political science with minors in international relations and global studies from the University of Central Oklahoma while maintaining a 4.0 GPA.

West said he would be working toward a master's degree at Cork in international public policy and diplomacy. West said that he was excited about the cultural experience of studying in Ireland. "Apart from the educational opportunities, I hope my time spent in Éire (Ireland) helps me grow as a person. In moving to another country, I hope I cultivate courage to be bold and take chances. In hearing different perspectives, I hope to cultivate humility and an understanding of how much I do not know. Lastly, as I live in a different nation, I hope to build a greater appreciation and understanding of our Choctaw Nation."

Both students are thankful for the opportunity and excited to begin their journey in Ireland.

"I am also looking forward to getting into college clubs and learning about Irish culture," he commented.

Young said she is very thankful for the support from her Choctaw tribal community. "I just want to say a huge thank you. These educational opportunities wouldn't be possible without the support of the tribe," said Young.

She also advised anyone deciding about their future to find support in their community. "It can really be difficult for young native kids today to navigate the world that we live in," she said. "Lean on your community. Lean on your tribe, elders, and

friends; those are the people who know you. They know when you're happy," she continued.

The Chahta Foundation has been helping to provide opportunities for Choctaw people for ten years. For more information about the Choctaw-Ireland Scholarship and other educational opportunities the foundation offers, visit [www.ChahtaFoundation.com](http://www.ChahtaFoundation.com).

To make or inquire about tax-deductible gifts to the Chahta Foundation, potential donors may contact the foundation at [info@chahtafoundation.com](mailto:info@chahtafoundation.com) or 800-522-6170, ext. 2993.

### An Olympic Connection

As the Biskinik reported in January, Choctaw tribal member Ian Burson was in Beijing for the 2022 Winter Olympic Games as the half-pipe coach for second-time Olympian, snowboarder Seamus O'Connor and freestyle skier Brendan 'Bubba' Newby. The trio not only represented Ireland but the sacred bond between the nations.



Photo Provided Ian Burson and the Irish Olympic Athletes he coaches pose for a photo as they arrive in Beijing for the 2022 Winter Olympics.



Photo Provided Thanks to the Choctaw-Ireland Scholarship, Austin West will be working toward a master's in Cork, Ireland.



Photo Provided Claire Green Young of Wright City is excited to earn her master's in museum studies in Cork.

## Faith, Family, Culture



Chief Gary Batton

### Parent Leadership Month

Halito,  
Being a parent is an important role. It requires leadership and influence, not only in one's home but in the communities in which we live.

February is Parent Leadership Month, a time to recognize the important role parents have on raising healthy families in their homes and communities.

It's important for us parents to continue to grow and gain the knowledge and skills to navigate the world that our kids grow up in these days. I would have never guessed that I would need to know Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Snapchat just to be able to communicate with my kids and grandkids and to know some of the issues our kids grow up facing in this day and age.

Oftentimes, we parents tend to struggle with our personal values and those values that society projects upon us.

But we must be steadfast and trust our parental instincts and teach our children the basic common courtesies of love and respect for others.

Parental leadership is a process, having to juggle the lessons learned of the past, understanding the hard realities of the present, and focusing on the vision of the future yet while being able to keep a balance of keeping the values of our ancestors while adapting to a new modern way.

I pray for each of our parents and grandparents as we go through these difficult times in life and that God gives us discernment on how to lead our children and the future of our Tribe.

Yakohe and God bless!



Pastor Olin Williams  
Employee Chaplain

### The Appeal

In the Book of Revelation, chapter 3, verses 14-22 is a letter written to the assembly at Laodicea. Laodicea was situated at the merging of three major roadways. The city grew into a highly successful commercial and financial center. It was a city of wealth. In verse 14, our Lord presents Himself as the author of this letter. Verses 15-17 is the admonition to this assembly. Their estimation of themselves in verse 17 is declared untrue by the Faithful and True Witness. This church assembly had boasted of her material riches and resources but never gave one word of praise for our Lord. In verse 17, they said they were rich and had need of nothing. All the while, the Lord saw them as wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked. In verses 18-20, the Lord appeals to this church assembly of Laodicea. "I counsel thee to buy of me, gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see." Our Lord is using language that is relevant to this assembly. These people were used to merchandising. They gained wealth by buying and selling with the merchants of the far East. Their riches were the gold of this material world. The Lord is introducing them to a new concept of riches and how to acquire it.

"Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." (Isaiah 55:1) In verse 18, the Lord says the best clothing of the world could never cover the moral nakedness of man. God himself is the only one who can clothe man's moral nakedness with the white clean linen of His righteousness. Then the Lord says, "Anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see." The Laodiceans could well afford to travel the known world of their day and see the wonders of the time. But only the Lord could open their eyes to perceive the spiritual world they had never seen. The natural man with all the riches of earthly knowledge and resources can never see the world of God. It is the anointing power of the eyesalve (Holy Spirit) that can open our spiritual eyes to see the world of God. Just like the Laodiceans, we too are wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked. The Lord is counseling us as He did the Laodiceans in His appeal.



Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr.

### National Social Work Month

We have made it to March, which signals warmer and longer spring days, along with more opportunities to spend time outdoors. As our ancestors did before us, we will prepare the earth for gardens not only to sustain families but provide beneficial activity for elders.

March is also National Social Work Month. It's a time that recognizes the dedication and empathy social workers across the country deliver while providing services to children and adults in need.

The Choctaw Nation Community Based Social Work Program serves Choctaw individuals and families. Since it is a community-based program, services are taken directly to the community, and assistance is given there where families are more

comfortable. The program's primary goal is to assist Choctaw families in locating resources to help meet immediate needs.

"Social Work Month is a way to celebrate a great profession and a great time to appreciate the many professionals who work to provide services to our Choctaw tribal members," noted Linda Goodwin, Program Director of Outreach Services.

The Choctaw Nation Community Based Social Work Program currently has 24 social workers that provide generalist social work, with an emphasis on general welfare and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) general assistance. If you need assistance, contact their office at (580) 326-8304.

### Be mindful of children's mental health amid COVID-19

(OKLAHOMA CITY, February 7, 2022) – Oklahoma City Indian Clinic (OKCIC), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit clinic providing health and wellness services to American Indians in central Oklahoma, wants to raise awareness of mental health struggles children are facing due to the pandemic.

Children's Mental Health Week will be observed February 7-13, 2022, to bring awareness to the social, emotional and mental well-being of children. In a 2020 survey conducted by the Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago, 71% of parents said the pandemic had taken a toll on their child's mental health.

"The pandemic has caused mental health crises for many children," said Misty Gillespie, OKCIC's Director of Behavioral Health. "They are experiencing disruptions in their routines, lost security and safety, and missing significant life events. Many children are also experiencing grief due to the loss of a loved one."

Experiencing trauma during childhood can have long-term effects. Luckily, parents and caregivers can watch for signs of stress and offer support to their children. Behavior changes to look for include difficulties with attention or concentration, avoidance of activities enjoyed in the past, excessive worry or sadness, and returning to behaviors they have outgrown.

If your child is showing signs of stress, there are ways you can offer support. Reassure them that they are safe, and tell them how you are dealing with your own stress. This can help teach ways to cope with stress in the future. If your child asks you questions about COVID-19, answer honestly and in terms that they can understand. Try to spend time doing meaningful activities together, like playing a board game or going for a walk. This will help support their social and emotional needs.

"You can be a role model for your child by taking care of your own mental health needs," Gillespie said. "Remember to get plenty of sleep, eat well and take breaks from watching or reading news stories."

The pandemic has caused mental health crises for many children, but caregivers can offer support and reassurance.

If you or your child are in crisis, you can call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255). OKCIC has Behavioral Health services available for patients. Call (405) 948-4900 ext. 610 for more information.

About Oklahoma City Indian Clinic  
Oklahoma City Indian Clinic was established in 1974 to provide excellent health care and wellness services to American Indians in central Oklahoma. The clinic staff cares for more than 21,000 patients from over 220 federally recognized tribes every year. American Indians can receive a range of services, including medical, dental, pediatrics, prenatal, pharmacy, optometry, physical fitness, nutrition, family programs and behavioral health services. For more information, please call (405) 948-4900 or visit [www.okcic.com](http://www.okcic.com).

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## SUMMER 2022 INTERNSHIP PROGRAM



The program provides opportunities for Choctaw students from area colleges to gain career fundamentals at Choctaw Nation offices throughout the CNO Reservation while also earning college credits. The program offers temporary, paid positions and is mutually beneficial for both the intern and hosting department. Students are rewarded with academic and professional experience. CNO benefits from the additional support and expertise interns provide to help meet business and operational needs.

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Choctaw Nation Human Resources

# Pawnee/Choctaw brothers are pop, pop, popping off after Reservation Dogs debut

By Shelia Kirven

Reservation Dogs, television's popular series on Hulu and internationally on Disney +, has become one of the industry's most talked-about shows. Filmed in Oklahoma, it took off like wildfire and has gained serious international attention. One of the many reasons for its success is Pawnee/Choctaw rap artists and Oklahoma City brothers, Lil Mike aka "Little Michael Jackson" and Funny Bone, together known as Mike Bone.

Reservation Dogs premiered in August 2021, featuring all Indigenous writers and directors and an almost entirely Indigenous cast and production team. The series has had high ratings, been nominated for multiple awards, and renewed for Season 2. Mike Bone, as they call themselves, are recurring actors on the show, playing Mose and Mekko, who can be seen throughout each episode riding their bicycles throughout the reservation while rapping and spreading the "news."

When asked how they got cast on the show, Bone said, "Due to COVID-19, we had to shut down all our touring in 2020. Everything pretty much stopped." He said their manager told them about auditions being held in Tulsa for a movie, but it ended up being for a TV pilot when they auditioned.

"We just did it. We did the audition and changed up the script a little bit to make it our own. They called us back and said y'all are exactly what we're looking for."

"The show went together magically," said Bone. "All the characters, all the people behind the cameras, the writers, they all worked together perfectly to make it a classic."

Mike said, "When we were on set, everybody was bragging on this being the next Smoke Signals. We knew it was going to be big in the Indian community, but we had no idea that it was going to be accepted by so many other people."

When asked what it means to be part of a series that has broken through barriers and placed itself so highly in the world of television, Bone said, "We've got people in different countries relating to it, hitting us up online saying it reminds them of their cities and their towns. I always say it humanizes the Native community, and it makes people relate and see that we're still here and we're people. We're still here and we're still humans and deal with same stuff that everyone else is, and even more so in America."

Before Reservation Dogs, the brothers' music was found all over the internet. They were very popular, but now their fame has somewhat exploded. Due to their increasing popularity, the brothers laughed about even getting rid of a car they drove around town, which had the name "Mike Bone" painted on the side.

Mike and Bone first appeared on America's Got Talent

in 2013. "That was our global breakthrough, and that opened the doors for us to travel to different countries, not just here in Oklahoma and the states," Bone said. "I think that broadened our fan base. We've got a lot of people jamming us in Tokyo, Greece, all kinds of other countries."

The brothers may look like twins, but they are five years apart, Mike being the oldest.

They write their own lyrics and produce and record their music in Oklahoma. Through their music, they want to influence others to stay away from violence, drugs and alcohol, and make good life decisions. Their honest and clean music speaks about real-life issues, many they have endured themselves, such as gang violence, abuse and homelessness. They say they strive to be positive influences for youth, promoting that a positive attitude and hard work can make dreams come true.

Mike said the neighborhoods they grew up in were poor, and kids witnessed and sometimes participated in gang activities. "I was one person who was like, I'm not going to do that again."

They said they also grew up in the Indian church, which helped. They speak about their faith in God openly, saying it does not waiver, nor do their abilities to pick themselves up and go forward.

"We stand our ground on our faith," said Bone. "We've always seen God come through, whether we were stressing on it or if we weren't stressing on it. That's something we preach to people, that the worrying isn't going to change anything." Their song, "Don't Worry About It," talks about letting go, having faith and believing.

According to Mike, his music career started by writing poetry early in life.

He said, "We grew up semi-poor, living off food stamps and things like that." He said he was encouraged to write out his feelings. "They had me write out my problems and draw, and all in that encouraged me to write poems. Poems turned into songs. Then I saw Michael Jackson, and I thought that was an outlet because dancing took my mind off everything."

He decided to try out for talent shows to see what he could do. After a school performance of his poetry at a gang violence awareness event at age 12, a student told him that she liked his rap. "I did a poem about one of my friends dying of gang violence, and I did it to a jazz beat." After that, he said he decided to try and write a poem about rap. "That sparked the journey," said Bone, who joined up with his older brother soon after.

When asked what message they want to share with our readers, especially our young readers, Bone said, "You are what you eat, so be careful what you feed your mind." He continued, "Not only food, but what you listen to, what you absorb, what you watch on movies and tv. It all goes in, and that's what a lot of young people don't

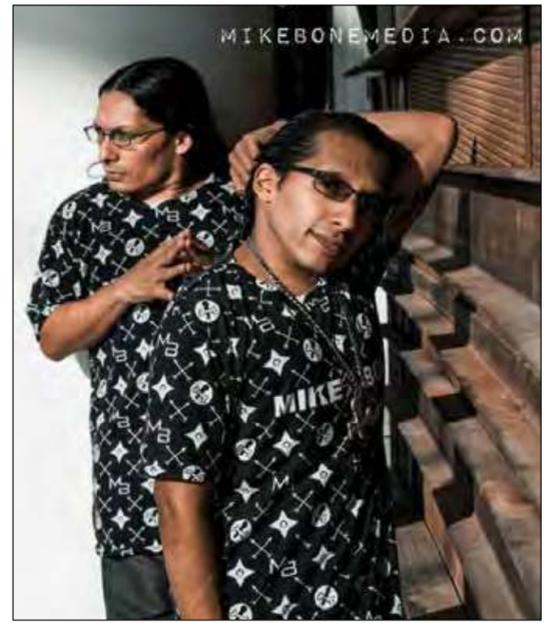


Photo by SylQui Snapped

OKC rapping brothers Lil Mike and Funny Bone, known together as Mike Bone, have seen their popularity skyrocket after their recurring appearances in Hulu's hit television series, Reservation Dogs.

understand, that the music they are listening to is speaking. Those words have power. If it's words of lack and depression and different things like that, and you're just soaking yourself in that, you're going to just live your life where you're just always sad or angry or suicidal, you name it; there's so much terrible types of music out there that's not good for the body, for the mental health." He explained, "Just be careful what you listen to. That's why we make our music quality content, no nonsense."

Mike added his encouragement, "Dream big, work hard, and never give up."

They said they try to spread what they have learned over the years. They also encourage healthy eating and they themselves try to eat as healthy as possible.

Bone said they are constantly working on new music and auditioning for future endeavors.

According to the brothers, they are collaborating with some great artists and experimenting with different styles.

"That's going to be real dope, especially for all the rock heads out there," said Mike.

Mike Bone's music, videos and mixed tapes are available through Mikebonemedia.com. Exclusive merchandise and touring information are also available on the website. Their music is also available on all streaming platforms as well.

# Chief Peter Pitchlynn's words come to life with music

By Shelia Kirven

Choctaw lyricist, professional songwriter, music producer and guitarist Scott D. Hutchison of Tulsa has released a new CD entitled "Peter Pitchlynn Poems to Songs: Hatchootucknee (Snapping Turtle)" featuring three poems written by Pitchlynn, which Hutchison has set to music. The poems by Pitchlynn, Chief of the Choctaw Nation 1864-1866, appear in the book Peter Pitchlynn: Chief of the Choctaws by W. David Baird.

The songs are "Jawbone (Walk I Say)," written in 1831 during the Trail of Tears, "Will You Go with Me" written in 1842 and "Song of the Choctaw Girl (Take Me Home Again)" written in 1842.

Hutchison said he read the book that included Pitchlynn's poetry several years ago and was inspired to do a musical project with them. "I saw those three poems and immediately I could see that they could be put to a song form." He described the project as something of a history lesson.

He wrote the music for the songs in a folk music style and invited others to help with vocals and instrumentation. The tracks feature Hutchison's daughter, Norah Hutchison, on vocals along with professional vocalist Tanya Maksood. Gareth Laffely plays Native American flutes; Hutchison plays guitar, and Hank Charles plays bass guitar.

Choctaw artist Jane Semple-Umsted's mural, "Long Journey Many Tears," is on the CD's cover (the original painting is housed at the Choctaw Museum at Tvshka

Homma). Umsted is a member of the Pitchlynn family line. Hutchison said, "She was glad to see how I found the poems and brought them to life." He noted how Umsted's mural syncs up with the songs. "That winter from 1831-1832 was really a harsh, terrible winter when you read about it in history. It was unyielding hail and snow and ice, what they had to walk." He said his inspiration came from the thoughts of "...the comeback of the endurance of the spirit of the Choctaw and other tribes, to be here and say we're here, and we're going to be."

Hutchison has decades of history in the music business. He has written music on major labels with various artists and was a staff writer for Warner Brothers and BMG Music. He has also been the guitarist for bands, including the Steve Pryor band, which recorded with Capitol Records. He was a core member, writer and guitarist with the Big House band. He has also worked with Grammy award winner, record producer and songwriter Russ Titelman.

Hutchison has been featured on YouTube in an interview about The Church Studio of Tulsa (legendary recording studio), in the Tulsa World and Oklahoma Magazine.

To listen to "Peter Pitchlynn Poems to Songs: Hatchootucknee (Snapping Turtle)," visit <https://m.youtube.com/channel/UCOR2lgoZhMXnptTTb0GrCgA>.

The Choctaw Cultural Center in Durant plays Hutchison's CD in their facility and sells it in their gift shop.

The CD can also be ordered by leaving a message on Hutchison's Facebook page, Peter Pitchlynn Poems to Songs, Hatchootucknee.



Photo Provided

Scott D. Hutchison has released a new CD of historical poetry set to original music. The poems were written by Choctaw Chief Peter Pitchlynn in the 1800s.

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James Dry

## District 9

Halito District 9! We have had a lot of growth and job opportunities this past year and I would like to share with you some of our highlights from 2021.

### Housing

- 12 Independent Elder Units built
- 10 LEAP homes completed, with 30 more under construction for 2022
- 59 storm shelters installed
- Approved Rose Hill housing project for 176 units at a cost of \$23,048,210
- Approved \$3,000,000-dollar federal budget for 10 new Independent Elder Units
- Approved \$5,000,000-dollar budget for 10 Affordable Rental Units in Calera/Hugo

### Education

- Chahta Foundation awarded 15 \$1,000 dollar scholarships in District 9

- Higher Education approved 443 scholarships for a total of \$413,546
- POSSE served 788 students for a budget of \$521,038.66
- Career Development served 352 members for a total of \$350,124.59
- Opened New Child Care Center to accommodate another 271 kids

### Health

- 201,981 total patient encounters
- 210,000 prescriptions dispensed
- 16,229 COVID tests performed
- 15,889 COVID vaccines given
- 128,933 Wellness Center visits
- 17,100 Community Center meals served

### Commerce/Business Development/Community Partnership

- Opened New Sky Tower, which created over 1,000 new jobs
- 2,469 commerce associates
- The town of Calera received \$145,000. Community Development Fund Award
- Choctaw Community Partnership FY-21 \$259,700 City/\$29,800 County
- 139 Chahtapreneurs in business
- 4 business start-ups
- 21 jobs created
- 443 jobs supported by our Chahtapreneur businesses

I appreciate all the hard work our associates put in every day to service our tribal members and take care of our guests. I look forward to the rest of 2022!

## National Park Service announces hiring of first full-time NAGPRA investigator

### WASHINGTON (January 31, 2022)

— The National Park Service has hired a full-time investigator to enhance oversight and museum compliance with the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) for the first time in the Act's 31-year history. Additionally, the Department of the Interior recently completed consultation with 71 Tribal Nations across the United States on improvements to NAGPRA regulations. Together, these efforts will further Interior's commitment to facilitate and ensure respectful disposition and repatriation under NAGPRA.

In July 2021, Interior announced the beginning of Tribal consultation as part of an ongoing review to update NAGPRA. The proposed changes to NAGPRA regulations, which will be made available for public review and comment in early 2022, would streamline requirements for museums and federal agencies to inventory and identify Native American human remains and cultural items in their collections.

"The repatriation of human remains and sacred cultural objects, and the protection of sacred sites is integral to preserving and commemorating Indigenous culture," said Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Bryan Newland. "Changes to the NAGPRA regulations are on the way and long overdue."

The proposed updates will incorporate input from more than 700 specific comments made by Indian Tribes and Native Hawaiian organizations (NHOs) during consultations. Key feedback from the robust consultation included:

- Strengthening the authority and role of Indian Tribes and NHOs in the repatriation process,
- Addressing barriers to timely and successful disposition and repatriation,
- Document and address requests of Indian Tribes and NHOs when human remains or cultural items are discovered on federal or Tribal lands before items are further disturbed, and
- Increase transparency and reporting of holdings or collections

"Repatriation is a sacred responsibility

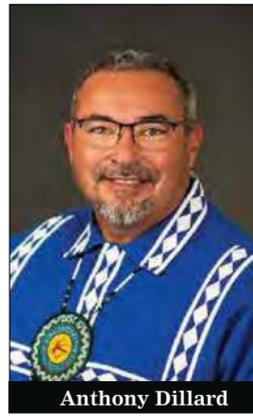
for many Native Americans. We hope our efforts to streamline the requirements of NAGPRA and invest in additional staff will lead to more instances of proper repatriation and reburial of Indigenous ancestors and cultural items," said NPS Director Chuck Sams.

In his new role as the civil penalties investigator, David Barland-Liles will explore allegations of museums failing to comply with the requirements of NAGPRA, present findings to the Secretary of the Interior, serve as a witness in legal proceedings as necessary, support the enforcement actions of proper authorities, and provide technical assistance to institutions and federal, state and Tribal agencies on how to comply with NAGPRA. Civil penalties may be assessed against any museum that fails to comply with the requirements of NAGPRA. Barland-Liles will also work with law enforcement agents to support their work on criminal investigations that may arise from his administrative investigations.

"David is a proven leader and skilled investigator who has helped us strengthen our government-to-government relationships with Native American Tribes and I am pleased to have him serve in this critical role," added NPS Director Sams.

Barland-Liles, a 33-year veteran of the NPS, joins in his new role after serving 25 years in NPS law enforcement. He served as the case agent of a distinguished team that successfully resolved the 1990 theft of Indigenous human remains from the museum collection of Effigy Mounds National Monument. Among Barland-Liles' many achievements, he was awarded the John L. Cotter Award of Special Achievement for Excellence in Archeology for his work during the Effigy Mounds investigation, and he was nominated by the U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Iowa for a Department of the Interior Distinguished Service Award.

The Department will publish a notice of proposed rulemaking for public comment in the coming months. The initial draft proposed text and the current regulations can be found at <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nagpra/regulations.htm>.



Anthony Dillard

## District 10

Halito,

Chim Achukma from District 10. I hope all is well with you and your families. I hope everyone enjoyed the snow while it lasted, and I'm looking forward to the warmer weather ahead.

In January, Council passed the Hochatown development bill to start construction on the Hotel, Casino, and Mercantile. We have been planning this development for quite some time and are very excited to complete it. For those unfamiliar with Hochatown, this area is growing by leaps and bounds as a tourist destination with over 3,000 luxury cabins for rent and growing daily. One of the largest attractions is the Broken Bow Lake, 22.19 square miles of lake enjoyment nestled in the Ouachita Mountains system in the southeastern portion of the Choctaw Nation Reservation. The Lower Mountain Fork River is another attribute

of the area for its year-round trout fishing and summer float trips.

The city of Atoka, The Choctaw Nation, and Reba McEntire are very excited to announce the partnership for the development of "Reba's Place," which will be completed in the fall of 2022. This newly renovated historic building will be the new home to Reba's restaurant, bar, music venue, and retail store showcasing Reba's memorabilia. The excitement of this project will continue to grow the expected tourist activities visiting downtown Atoka. I'm excited for this business opportunity for its estimated profitability and continued growth, which in turn allows more growth for the whole area to benefit economically.

I would like to give a big shout-out to the Choctaw Nation Housing Authority for continuing to expand our housing offerings all over our reservation area. We continue to open affordable housing, leap homes, and independent elderly housing. I want to encourage every tribal member that may qualify for these housing options to apply. These applications are the data source needed to determine where to build. In addition, I will continue to advocate for the commercial housing development throughout the Choctaw Nation reservation, emphasizing housing units in every independent school district.

As I conclude my article, I would like to give a big shout-out to the Strategy and Analytics team for facilitating our strategic planning session. This opportunity helps guide our paths for the future and improves the lives of our tribal members and the communities in which they reside. I'm so excited about the progress that we have made and continue to build upon those successes and correct the areas that we fall short of expectations.

As we are rapidly transitioning from winter to early spring, I encourage everyone to start turning soil on their gardens for those early spring vegetable plants. I just love the spring season when things start really blooming and coming alive. This time of year gives us the opportunity to get back outside and enjoy nature.

The future continues to shine bright for the Choctaw Nation.

Yakoke!

## OurWorlds set to present film "Choctaw Code Talkers 1918" at SXSW Film Festival 2022

**AUSTIN, Texas (February 7, 2022)** – San Diego Native American-led technology company, OurWorlds, has been selected to present the World Premiere of "Choctaw Code Talkers 1918" at SXSW Film Festival 2022.

OurWorlds Inc. is a San Diego-based tech start-up, and its XR experience, "Choctaw Code Talkers 1918" has been selected as one of eleven films to compete at the 2022 SXSW Film Festival in the Extended Reality category.

"Choctaw Code Talkers 1918" tells the pivotal story of the original Code Talkers, a group of 19 Choctaw soldiers from Oklahoma who fought bravely on the fields of France during WW1 and used their Native language cryptographically to help turn the tides of war—even as their language was forbidden to be spoken at home.

"The Choctaw Code Talkers played a crucial role in battle victories for the United States, eventually ending World War I. It's important to pass that information down to our children and this production will only serve to help teach other generations about the heroic efforts of these proud and brave Choctaws," said Gary Batton, Chief of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.

OurWorlds is collaborating with The Texas Military Forces Museum in Austin, TX, which is providing historical pieces for the SXSW activation in addition to WWI reenactors and historical experts.

"As the official museum of the Texas National Guard and the 36th Infantry Division, we are delighted to work with OurWorlds to share this story," said Jeffrey Wm Hunt, Director of the museum. "OurWorlds technology can help connect students and others to this important chapter in US and Choctaw history."

OurWorlds and "Choctaw Code Talkers 1918" has received an endorsement from the Southern California Tribal Chairmen's Association (SCTCA), a consortium of 24 tribal nations.

"We are proud to support this important

project," said Robert Smith, Chairman of the Pala Band of Mission Indians. "Sharing Native histories and telling Native stories is central to who we are as a people. Doing this on an international level, through new and inventive technology, takes it to another level."

Chairman Smith is also the Chief of the SCTCA.

"Many Americans believe the original Code Talkers were Navajo from WW2. In fact, the original code talkers were Choctaw, first used in WW1," said Kilma Lattin (Pala Tribe), founder of OurWorlds. "I believe this film is a significant piece of American history that needs to be retold in new ways. A win for this film means a win for Indian Country, American military history, education, and Extended Reality 360°."

"Our XR360° platform provides a powerful way to convey this important story. It presents the soldiers in volumetric point clouds to give viewers a compelling sense of their physical presence that we hope conveys some of their battlefield experiences in an immersive new way," said Catherine Eng, co-founder of OurWorlds. "The School of Choctaw Language provided translations and recorded readings of the Choctaw military code which provides viewers a direct experience with the spoken and written language."

The OurWorlds "Choctaw Code Talker 1918" experience pavilion will be open to the press and industry screening on Saturday, March 12 from 2-6 pm, and to the public from Sunday, March 13 through Tuesday, March 15, from 11 am-6 pm daily.

For more information, please visit [ourworlds.io/news](http://ourworlds.io/news).

*OurWorlds is a Native American founded and led company working with Native American change-makers all over the country and developing the tools for them to tell their stories. Our Native-led technology team has created a patent-pending platform for extended reality storytelling in geolocation, an interface between the past and the present.*

## LAWN SERVICES

APPLICATION NOW OPEN

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

[CHOCTAWNATION.COM/CHAHTAACHVFFA](http://CHOCTAWNATION.COM/CHAHTAACHVFFA)

Choctaw Nation Housing Authority

## GRADUATION STOLES AND CORDS

Apply for Choctaw graduation stoles and cords for your upcoming graduation beginning January 2, 2022

CHAHTAACHVFFA.CHOCTAWNATION.COM

Choctaw Nation Education Services

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SEE THE DETAILS AT [CHOCTAWTRAVELPLAZAS.COM](http://CHOCTAWTRAVELPLAZAS.COM).

**Choctaw Nation Vocational Rehabilitation**

March 1	Antlers	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
March 2	Wright City	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
March 4	Crowder	By Appointment
March 8	Poteau	11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.
March 9	Idabel	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
March 11	Atoka	8 a.m. - 11 a.m.
March 11	Coalgate	1 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.
March 15	Wilburton	10:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.
March 16	Stigler	By Appointment
March 16	McAlester	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
March 22	Talihina	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
March 23	Broken Bow	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
March 25	Coalgate	1 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.
March 25	Atoka	8 a.m. - 11 a.m.

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



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- Member Letter

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**CHOCTAW NATION CIRCULATION DEPARTMENT**  
 800-522-6170

**Biskinik**

**Announcement Guidelines**

We accept milestone birthday greetings for ages 1, 5, 13, 15, 16, 18, 21, 30, 40, 50, 60, 65, 70, 75, 80 and above. Couples may send announcements of silver wedding anniversary at 25 years of marriage, golden anniversary at 50 years, or 60+ anniversaries. We do not post wedding announcements. News from graduates of higher education only and sports submissions will be accepted as space allows. We welcome all letters from Choctaw tribal members. However, because of the volume of mail, it isn't possible to publish all letters our readers send. Letters chosen for publication must be under 150 words. We require full contact information. Only the writer's full name and city will be published. All events sent to the Biskinik will run the month of the event or the month prior to the event if the event falls on the first of the month.  
**Mail to: Biskinik**  
**P.O. Box 1210**  
**Durant, OK 74702**  
**or email: [biskinik@choctawnation.com](mailto:biskinik@choctawnation.com)**

*Gary Batton*  
*Chief*

*Jack Austin Jr.*  
*Assistant Chief*

The Official  
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 of the

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

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

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

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

**EVENTS**

**Okla Chahta Clan of California Annual Choctaw Gathering**  
 May 7 & 8, 2022. Gates open at 8 a.m. The event starts at 10 a.m. each day. Located at Ming Lake (Pyles Boys Camp) 13375 Lake Ming Road Bakersfield, CA. Take part in fun and educational activities throughout the weekend. Chief Gary Batton, Assistant Jack Austin, Jr. and Tribal Membership staff will be in attendance. A free meal will be served Saturday night. For more information, visit [www.oklachahta.org](http://www.oklachahta.org), call 661-319-6308, email [choctaws@oklachahta.org](mailto:choctaws@oklachahta.org) or follow us on Facebook at Okla Chahta Clan of California.

**Horn Family 45th Annual Gospel Singing Open Mic**  
 Saturday, March 26, 2022, at 7:00 p.m. at the Bryan County Community Center 1901 9th St. Durant, OK. Presented by the Horn family. A concession stand will be available, and everyone is welcome to attend. The event will feature The Gastineaus. Joe Wolf and Levi Battiest will serve as Emcees.



**YAB YOUTH ADVISORY BOARD QUARTERLY CONFERENCE**

**APRIL 23, 2022 | 9:00AM**  
 CHOCTAW CULTURAL CENTER | DURANT, OKLAHOMA

THIS OPPORTUNITY IS AVAILABLE TO ALL STUDENTS, NATIVE AND NON-NATIVE, IN GRADES 8-12 WHO LIVE IN THE CHOCTAW NATION.

**AGENDA**

- YAB BUSINESS MEETING
- CHOCTAW HISTORY
- TEAM BUILDING
- CULTURAL CENTER PROVIDING LUNCH
- CULTURAL ACTIVITIES
- CULTURAL TOUR

REGISTER NOW: [YAB@CHOCTAWNATION.COM](mailto:YAB@CHOCTAWNATION.COM) | 580-740-1204  
 EVENT LINK: [HTTPS://BIT.LY/YAB-CONFERENCE](https://bit.ly/yab-conference)

**Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma**

TOGETHER WE'RE MORE

**CHOCTAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA TRIBAL COUNCIL REGULAR SESSION AGENDA February 12, 2022**

1. CALL TO ORDER
  2. OPENING PRAYER/FLAG SALUTE
  3. ROLL CALL
  4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
    - a. Regular Session January 8, 2022
  5. WELCOME GUESTS/SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS
    - a. Veteran of the Month, District #5- Mike Scantlen
  6. PUBLIC COMMENTS - None
  7. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES
  8. NEW BUSINESS
    - a. Approve the Funds and Budget for the FY19 Urban Conservation Cooperative Agreement. Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed
    - b. Approve the Funds and Budget for the FY20 and FY21 Victims of Crime Assistance (VOCA). Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed
    - c. Approve Business Lease No. 4200274997 (G09-2014) in Favor of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Talihina Boys and Girls Club. Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed
    - d. Approve the Disposal of Surplus Capital Assets – Vehicles. Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed
    - e. Approve the Disposal of Surplus Capital Assets – Equipment. Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed
    - f. Approve the Disposal of Surplus Capital Assets – Equipment. Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed
    - g. Approve the Application for Funding from the Bureau of Indian Affairs for Attorney Fees and Litigation Support for Fiscal Year 2022. Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed
    - h. Amend the Choctaw Nation Criminal Procedure Code Relating to Statute of Limitations for Crimes. Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed
    - i. Enact the Legislative Committees Act of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed
  9. OTHER NEW BUSINESS
    - a. Consent Item
      - Speaker Williston's Letter of Appointments of Tribal Council Members to the Legislative Standing Committees.
  10. OLD BUSINESS
  11. ADJOURNMENT
  12. CLOSING PRAYER
- Councilman Karr was not present

**YAKOKE**



Photo Provided

Pictured, left to right, Councilman Jess Henry, Howe Coach Jon Sockey, Cameron Coach Hank Austin.

The Leflore County Archery Tournament would like to thank The Choctaw Nation and District #4 Councilman Jess Henry for aiding in the purchase of awards for the 2nd Annual Leflore County NASP Archery Tournament. The Tournament is open to all LeFlore County Junior High and High Schools that participate in the OKNASP programs. If you would like to know more about the Oklahoma National Archery in the Schools Program you can visit <https://www.wildlifedepartment.com/education>.

**Jon Sockey**  
**Howe Schools**

Dear Chief Gary Batton,  
 Today, Ground Zero installed a storm shelter in my garage. Thanks to the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma and your efforts to make this possible. Hope I never have to use it; however, it's a secure feeling to have if necessary. Living in Ada is a storm path. Again, thank you for everything you are doing for the Tribe.

**Loie Livingston**



Photo Provided

Pictured, left to right, Regan Ludlow, 17, and Luke Ludlow 16.

We wanted to thank the Choctaw Nation for coordinating the NASA partnered Astro Camp over winter break 2021. The kids had a blast and learned a great deal about science and what it takes to work for NASA. Thank you Debbie Vietta (higher education program) and Hayden Mcnutt (youth camp coordinator) for facilitating and enhancing our children's education!

**Traci Ludlow**

**Southeastern Oklahoma Indian Credit Association & Choctaw Revolving Loan Fund**

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

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

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

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

Choctaw Revolving Loan Fund To Be Eligible to Apply:

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

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

**Poteau Community Center**  
 March 25, 2022  
 10:00 – 12:00



**Chahta Anumpa Aikhvna**  
 March Language Lesson

**Common Questions**

Kvta-Who? / Kvta hosh- Who is it that....?

Katimma ish ia?	Where are you going?
Katimma ish ia tuk?	Where did you go?
Katomma ish ia chi?	Where will you go?
Katimma ia chi?	Where will he/she go?
Katimma ia chi miya?	Where did he/she say he/she was going? (miya-to sa)
Katomma ia chi ahoba?	Where does it seem/to appear he/she will go
Katomma ont falama tuk?	Where did he/she go and return from?
Katimma ish apisa ha?	Where did you see him/her/it? *
Katimma ish ahaklo tuk?	Where did you hear (it) from? *
Katimma amiti?	Where is he/she from? *
Katimma impvt ia chi bvna?	Where do you want to go and eat?
Katimma okla aiittafama chi?	Where will they meet?
Isht boa katomma bohli li ha	Where did I place the hammer? (bohli-put, place- sg.)
Isht tiwa katimma ashachi li tuk?	Where did I put the keys? (ashachi-put, place-pl.)
A shulush vt katimma kaha?	Where are my shoes lying? (kaha-to lie; dual)
Katos mvt katomma ittonla?	Where is that cat lying?
Katimma hvsh ittiachi?	Where are you two going? (ittiachi-two going-dual)
Katimma hvsh ilhkoli?	Where are you all going? (ilhkoli-more than two-pl.)

Placing an 'a' before the verbs 'pisa', 'haklo' and 'miti' defines a place or location (from).  
 Katimma/Katomma – where? -usage of both words are choice or dialectal, both are correct.

**Jerry Dean Moon**

Jerry Dean Moon, 77, passed away Nov. 7, 2021.

Jerry was born Dec. 27, 1943, in Wichita, Kansas to Paul Eugene and Lena Irene Moon.

He was preceded in death by his parents; daughter Jerica Annette Moon; brothers Jimmy P. Moon and Dennis E. Moon; sisters Nancy S. (Moon) Patterson, and Hazel L. (Moon) Seal.

Jerry is survived by his soul mate Sally Burnett; brother Terry S. Moon; sister Patricia (Moon) Collins; daughters Penny Roths, Brandy Spears, Charrie Moon, and Gara Stidham; seven grandchildren; six great-grandchildren; and numerous nieces and nephews.

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

**DeWayne Frazier**

DeWayne "Doodle" Frazier, 58, passed away Dec. 4, 2021.

DeWayne was born June 8, 1963, in Tahihina, Okla., to Geneva (Baxter) and Olen Ray Frazier.

He was preceded in death by his son Kenneth Ray Frazier; brother Terry Frazier; father Olen Ray Frazier; and grandparents Odis and Armelia Baxter, and Walter and Gladys James.

DeWayne is survived by his mother; children Kristi Martin, Wayne Oswald and spouse Heather, and Nikita Frazier; six grandchildren; brothers Odis Frazier and spouse Jimmie, and Timothy Frazier and spouse Suzette; as well as numerous aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, cousins, and a host of friends.

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

**Harley David Summers**

Harley David Summers, 82, passed away Dec. 21, 2021.

Harley was born Oct. 7, 1939, in Keota, Okla., to Sylvia (Tom) Summers and Eli Summers.

He was preceded in death by his parents; and brothers Eli Summers Jr. and Bill Summers.

Harley is survived by his wife Doris Sue Summers; children Regina Brown and spouse Shane, Cristina Robinson and spouse Rick, and Shannon Morgan and spouse Cy; grandchildren Shane Robinson, Jessica Barnes, Joshua Tomlin, Cassandra Morgan, Sylvia Gamer, and Dixie Sherfield; great-grandchildren Hunter Robinson, Gunner Robinson, Taylar Robinson, Charlea Timms, Amya Barnes, Justice Barnes, Jesse Barnes, Ashlyn Barnes, Aubrey Barnes, Jaycee Taylor, Axyle Gamer and Cash Gamer; along with numerous nieces, nephews, other relatives and friends.

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

**Barbara Ann Miller**

Barbara Ann (Ward) Miller, 84, passed away Oct. 17, 2021.

Barbara was born Jan. 18, 1937, in Olney, Okla., to Elizabeth Fanning Ward and Thompson Ward.

She was preceded in death by her husband James D. "Mike" Miller; and sister Neomah Sheckles.

Barbara is survived by her children Joni Miller Wilkinson, Jennifer Miller (Dena), Tony Miller, and Nancy Miller Dickeson (Blake); grandchildren Emily Wilkinson Grest (Jon), Andrew Wilkinson, Claire Wilkinson, Michael Miller (Lillian), Sarah Jane Dickeson, and James Dickeson; great-grandchildren Jackson Grest, Neomah Miller, and Katie Miller; sister Jane Ward Biggs; nieces and nephews Holly Ramsey (Wade), Brian Biggs (Sheila), Cindy Schwingshagl (Ken), Bill Payne (Kim); and several great-nieces and great-nephews.

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

**Martha Darlyn Martinez**

Martha Darlyn (Wade) Martinez, 85, passed away Dec. 24, 2021.

Martha was born Oct. 7, 1936, in Santa Fe, NM to Gilbert and Ola B. Wade.

She was preceded in death by her parents.

Martha is survived by her husband Manuel; sisters Janis Vargo, Margee Jacks-Diegl, and Carol Miernyk and spouse Bill; children Mark Martinez and spouse Catherine, Wade Martinez and spouse Wendy, Judith Headley and spouse Chuck, Stephanie Roy and spouse Michael, and Michelle Sladek and spouse Bill; son-in-law Sean Werth; 12 grandchildren; six great-grandchildren; numerous nieces, nephews, and great-nieces and great-nephews.

For the full obituary, please visit [Catholic Funeral and Cemetery Services](#).

**Yvonne Swain**

Yvonne Swain, 84, passed away Dec. 27, 2021.

Yvonne was born June 7, 1937, in Coalgate, Okla., to Andy and Bicey (Roberts) Billy.

She was preceded in death by her husband Leroy; her parents; children Brian Orr, Lisa Noel Swain, and Tammie Haire; and siblings Iva Jean Jackson, Verdelma Fobb, Sam Ed Billy, Amos Carnes, and Eula Mae Billy.

Yvonne is survived by her grandson Colt Sanders; granddaughter Rachel Haire Ramsey; brother Samuel Paul Billy; half-brother Ellis Carnes Jr.; half-sister Fred Louise (Carnes) Ott; nieces Dohna Bates and spouse Bob, and Pat Cooper and spouse Roland; nephew Preston Scott; great-nephew Zakk Bates; 14 great-grandchildren; and friend and caregiver Rachel Jennings and spouse Lonnie.

For the full obituary, please visit [Brown's Funeral Service - Atoka](#).

**Billy James Goins II**

Billy James Goins II, 59, passed away Aug. 9, 2021.

Billy was born July 8, 1962, in Santa Maria, Calif., to Rev. Billy James Goins Sr. and Janis Annette (Alsop) Goins.

He was preceded in death by his father; grandparents James and Gladys Goins, and Ben and Vivian Alsop; brother-in-law Ronald Pounds; aunts Sue Alsop, Ada Nickell, and Audrey Reed; and uncles Mike Alsop, Bob Blagg, and Ed Nickell.

Billy is survived by his wife Monica McGee Goins; son Billy James Goins III and significant other Brianna; daughter Sarah Goins; granddaughter Marceli Goins; grandson Billy James Goins IV (due January 2022); his mother; father-in-law Edward McGee and spouse Evelyn; brother Randy Goins and spouse Vyckie; sisters Cindy Goins, Leisa Goins Cierley and spouse Herb, Donna Simien and spouse Darrell, Rhonda Watson and spouse Stefan, and Yolanda Lewis; multiple uncles, aunts, nieces, nephews, cousins, and many good friends.

For the full obituary, please visit [Brown's Funeral Service](#).

**Jack Leonard Wooley**

Jack Leonard Wooley, 93, passed away Dec. 27, 2021.

Jack was born Oct. 4, 1928, in Hanford, Calif., to Lucy Wooley.

He was preceded in death by his wife Rosie Marie Reinhart; his mother; sister Billie Jo Lawrence and spouse Cassel; brothers Dick Wooley, and Bob Wooley and spouse Loretta; daughters Luann Simpson and Margaret Koch; and granddaughter Amy Keeling.

Jack is survived by his wife Sophia Sanchez Wooley; daughter Marina Todd and spouse Aaron; son Ben and spouse Suzy; son-in-law Mark Koch; grandchildren Gina Rolli (Brittany), Jack Rolli, Alex Keeling (Tammy), Nick Keeling (Brooke), and Noah Keeling; great-grandson Lyric; and many extended family members.

For the full obituary, please visit [Palm Boulder Highway Mortuary & Cemetery](#).

**Bobby Tom Bryant**

Bobby Tom "Catfish" Bryant, 81, passed away Dec. 29, 2021.

Bob was born Aug. 24, 1940, in Albion, Okla., to Joseph and Ada Geraldine (Bowles) Bryant.

He was preceded in death by his wife Ann; son Robert Bryant; his parents; sister Mary Sue Clinton; brother Billy Joe Bryant and spouse Carol; mother-in-law Eunice Pickard; and sister-in-law Yvonne Duvall.

Bob is survived by his daughter Debra Johnson and spouse John; daughter-in-law Bethany Bryant; grandsons Clint Bryant and Joe Bryant; sister Nyokia Ware; brothers Kenny Bryant and spouse Sarah, Joseph "Buckshot" Bryant, James "Bucky" Bryant and spouse Kathy, and Ray "Squid" Bryant; brother-in-law Ray Pickard and spouse Mary; sisters-in-law Barbara Ball and spouse Marvin, and Linda Cupps and spouse Paul; and numerous nieces, nephews, cousins, and other relatives.

For the full obituary, please visit [Brown Funeral Home and Cremations - Coweta](#).

**Lisa Marie Leal**

Lisa Marie Leal, 44, passed away Jan. 11, 2022.

Lisa was born Feb. 7, 1977, in Tahihina, Okla., to David Emmanuel and Debralyne Joyce (Wilson) Jim.

She was preceded in death by her son Seth Leal; her father; uncles Donald Jim, Ray Jim, and Eldene Jim; and aunt Shirley Lang.

Lisa is survived by her husband Ricky; son Tyler Leal; her mother; sister Madalyn Machuca; aunts Betty Jim and partner Jack Helsley, Ann Sleeper, Rhonda Freeman and spouse Dan, Lee Jim and spouse Yvonne, and Danny Jim; along with nieces, nephews, other relatives, and many dear friends.

For the full obituary, please visit [Brown's Funeral Service - Atoka](#).

**Clarice June Weaver**

Clarice June (Mickle) Weaver, 94, passed away Jan. 10, 2022.

Clarice was born May 12, 1927, to Bernard Mickle and Clarice McClish.

She was preceded in death by husband Coy Columbus Weaver; her parents; and sister Christine Westling.

Clarice is survived by daughters Sharon Sehon and spouse Bob, Deborah Ballard, and Lora Sue Weaver; son Robert Bernard Weaver and spouse Eileen Swanson; five grandchildren; and eight grandchildren.

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

**Thomas Edward Allen**

Thomas Edward Allen, 88, passed away Nov. 14, 2021.

Thomas was born Aug. 30, 1933, in Hugo, Okla., to Arthur M. Allen and Helen Marcella (Eastwood) Allen.

He was preceded in death by his parents; and brother Phillip Allen.

Thomas is survived by his wife Wilma Pauline Allen; children Gary D. Allen and Susanna, Brian K. Allen and Patti, and Sheila C. Moring and Greg; grandchildren Bradley Allen and Jemina, Julia Allen, Blake Allen and Courtney, Samantha Ford and Ben, Kirk Allen and Savannah, Diedre Hurley, Jared Hurley, Casey Moring, and Taylor Moring; great-grandchildren Eben, Omri, Caigen, Brinlee, Cayson, Adrian, Riley, Matthew, Hunter, and Archer; siblings Catherine Hoffmeister and Joyce H. Valentine; and a host of nieces, nephews, cousins, and friends.

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

**Percy Joe Lawrence**

Percy Joe "Kenewsah" Lawrence, 85, passed away Jan. 12, 2022.

Percy was born Jan. 26, 1936, in Lawton, Okla., to Joshua and Martha (Murphy) Lawrence.

He was preceded in death by his wife Loretta; his parents; aunt and uncle Ella and William Murphy; brother James Lawrence Sr.; sister-in-law Tudy Wilber; and brothers-in-law Elmer Wilber and Richard Frechette.

Percy is survived by his children Jerry Lawrence, Judy Clemons and spouse Joseph, Patricia McLester and spouse Lee, Ronald Lawrence, Percy "JR" Lawrence Jr. and spouse Lisa, Glenda Metoxen and spouse Mitch; 17 grandchildren; 28 great-grandchildren; two great-great-grandchildren; nephew, James Lawrence Jr. and spouse Shawn Dae; godchildren Kayla Jo Wilber and Eric Wilber; brother and sister-in-laws Gail Lawrence, Warren Wilber, Joylen Whitney, Dawn Wilber, Richard Wilber and spouse Juanita, Daryl Wilber and spouse Marcene, Lynette Wychesit, Ann Wilber, Renita Corn and spouse Roger, Martina Frechette, and Allen Wilber and spouse Pam; many nieces, nephews, other relatives, and friends.

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

**Kayla Dolores Edington**

Kayla Dolores (Marshall) Edington, 55, passed away Jan. 4, 2022.

Kayla was born Feb. 14, 1966, in Fort Worth, Texas, to Kenneth and Roxie (Knowles) Marshall.

She was preceded in death by her mother.

Kayla is survived by her husband Edward; sons Allen Kyle Edington and spouse Emily, and Adam Cooper Edington and spouse Laramie, daughters Kolbey Jarvis and spouse Jimmie, and Camey Edington; brother Kenny Marshall and spouse Sharon; grandchildren Saige Faith, Azel Joy, Indigo Noel, and Hollidae Luella.

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

**Buddy Mackey**

Buddy Mackey, 91, passed away Jan. 24, 2022.

Buddy was born June 17, 1930, in Wynnewood, Okla., to Opal Lavada Tompkins and Elum Mackey.

He was preceded in death by his wife Beverly; his parents; and sister Ollie Jo Mackey Patton.

Buddy is survived by daughters Jo Renee' Myler and Mickie Grimmitt and spouse Brent; grandchildren Brian Hilburn, Angie Grimmitt, Buddy Hilburn, Beth Grimmitt-Tankersley, Tyler Grimmitt, and Britany North-Smith; seven great-grandchildren; and adored cousins, nieces, and nephews.

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

**Billy Gardner**

Billy Gardner, 97, passed away Dec. 8, 2021.

Billy was born Nov. 2, 1924, in Bennington, Okla., to Walter T. Gardner and Mary Martha (Scott) Gardner.

He was preceded in death by his parents; wives Lucille Gardner and Grace Gardner; children Ronald Gardner, Greg Gardner, and Phil Gardner; and siblings Roma Lou Jackson, W.T. Gardner, LeeEtta Lloyd, Kathleen Orum, Vivian Vaughn, R.C. Gardner, and Roscoe Gardner.

Billy is survived by his son Stanley Gardner and wife Vina; grandchildren Pearl Holt and spouse Derek, Gregory Gardner and spouse Shiyeon, Carl Gardner and spouse Jennifer, Samuel Gardner, Ronald Gardner and spouse Jai, Billy Gardner, Maureen Doty and spouse Adam, John "JP" Gardner and spouse Ashley, Michael Gardner and spouse Kelli, Lance Gardner, Michelle Patterson, Richard Gardner and spouse Tiffany, Thomas Gardner, Rhonda Thrasher, Janet Eckroth, Ted Gardner, and Tahyna Landis; 30 great-grandchildren; and two great-great-grandchildren.

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

**Joseph Moore**

Joseph Moore, 83, passed away Jan. 12, 2022.

Joseph was born May 4, 1938, in McAlester, Okla., to Roosevelt and Florence (Nobles) Moore.

He was preceded in death by his parents; son Randy Moore; and brother Johnny Moore.

Joseph is survived by his wife Delois; sons Joey Moore, and Jeff Moore and spouse Dana; daughters Brenda Moore Brown and spouse Steve, Melinda Quintana, and Charity Barnett; brothers Sampson Moore and spouse Nita, and Richard Moore and spouse Della; sisters Marcell Fowler, Rosie Casey and spouse Ron, Martha Miller and spouse Sammy, Naoma Wieler and spouse Russell, and Melissa Rouse and spouse Dewey; seven grandchildren; four great-grandchildren; and numerous other relatives.

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

**Darrell Charles Brown**

Darrell Charles Brown, 72, passed away Jan. 5, 2022.

Darrell was born April 4, 1949, to Charles Eastman and Adna Grace (Gee) Brown.

He was preceded in death by his parents.

Darrell is survived by his wife Sarah (Garrow) Brown; daughter Crystal Brown; sons Ross Brown and Max Brown; grandsons Braden and Julian Besaw; and granddaughter Averie Brown.

For the full obituary, please visit [Alternatives Cremation and Funeral Services](#).



**Hazel Billy Taylor**



Hazel Billy Taylor, 85, passed away Jan. 9, 2022. Hazel was born Aug. 31, 1936, in Sobol, Okla., to John and Nellie (Charlie) Billy. She was preceded in death by her parents; her husband Edgar Taylor Sr.; daughter Linda "Clay" Taylor; brothers Solomon Billy, Junior Billy, and Edwin Billy; and sister Delories "Billy" Taylor.

Hazel is survived by her sons Edgar Taylor Jr., Hobie Taylor and spouse Martha, and Dewayne Taylor and spouse Gari; daughters Cinderella Deramus and spouse Ron, Mary Taylor, Betty Acklin and spouse Glenn, Lisa Donaldson and spouse Robert Ellevold, Anita Schroyer and spouse Brad, Rita Austin and spouse Dwight, Matilda Moore and spouse Brandon, and Adrian Mazias and spouse Lucio; special grandchildren that she raised Erica Sones, Mika Taylor, Teri-Jo Taylor, and Selena Taylor; 37 grandchildren; 70 great-grandchildren; six great-great-grandchildren; sister Versa "Billy" Crow; and a host of other family, friends, and loved ones.

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

**Michael Shane Hamill**



Michael Shane Hamill, 51, passed away Jan. 8, 2022.

Shane was born Aug. 17, 1970, in Durant, Okla., to Albert Luther Hamill and Mickey Ann (Coulter) Bruce.

He was preceded in death by his parents; stepfather Donald Bruce; grandparents Tommy Lee McDonald, Melvin Coulter, Lillian Hamill, Carl Hamill Sr., and Rosie Coulter.

Shane is survived by his wife Christy Graham; sons Michael Jacoby Hamill, Jarred Graham and spouse Bianca, and Zachary Shane Hamill; brothers Roy Don Bruce and spouse Alma, Walter Lee Hamill, and Dalton Lee Bruce; as well as numerous nieces, nephews, and other extended family.

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

**Kevin Ray Justice**



Kevin Ray Justice, 41, passed away Jan. 8, 2022.

Kevin was born Jan. 24, 1980, in Talihina, Okla., to Billy Roger and Donna (James) Justice.

He was preceded in death by his father; maternal grandparents Andrew and Kathrine James; paternal grandparents Billy and Ollie Justice; sister Barbara Ann Justice; and nephew Mason Justice.

Kevin is survived by his mother; special friend Amanda Campbell; son Abraham Battiest; daughters Alexandria Battiest, Taylor Battiest, and Katelyn Battiest; grandchildren Olivia Battiest and Benjamin Battiest; brothers Curtis Justice and Benny Downing; sisters Tina Paul; along with a host of other family friends and loved ones.

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

**Fanella E. Davis**



Fanella E. Wolf Davis, 83, passed away Jan. 9, 2022.

Fanella was born Nov. 15, 1938, to William Charles Wolf and Lila May Folsom Wolf.

She was preceded in death by her husband Al Davis; sisters Dorothy Williams, Lela Bullard, and Delthia Patterson; and great-granddaughter Kimber Davis.

Fanella is survived by her children Allan Davis, and Cyndi Davis and partner Brian Finch; grandchildren Andrew Davis, Michael Davis and spouse Raylynn, Clayton Smith, and Amanda McMillian and spouse Don; great-grandchildren Hayleigh Davis, Dallan McMillian, Porter Davis, Beau Davis, and Alarie McMillian; as well as many other distant family members.

For the full obituaries, please visit [Sam Houston Memorial Funeral Home](#).

**Judy Coleen Petree**



Judy Coleen Petree, 69, passed away Aug. 5, 2021.

Judy was born Aug. 15, 1951, in Talihina, Okla., to Andrew Jackson Bohanon and Lorena Jane (Lewis) Bohanon.

She was preceded in death by her parents; son James Fobb; brothers Paul Bohanon and Andrew Bohanon; and sister Rita Colecio.

Judy is survived by her husband Norman; children Leslie Whitman, Ray Petree, and Stephen Petree and fiancée Dawn Wallace; sister Pauline Bohanon; grandchildren Alyssa Neese, Summer Whitman, Stephen Petree Jr.; and many other family and friends.

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

**James Garland Airington**



James Garland Airington, 68, passed away Jan. 6, 2022.

James was born March 30, 1953, in Woodward, Okla., to Clarence Robert and Mattie Agnes (Lee) Airington.

He was preceded in death by his parents; sister Colleen Adams Harper; grandparents Rufus and Lillie (Manus) Airington; in-laws Roy Lee and Doris (White) Walker; special aunt and uncle Ida Jane and Jimmy Lee; nephew Rob Douglas; and niece Susan Adams McCarty.

James is survived by his wife Patsy; daughters Amy Anderson and spouse Scott, and Melissa Jefferson and spouse Chris; son Bobby Airington and spouse Alicia; grandsons Austin Anderson and spouse Felicia, Tyler Anderson, and Augustus Airington; granddaughter Marissa Anderson; great-grandchildren Brian Anderson and Brooklee Anderson; brothers Bobby Airington and spouse Rita, Johnny Airington and spouse Wilma; sister Carolyn Bates; and aunt Myrtle Holdaway.

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

**William Henry Bailey**



William "Billy" Henry Bailey, 66, passed away Jan. 23, 2022.

Billy was born July 23, 1955, in Hugo, Okla., to William Harvey and Elsie Marie (Foster) Bailey.

He was preceded in death by his parents; and brothers Randy Bailey and Mike Bailey.

Billy is survived by his aunts Mamina "Sam" Bailey Jackson, Louise Lakey, and Lucy Bailey; cousins Cathy Bailey Cole, Roslyn Bailey Drake, Bryan Bailey, Marquita Bannister, Teresa, Gary Redding, Phyllis Joyce, and Yvette Hunt; great-aunt Alma Louis Laney; along with a host of other family, friends, and loved ones.

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

**Carrol Denise Shomoh**



Carrol Denise Shomoh, 47, passed away Jan. 24, 2022.

Carrol was born Jan. 27, 1974, in De Queen, Ark., to Bertram Shomoh and Theresa Faye Shomo.

She was preceded in death by parents; and sister Leslie Shomo.

Carrol is survived by her daughters Hailey Rodgers, Chelsea Rodgers, and Elizabeth Trammell; brother Franklyn Shomo and spouse Cassandra; sister Frances Shomo; grandchildren Zackariah Shomoh-Rodgers, Kairi Keith, P.J. Pedigo, and Royalty Shomoh; along with a host of nieces, nephews, and other relatives and friends.

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

**Altha Lee Murray**



Altha Lee Murray, 99, passed away Jan. 24, 2022.

Altha was born March 27, 1922, in Bethany, Okla., to Murray Lee and Ethel Mae (Vawter) Terrill.

She was preceded in death by her parents; husband Clifford; and one sister.

Altha is survived by her children Betty James and spouse Don, Henry Murray and spouse Shirlye, and Max Murray and spouse Shirley; sister Imogene Terrill; eight grandchildren; 23 great-grandchildren; 40 great-great-grandchildren; and many nieces and nephews.

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

**Robert Dewayne Clay**



Robert Dewayne Clay, 74, passed away Jan. 22, 2022.

Robert was born Dec. 29, 1947, in Talihina, Okla., to Paul Clay and Joy (Teel) Clay.

He was preceded in death by his parents.

Robert is survived by his wife Donita; son Mike Clay and spouse Lori; daughter Melissa Wilson and spouse Chuck; grandchildren Logan and Nick Reed, Channing and Jodi Clay, Hunter and Jaye Needham, Josh Wilson, Heidi Clay, and Finley Clay; great-grandchildren Evan Axton, Kimber Clay, Jaxen Needham, Piper Dilbeck, Hazen Needham, Juniper Dilbeck, and Legend Reed; sister Kathy Tyree and spouse Cary; several nieces and nephews; and a host of other relatives and friends.

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

**Wilma Ruth Noah**



Wilma Ruth Noah, 91, passed away Jan. 26, 2022.

Wilma was born July 18, 1930, in Little Cedar, Okla., to James Ernest and Annie Loman Cole.

She was preceded in death by her parents; husband Simmeon Noah; son Billy Noah; brother Joe Cole; and sisters Mildred Greenwood and Billie Jean Cole.

Wilma is survived by sons David Noah and spouse Wanda, Daniel Noah, Ish Noah, Bobby Noah and spouse Alicia, and Sim Noah and spouse Teresa; daughter Karen Thomas; daughter-in-law Angela Noah; sisters Marie Samis and Josephine Stewart; grandchildren Easter Ginyard, Henry Thomas Jr., Kara Hawthorne, Nellie Thomas, Timothy Harrison Jon Paul Noah, John David Noah, Andrew Noah, Chris Noah, Brianna Saravia, Kasi Jo Noah, Derek Noah, Monica Jefferson, and Lindsey Roberts; 25 great-grandchildren; one great-great-grandchild; several nieces and nephews; and other relatives and friends.

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

**Channing Allen Battiest**



Channing Allen Battiest, 24, passed away Jan. 22, 2022.

Channing was born April 10, 1997, in Talihina, Okla., to Bobby and Cynthia Shomo.

He was preceded in death by his grandparents Joel and Marian Aaron; uncle Joel Aaron Jr.; aunt Lucilla Gibson; and cousins Geneva and Alan Gibson.

Channing is survived by his parents; brother Caleb Shomo; sister Chasity Aaron; aunts Jeanetta Aaron, and Sandra Franklin and spouse Timmy; uncle Audie Gibson; and a host of other family, friends, and loved ones.

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

**Michael Brandon Minyard**



Michael Brandon Minyard, 44, passed away Nov. 12, 2021.

Michael was born May 17, 1977, in Dallas, Texas, to Michael C. and Belinda S. (Bringman) Minyard.

He is survived by his mother Belinda Newton; daughter Savannah Minyard; uncles, aunts, and numerous cousins.

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

**Jimmy Leroy Fry**



Jimmy Leroy Fry, 81, passed away Jan. 27, 2022.

Jimmy was born June 30, 1940, in Talihina, to Dorothy White and Marion K. Fry.

He was preceded in death by his parents; son Kimsey Fry; first wife Syble Cusick Fry; and sister Marilyn Sue Hammer.

Jimmy is survived by his wife Jackie Lou Fry; daughters Angelia Hill, and Heather Henson and spouse John; son Jeffrey Fry and spouse Rebecca; sisters Virginia Wangler, Linda Kay Meeks, and Peggy McAlester; brother Roger Fry; daughter-in-law Lisa Fry; grandchildren Ethan W. Hill and spouse Ashley, Magen Copeman and spouse Caleb, Abigail Prince and spouse Dylan, Dayton Henson, Leah Fry, Elizabeth Fry, Kiley Henson, Hannah Fry, and Jacob Fry; great-grandchildren Jacey Tom, Ethan R. Hill, Victoria Hill, Sawyer Copeman, Rae-lynn Prince, and Mason Prince; numerous other nieces, nephews, and other loved ones.

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

**Chad Eric Airington**



Chad Eric Airington, 43, passed away Jan. 26, 2022.

Chad was born July 23, 1978, in Duncan, Okla., to Leroy Airington and Kim (Caldwell) Williams.

He was preceded in death by his father.

Chad is survived by his wife Amanda; sons Brysen and Blake; his mother and spouse Billy; sister Tiffannie Airington; and nieces Gabrielle Airington and Kattrinna Alkire.

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

**Roger Alan Aplin**



Roger Alan Aplin, 59, passed away Jan. 6, 2022.

Roger was born Oct. 9, 1962, in Durant, Okla., to Frankie Melburn Aplin and Mildred June (White) Aplin.

He was preceded in death by his parents; and special friend Cindy Teague.

Roger is survived by his daughters Tracie R. Aplin and Rebecka A. Bradley and spouse Matthew; grandsons Lincoln A. Aplin and Zath D. Aplin; siblings Curtis Brown and spouse Kathy, Marianne Brown, Sherry Damp'f, Phillip Aplin and spouse Berniece, Harold Aplin and spouse Michele, Robert Aplin and spouse Cleta, and Frank Douglas Aplin; numerous nieces, nephews, great-nieces and great-nephews, and other extended family members.

For the full obituary, please visit [Brown's Funeral Home](#).

**Randel Lee Bohanon**



Randel Lee Bohanon, 71, passed away Feb. 1, 2022.

Randel was born Jan. 2, 1951, in Ludlow, Okla., to David and Emeline Ludlow Bohanon.

He was preceded in death by his parents; brothers Clark and Esias Bohanon; and sisters Lodie Mitchell, Corene Palmer, and Angeline Bohanon.

Randel is survived by his wife Ruthie; son Skylar Bohanon and spouse Claudine; daughters Angela Bohanon, and Randee Porter and spouse Justin; sisters Leona Samuel and spouse Richard, Ella Willis and Della Bohanon; grandchildren Damian and Abigail Bohanon, Elizabeth and Halen Bohanon, Austin Porter, and Joseph Porter; great-grandchild Jackson Bohanon; several nieces and nephews; and a host of other relatives and friends.

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

**Earline Billie Bullard Dilbeck**



Earline Billie Bullard Dilbeck, 90, passed away Jan. 7, 2021.

Earline was born Sept. 20, 1930, in Shady Grove, Okla.

She was preceded in death by her husband Benson "Hunky" Dilbeck; sister Sharon Kay (Martin) Long; son Richard "Bimbo" Elvis Dilbeck; brother Johnny Martin; great-grandson Benjamin Shallenberger; her parents; and various other relatives.

Earline is survived by her children Richard Boone, Cindy Lorenson and spouse Jeff, Andrew Van Leuven and spouse Scott, Nena Kyriakidis and spouse Antonis, and Donnelle Dilbeck; grandchildren Michael Shoaf, Joy Lawson and spouse John, Crystal Moore, Tyler Moore, Jolene Shallenberger and spouse Mathew, Kadie and Macey Zeller, and Michael Dilbeck; 13 great-grandchildren; three great-great-grandchildren; as well as countless cousins and family members in Nevada and Oklahoma.

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

**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](mailto:biskinik@choctawnation.com)

## Dunlap graduates from SE



Rylee Dunlap is a proud member of the Choctaw Nation. In December of 2021, she graduated with the highest honors from Southeastern Oklahoma State University with a Bachelor of Science (Biology) and a Bachelor of Arts (Psychology). Rylee was a part of many organizations and extracurricular activities during her undergraduate journey, including the Honors Program, Alpha Chi, Psi Chi, Pre Health Association, the Sparks Dance Team and Savage Storm Leaders. One of her favorite volunteer experiences was with the Alzheimer's Association, where she helped plan an awareness walk as a committee volunteer. She is now spending her spring semester working as a scribe at TMC and AllianceHealth to gain more healthcare experience before fall.

Rylee has recently been accepted into medical school at OSU College of Osteopathic Medicine in Tulsa, Oklahoma, where she will pursue a D.O. degree. She plans to go into psychiatry specifically, and she has a strong interest in practicing rurally and tribally to give back to her local communities.

## Sophia Ann Chavez



Sophia Ann Chavez was born on November 20, 2021, at 6:45 p.m. to Ivan Chavez and Carla Hinojosa. Sophia weighed 4 lbs and was 17 inches long.

## Connor Dewey Curtis



Connor Dewey Curtis was born January 3, 2022, in Dallas, Texas weighing 7lbs and 6oz. The proud parents are Evan and Kelly Curtis. Connor's grandparents are John and Sheila Hampton Curtis of Dallas. Connor's late great-grandparents are Lewis and Lu Hampton of Dallas, Texas.

## February Veteran of the Month



Michael "Mike" Scantlen, Stigler, Oklahoma (District 5), is Veteran of the Month for February.

Scantlen graduated from Stigler High School and attended Connor State College before transferring to Northeastern Oklahoma State College, where he graduated with a bachelor's degree in education.

He was drafted into the U.S. Army, attending basic training in El Paso, Texas. He attended MOS school in Ft. Huachuca, Arizona, to become a clerk. He served in Vietnam for 14 months, achieving the pay grade of E-5. He was in Vietnam during the first Tet Offensive and the second Tet Offensive. After three months, E-5 Scantlen was attached to an education department in Long Binh, where he handled GED testing and taught a basic reading class.

Scantlen returned to Northeastern Oklahoma State College and received his master's degree upon return from the Army. He then began teaching at Hilldale School, where he retired from. After retirement, he drove a bus and did mailroom duties at Muskogee Vo-Tech. He drove a bus for the School for the Blind in Muskogee and served as a house parent. He retired completely in 1990 and moved back to Stigler in 2007 to work on his father's ranch.

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



## Sanders graduates from Texas A&M

MaKalynn Sanders of Lorena, Texas, graduated Magna Cum Laude from Texas A&M University on December 17, 2021, with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Allied Health. MaKalynn is currently enrolled at

Parker University in Dallas, Texas, to obtain her Doctor of Chiropractic degree. MaKalynn would like to thank the Choctaw Nation Higher Education programs for their help and support in pursuing her dream to become a Chiropractor.



## Hicks retires from the Air Force

Randy Hicks retired from his service of 24 years with the United States Air Force at Scott Air Force Base in Belleville, Illinois. His father, Randel Dewayne Hicks of Broken Bow, Oklahoma, was in attendance to congratulate Randy. Randel is also a Choctaw Air Force veteran who served for 22 years and 11 months.



## Phillips earns RN pin

Tabatha (Wood) Phillips of Troup, Texas was pinned from LVN to RN on December 16 and graduated from Tyler Junior College in Tyler, Texas on December 17 with an Associate of Applied Science in Nursing.

Tabatha graduated Magna Cum Laude with great distinction and was a member of Phi Theta Kappa.

Tabatha's husband is Richard Battise, and her son is Jayce Phillips of Arlington, Texas. Her parents are Gladys Durant of Muskogee, Oklahoma, and Randall Wood of Cut-N-Shoot, Texas.

Her family is very proud of her.

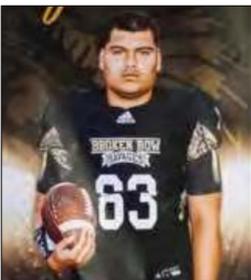


## Colonel Nichols retires

Antlers, Oklahoma native Chaplain (Colonel) Jimmy Felihkatubbee Nichols' retirement ceremony was conducted at Fort Jackson, South Carolina on February 1, 2022 and hosted by the Commanding General. He rose in the ranks from Private to full Colonel with 28 years active service and two combat deployments (Afghanistan with the 82nd

Airborne Division and Iraq with the 101st Air Assault Division). "I am a Proud Choctaw and throughout my time in service have often been asked about my name, Felihkatubbee, and have enjoyed each opportunity to talk about my Native American heritage."

## Walker named 4-A All-Star



Broken Bow Savages senior, Xavier Walker, has been selected as the offensive lineman for the 2022 Oklahoma Coaches Association's All-Star class football team. Xavier was also selected for All-County and All-District.

Xavier is the 17-year-old son of Timmy Dale and Bethany Walker. His grandparents are Solomon and Jackie Anna of Broken Bow and

Benny Wesley of Smithville. He is also the great-great-grandson of original Code Talker Ben Carterby and great-great-nephew of Joseph Oklahombi. Xavier is 1/64 degree Choctaw.



## Pitts turns 80

Donna Sockey Pitts turns 80 on February 21. She grew up in Red Oak, Oklahoma, as the eldest child of Betty and Paul Sockey. She lives in Edmond with her husband, Ed Pitts. She worked her entire career at the U.S.

Postal Service. After retiring, she made custom Choctaw dresses and shirts for years and now only makes quilts as the fancy strikes her in between her travels and watching Sooner and Thunder ballgames. We love you Mom/GranDonna - Happy Birthday!

## Brown graduates from UCO



Sarah Brown is from Hartshorne, Oklahoma. She is the daughter of Phyllis Rentie. Sarah moved to Edmond with her two children, Destiny Hill and Jayce Frazier, to continue her education. Sarah graduated from the University of Central Oklahoma on December 18, 2021, with a bachelor's in criminal justice, a minor in sociology and a bachelor's in

forensic science. Sarah believes that she was able to complete her education because of the Career Development and Higher Education programs that the Choctaw Nation provides their tribal members. Sarah is proud to be a member of the Choctaw Nation.

## Miller Celebrates 90 years



Wilma Beatrix "McCurtain" Miller recently celebrated her 90th birthday. Wilma is the great-granddaughter of Chief Green McCurtain and was born December 19, 1931, to Greenwood M. McCurtain and Julia Ward in McAlester, Oklahoma. Wilma is also the granddaughter of Hon. D.C. McCurtain. She has one

living sibling, Ward C.C. McCurtain. Wilma has four children, Marilyn Bain, Richard Miller, Wade Miller and Randall Miller. She also has six grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren. According to Wilma, "God has been good to her," and she appreciates the Wisdom blanket she received from the Tribe.

## Focht wins Distinguished Service Award



The Visual Resources Association (VRA), a multidisciplinary organization dedicated to furthering research and education in the field of image management, proudly presented the 2021 Distinguished Service Award (DSA) to Marcia Meeker Focht Binghamton University's Visual Resources Curator at the Virtual Chicago conference on March 25.

In over 30 years of active participation in VRA, Focht has helped to shape the association through her empathetic leadership and extraordinary service record—two terms on the VRA Executive Board, participation in various committees, task forces, and other special interest groups, and currently, Chair of the VRA Foundation. Her service is only surpassed by her considerable professional talents, sincere dedication and engaging personality. She has welcomed more people to VRA than any other member, mentored many future leaders and contributed to member retention.

Focht successfully transitioned her image collection from analog to digital images and collaborated with other campuses in the SUNY system to find ways to share Binghamton's growing collection. She continues to experiment with new technologies through digital humanities initiatives.

An "ambassador" of embedded metadata, she has presented and published on the innovative tools the VRA developed at regional, national and international conferences.

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**Choctaw Nation STAR Program**

ITI FABVSSA

# A New Chahta Homeland: A History by the Decade, 1920-1930

Iti Fabvssa is currently running a series that covers the span of Oklahoma Choctaw history. By examining each decade since the Choctaw government arrived in our new homelands using Choctaw-created documents, we gain a better understanding of Choctaw ancestors' experiences and how they made decisions that have led us into the present. This month covers the 1920-1930 period as Choctaw Nation navigated the best possible ways to provide for Choctaw people despite the severe constraints it faced as a government.

Following the end of World War I and the election of Chief William F. Semple in 1918, the 1920s were when everyone had to deal with the war's economic aftermath. Choctaws were already dealing with the dismal economic conditions caused by allotment. Those challenges were worsened by economic uncertainty caused by the war and federal budget cuts. With their governmental capacity severely reduced, Choctaw leaders increasingly relied on federal officials to ensure that laws governing Choctaw affairs were followed as treaties and laws stated they should be. Choctaws understood how limited their power had become and therefore pushed for more formal meetings regarding tribal affairs like the sale of coal and asphalt lands. The Choctaw National Attorney Hampton Tucker visited Choctaws regarding the issues individuals and families faced. Choctaw people hosted grassroots meetings to decide how to proceed. One group became known as the "Tuskahoma League" and advocated for the sale of coal and asphalt lands to provide per



Choctaw camp meeting where people often discussed community issues facing Choctaw people. E.A. Coleman Collection, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma..

capita payments to Choctaws.

When Choctaw lands were allotted, Choctaws' coal and asphalt lands were excluded from allotment. Since these lands were worth much more due to the natural resources, they had to be sold separately from other Choctaw lands. This would entail a lengthy process. First, the coal and asphalt lands had to be surveyed and provided a value. After this process was completed and the lands were assigned a value calculated by the U.S. government surveyors, the Bureau of Indian Affairs found the valuation rate of the coal lands to be too high to receive very many bids. Because

there was an economic downturn in the United States and demand for coal was less than before, they suggested that the valuation be lowered to attract bids for the coal lands. Choctaw leaders opposed this but found little recourse because they were eager to sell the lands so Choctaws could receive per capita payments that had been delayed over ten years by this point. They went through the process, but as they would find, this sale would drag out for another twenty years with multiple extensions to the legislation that authorized such a sale.

In addition to these large land issues, individual Choctaws faced numerous problems stemming from their respective allotments. Since these parcels of land were provided to individual Choctaws, landownership was primarily an issue for individuals and was no longer a matter that tribal government had control over. Although the Choctaw government continued to exist through a select few offices, they focused on the more significant land issues. Consequently, many Choctaws became forced to rely on the Bureau of Indian Affairs to help them with land ownership problems. As mentioned last month, Choctaws continually gathered to discuss issues facing Choctaw people. Choctaws gathered to discuss both the U.S. Congress Act approved in 1924 and the subject of allotments and restrictions associated with allotments.

A significant factor in the Choctaw land loss was the blood quantum requirement that determined whether people's lands would be held in restricted status or not. As mentioned in last month's article, all allotments initially had land restrictions. Land restrictions meant that land could not be sold or leased without the approval of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Furthermore, because allotments held by Choctaws listed on the Dawes rolls were considered Choctaw land managed by the federal government, they could not be taxed by the state of Oklahoma or any local county government. Initially, all Choctaw citizens were supposed to have land restrictions. Still, local Oklahoma

politicians sought to have these restrictions removed to tax the land and undermine Choctaw land ownership. Two years after allotment, land restrictions on intermarried citizens and Freedmen were lifted. Members of the Oklahoma congressional delegation also pushed to implement a blood quantum requirement for land restrictions. By requiring those with ½ blood quantum or more to have land restrictions, Choctaw lands quickly went from being owned by tribal citizens to non-tribal individuals.

Meanwhile, those with more than ½ blood quantum were limited in their ability to manage their land and money, which the government-held. While some full-bloods did not like the restrictions, it still helped many others and was why many of them supported them. Fullblood support for restrictions led Choctaw leaders and attorneys to convince congress to pass the Act of May 10, 1928, to extend the period of restrictions for those with ½ blood quantum or more and their heirs.

The poor conditions that Choctaws and other Native people lived in Oklahoma drew the federal government's attention. In 1926, the Secretary of the Interior requested a report on the conditions of Native Americans throughout the United States. A commission authorized by the Institute of Government Research (now the Brookings Institute) undertook a massive amount of work to complete the report. The report was formally titled "The Problem of Indian Administration" and later became infamously known as the Meriam Report. The purpose of this report was "to look to the future and insofar as possible to indicate what remains to be done to adjust the Indians to the prevailing civilization so that they may maintain themselves in the presence of that civilization according to at least to a minimum standard of health and decency." After two years of fieldwork and writing, they completed the 847-page report in 1928. This report evaluated the general economic conditions of Native people and how the Indian Service could be improved to better their work with Native peoples. Importantly, it found that the allotment system was a root problem and recommended a shift to corporate tribal land ownership. After the report was submitted and circulated, it was used to guide federal policy regarding Native people for years and laid the groundwork for what would become the Indian Reorganization Act and Oklahoma Welfare Act in the 1930s and which we will cover next month. This would move back towards tribal governance despite attacks at the beginning of the century.

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

## Bureau of Indian Affairs takes action to implement reforms to correctional program

**WASHINGTON (February 14, 2022)** – The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) today announced a series of reforms to the Office of Justice Services (OJS) Correctional Program to protect the rights, dignity and safety of those who are in custody.

After concerning reports about the treatment of incarcerated individuals, to include 16 inmate deaths in custody between 2016 and 2020, the BIA launched a three-month review in the Fall of 2021. The review included the commissioning of a third-party report to review current conditions in BIA operated and funded detention facilities. There are a total of 96 Corrections programs funded by the BIA, 26 operated by the BIA and 70 operated by Tribes.

"As the son of a corrections officer, I value the wellbeing of all people, those in our custody as well as those responsible for providing a safe and rehabilitative environment," said Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Bryan Newland. "We will not shy away from acknowledging the past and taking ownership of the path to improve conditions in our facilities. The reforms we are announcing today represent a new chapter for the Bureau of Indian Affairs as we move toward organizational culture change."

The report lays out recommendations for the Interior Department informed by an assessment of the thoroughness and effectiveness of the 16 closed in-custody investigations, if the BIA's current in-custody death investigation reporting meets modern standards, whether the incident investigations met common industry standards for proper evaluation, and whether investigators have proper training and skills to effectively investigate in-custody death incidents.

Consistent with the findings of the bureau's review, BIA is moving forward with more than two dozen reforms focused on:

- Updating policies and implementing consistent standards across corrections facilities;
- Improving the recruitment, retention, training and morale of staff; and
- Improving interagency coordination with federal partners to ensure safety for inmates and accountability for correctional officers.

Assistant Secretary Newland will further outline the reforms that the BIA has undertaken, as well as the overall culture change he is overseeing at OJS to place peoples' safety and wellbeing at the core of the organization, at the National Congress of American Indians 2022 Executive Council Winter Session later today.

## CHOCTAW NATION CAPITOL MUSEUM

UPDATED PHONE NUMBER: 855-569-4465

Choctaw Nation Cultural Services

## Housing Headlines

By Bobby Yandell

Storm season is just around the corner! Do you have your storm shelter installed? The storm shelter program began in 2012. To date, 7296 storm shelters have been installed in Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas, Kansas and Missouri. All tribal members in these states, regardless of income, 45 years of age and older, are eligible to receive a \$2500 voucher for an in-ground storm shelter with documentation showing they own their home. Those with ambulatory disabilities may receive a voucher for \$4,200 for the purchase of an above-ground shelter. All expenses over the voucher amount will be charged to the tribal member. All tribal members in the five states listed above under the age of 45 who own their home are eligible for a \$1,250 voucher. You are only eligible to receive this benefit once. The application is available on the Chahta Achvffa portal, or you can contact our housing office for an application and return it with your tribal membership and a copy of your deed to your home (the tribal member's name must be on the deed). If all eligibility requirements are met, you will receive your voucher. Pick the contractor of your choice, and once they have installed the shelter to your satisfaction, present them with the voucher. The contractor will then submit the voucher to Housing for payment. You may obtain an application by visiting the Choctaw Nation website at [www.choctaw-nation.com](http://www.choctaw-nation.com), the Chahta Achvffa portal, by giving us a call at (580) 326-7521 or (800) 235-3087 to have one sent to you.

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Housing Authority

## YOUTH WORK OPPORTUNITIES

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

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

APPLY ONLINE AT:  
[CHOCTAWNATION.COM/EMPLOYMENT-TRAINING-SERVICES](https://choctawnation.com/employment-training-services)

APPLICATION CLOSES ON APRIL 1, 2022

Summer Youth Employment Services

PROGRAM FUNDED BY PUBLIC LAW 102-477

# Regular health screenings are essential

By Chris Jennings

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), seven out of 10 U.S. deaths are caused by chronic disease. A large number of these diseases could be prevented with regular health screenings.

Michelle Gibson, director of preventative health for the Choctaw Nation, has a personal story about preventative health.

“My dad passed away with colon cancer in 2004. He was a very healthy man, never had any problems,” said Gibson.

Gibson said if he had gotten a colonoscopy as part of a regular health screening, he might not have died so early. “He was very hard-headed. He never went to the doctor until he had to.”

Colon cancer isn’t the only thing that can be prevented with regular screenings. Lung cancer screenings are another big one.

“We’ve screened a total of 2111 patients in the last three years for lung cancer. And of those, we’ve saved the lives of 21 people,” said Gibson.

A person can have stage 4 lung cancer and have no symptoms. If found early enough, doctors can remove the tumor before it spreads to other parts of the body. Finding these kinds of things in a regular health screening changes the conversation you might have with your doctor.

Gibson said, “It’s such a good feeling. I mean, it was a bad feeling to tell them or have the doctors say yeah, we’ve got something that’s suspicious, but guess what, we can cure it, we can get it out. You can do the chemo; you can do the radiation. We can actually beat this lung cancer.”

On top of saving lives, money can be saved. Regular health screenings can find things early when they’re preventable before major surgery is required. Wendy Brown, RN for the Choctaw Nation, said, “If you catch breast cancer or colon cancer early, you can just take out the polyp or take out the small area... You don’t have to do major surgery.”

Cancer was found in one of Brown’s breasts during a regular mammogram. Brown said the initial conversation with her oncologist wasn’t about extending her life for

10 years but about beating the disease.

“It’s about curing you, not just extending your life. That’s the difference in catching it early,” said Brown.

By catching these diseases early, you can prevent much suffering in yourself and your family.

Gibson says it was hard on her when her father was being treated.

“There were so many times on this roller-coaster ride I found myself in the bathroom alone crying. I prayed a lot, and God gave me more years than I expected to have with him. I am forever thankful for that,” Gibson said.

When and what screenings you should get vary significantly by individual. As of now, the Low Dose CT scans that can find lung cancer are only available to people with a history of smoking.

Yearly breast cancer screenings are recommended for women ages 45 to 54.

For people at average risk for colorectal cancer, the American Cancer Society recommends starting regular screening at age 45. This screening can be done either with a sensitive test that looks for signs of cancer in a person’s stool or with a visual exam that looks at the colon.

Cervical cancer screenings should start at age 25. People between the ages of 25 and 65 should get a primary human papillomavirus (HPV) test every five years.

The American Cancer Society recommends that men 50 and over start talking to their doctor about the pros and cons of testing for prostate cancer.

Talking to your doctor about what screenings you should take is the first step to living a long and healthy life. Your family history is an integral part of that conversation.

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

Brown added, “When you go in, you should know your family history. Many

**What is Genetic Testing?**

Genetic testing helps you learn if your family history of breast cancer is due to a specific inherited gene mutation. It's done with a blood or saliva sample, at a doctor's office, hospital, or clinic.

**UNDERSTANDING THE RESULTS**

Average Risk High Risk

Genetic test results are a factor in determining overall risk.

Results can help you understand your risk of getting breast and ovarian cancers and steps you can take to reduce your risk.

A positive test result does not mean you will definitely get breast or ovarian cancer. If you test negative for a specific gene mutation, you still may be at an increased risk for breast or ovarian cancer.

CDC graphic

The Choctaw Nation offers genetic testing for some types of screenings. Talk to your doctor to find out if genetic testing is something you can do.

times, patients will come in, and they don't know [their family history].”

Some common questions to ask family members are:

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

The CDC provides an online tool, My Family Health Portrait, to keep track of your family health history. The website will also allow you to share this information easily with other family members and doctors. The tool is available at <https://phgkb.cdc.gov/FHH/html/index.html>.

Gibson shared a story about one of her final moments with her father.

“God blessed him with strength and feeling well enough for us to take him hunting one last time...He got a shot off at a doe and talked about how he shot it right out from under me until the day he died. I was a daddy's girl, and he was my best friend. I miss him dearly, and I have so many good stories to tell about him to my grandchildren,” said Gibson.

With regular health screenings, you can ensure your children and grandchildren can create more of their own memories with you instead of having to hear them second hand.

# Improving our health by improving our plates

By Shanell Gray, Family Medicine Resident HRSA

Expectations from your healthcare professionals can be overwhelming, menacing and impossible.

How is it that, as patients, we are expected to adhere to a nutritional diet? Is access to the standard nutritional diet encouraged by the USDA and other organizations to be found in southeast Oklahoma?

As a resident physician, I am always searching to join my patients where they are at and work alongside them to improve their health.

As a rural physician in Talihina, Oklahoma, can I expect you to adhere to the latest “fad” diet? Where would you find such a spread? Furthermore, would it be accessible, affordable, consistently sourced and available? I think that is a far reach.

However, there are small things we can do to improve our diets, no matter where we live.

According to Harvard's “My Healthy Plate,” consumption of fruits and vegetables should be at least half of your daily food intake. So, instead of focusing on all aspects of the food pyramid, this article focuses on the benefits and “how to basics” of increasing the fruits and vegetables in our diet. Taking this journey together “one bite at a time.”

Research has shown that adding more servings of fruits and vegetables to your daily diet has many health benefits. This small change can improve your blood pressure, lower your risk of heart disease and stroke, improve blood sugar control, reduce diabetes risk, prevent some types of cancer, prevent age-related eye diseases and decrease food cravings.

Encouragingly, the Choctaw Nation provides fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables for its tribal citizens that qualify for food assistance. If your family does not qualify, I still encourage you to develop a budget and focus on increasing the amount of fresh and frozen fruits and veggies in their grocery cart by two to four items each shopping trip. Then, taking time to eat together as a family at least once per day.

According to Anne Fishel, executive director of the Family Dinner Project, most families today eat fast breakfasts, lunches apart and rarely dinners together. Unfortunately, our health and our children's health suffer. From extensive research, she finds “family dinners are great for the body, the physical health, the brains and academic performance, and the spirit or the mental health, and in terms of nutrition, cardiovascular health is better in teens.

Even if you don't try that hard, there is lower fat, sugar, and salt in home-cooked meals. There's more fruit, fiber, vegetables and protein in home-cooked meals and lower calories. Kids who grow up having family dinners, when they're on

their own tend to eat more healthily and to have lower rates of obesity.”

Though options are limited in our area, I start with fresh or frozen fruits and vegetables. You can purchase these at stores like A.J's Butcher Shop, Dollar General, Walmart and Aldi.

My two-year-old son loves breakfast options, including healthy grains such as oatmeal or cream of wheat, complementing his frozen mixed fruit and yogurt.

I love mid-morning snacks, including bananas, apples, or celery with peanut butter. Lunches including salads with mixed greens including spinach and arugula, mushrooms, bell peppers and carrots get a great variety of colors and limit the processed meats and cheeses. Homemade ranch dip with a yogurt base gives great probiotics and is super yummy to dip with fresh broccoli, carrots, cauliflower, peas and bell peppers. Dinners focusing on vegetables are always the most difficult, it seems. Still, we love homemade fajitas with onions and a variety of peppers served alongside homemade guacamole and limes. I made brown beans with sides of collard greens and cornbread just yesterday. For dessert, I sauteed apples with cinnamon and honey.

Your health is worth investing in. Your health reflects your eating habits. I think we are more than capable of making small changes each day, increasing the amounts of veggies and fruits and overall improving our health. Take care, God bless and I will see you in the office.

*This column was written by a guest contributor from the Choctaw Nation Health Services Authority.*

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

**Choctaw Nation** Health Services

## Southwestern Chicken and Pasta

- 1 cup whole-wheat rotini
- 2 boneless, skinless chicken breasts, each 4 ounces, cut into cubes
- ¼ cup salsa (or diced tomatoes)
- 1 ½ cups canned unsalted tomato sauce
- 1/8 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- ½ teaspoon chili powder
- ½ cup canned black beans, rinsed, and drained
- ½ cup fresh or canned corn
- ¼ cup shredded Monterey Jack and Colby cheese (or American cheese)

### Preparation

1. Fill a large pot ¾ full with water and bring to a boil. Add the pasta and cook until tender, 9 – 12 minutes.
2. Drain the pasta thoroughly.
3. While pasta is cooking, spray a large, heavy skillet with cooking spray. Over medium heat, sauté the chicken until browned and opaque throughout, 7 – 10 minutes.
4. Stir in the salsa, tomato sauce, garlic powder, cumin, chili powder, black beans and corn.
5. Stir thoroughly and cook until heated through.
6. Add the pasta and gently toss to mix evenly.
7. Divide the pasts between individual plates. Sprinkle each serving with 2 tablespoons cheese. Serve immediately.



## CHOCTAW NATION FOOD DISTRIBUTION

### WAREHOUSES & MARKETS

Open 8:00 a.m.- 4:00 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday  
Thursday: 9:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m.

### March 2022

All markets open weekdays, March 1-29  
**Closed:** March 30 & 31.

Nutrition Ed & Food Programs subject to cancellation  
Participants can request a calendar at their location.

**ANTLERS** 400 S.W. “O” ST., 580-298-6443  
*Food demos March 2 & 24*

**BROKEN BOW** 109 Chahta Rd., 580-584-2842  
*Food demos March 9 & 29*

**DURANT** 2352 Big Lots Pkwy., 580-924-7773  
*Food demos March 3 & 28*

**MCALESTER** 3244 Afullota Hina, 918-420-5716  
*Food demos March 4 & 23*

**POTEAU** 100 Kerr Ave., 918-649-0431  
*Food demos March 10 & 22*

*This institution is an equal opportunity provider.*

## SHOULD I BE SCREENED FOR LUNG CANCER?

The more you smoke, and the longer you smoke, the higher your risk is for lung cancer.

You should consider being screened using a Low-Dose CT Scan if you have all three of these risk factors:

- 50 to 80 years old
- Current smoker or former smoker who quit less than 15 years ago
- A smoking history of at least 20 pack-years (this means one pack a day for 20 years or two packs a day for 10 years, etc.)

If you are in the high risk category, talk to your physician about whether screening is beneficial for you.

**For more information:**  
**Choctaw Nation Health Services**  
**Low-Dose CT Program**  
**(800) 349-7026 ext. 6545**

## Choctaw Casinos & Resorts announced as presenting sponsor of PGA Tour Champions ClubCorp Classic

**IRVING, Texas (January 25, 2022)** – Tournament officials today announced a wide-ranging, four-year partnership with Choctaw Casinos & Resorts as the presenting sponsor of the inaugural ClubCorp Classic, April 22-24, at ClubCorp's Las Colinas Country Club. This unique event will feature the best on the PGA TOUR Champions playing together with sports and entertainment celebrities in separate competitions, as well as an unprecedented amateur match that will bring ClubCorp members inside the ropes to play side-by-side with the pros and stars.

As presenting sponsor of the annual PGA TOUR Champions event, Choctaw Casinos & Resorts brings its status as a premier entertainment venue to the tournament with remarkable fan enhancements, on- and off-site promotional activations and dedicated charitable efforts benefitting local organizations.

The ClubCorp Classic will benefit Momentous Institute, a North Texas non-profit dedicated to building and repairing social and emotional health so that all children can achieve their full potential. The tournament will also highlight ClubCorp's Gateway Program with First Tee, which opens the doors of ClubCorp private clubs to First Tee junior golf participants with a focus on growing diversity within ClubCorp clubs and throughout the golf industry. The program provides First Tee participants with junior golf memberships, which include tee times, use of the practice areas and the opportunity to compete in events. Club Members and Staff serve as mentors to the youth, empowering them to build their strength of character on and off the course.

"The ClubCorp Classic presented by Choctaw Casinos & Resorts will deliver world-class competition, top-tier celebrities and entertainment alongside the best in hospitality, making this partnership a perfect fit," said David Pillsbury, CEO of ClubCorp. "Choctaw Casinos & Resorts is well-known throughout our region for the important role they play in entertainment, their high-end level of hospitality and attention to detail as well as the work they do in the community. They are an ideal partner in the launch and growth of this spectacular event."

Choctaw Casinos & Resorts are owned and operated by the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, the third largest Indian Nation in the United States with more than 200,000 tribal members and 10,000 employees. Choctaw Casinos & Resorts features a variety of gaming, hotel and resort properties throughout southeastern Oklahoma.

"We are thrilled to partner with the ClubCorp Classic and the PGA TOUR Champions as both organizations share a culture centered around respect, innovation and entertainment," said Janie Dillard, Senior Executive Office for the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. "We look forward to connecting with both fans and players in fun and unique ways to not only help grow the event but to maximize the charitable impact for the community."

Choctaw Casinos & Resorts generate revenue to accelerate the success of the tribe. The strong, sovereign tribal government is an economic engine that, in 2019 alone, provided nearly \$2.5 billion in economic impact in the state of Oklahoma. From jobs and roads to emergency services and education, Choctaw Casinos & Resorts contribute in countless ways that benefit all tribal and non-tribal members in the communities where they live, work and raise their families.

The ClubCorp Classic will feature 78 PGA TOUR Champions professionals and 50 sports and entertainment stars. The PGA TOUR Champions professionals will play 54 holes of stroke play for a purse of \$2 million, along with the celebrities in a separate \$500,000 competition utilizing a modified Stableford scoring format.

Among the celebrities confirmed is Annika Sorenstam, World Golf Hall of Fame member and 72-time LPGA winner who'll be competing against the celebrities – Annika made her memorable foray onto the men's PGA TOUR in 2003 at the nearby Colonial Open Fort Worth, Texas. Joining her are 11-time MLB All-Star Pitcher Roger Clemens, Pro Football Hall of Fame wide receiver and Heisman Trophy winner Tim Brown, MLB Network Analyst and 12-year MLB standout Kevin Millar, as well as stars of the music and entertainment world with Larry the Cable Guy, Brian Baumgartner, and Colt Ford.

A group of amateur ClubCorp members will compete in a qualifying system that includes regional and national events to earn a spot alongside the stars during the official tournament rounds to play in their own modified stableford, low gross and low net format. The celebrities, amateurs and professionals will be paired together all three days of competition with all three rounds to be telecast on GOLF Channel.

As the largest owner and operator of private clubs, ClubCorp embraces its roles as a dynamic lifestyle company that brings people together through extraordinary experiences, impeccable service and opportunities to build meaningful relationships. The recent transformation and re-imagining of Las Colinas Coun-



Photo by ClubCorp

Pictured is Hole No. 13 at the Las Colinas Country Club, site of the ClubCorp Classic, which will be held April 22 through April 24.

try Club as an overall golf and lifestyle venue is a shining example of the work and effort being made across the entire ClubCorp brand and portfolio to bring ClubLife to its members and communities.

The ClubCorp Classic is operated by Mike Fliskey Entertainment. Fliskey, the founder and tournament executive director, is the former President and CEO of Diamond Resorts International and has extensive experience conceiving and overseeing top-tier golf events with both the LPGA Tour and PGA TOUR Champions, plus All-Stars and Hall of Famers from

NFL, MLB, NBA and NHL teams.

Las Colinas Country Club, which was classically designed in 1963 by Joe Finger, was named among the top 100 courses in Texas by the Dallas Morning News and selected as one of 2019 Best Country Clubs by Avid Golfer. The 18-hole course recently underwent a multi-million-dollar renovation and now features Trinity Zoysia fairways, Tif Tuf Bermuda rough and G12 Bermuda Greens. A brand-new practice facility that covers more than 10 acres was designed by Golf Hall-of-Famer, Lanny Wadkins.

## Choctaw Print Services is expanding

**Durant, Okla., (January 27, 2022)** – Earlier this month, The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma broke ground on an expansion project at Choctaw Print Services (CPS) in Durant, Okla.

The new facility will have an additional 15,000 square feet of space offering more room for services and sales operations. The larger warehouse will provide new equipment and services such as outsourced mailing services, screen printing and embroidery will eventually be brought in house—along with room for increased print production.

"The CPS expansion will more than double our production space allowing us to keep up with the growth of our largest client, the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, as well as our other clients nationwide," states Russell Marcum, Executive Director of Choctaw Print Services. "CPS invested approach to customer service has grown sales over 40%

in the last three years, making this expansion necessary for future projects."

Texoma Print Services began in 1979 as Texoma Business Forms. Founded by Don Marcum, the company provided a variety of graphic communications including forms, promotional products, inventory management and related services for businesses in Southern Oklahoma and North Texas.

In 1981, Texoma Business Forms entered into the commercial printing industry with the purchase of Texoma Printing and Supply in Durant, OK and the two companies began to develop a commercial printing division. The companies were purchased by Russell Marcum in 2003 and consolidated into Texoma Print Services, which became a subsidiary of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma in 2005.

The expected completion date for the CPS expansion project is winter 2023.

## IHS launches pilot project to strengthen health status of American Indians and Alaska Natives

**ROCKVILLE, Md. (February, 9, 2022)** – The Indian Health Service is announcing the launch of the National Health Coach Pilot Project, a much-anticipated effort to deliver health coach training to community and health professionals in Indian Country.

"The program aims to further advance the agency's commitment to improving health care service delivery and enhancing critical public health services to strengthen the health status of American Indians and Alaska Natives," said Indian Health Service Acting Deputy Director Elizabeth Fowler. "After completing this training, participants will be able to use current evidence-based health coaching techniques to facilitate improved patient care."

The Indian Health Service is seeking applicants interested in becoming effective health coaches and who are currently working in tribal communities and health care settings across Indian Country. The health and wellness coaching field is an emerging discipline that champions healthy behavior changes as a means of avoiding, reducing the incidence, or lessening the effects of chronic lifestyle-related diseases such as heart disease and diabetes. Health and wellness coaches are experts on human behavior, motivation, and health, helping their clients set and achieve health goals and build new habits.

Led by the Indian Health Service Division of Clinical and Community Services, the pilot project includes two cohorts of 50 participants, with the first cohort completing their six-month training from April to October 2022. Eligible participants include community and health care professionals working across tribal communities and clinical settings who provide health information and patient education to Native patients and communities. Applications for the first cohort must be submitted by March 16.

Training will be provided by the Legacy Holistic Health Institute, an approved training program for the National Board for Health & Wellness Coaching, and will prepare participants who want to further their training by becoming a board certified health coach. The evidence-based, practitioner-applied training consists of behavior change theories, methods, and practices that can be adapted across various populations.

Upon completion of the pilot project in 2024, the Indian Health Service will use the results and feedback from participants to assess the feasibility of establishing a health and wellness coach and behavior change approach at the clinical and community levels. The pilot project will also assist Indian Health Service in evaluating the integration of health coaching concepts into programmatic priorities, including behavioral health, mental health, substance abuse, community health, and diabetes efforts.

For more information, please visit the National Health Coach Pilot Project website or contact Project Manager Michelle Archuleta.

The Indian Health Service, an agency in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, provides a comprehensive health service delivery system for approximately 2.6 million American Indians and Alaska Natives who belong to 574 federally recognized tribes in 37 states. Follow the agency via social media on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn.

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## Brixy strives to keep endangered languages alive

By Chris Jennings

According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), just over 7000 languages are currently spoken worldwide. Less than 100,000 people use 90% of these languages. Over a million people converse in 150-200 languages, and 46 languages have just a single speaker.

These language facts are essential to Lina Brixy, a University of Southern California (USC) Viterbi Ph.D. candidate. Keeping the Choctaw language alive is important to her as well.

Brixy says she's competent in Spanish, Portuguese and French. She has dabbled in Arabic and Mandarin and is currently learning Choctaw.

Growing up in a diverse neighborhood in Houston, Brixy was exposed to different languages early in life. "All the friends that I knew as a child, they all spoke other languages at home. So I've always been very interested in languages from those experiences," said Brixy.

Brixy was exposed to the Choctaw language at an early age too. After her sister received a Choctaw dictionary and a learning module on tape as a gift, the two started learning words and having conversations amongst themselves.

"We tried to learn words and piece them together so we could talk privately to each other. We were best friends growing up, so we always wanted to be able to share things and talk to each other," said Brixy.

Currently attending the community language classes in Los Angeles, Brixy continues to learn Choctaw. While her teacher is always open to her texting, Brixy felt like she needed more to learn the language.

Earning an undergraduate degree in journalism and master's degrees in linguistics and computer science from the University of Texas, El Paso, Brixy is ideally suited to create

something that could help her learn Choctaw.

While working on the USC Shoah Foundation's Dimensions in Testimony, which allows visitors to have one-on-one conversations with "living avatars" of Holocaust survivors, Brixy was also assembling a Choctaw language corpus, a collection of written and spoken texts. Her corpus now includes more than 300,000 Choctaw words and phrases.

After working on the Holocaust survivor program, Brixy realized she might be able to use it as a base for something similar for Choctaw.

"It's this really interesting and engaging, interactive system. So when I was working on that project, I was thinking this tool is so useful I could use this for Choctaw. So that was how the chatbot got started," Brixy said.

A chatbot is a computer dialog system where you can ask a question, and it will search a database for an answer. Other examples of computer dialog systems are Amazon Alexa or Apple's Siri.

Brixy said, "I just wanted to set up a chatbot, where I could practice Choctaw, and in case I didn't understand something, I could ask for the translation."

Her Choctaw heritage is something that makes Brixy proud. She's also humble about how the ramifications of her project could potentially help future generations of Choctaws and others keep their languages alive.

"I feel like I'm a very, very small part in this. I feel like it's really positive to be able to contribute to that effort...I want to help however I can continuing into the future."

While her chatbot isn't available to the public, Brixy hopes that her work can be used as a basis for something that can help people learn Choctaw and keep the language alive.

For those who already know some Choctaw and may also be fans of the popular game Wordle, Brixy has created a Choctaw version that can be played at <https://chowordle.herokuapp.com/>.



Photo Provided

Jacqueline Brixy, USC Viterbi Ph.D. candidate, computer science, is doing her part to keep the Choctaw language alive by creating a Choctaw chatbot and a Choctaw version of the popular game Wordle.

## Rowland creates Native American resource guide for Texas Christian University

By Chris Jennings

Caroline Rowland is proud of her Choctaw heritage and knows the history of her tribe. She's also a criminal justice major and history and writing double minor at Texas Christian University (TCU) in Fort Worth, Texas. During a recent U.S. history class, when the Trail of Tears was only briefly discussed, she was confused and even a little upset.

Rowland says she was trying not to get angry, and that's when she realized that maybe it was a resource issue.

"Growing up, that was just part of who I was, and it's a large part of Oklahoma history," said Rowland. She realized that it might be challenging for people who haven't been surrounded by Native culture to sift through different tribes and their history and culture.

Rowland began to think of ways to help students and faculty access the missing resources.

As a member of the Chancellor's Leadership program at TCU, Rowland must create a project that could be implemented in the TCU community. The program aims to teach individuals to become ethical leaders and responsible citizens.

As a responsible Choctaw citizen, Rowland is using this required leadership project as an opportunity to make TCU a better school, not just now but for future students as well.

Rowland is creating a Native American resource guide that will contain contact information for tribes and stories and history that students and faculty will be able to use.

"It's [going to be] a resource guide that has information on how different departments can implement and recognize Native American history," said Rowland.

The guide will have course information for students and recommendations for faculty to incorporate Native American history into their classes.

Students and faculty will be able to access the guide online through their regular portal where they currently do coursework. There will also be department-specific sections, so relevant information is easier to find.

The response to the project has been great. Rowland has asked the board of directors, alumni and student organizations for input.

"Everyone has reacted really positively and really wants to help," said Rowland.

Feedback and suggestions are welcome and Rowland encourages anyone interested in the guide to contact her. "The biggest thing is that it's out there, and it's open to any change they see fit. If someone wants to come with suggestions or concerns, I'm available," she said.



Photo Provided

Caroline Rowland is making teaching and learning about Native history and culture easier at Texas Christian University.

If you're interested in contributing to Rowland's guide, you can contact her at [C.ROWLAND@tcu.edu](mailto:C.ROWLAND@tcu.edu).

There's a plaque on the TCU campus that says, "TCU acknowledges the many benefits, responsibilities and relationships of being in this place, which we share with all living beings. We respectfully acknowledge all Native American peoples who have lived on this land since time immemorial. TCU especially acknowledges and pays respect to the Wichita and Affiliated Tribes, upon whose historical homeland our university is located."

With Caroline Rowland's help, TCU is making sure the sentiment in the statement above doesn't just stay on the campus as a plaque to be read in passing but goes out into the world as learned respect for Indigenous cultures.

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Choctaw Nation Cultural Services

# Seven-year-old Choctaw girl saves family from devastating house fire

By Shelia Kirven

A seven-year-old Choctaw girl's gut feeling and quick thinking saved the lives of her family in Checotah, Oklahoma, on February 2, when a fire destroyed their home and everything they owned.

Joella Silva, Ava Fitzgerald's mother, said, "Ava was supposed to be staying at a friend's house that night, and she came home because she said she had a feeling something was wrong. So we let her sleep in the living room which we never let her do, she usually sleeps in her bedroom, but the living room is right next to our garage. She woke up because she heard crackling and saw orange through our window and saw that the kitchen was on fire."

Ava's bedroom was by the kitchen. According to Silvia, "If she hadn't been sleeping in the living room, she could have possibly been trapped in her room, or she couldn't have even heard it."

Silva explained that Ava went outside to see what the red was outside that she was seeing. "She saw that our garage was totally up in flames, so she ran back into the house and woke up everyone," said Silva.

Inside the house were her parents, Brandon and Joella, and her five-month-old brother, Calvin.

"I could tell something was wrong because she was yelling, and she never does that unless something is really wrong," said Ava's mom. "We weren't able to grab anything because our house wasn't completely on fire yet, so I figured they would be able to save it. We ran outside and we didn't even have shoes on."

Once the family was safely outside, a Creek Nation Lighthorseman who had been driving on a nearby road and spotted the smoke and flames and called the fire department.

Joella explained that the firefighters had difficulty fighting the fire due to extreme temperatures as fire hydrants were frozen up and there wasn't time to get a water tank onsite before the house was a total loss.

The family of four has since moved in with a friend. The community has helped with donations of immediate needs, and Ava's family is trying to save up for a down-payment to purchase a home since they were renting at the time of the fire.

The traumatic event has been devastating to the family. Since the fire, Ava has been sticking very close to her family.

The Checotah Perk Coffee Shop in Checotah, Oklahoma, is currently accepting donations and has a list of needed items by the family and a GoFundMe page has also been set up for the family at <https://gofund.me/e37f0650>.

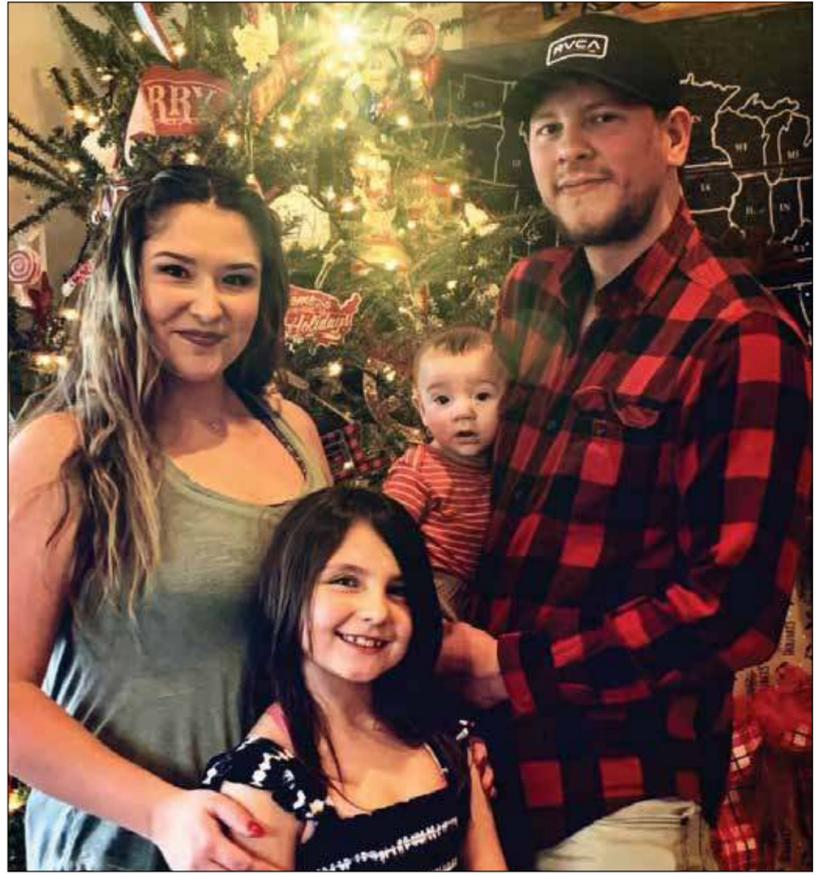


Photo Provided

Seven-year-old Ava Fitzgerald's quick actions saved her family from a recent house fire that totally destroyed their home.

# Alexandra Ott walks the runway with Choctaw pride



Photo Provided

By Christian Toews

Alexandra Ott said she was inspired to model from a young age by her mother, Cynthia. This inspiration grew into opportunity and led her to model for some of the top brands across the United States. These opportunities haven't happened without hard work and dedication. Alexandra attributes her drive to the values that her parents instilled in her when she was young.

Alexandra said her modeling career began when she was only 14 years old when she participated in a beauty pageant while her family was living in Alaska. She said that, from that pageant, she was invited by a modeling talent scout to compete in another pageant with over 200 models in Miami. Alexandra won this pageant and was offered a contract with a Los Angeles-based modeling agency.

According to Alexandra, the opportunities kept coming from that point.

By the time she was 16, she was meeting with more modeling agencies in New York. At 17, she moved to New York to work full-time as a model.

She has modeled for well-known brands such as L'Oréal and Michael Kors. She has walked in multiple New York fashion weeks. She has had features in Vogue Runway and was recently featured on the cover of Simply Buckhead Magazine.

Alexandra said that her parents had been a significant part of her success.

"My parents are responsible for every inch of my being and every single bit of my success. The older

I get, the more grateful I become for who they are as people and the support system they have been for my siblings and me throughout my life. I'm just beyond grateful that I am lucky enough to say that about my parents," she said.

Alexandra said that her Choctaw heritage had been a significant part of her life since she was young.

Alexandra's father, David Ott, is a third-generation Choctaw veteran. His grandfather was an Army veteran, His father was a Navy veteran and David Ott is also a retired Navy Captain.

According to Ott, her parents instilled values and passed down knowledge of the Choctaw Nation to her and her siblings from the time she was a child. She said that she is passionate about using her platform to educate other people about her Choctaw heritage. Her distinct Native American look has brought her unique opportunities within the modeling world. When people ask her about her heritage, she is thrilled to share that she is Choctaw.

"When I'm on set or talking with an agent, and they ask about my heritage, I'm able to just share about my tribe but also about all Native American tribes and bring awareness to indigenous people," she said.

Modeling has become Ott's passion.

While much of this passion was born out of her parent's example, she also learned discipline and hard work from sports.

Her father said that she was a very gifted soccer player, and she competed with her team from

Alaska in the 2016 Arctic Winter Games in Nuuk, Greenland, where she kicked the "golden goal" to win the gold medal in those games.

According to Alexandra, she has always been artistic and enjoys writing, design and graphic design.

She said that when she first began modeling, the allure of fame was enticing but that quickly faded, and she saw the artistic pursuit in it.

"I grew up in the generation of the hype of gaining Instagram followers and that culture, but I was never raised that way. So early on, the hype of that was what I really enjoyed about it, but as I progressed, I realized that I loved the artistic aspect of it," she said.

According to Alexandra, bringing large campaigns to life and working with each person to achieve that goal motivates her.

Alexandra is still striving in the industry and hasn't stopped being passionate and disciplined in working hard for her goals. She offered some advice to anyone thinking of modeling or getting into the fashion industry in any capacity.

"I think in any exploration of what you are passionate about, it just takes the work. It doesn't matter what it is. It just takes putting in the work," said Ott.

She encouraged everyone who pursues their passions to stay true to themselves.

"I think staying true to yourself and what you believe in will set you apart," she said.

To see Alexandra's latest work and keep up with her career, follow her on Instagram @allyott.

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# The possibilities are limitless when car camping in Choctaw Country

By Christian Toews

As we begin to catch the first glimpse of spring, one of the best ways to celebrate is by enjoying the great outdoors. Longer days and warmer temperatures bring an opportunity to explore new destinations with your friends and family.

One of the most popular activities in Southeastern Oklahoma during the spring months is camping.

There are many ways to go camping. Some people love the adventure of strapping everything they need to their back and setting off on a trail for a few days. This backpacking style is trendy but can have some downsides if you want more conveniences.

Car camping offers a great in-between. You can bring all your modern conveniences and still enjoy roughing it in the outdoors. You can even create a “base camp” and do short day hikes or rides from your campsite.

It’s always lovely to return to a cooler of cold drinks, a camp stove and maybe even a portable camp shower. The possibilities are limitless.

While you can sleep in your car, most car camp people opt to set up a tent or hang a hammock to sleep.

The popularity of car camping has grown in recent years. Some are outfitting a van with a bed, refrigerator and small kitchen to enjoy even longer camping trips without the need to set up a tent each night or tear it down when they are ready to leave. You might not have a camper van, but you can still enjoy the benefits of packing all your equipment in a vehicle and driving to your campsite.

Some of the best locations to camp are right here within the Choctaw Nation’s borders. Ethan Cox is an Oklahoma native and camped at Robbers Cave State Park near Wilburton, Oklahoma.

He said this location is perfect for car camping.

“Most recently, we stayed in the Deep Ford area of Robbers Cave State Park. The campground is flat and open, making it ideal for car camping. It’s also right on a stream that’s stocked with trout in the late fall and winter, which makes it perfect for the car camping fisherman,” said Cox.

He also commented on the convenience of car camping, “We set up our tent about 20 feet from the trunk of our car and simply kept whatever was not being used in the trunk. This can make for a more tidy campsite, as well as prevent critters from getting into things they shouldn’t.”

Robbers Cave State Park boasts some of Oklahoma’s only stocked trout fishing. This park has hiking trails, horseback riding, rock climbing and swimming areas. You are sure to find something fun to do no matter what activities you enjoy.

Another one of the best camping locations in Choctaw Country is McGee Creek State Park near Atoka, Oklahoma. This park has excellent camping locations and plenty of trails, fishing and swimming areas.

One of the best parts about camping is looking up at the stars at night and McGee Creek State Park has some of the best skies for stargazing.

This area is listed as class two skies according to the Bortle Scale.

The Bortle scale is a nine-level numeric scale that measures the night sky’s brightness of a particular location. The lower the number, the better it is for viewing the night sky. Make sure you pencil in some stargazing at your next camping trip to McGee Creek State Park.

There are many other places to camp inside the Choctaw Nation, with incredible scenic views and unique activities to enjoy.

If you want to learn more about car camping and other activities in Choctaw Country, you can visit [www.choctawcountry.com](http://www.choctawcountry.com).



Photo by Christian Toews

Car camping has risen in popularity in recent years. If you’ve never tried it out, Choctaw Country is the perfect place to start your new adventure.

## Ardis shares his story of resilience and determination

By Mallory Phelps-Jackson

When you’ve driven as many miles as Jimmy Ardis, taking the drive from South Carolina to Oklahoma is an easy journey. Not always a local to South Carolina, Ardis grew up in Ada, Oklahoma, until the age of 13. He recently stopped by the Choctaw Nation Headquarters to update his tribal membership card and share a bit about his recent accomplishments as a truck driver.

A nominee for the Mid-America Trucking Show (MATS) Wall of Fame, Ardis has driven over five and a half million miles during his 46-year span in the trucking business, all while driving with a prosthetic arm. At just six years old, he lost his arm as a result of Osteosarcoma, a rare form of cancer that originates in the bone-forming cells. Facing many obstacles and having been told as a child that he wouldn’t make it, Ardis wouldn’t stop until he reached his dream of becoming a truck driver.

As an amputee, he found it hard to make this dream come true. Major truck drivers and companies wouldn’t hire him. Not taking no for an answer, Ardis eventually took matters into his own hands and bought himself a truck. This drive and determination led him to secure a driving position, and his career in the trucking industry took off.

During his 46 years in the trucking industry, Ardis has earned many awards and served on committees both locally and nationally. In 2014, he was one of five finalists to be nominated and receive the Citizens Driver Award. To date, Ardis has a spotless driving record.

Among his many awards and accomplishments, Ardis also has a published book about his story titled, “‘Don’t Ever Give Up’ The



Photo by Mallory Phelps-Jackson

Jimmy Ardis and his wife, Debbie recently visited the Choctaw Nation Tribal Headquarters in Durant.

Jimmy Ardis Story” by Gary A Sampley. His faith and overcomer spirit are contributing factors to his success today.

That success wouldn’t be possible without the support from his wife, Debbie. For 30 years, she has been his biggest supporter and mentions that together they are a team. Being gone 2-3 weeks at a time, Debbie does the work behind the scenes and ensures he’s prepared for the next trip as he passes through. She said, “There’s not a harder working person,” and his work continued through the pandemic.

Today, Ardis takes things a little slower, and his trips are a little shorter. He and Debbie enjoy their seven grandchildren who refer to him as the “incredible transformer.” His inspiring story is a message to us all to never give up on our dreams. “Don’t ever give up. No matter how hard it is, no matter how bad the cards look, don’t ever give up,” Ardis said.

# BISKINIK

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## March 2022

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Page 1:

The Choctaw Nation and the people of Ireland have a long and storied history, with a continued bond.



Page 3:

OKC rapping brothers Lil Mike and Funny Bone, known together as Mike Bone, appear in Hulu’s hit television series, Reservation Dogs.



Page 12:

Jacqueline Brixey is doing her part to keep the Choctaw language alive.

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

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