



April 2024 Issue



2021 CHOCTAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA ECONOMIC IMPACT



CHOCTAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA ECONOMIC IMPACT

\$3,227,364,212

Photo illustration by Kendra Germany-Wall

Choctaw Nation brought more than \$3.2 billion impact to Oklahoma in 2021

(DURANT, Okla. – March 14, 2021) – The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma announced today that the tribe had a significant \$3,227,364,212 impact on the State of Oklahoma for 2021. Tribal officials made the announcement during an economic impact press conference for several tribal, state, county and local officials.

The economic impact report, prepared by Dr. Kyle Dean, economist for the Center for Native American Studies at Oklahoma City University, shows the Choctaw Nation is a driving force in Southeastern Oklahoma, as well as the overall state. In 2021, the Tribe reported 20,142 Oklahoma jobs supported, representing \$1 billion in wages and benefits paid to Oklahomans.

“With its remarkable \$3.2 billion impact, the Choctaw Nation is one of the most significant contributors to economic prosperity in Oklahoma. Through innovative enterprises and steadfast commitment to community, the Nation not only fortifies its own future but also significantly contributes to the economic fabric of communities throughout southeastern Oklahoma and the state,” said Dr. Dean. “Continued partnerships between the Choctaw Nation and local communities are crucial for the survival and prosperity of rural areas in southeastern Oklahoma, serving as a cornerstone for sustainable development and mutual growth in the region.”

“The Choctaw Nation’s \$3.2 billion (up from \$2.5 billion in 2019) economic impact is helping improve lives across Oklahoma. These dollars extend beyond our tribal reservation to help educate students, fund infrastructure improvements, and provide needed healthcare coverage to the often underserved,” said Chief Gary Batton, Chief of the Choctaw Nation. “We are proud the Choctaw Nation is able to help fuel Oklahoma’s growth and economic prosperity.”

Education

Choctaw Nation has paid more than \$335 million in exclusivity fees to the State according to the Gaming compact, including \$34.2 million in 2021. These funds go directly to support public education statewide. The Choctaw Nation funded over \$61 million (beyond exclusivity fees) for educational programs. In addition to providing statewide education support, the Choctaw Nation funded 10,410 college education scholarships to the tune of \$10.8 million, provided summer school education to 5,573 tribal and non-tribal students in 48 schools, and paid for 708 elementary-age children to attend Choctaw Head Start and Choctaw Childcare programs.



Housing

The Choctaw Nation is building a pathway to safe and affordable housing. In 2021, the Choctaw Nation invested \$14.2 million to build 92 new homes across the reservation as part of the Lease-to-Purchase (LEAP) homeownership program, independent elder, and affordable rental programs. A total of 481 storm shelters were installed in 2021 to protect the lives of tribal members.



Healthcare

Providing access to quality healthcare to tribal members is a primary focus for the Choctaw Nation which operates a full-service hospital in Tahleah, Okla., eight health clinics, three behavioral health clinics, five specialty clinics and 14 wellness centers. In 2021, the Choctaw Nation spent \$282 million to support healthcare for Oklahomans and had more than 1 million patient encounters.




Community

Through the Choctaw Community Partnership Fund and Choctaw Development Fund, the Choctaw Nation has provided \$3,525,252 in contributions and community grants to cities, towns and counties to support economic development, infrastructure and sustainability.



FROM THE

ECONOMIST



Kyle D. Dean, Ph. D. is an experienced professional economist who provides economic analysis for governments, businesses, tribes and non-profit leaders.

Dr. Dean began consulting in 2005, and his client list includes some of Oklahoma’s most influential businesses and trade associations, such as the Oklahoma Independent Producers Association (OIPA), the Oklahoma Bankers’ Association (OBA), the Oklahoma Telephone Association (OTA) and many others. He is best known for his comprehensive work with Oklahoma tribes, having completed the first ever estimate of the combined economic impacts from Oklahoma tribal activities, along with many other studies for the Oklahoma Indian Gaming Association and many of Oklahoma’s 38 federally recognized tribes. He recently served as a featured panelist at the international G2E Summit in Las Vegas and is regularly called upon to speak to Native American groups and serve on panels regarding Native American issues. Dr. Dean received his Ph.D. in Economics from Oklahoma State University. He is a member of the American Economic Association and the National Association of Business Economists. He currently serves as the Associate Director for the Steven C. Agee Economic Research and Policy Institute and as the Director of the Center for Native American and Urban Studies at Oklahoma City University.

CHOCTAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA ECONOMIC IMPACT

\$3,227,364,212

JOB	20,142 Oklahoma jobs supported	\$1.073 Billion in wages and benefits paid to Oklahomans
COMMUNITY	\$3,525,252 contributed to cities from the Choctaw Community Partnership Fund and Choctaw Development Fund	\$11.1 Million invested in Oklahoma highways and roads
EDUCATION	\$61 Million in education funding	\$335 Million paid in exclusivity fees since 2005 \$34.2 million paid in 2021 to support education
HOUSING	\$14.2 Million on new homes for tribal members	481 Storm Shelters installed for homeowners
HEALTH	\$282 Million total health spend	1,080,258 Encounters by patients at Health Services

CHOCTAWNATION.COM | GROWCHOCTAW.COM
Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

Faith, Family, Culture

Na Yimmi, Chukka Achvffa, Im Aivlhpesa



Chief Gary Batton

Your Chahta tribe has to be maintained to prosper
What does tribe truly mean to you?

Tribe is defined as “a social group composed chiefly of numerous families, clans, or generations having a shared ancestry and language.” The Choctaw Nation tribe is one of resilience, generosity, self-empowerment, sovereignty, commerce, technical prowess, faith, family, and culture.

What does being a part of a tribe mean to you? Is it the pride of our ancestry? Is it the growth and prosperity that we are experiencing as a nation? Is it the gatherings that we have such as the Labor Day Festival, Powwow or other cultural events where we congregate and share fellowship?

I choose to believe a tribe is all the above and much more. The Choctaw Nation is a special place where you can achieve your dreams, fill your life with great memories, honor your ancestors who made this all possible and add something for the next generation to take, run with and make it their own. The Choctaw Nation has a living history that we add to each day through good deeds, hard work, and a servant’s heart.

As I travel around the reservation to milestone events like groundbreaking and facility openings or to participate in giving the keys to a new homeowner or any number of important events that cause us to come together as a tribe, I’m always struck by the pride and love each one of us has for this tribe. And that’s especially obvious in conversations with our tribal members throughout the reservation. The Chahta Spirit is alive and well and it is a great thing to witness.

I see young Chahta learning the language of our ancestors. I see tribal members preparing foods, tribal jewelry, art works and cultural items from instructions passed down by our ancestors. The pride felt from the true Chahta experiences and fellowship with our tribe is one I will have with me forever. It does my heart good to see the Choctaw Nation traditions alive and well. While it’s important to always look to the future, we can never forget our past and the lessons learned, and sacrifices made by those who came before us.

That’s why I challenge all of us as proud Choctaw tribal members to be life-long learners about our culture and always be on the lookout for opportunities to learn about our Choctaw ancestors. Yakohe for keeping the history of this great tribe alive for future generations. Make it something your whole family can be a part of and create a true Chahta experience in your own home. You’ll be glad for the experience and at the same time you’ll be meeting our shared responsibility to do all that we can to protect our sovereignty and continue the growth of our self-empowered tribe.

Yakohe and God Bless!



Pastor Olin Williams
Employee Chaplain

Lessons From Green Beans

We can learn spiritual truths from nature. The characteristic of the left-handed green beans can teach us great spiritual truths.

The first characteristic is the peculiar way in which the left-handed green beans grow and climb a pole or string. It grows differently from other climbing vines. It climbs from left to right. This is why it is called left-handed green beans.

Who told it to grow this way? Who put the nature in it to climb?

You can find great comfort and edification when you understand the truths God is portraying to us through the peculiarity of the left-handed green bean.

Ephesians 1:4 says, “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundations of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.”

God knows all about us. He knows our likes and dislikes. He knows the number of hairs on our head. He knows our personality. We sometimes want to be like somebody else, but God made us in his divine plan and purpose so we will grow that way. It is in the nature of the bean to grow from left to right even when other beans do not. We are also unique and an individual. God decreed it so. God’s decree is God’s will. The bean did not ask God how he should grow. From eternity God determined it to be so.

Should God consult with us how the left-handed green bean should grow, there would be confusion. God is Sovereign, and He is the one who decrees how nature should be.

Psalm 115:3 says, “But our God is in the heavens, He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased.” When planted, the bean knows which direction it is to grow. The roots grow down, and the sprouts climb upward. It does not grow like grass, straight up just so high and fall over. Who is directing the growth patterns of nature?

In an automated world, people are confused and fearful of the future. Mental institutions are full, while thriving psychiatrists, psychologists, and counselors have failed to stem the tide. Psychosomatic illnesses from stress are causing the clinics to be full. This indicates people are not able to cope with pressures of everyday life.

Jesus spoke about the cure of anxiety in Matthew 6:25-27, “Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are you not better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?”

This does not mean to not be industrious in life but to trust in the Father’s care.

Mental Health Matters

If you or someone you know is struggling, you are not alone. There are many supports, services and treatment options that may help.

- For national resources, visit <https://www.nami.org>.
- For resources within the Choctaw Nation, visit <https://chocta.ws/mental-health>.
- If you are having suicidal thoughts or are in crisis, call the National Suicide & Crisis Lifeline at Suicide and Crisis Lifeline 988.
- Look for more information on mental health in next month’s issue of the Biskinik.



Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr.

Choctaw Forestry Department moves into new home

The Choctaw Nation Tribal Forestry Department recently moved into their new home in Talihiina. The new building provides a standalone office for the firefighting team, which previously shared a building.

The department has grown so much since it was founded in 2022 that more space was needed for growth and the overall efficiency of the program. The Tribal Forestry Services Department is a forestry wildland fire-fighting unit within the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. Located in Talihiina, Oklahoma, the department serves the CNO Reservation. The department provides services such as wildfire suppression, wildfire prevention programs, forest

timber assistance, Hazardous fuels reduction, and feral swine removal assistance. I’m pleased (and more than a little proud) to say our Tribal Forestry Services Department is the nation’s first tribal-led wildland fire module, sponsored by the U.S. Forest Service. The team of experts will travel across the country to prevent wildfires and focus on fuel management.

The Choctaw Nation firefighters are almost like a SWAT team but for firefighting. The unit is made up of tribal members, expertly trained to prevent wildfires.

The team will be geared toward improving forest health, whether that’s prescribed burning, removing hazardous trees or reducing the risk of wildfire through fuel reduction projects.

A statement from the U.S. Forest Service, when the Choctaw Nation Tribal Forestry Services Department was founded, highlights the value our team’s services provide: “We are proud to continue our partnership with the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. The potential to create a tribal wildland fire module would build on our more than 30-year collaboration. The tribal fire module would provide a skilled, efficient workforce that carries out prescribed fires and reduces the risk of wildfire. Most Southerners live near a forest. They value forests for producing clean air and water and for providing a home for wildlife.”

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma is committed to being great stewards of the land and protecting our natural resources is the best way to show that. Our Tribal Forestry Department is trained to handle what nature has in store and we are committed, as a tribe, to fire safety and the protection of our lands.

To check out the forestry service and what they are all about, see the team’s webpage on our Choctaw Nation website: <https://www.choctawnation.com/services/forestry-program/>.



Choctaw Nation Photos

Above: The new CNO Forestry Department opens the doors to their new HQ in Talihiina, Okla. Below: Assistant Chief Jack Austin, Jr. and Chief Gary Batton visit with members of the CNO Forestry Department.



Nine new language teachers certified



Photo Provided

At March’s Tribal Council meeting, the School of Choctaw Language teachers and staff were certified in the Choctaw language. E hvchi yakohe fehna for your labor to preserving our Chahta anumpa! (Left to Right) Angie Williston, Stacy Shepherd, Meggan Taylor, Twahna Hamill, Dustin Smith, Darnell Colbert, Madeleine Freeman, Eli Williamson, Jason Campbell) Not pictured: Josh Daney and Kym Frazier.

CHOCTAW TRAIL OF TEARS MEMORIAL WALK

MAY 18, 2024
TVSHKA HOMMA CAPITOL GROUNDS

CULTURAL DEMONSTRATIONS, LIVE VILLAGE AND VENDOR BOOTHS OPEN AT 9:00 AM
CEREMONY BEGINS AT 10:00 AM

Remembering our ancestors and embracing our culture!

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

I AM CHOCTAW PROUD

TOGETHER, WE'RE MORE

SOLAR ECLIPSE EVENT

APRIL 8, 2024

PRICE: \$40.00
INCLUDES T-SHIRT, CLAPPER AND SOLAR GLASSES.

CHOCTAW CULTURAL CENTER

To register, visit chocta.ws/ccs-solar-eclipse

Grant finds success through truck driving thanks to help from CNO

By Shelia Kirven

According to www.careeronestop.org, to drive a tractor-trailer combination or a truck with a capacity of at least 26,001 pounds Gross Vehicle Weight (GVW), one must be able to unload the truck and have a CDL license.

There were 2,192,300 drivers in the United States in 2002, and by 2032, there is expected to be a four percent increase to 2,281,500 with annual projected job openings of 241,200.

Wages for heavy and tractor-trailer truck drivers in the United States range from \$35,300 to \$75,220 yearly.

Dylan Grant is a truck driver from Lebanon, Oklahoma. Grant used the Career Development Program to attend a truck driving school and obtain a CDL.

According to Grant, the program took care of everything for him and helped him find a school in the area. He completed a four-week course, four weeks on-site, five days a week. After course completion, it took Grant approximately 10 days to get a job.

“Part of the course, they had us submit applications while we were in the truck driving school with the assumption that we would pass and get our license,” said Grant. “Maybe a week after I finished, I got a call back from one of the jobs I had applied for.”

He said he is thankful that Career Development helped him find the job to complete his career path.

“At that time in my life, I didn’t really have any plans. College didn’t work out for me. They were helpful in suggesting things they could help me with. I thought truck driving sounded like something I could try and might fit me,” Grant said. “I definitely would not have done it if the Career Development had not been able to help me, though.”

After the course completion, he worked as an over-the-road (OTR) driver. He said he went from Southern California to New York during the first few months.

He then moved to another account with the company, Oklahoma-Texas regional, and then to mid-west Texas and Oklahoma regional.

He now drives Oklahoma, Texas, Missouri and occasionally Illinois or Wisconsin, but he said everything is round-trip from the home distribution center at Ardmore, Oklahoma.

He works five days on the road and is home on the weekends. He is a company driver with a truck assigned to him.

According to Grant, there are a lot of trucking jobs available at the moment.

Choctaw tribal members wishing to pursue a commercial driver’s license (CDL) and receive training to become certified on-the-road truck drivers may be able to do so through the Choctaw Nation Career Development Program or Employment Training Services Program.

Career Development

The Career Development program provides career guidance, assessment testing, academic remediation, financial assistance for quality training, soft skills, and employment services.

It enables Choctaw members to obtain recognized



Photo Provided

Dylan Grant has been driving for eight years now after receiving his CDL through the Career Development Program.

certifications needed to enter careers or advance existing self-sustaining careers that contribute to personal financial security, healthy lifestyles, and enhancement of the regional, state, and national economy.

The program assists Choctaw tribal members nationwide.

Career Development works to enhance the lives of Choctaw tribal members by providing opportunities for education and training that lead to industry-recognized certifications or licenses and self-sustaining employment.

Career Development Senior Manager Jamie Hamil said, “Since our beginning in April 2007, the Career Development Program has successfully helped over 500 tribal members to obtain their Commercial Driver’s License (CDL) and go to work as a truck driver. In 2023 alone, we assisted 80 tribal members who have since gone to work in the field.”

Career Development also has a series of videos on subjects such as applying for a job, career networking, interview skills, employability skills, cover letters, Teach 2 Reach, and information on careers like optometry, nursing, pharmacist, speech-language pathologist, physical therapy, electrician, plumber, nurse practitioner, and veterinarian at https://www.choctawnation.com/news/search/?_sft_videos_categories=career-development.

For more information, visit [www.Career Development Programs \(choctawnation.com\)](http://www.CareerDevelopmentPrograms(choctawnation.com)) and apply on the Chahta Achvffa portal at www.chahtaachvffa.choctawnation.com/. You can follow the program on Facebook.

Employment Training Services

The Employment Training Services (ETS) program assists eligible CDIB holders living within the reservation’s service area. Applicants do not have to be Choctaw.

Brianne Wilson, Program Coordinator II for the Employment Training Services Program, said, “Employment Training Services can assist with the cost of tuition for many short-term trainings, including truck driving school.

Any CDIB cardholder (member of any federally recognized tribe) that lives within the CNO reservation area can apply for ETS services.”

Wilson said the applicant must list at least one barrier to employment when applying.

Typically, if applicants qualify for both Career Development funding and ETS assistance, the cost of the CDL course is covered.”

The ETS program provides adults with opportunities for employment education, training, and related services that are needed to succeed in the labor market.

The applicant must be 18 or older and attending an accredited school.

Applicants can apply for Employment Training Services on Chahta Achvffa, and information is available by visiting <https://www.choctawnation.com/services/adult-employment-training> or emailing bkwilson@choctawnation.com.

Dry continues tradition at Southeastern

By Christian Toews

Tucker Dry has signed to play football for Southeastern Oklahoma State University in Durant, Oklahoma, beginning in the fall.

The commitment in February comes after having an exceptional season playing for Durant High School as a tackle and guard.

Dry is a Choctaw tribal member and the son of Choctaw Councilman James Dry.

Tucker said his father greatly influenced his decision to play sports.

“My dad played tennis and actually played here at Southeastern,” he said. “He saw the potential in me to be a good athlete even before I saw it in myself.”

Dry’s mother was a cheerleader, and he attributes his success on the football field to both of his parent’s athletic abilities.

However, he said he still needs to determine where his 6ft 4in, 300lb frame came from.

“We think we traced it back to a distant relative who was a bigger guy,” said Dry.

Football has not always been easy for Dry.

He had to miss some critical years during high school due to injury and an autoimmune disorder that took him out of the game in his junior year.

He said those times were tough, but they fueled

his desire to return even stronger in his senior year.

The return he hoped for is exactly what happened. Dry received offers from 12 college programs upon playing his first full season as a senior.

The decision to attend Southeastern was easy despite so many offers, according to Dry.

“Out of all the schools I looked at, they (Southeastern) have the best business school by far,” he said.

Another reason Dry chose Southeastern was to stay close to family, particularly his little brother.

His heritage also influenced this decision. Dry will be the fourth generation in his family to attend Southeastern.

Being a Choctaw tribal member is very important to Dry.

According to Dry, when he was battling his autoimmune issues, the elders at the community center would gather and pray for him.

“It’s really more like a family than a tribe to me,” he said.

One of Dry’s favorite things to do is serve and talk to the elders at the community center. He plans to continue to do this throughout his time in college.



Photoby Christian Toews

Tucker Dry signs with Southeastern Football, continuing a long family tradition.

CHOCTAW NATION FILM FESTIVAL

SUBMISSIONS: FEBRUARY 1 - MAY 31

ATTENTION HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS
SHOW OFF YOUR CREATIVITY IN THE LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT’S 2024 FILM FESTIVAL.

Scan QR code for more information.

Choctaw Nation School of Choctaw Language

CHOCTAW NATION DISTRICT PRINCESS PAGEANTS

District 1:	Idabel Community Center Tuesday May 14, 2024 6:00 PM
District 2:	The Landing in Hochatown Thursday May 9, 2024 6:00 PM
District 3:	Talihina Community Center Thursday May 23, 2024 6:00 PM
District 4:	Poteau Community Center Tuesday April 2, 2024 6:00 PM
District 5:	Stigler Community Center Thursday April 4, 2024 6:00 PM
District 6:	Wilburton Community Center Tuesday April 16, 2024 6:00 PM
District 7:	Wright City Community Center Thursday April 11, 2024 6:00 PM
District 8:	Hugo Community Center Thursday May 16, 2024 6:00 PM
District 9:	Choctaw Cultural Center Tuesday May 7, 2024 6:00 PM
District 10:	Atoka Community Center Thursday April 18, 2024 6:00 PM
District 11:	McAlester Community Center Tuesday April 9, 2024 6:00 PM
District 12:	Coalgate Community Center Tuesday May 21, 2024 6:00 PM

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT
CHOCTAWNATION.COM/PRINCESS-PAGEANTS
MDREICH@CHOCTAWNATION.COM
580.380.5972

Choctaw Nation Princess and Royalty Program
CHOCTAWNATION.COM



District 4

Halito,
Spring has arrived! I think we are all welcoming the warmer weather and sunshine.
At the January Tribal Council Meeting, we honored William “Bill” Logan, a WWII veteran, as the Veteran of the Month, honoring his Excellent Character of Service, Purple Heart, Good Conduct Medal, and Honorary Service Button. We are grateful to his generation for making the sacrifices and paving the way for us.

We also honored Marie Jackson. She was recognized as the first language speaker, a testament to our community’s rich culture. Congratulations to these two outstanding Choctaw citizens.

The LeFlore County Premium Sale on March 1 showcased the dedication of over 40 participants from District 4, demonstrating their hard work with a variety of animals. Special thanks to parents and ag teachers for investing in our youth.

Recently, I had the joy of participating in the Read Across America event at the Poteau Child Development Center. The children were full of energy and excitement. Yakoke to the center’s staff for their dedication to nurturing our children.

Excitingly, language classes have begun at the Dale Cox Community Center in Poteau, offering an opportunity to connect with our cultural roots. Monday, April 1, and Tuesday, May 7, are the next classes. The potluck begins at 5:00 p.m., and class begins at 6:00 p.m. Everyone is invited to attend.

Both Poteau and Spiro seniors have been on the road. They traveled to Choctaw Landing in Hochatown and Red Earth in Oklahoma City. I encourage all seniors to join either Poteau or Spiro community centers for lunch on Wednesdays.

In a groundbreaking announcement, the construction team and architects revealed plans for a new community center during the senior lunch. Construction is set to begin later this year, with completion expected by the end of 2025. A great addition to our Choctaw community!

As the school year begins to wind down, let us extend many thanks to the dedicated teachers and staff of District 4 for their commitment to educating, nurturing, and guiding our young people. Your efforts in shaping the future leaders of tomorrow do not go unnoticed.

To the entire community of District 4, I am honored to serve you, and if I can be of assistance to you or your family, please reach out. “Together we are more,” let’s continue to support and uplift each other.



Photos Provided

Above: Councilman Jess Henry reads to students at the Poteau Child Development Center on Read Across America Day.

Top Right: Councilman Jess Henry shakes the hand of a young competitor during the Choctaw Nation Livestock Show in Wilburton.

Bottom Right: Councilman Jess Henry speaks about the new Dale Cox Community Center coming to Poteau.

Labor-Emmert is March Veteran of the Month

Deann Labor-Emmert of District #6 is Choctaw Nation’s Veteran of the Month. Labor-Emmert was born in McAlester, Okla., and lived the first five years of her life at Degnan before moving to Panola. She graduated from Panola High School in 1978 and joined the Oklahoma Army National Guard in 1987 to afford a better life for herself and her children. She was sent to Ft. Jackson, South Carolina for basic training.



Sgt. Labor-Emmert helped set up the Thunderbird Youth Academy in 1993 and became a recruiter in 2000 in the McAlester area. She moved to the maintenance shop at Ft. Sill in 2006 before retiring in 2009. She was one of few women accepted into the Order of Saint Maurice. The National Infantry awards the Order of Saint Maurice to recognize significant contributions from infantrymen, infantry supporters, and spouses.

Sgt. Labor-Emmert follows a long history of military family members including her father and his five brothers. Her husband Brian Emmert is also a veteran. She has three children Christi Hall, Cody Gibbs, and Chance Gibbs, three grandchildren Brenton, Emerson, and Zelda, and another grandchild on the way.

The Choctaw Nation holds our veterans in the highest esteem and appreciates their sacrifices and contributions to preserve our freedoms and the way of life we hold dear.



District 3

I enjoy this time of year because spring always brings life to our little valley. This year is a bit different, as spring has sprung in a big way!

In District 3, we joined Chief Batton and Assistant Chief Austin in the celebration of the groundbreaking for the Wellness Center located in Talihina. What an exciting time for us! This center will provide another opportunity for our tribal members to live healthy and active lives. The residents of the valley have expressed their gratitude to the Chief and Council for giving them this opportunity and are looking forward to the grand opening.

Also, this spring, just a short way down the road from Talihina, we joined Jennifer Woods in District 6 with a Grand Opening ribbon cutting of the Choctaw Nation Forestry Department. Their new location and building will provide them with the much-needed additional space and updated facilities. Choctaw Nation Firefighters were present to express their gratitude to the Chief, Assistant Chief and Council.

With so much exciting news for spring, I certainly don’t want to miss the opportunity to share all the good news and opportunities seized upon during the past winter months.

Council Day at the Capitol went very well. We met with legislators and had the honor to meet the Lt. Governor and Attorney General. The day at the Capitol gave us the opportunity to network and share ideas for the future of the tribe with Oklahoma government officials. It was a good day.

These past few months, District 3 has recognized many successful tribal members. Congratulations to the recipients of the Chahtapreneur Award. Congratulations to the participants of the county Premium Sales and to the students signing up with colleges. I know a lot of hard work has gone into your successes, and I commend and congratulate each of you. Your futures are very bright.

I want to thank the Chief for hosting the Easter Celebration at Tuskahoma. It was a little cool, but we all had a good time.

I also want to remind everyone that the grand opening for the Three Rivers Meat Company is scheduled for April 12 at 11:00 a.m. Come out and show your support while picking up some fine cuts of meat for dinner. Hope to see you there.

Yakoke!

Parrish Settle is First Language Speaker of the Month

First Language Speaker of the Month Gwendolyn Parrish Settle was honored as the March First Language Speaker of the Month during the March 9 Tribal Council Meeting.

Settle worked within her community to spread the Choctaw Language through her work in ministry.



Upcoming Events

APR 1 2024 8:30AM		Virtual Trail of Tears Walk Participants will join the journey of walking 550 miles over the course of 4 months. Virtual Event
APR 4 2024 9AM		ACT Workshop – Hugo Learn skills and strategies to improve your score on the ACT. Kiamichi Technology Center - Hugo
APR 6 2024 8:30AM		Ryan's Run 29th Annual Fundraiser for Abused Children and is a fundraiser for Pittsburg County Child Abuse Response Effort, Inc. Jackie Brannon Correctional Center
APR 13 2024 10AM		Kick Up Your Heels Brings awareness to the issue of sexual violence by encouraging participants to "take a walk in her shoes." Choctaw Nation Headquarters - Amphitheater
APR 19 2024 7PM		Adult Education Graduation Join Chief Batton and Adult Education in celebrating the accomplishments of our dedicated students. Choctaw Nation Headquarters

2024 LABOR DAY TRIBAL MEMBER RV RESERVATION

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Phone Number: _____
Email address: _____

RV/Trailer description (All information must be complete for reservation consideration)

Trailer type:	Length of Trailer:	# of slide-outs:
<input type="checkbox"/> Bomper Pull <input type="checkbox"/> 5th wheel <input type="checkbox"/> RV		

Additional information: _____

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma
ATTN: Janita Jeffreys
Labor Day RV Reservations
PO Box 1210
Durant, OK 74702

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT:
LABORDAY.CHOCTAWNATION.COM

NO PHONE RESERVATIONS WILL BE ACCEPTED. PLEASE INCLUDE A COPY OF YOUR CDB CARD ONLY. SITES WILL BE ASSIGNED BY LOTTERY. DO NOT SEND ANY MONEY AT THIS TIME. ALL APPLICANTS WILL BE NOTIFIED BY MAIL OR EMAIL IN MARCH 2024.

Scan to reserve your spot today

#CHAHTALABORDAY
CHOCTAWNATION.COM

JONES ACADEMY RESIDENTIAL PROGRAM

Did you know the Jones Academy Residential Program provides housing in the dormitories for up to 188 students! The dormitory program serves as more than just housing. The program is designed to aid students in developing habits and routines, while instilling essential life skills and social habits. Jones Academy's commitment goes beyond traditional housing, fostering an environment that prioritizes student growth and community involvement.

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT JONES ACADEMY, PLEASE VISIT: **JONESACADEMY.ORG**

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

EMPLOYMENT TRAINING SERVICES

Do you need assistance finding a job or paying for job training?

The 477 Employment Training Services aim to help people succeed in the workforce by providing opportunities for employment, education and training.

Services are available within
Choctaw Nation Reservation.

Scan to learn more and to apply!

Choctaw Nation 477 Program

NOTES & EVENTS

Idabel District 1 Spring Senior Citizens Community Dinner
 Thursday, April 25, 2024 at 6 p.m. at the Idabel Community Center 2408 East Lincoln Road Idabel, OK.
 MENU: Fried Fish, Hush Puppies, Pinto Beans, Fried Potatoes, Fried Pie (Peach), Tea, coffee, water.

Drinking Well Water Testing in LeFlore County
 The Oklahoma Water Resources Center is set to conduct well water analysis for citizens in Le Flore County. Samples will be accepted at the Patrick Lynch Public Library from 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. on Friday, April 26. The results of the tests will be provided directly to citizens.

Drinking Well Water Testing in Pittsburg County
 The Oklahoma Water Resources Center is set to conduct well water analysis for citizens in Pittsburg County. Samples will be accepted at the Pittsburg County Extension Office from 4:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, April 9. The results of the tests will be provided directly to citizens.

Native Beading Craft Day
 April 6, 2024 10:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m. at the Durant Community Center, 2746 Big Lots Dr., Durant, OK 74701. A gathering for all Native crafters to have fun hanging out and working on your own individual projects. You must bring your own supplies. A small childrens section will be set up. Please bring a dish, snacks or drinks to share. \$1 raffle benefiting MMIW Chahta. RSVP at 972-481-4139

OKC Wild Onion Dinner
 The OK Choctaw Tribal Alliance and OKC Choctaw Veterans Association Post 319 will be hosting a Wild Onion Dinner on Saturday, April 27, 2024 from 11:00a.m. to 3:00 p.m. The dinner will be held at American Legion 73/VFV Post 9969, 5000 SE 24th St, Del City, OK.
 The \$12 dinner will consist of wild onions, beans, tanchi labona, banana, grape dumplings, frybread, and choice of fried chicken or salt pork. Complimentary tea or water. The OCTA Choctaw children’s language class will have be selling lemonade and other soft drinks. The OKC Choctaw Vet’s group will be having a cake sale. Please come and join us for an awesome meal!

Ask a Lawyer Event
 April 9, 2024 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Choctaw Nation Health Clinic 1127 S George Nigh EXPY McAlester, OK 74501.

OILS will be available to provide answers to legal questions and take applications for legal services. OILS cannot provide advice if you currently have an attorney. We cannot provide advice for criminal matters involving the state district courts. OILS must follow federal poverty guidelines to provide services. For more information, visit <https://www.oilsonline.org/> or call 405-943-6457.

THE BEST WEEK OF YOUR LIFE
BERTRAM BOBB
BIBLE CAMP
KIDS AND TEEN SUMMER CAMP
 For more information, visit <https://bbbcamp.org>, email jerry@bbbcamp.org or scan the QR code.

LIFE IS BETTER WITH BLOOD DONORS
 Every two seconds, someone in our community urgently needs blood. This could be a child battling cancer, a trauma victim, a patient undergoing surgery, or someone with a chronic illness.
 Imagine the hope, relief, and second chance your donation can bring them and their families.
 By becoming a blood donor, you can become a lifeline for those who desperately need it.
 Join the Annual Blood Drive Challenge and help save a life.

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

Gary Batton Chief *Jack Austin Jr.* Assistant Chief
 The Official Monthly Publication of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma
Shauna Williams, Executive Director
Kristina Humenesky, Senior Director
Kellie Matherly, Content Development Director
Kendra Wall, Content Development Manager
Chris Jennings, News Reporter
Christian Toews, News Reporter
 P.O. Box 1210
 Durant, OK 74702
 580-924-8280 • 800-522-6170
www.ChoctawNation.com
 email: biskinik@choctawnation.com

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

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

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

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

EOCS Native Americans Who Code Summer Camp
 For incoming 8th-12th grade students June 10-13, 2024 from 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. at Eastern Oklahoma State College 1301 West Main Street | Wilburton, OK 74578.
 The camp is open to both beginner and experienced coders Learn Web Design or Drone Technology with Python. There is no cost to attend and space is limited. Register online by June 7 by scanning the QR code.
 Questions? Contact Brenda Strange | bstrange@eosc.edu or Kellje Semeski | ksemeski@eosc.edu.



Dreams become reality
 Halito,
 I’m Jenny Ross and I’m a proud Choctaw. I would have never achieved my dreams without the support of the Choctaw Nation. In my 30’s I have decided to return to the education world and attend Sosu. When making the decision of returning to school so late in life I was nervous and scared, I reached out to the higher education department and career development were they have been so helpful and have held my hand through the entire process. I am a paraprofessional at Valliant Public School and work in the special education department. When I graduate from college I will continue teaching at Valliant. I would have never been able to afford college or even know what resources would help me without the hands of the nation. Each day the Choctaw Nation is helping students make there dreams become reality no matter the age of the student, and for that I will be forever grateful.
 - Jenny Ross

- CHOCTAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA TRIBAL COUNCIL**
SPECIAL SESSION AGENDA
 February 16, 2024
1. CALL TO ORDER
 2. OPENING PRAYER/FLAG SALUTE
 3. ROLL CALL
 4. NEW BUSINESS
 - a. Executive Session
 - b. Approve Funding to Protect Gaming Market
 5. OTHER NEW BUSINESS
 6. OLD BUSINESS
 7. ADJOURNMENT
 8. CLOSING PRAYER
- All bills passed unanimously

- CHOCTAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA TRIBAL COUNCIL**
REGULAR SESSION AGENDA
 March 9, 2024
1. CALL TO ORDER
 2. OPENING PRAYER/FLAG SALUTE
 3. ROLL CALL
 4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
 - a. Regular Session February 10, 2024
 - b. Special Session February 16, 2024
 5. WELCOME GUESTS/SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS
 - a. Veteran of the Month, District #6 – Deann Labor-Emmert
 - b. First Language Speaker of the Month, District #6 - Gwendolyn Parish Settle, Sr.
 6. PUBLIC COMMENTS
 - a. Faith Parra – Group Speaker – Listening to Our Choctaw Voices – Opposition to CB-14-24
 7. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES
 8. NEW BUSINESS
 - a. Presentation of Teacher Language Certificates from Choctaw School of Language
 - b. Letter of Appointment - Richard Branan to the CN District Court of General Jurisdiction
 - c. Approve the Disposal of Surplus Capital Assets – Vehicles (Fair Market Value \$43,402.00)
 - d. Approve the Disposal of Surplus Capital Assets – Vehicles (Fair Market Value \$24,370.00)
 - e. Approve the Disposal of Surplus Capital Assets – Equipment (Fair Market Value \$2,166.53)
 - f. Approve the Disposal of Surplus Capital Assets – Equipment (Fair Market Value \$11,966.00)
 - g. Council Bill Amending the Choctaw Nation Criminal Procedure Code Relating to Search Warrants and Immunity
 - h. Council Bill Enacting the Choctaw Nation Servicemembers Civil Relief Act and the Choctaw Nation Change of Name Act
 - i. Council Bill Amending the Choctaw Nation Fish, Game, and Animals Code
 - j. Council Bill Amending the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Criminal Code Relating to Contraband
 - k. Council Bill Enacting the Choctaw Nation Residential Landlord-Tenant Act and the Choctaw Nation Landlord-Tenant Procedures Act
 - l. Amend the Choctaw Nation Banking, Savings, and Investment Act
 - m. Authorize the Chief to Place Property in Sebastian County, Arkansas in Trust Status wit the United States of America
 - n. Approve Application for the Family Violence Prevention Grant for FY2025
 - o. Resolution Supporting the Nomination of Jim Sallee to Serve on the Federal Highway Administration Working Group on Covered Resources
 - p. Approve Application for the Vocational Rehabilitation Services Project for American Indians with Disabilities
 - q. Approve Application for the FY24 Indian Housing Block Grant (IHBG) Program: Competitive Grant Application
 9. OTHER NEW BUSINESS
 10. OLD BUSINESS
 11. ADJOURNMENT
 12. CLOSING PRAYER
- All bills passed unanimously

Chahta Anumpa Aikhhvna
Eplil Language Lesson

Choctaw Conversation – What’s for lunch?

Tabokolikma nanta epa chi?	What’s for lunch?
Ak ikhano. Nanta vpa chi bvna?	I don’t know. What do you want to eat?
Pizza anukfilli li tuk.	I was thinking of pizza.
Pilashash mako vpa li tuk.	That’s what I ate yesterday.
Nanta vpa chi bvna?	What do you want to eat?
Hambukka yvt vlpisa yahoba.	I wouldn’t mind a burger.
Kanimikash hambukka vpa li tuk.	I ate a burger just the other day.
Il ittibachvffa makachi.	We’re going to have to compromise.
Hambukka ish ishikma, akma anato pizza ishi la hinla.	You could always get a burger, and I can get a pizza.
Ome, vlpesa sv yimmi.	Sounds good to me.
Katima ho illimpa it-tatuklo ka il isha hinla?	Where can we go to get both?
“Roots” ako il aiishi hinla.	We can get (both) at Roots.

www.choctawschool.com

Choctaw CAREERS

Choctaw Landing is now hiring.
 There’s something for you here.

Visit one of our upcoming job fairs. For more information about job fairs, open positions or to apply today, scan the QR code or visit Careers.Choctawnation.com.

Choctaw CAREERS

JUROR SUMMONS

Choctaw Nation tribal members, spouses of tribal members, and any Choctaw Nation associate residing within Choctaw Nation territory may be summoned to jury duty with the Choctaw Nation court system.

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

CHOCTAW CULTURAL CENTER
IBAIAYA VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

BE AN ACTIVE PART OF THE CHOCTAW JOURNEY!

The Choctaw Cultural Center is looking for volunteers to help share our culture with guests. Volunteer benefits include:
 Opportunities for personal and community enrichment, Ongoing training and learning opportunities related to Oklahoma history, Free or reduced admission to training activities, lectures, and workshops and much more!

SCAN THE QR CODE OR VISIT CHOCTAWCULTURALCENTER.COM FOR MORE INFORMATION

I-LEAD
 CHOCTAW FUTURE LEADERS

LEADERSHIP TRAINING
 INTERNSHIP CAMP

4-WEEK PAID INTERNSHIP FOCUSING ON:
 • Teambuilding • Financial Management
 • Leadership Development Skills • Elder Mentorship
 • Cultural Activities

Working as a team to create a unique community-based project for a chance to earn an additional \$500 scholarship.
 Ages 14 - 24 | Battiest | Antlers | Wright City

FOR MORE INFORMATION, EMAIL HWOOD@CHOCTAWNATION.COM
 580.642.6073

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

Luke Douglass Coffman

Luke Douglass Coffman was born November, 22, 2023, at the Choctaw Nation Healthcare center in Talihina, Oklahoma.

He is the son of Melissa and John Coffman II of Haywood, joining his siblings Ava and Noah.

Luke is the grandson of Althea and Doug Johnson of Haywood, Becky Coffman of Krebs and the late John Coffman.

He is the great-grandson of the late Jim and Marie Gibson, Patricia Johnson, the late Joyce Dorvee and the late Wayne Myers, the late Jimmy and Sadie Coffman dn Elizabeth Ann Cook.



Taylor turns 1

Happy first Birthday to Penelope!

She is the proud great-granddaughter of Timothy and Effie Shomo and granddaughter of David and Lisa Weaver and Damon and Marinda Taylor of Broken Bow.



Miller turns 18

Ky Miller turns 18 on April 7. The Caddo, Oklahoma senior has all A's and had perfect attendance for his freshman, sophomore and junior years.

He is a member of Blue River Fellowship Church and an active member of Fellow Christian Athletes, the National Honor Society and Gifted and Talented. Ky has played football since little league and was on the District Runner-Up Class B Team Caddo Bruins 2023.

He is on the powerlifting team and finished in the Top 10 at 8 Man State his Sophomore Year. Ky also runs Track.

His parents Josh and Karri Cappel, and Donnie Miller and siblings Kenna Miller and Cabre Cappel, want to wish him a happy birthday!



Emiliano Dillingham Robles

Alan Shane Dillingham and Frida Robles Calderón would like to announce the birth of Emiliano Dillingham Robles.

Emiliano was born on December 18, 2023, at St. Joseph's Hospital in Phoenix, Arizona. Emiliano's mother Frida is from Oaxaca City, Mexico.

On his father's side, he is the grandson of Alan Edward Dillingham and the great-grandson of John Howard Dillingham.

He is the direct descendent of Nancy Folsom Stewart, an original enrollee who was born on traditional Choctaw lands in Mississippi in 1830, survived the Trail of Tears, and made a life in Indian Territory until her death in 1916.



Memphis Robert Villa

Memphis Robert Villa was born January 19th in Laguna Hills, California.

His Parents are Amanda and Mario Villa and brother is Beau.

He weighed 7lbs, 11oz and was 20 inches long.



Jefferson earns National Award Scholarship

Choctaw tribal member Karsen Jefferson has been admitted to Oklahoma University with a National Award Scholarship and has also been admitted to the Honors College.

Karsen has completed the Oklahoma School of Science and Mathematics. Karsen also is an All-State Orchestra Bassoonist and is a 4.4 grade average senior at Tahlequah High School.



Ferris named Brown Foundation Scholar

Carson Ferris, a current high school senior at Veritas Academy in Austin, Texas, has been named a Brown Foundation Scholar at Texas A&M University.

Since 1992, the Craig and Galen Brown Foundation has provided more than 500 four-year undergraduate scholarships to high achieving, well-rounded high school students who were recognized as National Merit semifinalists and major in select STEM disciplines.

Brown Scholars must have high academic achievement with rigorous curriculum, participation in school organizations and activities, including community service, leadership positions, and excellent people and communication skills. Past Brown Scholars have gone on to become Rhodes, Truman, Marshall, and Goldwater Scholar recipients or finalists.

Carson is also among approximately 15,000 Finalists in the 2024 National Merit Scholarship Program. The Finalist pool represents less than one percent of U.S. high school seniors nationwide. This designation is based upon his academic record, participation in school and community activities, demonstrated leadership abilities, employment, and honors and awards received. To qualify for Finalist, a candidate must have an outstanding academic record throughout high school, be endorsed and recommended by a high school official, write an essay, and earn SAT® or ACT® scores that confirm the student's earlier performance on the qualifying test.

Carson will major in Biomedical Engineering at Texas A&M beginning in the fall of 2024.



Blevins Mendoza graduates from Cornell

Adrienne Blevins Mendoza graduated from Cornell University on December 16, 2023, earning a Masters Degree in Healthcare Administration. Adrienne lives in San Antonio Texas.

She is currently the Chief Operating Officer of South Texas Blood and Tissue.



Koltin Hevalow moves to No. 3 in world in PBR

SALT LAKE CITY

(February 10, 2024) – As the first PBR (Professional Bull Riders) Unleash The Beast (UTB) event in Salt Lake City, Utah, since 2020 rolled to a close on Saturday night, a sold-out crowd inside Delta Center was at full volume as Koltin Hevalow (Smithville, Missouri) went 2-for-3 to win his first premier series event of the 2024 season and jump to No. 3 in the standings.

Earlier on Saturday night, Hevalow was paired with Baldy (Tommy Julian/ D&H Cattle), recording the 86.5-point score he needed to creep upward in the event standings.

Going into the championship round, Hevalow, who rides for the Kansas City Outlaws in the separate PBR Teams league, was the No. 1 man on the leaderboard. As he prepared to ride as the very last rider of the round, he had already clinched the event win.

Paired with Chateau Montelena's Montana Jacket (Vella/ Coleman/Ogden/ Hart.), Hevalow climbed atop the muscular animal to finish the night strong. Firing from the chutes, he swung to the side of his powerful counterpart at 2.82 and went head to horn, helmet flying through the air as he hit the dirt.

Despite the collision, the 20-year-old Missouri man moved from No. 12 into the upper standings at No. 3 on the hunt for his very first world title.

In addition to a check for \$43,055, Hevalow also earned 106 Unleash The Beast points.



Keller earns Doctorate from National University

On September 27, 2023, Kerri Keller was awarded her Doctorate in Educational Leadership from National University.

With a background in education spanning 27 years, Kerri is presently serving as the Fine Arts Director for a Texas school district.

The financial scholarships provided by the Choctaw Higher Education Program have enabled the completion of this endeavor.

Daney inducted into NAIA Hall of Fame

Michael Daney, a member of the Oklahoma Choctaw Tribal Nation, was recently inducted into the North American Indigenous Athletics Hall of Fame.

Daney was a track and cross country athlete at Haskell Indian Junior College, Oklahoma Baptist University and Northeastern Oklahoma State University, as well as a coach at Haskell Indian Junior College and Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute, where he is currently a health and physical education instructor.

Daney serves as a coach, mentor, and facilitator of the Sport Warriors Track Club, a program that is designed to encourage and assist Native American post-collegiate runners to continue to compete on a national level in US-ATF national competitions. Daney mentored and coached three runners that qualified for the U.S. Olympic Trials.

As an athlete at Haskell Indian Junior College, he was a two-time NJCAA national cross country qualifier and was named the cross country team MVP while earning letters in cross country, basketball, and track.

While being an athlete at Oklahoma Baptist University, Daney was a member of the NAIA Cross Country All Conference Team, NAIA District 9 Cross Country Champion, and NAIA National Cross Country Qualifier. He was All Conference in the Three Mile Run and Steeplechase and was also named to the NAIA All Region Team Steeplechase.

Daney also attended Northeastern Oklahoma State University, and he was the winner of the NIAA Native American Cross Country Championship, Conference Track Champion and school record holder in the one and two mile.

Daney began his college coaching at Haskell Indian Junior College and was a part of the four-peat Haskell's Men's Marathon National Championships that is still an NJCAA record. His men and women's teams qualified for seven NJCAA National X-Country Championships and were all top 10 finishes. Daney coached 18 male and female All-Americans including one national champion and he was a two-time NJCAA Region X-Country Coach of the Year.

Daney also coached 10 NJCAA National Championship at Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute. He coached 23 All-Americans and seven individual national champions. He was named NJCAA Regional Coach of the Year five times and National Coach of the Year 10 times.

Daney currently lives in Albuquerque, New Mexico, with his wife, children and grandchildren.

For more information on the NAIA Hall of Fame, visit <https://www.naiiahf.org/>.



Gragg named AISES January Tatsinupi (Star) of the Month

Carsyn Gragg is a graduate of McAlester High School, a sophomore at Oklahoma State University, and a proud member of The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. She graduated valedictorian of her class from MHS in 2022 and was the 2022 Pittsburg County Student of the Year.

Currently she is an Animal Science major with a minor in Ethical Leadership, is on the president's honor roll at Oklahoma State University, and a member of Zeta Tau Alpha sorority.

She is the granddaughter to Al McAffrey, Ronnie and Michelle Keith, and Freddie and Sharon Gragg, daughter of Chad and Ashley Gragg, and big sister to Stephen Gragg. Carsyn has a passion for volunteering which is shown through her countless hours spent at many organizations such as Operation Catnip Stillwater, Think Pink Stillwater, and volunteer research in STEM cell therapy.

Carsyn has been accepted into the Early Admittance program at OKState School of Veterinary Medicine and is a member of the Honors College. She has been a recipient of awards for academic excellence, she is a Cobell Scholar, a recipient of the American Indian Science and Engineering Society Scholarship, selected to be a part of OKState's chapter of The National Society of Leadership and Success, along with multiple other awards. Carsyn intends to become a veterinarian, but she is also keeping medical school options open in case her plans change.

After starting a career, she plans to give back to the Native American community and help Native American students like herself earn a college degree.



LAWN CARE SERVICES FOR TRIBAL MEMBERS

APPLICATION NOW OPEN

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

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT CHOCTAWNATION.COM/CHAHTAACHVFFA

Scan to learn more about the program.

Choctaw Nation - Housing Authority

UNITING GENERATIONS THROUGH CULTURE

CHOCTAW CULTURAL CENTER

STAR PROGRAM APPLICATIONS NOW OPEN

Choctaw Nation's STAR Program applications are now available. Parents and guardians can apply for rewards on behalf of their students in grades 2 – 12 in the spring and fall semesters.

ALL A'S - \$50 GIFT CARD
ALL A'S AND B'S - \$25 GIFT CARD
PERFECT ATTENDANCE - \$25 GIFT CARD

APPLICATION PERIODS	
FALL JAN 1 - APR 1	SPRING JUN 1 - SEP 1

APPLY WITH CHAHTA ACHVFFA AT CHAHTAACHVFFA.CHOCTAWNATION.COM

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT CHOCTAWNATION.COM/SERVICES/STAR
800.522.6170

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

Choctaw Oklahoma State Wrestling Champions

By Christian Chaney

During the 2023-2024 wrestling season, several members of the Choctaw Nation achieved great success, winning numerous state titles and making history in the process. The accomplishments of these members are a source of pride for the Choctaw Nation.

The State Wrestling Tournaments, which took place at the Oklahoma City State Fairgrounds Arena from February 22 to 24, 2024, witnessed members of Choctaw Nation display their strength and determination as they battled their opponents on the mat.

Kelcie Avallone, a wrestler from Pawhuska High School, made history at the Oklahoma Class 5A State Wrestling Championship by becoming the first female wrestler from her school to win a state championship.

She took home the title in the 110 lbs. division.

Gage Vaughn from Caddo High School is another wrestler who made history during the tournament.

She won the State Championship for the 5A 135 lbs. division, the first wrestling title in Caddo School's history.

This is a significant milestone for Vaughn and the entire Caddo community.

Luke Brooks, a student from Poteau High School, also achieved a remarkable accomplishment by becoming the first wrestler from Poteau to win an individual state wrestling championship since 2012.

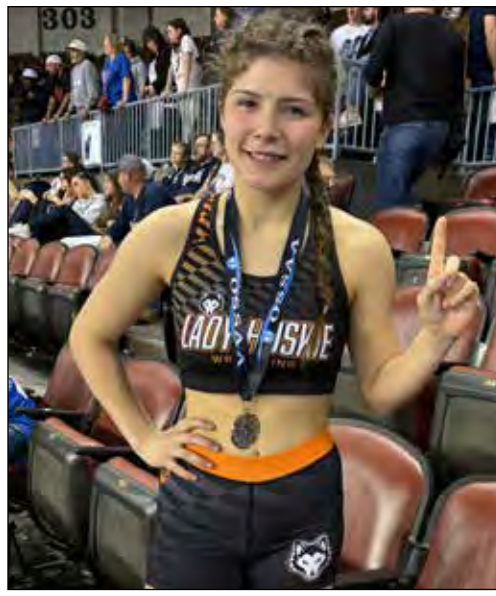
He took home the 4A State Wrestling Championship in the 190 lbs. division.

Brooks has signed with Ouachita Baptist University to further his education and wrestling career.

Kyler Tabor from Berryhill High School had a fantastic season, winning the 2024 OSSAA Class 3A 138 lbs. State Wrestling Championship.

We would like to congratulate each of the tribal member athletes who completed their recent seasons.

Their outstanding accomplishments on the wrestling mat represent a source of pride for the Choctaw Nation, and each title is a testament to these incredible athletes' hard work and dedication.



Kelcie Avallone, Pawhuska High School, 5A State Champion



Gage Vaughn, Caddo High School, 5A State Champion



Luke Brooks, Poteau High School, 4A State Champion



Kyler Tabor, Berryhill High School, 3A State Champion

Williams named Human Resources Leader of the Year by NNAHRA

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Human Resources Director of Organizational Development Twauna Williams has been recognized as the 2023 Human Resources Leader of the Year by the National Native American Human Resources Association (NNAHRA).

Twauna received the award at the NNAHRA 27th Annual National Conference held recently at the Gila River Casino & Resort in Arizona.

Twauna's congratulatory letter from the organization for this prestigious honor states, "Your management team did a tremendous job in highlighting who you are and are very proud of you and your accomplishments; just as they should be. Your performance, work ethic, and outstanding achievements were recognized in front of leaders and human resources professionals from all over the nation at our NNAHRA's Virtual Annual Conference."

Since 2014, this award recognizes Human Resources leaders who contribute to their organization by improving their tribal organization's bottom line, achieving business results, demonstrating leadership, or developing innovative programs. A nominee must be able to demonstrate accomplishment in all four of these focus areas to receive the award.

Twauna's nomination for the award (submitted by several members of Twauna's Organizational Development team) stated, "Twauna demonstrates numerous leadership and management skills within the Human Resources function. Twauna leads by example and with integrity to make sure all projects are keeping CNO tribal members' best interest at heart. Overall, Twauna's leadership and management continues to raise the bar and set the standard for what it means to be an innovative professional within the Human Resources function."

NNAHRA is a nonprofit organization comprised of professionals employed for a Native American Tribe or a tribal enterprise. The organization truly understands the unique challenges and opportunities presented in this industry and aims to help create real systems and solutions across organizations.

NNAHRA will hold its 28th Annual National Conference this fall at Choctaw Casino & Resort - Durant.

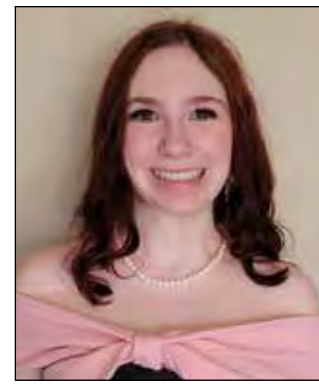


Wilson turns 90

Kenneth James Wilson was born Feb. 22, 1934, in Caney, Okla. to Isaac and Lucy Wilson.

His birthday was celebrated in Norman, Okla., at Norman First American UMC with traditional Choctaw food, Choctaw hymns, Muskogee Creek hymns and Kiowa hymns. He enjoyed fellowship with relatives and friends.

The Choctaw tribe gifted him with a beautiful Choctaw blanket.



Cassidy to attend Juilliard Summer Performing Arts

Keeley Cassidy, who is in 8th grade at Mustang North Public School, auditioned and was accepted to attend Summer Performing Arts with Juilliard 2024 as a vocal major.

She will attend a two-week intensive in Orlando,

Florida, with a small selection of other students from all over the globe. Keeley's vocal accomplishments are Honors Choir, Central Oklahoma Choral Association 2022 and 2023, and Oklahoma Children's All-State Choir 2024. She also enjoys theatre and has been in numerous musicals with her local theatre company for three years.

She is working towards hopefully attending Juilliard as a Musical Theatre Major when she graduates high school. Her dream is to have a career in musical theatre on Broadway one day.

James secures proclamation

Jocelyn James, as President of the Latta FFA, successfully secured a proclamation from the City of Ada Mayor, Randy McFarlin, to honor National FFA Week for February 19-23, 2024.

By obtaining a proclamation from the City of Ada, Jocelyn and the Latta FFA are not only celebrating National FFA Week within their organization but also raising awareness and appreciation for the contributions of FFA to agricultural education and youth development.

This recognition also reflects positively on Jocelyn's leadership skills and her commitment to promoting the goals and values of FFA within her community.

Receiving a proclamation from the City of Ada is a significant accomplishment and a great way to showcase the impact and importance of FFA both locally and beyond. Jocelyn is a junior at Latta High School.

She is the daughter of Jerrod and Laura James of Ada, the granddaughter of Ted and Sharon Brewer of Union Valley, Oklahoma, and Pamela McKinney of Broken Bow.



Hegler featured for work in Navy

Aviation Machinist's Mate 2nd Class Harold Hegler, a native of Daingerfield, Texas, conducts maintenance

on a F/A-18 engine in the jet shop aboard Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson (CVN 70) during Multi-Large Deck Event (MLDE).

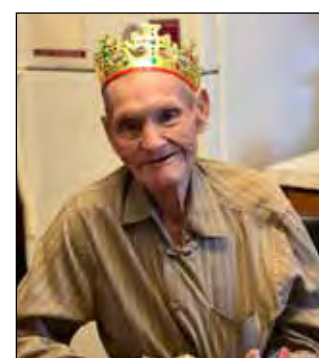
USS Carl Vinson (CVN 70) is the third Nimitz-class nuclear-powered aircraft carrier named in honor of Congressman Carl Vinson of Georgia.

The event comprising Carl Vinson Carrier Strike Group, Theodore Roosevelt Carrier Strike Group and the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force is designed to advance combined readiness between Japan and U.S. maritime forces while simultaneously demonstrating our commitment to our partners and allies in the Indo-Pacific. Vinson, assigned to Carrier Strike Group ONE, is deployed to the U.S. 7th Fleet area of operations to support a free and open Indo-Pacific. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Joshua Sapien)

Dakota Koi Cole Pierce

Dakota Koi Cole Pierce was born January 8, 2024, at Texoma Medical Center to parents Kendal and Loren Pierce.

He entered this world weighing 8 pounds 6.6 ounces and measuring 21.5 inches long.



Work turns 98

Choctaw WWII Veteran, Lige Work, celebrated his 98th birthday on Monday, February 19, 2024.

He celebrated with his two sons, Stan and Kenny, and lots of other family members and lots of love in Lindsay, Oklahoma.

TRADITIONS CELEBRATED. GENERATIONS CONNECTED.

CHOCTAW CULTURAL CENTER

SCAN FOR MORE INFORMATION

OKHVTA CHITO OKHOATALI
CHOCTAW AND FRENCH TRANSATLANTIC LEGACIES

COMING SOON

NEW EXHIBIT: JUNE 1 - NOVEMBER 30

Explore the continued relationship between the Choctaw Nation and France through a collaborative exhibit featuring items from the Musée du quai Branly - Jacques Chirac in France and the University of South Alabama.

CHOCTAW CULTURAL CENTER

CHOCTAWCULTURALCENTER.COM

Exhibition produced with the generous collaboration of the Musée du quai Branly - Jacques Chirac

MY SCREENING MAMMOGRAM SAVED MY LIFE

I get to enjoy more summers. -Julene

American Society of Breast Surgeons guidelines recommend women with an average risk get a mammogram annually beginning at age 40.

To schedule an appointment, call 918.567.7000 or 800.349.7026

Choctaw Nation Health Services

MMIW Community Run happening in May

Indigenous women experience violence at alarming rates. Please help us bring awareness to and honor Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) through this community event on May 11 in Antlers.



MMIW COMMUNITY EVENT 5K AND 1 MILE AWARENESS WALK

MAY 11, 2024 | ANTLERS, OK

- ◆ 5k | \$25 (must register to receive t-shirt)
- ◆ 1 Mile Walk | \$15 (must register to receive t-shirt)
- ◆ Open to PACE and Non-PACE members
- ◆ Rain or Shine Event
- ◆ Event Begins at 8:00 AM



To register, scan QR code or visit choctaw.com/mmiw-run



Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

CHOCTAWNATION.COM



CHOCTAW CULTURAL CENTER

GROUPS & TOURS

BRING YOUR GROUP TO THE CHOCTAW CULTURAL CENTER!

Great for teambuilding or just for fun!

Hosted or self-guided tours are available, and groups with a single payment receive discounted admission.



SCAN THE QR CODE OR VISIT
[CHOCTAWCULTURALCENTER.COM](https://choctawculturalcenter.com)
FOR MORE INFORMATION

Choctaw Words

katiohma chi

Nanta hvsh katiohma chi?

What will you (all) be doing?

E foha chi.

We will rest.

Word Meaning: **nanta** (nahn-la) = what
hvsh (hahsh) = you (all)
katiohmi (kah-ti-oh-mih) = do/doing
e (e) = we **foha** (foh-ha) = rest/break/retire
achi (ah-ch^{ehn}) = future tense marker

Note: Choctaw words do not always match up perfectly with English, but the content of the Choctaw meaning will be close to the English translation.

[CHOCTAWSCHOOL.COM](https://choctawschool.com)

Choctaw Nation School of Choctaw Language

Housing Headlines

By Bobby Yandell

The Section 184 Home Loan Guarantee Program is a home mortgage product specifically designed for American Indians to provide access to mortgage financing. Congress established this program in 1992 to facilitate homeownership and increase access to capital in Native American Communities. With Section 184 financing, borrowers can purchase a home with a low down payment. Section 184 loans can be used, both on and off native lands, for new construction, rehabilitation, purchase of an existing home, or refinance. Loans must be made in an area approved by HUD and deemed as an Indian Servicing area. All loans are approved by manual underwriting and not by an automated system. Fees are monitored and restricted to protect against predatory lending. Interest rates must be fixed, not adjustable, and based on the current market rate, not by credit score. By serving Native communities, Section 184 is increasing the marketability and value of the Native assets and strengthening the financial standing of Native communities. Section 184 is synonymous with home ownership in Indian Country.

Participating tribes make a request to the Office of Loan Guarantee to determine the areas where the Section 184 loans can be used. Loans must be made in an eligible/approved area. Currently, twenty-four states are fully approved, and fifteen states are partially approved lending areas.

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma requested to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Native American Programs, Office of Loan Guarantee, and has been approved for an expansion of fourteen counties in Texas to be deemed an Indian Service Area for Section 184 loans. Bowie, Collin, Dallas, Denton, Fannin, Grayson, Harris, Johnson, Lamar, Montgomery, Red River, Tarrant, Travis, and Williamson are now Section 184-approved Texas counties and available to Native Americans who reside there. Previously approved Texas counties are El Paso and Hudspeth. There are now sixteen approved counties in Texas eligible for Section 184 loans, and there are 12 approved counties in Arkansas.

Down payment assistance is offered with Section 184 loans to Choctaw tribal members who apply with Choctaw Home Finance and use a partner lender. The down payment loan is up to 2% assistance at a fixed 5% interest rate for up to 5 years. Borrowers must make a minimum investment of 1% from their own funds. There are no set income limits to be eligible. Qualifying credit guidelines must be met. We understand the unique circumstances and want to assist with all homeownership goals. Let our knowledgeable staff assist you. Call Choctaw Home Finance at 1-800-235-3087 or visit <https://www.choctawnation.com/services/> for more information.

Choctaw Nation

Housing Authority

Stay Connected

[CHOCTAWNATION.COM](https://choctawnation.com)



WILDLIFE & OUTDOORS

By Matt Gamble

Spring is such an incredible time in the Choctaw Nation. Fresh green growth signals a new beginning and the emergence of life in our woods and waters. Many species of birds have made their way north from Central and South America to make their summer homes and begin nesting. Ruby-throated hummingbirds are one of the most entertaining birds to watch in our area. A few feeders filled with sugar water will attract these little air acrobats to your yard or porch. Just make sure to place them away from windows and out of reach of ledges and limbs. Hummingbirds prefer to feed in the open, away from places where predators can hide. Plain sugar water without dye is best. Red dye is not necessary to attract them to your feeder and can be harmful to the birds. Be sure to periodically wash your feeders so harmful bacteria does not build in the feeding tubes.

A familiar spring sound is the buzzing of emerging pollinators. These organisms play a vital role in the ecosystem by carrying pollen from plant to plant, thus fertilizing many fruits and vegetables. Many people associate pollinators with bees and butterflies, but only a small number of animals can be labeled as pollinators. Bats, moths, flies, birds, and many others may intentionally or unintentionally move pollen as they feed and move about the landscape. Pollinators play such a crucial role in the ecosystem by pollinating plants that stabilize the soil, produce oxygen, and support wildlife.

How can you help pollinators in your area? Plant native wildflowers in your gardens and flower beds that will provide nectar. Having a wide variety of native wildflowers that bloom at different times will ensure that your pollinators have food year-round. Consider limiting the amount of ground that you mow on your property to encourage wildflower growth. Mowed grass may be pleasing to the human eye, but in terms of biodiversity and ecosystem health, it can be detrimental. Limit the use of pesticides or consider using alternatives. Pesticides can be very harmful to pollinators.

For anglers and hunters pursuing spring fishing and hunting opportunities, remember that your tribal membership card serves as your hunting and fishing license within the Choctaw Nation. Report all harvested game through the Chahta Achvffa membership portal. Lastly, remember to get those kids out there and enjoy Choctaw outdoors.

Choctaw Nation Wildlife Conservation

More Than a Scholar

Wright City, Oklahoma, may be a small town, but it's got a great big heart. Perhaps no one knows that better than hometown girl Claire Green Young. In a town like Wright City, everyone knows their neighbors, and a helping hand is never far away.

"Everyone kind of takes care of each other, and there's a lot of positive spirit surrounding that kind of communal aspect of how everyone gets along," said Claire. "If you're not at a basketball game on a Friday night, you might be at a church event or at a community bake sale. You're seeing everyone. You're at the community center playing bingo."

Claire's roots in the area go back multiple generations. She actually grew up in a tiny community just outside Wright City called Herndon, named for ancestors on her father's side. One of the Herndon brothers married the Choctaw matriarch of Claire's family.

"My grandfather attended Herndon school while it was still open, and today, my grandparents live on the same property where the old school building used to be. It's special to have that connection," said Claire.

At home, Claire's mother, Ellen Green, was the rock she and her brother needed. Being a single mother with a full-time job as a dietician didn't stop Ellen from being there to support her children as they grew up. Young Claire looked up to her mother for her strength and determination. She still looks up to her today for those same reasons.

"She's just one of the most incredible women I've ever met," said Claire.

Serving the community in a meaningful way is a value Ellen keeps and has passed on to her children. As executive director of the nonprofit Feed the Need Foundation for Rural Oklahoma, she has built a program that ensures the nutritional needs of elders are met.

"I feel really blessed to have had that experience and exposure to the kind of incredible work and the kind of embodiment of servant leadership that she upholds in our community," said Claire of her mother's efforts.

Seeing how hard her mother worked to give back to others and be successful was Claire's greatest inspiration to step out of her comfort zone when an opportunity to visit an ivy league college came her way.

Dartmouth College's Indigenous Fly-In program is designed for Native American high school seniors who want to see what an ivy league experience would be like for them. Claire didn't expect to be accepted to the program, but she knew she would regret it if she didn't at least try.

But her risk paid off.

By the end of her first day, Claire had decided Dartmouth was where she needed to be, and she applied for early decision admission, an intensive process requiring lots of time, commitment, and hard work. Of course, it meant taking another chance on something that may not work out. Dartmouth is all the way in New Hampshire, farther away than she had ever been from home and for a longer amount of time. Not to mention the tuition costs at Dartmouth are pretty steep.

Not only was Claire accepted on early decision, but she also earned a generous scholarship package. Her dream was actually coming true!

"I felt really driven to push myself in this way. And when I got that acceptance letter, it was almost a bittersweet moment for me. It took a while to tell people just because I do love that town and those people a lot," said Claire. "It took some time to get used to the idea of leaving and growing up."

For Claire, Dartmouth was just the first step in seeing the world, however. She studied abroad in London and Edinburgh, which fueled her passion for visiting other countries and cultures. Today, she has been to 21 different countries.

Upon her graduation from Dartmouth, Claire got the news that she had been selected as the Choctaw-Ireland Scholarship recipient. Honoring the friendship between the Choctaw and Irish people forged during the potato famine in 1847, the program gives Choctaw college students the opportunity to study in Ireland. A chance encounter there with an Irish local became one of many that helped Claire see that her place was back home with her tribe.

After a television interview at an old famine village site, Claire returned to her



Choctaw Nation Photo

Never underestimate the importance of a good support system made up of family, friends, neighbors, and your community. Hear Claire Green Young's story of going from small town Oklahoma to the Ivy League.

hotel in her full Choctaw regalia. An Irish man approached her in the lobby and asked about her dress. When she told him she was Choctaw and explained the symbolism of the regalia, he knew exactly who she was.

"Can I just give you a hug from my ancestors to yours to say thank you for all you've done?" asked the stranger.

"And that was one of the most powerful moments that I had," said Claire. "It was a really beautiful time and a really reassuring moment for me to hear from a complete stranger that his connection was something that meant so much to him, and it made me feel like this was a right time, right place kind of thing."

Small moments and revelations along her journey seemed to point her towards Chahta art and culture. A stint as the Mellon Foundation Curatorial Fellow of Native American Art at the Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art at the University of Oklahoma was her first experience working in a museum. Much like her Fly-In experience at Dartmouth, she felt instantly connected with her destiny.

"I was just blown away by the back of house, you know, going into collections and seeing these massive, incredible pieces of art hanging and gorgeous pottery. I wanted to be part of that," said Claire. "I felt like it was a moment where I also knew these are things I care about. Not just the art side of things, but the community side of things."

Upon her return to the Choctaw Nation, Claire accepted the position of Curator at the Choctaw Cultural Center. Her first curated exhibit, Bok Abaiya: Practiced Hands and the Arts of Choctaw Basketry, on display through March 30, 2024, centers on generations of Chahta basket weavers and the ways they have used natural resources to craft functional, yet beautiful, vessels.

"I hope that...you can tell that this isn't just an exhibit about baskets; this is an exhibit about Choctaw people," Claire said.

In February, Claire began a position with the Choctaw Nation's Communications Division as the Public Arts Manager, where she will continue to support Chahta artists and share their work with communities across the reservation.

And she is happy to be back home.

"I think it speaks to the fact that being from this small place doesn't mean that you have to stay forever. It doesn't mean you have to leave forever," said Claire. "I think that if I hadn't left and gone out and experienced the world the way that I did, I don't think that I would have been as motivated to recognize the extent to which I was so grounded in the place, in the people here."

CNO welcomes newest appellate judge

DURANT, Okla. (February 26, 2024)

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma (CNO) Advanced Technology Initiatives (ATI) has teamed up with the University of Oklahoma (OU) to research advanced transportation technologies, resilience to severe weather events, and defense and security challenges such as the development of counter-drone systems. The two entities have signed a three-year Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to achieve technological advancements, workforce development, economic growth, and scientific discovery, aligning OU's academic objectives with CNO's educational and economic priorities.

James L. Grimsley, Executive Director of Advanced Technology Initiatives, expressed his excitement about the partnership, saying "We are excited to work with the University of Oklahoma in several exciting fields. Both CNO and OU are developing world-class capabilities to address important challenges for our communities. This collaboration will accelerate our ability to improve the quality of life and health in our Reservation."

The MOU enables OU and CNO to share resources and connect stakehold-



Choctaw Nation Photo

Pictured from left Chief Gary Batton, Tracy Smith, Appellate Judge Fob Jones, Chief Justice David Burrage and Assistant Chief Jack Austin, Jr.

ers to find solutions for challenges facing rural and tribal communities, improving the safety and quality of life in those communities. Additionally, this agreement will create opportunities for Choctaw students interested in STEM fields like engineering, environmental sciences, meteorology, and aviation.

"We are thrilled to partner with CNO on this important work and leverage OU's deep research expertise in radar technologies and severe weather for the benefit of the state and nation," said Drew Allen, Deputy Executive Director of OU's Oklahoma Aerospace and Defense Innovation Institute.

CNO and OU partner to research advanced technologies and improve rural communities

DURANT, Okla. (February 21, 2024)

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma (CNO) Advanced Technology Initiatives (ATI) has teamed up with the University of Oklahoma (OU) to research advanced transportation technologies, resilience to severe weather events, and defense and security challenges such as the development of counter-drone systems. The two entities have signed a three-year Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to achieve technological advancements, workforce development, economic growth, and scientific discovery, aligning OU's academic objectives with CNO's educational and economic priorities.

James L. Grimsley, Executive Director of Advanced Technology Initiatives, expressed his excitement about the partnership, saying "We are excited to work with the University of Oklahoma in several exciting fields. Both CNO and OU are developing world-class capabilities to address important challenges for our communities. This collaboration will accelerate our ability to improve the quality of life and health in our Reservation."



The MOU enables OU and CNO to share resources and connect stakeholders to find solutions for challenges facing rural and tribal communities, improving the safety and quality of life in those communities. Additionally, this agreement will create opportunities for Choctaw students interested in STEM fields like engineering, environmental sciences, meteorology, and aviation.

"We are thrilled to partner with CNO on this important work and leverage OU's deep research expertise in radar technologies and severe weather for the benefit of the state and nation," said Drew Allen, Deputy Executive Director of OU's Oklahoma Aerospace and Defense Innovation Institute.



HEAD START NOW ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS

Providing educational, health and family services for eligible children and families, including children with special needs.

Available to all children who will be 3 or 4 years old by September 1, 2024.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL, **580.924.8280**



Scan to learn more about the program.

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

DID YOU KNOW?



Cultural Services offers step-by-step tutorials on crafting a variety of handmade beaded items, such as earrings and bracelets? Follow Choctaw Nation Cultural Services or visit www.choctaw-nation.com/services/cultural-outreach to get started.

APPLICATION NOW OPEN HIGHER EDUCATION

The Higher Education Program application for Summer is now open. **Apply now through June 15.**

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

Healthy nutrition habits set kids up for success

By Chris Jennings

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), childhood obesity affects 14.7 million children between 2-19 years old. Obesity is a body mass index (BMI) at or above the 95th percentile of the CDC sex-specific BMI-for-age growth charts.

Just like in adults, obesity in children increases their risk of obesity-related conditions, including high blood pressure, high cholesterol, type 2 diabetes, breathing problems such as asthma and sleep apnea, and joint problems. The key to solving this problem starts at an early age.

Robin Linam, with Choctaw Nation Child Nutrition, says that the early years are important.

"When they're young, their development sets them up for the rest of their life," said Linam. "And nutrition plays a huge part in their development."

According to the US Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Dietary Guidelines, mothers should breastfeed from birth, if possible, for about the first six months. If that's not possible, they recommend an iron-fortified commercial infant formula.

After six months, complementary foods and beverages can be added to their regular diet.

By 12 months, infants should continue healthy eating as they begin to switch to developmentally appropriate foods and drinks.

Healthy eating is important in every stage of life, and even though nutrient needs vary across life stages, the foods and beverages that individuals should eat over their lifespan are remarkably consistent.

For example, to help their children grow strong, parents should include the same fruits and vegetables they eat in meals and snacks. However, how much fruit and vegetables your child needs depends on their age and activity level.

General guidelines from the USDA MyPlate plan are:

- 12 to 23 months - ½ to 1 cup of fruit and 2/3 to 1 cup of vegetables
- 2 to 4 years - 1 to 1 ½ cups of fruit and 1 to 2 cups of vegetables
- 4 to 8 years - 1 to 2 cups of fruit and 1 ½ to 2 ½ cups of vegetables.

You can serve fresh, frozen or canned vegetables. With canned vegetables, look for options that are low in sodium. Choose canned or frozen fruits with little to no added sugar. The same guidelines apply to choices for adults.

Britney Speer, one of six registered dietitians with the Choctaw Nation, says the USDA's MyPlate is a good tool for planning healthy meals.

"My favorite resource is myplate.gov; it's a great resource," said Speer.

MyPlate replaced the older versions of the Food Guide Pyramid in 2011. The MyPlate Plan shows your food group targets. What and how much should you eat within your calorie allowance? Your food plan is personalized based on age, sex, height, weight, and physical activity level.

"The pyramids could have been confusing. How much of this am I supposed to have? How do I incorporate that? Where as my plate really simplifies it, half your plate should be fruits and vegetables; A quarter of your plate is protein; and the other part is grains," said Speer.

While the MyPlate recommendations are good, portions of the country don't have access to the recommended foods.

A recent study by the Native American Agriculture Fund found that during the pandemic, 56 percent of survey respondents across the country experienced food insecurity, with 31 percent experiencing very low food security.

Many families living in the Choctaw Nation don't have easy access to these food recommendations either. If you live in a rural area and are more than 10 miles from the nearest supermarket, then the USDA classifies that as a food desert.

Much of the Choctaw Nation falls under this food desert status. The Nation has taken steps to combat these food deserts by opening stores and making fresh fruits, vegetables and meat available to people in the area.

Another way the Nation is helping to alleviate food insecurity is by providing free meals to any child who needs one through the Child Nutrition Program.

"Child Nutrition is a department within the Choctaw Nation that provides meals to any child from one to 18 years old," said Linam.

Children do not need to be CDIB cardholders to qualify for the meals.

There are two different programs children can participate in. One is the At-Risk program that runs during the school year.

"A lot of kids get breakfast and lunch at school, but when they go home, they might not have a meal to eat," Linam explained. "So, we have sites throughout the whole Choctaw Nation reservation that will be open during after-school hours that a kid can walk into and get a free meal."

The second program is the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP).

"During our SFSP, when kids are out of school, we provide grab-and-go meals for the kids to take home, which provide five days of meals for the week. And this year, we will start giving breakfast with that," said Linam.

Speer highlights the importance of breakfast.

"Breakfast is such an important part of a balanced diet. It helps get your body started," said Speer. "It's important for helping with improved test scores and academic success."

In 2023, from the second week of May to the second week of August, Child Nutrition served 310,000 meals to kids who may have otherwise gone hungry.

With the lack of easy accessibility, Linam says that getting this food to the kids is important.

"Especially for kids in rural areas, the meals aren't as accessible. That's why we do our child nutrition programs; there are so many kids that are absolutely missed," said Linam. "We will not only provide for our tribal children but all children; we want to make sure they're not going hungry."

It's never too late to start eating better; a healthy eating plan can be started at any stage of life.

Using the opportunity to change the diets of the adults in your family while planning your child's diet is a great way to lead by example.

Making small changes can add up to big differences. Choosing nutrient-dense and low-sodium foods such as plain, low-fat yogurt with fruit instead of full-fat yogurt with added sugars, frozen vegetables instead of canned vegetables and vegetable or olive oil instead of butter can make a difference in your family's overall health.

Starting good, healthy eating habits for your children will help them grow up strong, giving them a headstart on a long life.

SUN: MEALS TO-GO
COMING SOON

Enjoy grab-and-go meals for all kids aged 1 to 18, regardless of CDIB status. The Summer Food Service Program is an equal opportunity provider.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT:
CHOCTAWNATION.COM/SERVICES/SUMMER-FOOD-SERVICE

SUN MEALS TO-GO

Choctaw Nation Health Services

Watermelon Salsa

- ¼ cup Pepper jelly
- ¼ cup Lime Juice
- 2 cups Watermelon, seeded, diced
- 1 can Peaches, rinsed, drained, chopped
- 1/3 cup Basil, fresh, chopped
- ¼ cup Chives, chopped
- 2 c Tomatoes, diced
- Chips
- 8 Whole-wheat tortillas
- 1 tablespoon Water
- ¼ cup Sugar
- 2 tablespoons Cinnamon

Preparation

1. Wisk together pepper jelly and lime juice in a small bowl. Heat in microwave for 10-15 seconds or until softened.
2. Stir in watermelon, peaches, basil, chives and tomatoes.
3. For the chips, brush tortillas lightly with water. Combine sugar and cinnamon; Sprinkle over tortillas.
4. Cut each tortilla into 8 wedges. Place in a single layer on ungreased baking sheet.
5. Bake at 400 for 6-8 minutes or until lightly browned. Cool and serve with salsa.



Atoka County CNO Community Center - Atoka Beginning 5/21/24 Tuesdays from 10am - 1pm	Hughes County Old Calvin Store - Calvin Beginning 5/16/24 Thursdays from 10am - 1pm
Bryan County CNO Wellness Center - Durant Beginning 5/21/24 Tuesdays from 10am - 1pm	Latimer County CNO Community Center - Wilburton Beginning 5/16/24 Thursdays from 10am - 1pm
Choctaw County CNO Community Center - Hugo Beginning 5/21/24 Tuesdays from 10am - 1pm	Pushmataha County CNO Community Center - Antlers Beginning 5/21/24 Tuesdays from 10am - 1pm
Haskell County CNO Community Center - Stigler Beginning 5/21/24 Mondays from 10am - 1pm	Leflore County Donald Reynolds Community Center - Poteau Beginning 5/17/24 Fridays from 10am - 1pm Alco Parking Lot - Tallihina Beginning 5/16/24 Thursdays from 10am - 1pm

There are locations for the Summer Food program across the reservation. For more information, call 580-642-7022.

PUBLIC HEALTH SURVEY

Take the Choctaw Nation Community Health Survey and give your opinions on the availability and access to various services that provide for the welfare, safety and health of our communities.

SCAN THE QR CODE TO TAKE THE SHORT SURVEY

Choctaw Nation Public Health

Choctaw Nation Vocational Rehabilitation

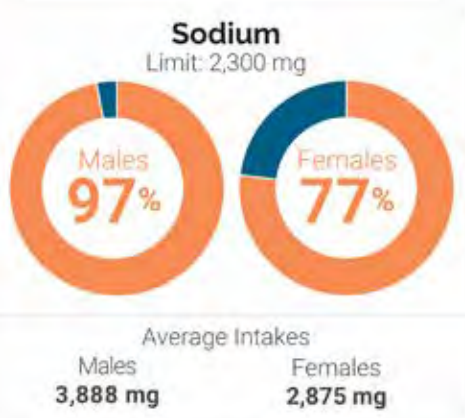
April 2	Wright City	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
April 3	Antlers	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
April 5	Crowder	By Appointment
April 9	Idabel	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
April 10	Talihina	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
April 12	Atoka	8:30 a.m. - 12 p.m.
April 12	Coalgate	12:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.
April 16	Broken Bow	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
April 17	McAlester	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
April 17	Stigler	By Appointment
April 24	Poteau	11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.
April 26	Atoka	8:30 a.m. - 12 p.m.
April 26	Coalgate	12:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.
April 30	Wilburton	10:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.

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

WIC OFFICE LOCATIONS

LOCATION	DAYS	HOURS
Antlers 580-916-5609	Tuesday	8:30 am - 4:00 pm
Atoka 580-889-5825	Daily Monday - Friday	8:00 am - 4:30 pm
Battiest 580-241-5458	1st Tuesday of every month	8:30 am - 4:00 pm
Broken Bow 580-584-2746	Daily Monday - Friday (Except the 1st Tuesday & 2nd Thursday of the Month)	8:00 am - 4:30 pm
Durant 580-916-2100 x83517	Daily Monday - Friday	8:00 am - 4:30 pm
Heavener 918-974-1820	Monday, Tuesday, Thursday & Friday	8:00 am - 4:30 pm
Hugo 580-326-9707	Monday, Wednesday, Thursday & Friday	8:00 am - 4:00 pm
Idabel 580-286-2510	Daily Monday - Friday	8:00 am - 4:30 pm
McAlester 918-423-6335	Daily Monday - Friday	8:00 am - 4:30 pm
Poteau 918-649-1106	Daily Monday - Friday	8:00 am - 4:30 pm
Smithville 580-244-3289	1st Thursday of every month	8:30 am - 4:00 pm
Spiro 918-962-5134	Wednesday, Thursday & Friday	8:00 am - 4:30 pm
Stigler 918-967-4211	Monday & Tuesday	8:30 am - 4:00 pm
Talihina 918-567-7000 x6792	Daily Monday - Friday	8:00 am - 4:30 pm
Wilburton 580-642-7588	Wednesday	8:30 am - 4:00 pm
Mobile Van 580-380-8193	1st Tuesday - Boswell 3rd Tuesday - Coalgate 4th Tuesday - Clayton	9:00 am - 3:00 pm

Choctaw Nation Health Services



Sodium intake for children ages 2-18 far exceeds the recommended allowance. Excessive sodium intake can lead to high blood pressure, heart disease and stroke—source: USDA Dietary Guidelines.

CHOCTAW NATION FOOD DISTRIBUTION

MARKET HOURS
Open 8:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday
Thursday: 9:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.
Markets will be closed the last two days of each month for inventory.

April 2024
All markets open weekdays, April 1-26
Closed: April 29-30
Nutrition Ed & Food Programs subject to cancellation
Participants can request a calendar at their location.

ANTLERS 400 S.W. "O" ST., 580-298-6443
Food demo April 4

BROKEN BOW 109 Chahta Rd., 580-584-2842
Food demo April 12

DURANT 2352 Big Lots Pkwy., 580-924-7773
Food demo April 18

MCALESTER 3244 Afullotha Hina, 918-420-5716
Food demo April 9

POTEAU 106 B St., 918-649-0431
Food demo April 14
This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Choctaw-Ireland Scholars graduate from University College Cork

CORK, Ireland (March 6, 2023) – Two Choctaw-Ireland scholars, Skylee Glass and Aurianna Jewell Joines, graduated from University College Cork (UCC).

The scholarships foster and deepen the ties between Ireland and the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. The scholarships recognize the act of generosity and humanitarianism shown by the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma towards the people of Ireland during the Great Famine of the mid-Nineteenth century.

The Choctaw-Ireland Scholarship recognizes the act of generosity and humanitarianism shown by the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma towards the people of Ireland during the Great Famine of the mid-Nineteenth Century. It aims foster and deepen the ties between the two nations today.

Skylee Glass, from Verden in Southwest Oklahoma, was conferred with a Masters in Applied Psychology. Her master's thesis explored education, intercultural and community work. During her time at UCC, Skylee completed a six-month placement with the Rainbow Club, an organization that provides support for children with autism and their families.

Skylee said: "The Choctaw-Ireland scholarship has maintained the bond between two cultures who underwent similar experiences. It has allowed me to expand my worldview and meet the best people by attending UCC. I was challenged, encouraged, and empowered while obtaining my degree. I plan to continue my education and pursue a PhD in hopes to one day open my own mental health care organization that serves underprivileged individuals because mental health care is not a privilege, it is a basic human right."

Congratulating Skylee, Dr Sharon Lambert, Senior Lecturer in Applied Psychology UCC, said: "Skylee has made outstanding contributions to UCC and Ireland during her time here. In addition to her studies, Skylee engaged in important events including the Traveller Visibility Group's Traveller Pride event, a celebration of Traveller history and culture. Skylee met with Traveller women and discussed the similarities between their communities and the shared

traditions associated with indigenous nomadic cultures, and the impact on health and well-being of the forced assimilation of these cultures."

Aurianna Jewell Joines was conferred with a Masters in Digital Arts and Humanities. Her ambitious thesis explored the importance of storytelling within tribal culture and invited others to explore the parallels between the strong storytelling tradition of the Choctaw and how that might be evidenced in digital multimedia environments.

Aurianna said: "The Choctaw-Ireland Scholarship is no small gift. This scholarship encourages both personal and professional growth, traveling and being immersed in culture, and being transformed in your way of thinking. I was challenged but encouraged through my work at UCC and my time there was a gift that I will reflect on throughout my life. I have since started my brand design studio, Foundwell Design, where I create brands and websites for heart-led businesses rooted in storytelling. I am deeply thankful to be working with small businesses, many of which are a part of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma."

Congratulating Aurianna, Dr Órla Murphy, Head of the School of English and Digital Humanities at UCC, said: "Auriana's work expertly ensured that aspects of traditional storytelling in the contemporary lives of Choctaw creatives were explored. The digital artefact of her thesis is a series of podcasts containing interviews with other members of the Choctaw tribal nation. The resonance of the work within the community is evident. The necessity of the work in its context and the depth and richness of the material is clear in the level of engagement from the community, and the personal and community resonance of this series."

UCC's College of Arts, Celtic Studies and Social Sciences conferring ceremony sees more than 390 candidates conferred with degrees, Masters and PhDs across diverse specialist areas including applied psychology, sociology, work and organisation behaviour, planning and sustainable development, arts management and digital humanities.



Photos by Daragh McSweeney/Provision Choctaw-Ireland Scholars Skylee Glass and Aurianna Jewell Joines graduated from UCC on the first day of the university's spring conferring ceremonies.

Choctaw-Irish Friendship Fest

On March 16, 2024, the Choctaw Cultural Center celebrated the bond between the Nation and its friend, Ireland. Visitors were able to participate in activities for the whole family, including an art market, special presentations, Choctaw and Irish cultural demonstrations, children's activities and much more.



Photos by Rylee Tollett
The audience watches a special presentation during the Choctaw-Irish Friendship Fest.



Dancers perform a special number in honor of the Choctaw-Irish bond.



Left and Above: Chef Tanya helps visitors make special green frybread for an added bit of luck during the Choctaw Irish Friendship Fest.



Leslie Stall Widner shows off her latest children's book, Kindred Spirits (Shilombish Ittibachvffa).

REGISTER NOW FOR THE 2024 NATIONAL JOHNSON-O'MALLEY CONFERENCE

SEPTEMBER 9-11, 2024

CHOCTAW CASINO AND RESORT
4216 US-69
DURANT, OK 74701

TO REGISTER VISIT:
WWW.NJOMA.COM
The registration deadline is September 1, 2024

Choctaw Nation Johnson-O'Malley Program

ENVISION CENTER VOLUNTEER INCOME TAX ASSISTANCE

Envision Center offers free basic tax preparation for tribal members with a combined household income of \$64,000 and below.

We are able to prepare the following tax forms:
W-2, W-2G, SSA-1099, 1099-R, 1099-G, 1099-C, Child Tax Credit, Earned Income Credit

We cannot prepare the following tax forms:
Itemized deductions, Schedule C, Schedule D, Self Employment

ENVISIONCENTER@CHOCTAWNATION.COM
580.380.9370

Scan here to schedule an appointment

Choctaw Nation Housing Authority

Southeastern Oklahoma Indian Credit Association & Choctaw Revolving Loan Fund

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

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

Southeastern Oklahoma Indian Credit Association Loan
To Be Eligible to Apply:
- Must live within the 10.5 counties of the Choctaw Nation
- Must possess a CDIB card from a federally recognized tribe

Choctaw Revolving Loan Fund
To Be Eligible to Apply:
- Must live within the 10.5 counties of the Choctaw Nation
- Must possess a CDIB card from the Choctaw Nation

If you're interested in applying for a loan, a representative will be at the:
Idabel Community Center
April 26, 2024
9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Choctaw Cultural Center hosts Spring Equinox Celebration

Christian Toews

The spring equinox has always been an exciting time for the Choctaw people. It is a time of change, warmer weather, and new growth. While the modern spring celebrations have evolved, the Choctaw people still welcome and celebrate the earth's renewal after the cold winter months.

The Choctaw Cultural Center is leading the way with opportunities to learn, grow, and plant for the future this spring. One of these opportunities took place on March 15. People from all over came together to observe and participate in the Spring Equinox Celebration at the Choctaw Cultural Center in Durant, Oklahoma.

Visitors had the opportunity to learn more about Choctaw culture and how the changing of the seasons historically impacted Choctaw people.

During the day, Dr. Ian Thompson led a tour and presentation of the Living Village, where he answered questions and spoke about historic events. Other presentations and workshops explored women's roles in Choctaw society and how native flora impacts local ecosystems.

This event highlighted how vital conservation and education have been in preserving the Choctaw culture.

One of the main presentations was from the Choctaw Nation's Growing Hope program and the Public Programs department. Together, they hosted Okchahli in the Cultural Center's Living Village garden. Attendees were offered the opportunity to plant some Choctaw heirloom corn seeds as part of the workshop.

The Growing Hope seed bank, curated by the Choctaw Nation's Historical Preservation team, allows tribal members to participate in preserving and revitalizing time-honored Choctaw foods. By preserving and distributing Heirloom seeds for traditional Choctaw crops, this program offers a unique look into the past.

"These are some seeds that were actually sewn into the hems of our ancestor's garments and dresses. These are seeds that they were afraid the soldiers would take, so they took such care to sew them and hide them," said Jacqueline Putman, the Program Coordinator of Growing Hope.

She said it was remarkable that when these early Choctaws were displaced from their homes, they considered the need for seeds to grow crops.

"They knew when they left from Mississippi on that long walk that they would have to have food to start over. It was about sustainability," said Putman. "That way, we weren't reliant on the government the way they wanted us to be."

Samples of other seeds that the Growing Hope program preserved were distributed to interested visitors just in time to plant them in their spring garden.

Growing Hope was able to share their ongoing efforts to preserve Choctaw Culture and food and give visitors a better idea of how they can participate in this preservation. Putman said that they recently opened their seed program to everyone.

"That's anywhere through the United States; we have sent seeds to Alaska, Hawaii and so forth," she said. "So, we are really excited about getting our seeds out to everyone."

Putman said she enjoys her job and seeing how people get excited about receiving seeds and growing Choctaw heirloom food.

"I get cards and letters from people all the time," she said.

Putman read part of a letter that she had received.

"Thank you for all your efforts and diligence in teaching our children a deeper understanding of the earth," the letter read.

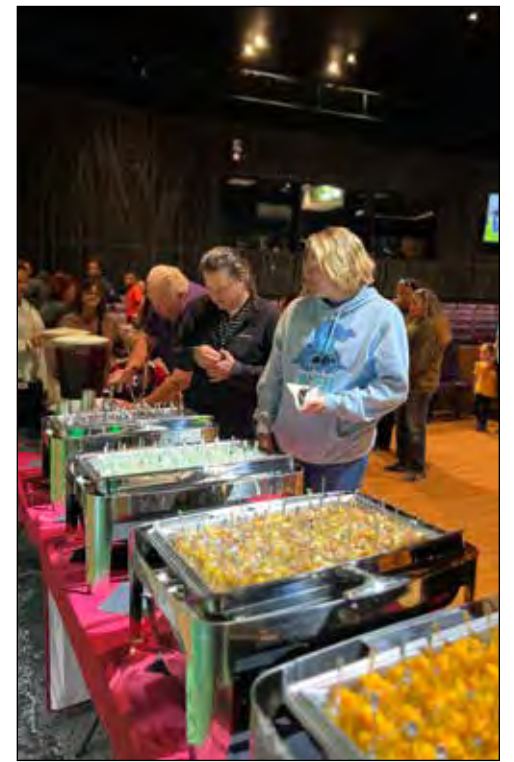
Putman said that the Okchahli event was about unity and realizing that we are all stewards of the earth. She said she believes we should all strive to learn more and better cultivate the land.

To learn more about spring events at the Choctaw Cultural Center, visit <https://choctawculturalcenter.com>. You can learn more about the Growing Hope program by visiting <https://www.choctawnation.com/services/growing-hope>.



Choctaw Nation Photo

On March 15, 2024, the Choctaw Cultural Center hosted its first Spring Equinox Celebration.



Photos by Rylee Tollett

Top Left: Growing Hope passed out Hvshi Pakanli (Seneca Sunflower) seed kits during the Spring Equinox Celebration.

Top Right: Visitors sample traditional foods at the Spring Equinox Celebration on March 15.



Left: The high tannin content contributes to raspberry leaf's benefits as an herbal astringent, which helps to tone and tighten tissue. This makes raspberry leaf a great herb to ease normal menstrual and gastrointestinal cramping and other issues.

Chief Batton's Easter Celebration



On your mark, get set, go! Some young egg hunters take part in the annual egg hunt.



Photos by Christian Toews

Easter egg hunts aren't just for the young ones. Elders take part in the Easter festivities too.



CNO employees and volunteers spread out the prize eggs before the big egg hunt at Tvshka Homma.



Sacred, Alisha and Nohden Williams enjoy the nice weather at the Easter Celebration.



Chief Batton chats with an egg hunter before the big hunt.



Mariah and Skilyn Seals smile while waiting for the egg hunt

MEMORIAL DAY CEREMONY
 MAY 24, 2024 | 10:00 AM TO 1:00 PM
 TVSHKA HOMMA CAPITOL GROUNDS
 Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

COLLEGE FYI INVITES YOU TO CAMP CHAHTA
 An orientation camp for first-year Choctaw tribal member college students attending CASC, SOSU, or EOSC.
 For more information scan the QR code
 Choctaw Nation College Freshman Year Initiative

Choctaw women's veteran group, Tvshka Ohoyo Alliance unveiled

By Chris Jennings

According to the May 2011 Iti Fabvssa, in 1541, during a battle between the ancestors of today's Choctaw people and an army of Spanish Conquistadors led by Hernando De Soto, the women picked up their fallen husbands' and fathers' weapons after most of the Choctaw warriors had fallen. They fought the Spanish to the death rather than give up their liberty and honor. To this day, the Choctaw war dance, unlike those of many other tribes, involves women as well as men.

Choctaw women (ohoyo) have a long history of serving their family and tribe in whatever way they're called to. For many, that way has been through military service. These ohoyo veterans made many of the same sacrifices and had to face much of the same trauma as male veterans, but are not always looked upon as the same.

Today, ohoyo make up 11.3% of the Native American veteran population (about 20,000), a higher percentage than ohoyo in all demographics.

The Choctaw Warrior Wellness program recognized that these ohoyo veterans needed their own place to be together. To address this need, several ohoyo veterans have gotten together to create the Tvshka Ohoyo (Women Warrior) Alliance.

Courtney Trent, With the Warrior Wellness Program, said, "Tvshka Ohoyo Alliance is a remarkable experience of women coming together to create a safe place of healing...The creation of this sisterhood of women speaks to the heart of what it means to be Choctaw and ohoyo."

Monica Brooks, a member of the Tvshka Ohoyo Alliance, said, "When we separate from the military, sometimes it seems like it's hard to find your group again. When you're on active duty or in boot camp, you find people you mesh well with, but when you get out, sometimes you feel lost because you've lost those connections. So, this improves our mental health, builds camaraderie, brings us closer to our culture, and creates a greater sense of self."

Another member of the alliance, Sandra Stroud, said, "Whenever we come together, there's laughter, and in laughter, there's healing in sharing stories, whether they're good stories or bad stories."

If you were to stand outside of a Tvshka Ohoyo Alliance meeting and hear the laughing and joking, you might not realize the healing from some of those bad stories that's taking place. Sharing those stories with peers is just one step in beginning to heal.

Veteran distress increased from fall 2019 to fall and winter 2020, with evidence of the highest increases in distress among Veterans aged 18 to 44 years old and among women veterans.

Mental health, including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), is an ongoing struggle for veterans. There are several causes of PTSD among veterans; combat, losing others, training and Military Sexual Trauma (MST) are just a few.

There are a staggering number of female veterans with PTSD. A significant contributor to this is MST, with 1 in 3 female service members reporting these experiences during their military service.

"Part of our task that we're charged with for this grant is reducing suicide rates. We know that 11.3% of the Native American veteran population is made up of ohoyo. So, a big part of that is us really acknowledging that we want to increase awareness about suicide prevention and provide support for our native ohoyo veterans," said Trent.

The camaraderie and friendship that the members of the Tvshka Ohoyo Alliance gain are just one step in improving the mental health of its members.

According to Stroud, seeing all these ohoyo at the unveiling of the alliance means a lot to her.

"It means we came together to heal, share, love, and grow," said Stroud. "We're still serving; we're still doing our best to ensure that our community is healthy."

Brooks was proud of the moment, being led in by a drum and the ohoyo's stickball team.

"I was emotional from the moment I walked in the door; there's been so much love and healing in this... this has been an incredible honor. And the tribe and the program have been so, so good to us. Anytime we're together, it's a huge blessing," said Brooks.

If you're a veteran who's struggling, you can get immediate support through the Veterans Crisis Line: Caring, qualified Veterans Crisis Line responders are available 24/7/365 to provide support for Veterans at acute risk for suicide and for those calling on behalf of a Veteran. Dial 988 and Press 1, text to 838255, or chat online at VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat.

For more information on the Tvshka Ohoyo Alliance, call 918-302-0052.



Photos by Chris Jennings


Members of the Tvshka Ohoyo Alliance from left to right, Sandy Stroud, Kristi Durant, Cynthia Logan, Jeani Pisachubbe, Martina Hawkins, Claire Harvey and Monica Brooks.



The blue skirt pays homage to Little Blue Hen, a story of resilience shared by Stroud. The red lining at the bottom represents the ancestral blood shared with survivors. The red ribbon at the beginning acknowledges the past. The black ribbon represents the traumas experienced. The blue ribbons represent the resolve to overcome those traumas, with the lightening of the blues representing the continued work and healing of those traumas. The white ribbon represents the hopes and dreams for future generations. The final red ribbon represents the hope to share the stories and connection to the culture and ancestors of those who wear the ribbon skirt.



Sandra Stroud speaks to the audience during the unveiling of the Tvshka Ohoyo Alliance. Behind her are the other members of the alliance.



CHOCTAW LABOR DAY FESTIVAL

INFORMATION UPDATES

Food Vendor Application Now Online - Sign up now to register as a food vendor at the 2024 Choctaw Labor Day Festival. The deadline for applications is May 31, 2024. For more information, call 580-740-0826 or email tribalevents@choctawnation.com.


Vendor Information Booth Application Now Available - Festival vendor information booth applications are now open through May 1, 2024. Festival Vendor Information Booth Dates/Times are: Friday, August 30 | 10 a.m.-6 p.m., Saturday, August 31 | 10 a.m.-6 p.m. and Sunday, September 1 | 12pm-6pm.

Arts & Crafts Vendor Application Now Online - Sign up now to register as a food vendor at the 2024 Choctaw Labor Day Festival. The deadline for applications is April 30, 2024. For more information, call 580-740-0826 or email tribalevents@choctawnation.com.

Call for Choctaw Performing Artists - Have you ever wanted to perform live at the Choctaw Labor Day Festival? Here is your chance! Choctaw performing artists are invited to apply to perform on the main amphitheater stage during the 2023 Labor Day Festival. Submit application before April 20.

For more information, visit laborday.choctawnation.com.

To stay update to on all Labor Day information, text LABORDAY to 888777.



Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

BISKINIK

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma ◆ TOGETHER WE'RE MORE ◆

TRADITIONAL CHOCTAW SEEDS GROWING HOPE PROGRAM

REQUEST BY APPLICATION ONLY

Please check the **three** plants that you would like to receive seed for:

<input type="checkbox"/> Tanchi Tohbi Choctaw Flour Corn	<input type="checkbox"/> Tvnishi Lambsquarter	<input type="checkbox"/> Chukfi Peas
<input type="checkbox"/> Tobi Smith Peas	<input type="checkbox"/> Hakchuma Perique Tobacco	<input type="checkbox"/> Hvshi Pakanli Seneca Sunflower
<input type="checkbox"/> Isito Choctaw Sweet Potato Squash		

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

Seeds from the Growing Hope Program are intended for Choctaw People and Community members. They will be given out on a first come, first served basis while supplies last, hard copy mail in application only. **YAKOKE!**

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL THE GROWING HOPE PROGRAM MANAGER
 918-567-3709 EXT. 1016


MAIL THIS FORM TO:
 Growing Hope Project
 163665 N 4355 RD
 Tushkahoma, OK 74574

Choctaw Nation Historic Preservation

Eplil 2024


In This Issue

- 2 FFC
- 4 Council Corner
- 5 NTN
- 6 PYK
- 7 PYK
- 8 Obits
- 9 Iti
- 10 TWM
- 11 Health
- 12 Choctaw-Irish




Page 1:

Choctaw Nation releases 2021 Economic Impact Report.



Page 3:

Grant finds success thanks to Career Development.



Pages 13:

Celebrating the Spring Equinox at the Choctaw Cultural Center.

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

Stay Connected to the Nation

CHOCTAWNATION.COM






CHOCTAW NATION
 U.S. POSTAGE PAID
 AUTO
 PRESORT STD

P.O. BOX 1210
 DURANT OK 74702-1210
BISKINIK