



September 2019 Issue



Photo by Deldre Elrod

A crowd gathers around the unveiling of the bronze statues at the Talihina Choctaw Nation Health Care Center.

## Choctaw Nation Health Care Center celebrates anniversary

By Christian Toews

The 20th anniversary of the Choctaw Nation Health Care Center was celebrated on Friday, July 26, in Talihina. The half-hour ceremony featured colors posted by the Choctaw Nation Color Guard, the Lord's Prayer signed by Junior Miss Choctaw Nation Kalin Beller and a brief video of health care services.

The health care center is a 152,894-square-foot state-of-the-art health facility. Opening in 1999, it houses a 44-bed hospital that includes an outpatient clinic with 79 exam rooms, and 13 treatment rooms.

The health care center has a 24/7 Emergency Department. A full range of clinical services are offered: Surgery, Family Practice, Pediatrics, Laboratory, Radiology, Pharmacy, Physical Therapy, Audiology, Dental and a full-service Dietary Department.

Talihina is the original site of the first two Choctaw Nation Indian hospitals, both of which are close to the current facility. The first hospital was a wooden structure built in 1915, and was known as the Carter Hospital. Only the foundation remains today.

The second hospital is a native stone structure originally built in 1937 as a Tuberculosis



Photo by Deldre Elrod

Three of the bronze life-size statues unveiled at the hospital anniversary celebration.

sanatorium. Although empty, the structure still stands, reminding visitors of earlier times and how far the tribe has progressed over the years.

The Choctaw Nation took over administration of this native rock structure in 1985, along with the clinics in McAlester, Hugo and Broken Bow. The historic agreement between Indian Health Service and the Choctaw Nation marked the first time a native tribe in the mainland U.S. had fully contracted all the health

services and facilities within their service area. In building this new facility, The Choctaw Nation became the first tribe to fund its own hospital.

Chief Gary Batton was the Health Director in 1999 when the new hospital opened. He helped with the original ribbon cutting ceremony and spoke about his experience during the celebration for the 20th anniversary.

"We were out here laying sod until three in the morning getting ready for the opening," recalled Chief Batton. "The previous facility was 60 years old when planning started in 1997, for the \$28 million new hospital," he said.

In a separate interview, Chief Batton said, "It was the first major commitment to our people in a long time. It was also a sign that the tribe was committed to improving our tribal members' health. At the time, it was the largest allocation of tribal funds the tribe had ever committed to, so it was a sign we were financially stable. It had a huge impact on the area, because it provided the best emergency room around. It impacted the state as well, because we could now take care of our own. That freed up resources for other Oklahomans."

Kelly Mings, the Executive director of Hospital Services, remembers the old hospital and said that the facilities built in 1999 improved care drastically. "At the old hospital there were long waits, you wouldn't know what primary care physician you would see, and they would send you out for different services. It was scattered.

It's a whole different feeling now. We have some of the best providers that you can come across," said Mings.

She said that the continued improvements have made more services accessible to tribal members. "So many more services are provided. We may have had to send people elsewhere, now we are doing those things here. And it's saving the tribal members and the Choctaw Nation money," she said.

Mings also commented on her roll at the hospital and what it means to her.

"It is an honor and a blessing when I think about how I am a tribal member working for the health system that is improving lives. Making lives better. Touching lives in ways that, years ago, we were not able to and it's just an honor to do that." She said.

The Choctaw Nation Health Care Center released information showing changes over the past two decades. In its first year, there were 69,756 ambulatory visits, 1,450 hospital admissions and 274 newborns.

In the past year, there have been 191,096 ambulatory visits, 1,224 hospital admissions and 479 newborns. There also are 121 associates in the Choctaw health care system that have served for 20 years or more.

The ceremony concluded with the unveiling of six life-sized bronze figures created by nationally renowned sculptor Matthew Placzek of Omaha, Nebraska. These bronze statues sit at the entry plaza of the hospital. Placzek attended the ceremony and said that the project took him almost two years to complete.



Photo by Judy Allen

The original tuberculosis sanatorium still stands in Talihina.



Photo by Deldre Elrod

Pictured are two of the Choctaw family of bronze statues unveiled at the hospital anniversary celebration.



Photo by Deldre Elrod

This figure represents a grandmother in the family of life-sized bronze statues that were unveiled on July 26.



## Faith, Family, Culture

# Choctaw Nation cares about all Oklahomans



Chief Gary Batton

If you've been paying attention to Oklahoma news lately, I'm sure you have heard about Governor Stitt's plans for the tribal gaming compacts in Oklahoma.

The leaders of 31 tribes throughout this great state and I strongly disagree with Gov. Stitt.

Yes, we are sovereign tribes, but we are also citizens of this great state. The name Oklahoma comes from the Choctaw language. We are the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma and all of our members have roots in this state. This is our

home. I graduated from Clayton and that is where I still live today. I love the people who live here and want every Oklahoman, tribal and non-tribal, to succeed. I'm sure that is a shared sentiment of all tribal leaders. The fact that Gov. Stitt suggests otherwise is honestly disappointing.

I recently released an op-ed in the Journal Record, explaining my thoughts and feelings on this matter. I want to share this letter with you, because I think it is essential that you all know how much we genuinely care for the people of Oklahoma.

The point of this letter isn't about bragging about what we do. Our ancestors taught us to stay humble but to have a servant's heart. Like the donation our ancestors made all those years ago to the people of Ireland, we are descendants of generous and loving people. That's is why it is so important to help everyone, not just the Choctaw people.

## Chief Batton's Aug. 12 op-ed published in the Journal Record

Recently Oklahoma Gov. Kevin Stitt published an op-ed, signaling his intention to open negotiations on the gaming compacts many tribes have with Oklahoma. We oppose Gov. Stitt's suggestions for a variety of philosophical and economic reasons.

The governor's op-ed was factually inaccurate in stating our compact does not renew, which does not hold up to legal review, and he seems to be unaware of just how beneficial tribes are to the state.

Tribes in Oklahoma have a nearly \$13 billion economic impact to the state. The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma is a huge tourism driver with 82% of our tracked revenue coming from out of state customers.

Unlike other businesses, ours are rooted firmly in southeastern Oklahoma, and we reinvest our profits into Oklahomans, not shareholders. How do we reinvest?

In recent years, we have worked alongside the state to offer free vaccinations to anyone living in our jurisdiction. This year alone we provided 33,000 flu shots. Our infrastructure projects benefit rural areas where other levels of government don't invest. Recent projects include walking trails, school parking lots, and over 50 miles of roadway.

Our summer education intervention program reached 3,800 students, tribal and non-tribal, living in 80-plus school districts in southeastern Oklahoma and over 90% of students improved their reading and math proficiency. Choctaw Nation Emergency Management responded to many natural disasters, supporting 295 Choctaw Nation tribal members and 44,461 non-members.

This year, we launched Choctaw Community Partner Fund, which awards city and county governments quarterly contributions based on the revenues of the

non-gaming businesses we operate within their jurisdictions. The fund has distributed \$742,800 to 24 cities and counties.

While I believe Oklahoma's tribes should be Governor Stitt's greatest allies in making Oklahoma a Top 10 state, it is difficult to not feel targeted by his recent position on the gaming compact and the state's passage of HB2667, which increased taxes on our customers and is driving business away from Oklahoma gaming to other states.

The revenue generated from gaming is used to better the lives of all Oklahomans and the communities that we live in. Tribes and the State established the existing compact in good faith as a mutually beneficial partnership, and this compact was approved by the people of Oklahoma. Gov. Stitt's position lacks understanding of the compact agreement, is factually questionable, and seems devoid of awareness of just how invested and supportive tribes are to Oklahoma.

I am calling on the governor to re-affirm a commitment to a united government-to-government partnership with the tribal nations of Oklahoma, a better understanding of the legalities of the existing compact, and a greater appreciation for how tribes already make substantial investments into the state for the benefit of all its citizens.



## Agriculture is important



Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr.

Fall is finally approaching, with the first official day of the season on Sept. 23. I hope that it brings with it cooler temperatures. So far, 2019 has been a roller coaster of wild weather. Deadly tornadoes, widespread flooding and record-breaking heat have especially taken their toll on agricultural producers across the country. Many lost entire crops in the floods, ripping away their source of income. I firmly believe that agricultural producers are the lifeblood of our country. The products they produce

are what allows us to feed our people.

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma understands the importance of agricultural production, and the hardships producers face. This is where our Land Management department comes into play. They are here to protect, enhance, and improve natural resources for the Choctaw Nation. They provide technical assistance to agricultural producers, farmers, and ranchers, by hosting outreach meetings. These meetings cover topics like soil health and vegetable production. There are two demonstration sites located in Hugo and Lehigh, where they can demonstrate different agricultural practices so the agriculture producer can see results first-hand of how things work. Land Management also offers a Farmers Market Promotion Program. This United States Department of Agriculture funded grant, assists in the marketing and promotion of locally grown foods. In November, the department will implement a TSCAN unit weather station at Jones Academy. This unit will serve as a resource for Jones students for their science, technology, engineering and mathematics programs. It will be an excellent tool for tribal farmers and ranchers, as well. The Land Management team will be able to compile information regarding rainfall amounts, soil moisture and soil temperatures. Having a better understanding



Photo by Kendra Germany

The annual Choctaw Nation Ag Expo was held Aug. 3, 2019, in Durant. The event was bigger and better than ever, attracting 650 attendees and showcasing new activities and vendors.

of these elements is key to proper management for producers.

Land Management works closely with local, state and federal USDA programs to better serve our tribal members and conserve, protect and improve our tribal lands.

The program also hosts the annual Choctaw Nation Ag Expo at the Event Center in Durant. This year, 650 people attended the event. This was an impressive increase in attendance from last year's 500 patrons. The 2019 event was bigger and better than ever, with added activities and vendors. The Ag Expo is a unique event, bringing together all different walks of life with one common goal. That goal is to create a better tomorrow for our land, families and food supply. The event allows producers to compare products and techniques while gaining information on available programs. It is an opportunity for our community to learn about where our food comes from. Events like this help promote awareness of natural resources and the agricultural industry. They also allow producers the opportunity to grow their network. They can meet other producers to share ideas and collaborate to solve common issues.

Our Land Management team works diligently to help our agricultural producers succeed. If you would like to learn more about the program, please call (580) 924-8280 ext. 4276 for more information.

## What's on your mind

Whatever is on our mind is that which dominates our lives at that time. Therefore, it is imperative to think right in order to live right. Wrongful thinking will produce a wrongful life. A person's actions cannot rise above his thought life. Whatever captivates our minds will eventually control our deeds. The demands of contemporary life of gaining materialistic achievements bring fear regarding the supply of daily necessities. Many people today are worried about their health,

finances, housings, jobs, etc. only to find out that things do not seem to get better. Anxiety and worry seem to be the elements that have become normal behavior in the minds of people today. Jesus deals with the subject at great length with His disciples. He knew that this would have a paralyzing effect on their future ministry. In Matthew 6:24, Jesus says, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other, or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." The point driven here is that the principle of life (soul or inner being) is more important than food and clothing or material things. When God is first in our lives, all other loves and needs fall automatically into proper perspective. Preoccupation with materialism and no placement of spiritual values develops the mind to become overwhelmed with worry in time. In Philippians 4:6, the Apostle Paul directs, "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." "Be careful for nothing," does not suggest carelessness, but rather to refrain from being troubled with cares and unnecessary burdens. In Matthew 6:25, Jesus says, "Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?" "Take no thought" does not mean thoughtlessness, but rather anxious or undue thought. Worry is a concern out of control. Prioritizing the thought process is the beginning of lining up the mind with the will of God and submit to a divine plan to have needs met.



Pastor Olin Williams  
Employee Chaplain

## History of commercial gaming in Oklahoma

By Bradley Gernand

Commercial gaming—or “gambling,” as it was once referred to in its less regulated form—by tribes in Oklahoma dates back to the early 1980s. This development was contentious, with several lawsuits challenging the tribes' right to do so. The tribes won the cases.

In other states, the controversy continued. In 1987, Congress passed the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act. As one legal analysis put it, “IGRA represented a massive compromise between tribal, state, and federal interests.” This compromise, which has proved stable, divided gaming into three classes. The IGRA, while generally friendly to Indian tribes, was not an unqualified victory; it limited their ability to operate Las Vegas-style Class III gaming.

In 1992, the first tribal-state compacts came into existence but concerned only lesser forms of gaming. Oklahoma proved an unwilling partner and was generally reluctant to negotiate to widen the playing field. This spurred innovative advances in the gaming practiced in Indian-owned casinos, with video displays and networked games adding to the excitement.

By the early 2000s, this technological leap and the gaming success it allowed prompted Oklahoma to agree to return to the negotiating table. The result was State Question 712, which was placed on the Oklahoma ballot in 2004. Voters approved the measure overwhelmingly, lured in part by its provision that many of the revenues would go to support education in the state. Among the gaming allowed were electronic bonanza-style bingo games, electronic amusement games, electronic instant bingo games, and non house-banked card games. Following the successful ballot measure was a need to establish rules of the road. A “model compact” was agreed to by the state and many of its tribes. As stipulated by IGRA, the agreement, typically referred to as the “gaming compact,” specified the games which would be played;

regulatory oversight; and revenue sharing arrangements. The federal government approved the terms of the agreement, including the “exclusivity fees,” or share of the proceeds, which the tribes would pay the state. The gaming compact proved very successful.

In 2018, 31 tribes in Oklahoma administered 130 tribal gaming operations, helping pump \$13 billion dollars into Oklahoma's economy. According to the terms of the gaming compact, the tribes direct between 4%-6% of their gaming revenues into state coffers. During 2017 that amount was nearly \$134 million, a 1.44% increase over the year before.

On July 8, 2019, came proof that state officials had noticed—and wanted a larger share of the proceeds. Oklahoma Gov. Kevin Stitt published an op-ed piece in the Tulsa World signaling his intention to renegotiate the gaming compact, with the apparent interest of increasing the exclusivity fee paid by the tribes to the state. He insisted that the gaming compact will terminate as of Jan. 1, 2020, and that its existing terms are no longer fair. “Today, most state-tribal compacts around the country provide for exclusivity fees to the state of 20% to 25%,” he wrote.

Chiefs of the Five Tribes, and many others, cried foul. Chief Gary Batton was in the lead, releasing a letter countering the governor's main points. Tribal leaders in Oklahoma, including Chief Batton, issued a statement opposing Stitt's move on several grounds. Contrary to the governor's assertion, they say, the compact doesn't expire on Dec. 31, 2019, but will renew. Even more critical to the argument is the governor's cavalier use of facts, several of which were inaccurate.

Tribal contributions to Oklahoma are significant, and should factor in the discussion.

The Choctaw Nation has partnered with United for Oklahoma to educate Oklahomans on the critical role tribes play in the state's future. For more information, please visit [UnitedForOklahoma.com](http://UnitedForOklahoma.com).

## UNITED for OKLAHOMA

The Choctaw Nation has partnered with United For Oklahoma to educate Oklahomans on the critical role the tribes play in our state's future.

These are the facts every Oklahoman must know.

Watch the videos and stay informed at:  
[UnitedForOklahoma.com](http://UnitedForOklahoma.com)



# Perry inducted into Starr Women’s Hall of Fame



Chief Gary Batton, Mona Perry and Assistant Chief Jack Austin, Jr. at the Poteau community center where Perry was recognized for her accomplishments.

By Christian Toews

Mona Perry has been fighting poverty and racism for 88 years and these efforts have not gone unnoticed. She was recently inducted into the Starr Women’s Hall of Fame for her work as an advocate with the American Indian Center in Kansas City, Missouri.

She was born in Hodgen, Oklahoma. Her father was an original Choctaw enrollee and her mother

early in my training days, I saw then that the minority people and the poor were treated differently. That right there really put something in my mind right then,” she said.

Later this desire led her to begin a career with the American Indian Center. Perry said the majority of her job with the American Indian Center was to understand how the government aid and benefit programs worked so that she could explain it to people

who needed assistance. “I had to understand the system in order to explain it to them,” She said.

Although Perry worked primarily as an employment specialist but her dedication to equality didn’t stop at her job. Her entire life was focused on this goal. She has volunteered in several organizations including the Homeless Service Coalition, Stand for Children and KC Harmony. Perry has received four certificates of service as a member of the Missouri Advisory Council for the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. In 2014 she was honored with the Martin Luther King Olathe Kansas NAACP Hero of Diversity Award.

According to their website, the Starr Women’s Hall of Fame is dedicated to recognizing extraordinary Kansas City women and preserving the history of their accomplishments. These women are social reformers, volunteers, philanthropists, civic leaders, activists and educators. They are movers and shakers whose tireless commitment to community has made Kansas City a better place to live. The Hall of Fame is a repository for their legacies. By sharing their stories, the Hall of Fame encourages and inspires women everywhere. Perry said she was honored to be an inductee.

Perry was recently recognized at the Poteau community center. Chief Gary Batton and the tribal counsel recognized her lifelong work and her recent induction into the Starr Women’s Hall of Fame.

Although she is now retired, Perry said she still tries to help people any way she can. She wants people to pick up where she left off and continue to help the poor and underprivileged. “I left a lot of unfinished business. I fought poverty but didn’t win it,” she said.

# Choctaw heritage, values inspire success

By Chris Jennings

Hookers Burgers in the Fort Worth Stockyards may look like just another burger joint, but the scripture Ruth Hooker placed in the foundation as it was being poured, her family’s handprints pressed into the corner and the phrase, “chi pisa la chike” prominently engraved where all can see, serve as a way for Ruth Hooker to remember, and share her Choctaw values of faith, family and culture.

Those values have helped Hooker build her restaurant from the ground up and propel her Oklahoma Onion Burger to Best Burger in Fort Worth. a result of the 2019 Fort Worth Magazine’s readers choice poll.

To say Hooker is proud of her Choctaw heritage is an understatement. The granddaughter of Choctaw Code Talker, George Davenport, remembers when her grandmother would hold her face saying, “don’t forget you’re Indian.”

“So I try to find ways in my daily life to honor that. One of the ways that I do it, is to educate other people,” said Hooker.

Hooker says when people see the Choctaw phrase, “chi pisa la chike” they think it’s Spanish, but don’t know what it means. She then gets to tell them that it’s not Spanish, but Choctaw, meaning until we meet again, explaining that there is no Choctaw word for goodbye.

“It’s just a way for me to educate other people that maybe don’t know, and it reminds me of where I came from,” said Hooker, adding, “if you don’t know where you came from, and who sacrificed what, then how do you know where to go?”

Hooker says the lessons don’t stop with the writing on the wall. They also come from the menu in the form of Indian tacos. Hooker explains, “You’re in the heart of the stockyards, when they see Indian taco they think that they’re going to get a Mexican taco or a street taco.”

She takes that opportunity to explain to them what an Indian taco is and how it’s made with fry bread, using a traditional Choctaw recipe passed down from her great-grandmother.

Hookers Burgers has been open for two years in the Fort Worth Stockyards, with a second location opening at the end of July. While she had planned something like this for a long time, when it came to building, it was no easy task.

Hooker, who has never worked in the restaurant or construction business, was her own general contractor when she built the restaurant.

She says there were several times in the process where it seemed like there was always something else that had to be done before she completed something important. Or there was always just one more thing. She remembers thinking that this would be where others would quit



Ruth Hooker, left, watches her mother, Kathryn make fry bread. The fry bread served at Hookers Burgers in Fort Worth is a family recipe passed down from Ruth’s great-grandmother.

and say, it’s too much, or it’s too stressful.

“You have to define in those moments, what are you about. Who let you be here today to even have the opportunity to do this.” Hooker credits her Choctaw heritage for her resilience. She wears jewelry that has the Choctaw seal, a war memorial for her grandfather and other pieces of Native art that help her through tough situations.

“Anytime that I was going to meet with an inspector; anytime that I was going to do something important; anytime I had to meet with a contractor, I put this on... and said, I got all this stuff behind me, so I can do whatever is in front of me.”

Hooker’s story isn’t just inspiring because of her hard work, or her success with the onion burger, but also for how she uses those things to help others.

“I have a large population of homeless that come to this area, they live down here, and when they want something to eat or drink, well, I have eat or drink in my restaurant. I would never turn someone away because they didn’t have money,” said Hooker.

Some will pick up and take out the trash, but she doesn’t require it. “Even if they don’t, they can order off the menu just like anybody else,” said Hooker.

It’s not just food she helps with. She’ll also place clothing items in the bathroom for them to take. Something that could



Ruth Hooker has the Choctaw phrase chi pisa la chike painted on her wall as a conversation starter and an opportunity to teach a little Choctaw.



Ruth Hooker uses 100% Hereford beef in all of her hamburgers and serves them with hand cut fries. The burger was recently voted Best Burger in Fort Worth by the readers of Fort Worth Magazine in their 2019 poll.



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**Choctaw Nation**  
Career Development

make a huge difference during the winter when temperatures drop.

Feeding and helping others is something Hooker’s family has always done. Hooker said she remembers as a child people just stopping on their way to work, or on their way home to eat at her grandmother’s house. She just thought it was interesting, and for the most part, normal. “These are just things that I’ve been taught growing up by my parents and my grandparents,” said Hooker.

Hooker has taken her onion burger and used the lessons she learned growing up Choctaw to create something special. She’s used the core Choctaw values of faith, family and culture to literally build her foundation and then used that to spread what it means to be Choctaw to the world.

“When you start out, you think it’s going to be about the food, but what really happens is it’s about everything but the food,” said Hooker.

It’s about doing a good job and helping others, not so much the burgers or the bottom line.

“We’re not trying to sell a product. We’re trying to create memories...and our food just happens to be along for the ride.”

The *Inspire What’s Next* campaign aims to tell the story of the Choctaw Nation through the inspiring stories of tribal members, employees and tribal members who are employees. These stories are about cultivating leaders, strengthening families, supporting our neighbors and building economic opportunities.



# Council Corner



Anthony Dillard, District 10

## Continued growth for District 10 and Nation

Halito, chim achukma. It is always great to share some of the happenings in District 10 and the Choctaw Nation.

We had the pleasure of having the ribbon-cutting for 10 new LEAP homes in Stringtown in the month of July. We also have steady progress on the construction of the 10 independent elder units and 10 affordable rental units being built in Atoka. We officially have our wellness center expansion completed with another 4,000 sq. ft. of workout space available. I encourage everyone to take advantage of these wellness centers to help improve your own personal fitness and healthy lifestyle.

The summer was full of camps for the kids in both athletic and cultural related events and was a wonderful success, a big shout out to the summer camp division on their completion. I believe we have one more camp coming, the first drone camp for kids to encourage STEM related studies, as well as promote the Drone IPP test site in Daisy Oklahoma. More information can be found at [www.choctawnation.com](http://www.choctawnation.com).

It is that time of the year that budgets are being submitted and reviewed for approval for the whole Choctaw Nation. The budget process continues to get more streamlined, so the council can better evaluate the budget request. The executive branch created the Strategy and Analytics division, which was given the charge to have viable strategy plans to ensure data driven decisions are being deployed. We have made great strides in software applications that will provide the data to generate a report in a timely, efficient manner.

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma is in the best financial position it has ever been in the history of our government. The population of our tribal membership continues to grow, 196,208 tribal members.

With financial success comes many challenges and questions, but good problems to have. We will continue to do our best to serve our Choctaw people and our communities.



District 10

## More LEAP homes completed



Photos by Deidre K. Elrod

New LEAP homes were opened in Stringtown, top and Broken Bow, bottom in August.

By Chris Jennings

The Choctaw Nation has taken another step towards bettering the lives of its tribal members with the building of 10 new LEAP homes in Stringtown, and 20 in Broken Bow, making the total 200 homes in the lease-to-own program.

The program is for Choctaw tribal members who meet program income guidelines. The homeownership process begins with a 15-year lease-purchase plan with the goal of the families being qualified to purchase the home at the end of their 15-year lease term.

Chief Gary Batton said, “We’re able to keep our families together through homeownership opportunities that sustain them, helping give them motivation...to succeed and grow in life. That’s helping our tribal members truly live out the Chahta spirit of faith, family and culture.”

Alex Fincher, in Stringtown is excited about the opportunities the LEAP program offers him and his family. On top of saving several hundred dollars on rent, being close to the lake means he’ll be able to spend more time fishing.

It’s not all fun and games though. The LEAP program focuses on education and home-buyer counseling throughout the lease. .

Carrie Blackmon, director of Service Coordination said, “One of the things that we do is to go over their budget to make sure that they are actually preparing for that next step.”

It’s not just whether or not you can afford the house payment, it’s the property taxes, home repair expenses and financial ability to save for bigger expenses like major appliance replacement as they reach their end of life.

The goal is to have the families ready to finance the remainder of their homes after the 15-year lease.

Fincher is thankful for the lessons and for what the Nation does for tribal members.

“They put their faith in you that you can be a homeowner and give you a chance when other places aren’t willing to. It’s a great thing that the Choctaw Nation does for its members,” said Fincher.

Cynthia King, in Stringtown says homeownership had always been a dream of hers. “I’ve rented for years and I’ve always wanted to own my own home. So, I’m really excited about the opportunity to be able to do so,” said King.

With the Nation’s help, these tribal members are able to begin their journey to home ownership. Lucretia Urive, in Broken Bow is another new homeowner that’s been dreaming of moving into a new home.

“It’s such a blessing to have the nation do this for us, to give us this opportunity to be a homeowner,” said Urive.

With payments on the homes starting at \$500 it means there’s more money to provide things for the family that they might have had to do without otherwise.

“A family member once told me, not only did you change my life, but you’ve changed our generation, meaning her kids,” said Batton.

The LEAP program is geared towards bettering and changing the lives of tribal members. With a goal of having 500 homes in the different housing programs available by 2022, the Nation is investing in these towns, investing in the future of Southeastern Oklahoma.



James Dry, District 9

## District 9 has a successful year

Halito District 9. We are happy to announce that 40 families moved into our LEAP homes May 30 in Durant. This program is a new homeownership program for Choctaw Tribal Members who meet program income guidelines. Our Tribal members pay \$500 a month for a new home. We look forward to providing more homes in the future.

Our District 9 community center hosted our scholarship banquet May 28 and presented a total of 19 scholarships worth \$1000 each. It’s been a great partnership with the Chahta Foundation, which matches dollar for dollar and allows us to touch more kids’ lives in District 9. A big thank you to Chahta Foundation and all who helped raise this money.

I would like to congratulate and welcome our two newest members to the Tribal Council, Eddie Bohanan from District 3 and Robert Karr from District 11. I look forward to working with these fine men. I also want to say a special thank you to Bob Pate and Kenny Bryant for their many years of service to our Tribe.

We had 105 youth participate in our summer Youth Work Program in Bryan County this year. Participants gained work experience in retail, avionics, food and beverage, information technology, health and wellness, multimedia and education. Our community center had the privilege of having two of our youngsters participate in the program in Isiah Marris and Onnat-minti Watson. They learned many skills while serving our elders. They each created a vision board with their goals and presented them to the operations team at the Durant resort. It was a great learning experience for these two up-and-coming tribal members.

The Miss Choctaw Pageant of 2019 resulted in naming Audrina Samuels as District 9 Little Miss, Kenzie Wilson as District 9 Junior Miss and Haleigh Gibson as District 9 Senior Miss during this years’ Durant Magnolia Festival.

These gracious young ladies did an outstanding job representing District 9 at our Veterans Appreciation Dinner. Also, in preparation for the 2020 Miss Choctaw Pageant in Tvshka Homma, they conducted their interviews in the true Chahta Spirit. We are proud to announce that Audrina, Kenzie and Haleigh will be attending all upcoming Choctaw events representing District 9.



District 9

### District 9 Fun Facts for This Year

#### Current Construction

Choctaw Nation Housing Authority – 10 Lease to Purchase (LEAP) Homes located in Calera, Oklahoma  
Choctaw Nation Housing Authority – 10 Affordable Rental (AR) Homes located in Calera, Oklahoma  
Choctaw Nation Cultural Center in Durant, Oklahoma  
Choctaw Casino Mega Expansion – Casino Expansion in Durant, Oklahoma

#### Employment

3,372 associates employed in Durant

#### Education

POSSE participation

Calera- 134 students attended  
Durant- 239 students attended  
Rock Creek- 105 students attended  
241 9th-12th grade students participated in High School Student Services for the 2018-2019 Year  
28 9th-12th grade students received a 3.9 or above GPA and were inducted into the Oklahoma Indian Honor society for 2018-2019  
Higher Education Scholarships- 432 assisted awarded \$330,600  
2019 expected graduates-74 students  
Technology Allowance- 25 assisted awarded \$12,500  
College clothing- 706 assisted and awarded \$202,850

54 Tribal members graduated in May from Southeastern Oklahoma State University  
Career Development assisted 122 Tribal members since Oct. 1, 2018  
Bennington Public Schools- 123 Choctaw students  
Caddo Public Schools- 103 Choctaw students  
Durant Public Schools- 777 Choctaw students  
Rock Creek Public Schools- 91 Choctaw students

#### Health

90,764 Wellness center visits  
47,069 Primary provider visits  
128,146 Total patient encounters

## Tribal Council holds August session

Choctaw Nation Tribal Council met in regular session August 10, 2019, at Tvshka Homma, Oklahoma.

- 1) CALL TO ORDER
- 2) OPENING PRAYER/FLAG SALUTE
- 3) ROLL CALL
- 4) APPROVAL OF MINUTES
  - a) Regular Session July 13, 2019
- 5) WELCOME GUESTS/RECOGNIZE VETERAN OF THE MONTH
  - a) Randal Dewayne Hicks, District #2
- 6) REPORTS OF COMMITTEES
- 7) NEW BUSINESS
  - a) Letter of Appointment for Marion Fry to the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Ethics Committee

Vote Counts:

YEAs- 10 (Thomas Williston, Tony Ward, Ron Perry, Jennifer Woods, James Dry, Anthony Dillard, James Frazier, Kenny Bryant, Jack Austin, Perry Thompson)

Abstained- 1 (Delton Cox)

Vote Result: Bill passed

- b) Approve Funds and Budget for Year Five of Five Continuation for the National Workforce Diversity Pipeline Program (PATHS)
- Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed
- c) Approve Funds and Budget for the Year Three of Five Continuation Cooperative Agreement for First Responders
- Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed
- d) Approve Funds and Budget for the Tribal Wildlife Grant
- Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed
- e) Approve Application for the Bus and Bus Facilities Program
- Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed
- f) Approve Funding for the Expansion of the Residency and Specialty Clinic at the Talihina Health Care Center
- Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed
- g) Approve Rescission of CB-93-19 (Which Approved Funding for Construction of New Travel Plaza and Casino Too in Durant, Oklahoma)
- Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous;

### Vote Result: Bill passed

- h) Approve the Articles of Organization of Choctaw Premier Services, LLC, allowing it to sue and be sued in accordance with a Limited Waiver of Sovereign Immunity and Authorizing the Submission of an Application for Certification as a Small Business Administration’s 8(a) Business Development Program Participant
  - Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed
  - i) Approve the Disposal of Surplus Capital Assets
  - Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed
  - j) Approve a Public Highway Easement in Favor of Oklahoma Department of Transportation, on Land Held by the USA in Trust for the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations in Love County, Oklahoma.
  - Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed
  - k) Approve a Limited Waiver of Sovereign Immunity (SA American Dreams Vacation, LLC)
  - Vote Counts:
  - YEAs- 10 (Thomas Williston, Tony Ward, Ron Perry, Jennifer Woods, James Dry, Anthony Dillard, James Frazier, Delton Clox, Jack Austin, Perry Thompson)
  - Abstained- 1 (Kenny Bryant)
  - Vote Result: Bill passed
  - l) Approve Application for Head Start Continuation Funds
  - Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed
  - 8) OTHER NEW BUSINESS
  - 9) OLD BUSINESS
  - 10) ADJOURNMENT
  - 11) CLOSING PRAYER
- Council Members Present:
- Thomas Williston  
Tony ward  
Kenny Bryant  
Ron Perry  
Jennifer Woods  
Jack Austin  
Perry Thompson  
James Dry  
Anthony Dillard  
Delton Cox  
James Frazier
- Councilmembers absent:
- Bob Pate
- Next regular scheduled council meeting will be 10:00 a.m., September 14, 2019, at Tvshka Homma.



EVENTS

Nanih Chito United Methodist Church  
45th Annual Singing  
Oct. 26, 2019  
7 p.m. - 12 a.m.  
4 miles East of Wright City, OK  
Henry Battiest Sr. - Emcee  
Concession stand will be available  
Supper from 5:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.  
Group and Classical Singing  
  
Featured Singers:  
Crimson River Band - Valliant, OK  
Ron Brandy - Durant, OK  
Blest Travelers - Yanish, OK  
  
For more information contact, Mike Davis 580-320-7985,  
Solomon Tonihka 580-236-0525 or Henry Battiest 580-306-7158



Saturday, October 5, 2019

In celebration of 50 years serving youth of the  
Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, we are inviting all  
past campers and families to join us.  
  
For information and to make reservations:  
Web: bbbcamp.org    Email: jerry@bbbcamp.org  
Phone: 580-212-1839

NEED TO CHANGE YOUR ADDRESS?

Contact the Choctaw Nation  
Circulation Department  
**580.924.8280 x4028**

Read the Biskinik online at  
[CHOCTAWNATION.COM/NEWS](http://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](mailto:biskinik@choctawnation.com)

Gary Batton  
Chief

Jack Austin Jr.  
Assistant Chief

The Official  
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Dara McCoy, Executive Director  
Brad Gernand, Senior Director  
Kendra Germany, Interim Editor  
Chris Jennings, News Reporter  
Christian Toews, News Reporter  
P.O. Box 1210  
Durant, OK 74702  
580-924-8280 • 800-522-6170  
[www.ChoctawNation.com](http://www.ChoctawNation.com)  
email: [biskinik@choctawnation.com](mailto:biskinik@choctawnation.com)

The BISKINIK is printed each month as a service to Tribal members. The BISKINIK reserves the right to determine whether material submitted for publication shall be printed and reserves the right to edit submitted material which it finds inaccurate, profane, offensive or morally unacceptable. Copy may be edited for space, proper grammar and punctuation. Copy will be accepted in any readable form, but where possible, it is requested that material be type-written 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. 2116.  
  
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.



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 paper work is needed. Meetings are 8 a.m. on the second Saturday of each month at the Spiro Choctaw Community Center. Members attend funerals, Disabled American Veterans and Marine Corp League.  
  
For information call:  
**Ed Hendricks, Recruiter 918-962-5524**  
**Paul Perry, Commander 479-353-2709**

Eufaula All Class Reunion

Former Eufaula Dormitory residents and their families are invited to attend the "All Class Reunion" on Saturday, Sept. 28, from 12 p.m. - 5 p.m. at the Eufaula Dormitory located at 716 Swadley Drive, Eufaula, OK 74432. A luncheon will be held along with other activities. This is the same weekend as the Eufaula High School All Class Reunion and football homecoming weekend.  
  
For more information contact:  
Lou McCulley Howard at [loushowardus@yahoo.com](mailto:loushowardus@yahoo.com), 580-319-1386  
Lucinda Eskamire Myers at [lucindamy@yahoo.com](mailto:lucindamy@yahoo.com), 405-487-7379

Celebrate Recovery  
Native Nations Night

"How Celebrate Recovery Works"  
**Sept. 16**  
**6 p.m. Meeting - Meal at 5 p.m.**  
First Baptist Church - Student Worship Center  
1st and Beech - Durant, OK  
Call 580-924-3573 for more information.

The Goodland Cemetery Association  
5th Pie and Cake Auction  
Oct. 12, 2019  
Kiamichi Area Vo-Tech  
107 S. 15th Street, Hugo, OK 74743  
Auction will be begin 6:00 p.m.  
Come join us for chili prior to the auction.  
Contact information 580-317-6395, 580-372-5517  
or [rlcooper\\_99@yahoo.com](mailto:rlcooper_99@yahoo.com)

District 6 July Activities

\*Every Monday and Wednesday  
Senior Fitness Program "55+" 9 a.m.  
\*Chair Volleyball Practice – 9:30 a.m.  
at the Wellness Center  
\*Every Wednesday – Lunch served,  
with guest speaker – salad bar opens at 11:00 a.m.  
\*Choctaw Language Class Monday Evenings 6 p.m. - 8 p.m.  
GED Classes Tuesdays and Thursdays 9 a.m. - Noon

**Sept. 4**  
Senior Monthly Meeting – (after lunch)  
Commodities pickup (McAlester) – after meeting  
  
**Sept. 6**  
Council Member Jennifer Woods Prayer Meeting –  
7 - 8 a.m. (Breakfast to follow)  
No taco sale due to Labor Day Festival  
  
**Sept. 9**  
Short Shopping Day (destination to be announced)  
  
**Sept. 10**  
Gourd Class 10 a.m. with Carol Harris  
Business Class with Kreg Haney  
  
**Sept. 12**  
Durant Casino Day Trip (bus leaves at 8:30 a.m.)  
  
**Sept. 19**  
Long Shopping Day (destination to be announced)  
  
**Sept. 21**  
Butterfield Biker Bash - Concession Downtown Wilburton  
  
**Sept. 24**  
Family Night Bingo and Potluck 6 p.m. - 8 p.m.

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

**Stigler Community Center**  
**Sept. 13, 2019**  
**10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.**

LETTERS

Thankful for hurricane relief efforts

My name is Sandy Kerns Nixon. I would like to personally thank my tribe for the help you gave my state of North Carolina during Hurricane Florence.  
I know you were in Bladin County. I live in Cararet County.  
Me and my husband, nearly a year after Florence, were still trying to recover. We had a tree on our home. We lost our well water. It has been a struggle. Not long after Florence, my husband had a heart attack and had to have a triple bypass and a valve replaced. We are very lucky, my husband is nearly blind. With help from church, friends and God, it gave me the strength to get through this. I was so happy when I read about my tribe being here to help. It made me so proud of my tribe for helping us. We still struggle each day. I still have leaks in my home and trees down. But, the strength I get is from my Indian blood. Thank each of you who helped my state. May God be with you. May God bless each of you.

Sandy Nixon  
Newport,  
North Carolina

Watson Family Reunites

My 89 year old daddy Jack Watson, son of Sanders Watson and last of his brothers, Leonard, Kenneth, Charles and sister Laura, wanted to see his family before it was too late.  
We had our first ever Watson family reunion July 6, 2019 in Norman Oklahoma. Some family members could not attend but those who did had a good time. Especially my daddy Jack, pictured in the middle wearing his white shirt, bolo tie and cowboy hat. I am so proud of him.  
A big thank you to those that made this a very special day for Jack and the entire Watson family.



Deanna Watson Hughes  
Gladwin, Michigan

Choctaw Nation Vocational Rehabilitation

Oct. 1	Poteau	11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.
Oct. 2	Antlers	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
Oct. 2	Coalgate	11 a.m. - 1 p.m.
Oct. 4	Atoka	11 a.m. - 1 p.m.
Oct. 9	Wilburton	10:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Oct. 9	Crowder	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
Oct. 11	Talihina	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Oct. 15	Idabel	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
Oct. 15	Talihina	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Oct. 16	McAlester	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Oct. 16	Stigler	by appointment
Oct. 22	Poteau	11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.
Oct. 22	Broken Bow	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Oct. 23	Atoka	11 a.m. - 1 p.m.
Oct. 23	McAlester	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Oct. 25	Coalgate	11 a.m. - 1 p.m.
Oct. 25	Antlers	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
Oct. 29	Wilburton	10:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Oct. 29	Wright City	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.

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

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](mailto:biskinik@choctawnation.com)

Enjoy stopping for red lights

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## Pickle honored by Journal Record

Tribal member Alma Pickle was recently named one of Fifty Women Making a Difference by the Journal Record, an Oklahoma City-based business newspaper, for her statewide leadership.

Pickle is the president of Muskogee-based Advanced Workzone Services. Pickle’s company specialties are pavement marking, portable signs and boards, traffic control devices and permanent signs. The 1986 Fort Gibson High School graduate is in business with two partners. Featured in the Feb. 8 issue of the Journal Record, Pickle is the first female president of the Association of Oklahoma General Contractors.

She will be honored along with the other 49 women at an Oct. 10 banquet at the National Cowboy Heritage Hall of Fame in Oklahoma City according to an article in the Muskogee Phoenix.



## Hofmeister visits, meets with educators

State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Joy Hofmeister visited the Choctaw Nation headquarters July 17.

During her visit several programs were discussed, such as the POSSE program. POSSE is a summer intervention program in which 3800 students participated over the summer, created 600 part time jobs and helped 90% of students improve in reading and math.

The POSSE program is just one example of a service the Choctaw Nation provides to both Native and non-Native students, working towards the goal of making Oklahoma a top 10 state.



Photo by Chris Jennings

Executive Director of Education School Programs, Jim Parrish shows Joy Hofmeister around the Durant headquarters on a recent, informal visit.

## Marris turns 18



Isiah (Chukfi) Marris turned 18 this year. Isiah is a senior at Durant High School. He plays soccer, track & field and runs cross country. In early June, Isiah competed in the AAU District Track and Field games in Luther, Oklahoma, where he finished 1st in the 400 meters, 3rd in the long jump and 5th in the 200 meters. Isiah qualified to run at the

AAU Regional Championships at Tulsa University on June 29th. Competitors came from Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri and Oklahoma to compete at this prestigious event. Isiah finished 12th overall out of 36 athletes.

Isiah has a passion for music, EATING, going to movies and hanging out with his friends. Life after high school involves going to college, hopefully to the University of Houston, University of North Texas, or UC San Diego. He has sights set on continuing his track career at the collegiate level while studying to be an ophthalmologist.

Isiah’s parents are Reuben Marris of Durant, Oklahoma and April Taylor of Midland, Texas. Grandparents are Eldina Marris of Calera, Oklahoma, the late Thomas Marris of Durant, Oklahoma, and the late Leila Taylor of Durant.

## Gilreath Graduates OSU and Marine Corps boot camp



Choctaw tribal member, Khaire Warren Gilreath had two graduations this year. First, he graduated cum laude from Oklahoma State University Institute of Technology in April of this year.

He is the most recent recipient of the Cowboy Scholarship through the Chahta Foundation.

Second, on August 2nd he graduated from Marine Corps boot camp as a Private First Class. His

ranking is a result of his college degree.

His family is very proud of him. He thanks the Choctaw Nation for helping him in college with so much financial assistance.



James Berg shows his service award at the Tulsa community meeting earlier this year

went and interviewed, and they hired me on the spot.”

Berg said that he was a “jack of all trades and a master of none” during his time with the hotel. The management of the hotel thought so highly of Berg’s dedicated service that they named the lounge “Jimmy’s”. According to Berg, it was nice to be recognized.

He recalls having basketball teams, baseball teams and other notable guests stay at the hotel during his career. According to Berg, his favorite part of the job was making sure the employees were happy and taken care of.

James has been a consistent part of the hotel since it opened. The ownership, however, hasn’t been so consistent. The hotel has had four owners throughout Berg’s 39-year career. Four hotel chains (Westin, Adam’s Mark, Crowne Plaza and Hyatt) have owned and operated the hotel according to Berg.

While Berg loved working at the hotel, he is also passionate about the entire city. He has volunteered with the American Legion, Salvation Army, and other local organizations around Tulsa. Berg said he still lives in north Tulsa and volunteers as much as he can.

## Berg honored

By Christian Toews

The Hyatt Regency Hotel recently recognized Choctaw tribal member James (Jimmy) Berg in downtown Tulsa for his 39 years of service. Berg began his career with the hotel in December of 1978 and retired in March of 2018.

Berg has lived in the Tulsa area his entire life. He started working at the newly constructed Williams Plaza Hotel in December 1978.

Berge said he heard about the job opening through a friend while ringing Christmas bells for the Salvation Army. He remembers, “I was working for the salvation army and one of my friends told me about the hotel hiring. I



## Caldwell turns 90

Helen Caldwell turned 90 on July 16. She was so happy to receive her 90-year afghan. The daughter of the late Dukes and Grace Wilson, she lives in Octavia, Oklahoma. She was married to Ben Caldwell for 66 years, has 3 children (plus 1 deceased), 13 grandchildren (plus 1 deceased), 25 great-grandchildren, and recently had her first great-great grandchild. She is a true inspiration to her family, friends, and church.

## Morgan graduates University of Arkansas



Olivia Morgan from Bentonville, Arkansas received her Bachelor’s degree in Psychological Science with a minor in Indigenous Studies. She received her degree from the University of Arkansas. She is very grateful for the Choctaw Nation who helped fund her education through the Choctaw Nation Higher Education Scholarship/Grant and the Choctaw Nation College

Clothing Allowance. She is also thankful for her friends and family who have supported her throughout school. They have also supported her in her decision to continue her education in pursuit of a masters degree in social work.



## Peterson receives Juris Doctorate


John Richard Chakse Peterson was awarded a Juris Doctorate May 19, 2019, from Marquette University School of Law in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Immediately following graduation, Peterson was sworn into the Wisconsin State Bar May 20, 2019, and is licensed to practice law in the state of Wisconsin.

He is the son of Patricia Ann and David

Paul Paterson of Dallas, Texas, the grandson of the late Rebecca Mae and Dick Lester.

He received his undergraduate degree from Oklahoma State University in Stillwater, Oklahoma. He is currently preparing for the Texas State Bar examination.

John and his family would like to thank the Choctaw Nation for the scholarships and awards from the Higher Education Department and the Career Development Program. The help from the Choctaw Nation has helped him pursue his career goals.



# RENTAL EDUCATION

**Giving tribal members the necessary skills to become successful renters and potential homeowners.**





**Dates and cities available:**

September 13 .....	Stigler
September 20 .....	Krebs
September 27 .....	Durant

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# Yakoke!

The members of the Choctaw Nation have a genuine heart for giving, and we want to thank you for your kindness and shared vision for the future of our Native youth.



Your contributions provided much-needed opportunities to the incredible students at Jones Academy. By giving through fundraisers and the Chahta Foundation website, you have made a positive impact on the students at Jones and provided an opportunity to help many others. Please accept our sincerest thanks to all who have given, and if you or someone you know has any interest in learning more about how to make a difference, please feel free to reach out to the Chahta Foundation team.



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FOUNDATION

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# Semple family museum to be built at Southeastern



Photo by Chris Jennings

Janie Semple Umsted pulls out a piece that was donated to Southeastern Oklahoma State University. The batik piece, which was done by Umsted some years ago, will be part of the permanent display at the new Semple Family Art Museum.

## Out of storage, into the limelight

By Chris Jennings

Preliminary construction work on the Semple Family Museum of Native American Art is now underway on the campus of Southeastern Oklahoma State University in Durant. The museum, which was funded by a gift from the Semple family, will be the permanent home of the University’s extensive Native American art collection.

The artworks consist of paintings, drawings, sculpture, pottery and batik pieces that were donated from several sources, starting with a large donation of 93 pieces by Charles W. and Miriam Hogan in the 1990s. A later donation from Brad Keithley brought the collection to over 130 pieces, several of which have never been displayed due to space limitations.

The collection, which has largely been kept in storage except during special showings, will be in a more appropriate setting once the museum is completed.

Janie Semple Umsted, director of the Southeastern Art Gallery said, “This treasure has been stored at the Visual and Performing Arts Center for more than 20 years, and now this magnificent art will be properly displayed so that it can be enjoyed for years to come.”

Along with an art gallery, the 5000 square-foot museum will also feature an audio-visual room, reception area, storage, a balcony and walkout patio providing ample learning opportunities for both students and the public.



An architectural rendering of the Semple Family Museum of Native American Art.

“We are honored that the Semple family has decided to bestow such an important gift that will enrich our campus and community for generations to come,” said Southeastern President, Sean Burrage. “Southeastern is indeed proud to be the home of the Semple Family Museum of Native American Art.”

The Semple family take great pride in their Choctaw heritage and want to share not just that, but the beauty of all of the artwork by the 17 tribes represented in the collection.

Frank Semple said, “It is our desire that this museum be a place of honor where visitors will have the opportunity to experience the beauty of the art.”

Not just the beauty of the art, but the potential lessons learned and inspiration to students, both native and non-Native, is a hope of the Semple family. Working in partnership with the University and the Southeastern Foundation, the new museum will contribute to the future of Southeastern students.

“It is our hope that it will bring continued pride to not only our vast number of Native American students, but to all who may visit. We want to see the collection continue to grow and be a place of continued inspiration and study of Native American cultures.

“As a family, we feel so fortunate to have the ability to share our collective talents and resources to be able to build this very special museum,” said Frank Semple.

The act of creating art has served as a way to pass down culture and history to those that come later. The gift of this new museum will ensure that future generations can experience the art first hand.

Chief Gary Batton said, “What an honor it is for the Semple family to invest in and showcase art to the people of Durant. As Chief of the Choctaw Nation, it makes me extremely proud to see our Choctaw families generously giving back to the community.”

Also contributing to the family mission of completing the museum, Semple Brown Design of Denver, Colorado, is the architectural firm.

“It was beautifully and meticulously designed by our talented sister Sarah and her daughter Georgia to honor our family in this unique and beautiful way. We also know our dear brother, Bill, also an architect and artist, would be especially proud of this endeavor,” said Frank Semple. Bill Semple passed away as the family was beginning initial discussions of building the museum.

The museum will be located north of the Fine Arts Building and Russell Building on Montgomery/Dunlap Drive, overlooking the historic Amphitheater.

# Choctaw election results stand as court dismisses appeal

By Charles Clark

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Constitutional Court has upheld the results of the Choctaw Nation’s July 13 general election, including the decision that Robert Karr be named the winner of the District 11 seat. The race for the seat brought an appeal, hearing and decision that has become a first for the tribe and its judicial system.

Both the Constitutional and Appellate Courts for the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma announced their findings Aug. 1, 2019, in the case of Nellie Meashintubby vs. Robert Karr, the Choctaw Nation Election Board, Tribal Council of the Choctaw Nation and the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.

In the Constitutional Court, the ruling went in favor of the Choctaw Nation and its co-defendants. The Appellate Court determined that it had no jurisdiction in these election matters and dismissed the case.

The Choctaw Election Ordinance lays out a process for challenging an election result and this is the first time those steps have been taken.

Since no candidate received more than 50 percent of votes cast in the District 11 election on July 13, a runoff was declared between the two candidates that received the most votes – challenger Robert Karr at 43.68 percent and incumbent Bob Pate, 28.41 percent. District 11 of the Choctaw Nation primarily encompasses Pittsburg County, including the cities of McAlester and Harts-horne.

Councilman Pate then withdrew his candidacy and asked that his name

be removed from the runoff ballot. The Election Board stated a runoff election was not required based on rules (Article VI, Section I of the Election Ordinance) and declared Robert Karr duly certified as the winner.

Meashintubby, who had garnered third place in the District 11 race, filed a petition that there should be a runoff and that she should now be placed on that ballot. The rulings of the two courts eliminate the petitioner’s request.

In its final determination, the Constitutional Court said that:

The Tribal Council is not a proper party to this proceeding and that the Court has no jurisdiction over the Tribal Council in the matter.

The Election Ordinance does not set forth any procedure by which a candidate who came in third in the general election advances to a runoff election. Therefore, all other candidates in the general election would no longer be considered candidates in the runoff election.



Photo by Chris Jennings

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Constitutional Court has upheld the results of the Choctaw Nation’s July 13 general election, including the decision that Robert Karr be named the winner of the District 11 seat.

## Help Choctaws get counted during the 2020 census

The U.S. Census, which is conducted every ten years, will take place in 2020. Field workers hired by the Census Bureau will be coming to neighborhoods between now and next spring to verify residential addresses. If they come to your home, please make sure they have your address correct.

The Census questionnaire, due to be mailed on Apr. 1, 2020, will include a question about the respondent’s ethnic heritage. Federal agencies use the official Census results to determine the amount of money made available to the tribe through grants. The first step to correctly filling out the Census will be to ensure every potential recipient receives it.

Only 24,000 Choctaw Nation tribal members indicated their tribal affiliation in the 2010 U.S. Census. The tribal membership is over 200,000.

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Census  
2020

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Obituaries

Martha Gujda

Martha Gujda, 91, passed away June 4, 2019. Martha was born Nov. 25, 1927, in McAlester, Oklahoma, to Samuel and Gertrude (Dunnigan) Garren. She was preceded in death by husband Bruno J. Gujda; parents; sister Kathleen “Kay” Manker and brothers John and Creed Garren. Martha is survived by sons and daughters-in-law Bruce N. and Cheryl Gujda, Gregory M. Gujda, Glenn J. and Zelma Gujda, and Mark L. and Roxanne Gujda; five grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. For the full obituary, please visit [Mills Funeral Home](#).

Levoid Gene Gage

Levoid Gene Gage, 52, passed away June 6, 2019. Levoid was born Jan. 9, 1967 in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, to Levoid Jack and Josephine (Pittman) Gage. He was preceded in death by mother Josephine Pittman. Levoid is survived by son Josh Gage and spouse Amanda; daughters Barbara Woods and spouse Thomas, Marinda Gage; step-son Tristan Sexton; brothers Horace Bell and Joe Frank Gage; sisters Darline Williams and Phyllis Dodd; grandsons Jaceton Gage, Paden Gage, Samuel Gage; granddaughters Harmony Contreras, Maddyx Gage, Finnyk Gage; and many nieces, nephews, cousins, other extended family and a host of friends. For the full obituary, please visit [Gordon Funeral Home](#).



Wanda Billings

Wanda Billings, 85, passed away June 14, 2019. Wanda was born July 22, 1933, in Oklahoma City, to James and Bessie (Tubbee) Sewell. She was preceded in death by her parents; husband Eugene Billings; infant son Jack Billings, son Donald McGrouder and several brothers and sisters. Wanda is survived by sons Doug Billings, Steve Billings and spouse Billie; and a host of grandchildren and great grandchildren. For the full obituary, please visit [Hunn, Black and Merritt Funeral Home](#).



Johnnie Edward Sipes

Johnnie Edward Sipes, 70, passed away June 14, 2019. Johnnie was born November 17, 1948, in Antlers, Oklahoma, to Buford and Janita (McKnight) Sipes. He was preceded in death by his parents; and brother Glenn Sipes. Johnnie is survived by daughter Jennifer Bednarz and spouse Blake; son Shawn Sipes and spouse Ashley; grandchildren Bryton Bednarz, Breck Bednarz, Bryce Cochran, and Aria Sipes; sister Pauline Reed and spouse Rex; nephew Zach Reed; and good friends Phillip Streitz and Bill Myers. For the full obituary, please visit [Serenity Funeral Home](#).



Rebecca Nahwooksy

Rebecca “Hattie” Nahwooksy, 73, passed away June 16, 2019. Hattie was born March 30, 1946, in Holly Creek, Oklahoma, to Elisman and Rena Mae (Thomas) Noah. She was preceded in death by her parents; daughter Cynthia Dawn Nahwooksy; sisters Ruth Alice, Mona, and Sharon Noah; brothers Hampton, Marvin, and Russel Noah; and little brother Arlis Noah. Hattie is survived by husband Richard; sons Brian Noah and spouse Andrea, Michael Nahwooksy, Jonathan Nahwooksy, and Richard Nahwooksy Jr.; daughter Jane Chavez and husband, Louis; brother Franklin Noah and spouse Sharon; six grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren; and many other nieces, nephews, and friends. For the full obituary, please visit [Brumley Funeral home](#).



Joe Leflore

Joe Leflore, 85, passed away June 16, 2019. Joe was born July 5, 1933, in Milton, Oklahoma, to Wes and Ova W. Leflore. He was preceded in death by his parents; two brothers; and two sisters. Joe is survived by wife Helen LeFlore; daughters Sherry Thompson and Brenda Hayes; son Joe LeFlore, Jr. and spouse Kim; sister Janie LeFlore; grandchildren, Shawna Keller and spouse Jeremy, Cristal Parvin and spouse Jay, Dalton Hayes, Shelby Lister and spouse Zach, and Wesley LeFlore; great-grandchildren, Ryan Weber, Alex Keller and Skyler Lister; and many nieces, nephews, friends and extended family. For the full obituary, please visit [Floral Haven Funeral Home](#).



Alline Johnson

Alline Johnson, 86, passed away June 16, 2019. Alline was born Oct. 14, 1932, in Idabel, Oklahoma, to Tobias and Rosa Willis-ton. She was preceded in death by husband Wilburn R. Johnson, Jr.; son Tony Johnson; daughter Christine Jones; six brothers and one sister. Alline is survived by her sons and daughter-in-law, James and Lora Johnson, and Dennis Johnson; daughter and son-in-law Maxine and Ted Williams; daughter-in-law Teresa McKee; sisters Effieleene Harley, Stella Williston, and Martha Williston, and Virginia Franklin; brothers Ben and Angus Williston; grandchildren Beth Johnson, Kim Jones, Jadynd and Alyssa Johnson, Miranda, Jayme, and Erica Johnson, Cameron and Brett Williams, Rachel, Annika, Lauren and Julie Johnson; great-grandchildren Tailor, Khali, Jaxen, Jansen, Silas, Dustin, Jerad, Adisyn, A.B., Deryk, Alexis, Brezie, Paisley, Connor, Greyson and Taloa; great-great-grandson Jaggar Johnson; numerous nieces, nephews, other relatives and a host of friends. For the full obituary, please visit [Clardy Funeral Service](#).



Ilena Krausch

Ilena P. Krausch, 98, passed away June 14, 2019. Ilena was born Sept. 5, 1920, in Stigler, Oklahoma, to Daniel B. & Eve (Sockey) Perry. She was preceded in death by her parents; husband Charles Krausch; grandson Carl Krausch II; great-granddaughter Serena Peterson; siblings, Ola, Ona, Ina, Isla, and Daniel; and nephew Ted Perry. Ilena is survived by daughter Gail Peterson; son Carl Krausch and spouse Patricia; grandchildren, Rick Peterson, Kirk Peterson and spouse Shamequa, Craig and spouse Nichole, and Cory Krausch; great grandchildren, Carl III “Trey”, Cannon, Skye; great granddaughter on the way; nieces and nephews Linda York, Marilyn Espinoza, Gloria Taylor, Byron Perry, Jerry Perry, Ron Perry and Glen Perry; Gerald Perry; and numerous great-nieces and great-nephews. For the full obituary, please visit [King and Sherwood Funeral Home](#).



John Richard McKinney

John Richard McKinney, 90, passed away Nov. 21, 2016. John was born April 1, 1926, in Coalgate, Oklahoma, to George and Jessie McKinney. He was preceded in death by his parents. He is survived by spouse Velma McKinney; children Laura and Merle Kitchen, Jan and Bruce Brady, Johnny and Cindy McKinney, Donna and Kent Birch, Alex and Gwen McKinney, Paula and Charles Seegel, Brenda and Ronnie Morgan, Granger and Rhonda McKinney, Clay and Angela McKinney, Shane and Stephanie McKinney; 32 grandchildren, 44 great-grandchildren and 9 great-great-grandchildren. For the full obituary, please visit [Biskinik](#).



George Washington McKinney

George Washington McKinney, 88, passed away Jan. 8, 2018. George was born April 5, 1929 in Coalgate, Oklahoma, to George and Jessie (Logsdon) McKinney Sr. He was preceded in death by his parents; son George McKinney III; grandchildren Travis McKinney, Blake McKinney, Kyle Rule, Asa Sellers and Nahman White; son-in-law Tom Rule; and daughter-in-law Linda McKinney. George is survived by spouse Rose McKinney; children Earl McKinney, Amber Sawyer and spouse Larry, Patty Rule, Michael McKinney, Cindy Anderson and spouse Danny, Danny McKinney and spouse Linda, and Avis Hamilton and spouse Glen; daughter-in-law: Desma McKinney; 22 grandchildren; 46 great-grandchildren; and many step-grandchildren and one great-great-grandchild. For the full obituary, please visit [Rogers funeral Home](#).



Danny Paul McKinney

Danny Paul Mckinney, 59, passed away Jan. 15, 2019. Danny was born April 16, 1959, to George and Rose McKinney. He was preceded in death by his parents; son Blake Jones McKinney; brother George McKinney; and other beloved family members. Danny is survived by spouse Linda McKinney; son Gunner Jones McKinney; daughter Franschecca Jones McKinney; stepdaughters Jill Kinoshita and Sharon Lloyd; grandchildren Brody, Ethan, Jaxon and Kiera Morkes; brothers Earl and Michael McKinney; sisters Amber Sawyer, Patty Rule, Cindy Anderson and Avis Hamilton. For the full obituary, please visit [Rogers Funeral Home](#).



Michael Lynn Bailey

Former Assistant Chief of the Choctaw Nation, Michael Lynn Bailey, of Durant, Oklahoma, 59, passed away on Aug. 8, 2019. He was born March 2, 1960, in Hugo, Oklahoma, to William Harvey Bailey and Elsie Marie (Foster) Bailey. He grew up roping calves and riding horses, achieving high school rodeo finals, Indian National Finals, United States Team Roping Championship, and Booger Barter finals numerous times in team roping and rodeoed all over the United States. Bailey loved raising horses and fishing. His greatest enjoyment was his God-given gift of helping people in and out of the Choctaw Nation. Wherever he saw a need, he met that need, most of the time, without asking. Bailey never met a stranger. He connected with people from all walks of life, rich or poor, famous or not, young and old, through his love of God. Bailey was a member of the Full Gospel Church of Atoka, Oklahoma, where he taught an adult Sunday School class until his health began to fail. Bailey received his B.A. in Physical Education from Southeastern Oklahoma State University. He later received a Master’s and partial Doctorate in Administration from East Central University. Bailey began his professional career as an assistant coach in Leonard and Whitesboro, Texas. He went on to serve as the Administrator of Jones Academy for 13 years and as the Assistant Chief for 10 years. Other accomplishments include; consultant to the Cherokee Nation, working with Washington, D.C., Harrison, Walker & Harper of Paris, Texas, the Corp of Engineers and various other entities. He was on the Board of Regents for Eastern Oklahoma State College and an honorary Oklahoma Highway Patrol. Bailey traveled all across the world during his time as Assistant Chief and was a recipient of President George H.W. Bush’s Thousand Points of Life Award. He was also a member of the American Paint Horse Association and the American Quarter Horse Association. He is preceded in death by his father, William Harvey Bailey, mother, Elsie Marie (Foster) Bailey, and brother, Randy Bailey. Bailey is survived by his brother, Billy Bailey of Hugo, Oklahoma; great aunt, Alma Louise Laney of Indio, California; a host of aunts, uncles, cousins and many friends. Services were held on Aug. 12, at Oak Grove Baptist Church in Hugo, Oklahoma, under the direction of Miller & Miller Funeral Home.



Danny Ray Parker

Danny Ray Parker, 66, passed away June 26, 2019. Danny was born May 27, 1953, in Sulphur, Oklahoma, to John and Gladys Parker. He was preceded in death by his parents; spouse Joy Parker; previous spouse Pat Parker; brother Robert Parker; brother-in-law David Gardner; sister-in-law Robin Parker; and daughter Brandy Parker-Forsythe. Danny is survived by daughter Tyra Talea Parker-Hobbs and spouse Erick; stepdaughter Rebecca Black; granddaughters Cesalea Nichole Osborne, Jen Mayo, Terin Forsythe and Cheyenne Forsythe; sister Carol Parker-Gardner Moore; brothers John Parker and Jim Parker Sulphur and Bill Parker. For the full obituary, please visit [Biskinik](#).



Leola Finch

Leola Finch, 94, passed away June 14, 2019. Leola was born Oct. 21, 1924, in Hugo, Oklahoma, to Grover Thorpe and Betsy (Roberts) Thorpe. She was preceded in death by her parents; siblings Eugene Thorpe, Edward Thorpe, Harding Thorpe, Leroy Thorpe, Tom Thorpe, Grover Jr., Lucille Tittle, Willie Jones and Rosalie Mitchell; sons Lyndell Finch and Bodgie Finch Jr.; grandchildren Lyndell Finch Jr., Michelle Bowen, James Bowen, Adam Smelser; and daughter-in-law Melanie Finch. Leola is survived by sons Robert Finch and spouse Janice, Haskell Finch and spouse Debbie, Eddie Finch, Larry Finch and spouse Pat, Clifford Finch and spouse Tonya; daughters Gail Thompson and spouse Perry Sr., Paula Pierce and spouse Ricky, and Janice Jones and spouse Bruce; 31 grandchildren, 57 great-grandchildren, 13 great-great-grandchildren, two daughters-in-law; Sherry Finch and Paula Finch; sister Carolyn (Kay) Harless; and numerous other extended family and special friends. For the full obituary, please visit [Miller and Miller Funeral Home](#).



Donald Ray Jones

Donald Ray Jones, 84, passed away July 30, 2019. Donald was born July 30, 1934, in Tom, Oklahoma, to Loston Coxwell and Laura Belle Jones. He was preceded in death by his parents; son Ronald Christopher Jones; and sisters Lucille Norman and Gertrude Koapaddy. Donald is survived by spouse Clara Jean Jones; daughter Kay Frances; sons Donnie Earl Jones, and Timothy Robert Jones and spouse Heather; sister Dorothy Richardson; brother Danny Miller and spouse Linda; grandchildren Andrew Christopher Jones and Skyler Nycole Jones; great-grandson Remington Lee Jones as well as several other relatives and friends. For the full obituary, please visit [Dowdy Marker Funeral Home](#).





# Hoponi Hvshi: Cooking month is the final month of the Choctaw calendar

This article is the final installment in the series entitled “A Year in the Life”. Focusing on the time period around AD 1700, this series follows the traditional Choctaw calendar through a year, with each article providing a glimpse of the activities that our ancestors were up to during each month. This information is excerpted from a book, soon to be published by the Choctaw Nation, which is entitled “Choctaw Food: Remembering the Land, Rekindling Ancient Knowledge.”

The final month in the Choctaw calendar is Hoponi Hvshi, Cooking Month, roughly corresponding to September. By this time of year, temperatures slowly begin to cool, bringing the first breaths of relief from the heat and humidity of the previous months. Cooking month, like some of the other Choctaw months, has a name that is a bit of a paradox. This is the season when the main crops were harvested. The name reportedly refers not to those crops, but to the stored foods left over from the previous harvest that had to be cooked and eaten up in order to make room for the new.

By this season, the corn in the fields would have fully matured, along with the beans and squash. Prior to the main harvest, Tanchi Nuna, the Ripe Corn dances were held. These were conducted only by the men. The celebration lasted 4 days, and was accompanied by feasting. The harvest of the communal fields was referred to as tanchi hoyo, meaning literally looking for corn. Like planting the communal fields, it was done cooperatively by the community as a whole. This harvest was often prolific. Workers picked the corn ears, put them into pack baskets, and then dumped them out into piles called vllhpikvchi. People cooperated to quickly prepare these ears of corn by pulling the husks back and removing the silk, a process known as luffi. The loose husks were used to braid the ears together into long strips, known as shikowa. These strips of corn ears were hung up in the sun to finish drying. When the corn was dried, much of it would be shelled, a process called chilukka. The loose, dried corn kernels would be stored in large bags, bahta chito.

Sometimes, corn was also preserved for storage through the following process. First, it was thoroughly dried in the sun. Then, the dried corn was laid in a

series of piles, each made up of one or two pack basket loads. A layer of dry grass was placed on top of the piles. A mortar made of clay mixed with dry grass was used to coat the piles. Corn stored in this way would remain fresh until the next harvest. Most of the stored corn would be eaten during the upcoming year. Seed corn, in the form of ears representing the ideal characteristics for a given corn variety, was stored on the cob, with the husks of the ears tied together. This seed was called pehna.

As the corn was picked and put away, so was the rest of the harvest. Immature green beans were eaten or threaded onto a string and hung up for storage. The dried beans were removed from their pods and put aside for storage. When the bean poles were taken down, the vines were left in the field, in recognition that they provided something (nitrogen) to the soil that the corn plants took out. Winter squashes were cut into thin rings, and suspended on racks where they were smoked and dried for storage.

Families kept a portion of the harvest from the communal fields for their own use, and they deposited as much as they saw fit into community store houses. This food was used to serve visitors who came to the community, to provision war parties, and to assist families who had run out of food.

Dried produce was stored in cornercribs called kanch-



Image by Ruby Bolding

A scene inside a Choctaw winter home filled with the fall harvest.

vk or picha. These structures measured about eight feet by ten feet, and were raised off the ground to make it harder for rodents to get into the harvest. People entered them by means of a ladder. The process of filling the cornercrib with the harvest was known as kanchvk fohki. The floors were covered in big, heavy bags of dried corn kernels and beans, bags of raisins, and parched nuts stored from previous seasons. From the rafters, strings of pumpkins slices and green beans were hung. The main enemies to this scene were the rodents that the rattlesnakes had missed, along with corn mold hakbona and weevils havvlak.

No greater food security exists than being able to look at the ceiling of your home and see a year’s supply of food stores, put up by you and your family, and to look out and see storage buildings full of the same. Most years, that is what Choctaw people had to look forward to during Cooking Month.

# Veterans benefit event hosted by Nation

By Chris Jennings

The Choctaw Nation recently hosted a Your Service. Our Mission: Bringing VA Benefits Home VA Claims Event at the Durant headquarters. The Department of Veterans Affairs partnered with the Choctaw Nation to host the VA Claims Events to identify and assist Veterans who may have presumptive disabilities and who might be eligible for a VA pension.

Presumptive disabilities are a condition that VA presumes is related to military service, although the condition may first appear after discharge from the military. These conditions may qualify individuals for VA compensation payments.

Also available during the event was Social Security assistance, help with VA benefits claims, and VA medical center enrollment.

“With the focus on Veterans with presumptive disabilities and those who are pension eligible, VA is hopeful we can help Indian Country Veterans access the full range of benefits they have courageously earned through their service,” said Director Stephanie Birdwell, VA’s Office of Tribal Government Relations.

Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr. said, “it’s about providing opportunities for our veterans to gain access to the resources that they need.”

Opportunities are not just for veterans, but for their families as well. The VA allows spouses and widows to file for certain claims.

“We realize that reaching these Veterans and their spouses could have a direct, tangible impact on their lives,” said Birdwell. “This will help VA enhance and improve the experience for all Veterans and their families.”

On top of the VA benefits, veterans could get more information on the different organizations that could assist them. Several booths of organizations that aid



Photo by Chris Jennings

Terry Cole, left, speaks to one of the several booths set up at the veterans benefit event recently held at the Choctaw Nation headquarters.

veterans were set up providing information on how they can help.

Vietnam veteran and member of the Choctaw Nation Color Guard, Terry Cole served in an area that was exposed to Agent Orange during Vietnam. He was at the event, hopeful that he could get some help from the VA for health problems he’s experienced that could be related.

Cole echoed the lack of resources that had been mentioned by several others.

“For a lot of veterans, there wasn’t anything out there for us years ago. We just didn’t have resources like we do today,” said Cole.

Now with the help of the Choctaw Nation and the VA those resources are more readily available.

If you are a veteran in need of assistance, you can call the Veterans Advocacy office at 800-522-6170.

# Hicks selected as Veteran of The Month

Randal Dewayne Hicks of District 2, was recognized as Veteran of the Month during Tribal Council’s regular session in August 2019.

Hicks enlisted in the Air Force in 1960. After receiving communications training he was stationed in 1962, at Bad Tolz, West Germany, in what was the first of several overseas postings.

In 1965, he transferred to Dauphin Island Air Force Station and was trained in radar maintenance. After serving at Port Heiden Air Force Station in Alaska and Tinker Air Force Base in Oklahoma City, Hicks was trained again in computer maintenance. He then served in the headquarters of the North American Air Defense Command, inside Cheyenne Mountain in Colorado.

Following his assignment in Cheyenne Mountain he served at Naha Air Base in Okinawa, Japan, during the final months of its status as an American protectorate. Hicks also served at an air base in Portugal’s Azores Islands, McClellan Air Force Base in California, Sahen Tepsi in Turkey, and, finally, Scott Air Force Base in Belleville, Illinois, where he retired from the service on May 31, 1982.

Hicks is active in his community. He also attends the Wellness Center and plays chair volleyball.



## Chahta Anumpa Aiikhvna

### September Language Lesson

anoli – to tell

Is svm anola hinla hg?

Can you tell me?

Ant is svm anola chike.

Come and tell me. (future)

Ont ish im anolikma.

You go and tell him/her. (future)

Ish anolikma.

You tell it or announce it.

**Word Meaning:**

is (ess) = you (comes from esh)

svm (sahm) = to or for me

anola (ah-noh-lah) = to tell

hinla (hihn-lah) = can/may

hg (hohn) = question marker

ant (ahnt) = come and

chike (chih-ke) = future tense


ont (ohnt) = go and

ish (esh) = you

im (ehm) = to or for him/her/it

anolikma (ah-noh-lihk-ma) = to tell

[www.choctawschool.com](http://www.choctawschool.com)



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# Outreach at the beach



Choctaw Nation volunteers work hard, serving hamburgers and hotdogs.



A family enjoys sack lunches while cooling off in the shade.



A large crowd enjoys the beach area of Sardis lake during outreach at the beach.



The waterslide was a splashing good time and provided hours of fun for the kids.



Choctaw Nation employees and volunteers prepare sack lunches for all attendees.

# Davis wins third world championship



David Davis won his third Horseshoe Pitchers Association World Championship in Wichita Falls, Texas this year. Davis won this title in 1998 and 2018 as well. The 71-year-old Choctaw tribal member has been competing in the National Horseshoe Pitching Association since 1990. His hometown of Wright City, Oklahoma proudly displays a sign that reads “Welcome to Wright City – Home of the world’s horseshoe men’s class champion 1998 and 2018.”

Davis moved into the F1 class this year and said the competition was tough. “I won the games that mattered,” he said. According to a previous interview, Davis said that he plans to compete

for as long as he can. “I’ll probably compete until I can’t go anymore,” Davis said. For more information on how to get involved in the State or National Horseshoe Pitchers Association, please visit [www.horseshoepitching.com](http://www.horseshoepitching.com).

SOFTBALL/BASEBALL  
FUTURES  
SHOWCASE

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2019

Durant High School Indoor Facility | Located behind Durant High School

<b>Girls Showcase</b> 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon <i>Registration begins at 8:00 a.m.</i>	<b>Boys Showcase</b> 1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. <i>Registration begins at 12:00 noon</i>
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- Competitive High School athletes currently in grades 9-12
- Tribal members must provide copy of Tribal Membership Card
- Lunch will be provided

Athletes will receive instruction and evaluation from regional college coaches

To register, email the following to [mclapp@choctawnation.com](mailto:mclapp@choctawnation.com):

- Completed Player Profile & consent forms (attached)
- Recent headshot photo (on player profile)
- Copy of Choctaw Nation tribal membership card

**Registration deadline: October 7, 2019**

Choctaw Nation  
Youth Events & Activities

800-522-6170 EXT. 2739  
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Our mission is to embrace the memory and perpetuate the spirit of our Choctaw ancestors, to bring honor and remembrance, and to increase knowledge of Choctaw history by living an active, healthy lifestyle and serving as an example for individuals, families, and friends.

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Choctaw Nation | Trail of Tears Bike Team

# HINA HANTA

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FUTURES OF BASKETBALL  
SHOWCASE

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2019

Bloomer Sullivan Gymnasium | Southeastern Oklahoma State University

<b>Girls Showcase</b> 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon <i>Registration begins at 8:00 a.m.</i>	<b>Boys Showcase</b> 1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. <i>Registration begins at 12:00 noon</i>
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- Competitive High School athletes currently in grades 9-12
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- Completed Player Profile & consent forms (attached)
- Recent headshot photo (on player profile)
- Copy of Choctaw Nation tribal membership card

**Registration deadline: September 9, 2019**

Choctaw Nation  
Youth Events & Activities

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# Food Distribution gets healthy recipes for Gold Award project

by Chris Jennings

The hurdle to eating healthier isn't always what you eat, but how you prepare it. Arden Crowe (17) from Plano, Texas is tackling that problem in the form of working on her Girl Scout Gold Award.

Crowe is working with the Food Distribution Center in Durant to help give customers healthy recipes for the common foods available at the distribution center. Crowe said, "I've been working all summer to do this project where I create recipes that are healthy with the food products that are here at the center."

The Gold Award is the highest achievement in Girl Scouting. Projects must demonstrate leadership and complete a project that has a sustainable impact on their com-



Photo by Chris Jennings

Arden Crowe prepares a bison and bean chili at the food distribution center in Durant.

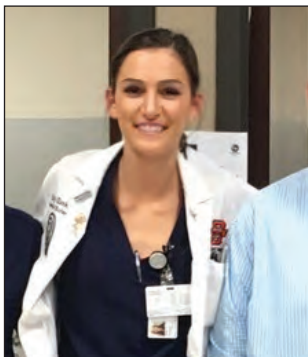
munities and beyond. Crowe said, "I think it's very important for people to eat healthy and have that opportunity. There's a lot of health problems here like diabetes and I think this is a good way to help prevent that."

According to the Centers for Disease Control, diabetes is the 7th most common cause of death in the United States, with Native Americans more than twice as likely to develop type 2 diabetes. Making positive lifestyle changes, including diet, is one way to counteract the effects of diabetes.

Crowe, who plans to put together around 30 recipes for the distribution center, says that while eating healthy is something she and her family have always done she knows it's not easy to start cooking healthier. By helping to break unhealthy shopping habits Crowe is helping tribal members make long-lasting changes.

Registered Dietician with the Food Distribution Program, Chase Ward says, "You see a lot of employers talk about promoting a healthy work environment. Here with Food Distribution, we would like to create a healthy shopping environment." By putting these recipes together, Arden is helping Food Distribution move in that direction. "As they see the recipes close by the items, our participants can select items with a planned purpose instead of just having hopes they will find a way to use it," said Ward.

The Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations is a jointly funded program between USDA and the Choctaw Nation. This program provides healthy, nutritious foods to income-eligible households within the boundaries of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma and those counties in Arkansas and Texas that border the Choctaw Nation.



Katy Gaskill

## Gaskill learns tradition, culture in medical training

Oklahoma State University College of Osteopathic Medicine has always excelled in specifically training their physicians to work in rural areas of Oklahoma with innovative and compassionate minds. In a statement by OSU's Office of American Indians in Medicine and Science (AIMS), they "work with tribes in an effort to include culture and tradition into all training programs aimed at helping to meet the health and wellness needs and education of Oklahoma's tribal and rural communities."

Included in this program, OSU has students who have decided to work in underserved areas, to spend their summer working in rural communities across Oklahoma.

Local second year medical student and Choctaw tribal member, Katy Gaskill, has chosen Durant's location due to the rich native involvement, and worked under local physicians Dr. Jestis and Dr. Lee. She states that "working here for the summer has really strengthened my commitment to serve our underserved communities. It's been an incredible feeling to be able to give back to such a remarkable community. Dr. Jestis and Dr. Lee have so much compassion for their patients, and being able to see the impact they have on their patients has set my goals for what good physicians are like quite high."

This is the first year Choctaw Nation's Durant clinic has been involved in the program.

# Edible Schoolyard grows knowledge of food

By Chris Jennings

To a kid, the grocery store could be a magical place where everything is made in the back and put into packaging, ready to buy.

The Nihi Hokchi-Edible Schoolyard Project at the Early Childhood Development Center in Durant aims to teach kids what's actually involved in getting food to the store.

The Edible Schoolyard is part of the

Chahta Foundations Green Growth Initiative.

The goal of the program is to teach kids where their food comes from and that they can grow their own in a small space, such as a raised flower bed.

Kids participate in the outdoor classroom by planting various fruit and vegetables, then taking care of them, finally getting to eat them.

After school teacher, Carol Dillingham said, "It shows them food just doesn't



Photo by Chris Jennings

Jasmyn Valliere, left and Keyara Johnson water plants in the edible schoolyard at the Early Childhood Development Center in Durant

## Bison and Bean Chili

- 2 pounds Ground bison
- 2 Bell Peppers
- 2 Yellow Onions
- 7 TBS Chili Powder
- 1/4 tsp Cayenne Pepper
- 4 tsp Minced Garlic
- 1 TBS Salt
- 1 can Diced Tomatoes
- 1 can Tomato Sauce
- 4 cups Water
- 1 can Hominy
- 1 can Kidney Beans
- 1 can Pinto Beans
- 1 can Black Beans

### Preparation

1. Brown the bison in a slightly greased soup pot or dutch oven at medium-high heat, about 10 minutes.
2. Remove cooked meat, set aside. Drain the liquid in the bottom of the pot and spray lightly with grease.
3. Cook the bell peppers and onions over medium high heat until softened and beginning to brown, about 5 minutes.
4. Add the chili powder, cumin, salt, cayenne pepper and garlic. Cook and stir for 1 to 2 minutes.
5. Add the tomatoes with the juices and tomato sauce, bring to a simmer while scraping any browned bits off the bottom of the pan, about 2 minutes.
6. Return the bison to the pot and add the hominy, kidney beans, pinto beans, and 4 cups water. Bring to a boil, and then reduce the heat, cover and simmer until thickened, about 45 minutes. Season with salt and serve.

come from the grocery store. It has to be grown in a garden somewhere, they have to go pick it, and ship it or send it to the grocery store."

Kids planted strawberries, green beans, blackberries, squash, cherry tomatoes and other plants.

Martha Lowery, with the Chahta Foundation said, "They absolutely love it. They get very excited when they see the first fruit or vegetable forming. I've been there a number of times when the kids are out there and they love finding a strawberry and plucking it and popping it in their mouth."

Durant Early Childhood Director, Staci Sawyer said, "They've really enjoyed watching those plants grow." With a chuckle, Sawyer added, "They've been going over and picking little things one or two at a time and eating them so they're kind of disappearing."

It's not just the growing of food and the process of getting it onto their tables the kids are learning about. They also planted plants, such as zinnias, that would attract butterflies, teaching them the importance of the butterfly in pollination.

Continuing with the goal of teaching kids the origins of things they see every day, the butterfly garden provided another learning experience "When the zinnias started to go into seed, we picked them [the seeds] to plant next year," said Dillingham.

The Edible Schoolyard teaches a lesson that children can carry with them throughout their lives. For more information about the Edible Schoolyard Project visit <https://www.ChahtaFoundation.com>.

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### September Mobile Unit Schedule

3rd	Heavener - CV's Grocery
5th	Boswell - across from Pushmataha Family Clinic
6th	Heavener - EOMC
10th	Heavener - CV's Grocery
12th	Clayton - across from Pushmataha Family Clinic
13th	Heavener - EOMC
19th	Coalgate - Choctaw Nation Community Center
20th	Heavener - CV's Grocery
24th	Heavener - CV's Grocery

For More Information Call (580) 380-3628

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<div><div>wic</div><div>CHOCTAW</div><div>Women, Infants and Children</div></div>		
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 580-916-2100 x 83517	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 580-286-2510	Mon., Wed., & 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. 7 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		

## COLORECTAL CANCER AWARENESS

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September 2019

All markets open weekdays September 3-28, Closed: September 2, 26, 27 and 30.

Participants can request a calendar at their location.

**ANTLERS** 400 S.W. "O" ST., 580-298-6443  
Nutrition education and food demo September 5, 10:00-1:00

**BROKEN BOW** 109 Chahta Rd., 580-584-2842  
Nutrition education and food demo September 11, 10:00-1:00

**DURANT** 2352 Big Lots Pkwy., 580-924-7773  
Nutrition education and food demo September 4, 10:00-1:00

**MCALESTER** 3244 Afullota Hina, 918-420-5716  
Nutrition education and food demo September 10, 10:00-1:00

**POTEAU** 100 Kerr Ave., 918-649-0431  
Nutrition education and food demo September 24, 10:00-1:00

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# Kids swarm to first ever Bug Camp

By Christian Towes

The Choctaw Nation Natural Resources Department hosted the first ever “Bug Camp” this summer. The three-day camps took place July 16-18 in Lehigh, Oklahoma and July 23-25 in Tvshka Homma.

According to Tom Lowery, Senior Director of the Choctaw Nation Natural Resources Department, this year’s camps were designed for children aged 12-16. He said he hopes to grow the camp in coming years and hopes this camp becomes a part of the regular summer camps that the Choctaw Nation provides. “I think we have demonstrated that there is interest. Our attendance has increased daily. The kids tell their friends what they’re doing, and their friends want to come,” Lowery commented.

Oklahoma State University (OSU) worked with the Natural Resources department to provide student interns to teach at the camps. Taylor and Alexis Coles, are two of the interns helping with the camp. The both Choctaw tribal members both attend OSU. As entomology students, the sisters designed the curriculum and the agenda for the bug camps. They said their goal is to educate the students and generate interest in the field of entomology.

“Our main goal is to help these Choctaw kids. We wanted to provide an opportunity for them to learn about things they might not be able to otherwise. We covered topics such as pollination, insect-borne diseases, and just general insect information,” said Taylor Coles.

Even though this was the camps first year, it drew 18 kids from all over the Choctaw Nation who wanted to learn more about insects. “I have learned a lot about insects and the

diseases they carry. I want to learn even more about bugs because I like them,” said Santino Scott, 11, from Poteau.

The students were able to have both a classroom environment and an opportunity to go out in the field and capture local bugs. After they captured the bugs, they were able to use the bug kits they received as part of the camp and learn in a very hands-on way.

Although this camp was focused primarily on entomology, Lowery said that he wants to provide an opportunity for younger tribal members to learn about natural resources as a whole. “If we get one or two of these kids to go on and follow a career in natural resources, whether it’s entomology, agriculture, or forestry, it’s a success,” Lowery said.

If you would like

more information on the summer camps that the Choctaw Nation offers, you can visit: [www.choctawnation.com/SummerCamps](http://www.choctawnation.com/SummerCamps).



Photo by Deidra Elrod  
Taylor Coles helps kids collect bugs during the Choctaw Nation Bug Camp in July.



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Choctaw Nation Career Development [CHOCTAWNATION.COM](http://CHOCTAWNATION.COM)

## HARVEST CARNIVAL

FRIDAY | OCTOBER 18, 2019 | 6:00 - 9:00 PM



- Costume contest for children up to 16 years will begin at 7:00 pm
- \$1 Cake Walk and \$1 Bingo
- Free games and prizes

- Trail of Terror begins at dusk
- T-shirts given out in the souvenir shop
- Haunted House at Amphitheater backstage

- Costume contest participants must sign up by 6:30 pm
- No strollers or walkers allowed in the Trail of Terror or Haunted House
- Check your local Choctaw Nation Community Center for bus pickup times and to reserve your seat if available

Arts and Crafts Building | Choctaw Capitol Grounds at Tvshka Homma  
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## BISKINIK

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma TOGETHER WE'RE MORE

### SEPTEMBER 2019

#### In This Issue

- 2 Faith Family Culture
- 4 Council Corner
- 5 Events
- 5 Notes to the Nation
- 6 Education
- 8 Obituaries
- 9 Iti Fabvssa
- 9 Language Lesson
- 11 Health



**Page 1:**  
Choctaw Nation Health Care Center celebrates 20th anniversary.



**Page 3:**  
Ruth Hooker, inspired by her Choctaw values and heritage, builds a successful business.



**Page 7:**  
Semple family to build museum of Native American art on Southeastern campus.

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

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