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CHOCTAW NATION

The Official Publication of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

February 2016 Issue

Tribal Council holds regular session

The Choctaw Nation Tribal Council met in regular session Jan. 9 at Tvshka Homma. Committees from the following departments reported: Risk Management, RV park, Travel Plaza, OEH program, Smoke Shop, Wellness Center, CHR department, and gaming.

The following council bills were unanimously approved:

- Authorize Chief to place property in Choctaw County in trust status with the USA as amended.
- Business lease no. G09-1879 in favor of Lake Eufaula Rod & Gun Club on Land USA in trust for the Choctaw Nation and Chickasaw Nations in Pittsburg County.
- Business lease no. G09-1880 in favor of Lake Eufaula Rod & Gun Club on Land USA in trust for the Choctaw Nation and Chickasaw Nations in Pittsburg County.
- Application for Connecting Kids to Coverage Outreach and Enrollment.
- Application for Strengthening the Public's and/or K-12 Students' Environmental Literacy for Community Resilience.
- Application for the COPS Tribal Resource Equipment/ Training Grant.
- Application for the Tribal Courts Assistance Program.
- Application for the Children's Justice Act Partnerships for Indian Communities.
- Application for the Native Agriculture and Food Systems Initiative Grant.

For detailed meeting information on these resolutions and council bills, go to <http://www.choctawnation.com/government/tribal-council-bills/2016-council-bills>.

Tribal Council meets at 10 a.m. on the second Saturday of each month in the Council Chambers at Tvshka Homma.

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The Mission of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

To enhance the lives of all members through opportunities designed to develop healthy, successful and productive lifestyles.

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Photos by Ronni Pierce

Chief Gary Batton of the Choctaw Nation talks to members of the audience before the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian presentation. The NMAI unveiled the plans for a Native American Veterans Memorial during a stop in Choctaw Nation.

Choctaw Nation First Stop on Smithsonian NMAI Native American Memorial Planning

By RONNI PIERCE
Choctaw Nation

Native Americans' military service for the United States goes back almost 250 years. American Indians have fought in every major conflict since the Revolutionary War.

With this knowledge in hand, the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian has been tasked by Congress to build a National Native American Veterans Memorial with a tentative completion date of Veterans Day 2019.

NMAI representatives made the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma in Durant their first stop on Jan. 21, 2016, during a national tour to elicit feedback from Native American veterans across the nation. NMAI Director Kevin Gover (Pawnee) says they are visiting tribes "to find the most important stories to tell" from the perspective of the Native American veteran.

Gover along with Chief Gary Batton, Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr., Cherokee Nation's Deputy Principal Chief Joe Crittendon, Chickasaw Nation's Lieutenant Governor Jefferson Keel, and several local veterans listened while Gover explained the history of the memorial's proposal.

In 2013, Congress au-

thorized the NMAI to begin work on the memorial. Former U.S. Senator from Colorado Ben Nighthorse Campbell (North Cheyenne) and Lt. Gov. Keel will co-chair the advisory committee

capture that giving spirit, I think that would be the most important part of this memorial."

The memorial, which will be representative of all the armed forces and will be lo-



Kevin Gover, the director of the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian, addresses veterans at the town hall meeting.

for the memorial.

Chief Batton recalled the long and proud history of the Choctaw tvshka (warrior) that included the first Codetalkers during WWI. "The most important story for me is the spirit of Native Americans, that we are caring people who have always been about protection of all. And I cannot think of a better example of that spirit than the Codetalkers' story because they gave all for God and country, as did all veterans. So if we can

cated on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., will have its final design selected after a juried competition.

A traveling exhibition entitled Patriot Nations: Native Americans in Our Nation's Armed Forces will tell the stories of Native American veterans and will travel to various tribal centers beginning in mid-2016.

Future town hall meetings will be held in California, the Southwest, the northern Plains, the Northeast, and Alaska.

Nation Opens Food Distribution Center in Broken Bow

By RONNI PIERCE
Choctaw Nation

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma held a ribbon cutting ceremony Tuesday, Jan. 12, 2015, at the new 6,333-square-foot food distribution center in Broken Bow.

The facility, located at 109 Chahta Rd., will provide five new jobs at the site, as well as supplying commodities for tribal members in the surrounding area.

After speaking to tribal members present, Chief Gary Batton reminded the audience that the building is more than a food distribution site, it's a place for tribal members to come together and a point of pride for Choctaw citizens. District 2 Councilman Tony Ward added, "This is an exciting time for us here in the Choctaw Nation. Normally our citizens would have to drive somewhere or wait for a truck for our commodities. But now our local tribal members will be able to shop at their

own convenience at the new center."

The center offers a state-of-the-art nutrition education kitchen for staff nutritionists to demonstrate preparation of healthy meals. In addition, the center will house the Next Step Initiative, the Choctaw Nation's supplemental commodities program.

Also on hand was Eddie Longoria, United States Department of Agriculture Division Director from the Dallas regional office, who works closely with the Nation. He presented a certificate of appreciation to the Chief, Council members, and to Jerry Tonubee, Director of Food Distribution for the Choctaw Nation. The citation was in recognition of the Choctaw Nation and its operation of the food distribution program in Indian country and their efforts in making nutritious food choices available in order to improve the overall health and quality of life in Native American households.



Photo by Ronni Pierce

Members of the Inter-Tribal Council of the Five Civilized Tribes listen as Julian Castro, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, speaks Jan. 8 in Tulsa.

HUD Secretary Meets with Inter-Tribal Council

By CHARLES CLARK
Choctaw Nation

The Inter-Tribal Council of the Five Civilized Tribes' first quarterly meeting of 2016 was launched with the confirmation of Chief Gary Batton as the group's new leader for the year ahead.

Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Julian Castro attended and announced an important new initiative from President Barack Obama that will affect American Indians nationwide.

The meeting, held Jan. 7 and 8, 2016 at the Renaissance Hotel & Convention Center in Tulsa, drew all the leaders of the five Nations, additional tribal leadership, and more than 600 people from across the state.

In his speech addressing the Inter-Tribal Council, Castro outlined the Obama administration's commitment to Native American veterans.

"HUD has joined with seven other federal agencies to lay out a comprehensive plan to end veterans' homelessness among American Indians and Alaska Natives," he said.

According to Castro, it is the federal government's objective to ensure that every veteran and their family has a roof over their heads. "More than any other group of Americans, Native Americans step forward to serve in our military. They've served with distinction in every major conflict for over 200 years."

An aspect of the program is that vouchers to help with housing costs will be disbursed to qualified applicants. The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma is among a select few tribes chosen as the first to implement this assistance.

Detailed needs of the state's veterans were further outlined by Dr. Gerald Darnell, Acting Director of the Oklahoma City VAHCS, and Richard Crockett, Acting Director of VAMC.

Chief Batton noted that he was impressed by the government-to-government relationship demonstrated by Secretary Castro's personal visit to make the announcement. The program, he continued, "allows us to highlight and help those who have given to God and country in their time of need."

Duane Winship, Deputy Executive Director, Choctaw Housing, whose program will administer the housing funds, had already been given additional information about what to expect.

The Choctaw Nation, he said, "will receive 25 vouchers to help with housing for eligible veterans." The vouchers, he added, will be good for up to at least 36 months. Monies should be available this spring, but veterans may begin applying immediately to either the Choctaw Veterans Services, (800) 522-6170, or Choctaw Housing (800) 235-3087.

In addition, the Inter-Tribal Council passed six resolutions: reform to the national Johnson-O'Malley student count, commitment to support the 2016 NativeVisions Sports and Lifeskills Camp via commitment to fill 200 spots for each respective tribal nation encompassing the ITC, support of HR. 2759 Mental Health Access Improvement Act of 2015, support of S. 1830 Seniors Mental Health Access Improvement Act of 2015, requesting that the Five Civilized Tribes be able to petition directly to the Keepseagle board and receive directly from the Keepseagle Cy Pres funds, and authorization of the Secretary-Treasurer to conduct financial responsibilities on behalf of the Inter-Tribal Council of the Five Civilized Tribes.



Photo by Kendra Germany

USDA Director Eddie Longoria presents Chief Batton with an award for Choctaw Nation officials and their efforts to provide healthy food options for all members of the tribe.



Our Future: Moving Ahead to Success

When I think of a sustainable tribe I think of our tribal members and I think about resources. It takes both for the tribe to be successful. One of the people I rely upon is my Mom who celebrated her 78th birthday on Jan. 17, and on the same day, Angie and I celebrated our 29th anniversary. We are blessed to have had Mom’s help through the years, and I hope we can help in the growth and success of our children and grandchildren.

Other people who have sustained our tribe are our Veterans. The Choctaw Nation hosted a meeting with representatives from the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian and several Choctaw veterans on Jan. 21. The men and women traveled from as far as Spiro in the northeastern corner of the Choctaw Nation to Durant to be included in the first consultation on a new Native American Veterans Memorial at NMAI in Washington, D.C.

The best part of the meeting was seeing our veterans come together and listening to their thoughts. I enjoyed hearing the wonderful stories of our ancestors and how far they have progressed. The veterans have always been the “tvshka,” the warriors, protectors of our way of life.

For more information . . .

If you reside in the Choctaw Nation’s 10 1/2 county service area and are interested in participating in the Reintegration program, please call (800) 522-6170.

If you are interested in participating in the Job for the Day program, please contact a coordinator nearest you:

Durant: 580-924-8280, ext. 2962
Idabel: 580-208-2276
Stigler: 918-967-9034
McAlester: 918-429-7719

They sustain us. They represent years of sacrifice to provide a better life for us. As one of the veterans, Jim Fry, said, “We did it for the good of all.”

Our veterans make the unending opportunities we have available possible. The Choctaw Nation has recently opened several new facilities—a campus in McAlester with a community center, food distribution center, head start, and wellness center. A ribbon cutting was also held for a food distribution center in Broken Bow. A new travel plaza opened in Antlers, and we had a groundbreaking for another in Heavener. Business is expanding with new Chili’s restaurants in Poteau and Atoka and a grocery store in Clayton. A ceremony in March will mark

the beginning of construction on a new headquarters building near the site of the Durant Regional Medical Clinic.

A new Voters Registration program is part of the Choctaw Nation’s election reform in having an election process that is transparent, accountable, and fair. It’s important to vote. It is our responsibility. It fulfills our culture and helps shape our future. More information on the Voter Registration department will be shared through the coming months and their staff is available to answer any questions regarding voter registration and tribal elections.

Negotiations are in progress with the state of Oklahoma on a hunting and fishing license compact. Tribal representatives have been working with state officials to ensure the best possible agreement is reached.

Two programs in developing stages are the Reintegration Program and Job for the Day. The mission for the Reintegration Program is to assist adult tribal members who have been convicted of felony crimes to become productive citizens by offering the appropriate services. Our goal is aimed at removing barriers to our tribal members who are reintegrating back into the communities in which they have lived. Since its inception, we have assisted 78 clients with over 200 different referral options. Five have gained employment as a result of direct assistance.

The Job for the Day is a temporary work program that places tribal members in a full-time work environment in the Choctaw Nation workforce for up to six weeks. While on the program, participants build relationships with employees and learn new work traits, allowing them to gain experience while coordinators work with them to apply for permanent jobs using the Choctaw Careers website.



Step Up to Good Health

The Choctaw Nation started off the new year with the Miko Fitness Challenge, an 8-week program for tribal employees to learn to sustain a healthy lifestyle. It’s a motivator that promotes good health. It also creates a positive atmosphere and new friendships as the teams compete. I’ve enjoyed being a part of the challenge and a team that is having fun with the contest and showing quite a bit of competitiveness! I commend everyone who joined the fitness program and is striving to make a change. Good luck to you all!

It is tough to get outside for physical activity in the winter months to fulfill any commitment to exercise more. My son, Sam, and I have been creative on the cold and rainy days. Activity can come in many forms and I enjoy the time we spend thinking of different ways to get moving. One of the things we

like to do when stuck in the house is grab a ball and play basketball with a laundry basket for a goal. We play games of HORSE and have a great time.

The youth stickball season has started, giving the boys and girls another opportunity to get active. It’s changed from when I was young and there was only the exhibition game for us to play once a year during the Labor Day Festival. Now, there are seven youth teams with practices held twice a week. The practices include all aspects of Choctaw stickball. It’s a learning opportunity for the kids to gain more knowledge of Choctaw history and the culture connected to the game.

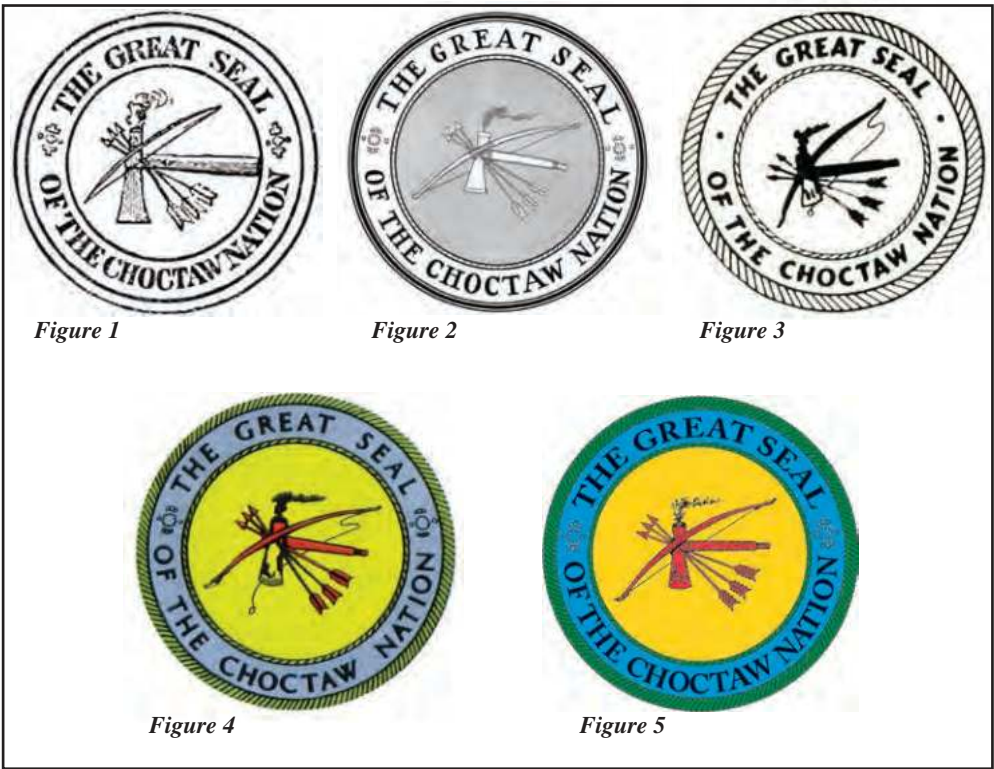
The kids aren’t the only ones having a good time. My family and I share Sam’s excitement and are looking forward to the games. My dad gets a big kick out of listening to him talk about stickball. We find time to practice at home, too, tossing the ball around, and Sam really likes to try to score on me.

All of the teams are preparing to meet for tournaments at Tvshka Homma with the first round on February 13. Families gather, bringing their chairs or blankets to line up around the field and it gives everyone a chance to get out of the house, walk around and visit with friends and family.

The benefits of physical activity to lower the risk for type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart disease are well documented. Any innovation we can find to stay active will help us have a better chance for long and productive lives, a fulfillment of the Choctaw Nation’s vision.



Iti Fabussa



The seals of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma throughout history.

The History of the Great Seal of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

During the course of a given month, the Historic Preservation Department is contacted numerous times by tribal members looking for answers to questions about Choctaw history and culture. Over the years, some of the most commonly recurring questions have involved the tribal seal. For this month’s edition of Iti Fabvssa, we have put together what we know about the history of the tribal seal. It is far from being the full story.

To the best of our knowledge, the Choctaw tribal seal was first formalized as an idea in the 1857 tribal constitution, signed at Skullyville. On Oct. 24, 1860, the seal came up again through a special act at the regular annual session of the Choctaw General Council meeting held at Doaksville. Section 4 of the act directed that:

The Principal Chief shall procure, at an early day, at the cost of the Nation, a great seal of the Nation, with the words “The Great Seal of the Choctaw Nation” around the edge, and a design of an unstrung bow, with three arrows and a pipe-hatchet blended together, engraven in the centre, which shall be the proper seal of this Nation until altered by the General Council, with the concurrence of both houses thereof.

All of these elements have symbolic meanings. The unstrung bow represents both the love of peace that the Choctaw people have had through time, and the willingness to go to war at a moment’s notice if attacked. The three arrows stand for Chiefs Pushmataha, Mushulatubbe, and Apukshunabbe. These men were the leaders of the three Choctaw Districts in 1820, when the Treaty of Doak’s Stand was signed. It was through this treaty that the United States ceded the lands in present-day southeastern Oklahoma that would become the Choctaw Nation. The pipe-hatchet represents the desire of the Choctaw people to establish beneficial alliances with neighbors, but also perhaps prowess.

Although the Chief George Hudson approved the above act in 1860, the physical creation of the seal may have been delayed by the American Civil War, at least, there is no documentation of one being created before or during the war that we are aware of. We do know than in a letter written at Boggy Depot on March 1, 1867, Chief Allen Wright asked Peter Pitchlynn, then in Washington D.C., to have the tribal seal created. He was probably talking about a seal press, used to emboss an impression of the tribal seal onto official correspondence of the Choctaw Nation. Chief Wright recommended that Pitchlynn visit an establishment located on Pennsylvania Avenue, apparently the same one that Chickasaw Nation had contracted

to create their seal or seal press a short time earlier. The completed seal was to be brought back to Choctaw Nation by Israel Folsom.

The whereabouts of Chief Wright’s seal are unknown to the Historic Preservation Department. Sometime after statehood, the Bureau of Indian Affairs took custody of the official seal presses that were then in use by the Five Tribes. One seal press, dated between 1895 and 1905, is curated at the Capitol Museum in Tvshka Homma.

Although the basic structure of the seal has stayed the same, the artistic representation of its elements has changed through time. Early versions of the seal depict a Choctaw longbow shown on a small scale (*Figure 1*). Sometime before 1940, the seal was redrawn replacing the Choctaw bow with an English-style longbow, with antler tips (*Figure 2*). The reason for changing the bow is unknown, but there are several possibilities. One is that English target archery was popular in the early 1900s, and perhaps that was the type of bow that the artist was familiar with. A second possibility involves the fact that during the early 1900s, tribal chiefs were appointed by the United States president under a policy that was ultimately intended to terminate the tribe. During those years, there was an incorrect belief that the English bow was superior to the Native American bow. It may be that the English bow was used on the seal as a symbol of the artist’s belief that the tribe was converting to Euro-American ways of doing things.

There have been other changes to the seal. As the tribe regained self-determination in the 1970s and 1980s, a version of the seal was used that looked like it had a strung bow. In December 1983, a new version was presented with an unstrung bow (*Figure 3*). Through the 1980s and 1990s, several different depictions of the unstrung bow were used (*Figure 4*). In 1997, with input from tribal council member Charlie Jones, the bow on the tribal seal was redrawn as being partially braced (*Figure 5*). A partially braced bow has one end of the string attached, the loop at the other end of the string is slid around the bow limb. With one simple motion, that loop in the string can be slid over the nock, and the bow is strung ready to fire arrows. This change was made to more realistically represent a Choctaw bow when not in use. This is the version of the official seal that is currently in use today.

That is what we know. For something as recent, local, and directly tied to the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, it is surprising that we don’t know more than we currently do about the tribal seal. If you know about a piece of the story that is not told here, please contact us at (800) 522-6170 ext. 2216.

Rain or Shine

Choctaw Nation
Faith♦Family♦Culture

Bring your lawn chairs

Chief Gary Batton
Easter Celebration
Arts & Crafts Building | Tvshka Homma, OK
March 5, 2016 | 10:00 AM

Gospel Singing | Kids 12 & under Egg Hunt | Elders 55 & up Egg Hunt
Easter Bunny Photos | Inflatables for kids (weather permitting)
Stickball (starting at 10:00) | T-shirt Booth | Lunch Provided

New Voter Registration Program to Streamline and Increase Participation

The Choctaw Nation is excited to announce the development of the new Voter Registration Department. This department was created with the goals of promoting transparency, increasing voter participation, and assisting tribal members with questions regarding voter registration and tribal elections.

All eligible voters (members age 18 and older) will be required to officially register to vote in tribal elections, regardless of previous voter participation. Applications will be mailed out in the following months to all eligible voters who have a current address on file with the Choctaw Nation Tribal Membership Department. At that time, applications will also be available on our website, at www.choctawnation.com, and at all Choctaw Nation community centers.

The registration process will be based on physical addresses, but will also keep mailing addresses on file for all eligible members interested in voting in tribal elections. You will receive a Voter Registration certificate once your application has been processed. We anticipate that the certificates will be mailed out beginning this summer. Please be aware that this certificate will not replace your Tribal Membership card.

The Voter Registration staff will be available to assist the Election Board during election times but will not directly affect the election process other than voter eligibility. The new changes will also provide our tribal

leaders improved voting/ election analytics that could be used in making decisions on the future of the tribe.

We hope to improve Choctaw Nation voter participation by getting more involved with our voters and potential voters. We want to inform our tribal members of the importance of voting and how their vote can impact the future of the Choctaw Nation. We want to provide every opportunity for our tribal members to have a voice in the tribe.

Staff will be available year round to answer any questions or concerns tribal members may have regarding registration and Tribal Elections. The Voter Registration Department is located at the Choctaw Nation Headquarters in Durant.



Photo Provided
The Choctaw Nation's Healthy Aging is a finalist for a Champions of Health Award.

Choctaw's Healthy Aging program makes a difference

The Choctaw Nation elder health care program, Healthy Aging, has been named a finalist for the Champions of Health Awards as a Champion of Senior Health.

Since 2004, the Champion of Health awards have recognized programs and individuals that make a difference in the health of Oklahomans. Increasing success and positive results of the Healthy Aging program made it the perfect candidate, worthy of the nomination and recognition as a finalist for the award. Through successful Care Management and elder wellness activities, the program impacted 4,400 elders in 2013 and 9,700 in 2014 by partnering with existing service programs to provide physical and mental health services. The success of the Healthy Aging program is attributed to providing services in a home or community environment where the elder is comfortable. The scope of the program has

expanded to serve Choctaw elders throughout the United States.

Choctaw Nation Healthy Aging was launched in 2012 as a program to address the health of Native American elders ages 65 and up. Due to the success and growth of the program, Healthy Aging now provides services to elders ages 55 and up. The program's purpose is to assist elders in maintaining optimal health, remain independent and reside in their own homes as long as possible. The program provides physical and behavioral tools along with Care Managements services to improve self-care and independence.

There are six main components that contribute to the success of the program: Wellness, Case Management, Social Services Navigation, Behavioral Health, Geriatricians, and Respite Care.

For more information, contact Healthy Aging at the following locations:

- Durant:** 698 Westside Drive, Suite 106
(580) 745-9017
- Idabel:** 920 Lincoln Road
(580) 286-2600
- McAlester:** 1127 South George Nigh Expressway
(918) 423-8440
- Poteau:** 109 Kerr Avenue
(918) 649-1100
- Talihina:** One Choctaw Way
(800) 349-7026



By LISA REED
Chief Gary Batton, third from left, along with 20 council and community members break ground in Heavener.

New Travel Plaza, more coming to Heavener

Chief Gary Batton stated the best way to look at it with a dose of excitement when he spoke at the shovel turning for the Heavener Travel Plaza and Casino Too.

"If we can put these 18 new jobs here in Heavener, it's a win for us in southeastern Oklahoma," said Chief Gary Batton.

The new location, adjacent to the current Travel Plaza, will add a Casino Too and will provide 18 new jobs, bringing the total of 38 at the facility.

The new facility will feature a Choctaw Country Welcome Center dedicated to showcasing tourism information and destinations, Choctaw culture, and Choctaw-made items.

Located at 503 Highway 59 N., adjacent from the current Travel Plaza, in Heavener.

The new 10,254-sq.-ft. complex will offer gasoline, diesel, and two trucking lanes. Amenities will include a full kitchen, a dining area, drive-through service, and 25 games in the Casino Too.

Opening expected to be in early November of this year.

Beginning in 2016, Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma members will be required to officially register to vote in tribal elections with our new **Voter Registration Department**. The **Voter Registration Program** will:

- Promote transparency
- Increase voter participation
- Expand voter information

In the following months, **Voter Registration** applications will be mailed to all members, ages 18 and older, who have a current address on file with the Choctaw Nation Tribal Membership Department. Tribal Members will be required to register to vote with this **new Voter Registration Program, regardless of previous voter participation**. To be eligible to vote, you must:

- Be a member of the Choctaw Nation
- Be at least 18 years old
- Complete the Voter Registration application

As a tribal member, voting is a responsibility and privilege. Be sure to send in your application, and if you need more information or instruction, contact information is listed below.

Until 1971 Choctaws were not allowed to elect their own tribal leaders. Chiefs were appointed by the President of the United States. After ratification of the Indian Self Determination and Education Assistance Act, Choctaws were allowed to have their own Tribal Constitution to govern these matters. The Choctaws quickly formed a committee and by 1979 had ratified its first Constitution as the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. The Constitution guides the Chief, Tribal Council, and Tribal judges in creating successful lifestyles for the Choctaw people.

Mary Watson, 81, attended Wheelock Academy from 1942 to 1949. Wheelock Academy, founded in 1842, was the first school in the Choctaw Nation. It is now registered as a Historic Site. Presbyterian missionaries first operated the Academy as a day school for both boys and girls. Located just east of Fort Towson, Wheelock later became a boarding school for girls.

(right) Mary's room while at Wheelock was located in the upper left corner of this photo.

(left) Mary stands in front of her favorite place at Wheelock, the rose arbor.

Mary is the February elder in the 2016 Choctaw Nation calendar.

2016 Annual Choctaw Nation Livestock Show

Wilburton

EOSC Campus Saturday Feb. 6 & Sunday Feb. 7

Swine Show, Heifer Show, Doe Show, Steer Show, Wether Show, Lamb Show

Durant

Bryan Co. Fairgrounds on Saturday Feb. 6 & Sunday Feb. 7

Swine Show, Heifer Show, Doe Show, Steer Show, Wether Show, Lamb Show

www.choctawnation.com (888)767-2518

BUSINESS

New Tribal Headquarters To Break Ground

Official Ground Blessing Scheduled for March 10

By RONNI PIERCE
Choctaw Nation

The long-awaited construction of the new Choctaw Nation Tribal Headquarters is slated to begin. Work started at the end of January north of the Choctaw Casino Resort in Durant by Manhattan Construction. The 500,000-square-foot facility is expected to be complete by the end of 2017. “This is a tribal legacy project for the Choctaw Nation and its citizens,” said Chief Gary Batton. “We’ve waited a long time to see the beginning of this construction which will bring much more efficient delivery of services for tribal members. This whole project represents the future of the Nation and the progress we have made as a people.” The new complex will consolidate over

30 Nation offices scattered across Durant and will have outdoor architecture featuring a pond and walking track. The building will also showcase culturally significant artwork and symbolism. In addition to the main building, the complex will be home to a data center, conference center with cafeteria, and a 765-space parking garage. “The Choctaw Nation’s new headquarters campus is a truly transformative project that will provide improved efficiencies and synergies in how it administers services and interacts with tribal members,” said Jason Holuby, a Principal with the contracting architectural and planning firm Frankfurt-Short-Bruza Associates. “As a Native American myself, I am proud to partner with the Choctaw Nation in designing a campus that will serve its tribal members for generations to come.” A ground breaking and blessing ceremony will be held on March 10, 2016, at 1 p.m. The public and media are invited to attend. The complex will be located next to the regional health clinic in Durant on Big Lots Road which started construction in July.



Choctaw Nation Headquarters Building Durant, Oklahoma Architectural Rendering

Country Market Under Construction

By JODY STANDIFER
Choctaw Nation

Ground has broken and construction is in progress on the first Choctaw Country Market. It is a one-stop-shop for patrons

chops, steaks, and ground meats. It will feature fresh produce and common household products. Staying true to Choctaw heritage, the market will feature murals depicting cultural aspects of the Choctaw Nation. The gas station will have 10 pumps including four diesel. Choctaw Country Market will employ approximately 28 people from the surrounding community. It is conveniently located at the intersection of Highway 271 and Highway 2 in the former Clayton Country Store building. “We are excited to be building our first market in the 10 ½ counties. It will provide jobs and one-stop shopping convenience to residents in and around the Clayton area.” said Choctaw Nation’s Chief Gary Batton.

Although originally slated to open March 2016, extensive remodeling has been required and it is projected to open late July 2016.



Architectural Rendering

The first wholly owned Choctaw Nation store is expected to be open in mid-summer 2016.

featuring a full service grocery store and gas station. The market will include a comfortable sit-down deli area where customers can enjoy delicious made-to-order meals for breakfast, lunch, or dinner. And for those on the go, the deli will provide pre-packaged meals. The on-site butcher will prepare fresh cut meat daily including



Photo Provided

Seven upscale hotels in Oklahoma have received the AAA Four Diamond award for 2016, including, for the fifth year in a row, Choctaw Casino Resort Grand Tower in Durant.

Choctaw Grand Tower Among State’s Top Hotels

Seven upscale hotels in Oklahoma have received the AAA Four Diamond award for 2016. “To understand just how special this is, you have to know that only 5 to 7 percent of all AAA Approved and Diamond Rated hotels qualify for the Four Diamond designation in North America,” said Chuck Mai, spokesman for AAA Oklahoma. Oklahoma’s AAA Four Diamond hotels for 2016 and the year they first qualified for the award. According to the AAA TourBook, Four Diamond hotels are, “refined, stylish with upscale physical attributes, extensive amenities and a high degree of hospitality, service and attention to detail.” Learn more at AAA.com/ Diamonds. For 80 years, AAA has used professional inspectors to conduct in-person property inspections. AAA offers the only rating system using comprehensive, on-site professional hotel and restaurant evaluations guided by member priorities. With a far greater inventory than any other rating entity, AAA’s rating system covers the United States, Canada, Mexico and the Caribbean. Travelers can find Diamond Rated establishments and inspector insight in AAA trip-planning products: the AAA Mobile app for tablets and smartphones, the desktop and mobile versions of the TripTik Travel Planner online mapping and routing tool, and online searchable Travel Guides on AAA.com. Also, AAA TourBook guides are available for free to AAA organization members at all 11 full-service AAA offices located throughout Oklahoma.

(Provided by AAA)

At a glance . . .

The Choctaw Grand Tower is a AAA Four Diamond entertainment destination in Southeastern Oklahoma. Exceptional gaming and entertainment with a variety of restaurants and accommodations, the Choctaw Grand Tower has catapulted the casino resort to the status of a full-service, regional destination. Perfect for the corporate or leisure travelers alike, guests will enjoy the beautifully designed accommodations. Location to Dallas makes it a perfect getaway. It’s also 10 minutes to Main Street Durant (shopping, dining, museums), and 24 minutes to Lake Texoma. Featuring the region’s most premium rooms and suites, each with wireless high speed Internet access, 32” flat screen TV and executive work areas. Dine at 1832 Steakhouse, or one of the other six restaurants, and enjoy live entertainment at Gilley’s, lounge at the Oasis pool or book a massage at The Spa.

Choctaw Elders age 80 & up . . .

You have stories to tell, let us preserve them.

Contact: Deidre Elrod, 800-522-6170 or delrod@choctawnation.com



The CSBDS provides business assistance to Choctaw tribal entrepreneurs that want to start or expand their business.

Choctaw Tribal members that utilize the services will receive specialized technical assistance through one-on-one business counseling, training workshops, an extensive network of business assistance programs and educational networking opportunities. Assistance offered includes, but is not limited to:

- Business Planning
- Business Counseling
- Business Registration
- Access to Financing
- 8(a) Certification Assistance
- Minority Business Registration
- Marketing
- Business Taxes
- Bid Assistance

February Events Calendar:

- (Please contact CSBDS for more details and to register)
- Feb 4 McAlester: Get your business on the map with Google
 - Feb 9 Atoka: Get your business on the map with Google
 - Feb 9 Coalgate: Get your business on the map with Google
 - Feb 11 Poteau: Etsy: Craft Entrepreneurship 9:00 – 2:00
 - Feb 16 Idabel: Etsy: Craft Entrepreneurship 9:00 – 2:00

Contact Small Business Development Services today!

bhamilton@choctawnation.com or 580-924-8280 ext.2901

Do You Need Help Paying For Your Child’s Daycare?
The Choctaw Nation Child Care Assistance Program
May Be Able To Assist You!

Eligibility Requirements

1. The child must be under the age of 13
2. The child must have a CDIB or reside with an Indian Family
3. The child must reside within the boundaries of the Choctaw Nation 10 1/2 county service area
4. Both parents must be working, in training, or attending an educational program
5. You must meet income guidelines based on family size and income

Child Care Assistance Eligibility Caseworkers:

- | | |
|---|--|
| Margie Cloud
Atoka, Bryan, Coal, and Choctaw counties
mcloud@choctawnation.com
580.924.8280 ext. 2387 | Laura Matthews
Hughes, Haskell, Latimer, LeFlore, McCurtain, Pittsburg, and Pushmataha counties
lmatthews@choctawnation.com
580.924.8280 ext. 2390 |
|---|--|

NOTES TO THE NATION

Youth of the Nation —

Respect, Integrity, Courage Important Lessons

By Jake Lovell, Howe High School,
U.S. Armed Services, and member of
the Choctaw Youth Advisory Board

From a very young age, in my opinion, my parents have nurtured in me three major values.

They instilled in me respect, by respecting my elders, my boss, and anyone of higher ranking in the military.

My parents also taught me integrity, by always being myself even when no one is watching.

Finally, they also cultivated in me personal courage by facing my fears, danger, and adversity (physical or moral).

Respect, to me, is very important because if you meet someone, such as your future boss and you don't show them respect, they could remember you and not hire you.

Respecting your elders is imperative, because they can teach you important lessons and skills that you may need later in life.

Respecting someone in the military is very crucial. If you disrespect someone of higher ranking, you could lose ranking, or even be kicked out of the military with a dishonorable discharge, which in turn would make it close to impossible to get a job.

Another value that my parents have taught me is integrity. Integrity is very important to me because you should always be the same person. You shouldn't act different to fit in with a certain crowd. If you talk about something in public, but do differently when you're alone, then you lack integrity.



I've always tried to do my best to keep my integrity, by being myself when I'm around my friends and family.

One of the biggest values that I have been enriched with by family and the military has, is personal courage. To me, that means facing fear, danger, and adversity, both physical and moral.

I've been tested in basic training by many things, physically and mentally, such as the confidence course, where I had to face my fear of heights.

At a young age my parents taught me to respect my elders, my boss in any job, and anyone that has a higher ranking than me in the military.

They encouraged me to always keep my integrity in mind when I'm with my friends, girlfriend, and more importantly when I'm alone.

Thank you,
Christopher Jacob Lovell,
Senior at
Howe High School
and Private in
the U.S. Army Reserves

Family appreciated

I would like to thank all of my loving family, the Stevens, of Boswell, Bokchito and Durant. The love and support that was given me during the passing of my father, Gen. John Gecks is beyond words.

I want to thank my loving husband Mark and my nephew Martin for being there when I needed you.

I would also like to thank my sisters-in-law Rebecca Acuna and Nita Free for all their hard work.

Thanks also to my niece Melissa Stevens, nephew Brian Acuna, brother-in-law Lee Free and sister-in-law Wanda Vanderveen for their presence.

To the rest of my family, thank you for your calls and love.

Becky Stevens
Durant

Gary Batton
Chief

Jack Austin Jr.
Assistant Chief

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of the
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The BISKINIK is printed each month as a service to Tribal Members. The BISKINIK reserves the right to determine whether material submitted for publication shall be printed and reserves the right to edit submitted material which it finds inaccurate, profane, offensive or morally unacceptable. Copy may be edited for proper grammar and punctuation. Copy will be accepted in any readable form, but where possible, it is requested that material be typewritten and double spaced. You must include an address or 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.

If you are receiving more than one BISKINIK at your home or if your address needs changed, we would appreciate hearing from you.

The BISKINIK is a nonprofit publication of the Choctaw Nation.

Circulation is monthly. Article deadline is the 10th of the month for the following month's edition.

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.



Letters of Thanks



Photo Provided

CHRISTMAS JOY CONTINUES. The Chahta Pre-school children in Bethel were very excited to receive a surprise visit by Santa Claus after singing songs to their families, opening gifts, and enjoying a Christmas meal together. Yakoke, Santa.

Halito,

I would like to extend a word of thanks to everyone who attended, prepared the meal, and served at the District 1 Thanksgiving dinner. Your efforts made this evening of food and fellowship a great success.

The Choctaw Nation is blessed with wonderful employees and I sincerely appreciate the work you do. May you all enjoy a safe and happy 2016 with your families. Yakoke.

Thomas Williston,
Speaker
Choctaw Nation Tribal Council

I want to thank you for the beautiful Christmas ornaments you send out each year. I proudly display them on my tree and store them carefully away for the next Christmas. It will become a tradition to pass on to my children. Thank you again.

Barbara J. Elczyn
Oklahoma City

Halito All!

Help me in congratulating and supporting Dustin Battles, a fellow associate that has entered a Hunting Video Contest with his team. The video contest started Jan. 3 and will run 13 weeks. The show, "Generation X," airs on the Pursuit channel (Channel 393 on Dish Network and 604 on Direct TV). Dustin, as well as six of his team members are tribal members.

Teresa Gallant
Homeowners Energy Management Services

Nominations open for 2016 AARP Oklahoma Indian Elder Honors

Nominations are being accepted for the 8th Annual AARP Oklahoma Indian Elder Honors now through June 1

The annual event, which will be held in October, recognizes 50 tribal elders from federally-recognized Oklahoma tribes and nations for their contributions to their tribal nation, community, family, state or nation.

Past honorees have included artists, language preservationists, military veterans, ministers, educators and family leaders.

Nominations can be made online at: www.aarp.org/okindiannavigator or by calling AARP Oklahoma Associate State Director Mashell Sourjohn at 405-715-4474.

LIVESTOCK DISASTER ASSISTANCE NOW AVAILABLE IN SEVERAL COUNTIES

As a result of the extreme dry conditions from August into October 2015, Atoka, Bryan, Choctaw, and McCurtain have all been designated drought counties eligible for the USDA's Livestock Disaster Assistance Program.

Livestock producers in these counties may sign up and receive payments from the USDA's Farm Service Agency. Livestock producers should contact local offices for appointments to sign up.

Atoka County – (580) 889-2554 ext. 2
Bryan County – (580) 924-4131 ext. 2
Choctaw County – (580) 326-3655 ext. 2
McCurtain County – (580) 286-2574 ext. 2

EVENTS

Fire Fighter Tests to Begin

The Choctaw Nation Forestry Program is organizing a new team of fire fighters.

The first step for possible new recruits will be the "pack test," to be conducted April 4, starting at 9 a.m. at the Talihina High School Track, in Talihina. This is a physical fitness test requiring an individual to carry 45 pounds for 45 minutes.

Application is open to all Native American men and women. Applicants must be 18 years old and provide a current physical examination. Forms for physicals and applications are available at the Forestry office.

For information, contact Raymond Ludlow at (918) 567-2321 or (918) 465-6295. Applicants also may come by the Choctaw Nation Forestry Office, 302 Church St., Talihina.

Emergency Conservation Aid for Bryan County Farms and Ranches

As a result of flooding during December, agriculture producers located in Bryan County who have damage on their land may sign up for the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) now until March 1, 2016.

75% to 90% of the total eligible cost to repair damage sustained on farms and ranches, such as:
Debris Removal
Fencing Removal
Fencing Repair
Fencing Restoration
Gully Shaping, land leveling, etc.
Structure Repair (pond dams, spillway washouts etc.)

Sign up:

Farm Service Agency
USDA Service Center,
200 Gerlach Dr.
(580) 924-4131 ext. 2.

Living Stone

in concert

Contemporary Christian band from California

Featuring

Lead vocalist/bassist Evangeline Jackson
and guitarist/vocalist Randy Jackson

7 p.m.

March 9

New Hope Assembly of God Church
2220 N. 1st Ave.
Durant

For information, contact Junior Battiest, 580-236-6602.

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Legal Assistance

A licensed attorney will be available to provide assistance with simple legal documents **free** to all Choctaw members. Examples of matters that the attorney may be able to assist with:

- Family law (adoption, divorces, custody, child support)
- Contracts and leases
- Guardianships and modifications

February Community Center Schedule
11th, Smithville, OK / 580-244-3289
18th, Wright City, OK / 580-981-7011
25th, McAlester, OK / 918-423-1016

All times will be 9 a.m.-1 p.m. and 1:30 p.m.-3 p.m.
Contact the community center to confirm the attorney will be there before traveling. The office does not provide representation in court or assist in criminal matters.

Choctaw Nation Vocational Rehabilitation

March 2016

Durant - Monday, Wednesday and Friday
Phone: 580-326-8304; Fax: 580-326-0115

Broken Bow - Monday, Wednesday and Friday
Email: ddavenport@choctawnation.com

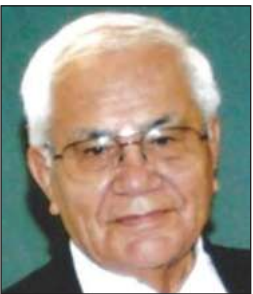
Idabel by appointment

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 Broken Bow by appt. Idabel by appt.	2 Antlers by appt.	3	4 Wright City by appt.	5
6	7 Durant 8:00-4:30	8 Talihina 10:00-2:00	9	10	11 Atoka by appt. Coalgate by appt.	12
13	14 Durant 8:00-4:30	15 Poteau 11:30-1:00	16 McAlester 10:00-2:00 Stigler by appt.	17	18	19
20	21 Durant 8:00-4:30	22 Broken Bow by appt. Idabel by appt.	23 Crowder by appt.	24	25	26
27	28 Durant 8:00-4:30	29 Wilburton by appt.	30	31		

OBITUARIES

Burnett Charlie James

Burnett Charlie James, 90, of Fairview, Texas, passed away on Dec. 28, 2015, from natural causes. He was born Dec. 17, 1925, to Jesse Albert James and Irene (Mills) Hopson in Garvin. Burnett attended the Farmers Hill Country School in Garvin. He later enrolled at Jones Academy. He was a proud member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.



While attending Jones Academy, at the age of 18, Burnett was drafted into the U.S. Army to fight in World War II. Burnett served in the 87th Division of the 365th Regiment, U.S Army Infantry, under the command of General George S. Patton. He was trained as a machine gunner. Burnett was shipped overseas in November 1944. He served in France, Belgium, Luxembourg and Germany. The 87th Division fought in the Battle of the Bulge, cracked the Siegfried Line, crossed the Rhine River and captured the historic city of Koblenz, Germany. Burnett was a decorated war hero, receiving the Silver Star and Combat Infantry Badge for his bravery in the line of duty. He exemplified his division motto, “Stalwart and Strong.” Upon returning home to Oklahoma after the war, in 1946, Burnett met Juanita June Steele, who lived next door to his mother and stepfather, Joe Hopson. Burnett and Juanita were married in Wheeler, Texas the following year. They had two children.

Burnett worked as a truck driver for the Cudahy Meat Packing House for over 20 years. He later worked 10 years at the Weyerhaeuser Paper Mill in Valiant.

Burnett was an avid hunter, fisherman, and outdoorsman. He also crafted beautiful silver jewelry.

Burnett recently traveled to San Antonio, Texas, where he received the “French Legion of Honor” medal for his defense of France during World War II.

Burnett received a Chahta Elder’s “Wisdom Blanket” from Chief Batton. The blanket was given as a token of respect and appreciation as an elder of the Tribe. Burnett was also featured in the December 2014 issue of the Biskinik as a part of the Elder’s Spotlight series.

He was preceded in death by his beloved wife, Juanita; and both parents.

Burnett is survived by his daughter, Linda Diane (James) Pittman and her husband, Larry of Edmond, Oklahoma; son, Terry Lawson James and his wife, Dorris of Fairview, Texas; nine grandchildren, Larry H. Pittman, Jr., Shawn J. Pittman both of Broken Arrow, Terre June (Pittman) Cumming of Edmond, Jamie L. (James) O’Banion, Stacey M. (James) Mattinson, Garrett Lee James, Brett Weston James all of Dallas, Lindsey R. (James) Tanner of Carlsbad, California, and Grant Kendall James of Spanish Fork, Utah; eighteen great-grandchildren, Jesse Wayne Cossey, Jaxon Blake Cossey, Tyler Burnett Cossey, Alex Braden Cossey, Emmaline Faith Cossey, Anderson Hale Cossey, Noah Matthew James, John Asher James, Lawson Lee James, Capri Kendall James, Sierra Marie James, Summer Lorraine James, Benton James O’Banion, Aubrey Lynn O’Banion, Ava Grace O’Banion, Savannah Jane Tanner, Benjamin James Tanner, Evelyn June Tanner.

Arrangments were made under the direction of Turrentine Jackson Marrow Funeral Home in McKinney, Texas. Interment was at Ridgeview Memorial Park in Allen, Texas.

Harrison James ‘Jo Jo’ Thomas

Harrison James “Jo Jo” Thomas, 83, passed away on Dec. 30, 2015. Harrison was born on Jan. 15, 1932, to Hampton Thomas and Elizabeth (Nehka) Thomas in Corinne.



Harrison was a Texas farmer in his earlier years. A mechanic by trade, he enjoyed small engine repairs and was an all-around handyman.

Harrison was a proud member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. He loved his Choctaw heritage, language, music, especially hymns and dancing.

He was preceded in death by both parents; wife, Irene Mae Bond-Thomas; and brother, Daniel Thomas.

Harrison is survived by daughters, Harolyn Myers of Hugo, and Tina husband, Freddie “Sonny” Simes of Boswell; nine grandchildren, Jessica Simes of Durant, Fleming Simes of Colbert, David Simes and wife, Sarah of Unger, Cody Simes and wife, Amy of Colbert, and Issac Simes of Boswell; eight great-grandchildren; along with many other relatives and friends.

Arrangments were made under the direction of Miller & Miller Funeral Home in Hugo. Interment was at Antlers City Cemetery in Antlers.

Vicky Darlene Beard

Vicky Darlene Bailey Beard, 43, passed away on Dec. 17, 2015 in Idabel. She was born May 30, 1972, to Truman Jefferson and Bertha Emeyabbi Jefferson in Talihina.



She enjoyed fishing with her late husband, Squirrel, bingo, dancing, talking on the phone and spending time with her friends and family.

She was preceded in death by her first husband, Robert Charles “Squirrel” Bailey; grandparents, Aurelia and James Emeyabbi and Annie and Preston Jefferson.

Vicky is survived by husband, Elsonzo Beard Sr.; daughter, Talesa Proby and husband Deon of Oklahoma City; sons, Victor Jefferson and James McAlester of Idabel; grandchildren, Victoria, Victor, Vivica and Vquan Jefferson; parents, Truman and Bertha Jefferson of Idabel; sisters, Priscilla Wallace, and April Burris and husband Darrell of Idabel; brother, Robert Jefferson of Idabel; special niece and nephew, Whitney Jefferson and Tyrone Wallace; special friends, Shirley and June Whitaker; a host of nieces, nephews, other relatives and many friends.

Arrangements were made under the direction of Bunch-Singleton Funeral Home in Broken Bow. Interment was at the Williamston Cemetery in Idabel.

Charles ‘Chuck’ Allen Fulton

Charles “Chuck” Allen Fulton, Sr., passed away on Dec. 10, 2015, at his home in Hayden, Idaho. He was born on June 4, 1947, to Jewel and Mary Fulton in Willows, California.



He attended school in Willows, until he enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1966.

Chuck was a proud Vietnam War veteran. He served two tours of duty. His first tour was with the 173rd Airborne, and his second was with the 101st Airborne Division “Screaming Eagles”-327th Infantry Regiment-Tiger Force. He was wounded in action at Que Son Valley, for which he received a Purple Heart. After achieving the rank of Staff Sergeant, Chuck was honorably discharged in 1971.

After his discharge, he returned home to marry his first wife Sandra Ward also from Willows. Together, they had a daughter, Suzanne.

Chuck was later remarried to Carol Reese of Orland, California. Together they had a son, Charles Jr. and a daughter Catherine. While in Orland, Chuck was involved in forage farming, and the natural gas industry. He was a skilled welder, and machinist. He also enjoyed shooting, trading firearms, and was a staunch advocate of the 2nd Amendment.

Upon retirement, he moved to Hayden, where he continued with his firearm-collecting hobby.

Chuck also enjoyed spending time with his friends at Nosworthy’s Cafe, playing cards, crossword puzzling, and just sitting on the veranda watching the world go by. Chuck was also a late-blooming texter, as he found this to be a wonderful way of communicating with his California family.

He was predeceased by both parents; brother, Jack Fulton; and sisters, Tommy Fulton Love, Janie Fulton LaLond.

Chuck is survived by his children, Suzanne Fulton Wunsch, Charles Fulton Jr., and Catherine Fulton Morehouse; sister Dixie Fulton Love, and his companion Julie Kress; along with eight grandchildren.

Arrangements were made under the direction of Bell Tower Funeral Home and Crematory in Post Falls, Idaho. Services were held on Dec. 18, at Coeur d’ Alene Memorial Gardens.

Kitty ‘Colleen’ Welch McDonald

Kitty “Colleen” Welch McDonald, 54, passed away on Nov. 12, 2015 in Yreka, California.



Colleen was born on March 5, 1961, to Richard and Virginia Welch in Santa Rosa, California.

Colleen was raised and attended schools in the Santa Rosa area. She has lived in Siskiyou County, California for 20 years. Colleen married her husband, Brian McDonald, on Nov. 19, 2011, in Little Shasta.

Colleen loved the outdoors, camping, metal detecting and the paranormal. She was also a member of the Siskiyou County Off-Road Riders.

Colleen is survived by her husband, Brian “Kelly” McDonald; daughter, Sarah Bacon; brothers, Dennis and Tim Welch; and a grandchild.

Leonard Ray Bacon

Leonard Ray Bacon, 83, of Talihina, passed away on Nov. 7, 2015 in Honobia. He was born on Nov. 29, 1931 to Roosevelt and Josie (Wood) Bacon in Whitesboro.

Leonard was a proud member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. He enjoyed the fellowship of the fellow members of his Baptist Church. Leonard worked as a welder for many years.

He is survived by his daughter, Linda Chapman of Tulsa; son, Darryl Bacon of Tulsa; seven grandchildren; six great-grandchildren; brother, Wilburn Bacon of Talihina; sisters, Ima Jean Owens, of Talihina, Melba Bowman of Whitesboro, Thelma Johnson of Honobia, and Jerline Flowers of Tulsa.

Arrangements were made under the direction of Burkhart Funeral Service of Talihina.

Chynia Ziegler (Patsy Lawrence)

Chynia McKay Ziegler (Patsy Lou Lawrence) passed away Dec. 18, 2015. She was born Patsy Lou Nelson, on Nov. 9, 1961 to Jewel Nelson and her Choctaw mother, Marguerite Falconer Nelson, near Spiro.



Chynia was a registered nurse most of her professional career. She loved caring for people.

Chynia was a member of Bernice Baptist Church and loved singing in the choir. Her husband was the choir director and there she was affectionately known as “Director’s Pet.” She loved her Lord. Through belief in him she defeated cancer, and is celebrating her final victory over death with him eternally.

Chynia was a very proud member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. Her Choctaw heritage came through her mother’s side. Her great-grandmother was Trail of Tears survivor and “Mother of Caddo, Oklahoma,” Sarah Ann Harlan. Her grandfather, William C. Falconer, and great uncle, Henry Falconer, served as U.S. Marshals under Wyatt Earp. Her grandfather was also appointed Sheriff of Le Flore County, Indian Territory in 1902. She was proud Choctaw, through and through.

She was preceded in death by both parents; and son, Darren Lee Lawrence.

Chynia is survived by her husband, Gary D. Ziegler Sr.; son, Michael W. Lawrence; daughter, Kayla Lawrence Borton; stepdaughter, Betsy Ziegler Murphy; step sons, Gary “David” Ziegler Jr., Christopher Thomas Ziegler, Craig I. Gonsalves and Clint S. Gonsalves; as well as nine grandchildren who loved her as “Mama Chy.”

Chynia donated her body to science to further continue the fight against cancer.

A service celebrating her life and home going was at Bernice Baptist Church in Bernice on Jan. 16, 2015.

Herschell E. Daney

Herschell E. Daney, 87, went to be with the Lord on Dec. 20, 2015. He was born on Sept. 6, 1928 to Reverend Ben and Edith Daney.



He was a proud member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.

Herschell enjoyed learning and was always continuing his education. He graduated from Bacone College, Ottawa University, the University of Tulsa and Seminary of the West. He applied his ample education to many aspects of his life and career.

Herschell served as missionary to the Crow Indians in Montana. He also worked as Director of Religious Life at Bacone College and was Director of Adjunctive Therapy at Hissom. Herschell also served as Superintendent of the Rader Center and Director of Indian Ministries for American Baptist Churches USA.

Herschell lived a very active social life. He served as president of the Sand Springs Rotary Club and sang with Rotary Men of Note. He also served on many boards including Indian Health Care, Bacone College, Ottawa University, and General Board of American Baptist Churches.

Herschell loved the Lord and his family. He was always on the go, doing something.

He was preceded in death by his parents; and his sisters, Louise Paddlety and Peggy Shoemaker.

Herschell is survived by his wife, Vicki, of the home; four children, Steve and Sheila Daney of Albuquerque, New Mexico; Greg and Sarah Daney of St. Louis, Missouri; Mark and Laura Daney of Sand Springs; and Matt and D. Dee Reid of Topeka, Kansas; grandchildren, Hannah and Noah Daney of Albuquerque, New Mexico; Shae and Bryn Daney of St. Louis, Missouri; Hunter and Mason Daney of Sand Springs; Bella, Miller, Sutton and Blythe Reid of Topeka, Kansas; siblings, Billie Engavo, Jean Florance, April Brown and Daniel Daney; as well as, numerous nieces and nephews.

Arrangements were made under the direction of Freeman Harris Funeral Home in Tulsa. Memorial Service was held on Jan. 2, 2015 at Community Baptist Church in Tulsa.

Jerry D. Allen

Jerry D. Allen, 75, of Murray, Kentucky, passed away on Oct. 21, 2015 at Baptist Health in Paducah, Kentucky. He was born on July 17, 1940, to the late Don V. Allen and Doris (Gamble) Allen in Chickasha.



Jerry had retired with Kenlake State Park as the business manager after 18 years of service. He was currently serving as the CFO for Wisdom Tree Technologies, LLC in Murray. Jerry was a member of the Poplar Springs Baptist Church. He was also a proud member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. Jerry was also a Navy Vietnam combat veteran.

Jerry married Brenda Allen in 1960 in Fairfield, California.

Jerry is survived by his wife Brenda Allen of Murray; daughter, Dawn Prescott and husband Quentin of Henderson, Kentucky; son, Scott R. Allen of Murray, Kentucky; brother, Dennis E. Allen and wife Roxie of Fairfield, California; six grandchildren, Emily N. Reeves of Lexington, Kentucky, Allen E. Reeves of Owensboro, Kentucky, Adam G. Prescott and wife Whitney of Athens, Georgia, Aaron A. Allen of Honolulu, Hawaii, Alex Villanueva of Murray, and Sarah B. Allen of Murray.

Arrangements were made under the direction of the J.H. Churchill Funeral Home in Murray. Interment with full military rites by VFW Post #6291 was held at the Murray City Cemetery.

Ernest Paul Carnes

Ernest Paul Carnes, 72, passed away on Dec. 31, 2015 due to complications from pulmonary fibrosis. He was born on April 4, 1943 to Ernest Newell and Opal Fern Carnes.



Ernest, also known as “Chief,” “Beaver,” or “Ern,” lived in Pendleton Indiana. He formerly resided in Bradenton, Florida.

He attended his mother’s Alma mater, Ball State University after serving in the U.S. Air Force during the 1960s’ Cold War. While in the Air Force, Paul was trained as a communications specialist in Operation Looking Glass, where airborne intelligence information was relayed to his station for encryption and sent to Strategic Air Command.

His communications training also led him to work for Indiana Bell in 1965, then to General Telephone & Electric Corporation in 1969 while continuing in the U.S. Air Force Reserve at Grissom Air Force Base. He eventually retired from GTE in Sarasota, Florida.

Paul was a man’s man who balanced American Veterans (AMVETS) books and helped many veterans file for their benefits.

Paul was a proud member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.

Paul was preceded in death by his wife, Arlene Carnes; loving friend, Sally Clark; and friend Red.

He is survived by the mother of his children and friend till the end, Phyllis Elaine Carnes (Bennett); daughter, Paula Jill (Chip “Chipmeister” Myers) Carnes, granddaughter Kelly and husband Heath Vanoy; grandson, Johnny Patrick Ginder; son, Todd Douglas Carnes; grandson, Trent Paul Carnes; son, Christopher Shawn Carnes and wife, Lisa Leann; grandchildren, Jordan Kilee Beauchamp, Kyle Alexander Carnes and Trevor Michel Carnes; granddaughter, Amanda Circharo; six great-grandchildren; granddaughter, Courtney Miquel; stepson, Hill Readnour and wife Denise; cousins, Morris, Michael and Danny McCreery; and sister, Ann Julane Carnes.

Arrangements were made under the direction of Wilson St. Pierre Funeral Service and Crematory in Pendleton. Burial with military honors was at Marion National Cemetery in Marion, Indiana.

OBITUARIES

David Kannady

David Alan Kannady, 53, of Owasso, passed away on May 28, 2015. He was born, on Oct. 13, 1961, to B.F. and Barbara (Dedmon) Kannady in Tulsa.

David was a firefighter for the Tulsa Fire Department. In his spare time, he enjoyed hunting, fishing, 4-wheeling and going to auctions. David was the great-grandson of original enrollee Eliza Dain White.

David is survived by his wife, Connie; two sons, Jacob Kannady and Taylor Kannady of Owasso; grandson, Hagen Kannady; his parents, Burr and Barbara Kannady of Tulsa; sister, Pam Kannady of Tulsa; brother, Mitch and wife Melissa Kannady and their children, Makinze, Lane and Keelie, all of Coweta; and an overabundance of uncles, aunts, cousins, friends.

Arrangements were made under the direction of Mowery Funeral Service in Owasso. Interment was at Grace-land Memorial Park Cemetery.



Ronald Wayne Johnson

Ronald Wayne Johnson, 71, of Marietta passed away on Dec. 23, 2015 in the Norman Specialty Hospital in Norman. He was born on Oct. 29, 1944 to Frank and Lavene (Brokeshoulder) Johnson in Marietta.

Ron was a graduate of Marietta High School. He attended Bacone Junior College, before receiving a bachelor's degree in architecture from the University of Texas at Arlington.

Ron married Lorraine Elizabeth Heart on June 5, 1970 at the Trinity Temple in Las Vegas. The couple met at Bacone College in Muskogee and lived in Marietta, Georgia, and Dallas before returning to Marietta to make their home.

Ron worked as an architect for many years and then began woodworking. In addition he served in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War. He was an avid University of Oklahoma Sooner fan. Ron also enjoyed fishing. He was baptized in the Lockwood Baptist Church and was a member of Marietta's First Baptist Church.

He was preceded in death by his parents; son, Russell Johnson; and brother, Jimmy "Tiny" Johnson.

Ron is survived by his wife, Lorraine Johnson of the home; two daughters and sons-in-law, Jennifer Story and husband Joshua of Durango, Colorado and Kathleen Brintle and husband Randy Jr. of Kingston; three brothers, Calvin Johnson of the Pike Community, Bill Johnson of Ardmore, and Kenneth Johnson of Durant; three sisters, Shirley Thompson of Marietta, Rita Scott of Ada, and Barbara Williams, also of Marietta; four grandchildren, Noah, Asher, Layton, and Carter; and many other extended family members and friends.

Arrangements were made under the direction of Flanagan-Watts Funeral Home & Cremation Services in Marietta. Interment was at the Lakeview Cemetery in Marietta. Honors were conducted by the Choctaw Honor Guard.



Davie Mae (Bohanan) Russell

Davie Mae Bohanan Russell, 92, passed away on Jan. 10, 2016. She was born on May 14, 1923, to Dave and Elsie Bohanan.

She was the oldest of seven children.

Davie Mae married Thayer James Russell on June 18, 1942, and they were married for 53 years. Together they raised three children.

Davie Mae loved to shop and was very independent.

She was preceded in death by both of her parents; husband, Thayer; and sisters, Hellen McDaniels and Inola Walker.

Davie Mae is survived by son, Dave and wife Margaret; son, Joe Russell and wife, Von; daughter Cindy and husband Jess Atteberry; grandchildren, Sherri and Rick DeRennaux, Marsha Russell, David and wife Lisa Russell, Michael Russell, Gena and husband David Jones, Maurice Ludlow, Elizabeth and Sidney Ramsey, Whitney Russell, Corie Wall, Russell and wife Amanda Atteberry, Jessie Jo Atteberry; numerous great-grandchildren; siblings, DeAnna Foster, Dorothy Black, Johann Dillon, and Robert (Son) Bohanan.

Arrangements were made under the direction of Burkhart Funeral Services of Talihina. Interment was at the Bohanan Cemetery.



James Delbert Englebright

James Delbert Englebright, 71, passed away on Jan. 1, 2016, in Tahlequah. He was born Jan. 11, 1944, to Albert Henry and Helen Martha (Byington) Englebright in Tahlequah.

Growing up, Delbert attended school at Peggs, and lived in the Peggs area his whole life.

He enjoyed spending time outdoors, going fishing, hunting and going to the creek. Delbert loved his dogs and he enjoyed playing the guitar.

He was preceded in death by his parents; four brothers, Talbert, Thomas, Kenneth and Richard Englebright; and two sisters, Mary McKim and Janet Englebright.

Delbert is survived by four brothers, Ronnie, Loyd, Joe, and Johnny Englebright; four sisters, Sherry Martin, Jackie List, Faye Butler, and Kay Jenkins; as well as numerous other relatives and friends.

Delbert will be greatly missed by all who knew him.

Arrangements were made by Hart Funeral Home in Tahlequah.



Myreta Don Suggs

Myreta Don Sugg, 81, of Lubbock, Texas, died Dec. 27, 2015. She was born in Harrisburg, to Sam and Juanita Thomas.

Myreta attended school in Wellington, Texas. She married Paul Sugg on Aug. 1, 1953, in Wellington.

Myreta worked for many years as a nurse's aide in the Lubbock area.

She was preceded in death by her husband; both parents; brother, Elvis Lee Thomas; and sister, Jo Ann Thomas.

Myreta is survived by her daughter, Paula Gay and husband Paul of Lubbock; son, Mark Sugg and his wife Dion of Lubbock; brothers, Gary Mac Thomas and Ronald Dale Thomas; sister, Linda Gayle Marshall; eight grandchildren, 14 great-grandchildren and numerous nieces and nephews.

Arrangements were made under the direction of Resthaven Funeral Home in Lubbock. Interment was at the Resthaven Memorial Park.



Bertie Brashears Mitchell

Bertie Brashears Mitchell, 100, passed away Jan. 9, 2016, in Oklahoma City. She was born Aug. 10, 1915, in the family farmhouse near Kinta.

Bertie was a member of Daughters of the American Revolution. She moved from Lona Valley near Kinta, in 1942 to Moore. Later, she moved to Oklahoma City.

Bertie was a member of the Wilmont Place Baptist Church, joining the church in 1944.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Thomas Carl Mitchell; and daughter, Vestal Juanita Mitchell.

Bertie is survived by her daughter, Ramona Etris, of Oklahoma City; her granddaughter, Karen Bouchard (Norm), of Kansas City, Missouri; grandsons, Darrell Etris and David Etris, of Oklahoma City; three great-grandchildren; five great-great-grandchildren; as well as her special niece, Sybil Foster.

Arrangements were made under the direction of Vondel L. Smith & Son Mortuaries in Oklahoma City. Interment was at the Lona Valley Cemetery near Kinta.



Danny Williams

Danny Williams, 62, passed away Oct. 27, 2015 at his home. He was born April 10, 1953 to Frank Williams Jr. and Udell Williams at the old Phoenix Indian Hospital in Phoenix, Arizona.

Danny was a life long resident of Peoria, Arizona and graduated from Peoria High School.

He is the grandson of Frank Williams, an original enrollee of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.

He is preceded in death by both parents; and brother Chuckie Williams.

Danny is survived by his son Jason and wife Sheila of St Helena, California; daughter Vanessa Williams of Peoria; along with two brothers and four sisters.

Arrangements were made under the direction of Heritage Funeral Home in Peoria. A memorial was held on Nov. 7 at Heritage Funeral Chapel in Peoria.



Stephanie Gayle Smith

Stephanie Gayle Smith, 33, passed away on Dec. 19, 2015. She was born Jan. 4, 1982 to Gerald and Marsha Gayle (McConnell) Stevens in Oklahoma City.

Stephanie was a graduate of U.S. Grant High School. She and husband Brandon Smith were high school sweethearts. They moved to Guthrie in 2007 where they loved diving headfirst into the community activities.

Stephanie enjoyed being at the school volunteering in the office always smiling at all she met. Sporting events were a part of her life. She truly treasured her job as a mother, wife and friend.

She was preceded in death by John Westey Taylor.

Stephanie is survived by her husband, Brandon of the home; daughters, McKenzie, Kaydence, and son Decan; mother, Marsha Taylor of Oklahoma City; father, Gerald Stevens and Kara Gardener of Oklahoma City; grandparents, Karen and Jim McConnell of Tuttle; sisters, Anne Stevens and Mindy Stevens, both of Oklahoma City; nephew, Cameron Lawrence; in-laws, Scott and Diana Frith of Choctaw; brother-in-law, Austin Smith and wife Kimberly of Yukon; their daughters, Matilea and Katilea; Weston Frith and wife Amber of McCloud; their children, Weslee and Kase; as well as the many friends she met along the way.

Arrangements were made under the direction of the Smith- Gallo Funeral Home in Guthrie. Interment was at the Summit View Cemetery.



George Wayne Robison

George Wayne Robison, 85, passed away on Jan. 8, 2016 in Paris, Texas. He was born on Dec. 28, 1930, to George Washington and Essie (Spring) Robison in Shreveport, Louisiana.

His family returned to Hugo when George was a baby, and he lived in the Hugo area the rest of his life.

In 1947, at the age of 17 and a half, George joined Company "F" – 180th Infantry Regiment of the 45th Infantry Division in the Hugo National Guard. On Sept. 1, 1950, his unit was mobilized for active duty. He was sent to Fort Polk, Louisiana for eight months, then to Japan for nine months of advanced combat training. From Japan, George's Company F was sent to the front lines of the Korean War, where he served for six months. Upon returning to Hugo, he continued in the Army National Guard as a full time employee for 10 years. George retired from the military as Sergeant Major after a total of 38 years and nine months of service.

George married Sarah Lavella Burton on Dec. 2, 1954, in Hugo.

He worked for the State of Oklahoma, in the local employment office, for 20 years; eventually he was promoted to manager. George also worked as manager of the Erie Theater and Circus Drive-in in Hugo.

George was a proud member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. He served on the Housing Authority, and in the Choctaw Color Guard.

George was president of the Hugo Chamber of Commerce in 1985. He was an active member of the Wesley United Methodist Church. George was a lay leader and speaker at numerous churches in the area.

He was preceded in death by both of his parents.

George is survived by his wife, Lavella (Betty) of the home; son, Michael Robison and wife, Kim, of Valiant; daughter, Kathy D. Reeder and husband, Kevin, of Stillwater; grandchildren, Drew Robison and wife, Katie, of Midland; Brianne Johnson and husband, Jeremiah, of Shawnee; Sky Rogers and husband, Chuck, of Stillwater; Cameron Robison of Norman; Cha' Hutchison and husband, Wyatt, of Tulsa; sister and brother-in-law, Sue and Bob Wallace, of Lovington, New Mexico; four great-grandchildren and numerous nieces and nephews.

Arrangements were made under the direction of Prater-Lampton-Mills & Coffey Funeral Home in Hugo. Interment was at the Mount Olivet Cemetery in Hugo.



Peggy Ruth Scruggs

Peggy Ruth Scruggs, 82, passed away on Nov. 15, 2015 in Marlow. She was born on June 10, 1933, to Levi L. and Donna C. (Gardner) Beard in Rush Springs.

Peggy lived in the Rush Springs area all of her life. She attended Rush Springs schools.

Peggy married Curtis Karl Scruggs in Wichita Falls on Dec. 24, 1948.

Peggy enjoyed sewing, crafts, traveling and playing bingo with her sisters. She loved playing with her grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Peggy also loved visiting with her older grandchildren.

Peggy was a proud member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. Her grandfather Edward Nail was an original enrollee.

Peggy was a member of the Southern Baptist Church in Rush Springs.

She was preceded in death by both of her parents; husband, Curtis; daughter, Karla O'Neal Prieto; great-grandson, Justice Elam; two brothers, Buster and Ralph Beard; two sisters Billie Jenkins and Wanda Steltemeier.

Peggy is survived by two daughters, Shannon Foster and husband Bobby of Rush Springs, Marilyn Joyce Scruggs of Marlow; seven grandchildren, Kyle, Robert and James Foster, Shane and Curtis Elam, Stuart O'Neal and Heather Ruthstrom; nine great-grandchildren; one son-in-law, Steve Prieto; as well as numerous nieces and nephews.

Arrangements were made under the direction of Callaway-Smith-Cobb Funeral Home in Marlow. Interment was at Rush Springs Cemetery.



Dawn Morningstar

Dawn Morningstar, 50, of Carbondale, Illinois, passed away on Jan. 10, 2016. Dawn was born on Aug. 29, 1965 to Jimmy Holt and Sandra (Clampet) Holt in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Dawn worked in transportation as a school bus driver for many years.

She was a proud member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. She was an advocate for human and animal rights, and a volunteer and host on WDBX 91.1 for the Native Voices program.

Dawn was a very passionate artist that donated some of her art to the community for fundraisers. She was also a co-founder of Common Greens, which is a non-profit community garden.

She was preceded in death by her grandparents Lawrence Clampet and Forrest and Opal Holt, Uncle Anthony Clampet.

Dawn is survived by parents, Jimmy Holt and Sandra (Clampet) Holt of Talihina; grandmother, Isabell Clampet of Talihina; partner Sorrel Kunath of Carbondale; many uncles, aunts, nieces, nephews, friends; as well as her favorite running buddy, her dog Neshoba.

Donations may be made in Dawn's memory to the St. Francis Animal Care in Murphysboro, Illinois.

A celebration of life ceremony was held in Dawn's memory in both Carbondale and Idabel. Arrangements were made under the direction of Huffman, Harker, Walker Funeral Home in Carbondale.



Obituary Policy

Obituary submissions are for Choctaw tribal members and are free of charge. The Biskinik will only accept obituary notices from funeral homes or other official sources. Family members/individuals may still submit funeral notices as long as the notice is from the funeral home or printed in their local newspapers through a funeral home service. Full-length handwritten notices will not be accepted. The Biskinik strives to serve all Choctaws, therefore, any handwritten notices received will be searched online for official funeral home notices. If none are found, efforts will be made to contact the family and make arrangements for an official notice. Notices may be edited for space limitations.

Send official obituary notices to:
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Durant OK 74702
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PEOPLE YOU KNOW



Grandmother and Granddaughter Explore their roots in Choctaw Culture through Artwork

Donna Bartee and her granddaughter Christian McGowan are both registered Choctaw artists. Donna makes traditional Choctaw cornhusk dolls, infusing traditional techniques with modern twists. Christian draws and paints everything from caricatures, to the animals she loves to bring to life through her artwork.

Donna discovered her love and talent for making cornhusk dolls, after participating in a workshop offered to the Durant Choctaw senior citizens group.

Donna is proud to be able to make these traditional pieces of art.

“These dolls are representative of what children used to have,” said Donna. “They didn’t have real toys, they made things.”

According to Donna, cornhusk doll making is about a two-day process.

Every one of Donna’s dolls is unique. Donna likes to use things she finds to make the special accessories.

Opal Twyman Pipes to Celebrate 99th Birthday

Opal Twyman Pipes, a lifelong resident of Roff, Oklahoma, is celebrating her 99th birthday this month.

She had been employed by Salon Nursing Home, the Roff Café, Roff Head Start School, and a nutrition site in Roff.

She retired and was a housewife.

She married J.D. “Dick” Pipes on Oct. 25, 1931, in Sulphur. They had three children together, Patricia Halpin, deceased; Jerry Pipes, deceased; and Kay Emerson. They had six grandchildren, David; Ronny; and Mike Pipes, deceased; Jeff; and Casey Hughes; Rachelle Moreland, and three adopted Laura Braun; Byron; and Gordon Bradshaw. They had twelve great-grandchildren, Justin, Mason, Devin, Blake, Makenzi, Sidney, Mitchell and Ella Pipes; Daniel, Janae and Conor Hughes; and Caleb Moreland.

Dick passed away in 1999. Opal is now living in an Alzheimer care facility in Hurst, Texas.



Hinson Receives Nurse Practitioner Degree

Tiffany (Harkins) Hinson recently received her family nurse practitioner degree.

Tiffany is the daughter of Tom and Diana Harkins. She is the great-great-great-great-granddaughter of George Washington Harkins, a former chief of the Choctaw Nation.

Tiffany graduated in 2000 from Erick High School. She attended one year of college at Southwestern Oklahoma State University in Weatherford. Tiffany then moved to Yukon, and went to work at Mercy Hospital in 2001, while attending nursing school. She graduated with her associate’s degree in applied science at Redlands College in 2004. Tiffany continued to work at Mercy as a registered nurse. In 2012 she received her bachelor’s degree in nursing science. In 2015 Tiffany graduated from Midwestern State University in Wichita Falls, Texas, as a family nurse practitioner with a master’s degree. Tiffany currently works at the Oklahoma Heart Hospital, a branch of Mercy. She has worked for Mercy for 14 years.

Tiffany makes her home in Yukon, with husband Ryan and daughters Peyton and Presley.



“We do beads, or we’ll make baby dolls for the mothers. We’ll make bow and arrows and fishing poles for the guys,” said Donna. “They’re all unique. Each one is different.”

One of Donna’s favorites to make is the fisherman doll. This doll has a glass bead for a bobber and sewing hook as a fishing hook.

Donna is proud to express her heritage through her doll making.

Growing up, like many people of Choctaw descent, her family didn’t speak about their Choctaw roots.

“My granddad went to an Indian school, but he never talked about it,” said Donna. “At that time, they were told it was best you just didn’t talk about it.”

Now that Donna is older she and her family are reconnecting with their Choctaw heritage.

“Now that I’m older and he’s gone, we missed out on a lot by not sharing,” said Donna.

Donna’s doll making sparked the fire of wanting to know about their heritage within her family.

“It wasn’t prominent in my growing up either,” said Christian. “Not until she started working on the dolls.”

Donna and her granddaughter Christian McGowan travel to cultural events selling their artwork and learning about Choctaw culture.

According to Donna, she always enjoyed sewing and craft making, but never really considered herself an artist prior to making her dolls.

Donna’s granddaughter Christian on the other hand has been an artist for as long as she can remember.

“My parents have no idea where it came from. They like to think it comes from her,” said Christian.

Christian uses many different mediums in her artwork, but her favorite is watercolor.

Watercolor painting can be difficult to master, but after taking a few classes, Christian got the hang of it.

“It was a lot of fun, and it is what I find the most enjoyment in now,” said Christian.

Christian’s love for animals and nature is reflected in

her artwork.

“It’s probably in all of my work, animals and scenery,” said Christian.

Christian likes using her imagination and putting her own spin on her artwork. From watercolor buffalos to comic strips about pigeons, Christian’s art is uniquely her own.

Together, Donna and Christian work as a team. The only two artists in their family, they go to each other for artistic advice and encouragement.

“We kind of shop together. She has a good eye about my dolls,” said Donna. “We kind of feed off of each other, even though we do different things.”

Christian considers Donna to be a huge inspiration in not only her artwork, but in her life.

“For every one or two dolls that I help design, she’s made 40 or 50,” said Christian. “She is a hard worker.”

Both Donna and Christian’s art are available for purchase online.

Visit the Facebook page Donna Bartee – Choctaw Corn Husk Dolls for more information about Donna’s cornhusk dolls. For more information on Christian’s artwork, visit christianmcgowanart.com.



Nathan Coates Awarded for Heroism

Nathan Coates, was nominated and awarded by the Oklahoma City Police Department for his act of heroism.

One night in November of 2014, Nathan witnessed a motor vehicle accident. The vehicle had rolled over three times, before landing upright. Nathan sprung into action. Nathan noticed that the vehicle was smoking. Without regard for his own safety, Nathan attempted to open the doors of the vehicle. The doors would not open due to damage. He noticed flames coming from under the damaged hood and that the driver was unconscious. Nathan quickly called 911, and within minutes an OKC police officer arrived on scene. Nathan and the officer were able to remove the driver, seconds before the vehicle burst into flames.

Nathan received his award during the 34th Annual Oklahoma City Police Awards Banquet held on May 1, 2015.

Nathan is the great-grandson of original enrollees, Jonas S. Nelson and Annie (McIntosh) Nelson. He is also the great-great-grandson of Lucy A. McCurtain.



Stigler Head Start Students Give Back

Students from the Choctaw Nation Stigler Head Start recently accepted a Loose Change Challenge, to experience the joy of giving.

They chose Samaritan’s Purse, an international relief program that offered the opportunity to help fund a fresh water well in Kenya. The goal was to raise \$40, but students went above and beyond raising a total of \$200.

Students Noah Jaspersen and Corbit McCauley are seen holding the loose change watering can used to collect the donations.



Taloe Raven Wins Spelling Bee

Taloe Raven, a 10-year-old sixth-grader, was the spelling bee champion for Talihina Schools. She will compete at the regional level.

Taloe is the daughter of Sarah Sharp and Les Williston.



Millerton Language Class Graduates

The Choctaw Language class in Millerton graduated from phase II/III. Eleanor Caldwell taught the community class.

Pictured from left, Eleanor Caldwell, Mary Edna Watson, Howard Phillips, Greta Slaton, Doretha Bowen

Not pictured: Paula Griffith, Whitney Griffith.

Allyson Paige Campbell turns 13

Allyson Paige Campbell turned 13 on Dec. 24, 2015.

She is a seventh grader at Bethel Middle School. Allyson has been an Honor and Choctaw Star student since the second grade. She enjoys band, choir, cheer and softball.

Allyson is the daughter of Renée Campbell. She is the granddaughter of Tammy and Jacob Jesse James.



The Choctaw Nation Coalgate Head Start gathers around the flagpoles of their center for a “See You at the Pole” event. The students met on the morning of Nov. 6 to pray.

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HEALTH

February is American Heart Month: Healthy Lifestyles = Stronger Hearts

By ERIN ADAMS

Choctaw Nation

Halito,

February is American Heart Month. This article written for The American Heart Association is aimed at kids, however, we can all learn from this information to live a healthier lifestyle for stronger hearts.

Keep your heart healthy with Life’s Simple 7 for Kids

As a young person, if you start doing small things every day that keep your body healthy, you have a better chance of living a longer, happier and healthier life.

The things that you do to keep your heart healthy will also make you less likely to develop many other types of diseases, like type 2 diabetes and cancer.” These small steps are not expensive or difficult to take, and taking them can go a long way toward helping you feel your best.

Make small choices daily to keep your heart healthy

You make many choices every day, like what color socks to wear or how to fix your hair. When it comes to making decisions that keep you healthy, it may seem difficult to choose better options when so many things seem easier or just more fun. You just need to take small steps in a healthy direction and that begins by knowing the healthy

choices! Then it gets easier to make choices every day that help keep you healthy.

How do I know if my heart is healthy?

Find out if your heart is healthy using Life’s Simple 7™. They are:

- Avoid smoking and using tobacco products.
- Be physically active every day.
- Eat a heart-healthy diet.
- Keep a healthy weight.
- Keep your blood pressure healthy.
- Keep your total cholesterol healthy.
- Keep your blood sugar healthy.

We’ll help you understand how to keep your heart healthy.

To make it fun and exciting, the American Heart Association has created a website called “My Life Check” (link opens in a new window) that will help you understand your heart health and give you and your family ideas to make the best choices.

The Life’s Simple 7 series describes things you can do on your own to keep your heart healthy and some things that may require the help of a health professional.

Are you ready? Let’s start off by learning about heart disease and stroke.

What is heart disease?

Heart disease is also known as cardiovascular disease

or “CVD.” CVD is a very serious health condition that keeps the heart or blood vessels from working properly. When our heart and blood vessels are working at their best, blood flows easily and is circulated around the body freely.

If there is a clog in our blood vessels or if our heart is not pumping blood properly, this prevents blood from being delivered to many important parts of our body. Not having blood constantly delivered to the many important parts of our body can cause serious illness or even death.

Although some people are born with certain types of CVD, most people develop CVD as a result of poor lifestyle habits, such as eating unhealthy foods, not getting enough exercise or using tobacco.

What is a Stroke?

A stroke happens when a blood vessel that carries oxygen to the brain gets blocked or bursts. When that happens, blood can’t deliver oxygen to part of the brain and the brain starts to die.

Without the right medical attention, a stroke can cause major damage to the brain. People who have a stroke may have problems speaking, seeing or moving normally for a short time or for the rest of their lives. The person can even die from a stroke.

People most likely to have a stroke are older adults, don’t eat a healthy diet, are not regularly physically active, are overweight or obese, or have other medical problems that may lead to heart disease, but people can have a stroke at any age. If you think you or a loved one may be having a stroke, it’s important to call 9-1-1 and get help right away.

Following Life’s Simple 7 can help you live a life free of CVD!

Making small changes in your life can add up to a big difference in your heart health, even for children and teenagers!

To get started on your heart healthy lifestyle, think about the following questions:

1. Do you have a family history of heart disease? Talk to your mom, dad or guardian to find out more.
2. What are three things you’re doing to live a healthy life free of heart disease and stroke?

Below is a heart healthy recipe with a tropical spin. This recipe can be spicy, so if you prefer a milder flavor I would decrease the amount of cayenne pepper added to the recipe by half.

Brazilian Chicken with Coconut Milk

*Recipe from allrecipes
Recipe of the Month*

Ingredients

- 1 tsp ground cumin
- 1 tspn ground cayenne pepper
- 1 tspn ground turmeric
- 1 tspn ground coriander
- 4 skinless, boneless chicken breast halves
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 2 tbsl olive oil
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 tbsl minced fresh ginger
- 2 jalapeno peppers, seeded and chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 3 tomatoes, seeded and chopped
- 14 ounces light coconut milk
- 1 bunch chopped fresh parsley

Directions

Prep 15 minutes, Cook 30 minutes, Ready In 45 minutes

1. In a medium bowl, mix the cumin, cayenne pepper, turmeric, and coriander. Place the chicken in the bowl, season with salt and pepper, and rub on all sides with the spice mixture.
2. Heat 1 tablespoon olive oil in a skillet over medium heat. Place the chicken in the skillet. Cook 10 to 15 minutes on each side, until no longer pink and juices run clear. Remove from heat and set aside.
3. Heat the remaining olive oil in the skillet. Cook and stir the onion, ginger, jalapeno peppers, and garlic 5 minutes, or until tender. Mix in the tomatoes and continue cooking 5 to 8 minutes. Stir in the coconut milk. Serve over the chicken. Garnish with the parsley.

Nutrition Facts Servings Per Recipe: 4

Amount Per Serving:	
Calories: 345	Fat: 19.9g
Carbs: 11.5g	Protein: 29.3g
Cholesterol: 72mg	Sodium: 234mg

I hope you enjoy this recipe and have a healthy New Year! For further information you may contact: Erin Adams, RD, LD, Choctaw Nation Diabetes Wellness Center (800) 349-7026 ext. 6959.



United States Department of Agriculture



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Follow the MyPlate building blocks below to create your own healthy eating solutions—“MyWins.” Choose foods and beverages from each food group—*making sure that your choices are limited in sodium, saturated fat, and added sugars.*

Make half your plate fruits and vegetables: Focus on whole fruits

- Choose whole fruits—fresh, frozen, dried, or canned in 100% juice.
- Enjoy fruit with meals, as snacks, or as a dessert.

Make half your grains whole grains

- Look for whole grains listed first or second on the ingredients list—try oatmeal, popcorn, whole-grain bread, and brown rice.
- Limit grain desserts and snacks, such as cakes, cookies, and pastries.

Move to low-fat or fat-free milk or yogurt

- Choose fat-free milk, yogurt, and soy beverages (soy milk) to cut back on saturated fat.
- Replace sour cream, cream, and regular cheese with low-fat yogurt, milk, and cheese.

Limit

Drink and eat less sodium, saturated fat, and added sugars


- Use the Nutrition Facts label and ingredients list to limit items high in sodium, saturated fat, and added sugars.
- Choose vegetable oils instead of butter, and oil-based sauces and dips instead of ones with butter, cream, or cheese.
- Drink water instead of sugary drinks.

Make half your plate fruits and vegetables: Vary your veggies

- Try adding fresh, frozen, or canned vegetables to salads, sides, and main dishes.
- Choose a variety of colorful veggies prepared in healthful ways: steamed, sautéed, roasted, or raw.

Vary your protein routine

- Mix up your protein foods to include seafood, beans and peas, unsalted nuts and seeds, soy products, eggs, and lean meats and poultry.
- Try main dishes made with beans and seafood, like tuna salad or bean chili.



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FEBRUARY

ANTLERS

Market open weekdays February 1-29, except for:
Closed: February 15 for holiday and 26 and 29 for inventory.
Cooking with Carmen: February 2, 11 a.m.-1 p.m.

BROKEN BOW

Market open weekdays February 1-29, except for:
Closed: February 15 for holiday and 26 and 29 for inventory.
Cooking with Carmen: February 16, 11 a.m.-1 p.m.

DURANT

Market open weekdays February 1-29, except for:
Closed: February 15 for holiday and 26 and 29 for inventory.
Cooking with Carmen: February 4, 11 a.m.-1 p.m.

McALESTER

Market open weekdays February 1-29, except for:
Closed: February 15 for holiday and 26 and 29 for inventory.
Cooking with Carmen: February 9, 11 a.m.-1 p.m.

POTEAU

Market open weekdays February 1-29, except for:
Closed: February 15 for holiday and 26 and 29 for inventory.
Cooking with Carmen: February 11, 11 a.m.-1 p.m.

MARCH

ANTLERS

Market open weekdays March 1-31, except for:
Closed: March 25 for holiday and 29-31 for inventory.
Cooking with Carmen: March 3, 11 a.m.-1 p.m.

BROKEN BOW

Market open weekdays March 1-31, except for:
Closed: March 25 for holiday and 29-31 for inventory.
Cooking with Carmen: March 17, 11 a.m.-1 p.m.

DURANT

Market open weekdays March 1-31, except for:
Closed: March 25 for holiday and 29-31 for inventory.
Cooking with Carmen: March 8, 11 a.m.-1 p.m.

McALESTER

Market open weekdays March 1-31, except for:
Closed: March 25 for holiday and 29-31 for inventory.
Cooking with Carmen: March 10, 11 a.m.-1 p.m.

POTEAU

Market open weekdays March 1-31, except for:
Closed: March 25 for holiday and 29-31 for inventory.
Cooking with Carmen: March 15, 11 a.m.-1 p.m.

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Choctaw Nation WIC

*WOMEN, INFANTS
and CHILDREN*



Site	Hours	Days
Antlers (580) 298-3161	8:30-4:00	Every Tues.
Atoka (580) 889-5825	8:00-4:30	Every Mon., Wed., Thur., & Fri.
Bethel (580) 241-5458	8:30-4:00	1st Tues.
Boswell (580) 380-5264	8:30-4:00	Every Fri.
Broken Bow (580) 584-2746	8:00-4:30	Daily, except 1st Tues. & 2nd Thurs
Coalgate (580) 927-3641	8:00-4:30	Every Wed.
Durant (580) 924-8280 x 2257	8:00-4:30	Daily
Hugo (580) 326-5404	8:00-4:30	Daily
Idabel (580) 286-2510	8:00-4:30	Mon., Thur., & Fri.
McAlester (918) 423-6335	8:00-4:30	Daily
Poteau (918) 647-4585	8:00-4:30	Daily
Smithville (580) 244-3289	8:30-4:00	2nd Thur.
Spiro (918) 962-3832	8:00-4:30	Every Wed.-Fri.
Stigler (918) 967-4211	8:30-4:00	Every Mon.-Wed.
Talihina (918) 567-7000 x 6792	8:00-4:30	Mon., Tues., Wed., & Fri.
Wilburton (918) 465-5641	8:30-4:00	Every Thur.

EDUCATION

Accuracy in Education about Choctaws is Purpose of Institutional Review Board

By CHARLES CLARK
Choctaw Nation

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma's Institutional Review Board (IRB) is one of only four such organizations in the state that is totally an entity of a tribe. Other tribal IRBs are subsidiaries of the Indian Health Board. Members of the Choctaw IRB are appointed by Chief Gary Batton and are drawn from across the Nation's 10 1/2 -county service area.

The Choctaw IRB added two new members on Jan. 20. Carolyn Elgin and Chantelle Standefer were welcomed in a ceremony at the board meeting held at Kiamichi Technology Center, Talihina. Other board members were recognized for their longstanding service to the IRB.

Bob Ludlow, who opened and closed the meeting with prayer, was presented a memento for serving 5 years on the board. Sandra Reavis and John Jones accepted awards for their service of 10 years each.

Charter member David Wharton, the Scientific Co-chair of the board, offered historical comments about the IRB. Wharton noted that in 2002, before he was chief, Gary Batton proposed the idea of the Nation developing its own IRB. Within two years, the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma had its own IRB, becoming the third tribe in the state able to accomplish that.



The newest members of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma's Institutional Review Board, Chantelle Standefer, left, and Carolyn Elgin.

Photo by Charles Clark

Contact:

Dannielle Branam
Choctaw Institutional Review Board
Administrative Director
720 Bryan Dr.
Durant, Oklahoma 74701
580-924-9706
Ext. 30313
debranam@cnhsa.com

"He saw the need and made it happen," Wharton said.

Since its inception, the organization's workload has only grown.

"We generally have about a dozen proposals, at various stages, that we are dealing throughout the year," Wharton said.

By definition, the IRB is described as "a federally registered research review board responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of human participants in any research study conducted within Choctaw Nation facilities or programs. It has the responsi-

bility to approve, deny, or require appropriate modifications to research proposals that would have an impact on tribal members, clients, and/or Choctaw heritage."

The idea is to protect tribal members and tribal heritage from dissemination of inaccurate information or defaming results based on work by outside researchers.

Researchers must make application to the IRB office before beginning their investigations and inquiries. Once the OK is given and work begins, periodic meetings and reports are made to the board; and a final presentation of findings must be approved by the board before the information can be officially released.

While its origins were in the health field to safeguard against harm or stigmatization of the tribe in research, the Choctaw IRB has branched out encompassing oversight for historical, cultural and business research and inquiries.

Other current board members include, Sylvester Moore (the Community Co-chair), "He's been here since the beginning," Wharton said. Also included are Dr. Ed Work, Joe Bray and Marie Cole.

Service Awards Presented to Staff at Jones Academy

This year's Christmas Dinner at Jones Academy was made special by a visit from Chief Gary Batton and Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr. The leaders met with the students and staff to spread the good cheer of the Choctaw Nation. After supper, the chief and assistant chief presented several staff members with service awards recognizing their dedication to Jones Academy through years of hard work.

Five-year service awards were given to Kathleen Cunningham, Elaine Garvin, Lynn Larson, and David Scott. Charles Thomason was recognized for 15 years of service at Jones Academy.

Both Robert Ray, the Jones Academy Elementary School Principal, and Brad Spears, Jones Academy Senior Director, were



Photos Provided

Left: Robert Smith, center, receives a 30-year service award from Chief Gary Batton, left, and Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr. Right: 30-year award winner Arlie Marris, center, is honored by Chief Batton, left, and Assistant Chief Austin Jr.

presented their 20-year awards for service with the Choctaw Nation.

Arlie Marris, the assistant dormitory manager, was honored for 30 years of service at Jones Academy. He was employed by the Bureau of Indian Education at the Academy for 12 years before the Choctaw Nation contracted the boarding school operation.

Robert Smith, the dormitory manager, also

received a 30-year service commendation.

Smith was with Jones Academy for 22 years when the Academy was managed by the BIE. Smith was a student at Jones Academy having come to the facility as a resident when he was in seventh grade and remaining until he graduated. Smith has been directly associated with Jones Academy for almost 60 years.

SCHOLARSHIPS

DEADLINE: MARCH 31

Competitive scholarships for Choctaw students range from **\$1,000 up to \$40,000**

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EMPOWERING CHOCTAW LIFE

Chahta Anumpa
Aiiikhvna
◆◆ Lesson of the Month ◆◆
Gone Fishing - Dialogue

Pair with a partner and practice speaking Choctaw. Then, fold the paper so the English words are hidden, and speak Choctaw to one another. Eventually, speak Choctaw without the worksheet.

Speaker 1: Nvni hoklit ia sv bvnnna.	I want to go fishing.
Speaker 2: Ome! Bok Iskitini il ittiacha chi.	Okay. We will go to Little River.
Speaker 1: Bok Iskitini ia sv bvnnna kiyo.	I do not want to go to Little River.
Speaker 2: Katimi ho?	Why?
Speaker 1: Oka yvt kotoma.	The water is stink/smelly.
Speaker 2: Ahlika?	Really?
Speaker 1: Toffakash, ia li tuk.	I went last summer.
Nvni illi kotoma lawa tuk.	There were a lot of smelly dead fish.
Speaker 2: Eww! Bok Homma il ittiacha chi.	Eww! We will go to Red River.
Speaker 1: Ome! Kil ia!	Okay. Let's go!
Speaker 2: Ome!	Okay!

www.choctawschool.com

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CHOCTAWCAREERS.COM/PATHS

THE OVERARCHING GOAL OF **PIPELINE FOR ADVANCED TRAINING IN HEALTH SCIENCES ACADEMY (PATHS)** IS TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF MINORITY STUDENTS IN SOUTHEASTERN OKLAHOMA WHO ENTER HEALTH CAREER PATHWAYS, WHICH LEAD TO SUCCESSFUL EMPLOYMENT IN HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONS AND RESULT IN MORE MINORITY HEALTH PROFESSIONALS IN THE REGION, ENGENDERING BOTH ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROSPERITY WITHIN THESE MINORITY POPULATIONS.

ACADEMY OVERVIEW

CHOCTAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA HAS PARTNERED WITH KIAMICHI TECHNOLOGY CENTERS (KTC) TO BRING A TRAINING PROGRAM TO HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS GEARED TOWARD A FUTURE IN THE MEDICAL FIELD.

THIS PROGRAM WILL PREPARE STUDENTS FOR POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION BY INTRODUCING THEM TO HEALTH CAREERS THRU HEALTH SCIENCE AND BIOMEDICAL CLASSES.

STUDENT QUALIFICATIONS:

IN ORDER TO BE ADMITTED TO THE PATHS ACADEMY, A STUDENT WILL NEED TO HAVE ALL OF THE QUALIFICATIONS BELOW:

- RESIDE WITHIN THE 10 1/2 COUNTIES OF THE CHOCTAW NATION
- MUST BE IN 10TH, 11TH, OR 12TH GRADES
- PROGRAM PRE-REQUISITES
- COMPLETE ADMISSIONS ASSESSMENTS
- INTERVIEW

Do you make too much to receive commodities?

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS:

- ◆ MINIMUM OF ONE (1) CHOCTAW TRIBAL MEMBER IN HOUSEHOLD
- ◆ NO HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS PARTICIPATING IN THE SNAP PROGRAM (FOOD STAMPS)
- ◆ RESIDE WITHIN THE BOUNDARIES OF THE CHOCTAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA (10 1/2 COUNTIES)
- ◆ MUST BE A WORKING HOUSEHOLD (SOME EXEMPTIONS APPLY – SSI, SS, GA, RETIREMENT, ETC.)
- ◆ OVER FOOD DISTRIBUTION INCOME REQUIREMENTS (COMMODITIES) – \$.01 TO \$500.00

Note: All qualifications are established on individual basis. In order for an accurate assessment, please call a Next Step Social Worker at your local Food Distribution Center listed below.

Antlers – Amanda Heath 580.298.6443

Broken Bow – Tracey Risner 580.584.3832

Durant – Michael William Williamson 580.924.7773

McAlester – Nikki Heath 918.420.5716

Poteau – Hank Harris 918.649.0431

SPORTS

2015 Tvshka Homma Stickball Team Awards Banquet



(left to right) Rosa Sardina, Mariel Sam, Maria Mackey, and Marley Black

Alexis Lyons

(left to right) Andres Lujano, Tanner Henry, and Mayan Fox

Jones Students Hit the Ground Running

The P.A.C.E. Running Club at Jones Academy ran more than 10 races in the spring and fall of 2015, but none as challenging as September’s Runestone Thor’s Hammer Trail Run in Heavener. Approximately 150 runners took part in the race which started at 8:00 a.m. Jones Academy staff Kim Russell and Joanna Baker left for the race with 26 students in tow. Delayed by construction, the normally hour-long trip took much longer than expected. When the Jones Academy bus arrived in Heavener, the run had already started. With no time to lose, the students and staff laced up and literally hit the ground running. The other contestants had a 15-minute head start on the cross country run. The Jones Academy students were undeterred. Tenth graders Alexis Lyons and Andres Lujano ran the 10K event in the 13-15 year old age group and placed first in the female and male division respectively. Alexis was the third best overall runner. Rosa Sardina, Mariel Sam, and Marley Black placed first, second, and third respectively in their 16-19 age group. Tanner Henry and Mayan Fox finished second and third in that division. Maria Mackey placed second in the 13-15 year old girls’ section. The race was absolutely a positive experience for the students. It was a life lesson on the value of perseverance. The students put a whole new meaning on the expression “running late.”

Reitz Wins Big at Wrestling Tournament



Phillip Reitz Jr., a senior from Joplin, Missouri competed in the Miami Wardog Invitational wrestling tournament in Miami, Oklahoma. Phillip was selected the overall most outstanding wrestler of the tournament. He dominated the competition winning all six matches by pin, wrestling a combined six minutes. Phillip is ranked second overall heavyweight in Missouri class 4 wrestling by missouriwrestling.com.

Phillip is the son of Christina and Phillip Reitz. He is the grandson of Lena Maturino and the great-grandson of the late Rev. Daniel and Catharine Sexton.

Cleveland Signs Professional Contract



Caden Cleveland signed a professional baseball contract with the New York Road City Explorers, playing in the North Country Professional Baseball League. Caden, a catcher from Oklahoma Christian University NCAA Division II program, received several NCAA II Heartland Conference awards. He was named to the Heartland Conference All-Conference team. Caden played high school baseball at Christian Heritage Academy in Oklahoma City, where he was a Louisville Slugger All-American.

Caden is the grandson of Don Demeter, who signed a Pro Baseball contract with the Dodgers. Demeter went on to have an outstanding 11-year Major League Baseball career. He is also the grandson of Oklahoma State House Representative Bobby L. Cleveland.

Youth Stickball Games Begin on Feb. 13

The 2016 Choctaw Nation Youth Softball League begins its third year on Feb. 13. Seven teams will compete in the league this year. Broken Bow, Durant, Hugo, McAlester, Poteau, Talihina and the Chickasaw Nation will all be participating in the events. All games will take place at Tvshka Homma. For more information, contact Jared Tom at (580) 775-0725.

2016 Youth Stickball Schedule:

Regular Season Games

- Feb. 13 @ 10 a.m.
- Feb. 20 @ 10 a.m.
- March 5 @ 10 a.m.
- March 12 @ 10 a.m.
- March 26 @ 10 a.m.

End of Season Tournament: April 9

All games are played at Tvshka Homma



From Left, Valerie Williston, Teela Walton, Gennavie Tom, Lisa Rhodd, Jared Tom, Robert Baker, and Curtis Billy were among the winners announced during the awards banquet held in the Tvshka Homma Cafeteria on Dec. 19, 2015. Votes were cast by fellow teammates and winners were chosen based on their performances during the 2015 Stickball Season. Awards and winners include:

- Male and Female Shooter of the Year - Curtis Billy and Gennavie Tom
- Male and Female Center of the Year - Jared “Pinti” Tom and Lisa Rhodd
- Male and Female Defensive Player of the Year - Bobby Baker and Valeria Williston
- Male and Female Most improved Player of the Year - Kyle McKinney and Teela Walton
- Most Valuable Player - Jordan EagleRoad
- Veteran Player of the Year - Robert Baker

Bleemel Plays Baseball at Cooperstown



Twelve-year-old Rhet Bleemel has a passion, and that passion is baseball. He has played the game since the age of four. For the last four years, he has played on select league baseball. It is a dream of young baseball players to get to play at Cooperstown Dreams Park in Cooperstown, New York. Rhet’s team, Turn 2 13U of Denton, Texas, raised the money to attend the tournament at Cooperstown through a variety of fundraisers. While at Cooperstown, the team stayed on-sight in barracks for seven days. They played a guaranteed seven games and enjoyed on-campus dining, batting cages and practice fields.

Turn 2 Denton finished 50th out of 100 teams. Though the competition was stiff, they finished strong and inspired. Rhet also had the opportunity to visit the National Baseball Hall of Fame. He also was able to visit the Doubleday Field, which is the legendary home of baseball where the game began one afternoon in 1839. “The Cooperstown opportunity has made me love the game of baseball even more than before. I didn’t even know that could happen. I am so lucky to have had the chance to play on those fields,” said Rhett. Rhett is the son of Rick and Kelli Bleemel of Arbury, Texas. He is the grandson of Ron and Delores Marshall of Durant, and the great-great-grandson of Choctaw Codetalker Ben Hampton.

Kiley Lockett Brings Home Gold Medal



Kiley Lockett, 14, of Oceanside, California, brought home a gold medal for team USA, after competing in the 2015 Trampoline and Tumbling World Age Group Competition. The international competition was held on Dec. 3-6 at the Sparekassen Fyn Arena in Odense, Denmark. Kiley won the gold medal in women’s 13-14 tumbling, scoring a 32.700. She came in fifth in the double-mini trampoline competition.

Kiley was selected by USA Gymnastics to represent the United States in the world age group competition. She competed in both the power tumbling and double mini trampoline events. Kiley is a sophomore at the Classical Academy High School in Oceanside. She is coached at Flip Force San Diego, by former Bulgarian National Power Tumbling Champion, Misha Yordanov. Kiley is the daughter of Kathy and Michael Lockett of Oceanside. She is the granddaughter of Betty (Suddath) Lockett and Jack Lockett. Jack played tight end and cornerback for the University of Oklahoma, form 1949-1951. He was a member of the Sooners 1950 National Championship winning team. Kiley is also the great-granddaughter of Ralph and Gladys Suddath.

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CAREER DEVELOPMENT

No. 34248

Choctaw Nation Project SAFE Offers Aid and Support for Victims of Dating Violence

By KAREN S. LYONS

Choctaw Nation

For the last 10 years Choctaw Nation Project SAFE has been working with national, local, and tribal organizations to end dating abuse. The Project SAFE grant was awarded as a result of the 2005 reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act, when the importance of addressing dating abuse was highlighted. In 2010, the entire month of February was declared dating violence awareness and prevention month.

Dating abuse, along with domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking, are considered a silent epidemic. We are living in a world where one in three students report experiencing some form of abuse. Ninth grade girls in Oklahoma are three times the national average more likely to be abused by their partner. Young women between the ages of fourteen and seventeen represent 38 percent of those victimized by date rape. New studies show that dating abuse is beginning as early as the fifth grade.

Another staggering statistic shows Oklahoma is ranked third in the nation of women being killed by their intimate partner. Adults who use violence with their dating partners often begin doing so during adolescence, with the first episode typically occurring by age fifteen.

Dating violence is a pattern of abusive behaviors used to exert power and control over a dating partner. Calling dating violence a pattern doesn't mean the first instance of abuse is not dating violence, it just recognizes that dating violence usually involves a series of abusive behaviors over a course of time. Every relationship is different, but the one thing common to most abusive dating relation-

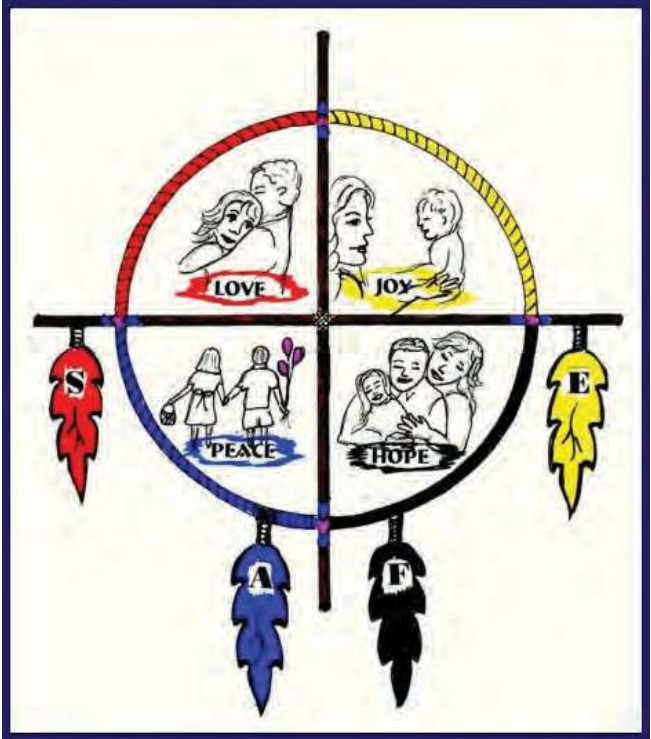
ships is the violence can escalate over time and becomes more and more dangerous for the young person.

Choctaw Project SAFE originally started as a prevention program providing community awareness and services to Native American victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. Their goal is to enhance the safety of children, youth, and adults by supporting activities uniquely designed to address and prevent these crimes. Project SAFE visits local schools and presents the SAFE Dates curriculum to students from grades 5 through 12. SAFE Dates is the only evidence-based dating violence prevention program listed in SAMHSA's National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices for its strength of evidence and ease of replication.

In 2015, Project SAFE was awarded a new grant expanding awareness and services to college campuses. The staff continues to provide community awareness activities, bring the SAFE Dates program to area schools, and now they can offer support services on college campuses and institutes of higher education in the 10 1/2 counties of the Choctaw Nation.

Some of the services Project SAFE can offer to college students who finds themselves a victim of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, or dating abuse include safe emergency shelter, relocation assistance, transportation assistance, and individual and group counseling mediated by licensed counselors. The only requirements to qualify for these services include the following:

- You must be a victim of abuse
- You must be enrolled in a school of higher education (This includes universities, colleges, technology



schools, or cosmetology schools.) Project SAFE services and activities are available to all students regardless of Native American status.

If you would like more information about the program go to the Choctaw Nation Children and Family Services website at ChoctawFamilyServices.com and click on the Project SAFE tab. Call (800) 522-6170 to speak to a Project SAFE Coordinator and get help today.

Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program Makes Changes for 2016 Summer

The Farmers Market Nutrition Program for Seniors originated in 2014 with funding from Choctaw Nation Health Services. This program provided participants with \$50 of checks that can be exchanged for eligible fresh nutritious, unprepared, locally grown fruits, vegetables and herbs from authorized farmers. This program, increases the domestic consumption of agricultural commodities. Partnering with the FMNPS Program was the "Going Lean" Program which promoted the same nutritional message to our participants. Partnering with local Choctaw Community Field Offices, we established Choctaw Farmers Markets on Wednesday (during the program months) to give our Farmers a place to go to sell their produce as well as to give our give our participants a convenient place to purchase fresh produce. These Choctaw Farmers Markets are located at the Durant,



Mother and daughter, Linda Armor and Teresa Davis, display their organic cherry tomatoes and okra at the Durant Farmers Market.

Hugo, Broken Bow, Idabel, Atoka, McAlester and Stigler Choctaw Community Field Offices.

In late summer 2015, our SFMNP program was named the 52nd State Agency in the United States to receive funding from the USDA. Eligibility for certification for individuals who are eligible to receive Federal benefits under the SFMNP are:

- Must be income eligible. Participants must have a maximum household income of not more than 185 percent of the annual poverty income guidelines or be determined automatically income eligible based on current participation/eligibility to receive benefits in another program such as the Choctaw Food Distribution Program. Proof of income eligibility must be provided.
 - The income eligibility chart is on each application.
 - Must reside in the Choctaw Nation 10 ½ counties. Proof of address must be established.
 - Categorical eligibility. Native Americans at least 55 years of age; Non-Native Americans at least 60 years of age residing in a Native American household; Disabled persons under 60 years of age living in housing for the elderly with congregate nutritional services.
- In February of 2016, application forms will be mailed to 2015 eligible participants for their convenience. They can provide proof of all the above requirements and mail their application back to the SFMNP office or turn it in to their local Choctaw Community Field Office. Applications can also be picked up at the Choctaw Community Field Offices beginning in February. Or you can call the SFMNP office at (580) 924-8280 extension 2303 and an application will be mailed to you.
- Funding through the USDA is limited, so applicants will receive benefits on a first come basis. The Choctaw Nation Health Services will again be our partner in the SFMNP in order for us to serve more Native Americans in our 10 ½ counties. It is our desire to serve our people in a way to improve their nutritional wellbeing and overall health. All eligible applicants will receive their \$50 of checks through the mail by the first week of May. The program runs from May 1 through October 31 each year.



Choctaw Nation's Gwen Coleman Lester's Art Tops Tulsa Area Festival

Choctaw artist Gwen Coleman Lester is the featured artist at the 30th annual Greater Tulsa Indian Art Festival this year. The Claremore resident designed the poster which proclaims the show's 2016 theme, "Honoring Our Veterans and Code Talkers."

The Greater Tulsa Indian Art Festival runs Feb. 5-7, at the Glenpool Conference Center, Highway 75 & 121st Street.

Lester began her artistic career in commercial and gradually moved to fine art working in colored pencil, charcoal, pastel, watercolor, acrylic, and occasionally oils. She paints and draws Choctaw history, legends, and culture.

The Five Civilized Tribes Museum named Lester a Master Artist in 2007. Her awards include Best of Show and Choctaw Heritage awards from the Choctaw Indian Art Show; Best of Division for Drawing at the Santa Fe Indian Market, and the Heard Museum Guild Indian Art Fair and Market, Phoenix; and Best of Division for Painting at the Cherokee Art Market.

Her art has been shown at Eiteljorg Museum's Indian Art Market, Tulsa Indian Art Festival, Red Earth, and the annual Trail of Tears Art Show. Gwen is honored to exhibit her work at the Southern Plains Indian Museum.

For more information see www.tulsaindianartfestival.com.

Southeastern Oklahoma Indian Credit Association and Choctaw Revolving Loan Fund

The Southeastern Oklahoma Indian Credit Association offers small business, home, home improvement, and agriculture loans. To be eligible to apply, a person must reside within the 10 1/2-county service area of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma and must possess a Certificate of Degree of Indian Blood (CDIB) from a federally recognized tribe.

Micro-loans are available for emergency home improvements and small businesses. The loans are available up to \$2,500 and are to be repaid within 24 months. To be eligible to apply you must be Choctaw, possess a CDIB and you must reside within the 10 1/2 county area of the Choctaw Nation.

For more information, please contact Susan Edwards at 580.924.8280 or toll-free 800.522.6170.

If you are interested in applying for a loan from the SOICA or the Choctaw Revolving Loan Fund, there will be a representative from the Choctaw Nation Credit Department at the:

McAlester Community Center • February 26, 2016

at

9:30 a.m. - 11 a.m. & 1 p.m. - 2 p.m.

Choctaw Nation will select a school district within the nation to be the recipient of each Box Tops Program. The 2015-16 recipient will be Hartshorne Public School. Don't have anyone to give your box tops to? Here's how you can help!

It's easy for anyone to get involved with Box Tops.

It's simple. Buy the products; clip the Box Tops; drop off or send the Box Tops to the Choctaw Nation and help earn cash for the things the school needs like: books, school supplies, playground equipment, teacher training, computers, etc.

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Attn. Jerry Tomlinson
P.O. Box 1210
Durant, OK 74702

Yakoke to all of the Biskinik readers for your Box Top contributions. You are making a difference!

For further information contact Jerry Tomlinson at 580-924-8280 ext. 2904