



December 2020 Issue



Photo by Chris Jennings

Celebrating the holidays in the midst of a global pandemic

By Kendra Germany-Wall

The COVID-19 global pandemic has affected every aspect of daily life, and the holiday season is no exception. As Christmas approaches, the number of COVID-19 cases have begun to surge. Millions of Americans will need to decide how they will celebrate the holiday this year.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, and Robert Redfield, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, have warned of the potential for a spike in infections stemming from holiday parties, even those that are small and among relatives.

The holidays are traditionally a time for families to gather and spend time with each other. With the risk of transmitting COVID-19, it is essential to understand the risks of in-person gathering and considering the guidelines set forth by the CDC.



Photo by Chris Jennings

Large boxes were filled with employee food donations at the Choctaw Nation headquarters in Durant.

The tips for in-person gatherings include measures like holding events outdoors, limiting their size, having participants wear masks and maintaining social distance. The CDC also encourages hosts to request that guests avoid contact with anyone outside their household for two weeks before the activity. Close contact is now considered as being within 6 feet of an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period starting from two days before illness onset (or, for asymptomatic patients, two days prior to test specimen collection) until the time the patient is isolated.

Traveling is also an issue that families need to consider. A study conducted for the Department of Defense indicated that the risk of catching the virus on a plane is minimal because aircraft have a high turnover of airflow and use HEPA filters.

However, the CDC still strongly recommends that all passengers traveling on public transportation and on-board personnel wear face masks to avoid spreading the virus. The CDC also encourages travelers to practice social distancing, washing hands often and using at least

60% alcohol hand sanitizer, avoiding touching eyes, face, nose and mouth. More information on traveling during the pandemic can be found on the CDC's website.

An important thing to keep in mind is the health of others. If you have been diagnosed with COVID-19, are experiencing symptoms, have been exposed or are at increased risk of severe illness due to COVID-19, please do not attend in-person events.

Celebrating virtually or only with members of your own household poses a low risk for spread and is highly encouraged.

If your family chooses to host an in-person holiday celebration, the CDC encourages you to keep a few considerations in mind. When possible, hosting outdoor activities rather than indoors is preferable. If hosting outdoors is not possible, and you choose to host an indoor event, avoid crowded, poorly ventilated or fully enclosed spaces. One way to increase ventilation is by opening windows and doors. Other recommendations include hosting activities with only people from your local area as much as possible, limiting the number of attendees, providing updated information to your guests about any COVID-19 safety guidelines, and providing masks and hand sanitizer. If you are planning in-person holiday gatherings with people outside of your household, consider asking all guests to strictly avoid contact with people outside of their households for 14 days before the gathering.

During the celebration, the CDC recommends guests practice social distancing. It is also important to be particularly mindful in areas where it may be harder to keep this distance, such as restrooms and eating areas. Other recommendations include avoiding using restroom facilities at high traffic times, such as at the end of a public event, avoid busy eating areas, such as restaurants during high volume mealtimes, minimize gestures that promote close contact and wearing masks. It is also recommended to avoid singing, chanting or shouting.

When it comes to food and drinks, make sure everyone practices proper handwashing. Instead of potluck-style gatherings, encourage guests to bring food and drinks for themselves. Limiting people going in and out of the areas where food is being prepared or handled, such as in the kitchen or around the grill, if possible, is also suggested. Wearing a mask while preparing or serving food to others who don't live in your household is encouraged. If serving food, consider having one person serve all the food so that multiple people are not handling the serving utensils. Avoid any self-serve food or drink options, such as buffets or buffet-style potlucks, salad bars, and condiments or drink stations. Use grab-and-go meal options, if available. If you choose to use reusable items, wash and adequately disinfect after the event.

For more tips on how to stay safe this holiday season, visit www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/holidays.html.

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma has kept in mind the CDC's guidelines this holiday season. Many of its annual holiday events and programs have taken the health and safety of tribal members into consideration, and changes have been made to deliver services in a safe manner.

All community holiday parties and meals were held curbside, and extra precautions were taken when preparing and serving food.

Choctaw Nation Outreach Services have continued to

serve the Choctaw people through the pandemic. They have utilized the Chahta Achuffa Member Portal to help eligible tribal members apply for programs like the Thanksgiving and Christmas Food Voucher and Christmas for Families in Need programs. These programs are designed to help provide eligible Choctaw families access to food and gifts during the holiday season.



Photo by Christian Toews

James Stipe hands a box of food to Lila Tucker. The boxes were provided by the USDA Farmers to Families program and the Chahta Foundation. Choctaw Nation employees and volunteers distributed 1,725 food boxes weighing approximately 20 pounds each in the Crowder, Stigler and Coalgate communities.

According to Kenneth Winship, Director of Youth Outreach, the Christmas for Families in need program typically serves 1,200 -1,600 tribal members each year. Outreach Services also offers the Chahta Youth and Elder Angel Tree programs. These programs helped bring gifts to Choctaw children and elders in need this holiday season. As a health precaution, elders were given gift cards this year.

The spirit of giving runs deep within the Choctaw Nation. Various departments help food, clothing and toy drives this year. All Wellness Center locations held canned food, winter apparel drives and new toy drives. The Choctaw Nation Employee Food Drive helped deliver needed food items to more than 40 food banks and pantries across the region. All Choctaw Nation Head Start and Early Child Care locations held a clean and gently used coat drive. Choctaw Nation Recycling Centers also joined in to bring Christmas joy to the area by partnering with Native American Ministries in Durant to deliver clean, gently used toys to kids and used clothing for those in need throughout Oklahoma.

The vision of the Choctaw Nation is living out the Chahta spirit of faith, family and culture. The Choctaw Nation offers services to its tribal members year-round. To find out more about services and programs available, visit www.choctawnation.com/tribal-services.

Faith, Family, Culture



Chief Gary Batton

Seeing the blessing during tough times

This year has been challenging for many. It has been a time of uncertainty and worry. We all have been directly affected by COVID-19 in one way or another. Many have been sick, lost loved ones or experienced financial hardships due to the pandemic. There is no doubt that 2020 has been a difficult journey. However, through it all, God has blessed us along the way.

In June, we announced that we would be distributing \$200.8 million in CARES Act funding to our tribal members through support programs.

Tribal members were able to apply for programs like COVID-19 Tribal Member Child Care Support, Food Security, Technology Assistance, Student Assistance, ACT Online Prep, Elder Food Security, Disability Food Security, Elder Rental Assistance and Choctaw Small Business Relief. Eligible tribal members who experienced a loss of income or financial hardship due to COVID-19 were able to apply for a one-time \$1,000 payment to help with bills. Through these programs, we were able to help our tribal members during these trying times.

Aside from the services we were able to provide during the pandemic, I also believe we've learned some valuable lessons during this challenge. Many people realized the importance of slowing down and appreciating the blessings in their lives. We saw families spending more time together during lockdowns. We also saw communities coming together to help friends, neighbors and small business owners who were struggling. It really warms my heart to think about the ways God has moved in us during these past several months.

Christmas is right around the corner. It will be different for all of us, and I hope you and your family take the proper precautions to be safe and healthy. Christmas might look and feel different this year, but one thing will always stay the same. Jesus is still the true reason for the season. I truly believe that we were able to help each other this year through God's blessings and love.

I want to wish you all a very merry Christmas. In the new year, I hope that we experience healing, not only in our nation but also in our country and world. May God bless you with good health and healing. Yakoke.

Tribal Council Honors Service, Creates Annual Choctaw Nation Flag Day

TVSHKA HOMMA, Okla. – The November legislative session for the Choctaw Nation Tribal Council included passage of bills to fund important programs and services for tribal members, to honor the service of tribal members and to establish the annual Choctaw Nation Flag Day.

The resolution recognizing October 16, 2021 as the First Annual Choctaw Nation Flag Day, is set to become an annual holiday celebration across all of Choctaw Nation.

Robert Smith, longtime Hartshorne resident, was honored for 57 years of service at Jones Academy. Smith has been a mentor to thousands of Choctaw children and the impact of his service has strengthened countless generations of families across Choctaw Nation. "Patience has always been one of my strong points. You have to understand a young person in order to help. Their first impression of you is a lasting one", advised Smith. "When working with a large body of students, always treat them the way you want your own family treated and praise all accomplishments, large or small."

Budgets for the Child Care Assistance Program and Family Violence Counseling Program received unanimous support from the council. An application for the fiscal year 2021 Native American Affairs Technical Assistance to Tribes Grant also passed with support from all council members.

Silas McKinney, of Choctaw Nation District 2, was recognized for his decorated military service career, which included two Purple Hearts during the Vietnam War.

Public comments were recorded from Nellie Meashintubby regarding the importance of transparency for tribal government affairs. Faith Parra also addressed the council, sharing her family and community's struggles with the COVID-19 pandemic.

For more information on the Choctaw Nation Tribal Council, including the full text of the measures passed in the session, please visit www.choctawnation.com/government/tribal-council.



Assistant Chief Jack Austin, Jr. and Tribal Council celebrate the passage of Choctaw Nation Flag Day, which will be recognized as an annual holiday beginning October 16, 2021.



Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr.

Have a holly, jolly and safe Christmas

It has been over eight months since a global pandemic was declared. The holiday season is normally a time to gather with family and celebrate, but this Christmas will be different for many of us adjusting to new ways of living. My heart and prayers go out to everyone who has been directly affected by the pandemic.

I hope you all take the necessary precautions to keep yourself and your loved ones safe and healthy. Many of us long to spend time with our aging parents, grandparents, and old friends to get into the holiday spirit. We want to feel some sense of normalcy after being in the pandemic for so long, but this doesn't mean we should let our guard down.

Christmas is a special time, but for the safety of those we love, we need to look at it differently this year. Although we know much more about the spread of COVID-19 since March 2020, we also know that the virus can quickly spread in our homes during traditional holiday activities where we gather for shared meals or rituals. Please remember that if you gather with people you do not live with, the risk of infection increases, and consideration of those most vulnerable is necessary. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) have suggested the following ways to celebrate more safely: agree on some ground rules in the weeks leading up to your event; try to quarantine for two weeks before the day; host outdoor activities rather than indoor to minimize the risk. If you cannot host outdoors, avoid crowded, poorly ventilated or fully enclosed indoor spaces. You can increase ventilation by opening windows and doors based on the weather. Try hosting activities with only people from your area and limit the number of attendees as much as possible. It is also suggested to provide updated information to your guests about any COVID-19 safety guidelines and steps you are taking to prevent the spread of the virus. You can also provide or encourage attendees to bring supplies to help you and others stay healthy—for example, extra masks, hand sanitizers, or disinfecting wipes.

Statistics prove that people 65 years and older are at higher risk for getting a severe case of COVID-19, so I encourage other creative ways to celebrate without gathering in-person. Many families are planning on celebrating together virtually through video chat, which is unconventional but a safe way to celebrate. A meal could also be delivered for family and neighbors, especially those at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19.

There is no doubt that this year has tested us, as we all know someone or have lost someone due to this virus. As Choctaws, resilience is in our blood - we will get through this together. I wish you all health and happiness this Christmas season and in the new year. May God bless you and keep you safe.



Pastor Olin Williams
Employee Chaplain

Salvation of a Nation

How does a nation regain favor with God? How can a nation have sins forgiven and have healing?

II Chronicles 7:14, "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

A nation is saved not through the government or social reform. God is referring to His people, the Christians, to humble themselves, and pray and seek his face before healing takes place.

To understand this, let us read Leviticus 2:13. "And every oblation of thy meat offering shall thou season with salt; neither shalt thou suffer the salt of the covenant of thy God to be lacking from thy meat offering; with all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt. What is the "salt of the covenant?" A covenant of salt was a covenant made between individuals pledging an unbreakable friendship. They vowed this strong friendship and as a symbol of that covenant, they ate bread and salt together. The bread symbolized the nourishment of the friendship and the salt with its savoring capacity emphasized the durability of the friendship.

Numbers 18:19, "All the heave offerings of the holy things, which the children of Israel offer unto the Lord, have I given thee, and thy sons and thy daughters with thee, by a statute for ever: it is a covenant of salt for ever before the Lord unto thee and to thy seed with thee."

The Christian is called the salt of the earth, Matthew 5:13, "Ye are the salt of the earth; but if the salt have lost its savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and to be trodden under foot of men."

Christ is called the Bread of life, John 6:35, "And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."

When a person becomes a believer, Christ entered a covenant with him or her. The salt of the covenant is applied here. The Christian is the salt that preserves a nation. Salt is the righteousness of Christ. When a Christian loses its salt savor, it cannot have enough strength to save a nation. Abraham came to God and asked for the salvation of Sodom. His nephew and family lived there so he wanted them to be saved from destruction. Abraham asked God if there were fifty righteous people, would God spare the city? There were not enough to save the city although God agreed to save the city for even ten righteous souls. Our nation can be spared if God's people will return to the Church House instead of the White House. The nation can be saved only through God's intervention through God's people getting right with God.

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Choctaw Nation High School Student Services

Shelley Dennis chosen as staff writer for all-Native Netflix animated series

By Shelia Kirven

It is challenging to succeed in the entertainment business in just one area of expertise, much less several. But that’s what Choctaw tribal member Shelley Dennis has been able to do. From modeling to stand-up comedy, acting to writing, and directing to producing, Dennis does it all.

Born at the Talihina hospital, the Pushmataha County native attended Eastern Oklahoma State College and then went on to the University of Oklahoma, where she received a degree in Drama and Dramatics/Theatre Arts in 2005.

After graduation, she moved to Milan, Italy, upon receiving an invitation from a modeling agency.

Dennis says on her website, “Life took an unexpected turn when I was scouted by a modeling agency and flown to Milan, Italy, where I made a living being tall and hungry.”

She spent over two years modeling in Italy and Germany, appearing on billboards and several publications like teen magazines and Vanity Fair.

Dennis had been invited to work in Istanbul but decided to go home to pursue acting. After sitting in on a few more classes at OU, Dennis said she was ready. She stayed with a relative in Utah for a while, who gave her some contacts in Los Angeles. After arriving in California, she got a job at a bakery cafe as a hostess and worked her way up to be a waitress, where she stayed for over eight years, saying she wanted it to be her first and last job waiting tables. She began to get copywriting and content specialist jobs where she did sales pages and website copy. She even worked as a copywriter for the Pushmataha Family Medical Center. During this time, she continued to work on her acting career.

Dennis has done stand-up comedy and has 34 acting credits, appearing in productions such as Days of Our Lives, Criminal Minds, The Tonight Show with Jay Leno, and Selfie Dad. She has directed and produced. She also has six writing credits for shows like The Tristen and Shelley Show, Those Who Wait and Russian Bride. Dennis also created her web series, Recovering Model, and worked as a freelance writer for Walt Disney Animation Studios.

When asked what she has been most proud of, Dennis remarked, “Not to diminish Criminal Minds and Days of Our Lives, those are awesome and were so fun to do because I watched those shows growing up, but it was the times I did stand-up and nobody saw it, the web series that I created and sort of feel like I had a workout trying to define my voice, and what I wanted to say.” Dennis explained, “When I got into stand-up, it wasn’t because I wanted to do stand-up. It’s because I was auditioning for acting roles, and I was debilitatingly nervous. My hands were shaking. I couldn’t do what I could do in my living room when I would go to the auditions, so I was like, this



is an issue, and I will never work if I don’t nip this in the bud. So, I started going to open mics and telling jokes on stage because that was the most terrifying thing I could think of. I hated it. I hated it so bad, I would cry in the car. I would go to the next one and cry in the car.” Dennis noted, “I was really bad. I was terrible. And then something happened. It wasn’t meant to be anything more than a tool to break my nerves, but I started to find my voice and process.”

Dennis recently completed the Native American Showrunner Program for 2020. She was one of four fellows nominated (along with Choctaw comedian, writer and actress Siena East) to participate in the program designed to allow experienced Native American writers to grow in the television writing industry. She says she is very grateful to everyone at LA Skins, including fellow Choctaw Ian Skorodin (Barcid Production and Barcid Foundation), saying, “The doors have opened since I have participated in the programs they have created for us.”

Dennis is currently writing for Spirit Rangers, an upcoming NETFLIX animated series for children ages 6-8. The show follows a Native American trio in a National Park who can transform into their own animal spirits. The show is executive produced by Chris Nee, creator of the children’s shows Doc McStuffins and Vampirina.

Dennis, along with other Native American writers and freelance writers, make up the all-Native writers’ room where Dennis is the only Choctaw. The first season will have 40 episodes. Writing for the season will wrap up in May.

The show’s creator is Karissa Valencia from the Chumash tribe, whom Dennis was recommended to through the LA Skins project.

Dennis said, “What is great about working with Karissa is that she keeps saying, bring in Choctaw stories, Choctaw characters, so I’ve already in previous episodes that I’ve written been able to do that, and it’s just really cool. I’m very excited to share certain characters and legends from the Choctaw tribe specifically. I want kids to be able to enjoy that and get excited about their culture in that way.” She said, “I feel super grateful. I really think the show is going to be special, not only to all kids, but Choctaw kids in general.”

Dennis says this is a first in creating an all-Native show for children and putting it into mainstream television. “I just don’t think that’s been done before,” she said.

“Because this is not an educational series and is fictitious, there are certain things that are very traditional, that they’ve gotten permission from the Chumash and Cowlitz tribes to use the characters as tribal members of those tribes, but the stories themselves are kind of a mish-mash of certain myths and legends, and using characters from different tribes, so it’s not an authentic start to finish story from any tribe usually. There are a couple of exceptions in that, for example I will use characters in pitched stories based on certain animals that are very prevalent from the Choctaw Nation and any bit of stories, little nuggets that we can expand on and create a fictitious story of our own to combine with different tribes and legends.”

Dennis explained, “We are not exclusive to our personal tribes, we want to include our knowledge, and what we’ve been taught growing up, we want to include that, but we also do research and incorporate different animals, and myths and legends from all kinds of different tribes.”

Karissa Valencia, Spirit Rangers creator, said, “I hope



Spirit Rangers will help our Native youth celebrate being Native. Whether that’s learning about tribal traditions or just going on magical adventures, I hope they see themselves in the modern-day Skycedar family. Working with an all-Native Writers Room is like taking the American History Class of my dreams. I feel like the luckiest person in the world to be surrounded by such amazing Native talent, like Shelley. Our shared experiences bring us together in the room, but what really strengthens our stories is getting to learn from one another. Every Native experience is different and I’m grateful our writers room provides us a space to learn from each other.”

Dennis says she is a proud Choctaw and Choctaw Registered Artist. She says she keeps up with what is going on in the Choctaw Nation and hopes to be able to give back to the tribe, as she credits it with giving her the foundation to be able to achieve her dreams.

“I want to be involved in the community even though I’m in L.A. My hope is, I can give back to the Choctaw Nation and the tribal members, because I have received so much,” said Dennis.

For more on Shelley Dennis, visit her website at www.shelleydennis.com. To become a Choctaw registered artist, visit www.choctawnation.com/history-culture/artist-registry.

Portion of farms solar energy to be used by Nation

By Christian Toews

OG&E, the electric utility subsidiary of OGE Energy Corp. (NYSE: OGE), recently completed the construction of a solar energy farm in Durant, Oklahoma. This farm will help meet the renewable energy needs of the Choctaw Nation. The nation has purchased approximately 50% of the energy center’s solar output through OG&E’s solar tariff. The remaining solar capacity was made available to all customers in the area.

With the new solar farms now energized, approximately 4,600 customers are subscribed to OG&E Solar Power.

“All of the output of these two farms is now fully subscribed. We look forward to adding additional projects as customer demand grows,” said Sean Trauschke, President and CEO of OGE Energy Corp.

This solar farm is located on about 30 acres of land and contains 15,344 solar panels. The solar farm will produce 5 megawatts of solar energy. That’s enough to power 1,785 homes, according to OG&E.

“When I look at these new solar farms, I see the future. The Choctaw Nation has thousands of years of experience living off the land in a sustainable way, and to us, this is a natural and welcome development. By living more sustainably, we can be good stewards of the environment and still live comfortably,” said Chief Gary Batton.

Stanley Self, Director of the Utility Authority at the Choctaw Nation, said the solar farm’s energy is being spread across 58 Choctaw Nation facilities and reduces energy costs.

“We’re already seeing energy savings at several of our facilities. The savings has increased over the past four or five months,” explained Self.

He also commented on the potential for solar to play an even larger role in the future.

“The current farm is only 30 acres, and there are 100 acres to expand the farm potentially, Self said.

According to Self, the Choctaw Nation is continuing to look at ways to use renewable energy in all areas, including solar, natural gas and water. He said he is thankful for leaders who make renewable energy sources a priority.

“It’s truly great that we have a chief and assistant chief that support this and want to use energy efficiently,” he said.



A new OG&E solar energy farm located in Durant can be seen in this aerial photo. The farm will produce 5 megawatts of solar energy.

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District 9

Halito! We hope everyone is having a wonderful holiday season. Our staff has been working very hard during this pandemic, ensuring that our services don't miss a beat. The COVID-19 relief funds have been a tremendous help to many of our tribal members. I would like to thank Chief Batton, Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr., Tribal Council members and our staff for putting together a great program for releasing these funds. We have been able to process over 100,000 applications during this time. I would like to also encourage everyone to continue to be safe and wear a mask while out and about.

Our construction projects have been coming along great in District 9. We were able to give keys to another 30 families through our LEAP program in November. We are also adding another 10 independent elderly units that will be complete in early summer. The expansion on the new casino will be complete this summer as well. The new childcare center is also starting to come up, and we are very excited about the new Cultural Center opening soon.

We are looking forward to our Kids Christmas at the Community Center on December 10th from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. It will be a little different this year, as it will be a drive-thru process to keep everyone safe. I encourage everyone to bring your kids to receive a gift and see Santa. I would like to thank all the volunteers that help put this event on for us, and can't wait to see all the kids.

I would also like to congratulate Ann Baskin and Curtis Bully for being selected as our Outstanding Elders for District 9. They both show the true Chahta spirit in helping others and have been active at our community center for many years. I know they will represent our District very well, and we appreciate them very much.

As we head into 2021, our Nation is stronger than ever, and it is because of the strength of each tribal member across the country. In closing, I would like to send my condolences to anyone that has lost a loved one during this time. During these challenging times, it is important to remain strong in our faith, loved ones and our Nation. Yakoke.



James Dry

District 11

Halito, chim achuckma! 2020 has definitely been a trying time. Please continue to be safe and pray for all that have been affected by COVID-19. But don't forget to count our blessings as we have seen some beautiful fall weather in the Choctaw Nation in the last three months. The holiday season is my favorite time of the year, and Tammy and I would like to wish you and your family a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

I have to say that with everything going on this year, the way our three branches of government work together is very encouraging to me. The McGirt supreme court ruling has kept us busy, especially with all the misunderstanding and confusion that followed the announcement. Tribal Council, along with Chief Batton and the tribes Sovereign for Stronger Communities Commission, are researching all our options while keeping the best interest of the Choctaw people and Choctaw Nation in mind. In September, we approved the FY Budget for 20/21, and I am happy to say we are in a very strong financial position with no debt.

The Tribal Council did something historical at the November council meeting. We approved a Resolution Recognizing and Honoring October 16, 2021, as Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Flag Day to celebrate and reflect on the importance of the flag. This resolution was introduced by me and was the idea of a fellow Dist. 11 tribal member. Let's all be prepared and purchase a CNO flag to fly proudly by next October!

We love to support our children in Dist. 11. The drive-thru trick or treat was October 29 and went very well. The Christmas party for kids 12 and under will be drive-thru also on December 10 with gifts and food. Remember the date. We will see you then. We had the privilege to donate to the McAlester High school AG/FFA program and the First Indian Baptist Church for their youth movie night. The community center senior Thanksgiving meal was served on November 18, while the Christmas dinner is set for December 16.

Congratulations to our 2020 Outstanding Elders from District 11, Christine Baker and Richard Carney. Christine is from the Jackfork area but spent most of her work career in OKC before retiring to McAlester. She is active in the community center senior group, the Sardis Baptist church and sews Choctaw shirts and dresses for our princesses. Coach Carney was an All-State captain on the MHS Buffalo football team that won the state championship in 1968. He also played on the NEO 1969 National Jr. College Football Championship team. He spent 41 years as a teacher and coach, where he was a positive role model for the students he taught and the community before retiring in 2015.

We were also proud to announce the Chahtapreneur of the year is from Dist. 11. Congratulation's to Micky Lloyd, who owns Common Roots Mercantile with his wife Kristen in downtown McAlester. Make sure you support Common Roots and all Choctaw Small businesses during the shopping season.

I am very humbled and honored to serve the wonderful Choctaw people of District 11. Thank you for all the support during my first year as your Councilmember. As we look forward to 2021, always know if you have any concerns or questions regarding the Choctaw Nation, please contact me. Chihowa vt Achuckma!



Robert Karr

CNO Family Violence Prevention Program receives \$301,538 grant

By Chris Jennings

The Choctaw Nation Family Violence Prevention Program will soon be better equipped to help children and non-offending parents that have been affected by domestic violence.

A new grant for \$301,538 was awarded to the program from the Family and Youth Services Bureau at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The grant will be used to address some gaps in service that were unable to be met.

Anna Marcy, CDSVRP, Director of Choctaw Nation Family Violence Prevention said, "We're hiring two Licensed Professional Counselors and a service coordinator to provide culturally relevant therapeutic support services to children exposed to domestic violence and that are involved in the tribal child welfare system."

This grant, funded through the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act, helps to make services for immediate crisis intervention and safety planning available to victims of domestic violence nationwide.

"FVPSA funding supports important partnerships for faith and community-based organizations, state agencies, and other service providers who work with survivors of domestic violence, their children and their families, to help them heal and to reduce the risk of trauma and abuse," said Commissioner of the Administration on Children, Youth and Families Elizabeth Darling.

If you've been a victim of intimate partner violence, you can call Choctaw Nation headquarters at 800-522-6170 and ask to speak to the Family Violence Prevention Program or email familyviolence@choctawnation.com.

The program is open to everyone, regardless of Native American status.

Hard Work Pays Off for Choctaw Tribal Police

By Charles Clark

On Oct. 14 at the Choctaw Nation Department of Public Safety, Special Agent Gary L. Cunningham of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Muskogee office, presented 19 tribal police officers with Special Law Enforcement Commissions. The commissions give the officers federal authority, above their tribal authority, when working Major Crimes in the jurisdiction of the

Choctaw Nation. Major Crimes are defined as murder, manslaughter, rape, assault with intent to kill, arson, burglary and larceny. They are the result of the Major Crimes Act of 1885, a law passed by the U.S. Congress as a section of the Indian Appropriations Act of that year placing these crimes under federal jurisdiction if they are committed by a Native American on Native land.

"In order to obtain this level, they must first be full-time officers," said Cunningham. "Then, they had to attend two days of training and pass a test." The new designations are good for five years, he added, then they have to be renewed.

Director of the Choctaw Nation Tribal Police R.D. Hendrix noted that each officer also had to pass a background check. "The newest of these officers has been with us about two years, and the one that's the longest is 26 years."

Hendrix also addressed the reason for a large number of officers training for advancement.

"This will help when the McGirt ruling comes to the Choctaw Nation," he said, referring to the U.S. Supreme Court ruling of July 9, which recognized the Muscogee (Creek) Nation's reservation status. The decision is expected to equally affect the Choctaw Nation by the end of 2020.

Choctaw Nation Tribal Police officers who received Special Law Enforcement Commissions were Terry Baker, Jeffery Bryant, Tony Bryant, Lawayna Cathey, Anthony Garvin, Joe Hankins, Zachary Hendrix, Isaac James, Jesse James, Andrew Kenyon, Hesston Kirkes, Forrest Ludrick, Douglas Rinehart, Erik Sevenstar, Vincent Stanley, Nicholas Wallace, Chabon Williamson, Kyzer Williston and Clayton Wynn.



Photo by Charles Clark

Members of Choctaw Nation Tribal Police recently received Special Law Enforcement Commissions giving them federal authority when working Major Crimes in the Choctaw Nation. Joining the officers are, far left, Director of the Choctaw Nation Tribal Police R.D. Hendrix and, far right, Special Agent Gary L. Cunningham of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Muskogee office.

Choctaw Nation Christmas meals and children's parties

All meals and parties will be curbside events at each town's community center.

Wednesday, December 2

Battiest Senior Lunch 11:00 AM

Sunday, December 6

Tuskahoma 2:00 PM

Monday, December 7

Battiest Children's Party 4:30-6 PM

Wednesday, December 9

Atoka Senior Lunch 11:00 AM

Coalgate Senior Lunch 11:00 AM

Stigler Senior Lunch 11:00 AM

Broken Bow Senior Lunch 12:00 PM

Smithville Community Lunch 12:00 PM

Wright City Community Lunch 12:00 PM

Spiro Senior Lunch 11:00 AM

Poteau Children's Party 6:00 PM

Thursday, December 10

Atoka Children's Party 4:30-8 PM

Stigler Children's Party 5:00-7 PM

McAlester Children's Party 6:00 PM

Saturday, December 12

Crowder Children's Party 1:00 PM

Sunday, December 13

Antlers Children's Party 2:00 PM

Monday, December 14

Broken Bow Children's Party 4:30-6 PM

Spiro Children's Party 5:00 PM

Wednesday, December 16

Crowder Senior Lunch 11:30 AM

Durant Senior Lunch 11:30 AM

Spiro Senior Lunch 11:00 AM

Talihina Community Lunch 11:30 AM

Wilburton Community Lunch 12:00 PM

Hugo Community Lunch 11:00 AM

Idabel Senior Lunch 12:00 PM

McAlester Senior Lunch 11:00 AM

Poteau Community Dinner 5:00-7 PM


Antlers Senior Lunch 12:00 PM

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DISCOUNT AVAILABLE WHEN PRESENTING
CDIB OR MEMBERSHIP CARD



TRIBAL MEMBERSHIP
AND COVID-19 GUIDELINES

The Choctaw Nation is taking numerous steps to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

The Tribal Membership Department has released important guidelines that we want all members to be aware of.

The safest option for obtaining a tribal membership application is through our online application access.

Guidance can be found at
choctawnation.com/contacts-applications/cdibmembership-information

All membership cards are being mailed to recipients until further notice. Unfortunately, this means same-day card obtainment will not be available. Applications, supporting documentation, and photos can be emailed or mailed to us at the address listed below.

800-522-6170 EXT 4030
CDIB-MEMBERSHIP@CHOCTAWNATION.COM
CHOCTAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA | ATTN: TRIBAL MEMBERSHIP
PO BOX 1210 | DURANT, OK 74702

Choctaw Nation Member Services

Thank you

Dear Chief Batton,

Without the Senior Food Security, I don't know how I would be purchasing any groceries. I recently retired due to being compromised with breathing issues. Covid-19 has changed my life. I'm so grateful for the assistance of the Choctaw Nation. God bless you and the Choctaw Nation.

Cheryl Mainka

Chief Batton and The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma,

I am so grateful--let me reword that--more than grateful for the help I have received from my Choctaw Nation. Especially, during these trying times, but even before that. I am receiving help from the Elder Food Program and the Emergency Services due to my health conditions. Honestly, it has lifted a burden and I can not say enough how proud I am of my heritage. Also, my grand children and great grand children have been able to receive support with their school clothing, good grade program, and continuing education program. I am so appreciative for myself and my family and just want to say thank you!

Sincerely,
Nancy Reed Phillips

Send us your stories!

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

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

NEED TO CHANGE YOUR ADDRESS?

Contact the Choctaw Nation
Circulation Department
580.924.8280 x4028

Read the Biskinik online at
CHOCTAWNATION.COM/NEWS



Biskinik
Announcement Guidelines

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

Gary Batton
Chief

Jack Austin Jr.
Assistant Chief

The Official
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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.

Ayers AARP Outstanding Elder



Carol Ayers' service and contributions to the Choctaw Nation are vast. A keeper of her heritage, Mrs. Ayers is fluent in her native Choctaw language and volunteers as a language teacher at the District 9 Child Development Center. Mrs. Ayers additionally served as past president of the Durant Senior Community Center.

She was employed as a registered nurse for 35 years. During that time, painting was her hobby. When she retired, Mrs. Ayers' focus turned to Choctaw art and honing her craft. She says her mother is responsible for her love of color. Mrs. Ayers depicts Native Americans of all tribal nations in authentic regalia. She views her artwork as a way to preserve and share Choctaw dress and customs for future generations.

Veterans Association Members Needed

Choctaw Veterans Association is searching for new members. Most of our members are Vietnam Vets. We need young Choctaw military men and women, active or retired. Members of different tribes are welcome as well. Veterans Association paperwork is needed. Meetings are 8 a.m. on the second Saturday of each month at the Spiro Choctaw Community Center. Members attend funerals, and Disabled American Veterans and Marine Corp League. For information call:

Ed Hendricks, Recruiter 918-962-5524
Paul Perry, Commander 479-353-2709

Did You Know?

The Choctaw Nation Color Guard is in its 22nd year of service to veterans around the country? It provides military funeral honors for Choctaw veterans and adds elements such as posting the colors, presenting arms, and playing Taps at ceremonies and memorials. The Color Guard is a familiar site at tribal events including the annual Trail of Tears Walk, Memorial Day ceremony and Veterans Day ceremony.

Tribal Council holds November session

CHOCTAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA TRIBAL COUNCIL
REGULAR SESSION AGENDA
November 14, 2020

- 1. CALL TO ORDER
- 2. OPENING PRAYER/FLAG SALUTE
- 3. ROLL CALL
- 4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
 - a. Regular Session October 10, 2020
- 5. WELCOME GUESTS/SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS
 - a. Veteran of the Month, District #2, Silas McKinney
 - b. Service Award, Robert Smith
- 6. PUBLIC COMMENTS
 - a. Nellie Meashintubby – Transparency
 - b. Faith Parra – My Choctaw COVID Experience
- 7. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES
- 8. NEW BUSINESS
 - a. Approve the Budget for the Child Care Assistance Program for FY2020. **Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed**
 - b. Approve the Family Violence Counseling Program Budget FY2021. **Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed**
 - c. Approve the Disposal of Surplus Capital Assets. **Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed**
 - d. Authorize the Chief to Place Property in Pushmataha County in Trust Status with the United States of America. **Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed**
 - e. Approve Grazing Lease No. G09-1961, in Favor of Kevin Burch on Land Held by the USA in Trust for the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma in Latimer County, Oklahoma. **Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed**
 - f. Approve the Application for the FY21 Native American Affairs: Technical Assistance to Tribes Grant. **Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed**
 - g. Approve a Resolution Recognizing and Honoring October 16, 2021 as Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Flag Day to Celebrate and Reflect on the Importance of the Flag of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. **Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed**
- 9. OTHER NEW BUSINESS
- 10. OLD BUSINESS
- 11. ADJOURNMENT
- 12. CLOSING PRAYER

Robert Karr, Delton Cox, Jennifer Woods, James Dry, Anthony Dillard, Ronald Perry and Thomas Wiliston were present. James Frazier, Tony Ward, Jack Austin and Perry Thompson called in. Eddie Bohanan did not attend.

Oklahoma Indian Legal Services may be able to help tribal members who have received storm damage but can't get assistance due to title problems.

Call 800-658-1497 for more information.

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:

Idabel Community Center
December 11, 2020
9:30 – 11:30

Choctaw Nation Vocational Rehabilitation

December 1	Idabel	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
December 2	Coalgate	11 a.m. - 1 p.m.
December 4	Atoka	11 a.m. - 1 p.m.
December 7	Talihina	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
December 8	Wright City	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
December 9	Crowder	By Appointment
December 11	Poteau	11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.
December 14	Wilburton	10:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.
December 16	McAlester	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
December 16	Stigler	By Appointment
December 18	Antlers	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
December 29	Broken Bow	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

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

Chahta Anumpa Aikhvna
December Language Lesson

Verbs

Here are some common verb pairs which have the same base word at the beginning of the word, but will have different endings expressing different results. The first verb will produce an 'action' and the second verb will serve as a 'passive participle' showing an 'action' which has already happened and is in that 'state' now.

Verbs showing action then Completed action.

- 1. takalichi – to hang
takali – to be hung

Sioshi vt pvla himona a chompa tuk osh, vm aboha ya takalichi tuk. Himakno, pvla yvt tohwikeli hosh takali.

My son bought new lights for me, and hung them up (for me) in my room. Now, the lights are (hanging) shining brightly.

- 2. inlvchi – to alter; to change
inla – to be changed; to be different

Sioshitek vt ippashi ya inlvchit apoksiachi tuk. Himakno, pisa kvv inla.

My daughter changed her hairstyle. Now, she looks different.

- 3. shepolichi – to stretch
shepoea – to be stretched

Ofi yvt a shulush hopasvt shepolichi tuk. Shulush shepoea holo ik sv bvnno. ihatuko, shulush himona chompa li maka chi.

The dog chewed and stretched my shoes. Because I don't want to wear stretched out shoes. I will have to buy new shoes.

www.choctawschool.com

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WITH PURCHASE OF ANY ENTREE,
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Charles DeWayne Southard

Charles “Charlie” DeWayne Southard, 63, passed away Sept. 26, 2020.

Charlie was born Sept. 12, 1957, in Ft. Smith, Ark., to James Southard and Lois (Battles) Southard.

He was preceded in death by his parents; several aunts and uncles; stepson Josh Peeples; and great-nephew Remington Stacy.

Charlie is survived by aunt Johnnie Patty; brothers Shermon Southard and spouse Mary Nell, and Donald Southard; sister Leota Southard and partner Troy Walchli; daughter Crystal Widger and spouse David; sons Michael Southard and spouse Emily, and Jesse Southard and spouse Junghyeon; stepdaughters Karissa Peeples, and Christina Bennett; stepson Jake Bennett; seven grandchildren; four step-grandchildren; and a host of other extended family and friends.

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



Jeffrey Scott Beck

Jeffrey Scott Beck, 61, passed away Sept. 26, 2020.

Jeffrey was born Aug. 25, 1959, in Redlands, Calif., to Wallace and Doris Ann (Jones) Beck.

He was preceded in death by his mother, father-in-law Dale Woodburn; and grandparents Ralph and Dorothy Jones.

Jeffrey is survived by his wife Cindy Beck; sons Michael Beck and spouse Sara, and Christopher Beck; daughter Nicole Myers and spouse Clayton; grandchildren Dallas and Lucas Myers, and Abigail and Hunter Beck; his father; sisters Terry Wahl and Donetta Beck; Alice F. Bennett; Dr Richard Allen; his mother-in-law; 3 brothers-in-law; 3 sisters-in-law; and a host of many nieces, nephews, and cousins.

For the full obituary, please visit [Shipman Funeral Homes](#).



Donald W. Johnson

Donald W. “Don” Johnson, 57, passed away Jan. 22, 2020.

Don was born March 7, 1962, to McDonald Douglas Johnson and Naomi Ruth Scott-Johnson.

He was preceded in death by his parents; brothers Melvin Ray Johnson and Ulysses Johnson; niece Peaches Johnson; and nephews Myron Johnson and Marvin Roy Johnson.

Don is survived by his wife Alma Goines; brothers Jarvis Johnson Sr. and spouse Sheila, Marvin Johnson and spouse Cheryl, Samuel Johnson, and Richard Johnson; sisters Wilma Johnson-Watan and spouse Mitch, and Delvogene Johnson-Laguna and spouse Ruben; sons James Goines, Eddie Goines and spouse Crystal, and Mike Goines and spouse Elizabeth; many grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

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



Marjorie Rice

Marjorie “Pargie” Rice, 94, passed away Oct. 10, 2020.

Pargie was born Aug. 14, 1926, in Durant, Okla., to Dr. Irving L. Drake MD and Josephine Drake.

She was preceded in death by her parents; daughter Jamie Sue Barnes; son Joe Bill Rice; infant son John Glosson; and her husbands James Glosson, Don Rice, and Rex Brent.

Pargie is survived by her son Thomas L. Rice and spouse Brenda; grandson Shane L. Rice; granddaughters Rebecca Smith, Amy Fugett, and April Barnes; sister Helen Talbert; seven great-grandchildren; and special friends Kay and George Glasscock.

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



Haskell E. Bohanan

Haskell E. “Hack” Bohanan, 74, passed away Oct. 18, 2020.

Hack was born May 28, 1946, in Bethel, Okla., to Earl Andrew and Betsy (Bond) Bohanan.

He was preceded in death by his parents; brother Emmett Jefferson; sisters-in-law Louise Jefferson and Ruthie Jefferson; brother-in-law Elton Baker; son-in-law Billy Noah; daughter-in-law Beatrice Bohanan; granddaughters Terry Lynn Bohanan and Stephanie Nicole Bohanan; and great-grandchildren Chasley Holt and Jayden Martinez.

Hack is survived by his wife Ella Bohanan; children Dana Bohanan and spouse Raylene, Angela Noah, Daniel Bohanan and spouse Amanda, David Bohanan, Bobby Bohanan, Stevie Bohanan and spouse Deborah, Sammie Arnold, and Terrie Lane; siblings Jimmy Jefferson and Josephine Baker; 19 grandchildren; 12 great-grandchildren; numerous nephews and nieces; and a host of other relatives.

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



Audie Melvin John

Audie Melvin John, 69, passed away Oct. 12, 2020.

Audie was born July 31, 1951, in Lawton, Okla., to Andy John and Vella (Sampson) John.

He was preceded in death by his parents; brothers Donnie John and Jimmy Lee John; sister Anita John; two young brothers and an infant sister.

Audie is survived by daughter Amy John; sons Stanley John and Toby John; grandchildren Nydia John, Adrianna Ramirez, Jose Ramirez, Angelica Alvarez, and Nina Sue Calva; sisters Irma Ned and Aneda Perez; numerous nieces, nephews, and a host of family and friends.

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



Rodney Gene Taylor

Rodney Gene Taylor, 56, passed away June 29, 2020.

Rodney was born June 18, 1964, in Talihina, Okla. to Howard W. and Joan Mae (Jim) Taylor.

He was preceded in death by his parents; grandparents Abbott Jim, Virgie (Fletcher-Peters) Jim, Israel Taylor, and Serena Amos; sisters Brenda (Taylor) Samuels, and Deborah Taylor; infant brother Clyde Taylor; niece Stephanie Taylor; nephews James Hotema and Jonathan Hotema; aunts Rosie Mae (Jim) Simon, and Pauline Taylor; uncles Lester Jim, John Jim, and Clifton Taylor; cousins Gary Jim, Kerry Jim, and Carolyn (Thompson) Sims.

Rodney is survived by daughter Jennifer (Taylor) Dart and spouse Corey; son Nicholas Taylor and spouse Amanda; brothers H. Lynn Taylor and partner Maxine, and Michael Taylor and spouse Maleya; sister Sherry Taylor; five grandchildren; and numerous aunts, nieces, nephews and cousins.

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



Mabel Jewel McGuire

Mabel Jewel (Going) McGuire, 83, passed away Oct. 7, 2020.

Mabel was born Nov. 5, 1936, in Tom, Okla., to Rayson Going and Lucy (Thompson) Going.

She was preceded in death by her parents; brothers and sisters Dolly Della Mae Going, Samantha Louella Neal, Ruby Madeline Stotts, Vernola Pearl Going, Rayson Gibson Going Jr., Josiah Coleman Going, John Andrew Going, Baby Going, Frances Jean Neill, and Virginia Lois Williams.

Mabel is survived by daughter Luci Logan and spouse Todd; granddaughter Miranda Waddle; grandson Jacob Waddle; great-granddaughter Ava Flatley; nieces and nephews; and beloved dogs Sara, Bubba, and Red.

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



Barbara Ann Ridenour

Barbara Ann Ridenour, 76, passed away Oct. 4, 2020.

Barbara was born Dec. 23, 1943, in Broken Bow, Okla., to Willie and Emma (Maness) Sampson.

She was preceded in death by her parents; grandchildren Jamie Wright, Michael Wright, Rhett Wright and Montana Wright.

Barbara is survived by her husband Rex Ridenour; daughter Dana Breece and spouse Chris; son Danny Ridenour and spouse Linda; brother Donald Murphy and spouse Diane; sisters Doris Liter, and Bernie Davis and spouse Mike; grandchildren Joshua Ridenour, Jacob Wright and Catey, Bethany Sheeley and Nate, Jackie Wright and Loretta, Patrick Wright and Heidi; great-grandchildren Micah Ridenour, Kaleb Ridenour, Rachel Ridenour, Carver Donley, Parker Sheeley, Lexton, Andy Wright; special cousin Geraldine Rowell; “Nanny” to a special little girl, Olivia; special adopted family, The Jon Hollinghead family; and many other family and friends.

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



Gage Ty Wilson

Gage Ty Wilson, 28, passed away Sept. 20, 2020.

Gage was born Oct. 26, 1991, in McAlester, Okla., and was raised by his grandparents O’Kelley and Alonzo McKenzie.

He was preceded in death by his father Ricky Wilson; and grandfather Alonzo McKenzie.

Gage is survived by wife Kelsey Miran Wilson; sons Braden Ty and Kaysen; brothers Chad Wilson, Bobby Graham and son, Matthew; sister Kerstin Calvin; and grandmother O’Kelley McKenzie.

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



Joseph D. Vann, Sr.

Joseph D. Vann, 65, passed away Sept. 28, 2020.

Joseph was born Jan. 9, 1955, in Kansas City, Mo. to Carthel and Ethel Vann.

He was preceded in death by his parents; sister Christine Castaneda; and brother Carthel Vann Jr.

Joseph is survived by his children Vanessa Manis and spouse Casey, Joseph Vann Jr., Anthony Vann, James Vann and spouse Penny, Jeffrey Vann and spouse Alesia, Raymond Vann and spouse Stephanie, and Johnny Vann; sister Anella Garcia and spouse Phil; brother Jimmy Vann; thirteen grandchildren; and four great-grandchildren.

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



Vera Ann Mackey

Vera Ann Mackey, 67, passed away Jan. 26, 2020.

Ann was born Aug. 7, 1952, to C.R. Mackey and Lavera Canada Gibson.

She was preceded in death by her parents; brother Ricky Don Mackey; grandchildren Christopher and Cayden Penney; and love of her life, John Edward Penney.

Ann is survived by daughters Latisha Sawyer and spouse Joel, Stormy Knight and spouse Calvin; son John Casey Penny; sons found and adopted three years ago, Johnny Stone and spouse Dee, and Jimmy Ratcliff and spouse Ruth; brothers Calvin “Cowboy” Mackey and spouse Kathy, and Alva Rue Mackey; step-siblings Karen Inselman, Mark Gibson, Larry Gibson, Jeanie Rapier; grandchildren Ladessa Barber, Latristan Barber, Mikalee Sawyer, Jamelle Knight, Quela Knight, Haven Penny, Chloe Penny, Cashlynn Penny, John Penney, Ariaah Penney, and Reyah Penny; great-grandchildren Gavin, Kaison, Adilynn, Ashton, and Nova-Ann; as well as numerous nieces and nephews.

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



Mark Pace Emmert

Mark Pace Emmert, 88, passed away Oct. 22, 2020.

Mark was born April 23, 1932, in Talihina, Okla., to Bertha (Bryant) Emmert and Robin Emmert.

He was preceded in death by his parents; sisters Betty Moline, Francis Purifoy, and Patti Ann Atwood; and brother Jack Emmert.

Mark is survived by his wife Florene Emmert; daughters Shirley Herzog and spouse Doug, Ginger White and spouse Lynn, Marcella Williams and spouse Kenneth, Brenda Emmert, and Donna Catron and spouse Kim; 11 grandchildren; 23 great-grandchildren; six great-great-grandchildren; brothers Bob Emmert and spouse Jean, and John Emmert and wife Janie; and numerous nieces and nephews.

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



Shirley Cogburn

Shirley Cogburn, 76, passed away Sept. 16, 2020.

Shirley was born March 22, 1944, in Broken Bow, Okla., to Jesse and Henryetta (Jefferson) James.

She was preceded in death by her parents; sister Kathy; brothers Cecil and Jonas; and Aunt Minnie.

Shirley is survived by her husband Howard; bonus sons Luke and Kelly; Aunt Rhoda; many loving nieces and nephews, cousins and extended family.

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



Betty Jean Eastep

Betty Jean (Wade) Eastep, 90, passed away Sept. 23, 2020.

Betty was born Jan. 16, 1930, in Talihina, Okla., to Malcolm Delos Wade Sr. and Lucille “Lucy” (Cenotto) Wade.

She was preceded in death by her parents; sister Margaret Pauline Wade; and brothers Malcolm Delos Wade Jr. and James Leroy Wade.

Betty is survived by husband Johnny Vernon Eastep Sr.; daughter Rebecca Louise (Eastep) Fleming; sons Johnny Vernon Eastep Jr. and Michael Wade Eastep; grandchildren Lonathan Chance Morgan, and Brianna Michelle (Fleming) Burnell; step-grandchildren David Mellor and Melissa Schutte; great-grandchildren Taylor Morgan, Tristan Morgan, Charlotte Grace Burnell, and Elizabeth Mae Burnell; step great-grandchildren Amanda Reitz, Ashley Nouri, Haidyn Darr, Dustin Mellor, Logan Schutte, Rachel Schutte, and Brinley Schutte; step great-great-grandchildren Garrett Darr and Braylon Darr.

For the full obituary, please visit [John M. Ireland & Son Funeral Home and Chapel](#).



John Grady Coe Jr.

John Grady Coe Jr., 93, passed away Oct. 5, 2020.

John was born Sept. 18, 1927, in Lyford, Texas, to Irene Ida Benton and John Grady Coe Sr.

He was preceded in death by his wife Betty Kealy Coe; his parents; brother Benton Duane Coe; and son Robert Grady Coe.

John is survived by grandchildren John Coe and spouse Amy, and Kealy Coe and fiance’ Chad Meier; great-grandchildren Lainey, Conner, Karsynn, Corbin and Jaxson; numerous nieces, nephews, cousins, and wonderful friends including close friend and companion Marjorie Weber.

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



Katie Noahubi

Katie Noahubi, 53, passed away Aug. 5, 2020.

Katie was born Feb. 3, 1967, in Talihina, Okla., to Nelson Samuels and Edith (Ludlow) Samuels.

She was preceded in death by her mother; stepmother Helen Samuels; and brother Curtis Samuels.

Katie is survived by her husband Nolan Noahubi; her father; children Andy Noahubi, Bianca Noahubi, Matt Noahubi and spouse Noley Noahubi, Olivia White and spouse Jason; and Felicia Carney and spouse Doug; sisters Jamie Badillo, and Cindy Samuels; grandchildren Felicity, Chasity, Kyah, Jazlyn, and Kacely Noahubi, Jarrett White, and Adalyn Noahubi; as well as many other family and friends.

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



Alvin Louis McIntosh

Alvin Louis McIntosh, 77, passed away Oct. 4, 2020.

Alvin was born Nov. 23, 1942, in Talihina, Okla., to Carl and Marie (Robison) McIntosh.

He was preceded in death by his wife Vera Intosh; his parents; son Tracey McIntosh; sister Corrine Sabala; and brother Carl McIntosh.

Alvin is survived by sons Louis McIntosh, James McIntosh, Kenneth McIntosh and spouse Sandi; daughter Alma Pickle and spouse Charlie; grandchildren Cory McIntosh and spouse Corrina, Kenny McIntosh and fiance’ Jessica, Bailey McIntosh, and Jesi Pickle; sister Stella Dennis and spouse Chester; six great-grandchildren, Chase, Rylie, Emma, Abby, Gunner, and Reagan; three brothers-in-law Verlon, James and Mikel Burnett; three sisters-in-law Iza Holt, Armenda Pearson, and Sally Burnett; along with many nieces, nephews, cousins and many friends.

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



Eugene Davis Wilson Jr.

Eugene “Cokey” Davis Wilson Jr., 72, passed away Sept. 9, 2020.

Cokey was born Dec. 23, 1947, to Eugene “Bo” Davis Wilson Sr. and Heloise (Barrett) Wilson.

He was preceded in death by his wife Sarah Elizabeth “Liz” Wilson; his parents; brother David McCalman; and sisters Mary “Sue” Burris and Rebecca Wilson.

Cokey is survived by his wife Alejandrina Wilson; daughters Tonya and spouse Robert, Logan, Rhyen, Paloma and Nikki; sons Kevin and spouse Patty, Bo’don and spouse Kimmie, Justin and spouse Megara, Jonathan and spouse Katrina Rule, Flint, Rance, Lupe and spouse Niki, Jamall, Adrian and spouse Samantha, Ricky, Matt and Derrick; numerous other children who were like his own; father-in-law Don Patrick; sister Leslie Draper and spouse Archie, and Kimberly Cox and spouse Walter “Rob” Speckert; 17 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren; numerous other family and friends.

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

Johnny Wade Sr.

Johnny Wade Sr., 75, passed away July 9, 2020.

Johnny was born Feb. 22, 1945, in Broken Bow, Okla., to Alexander B. and Nellie (Battisti) Wade.

He was preceded in death by his parents; brother Donald Patrick Wade; and sister Ruby Wade.

Johnny is survived by his wife JoAnn Wade; children Karen and spouse Rusty Coffey, Johnny Jr. and Johanna Wade, and Jennifer Abeita; stepchildren Greg White, Tracy White, Melissa Harwood, Billy Harwood, and Tim Harwood; adopted son Jesus “Corey” Salinas; grandchildren Kateri and Derrick Kanteena, Kiel Marmon, Tyler, Alexis, and Joshua Wade, Gerald Abeita and Wade Crosby, Kelli Crosby, Samantha Wade, Kalene and Andre Thompson; great-grandchildren Darius Smith, Jacoby Tso, Nyjah and Isiah Marmon, Amara Scott, Cameron and Adriel Scott, Khloe Garcia, Samuel and Annabelle Garcia; brothers Richard Wade, and Roland Wade and spouse Rosalie; sisters Linda Wade, Betty Richards and spouse John, Edwina Martinez and spouse Mario, and Thelma Wade; as well as many nieces, nephews, cousins and friends.

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

David Paul Schuster

David Paul Schuster, 56, passed away Feb. 23, 2020.

David was born July 18, 1963, in Poteau, Okla., to Larry Edward and Lillian Lafayette (McCracken) Schuster.

He was preceded in death by his parents.

David is survived by his sister Betsy Humble and spouse Stoney; brothers Larry Edward Schuster, Gordon Schuster, Wayne Eugene Schuster and spouse Lori, and Carl Wade Schuster.

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

Mary Dean Oliver

Mary Dean Oliver, 75, passed away Sept. 16, 2020.

Mary was born Julia Ann Stafford on March 31, 1945, in Amarillo, Texas. She was adopted by the Rev. Roscoe Dean Trostle and Mary Elizabeth Trostle.

She was preceded in death by her parents.

Mary is survived by sister Sue Beth Millman; her husband Vance Oliver; sons Vance Oliver II and spouse Debbie, Michael Dean Oliver, and Jay Kerry Oliver and spouse Stephanie; four granddaughters; and five great-grandchildren.

For the full obituary, please visit [Nalley-Pickle & Welch Funeral Home & Crematory](#).

Bruce Curtis Barnes

Bruce Curtis Barnes, 64, passed away July 28, 2020.

Bruce was born Nov. 3, 1955, in Colorado Springs, Colo., to Millard and Bonnie (Hampton) Barnes.

He was preceded in death by his parents; and brother Bennie Cal Barnes.

Bruce is survived by his wife Pamela “P.J.” (Mackey) Barnes; son Chad Schoening and spouse Lichia; sister Kris Tina Barnes and partner Oscar Gutierrez; nephew Vance Barnes; niece Bonnie Barnes; and 6 great-nieces and great-nephews.

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

Ola Mae Hatridge

Ola Mae (Kanimaya) Hatridge, 86, passed away Aug. 21, 2020.

Ola was born July 1, 1934, in Blanco, Okla., to James and Alice (Tucker) Kanimaya.

She was preceded in death by her parents; brothers Carl Kanimaya, James “Junior” Kanimaya, and Bobby Kanimaya; sisters Stella Ruth Joplin, Augusta Ashworth, and Geneva Thomason; daughters Cheryle Raye (Hatridge) Adams, and Kim Suzette (Hatridge) Spencer; and the father of her children Robert Franklin “Bob” Hatridge Jr.

Ola is survived by daughter Tammy D. Hatridge; grandchildren Rob Murphy, Suzzette Spencer, Kaisha Deo, Derek Spencer, Tommy Spencer, and Sean Spencer; great-grandchildren Landon Gilliland, Alaina Gilliland, Amadeus Deo, Selene Deo, Phoenix Deo, Travis Spencer, Paige Spencer, Hailee Spencer, Madden Spencer, and Zoey Spencer; along with numerous nieces, nephews, other relatives, and many friends.

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

Joyce L. Daney

Joyce L. Daney, 93, passed away Nov. 23, 2019.

Joyce was born April 27, 1926, in McAlester, Okla., to George Walker and Agnes Pauline Colbert.

She was preceded in death by her parents; and husband Gil Daney Jr.

Joyce is survived by her son Buz and spouse Linda; grandsons Lee Ayagarak, Daniel and Asa Daney; niece Aleta and spouse Al Fields; Kizzi Davis and Aggie Ayagarak.

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

Alice Darlene Seebeck

Alice Darlene (Bohanon) Seebeck, 67, passed away Sept. 10, 2020.

Alice was born April 6, 1953, to Robert and Myrtle Bohanon.

She was preceded in death by her mother; brother George; son RayJo; close friend Della; and many other friends and family.

Alice is survived by her husband Melvin Lynn Seebeck; son David Huff and spouse Erica Huff; daughter Katherine “Christy” Austin and spouse Tommy D. Austin; grandchildren Christine Zobel, Michael Austin, Ren Irie, Sarah Burton and spouse Tyler, Tommy R. Austin, Nickolas Austin, Stephen Austin, Blake Austin, Preston Austin, Dustin Huff, and Courtney Huff; great-grandchildren Katherine Zobel, Andrea Zobel, Emma Burton and Zoya Huff.

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

Cyrus McKinney

Cyrus McKinney, 58, passed away July 22, 2020.

Cyrus was born April 24, 1962, in Talihina, Okla., to Silas J. McKinney Sr. and Eriss Brandy McKinney.

He was preceded in death by his parents; sister Suzanne Shomo; nephew Frank White; niece Allison McKinney; and brother-in-law Alan Tonihka.

Cyrus is survived by his wife Elizabeth “Ann” McKinney; step-sons Gary French and John French; step-daughter Sarah French; brothers Silas McKinney Jr. and spouse Betty, Gwen McKinney and spouse Ruth, and Gary Johnson; sister Gay Shomo and spouse Stanley; aunt Hannah Blackout; brothers-in-law William Tonihka and spouse Betty, Wilbur Tonihka, and Sherrill Tonihka and spouse Dora; special niece Marian Shomo; special friend Walter Hamilton; seven step-grandchildren; several nieces, nephews, other relatives and many friends.

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

Brian Wesley Stevens Acuna

Brian “Nanny” Wesley Stevens Acuna, 27, passed away Sept. 22, 2020.

Nanny was born Sept. 8, 1993, in Graham, Texas, to Rebecca Acuna and Genovevo Acuna Jr.

He was preceded in death by his father; grandparents Etta Mae Stevens, Genovevo Acuna Sr., and Cruz Acuna; longtime best friend Elijah Gabriel; cousin Michael Stevens; and many aunts and uncles.

Nanny is survived by his mother Rebecca Acuna; brothers Justin, Joe, David, Genovevo IV, Bobby, Ricky, and Jerry Acuna; sisters Josephine Munoz and Sandy Acuna Garza; grandfather Edgar Ray Stevens Sr.; and numerous aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces, and nephews.

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

Mary Frances Bohanan

Mary Frances Bohanan, 62, passed away Sept. 24, 2020.

Mary was born Oct. 26, 1957, in Talihina, Okla., to Robert Roy and Melissa (Peters) Bohanan.

She was preceded in death by her father; sisters Eunice Bohanan, Linda Jefferson, and Margaret Ludlow; and brother Virgil Bohanan.

Mary is survived by her mother; son Robert Bohanan, daughters Amber Bohanan, Abby Bohanan, and Julio Olvera; brothers Herbie Bohanan and spouse Marvada; brother-in-law Austin “Shot” Jefferson; sister-in-law Carolyn Bohanan; sisters Lois Bohanan, Emmy Baker, and Andy Perez, Betty Tom, Jimmy, and Brenda James, and Tony; grandchildren Ava, Katalina, Katrina, Mariela, Matthias, Izayah, and Jayden; several nieces and nephews, including special niece Shiloh Bohanan who was like a daughter; a host of other relatives and many friends, including special friend Linda Benefield.

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

Patrick P. Coxsey Jr.

Patrick “Pat” P. Coxsey Jr., 76, passed away July 10, 2020.

Pat was born March 29, 1944, in Little Rock, Ark., to Patrick P. Coxsey Sr. and Stella M. Hall-Coxsey.

He was preceded in death by his parents.

Pat is survived by his wife Hollis “Holly” Coxsey, daughters Debbie Oliver and spouse Joe, Rebecca Coxsey, and Patricia Garcia; son Brian Coxsey and spouse Anna Marie; brothers Jim Coxsey, Tom Coxsey and spouse Virginia, and Paul Coxsey and spouse Wendy; sisters Cynthia Chambers-Delgado and spouse Felix; Jane Sommerfield and spouse Craig, and Judy Hirsch and spouse David; grandchildren Caitlin Oliver, Ashley Smalling, Raquelle Archer, Michael Coxsey, Paige Coxsey, Victoria Montano, Gabriel Montano, Jacob Garcia, Jeremiah Garcia, and Tommie Gwen Coxsey; great-grandchildren Madelyn, Liam, and Harper; many nieces and nephews and extended family.

For the full obituary, please visit [Starbuck-Lind Mortuary](#).

Ralph Jay Goins

Ralph Jay Goins, 83, passed away Sept. 25, 2020.

Ralph was born June 15, 1937, in Soper, Okla., to Frank and Florene (Taylor) Goins.

He was preceded in death by his parents; brother Elmer Goins; sisters Juanita Mullins, Mavis House, Margarette Walker and Lessie Willingham.

Ralph is survived by his wife Diane; daughter Pam Goins; sons Todd Goins, Aaron Goins, Brian Pratt, and Steven Pratt; 11 grandchildren, one great-grandchild; and a host of other family, friends, and loved ones.

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

Scotty Ray Bacon

Scotty Ray Bacon, 54, passed away Sept. 25, 2020.

Scotty was born Sept. 7, 1966, in Talihina, Okla., to Jimmy Ray and Mary Jane (Roberts) Bacon.

He was preceded in death by his parents; and sister D’Esta Kay Hull.

Scotty is survived by his wife Elizabeth; sons Nicholas Bacon, Colby Bacon and spouse Kayla, Bobby Larkins Jr. and spouse Karli, and Bryan Larkins; daughters Bridgette Farrell and spouse Justin, and Brandi Larkins; brother John Bacon and spouse Tina; sister Evangeline Cubit and spouse Dwight; 17 grandchildren; and numerous other family, friends and loved ones.

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

Wilma Walker

Wilma Walker, 67, passed away Sept. 28, 2020.

Wilma was born Dec. 19, 1952, in Good Water, Okla., to Eleanor (McKinney) and John McClure.

She was preceded in death by her parents; and four siblings.

Wilma is survived by her husband Jerry Walker; daughter Regina Walker; two brothers; two sisters; and many nieces and nephews.

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

Sandra Louise Hardy Hill

Sandra Louise Hardy Hill, 76, passed away Aug. 9, 2020.

Sandra was born in Miami, Fla., to Eldon and Opal Hardy.

She is survived by daughters Renee Anderson and spouse Brian, Rebecca Cheek and spouse Thomas; son Frank Hill Jr.; sisters Elaine Harper and Lana Martin; brother Mike Hardy; grandchildren Tyler Dreson and Madison Cheek; and many nieces and nephews.

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

Courtney Beth Seybold

Courtney Beth Seybold, 21, passed away Aug. 25, 2020.

Courtney was born Aug. 24, 1999, in Talihina, Okla., to Arthur Seybold and Pamela Jean Perry.

She was preceded in death by her great-grandmother Katherine Ward; aunts Lisa Ann Perry and Margie Jones; and cousin Richard Perry.

Courtney is survived by her mother and companion Danny Bowen; grandmother Daisy Perry; aunts Kim Ford, Angela Perry, and Jenny Holmes; uncle Billy Perry; cousins Jace Ford, spouse Brittany and daughter Bella, and Jamie Miller, spouse Chris and children Abigail, Logan, and Liam; numerous aunts, uncles and cousins; and her fur baby Crue.

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

Steven Wayne Danna

Steven Wayne Danna, 66, passed away July 20, 2020.

Steven was born May 29, 1954, in San Jose, Calif., to Charles and Carol (Coleman) Danna.

He was preceded in death by his daughter Stephanie.

Steven is survived by his wife Sylvia; daughter Angela and spouse David; sons Jonathan and Charles; daughter-in-law Margie and spouse Anthony; son-in-law Ramon and spouse Christina; grandchildren Madson, Julian, Anthony, Victor, Giania, Vincenzo; brothers Mike, Leonard, Larry and Richard; sister Suzanne; his Aunt Barbara; along with many other cherished family members and friends.

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

ITI FABVSSA

Putting The Coal in Coalgate, exhibit teaches about past

Recently, the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Historic Preservation Department completed a small exhibit in Coalgate, Oklahoma, called “Putting the Coal in Coalgate.” This exhibit houses some exciting artifacts that date back to the late-1800s era coal mining operations in Choctaw Nation. These artifacts help us understand what life was like for miners and their families during that time. This month, Iti Fabvssa will discuss the archaeological excavations completed by our staff, the history of mining in Choctaw Nation, and provide information on the “Putting the Coal in Coalgate” exhibit!

In 2017, the Housing Authority of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma contacted the Historic Preservation Department to assist with a new Independent Elderly Housing project planned in Coalgate (Coalgate IEH). The land selected for the new housing turned out to be part of one of the original mining camps settled by coal miners back in the 1890s! Coal mining activities in this area were unique from anywhere else in the United States and were an important part of Choctaw history. Usually, when our department comes across an important archaeological site, we prefer to leave it undisturbed out of respect for the ancestors and so future generations can have a chance to also learn from the site. We call this method, “in-situ archaeology,” an archaeological practice often used in an Indigenous Archaeological methodology. To learn about Indigenous Archaeology, we invite you to read our October 2019 Iti Fabvssa called “Indigenous Archaeology: What is it, and why is it important to the Choctaw Nation?”.

However, in this case, circumstances required that this archaeological site be excavated. Artifacts – things left behind in the ground by people of the past – are not the only important part of an archaeological site. Context – the way that artifacts are positioned in the ground and in relation to each other – can be just as important in learning about the past people who created the archaeological site. When an archaeological site is excavated, its context is destroyed. Excavation must be approached carefully by professional archaeologists using an excavation strategy that is designed to record as much information about context as possible. Choctaw Nation set up a formal agreement with Housing and Urban Development (a federal agency) and the State of Oklahoma that laid out the strategy on how excavation and information recording would take place. Professional archaeologists with the Historic Preservation Department carried out this plan, making careful notes, drawings, sketches, and photographs, as they excavated. A lot was found, including the foundation of a dugout house, the foundation for a more modern house, and nearly 4,000 artifacts that provide information about many aspects of the lives of the people who lived in the coal mining camp. The information producing during the excavation was used to put together a full report on the archaeological site. It was also used to put together the exhibit at the Coalgate IEH.

Exhibit Information:

One might ask, “What does an archaeologist do with the artifacts they dig up?” While Choctaw Nation Historic Preservation prefers to leave artifacts in the ground to keep them preserved and safe, the Coalgate excavation was necessary in order to document this important part of Choctaw Nation and Oklahoma history. Staff from Choctaw Nation Historic Preservation Department recovered nearly 4,000 artifacts from the Coalgate excavations, along with hundreds of photographs and pages of excavation notes. Once the reports were written, it was time to present this important part of history to Choctaw tribal members and residents of Oklahoma. Staff from Historic Preservation would create a small exhibit that would be housed at the former site of the Coalgate mining town: the main office of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Independent Elder Housing located in Coalgate, Oklahoma. Behind a glass case, sits 45 of the 4000 artifacts recovered at the Coalgate IEH archaeological project that was held to tell the story of some of Coalgate’s earliest residents. Just a few of the featured artifacts include ceramic shards of tableware that were brought with the immigrant miners to the mining camp in Coalgate; children’s toys that were manufactured in Germany; an Italian-made wine bottle with seal; and even two bottles made by the Crown Bottling Company, which was located in Coalgate, Indian Territory. While there were thousands of artifacts to choose from for this exhibit, we decided that it was best to give viewers of this exhibit some insight into who was living in Coalgate and working in these coal mines.

There was great ethnic diversity in the coalfields in southeastern Oklahoma. In the 1870s, immigrants from Ireland, Scotland, and England moved to Indian Territory to eke out a living in coal camps. During the 1880s, immigrants from places like Italy, Russia, Poland, and Hungary moved out to Indian Territory to work in the coal mines. Coalgate had a rather large community of Italian immigrants and this is evidenced by the Italian-made wine bottle in this exhibit. Miners and their families entered this complex foreign land with few material possessions but

Here is a little bit of the story. In 1875, Chief Coleman Cole declared that Choctaws should develop the natural resources in their lands to fund their schools. For years, Choctaws collected coal as fuel for their homes and blacksmithing, but General Council’s decision to allow industrial coal mining completely changed life in Indian Territory. Choctaw Nation established a system in which coal mining companies paid permits to operate their mines, permits to bring in non-Choctaw citizens as workers, fees for each bushel of coal removed from the ground, and leases to mine the land owned by individual Choctaws. Private companies operated these mines and used the railroads that were increasingly being built during this period to export the coal throughout the United States and Mexico. Some of these companies were also owned by Choctaw citizens. In 1901, thirty-nine companies employed 4,005 workers and produced 1,433,809 tons of coal in all of Indian Territory, with the majority of them being within the boundaries of Choctaw Nation.

Coal mining provided a substantial amount of money to the Choctaw Nation to spend on expanding the number of schools they operated. It led Choctaw Nation to create the office of the Mine Trustee, who was responsible for keeping track of mining permits and fees. The Trustee also kept detailed records of how much coal was mined and exported out of the Nation. For those interested, those records are available in the Choctaw national records microfilm at the Oklahoma Historical Society. This information was then shared with the U.S. government, which published reports to Congress every year.

There were multiple effects of coal mining. Mining provided the Choctaw Nation with money to support its citizens and allowed them a degree of independence from the U.S. government. It led to the development of roads and railroad lines, connecting Indian Territory to outside markets. With money coming into the Choctaw treasury, Choctaws were less reliant on U.S. treaty annuities that sometimes did not get paid out in a timely manner or would be less than they were supposed to be. Because the coal mines mostly employed outside workers, thousands of people moved to Indian Territory. Workers came from other parts of the U.S., Ireland, Italy, and parts of eastern Europe.

Many of the towns that we know today originated from mining camps. From McAlester to Poteau to Lehigh, communities popped up near coal mines and railroad stops. Mining camps would sometimes become towns, as was the case of Hartsborne. In 1902, Coalgate was a mining town with a large number of one-story frame houses that cost \$50 each to build. Most of its inhabitants were immigrants or Black miners, which is reflected in the objects recovered from the land for the elderly housing project. Now featured in the Coalgate exhibit, these objects and their stories help us to learn more about what life was like in Choctaw Nation during the late 1800s and early 1900s.

brought with them the hope for a better life and future.

Among the people who lived at the Coalgate mining settlement were individuals who helped to shape state and national history. Peter Hanraty was a Scottish immigrant who moved to Indian Territory after being blacklisted for his efforts to organize miners in Ohio and Pennsylvania to seek safer working conditions. Hanraty went on to become the first mayor of Coalgate, the first President of the Twin-Territorial Federation of Labor, the first Mine Inspector for the State of Oklahoma and was eventually instrumental in developing the State of Oklahoma’s constitution.

If you are interested in viewing the exhibit and learning more about the Coal Mining history of Coalgate, Oklahoma, please feel free to contact Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Historic Preservation Staff!



Photo by Kristen Walczesky

Our exhibit features items excavated from the elderly housing site in Coalgate.

Housing Headlines

The Housing Authority of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma offers quality, safe, affordable rental units to low-income tribal families, with a preference for our Choctaw families, throughout the Choctaw Nation Reservation. The Affordable Rental Housing program enables residents to participate in a family-oriented housing community at a rent rate within the family’s means.

The Housing Authority currently manages 17 Affordable Rental Housing site locations consisting of 286 units across the Choctaw Nation Reservation, with an additional 40 units under construction. The units are equipped with a refrigerator, stove, and central heat and air conditioning.

Each site is overseen by a Rental Manager and Maintenance Technician who are responsible for the overall operation and physical integrity of each unit and property. Together, they strive to deliver quality service to our tenants while maintaining compliance with policies and Lease Agreements.

Eligibility requirements for the Affordable Rental Housing program are as follows:

- Applicant must have a CDIB Card.
- Applicant household must meet income guidelines.
- Household members age 18 and older must pass a nationwide background check.
- Applicant must provide two previous landlord references or notarized statements of reference by non-family members.

Applicants must have income at the time of application to pay monthly rent and maintain utilities. Currently, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, rent is waived until January 1, 2021.

Independent Elder Housing is currently offered at the following locations:






Antlers	Coalgate	Poteau	Talihina
Atoka	Hartshorne	Savanna	Wilburton
Broken Bow	Hugo	Smithville	
Calera	Idabel	Stigler	

Choctaw Nation

Housing Authority

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Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

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STUDENT SCHOOL AND ACTIVITY FUND

The Choctaw Nation offers a \$100 grant to Choctaw tribal students who are attending 3-year-old head start through high school. The grant is provided one time each funding year and will be on a Visa card specifically for clothing; it will be declined at ATMs, gas stations, restaurants, movie theaters, etc.

The Student School and Activity Fund Program current funding year is November 1 to May 1. Applications can be submitted online.

APPLICATIONS OPEN NOVEMBER 1, 2020

CONTACT

CHOCTAWNATION.COM/STUDENT-SCHOOL-AND-ACTIVITY-FUND-SSAF

800-522-6170 EXT 2175 OR 2463

Choctaw Nation Student School & Activity Fund

Healthy holidays can still taste great

By Chris Jennings

The pandemic may have changed how your holiday meals are being served, but it’s important to remain mindful of what you’re eating. By planning ahead and thinking about what you’re going to eat, it puts a stop to the common pitfall of mindlessly eating unhealthy foods.

Another common mistake made during the holidays is skipping meals before the big holiday meal. Registered dietician with the Food Distribution Program, Chase Ward, said, “People do this thinking that this will make everything even out as if they ate normal, but it really doesn’t. When you arrive at the party hangry (so hungry that it makes you angry) and on a food rage, you are prone to binge-eat like there is no tomorrow.”

Skipping meals is especially dangerous for people with diabetes. During the starvation period, your blood glucose will drop. When your blood glucose levels are extremely low, your body can start to make you crave carbohydrates. Ward suggests that rather than skipping meals, it would be a good idea to eat a light snack before leaving your house, so it is easier to pass on the dessert table temptations.

When it comes to healthy eating for people with diabetes and high blood pressure, Ward has some other suggestions.

“You can limit the number of starchy food choices to put on your plate; if there are sweet potatoes, mashed potatoes, and macaroni and cheese all at the table, maybe just choose one instead of all of them... Most importantly, do not deprive yourself of your favorite foods during the holiday. Just enjoy them safely. If there is something that isn’t in line with your healthful diet, a small portion is ok,” suggested Ward.

Planning what you’re going to eat is one way to alleviate some of these last-minute decisions as you’re standing next to a table full of unhealthy foods. Ward suggests talking to the host and offering to add some healthy choices to the table.

“You can bring steamed broccoli as a side, and you can combine the mac and cheese and broccoli,” said Ward.

When it comes time for holiday meals, everyone has their favorite item they look forward to all year. Make the best of the situation brought on by the pandemic and

- smaller family gatherings to try some healthy substitutions in your holiday meals. You can try several healthier options that still provide a holiday feel while keeping the meal lighter.
- Greek yogurt for sour cream**
Use an equal amount of Greek yogurt to replace the sour cream. The taste is nearly identical, and as a bonus, increases the protein in your dishes.
 - Grilled fruit instead of pies**
Swap out one or two pies on your dessert table with some grilled fruit. This cuts out the carbs in the crust.
 - Baked sweet potatoes for sweet potato casserole**
Skip the sugar-heavy marshmallow topping and drizzle a mix of extra virgin coconut oil, maple syrup, freshly grated ginger and pumpkin pie spice.
 - Hummus for cream cheese dip**
Cream cheese dip can have around 50 calories from fat and 14 grams of cholesterol per serving. Load the plate with an assortment of veggies to dip with, and you get the added benefit of a more filling snack, which could lead to less overeating of the main course.
 - Pumpkin pie pudding for pumpkin pie**
Cut out the white flour and shortening used to make the crust and put a pumpkin pie pudding in some decorative cups. By eliminating the crust, you ditch the added saturated fats and refined carbohydrates.
 - Dark chocolate instead of milk chocolate**
Several studies show that dark chocolate is healthier than milk chocolate. Moderation should still be considered when eating any candy, though.
 - Whole grain bread in place of white bread stuffing**
Whole-grain bread packs more nutrients than white bread, which lacks much nutritional value and causes blood sugar to spike. You can also reduce the amount of bread used in the stuffing by subbing in a portion with couscous or quinoa. When blended with the other stuffing ingredients, these healthy substitutions will hardly be noticed.



- Pumpkin pudding is one way to have a holiday favorite made healthier. By eliminating the crust you cut out the extra starches.
- Baked apples instead of apple pie**
Ditch the crust again and bake your apples instead. Core out the center and fill with a mix of rolled oats, coconut oil, cinnamon and nutmeg. This healthy alternative can lead to lower blood sugar and reduced risk of heart disease.
 - DIY cranberries instead of canned cranberry sauce**
The canned sauce is loaded with sugar and preservatives. Orange zest and apples enhance the berries’ tartness, so there’s less need to add sugar. Cranberries are high in antioxidants, vitamins C, E, and K, and contain fiber, so go ahead and load up.
 - Whole wheat rolls for white bread rolls**
While skipping bread altogether may be healthier, sometimes traditions are hard to break. Make your tabletop breadbasket a little more health-conscious by subbing in whole wheat rolls. The whole wheat will add more fiber and protein to the meal. Use olive oil for dipping to add heart-healthy omega-3 fatty acids and cut down on sodium.

Nation’s Employment Training Services assists thousands over the years

By Shelia Kirven

Success stories are something the Choctaw Nation Employment Training Services Department knows a lot about. Formerly known as the WIOA Program, the program has, for many years, assisted with training and employment services for individuals who are unemployed, underemployed, upgrading their skills for career advancement or simply seeking retraining. The program has helped many and continues today as one of the longest-running and most utilized programs within the tribe.

One of the program’s most recent success testimonials came from tribal member RaeDeana Vineyard, Business Process Manager for Cavanal Services. Vineyard appreciates the assistance she received from the program.

“In April of 2020, new company Cavanal Services opened in Leflore County. I was selected as the first employee to help build and grow the business. As a Choctaw tribal member, the WIOA program helped secure the job for me. I feel rewarded every day as I learn new skills related to the job and the mortgage industry that we support. I am thankful the WIOA program has helped me with this opportunity to succeed in life,” said Vineyard.

Carl W. Brown, President of Cavanal Services, added, “Cavanal Services is proud to participate with the Choctaw Nation in developing member employment opportunities through the WIOA grant program. The benefits to a small business are significant when making recruiting and hiring decisions. As a startup company in a competitive service-driven industry, without this program, it would have been difficult to hire the necessary resources to meet our customer’s expectations. However, more important than the expense benefits, the program has allowed us to increase the number of job opportunities to all residents in our community, both Native and non-Native.”

The Employment Training Services Department gives its participants an edge in today’s workforce by providing employment, education and training opportunities to those who have barriers to employment. Services are available within the Choctaw Nation’s service area.

The program is funded through both federal and tribal funding.

Patty Hyde, Program Director, has seen thousands of Native American youth and adults assisted through the program since she began as one of the program’s Summer Youth counselors in 1982 when the program was called JTPA. She was named Director of the program in 1998.

Hyde said, “The most significant part of our program is that it helps all Native Americans living in the Choctaw Nation, and it provides opportunities for both participants and partnering businesses. Our mission is to help those become economically self-sufficient and confident in the workplace. We have seen communities prosper because of the money coming in and out from their local citizens because of our services.”

She noted that several of our tribal leaders, including Chief Batton and Councilman Robert Karr, began on the Summer Youth Program, as well as many current associates who continue to work for the Tribe today. The program has been used by many as a steppingstone onto solid foundations for lifelong careers.

The program offers several aspects from which a person might qualify to receive services.

The Classroom Training program (CRT) is available to eligible applicants seeking an associate or bachelor’s degree from an accredited educational institution, vocational or career technology center, or other accredited specialized training facility. The intended purpose of classroom training is to enhance skills and employability to meet job market demands and is limited to four semesters of participation.

On-The-Job Training (OJT) provides training of participants in the public or private sector for full-time or part-time employment. Employers are reimbursed a portion of the training costs of the participant for up to three months.

The Work Experience Program provides participants with basic work skills necessary to enter into the job



Submitted photo
Carl W. Brown, President, and RaeDeana Vineyard, Business Process Manager for Cavanal Services, one of LeFlore County’s newest businesses.

market and placement with employing agencies such as businesses and organizations, both public and non-profit. Training is provided based on participant and service area needed with 100% payment to the participant for up to three months (90 days).

The Summer Youth Work experience program offers those participants ages 16-21 the opportunity to participate in job skills training of their choice. Eligible youth are encouraged to find their place of employment in private, non-profit, human enrichment, community improvement, social programs, education, or other fields of public outreach to gain hands-on experience in the workforce. The wages are paid up to 40 hours per week for five weeks in the summer.

The Choctaw Nation Employment Training Services department is committed to providing various opportunities for employment, training, and related services to educate and train Native Americans living within the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.

If you would like to know more information about the program and the eligibility requirements, visit choctaw-nation.com/employment-training-services, call 800-522-6170, or complete an online application at 477etsapp.choctawnation.com.



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:

1. 55 to 80 years old
2. Current smoker or former smoker who quit less than 15 years ago
3. A smoking history of at least 30 pack-years (this means one pack a day for 30 years or two packs a day for 15 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. 6440

Choctaw Nation Health Services



Location	Days	Hours
Antlers 580-298-3161	1st & 2nd Tue. Every Month	8:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Atoka 580-889-5825	Mon., Wed., Thur., & Fri.	8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Battiest 580-241-5458	1st Tue. of Every Month	8:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Broken Bow 580-584-2746	Tue. & Thur. (except for Battiest & Smithville days)	8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Durant 580-920-2100 x-83582	Daily Mon. - Fri.	8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Hugo 580-326-9707	Daily Mon. - Fri	8:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Idabel 580-286-2600 x-41113	Daily Mon. - Fri.	8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
McAlester 918-423-6335	Daily Mon. - Fri	8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Poteau 918-649-1106	Daily Mon. - Fri	8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Smithville 580-244-3289	1st Thur. of Every Month	8:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Spiro 918-962-5134	Wed., Thur., & Fri.	8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Stigler 918-867-4211	Mon. & Tue.	8:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Talihina 918-567-7000 x-6792	Daily Mon. - Fri	8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Wilburton 918-465-5641	Mon. & Fri.	8:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Mobile Clinic	Tues., Wed., & Thurs.	8:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Building Healthy Families Through Good Nutrition

CHOCTAW NATION FOOD DISTRIBUTION

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

December 2020

All markets open weekdays, December 1-28
Closed: December 15, 24, 25 and 29-31.
Nutrition Ed & Food Programs subject to cancellation
Participants can request a calendar at their location.

ANTLERS 400 S.W. “O” ST., 580-298-6443

BROKEN BOW 109 Chahta Rd., 580-584-2842

DURANT 2352 Big Lots Pkwy., 580-924-7773

MCALESTER 3244 Afullota Hina, 918-420-5716

POTEAU 100 Kerr Ave., 918-649-0431

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

WIC van travel has been postponed. If you need assistance, please call 580-380-3628 or 580-380-9895 Ext. 83582.



Ava Marie Ganote

Ava Marie Ganote was born at 7:03 p.m. on Oct. 7, 2020, at Mercy Hospital in Oklahoma City. She weighed 7 pounds, 1 ounce and was 20 inches long.

Ava is the daughter of Kyle and Angela Ganote of Yukon. She was welcomed home by her big brother, Alec Ganote. Ava is the

granddaughter of Ted Ganote, Sr., Shiela Ganote, Stephanie Taylor and Diana Whited. She is the great-granddaughter of Patricia Bradford of Tulsa and is named after her great-great-grandmother, Melba Marie Bowman of Tahihina.

90 years for Ransdell

Mable Ransdell will be 90 years old on December 7. Her mother was Anthe Lois Franklin.

Ransdell lives in Prescott, Ariz. with her daughter, Debra Reynolds.



Blakely Kay Fight

Blakely Kay Fight was born at 4:03 a.m. Oct. 8, 2020, at Carl R. Darnall Army Medical Center in Fort Hood, Texas. She was 5 pounds 14 ounces and 19 inches long.

Blakely is the daughter of John and Kayla Fight. She is the granddaughter

of Ralph Jr. and Nena Tucker of Fort Smith, Ark., Kelly Fight of Fort Smith, AR and Joann Shafer of Bigelow, Ark. She is the maternal great-granddaughter of Ranell Mahan, the late Orval Mahan, the late Ralph Sr. and Mary Tucker., the paternal great-granddaughter of Alice Faye Wilson, the late Albert Fight, the late Joseph Shafer and Mary Hamm.



Choctaw Nation 2020 Outstanding Elders

By Kendra Sikes

For more than two decades, the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma (CNO) has recognized an Elder Male and Elder Female of the Year. This year, the Choctaw Nation Health Services Authority (CNHSA) is pleased to honor Austin Jefferson as the Outstanding Male Elder of the Year and Ann Baskin as the Outstanding Female Elder of the Year for 2020.

The Choctaw Elders hold a special place in the hearts of the Choctaw people. In addition to paving the way, they have a unique energy about them that encourages others to give back to their community. These two elders exhibit this energy in abundance.

Mr. Austin Jefferson cares deeply for his people. Although an elder himself, he has a special place in his heart for the seniors. Throughout the pandemic, he has not missed one day of action. He is the community's bus driver and has made sure that the seniors get their curbside meals, rain or shine. Nominated by Michelle Tonihka on behalf of Councilman Tony Ward, Jefferson is admired for his persistence in making sure the facility is nice and clean at all times. She adds that "we have been in the building for four years, and it still looks brand new." Jefferson is from the Bethel/Battiest area.

Ms. Ann Etta Baskin is from the Durant area. Among many moments of service, she went above and beyond during the COVID pandemic. She set up a station in the Community Center parking lot so the seniors who drive-thru for meals could also receive books and clothing they need. She also collects birthday cards and personally distributes them when possible to the seniors in her district to show appreciation for those who have served the Nation. Her nominator sums up her devotion and love for the Choctaw people saying, "Ann has served the Choctaw Nation proudly and is an asset to the Tribe, her district and those who have been influenced by her character and empathy for all."

The Choctaw Nation appreciates all the elders nominated for this prestigious award and the service provided to peers. Mr. Jefferson and Ms. Baskin will each receive appreciation in the form of a traditional outfit and plaque, an invaluable portrait creation experience, and a stay at the Durant resort for the banquet held each year, which is planned to be held safely again in 2021.



Austin Jefferson was recently named the 2020 Male Outstanding Choctaw Elder of the Year. Jefferson is the bus driver for the Bethel/Battiest Choctaw Community Center. Jefferson has continued to serve his community throughout the pandemic.



Ann Etta Baskin of District 9 was recently named the 2020 Female Outstanding Choctaw Elder of the Year. During the pandemic, Baskin has continued to serve her community by setting up a station for seniors to pick up books and needed clothing.



Barnards model for magazine

Spencer and Kelsey Barnard are models in this month's Southern Sass and Sassy Couture fashion magazines. The theme for the issue featuring the Barnards was pirates and mermaids. Spencer was Poseidon, and Kelsey was a pirate. Spencer and Kelsey are the children of Lindsey and Joshua Wallace and Thomas and Amy Barnard. The photos are by Dyann Seguin of Deeliteful photography.



Conrad graduates from boot camp

Charley Wayne Conrad graduated Navy boot camp Aug. 20 in Great Lakes, Illinois.

Charley is a proud Choctaw Nation tribal member. He is a 2020 graduate from Haileyville High School. While in High School, Charley served as the class president for four years. He also has numerous academic achievements such as Mock Trial Team Captain, Academic Team Captain, National Honor Society, FCCLA, and his Junior year he attended Oklahoma Boys State in Miami, Okla. He attended Votech in his Junior and Senior years, where he studied automotive technology.

Conrad is the son of Travis and Charli Jane Conrad of Dow, Okla.



2020 Outstanding Elder Nominees

District 1 Idabel

Female: Matilda Paxton
Male: Jimmy Lowman

District 2 Battiest/Bethel

Female: Darlene Noahubi
Male: Austin Jefferson

District 2 Broken Bow

Female: Mary Jane Jefferson
Male: Anderson William Ward

District 3 Smithville

Female: Kathleen Hudson
Male: James Ludlow

District 4 Poteau

Female: Nyoka Turner
Male: Bob Free

District 4/5 Spiro

Female: Lola Edwards
Male: Ed Hendrix

District 5 Stigler

Female: Wanda Leach
Male: Simpson McCann

District 6 Wilburton

Female: Euliuma "Mary" Holman
Male: Cornulius Winship

District 7 Antlers

Female: Nancy Peters
Male: Billy C. Hampton

District 7 Wright City

Female: Sharon Davis Gibson
Male: Audie Gibson

District 8 Hugo

Female: Judy Chaney
Male: Roger Haynie

District 9 Durant

Female: Ann Baskin
Male: Curtis Bully

District 10 Atoka

Female: Nancy Williams
Male: Bunnie Burchfield

District 11 McAlester

Female: Mary Christine Baker
Male: Richard Carney

District 12 Coalgate

Female: Rebecca Pickens
Male: Wade Thomas Pebworth Jr.

District 12 Crowder

Female: Concetta Gragg
Male: James Bench

Sells graduates from A&M

Amber Sells will graduate from Texas A&M University on December 18, 2020 with a Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Economics, a Concentration in Rural Entrepreneurship, and minors in Agribusiness Entrepreneurship and Economics. Thank you to The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma for helping make this happen.



Frazier a top 10 freshman

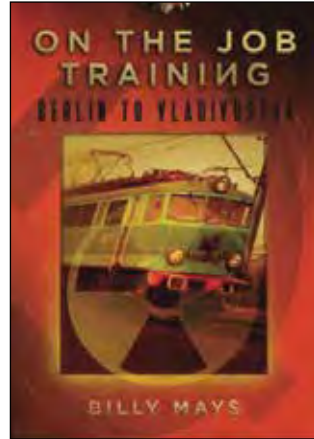


Josie Elaine Frazier, a 2019 graduate of Hugo High School, was recently named as one of the Top 10 Freshman at Southeastern Oklahoma State University. The awards are presented to freshmen in 2019 and are based on academics, leadership, campus involvement and letters of recommendation.

Frazier is working on an English Education degree with a minor in Communications. She is a proud member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, a

member of the 2019-2020 SOSU President's Leadership Class and Vice President of Finance for Alpha Sigma Tau Sorority. She is a second-year recipient of the Cobell Scholarship and is also active in Alumni Legacy Leaders and the Gay and Straight Alliance Club. While working for the Campus Note, the SOSU campus magazine, Frazier also volunteers as the only student member of the Oklahoma Suicide Prevention Council and is active in the Peer Education Support Group for Stress Management and J127 Ministries.

Frazier is the daughter of Darren and Michele Frazier.



Mays publishes memoirs

A collection of stories from Billy Mays' twenty years, 1983-2003, living in Central and Eastern Europe is now available.

A student turned unwitting spy through his work for Radio Free Europe, Billy's adventures, both before and after the fall of the Berlin Wall, are described in a career that

spans two decades from Soviet-Bloc martial-law Poland through the Klondike-like era following the Soviet Union's collapse.

Enroute to becoming a European Director for several multinational firms—including FedEx—the author befriends world leaders, becomes engaged in spy networks, is immersed in black market trading, and has numerous brushes with death along the way while handling sensitive affairs for U.S. Government agencies. This book, sometimes irreverent and shocking, reveals a great deal about how the East was really won and sheds light into the dark and dangerous world that was the former Soviet-Bloc before and after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

On the Job Training: Berlin to Vladivostok is available on Amazon.

Frazier October vet of the month



Benny Frank Frazier, Idabel, Oklahoma, is October's Veteran of the Month.

Frazier served in the United States Army with the 101st Airborne from 1966 to 1969, where he achieved the rank of Specialist E-4.

He saw multiple combats in Vietnam and Germany, where he served as a M60 Machine Gunner. As a member of the 101st Airborne Paratroopers, he participated in numerous jumps in Germany. Specialist Frazier received the Purple Heart after being wounded in Vietnam, the Combat Infantry Badge and Sharpshooter Award.

CHOCTAW CULTURAL CENTER

CHOCTAW YOUTH ARTIST REGISTRY PROGRAM

SIGN-UP TODAY!

For registration: <https://bit.ly/3mH9pw4>

For questions: artistregistry@choctawnation.com

THANK YOU!

To all of our amazing Senior Nutrition staff and volunteers, we want to take this time to recognize you because without all of you, feeding the elders would not have been possible.

We recognize that the majority of you are elders yourself and thank you for selflessly working throughout the COVID pandemic to serve others. You all have such big hearts, and we want you to feel appreciated for all of your efforts.

Choctaw Nation Health Services

Nation offers lights and sights for holiday activities



Photo by Christian Toews

A view of the Ouachita Mountains and the Poteau Valley from the world’s highest hill. Cavanal Hill sits at just one foot shy of being designated as a mountain.

By Christian Toews

The holiday season is in full swing, and now is the perfect time to explore some of the most beautiful places and activities in Oklahoma. Spending time with family and friends is what the holidays are all about. While this year might be a little different because of COVID-19, don’t let a virus stop you from safely enjoying the holiday sights that southeastern Oklahoma has to offer.



Photo by Christian Toews

The striking beauty of the Talimena Scenic drive can be seen year-round, but the fall is a favorite.

When was the last time you made some hot chocolate, grabbed a thermos, and went somewhere spectacular to drink it? Maybe you and that special someone want to spend some quality time. Perhaps you and your spouse need to go on a date night. Or maybe you want to pack up the whole family and enjoy an evening out of the house. Southeastern Oklahoma is the perfect place to enjoy the holidays.

Let’s begin in the beautiful city of Poteau, Oklahoma.

Nestled in the foothills of the Ouachita Mountains, Poteau is a unique destination. One of the most popular attractions in the area is Cavanal Hill. Here, you can catch a great view of the Ouachita Mountains and the Poteau Valley from the top. Dubbed “the world’s highest hill,” Cavanal Hill sits at just one foot shy of being designated as a mountain. While it may technically be a hill, the view is well worth the climb or drive. Once you reach the top, you can see for miles on a clear day. This fantastic view attracts visitors from all over the country.

Because you can drive or hike to the top, Cavanal Hill is the perfect place to spend some quality time with your loved ones, hot cocoa in hand, enjoying the scenery. No matter what time of year you visit, this view is sure to stun, but the holiday season offers some exceptional views as the leaves change.

Just a few short miles from Poteau, you will find Lake Wister State Park. Lake Wister is known for its beautiful scenery and unique island. This island allows you to experience the beauty of the area surrounded by water on three sides. Every year, the Poteau Chamber of Commerce and volunteers host a Christmas light display called Lights on the Island.

This impressive light display features over 300 displays in the ¼-mile drive. The displays are surrounded by Lake Wister’s water on three sides, providing a darker area for displays.

“One of our most popular displays is the three giant dinosaurs towering over 15 feet high sitting on the water’s edge on the lower north side. The display takes visitors through a huge lighted tunnel and a candlelit forest with many animated displays throughout. One of the most unique displays is the 30-foot Statue of Liberty with the American Flag sitting just below the hill,” said Karen Wages, CEO of the Poteau Chamber of Commerce.

Christmas light displays are fun for the whole family and a great way to enjoy the holiday season. Lights on the Island will be open Nov. 17 through Dec. 25 from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., according to the Poteau Chamber of Commerce. You can find more information about Lights on the Island at www.poteauchamber.com/lightdisplay. So, put on that Christmas playlist and treat your loved ones to a dazzling display on the lake. Oklahoma has so many amazing views to offer.

Let’s head over to Talihina. If you have never visited this quaint town, you’re missing out on some of Oklahoma’s most spectacular landscapes. The city of Talihina sits in the Kiamichi Valley between the Kiamichi and Winding Stair Mountains. Because of this, historic Talihina is a unique contrast from other parts of Oklahoma.

One of the most popular attractions in the area is the Talimena National Scenic Byway. This 54-mile highway winds through the Ouachita National Forest from Talihina, Oklahoma, to Mena, Arkansas. The highway is popular with motorists, bikers, and even cyclists. The drive offers spectacular views and incredible vistas where you can sit and take in the majestic Oklahoma scenery. The holiday season is a great time to enjoy these views with your loved ones. If you can get out before the trees lose their leaves, you will see a fantastic display of colors from

the Ouachita National Forest.

The last stop on our list is Tvshka Homma, Oklahoma. Located only 20 miles southwest of Talihina, Tvshka Homma offers a great way to enjoy the holiday season. The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma provides a Christmas light display that everyone can enjoy. This year’s Christmas in the Park will feature Christmas displays ranging from Native American to traditional. Hot chocolate will be given out on Fridays and Saturdays when you visit the display. You can find out more information about the Choctaw Nation’s Christmas in the Park at www.choc-tawnation.com.

While southeastern Oklahoma has countless amazing views and things to do during the holidays, this list will get you started on some great ideas for spending quality time with your family during this season. Whether you enjoy a spectacular view or an impressive light display, the holiday season is a magical time in southeastern Oklahoma.



Submitted photos

Some of the light displays that can be seen at the Lights on the Island show. The show has over 300 displays.

GROWING HOPE PROGRAM



REVIVING AND SUSTAINING OUR CHOCTAW TRADITIONS AND CULTURE

By revitalizing our traditional crops and sharing related knowledge, the Growing Hope Program helps make it possible to revitalize traditional Choctaw foods. These foods are an important part of Choctaw heritage. Both tasty and healthy, they provide an opportunity to use our own culture to help us live healthier lives today.

To learn more about the Growing Hope Initiative and seed availability, contact Jacqueline Putman at 580-380-9397.

This program is funded in part through the US Department of Agriculture.

Choctaw Nation Cultural Services

STAR PROGRAM

SUCCESS THROUGH ACADEMIC RECOGNITION



To qualify for STAR awards, students must be enrolled in the second - twelfth grades and possess a tribal membership card. Incentives are given twice a year at the end of each semester, for the following academic achievements:


• ALL A'S: \$25 GIFT CARD	• ALL B'S: \$10 GIFT CARD
• ALL A'S & B'S: \$10 GIFT CARD	• PERFECT ATTENDANCE: \$25 GIFT CARD

AWARDING PERIOD: FALL, DEC 1 - MAR 1 | SPRING, MAY 1 - SEP 1

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800-522-6170 EXT 2581 OR 2971

 **Choctaw Nation** STAR Program

CHAHTA HOMESTEAD PROJECT: 1830-1930



HOMESTEADS | OLD SCHOOLS | CHURCHES
FAMILY HISTORY | PHOTOGRAPHS

Our project aims to bring together the information we do know with community knowledge to stitch together a map of the Choctaw Nation’s early landscape. This project will help protect historical sites from getting destroyed, preserve family history for future generations and increase our understanding of life after the Removal.

WE NEED YOUR HELP!
What are you interested in learning from this project?
Do you have information to provide?

Choctaw Nation Cultural Services

Smith dedicates 57 years at Jones Academy as unforgettable mentor to students

By Shelia Kirven

Not many people can say that they have positively impacted thousands of kids, but Choctaw tribal member Robert Ellis Smith can. Smith retired last month from Jones Academy in Hartshorne, Oklahoma, after attending there himself as a youth, and then spending his entire career of 57 years serving others at the residential learning center.

Jones Academy coordinated a drive-by parade Oct. 21, for Smith’s family and friends to honor him for his dedication to Jones Academy, its students, and the community of Hartshorne. The parade began at the Hartshorne Fire Department, then proceeded to Smith’s home, and was complete with police and fire escorts, two large buses filled with Jones Academy students, along with many cars driven by family, fellow staff members and friends. Jones Academy students hopped off the buses at Smith’s home and dropped off hand-made posters, letters, cards and balloons. He was also honored with a news story covering the parade on Oklahoma’s News 6 TV. It was a day full of emotions as family sat with Smith in the yard at his home, watching those who knew him well come to thank him for his many years of a job well done.

Chief Gary Batton said, “He’s been a cornerstone for Jones Academy for many years. He’s quite a good man, and all the students think very highly of him. He will be greatly missed.”

Smith lived full-time at Jones Academy from the age of 13, in 1957, until he graduated from Hartshorne High School at eighteen. His younger brother lived at Jones Academy as well.

When asked what Jones Academy was like when he lived there, Smith said, “It was a co-ed school. We had boys and girls there. Everybody went to Hartshorne school. I enjoyed it. It was great!”

After his high school graduation, Smith searched for a job, finding several nearby his hometown of McAlester, but he did not have transportation at the time to get to work. He talked to a recruiter about the military and was considering joining when he received a call from Jones Academy wondering if he would like to come back and work in their maintenance department. Smith said he went back to the military recruiter and told him he had decided to work for Jones Academy. By that time, Smith had transportation to drive back and forth to Jones Academy just a few miles away. Once he walked back in the doors at Jones Academy that October, he never worked anywhere else.

After working in the maintenance department for three years, Smith took a position in the dormitories as an instructional aide. He said his job duties consisted of helping the students get adjusted in their dorms, making sure they kept their rooms clean and doing the “everyday parent thing.” He stated about 180 students lived at Jones Academy during that time and that enrollment isn’t quite as large nowadays. When asked why, Smith said, “Back then, kids were really looking for a place to live. Now the kids that do have parents and assistance from the tribe may be able to stay home with their parents or grandparents.”

Smith worked in the dorms from 1966 until this past October when he retired. He was instructional aide in the early years, but then the position title changed to a supervisor position in the wings. Later, Smith said, the dormitory manager resigned, and he put in for the job. He went on to work for about 20 years in that position, overseeing around 30 staff members in all the dormitories at the facility.

During his years of working at Jones Academy, Smith took college classes at Eastern Oklahoma State College, Southeastern Oklahoma State University and East Central University. He received an associate degree from EOSC.

Looking back at his years at Jones Academy, Smith

said the best part was seeing the students graduate. “Most of our kids who came through 7-8th grades stayed and graduated. The saddest part was when they lost a parent, a brother or sister, and we had to sit and talk with them, help nurse them through their trauma.” He said he felt his life’s mission was to work at Jones Academy, and all he ever wanted to do was to help the kids.

When asked if he feels he made a difference in the students’ lives, and whether any of them had ever come back to thank him, he said, “You bet. I feel like my presence was one of the things that helped our kids, knowing their backgrounds and knowing my own background, that the kids I helped were similar with what I grew up with. I have a lot of them that still call me; some still come by and see me. Yeah, we’re still in touch with a lot of them. Back then, a lot of the kids would want to come home and stay with me, and we’d bring them in on the weekends to watch football games and take them back out there, so yes, we were close.”

Smith’s daughters and son say they remember every Jones Academy student being welcomed in their home growing up, even years after they graduated, many even bringing their spouses, children and grandchildren in to meet their dad. Smith is one of those who can remember every student’s name, no matter how many years have passed since he last saw them. His children say he receives at least one call from a student every holiday to thank him for caring for them while they attended Jones Academy and to tell him what a difference he made in their lives.

Smith enjoys talking about the students and is proud of those who went on to work in professions helping others the way they were helped.

“We helped a bunch of the kids go on to college. Some became counselors; some became teachers. Some went on to work in bureau schools. I think we had one or two go to work at Anadarko, which is another Indian school. We had a kid that did street counseling in Tulsa. Those are the ones who had difficult times in school that wanted to help other kids. I’ve had many of them call me and ask if I thought they were ready for this type of work or whatever they were trying to get into, and I always encouraged them, to go for it.”

Smith and his wife, Glenda, have two daughters, Teresa Jackson and Sheryl Baker, and a son, Mike Smith. They have five grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. Robert and Glenda have lived in the same home in Hartshorne for almost 50 years. He says his family was very close to the Jones Academy students and spent a great deal of time at the facility.

“All of my kids knew the kids out there at school. They were close to them.” Smith said he went to a lot of the students’ activities after hours to support them, taking his own family to watch Jones students as well. “I made sure someone from the dormitories was there watching them participate.”

To sum up how important Smith’s work has been to the students and staff of Jones Academy and the Hartshorne school system, he received a long congratulatory letter from the Hartshorne Schools Superintendent, Jason Lindley. The letter stated in part, “From watching over generations of Jones Academy students, supporting their extracurricular endeavors, driving buses, and being a father figure to so many children, you have left an indelible mark at Hartshorne Public Schools and the Choctaw Nation. The work you committed your life to was not work that brought fame or fortune in the traditional sense; however to generations of Hartshorne and Jones Academy students, you are as well-known as any celebrity. When wealth is measured



Submitted photo
Robert Smith watches a parade in his honor. Smith recently retired after 57 years at Jones Academy.

in terms of the lives and hearts that have been touched, you are as prosperous as any financial investor.” It went on to say, “Your service to the young people of Jones Academy and Hartshorne Public Schools is an example of what love and compassion should look like. Your gentle demeanor and your commitment to our students will stand as testament to a career well performed and a life well lived.”

When asked what he plans to do now that he is retired, Smith said, “I will continue supporting them [the students] as far as their activities. As far as going back and working, that’s for the younger people to do now. If anybody ever asks for my advice though, I will still give it to them.” He says he plans to go fishing and to his deer cabin in the mountain on the weekends, plus doing things around the house.” Smith says he enjoys camping and plans to continue going to tribal events, and that, “Retirement’s not just quitting.”

Jones Academy is located on a 540-acre campus, five miles northeast of Hartshorne, Oklahoma and was initially an all-boys school. In 1955, Jones Academy became a co-ed school after Wheelock Academy, a boarding school for girls, closed. In April of 1985, the Choctaw Nation contracted the boarding school operation from the Bureau of Indian Affairs. In 1988, Jones Academy became a tribally controlled school. Jones students come from as many as 29 different American Indian tribes, though the two largest populations, due to proximity, are Choctaw and Muscogee (Creek). For more information on Jones Academy, visit <https://www.choctawnation.com/jonesacademy>.

STOP THE SPREAD OF GERMS

Avoid close contact with people who are sick

Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash

Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth

Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces

Stay home when you are sick, except to get medical care

Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds

CDC.GOV/NCOV

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma • TOGETHER WE'RE MORE •

CHRISTMAS IN THE PARK

DECEMBER 4 - JANUARY 3 | 6:00PM - 9:00PM

CAPITOL GROUNDS AT TVSHKA HOMMA

HOT CHOCOLATE SERVED ON FRIDAYS & SATURDAYS

December 2020

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