



## Season's Greetings



GOV. BILL ANOATUBBY

Season's greetings and Merry Christmas from the Chickasaw Nation!

Each year during the holidays, we reflect on and remain thankful for our continued blessings and the great progress of your government, which is committed to our mission to enhance the overall quality of life of the Chickasaw people.

Our mission is a reflection of a long history of service and dedication to the greater good of the Chickasaw people. Throughout the history of the Chickasaw Nation, our community has worked for the betterment of all Chickasaws. We

continue this value of community today as we are proud to offer nearly 400 programs and services in the areas of health care, housing, education, cultural preservation, the arts and much, much more.

Our successful and diverse business endeavors are key to the myriad of programs and services offered, as well as sustaining our success for future generations of Chickasaws.

Looking back on this year, growth, advancement and progress are evident in all areas of the tribe. Programs and services are continuing to expand and enhance to meet evolving needs and opportunities abound for Chickasaws of all ages across the country.

As we close the chapter on 2024, we are unwavering in our efforts to positively impact Chickasaw lives and families. It is this resolve and determination that pushes us forward into a promising future for generations to come.

We pray God continues to bless you and your family during the holidays! Merry Christmas and happy New Year!

## HUD officials tour tribal facilities



Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby, Chickasaw Nation Lt. Governor Chris Anoatubby and Chickasaw Nation Secretary of Community Services Wayne Scribner welcome U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Office of General Counsel officials, from center left, Gayle Bohling, Deputy General Counsel for Operations, Althea Forrester, Associate General Counsel, Office of Assisted Housing and Community Development and Nicola Sanders, Assistant General Counsel, Community Development Division.

ADA, Okla. – A delegation from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) recently visited the Chickasaw Nation to mark progress made during a partnership stretching back more than a half century.

Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby, Lt. Governor Chris Anoatubby and tribal housing officials welcomed HUD representatives during the daylong tour of the Chickasaw Nation's housing, education and medical facilities located in the Ada area.

"The Department of Housing and Urban Development has been a true partner for us. Quality housing has been and continues to be foundational to the success, health and security of Chickasaw people and our families," Governor Anoatubby said. "In 50 years, we've built a strong partnership with the Department of Housing and Urban Development. That relationship and much of the assistance that HUD has provided us has been pivotal in our effort to develop and do the things that

we need to do."

Funding from HUD has been instrumental in the Chickasaw Nation's ability to develop facilities such as community centers and service centers, and infrastructure improvements in the communities throughout the Chickasaw Nation.

Collaboration with HUD and other institutions throughout the communities, including cities, counties and the state, is the key to progress, Governor Anoatubby said.

"We get a whole lot more done when we partner with each other than we do if we try to do it alone. This collaboration and partnership have been integral to our growth and the success of the Chickasaw Nation, the cities and towns that our people are living in, and the communities all throughout the Chickasaw Nation treaty territory," he said.

"It's all done through a collaborative effort and an effort that's

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## Chickasaw Nation thanks veterans with Washington D.C. trip



Chickasaw veterans recently visited several war memorials and other sites in Washington, D.C., as part of the Chickasaw Elder Veterans Trip. Back row, from left: Donald Harris, Delmer Brewer, Robert Lair, Gary Tomshack, David Keel, Jim Seawright, Michael Slater, Kenneth Horton and Bobbie Johnson. Front row, from left: Robert Cobb, Allen Keenan, Stewart Johnson Sr., Billy Jordan, George DeGraff Jr., Samuel Crow, Kenneth Harrington, Richard Burkett and Lonnie Lawson.

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Chickasaw warriors placed a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier during a recent trip to Washington, D.C., in celebration of Veterans Day.

The veterans laying the wreath were part of the 19 total Chickasaw elder veterans who attended a five-day trip to the nation's capital, sponsored by the Chickasaw Nation.

Each November, the Chickasaw Nation sends a group of warriors from throughout the country to Washington to take part in Veterans Day memorial ceremonies, and to tour museums and historic landmarks while fellowshiping with other Chickasaws who served.

The 2024 participants, whose military service years ranged

from the early 1950s through the 1980s, represented four branches of the U.S. armed services including the Marine Corps, Air Force, Army and Navy.

Three Chickasaw Vietnam-era veterans presented a Chickasaw Elder Veterans wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier inside Arlington National Cemetery on the afternoon of Sunday, Nov. 10. They included Clermont, Florida, resident George DeGraff Jr., an Army veteran; Eufaula, Oklahoma, resident Robert Lair, an Air Force veteran; and Harrisville, Utah, resident Gary Tomshack, a Navy veteran.

Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby said the trip is an expression of appreciation to the countless Chickasaw veterans who have selflessly served the

United States in every major war and conflict since World War I.

"Our history is marked by the strength and resilience of the brave men and women who have defended our land, lives and freedom," said Governor Anoatubby.

"Chickasaws have a long and proud history of service in all branches of the armed forces, like these veterans who have carried on the tradition of the Chickasaw warrior. We continue to hold our veterans and active-duty military in high regard and thank them for their service and sacrifice."

Lair expressed excitement and gratitude when notified that he was selected to help place the wreath.

"I was surprised," Lair said.

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## Emergency management personnel receive Red Feather awards



The Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation recognized nine current and former Chickasaw Nation Emergency Management team members with Red Feather Awards for their "above-and-beyond" effort throughout the investigation into Faith Lindsey's 2019 disappearance. Pictured, from left: Sara Billings, JP Maples, Brandon Burchfield, Steve Dunn, Steve Cash, OSBI Investigative Division Director John Jones, George Jesse, Dewayne Price, Adam Kuhlman and Carol Williamson.

When 17-year-old Faith Lindsey went missing in October 2019, the ensuing investigation brought together numerous law enforcement agencies and led to multiple searches across three Oklahoma counties. At every turn, Chickasaw Nation Emergency Management (CNEM) assisted the investigation with manpower and state-of-the-art search tools.

During the investigation, it was discovered that Lindsey, a Chickasaw citizen, had been murdered, and in August 2022, Tanner Dean Washington pleaded guilty to one count of murder in Indian Country. Washington was sentenced May 6 to serve life in federal pris-

on. His sentence does not allow for parole.

Following the sentencing, the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation (OSBI) recognized nine Chickasaw Nation Emergency Management employees with Red Feather awards for their "above-and-beyond" effort throughout the investigation.

Red Feathers are an OSBI tradition used to recognize professionalism, integrity, hard work and going the extra mile, said OSBI Investigative Division Director John Jones.

Jones said this case that brought together the OSBI, FBI, CNEM, Chickasaw Lighthouse

Police, the Seminole County Sheriff's Office and the Pontotoc County Sheriff's Office is a sterling example of teamwork.

"This case is literally the blueprint for success," Jones said. "Without the teamwork of our Chickasaw Nation partners, this case does not come to fruition. We are very grateful for the teamwork, resources and the effort that were provided to us and to the citizens of Oklahoma to get justice in this matter."

During the investigation, CNEM assisted in five searches across Garvin, Pontotoc and Seminole

SEE CNEM, PAGE 2

# Purcell health clinic celebrates two decades of service



Chickasaw Nation Purcell Health Clinic staff, community guests and Chickasaw Nation Department of Health leadership observed the 20th anniversary of the Purcell Health Clinic Oct. 31. From left, Chickasaw Nation Secretary of Health Dr. Charles Grim, Purcell Clinic Vice Chief of Primary Care Dr. Beth May, Purcell Clinic Director Teri Spain, Purcell resident Carolee Maxwell, Chickasaw Nation Legislator Lisa Johnson-Billy, and Chickasaw Nation Deputy Secretary of Health Kevin Meeks, RADM (Ret.), are among those who attended the celebration.

PURCELL, Okla. - Chickasaw Nation Purcell Health Clinic staff along with community guests and Chickasaw Nation Department of Health leadership observed the 20th anniversary of the Purcell Health Clinic Oct. 31.

The Purcell Health Clinic, 1438 Hardcastle Blvd., opened its doors Oct. 6, 2004, bringing outpatient

health care to Chickasaws and First Americans in the Purcell area.

Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby said at the 2004 grand opening that the Purcell clinic was built and dedicated to deliver quality health care to area residents and help meet the Chickasaw Nation's mission to en-

hance the overall quality of life of the Chickasaw people.

The opening of the Purcell clinic was part of Governor Anoatubby's strategic plan to provide quality health care within 35 miles within the Chickasaw Nation treaty territory.

Chickasaw Nation Secretary of Health Dr. Charles Grim led the

commemoration ceremonies, praising the Purcell clinic staff and celebrating two decades of progress in delivering health care to First Americans in the Purcell area.

Prior to the construction of the clinic, a study found that Chickasaws and other First Americans who lived in the Purcell area had to travel more than 60 miles to access health care in Ada or Oklahoma City. More than 4,000 potential patients living within a 30-mile radius of Purcell were also identified.

"And so, the original Purcell clinic was built and dedicated 20 years ago to deliver convenient, exceptional health care, with 16 employees on staff," said Dr. Grim.

The 10,086-square-foot clinic was expanded in 2017 to accommodate the growing number of patient visits as well as add space to provide new services.

The clinic expansion added medical imaging, pediatrics and physical therapy. Laboratory, pharmacy and primary care services were expanded with the 13,000-square-foot addition. Four new exam rooms and a dental clinic were also added in the expansion. The enlarged clinic has the capacity to serve 17,000 more patient visits, and more than 40 positions were added to the clinic staff.

"Today, we have 98 highly

skilled compassionate individuals working at the Purcell clinic, making a real difference in the lives of our patients, every day," Dr. Grim said.

"The clinic now serves more than 10,000 patients a year."

Responding to feedback from Chickasaws living in the area, as well as the Purcell area Chickasaw Community Council, beneficial programs and services were also expanded.

During the past two decades, services and facilities were developed and expanded in Purcell to include a senior center, a wellness center, an area office and nutrition and outpatient services.

"In our mission to enhance the overall quality of life of the Chickasaw people, Governor Anoatubby and his teams are always listening to our citizens and look for ways to best serve," said Dr. Grim.

"Thanks to Governor Anoatubby's leadership and the dedication of our health care teams, we are working diligently to ensure the Chickasaw Nation remains at the forefront of quality health-care delivery."

The Chickasaw Nation also operates health clinics in Ada, Ardmore and Tishomingo.

For more information, visit [ChickasawNationHealth.net](http://ChickasawNationHealth.net) or call (405) 527-4700.

CONTRIBUTED BY Dana Lance, Media Relations

## VETERANS CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1



Three Chickasaw veterans present a Chickasaw Elder Veterans wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier inside Arlington National Cemetery on the afternoon of Sunday, Nov. 10. Pictured from left: Harrisville, Utah, resident Gary Tomshack, a Navy veteran; Clermont, Florida, resident George DeGraff Jr., an Army veteran; and Eufaula, Oklahoma, resident Robert Lair, an Air Force veteran.

"This is a pretty great honor."

At age 90, Lair is the oldest Chickasaw elder who made this year's trip. He entered the Air Force in 1953 and proudly recounted assisting critical missions near the Soviet Union during his 28-year military career.

"I was an air reconnaissance technician," Lair said. "We operat-

ed several detachments of RB-47 Stratojets out of Forbes (Air Force Base) in Topeka (Kansas). These spy planes helped gather essential intelligence near Russia and other places around the world."

This year's trip led the Chickasaw warriors to memorials and celebrations throughout the National Mall, including two special

holiday ceremonies at the World War II Memorial and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial on Veterans Day.

At the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, a solemn ceremony honored those who made the ultimate sacrifice and provided opportunities for the elders to exchange stories of their military service and find

the names of friends and fellow soldiers on the memorial wall.

Dr. Allen Keenan is proud to have supported the war effort, although he said his service was different from most soldiers during the Vietnam era.

"I graduated dental school when I was just 23 years old," Dr. Keenan said. "I went directly into the service and was a dentist in the Air Force for five years."

A native of Tulsa, Oklahoma, Dr. Keenan provided dental services to military members and their families at McChord Air Force Base for two years and then received orders to serve in Athens, Greece.

"We got people prepared to go into action in Vietnam," Dr. Keenan said. "We had to fix them so they would be in good shape for at least a couple years."

Following his Air Force service, Dr. Keenan returned to Tulsa and established his own dental practice, a business he would operate for 40 years.

In addition to the holiday memorial services, the Chickasaw veterans and their traveling companions toured the National Museum of the American Indian, the National Museum of American History, the National Archives, the Lincoln, Jefferson and Iwo Jima Memorials, the National Air and Space Museum and the U.S. Capitol.

Some veterans were making their first trip to the nation's capital while others, like Richard Burkett, enjoyed seeing the many changes in Washington D.C., that occurred in the six decades since his initial visit, most notably at Arlington National Cemetery.

"I remember being here (Arlington) just a few months after President Kennedy died," Burkett said. "At that time, only the eternal flame was at his gravesite. It is really something to see the changes and additions since 1964."

At the National Museum of the American Indian, the veterans explored a variety of exhibits describing the experiences and accomplishments of First Americans. Among the muse-

ums' thousands of exhibits are several significant Chickasaw artifacts, including a flute and bald eagle feather that traveled to the International Space Station with Chickasaw astronaut John Herrington during his 2002 flight aboard space shuttle Endeavour.

When Burkett encountered the eagle feather and flute exhibit, he reached for his cellphone and quickly displayed a picture of himself meeting John Herrington at the recent Chickasaw Veterans Conference in Thackerville, Oklahoma.

"John Herrington is such a nice, down-to-earth guy," Burkett said. "It was a pleasure to meet him then, and it's a great honor to again be with so many fellow Chickasaw veterans on this trip."

## Veterans Services

The Chickasaw Nation provides veterans with increased benefits and services, including the Chickasaw Warrior Society. The warrior society was formed by Governor Anoatubby in 2015 as an organization to encourage community, establish and support camaraderie, and personify the Chickasaw warrior spirit.

The Chickasaw Nation Veterans Lodge, located on the Ada South Campus near the Chickasaw Nation Medical Center in Ada, Oklahoma, was also established to assist veterans in a centralized location. It serves by helping them conveniently access all resources available through the Chickasaw Nation and other sources. It also functions as a place for members of the Chickasaw Warrior Society, other veterans, and those in active service to come together for fellowship and networking.

To further honor all Chickasaw veterans, the Chickasaw Nation also created the Chickasaw Veterans Wall. The virtual veterans wall publicly pays tribute to all Chickasaws who have served in any branch of the U.S. Armed Forces.

For more information about these and other veterans services, visit [Chickasaw.net/Veterans](http://Chickasaw.net/Veterans).

CONTRIBUTED BY Chance Plett, Media Relations

## CNEM CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

counties. CNEM utilized a variety of newly acquired drones, provided a cadaver dog and contributed significant manpower to physically search challenging terrains.

OSBI Deputy Director Steven Carter commended the Chickasaw Nation and CNEM for providing this assistance whenever and wherever asked.

"Assistance with searches outside the Chickasaw Nation was provided without hesitation," Carter said. "The successful investigation and prosecution of this case was possible due to your willingness to provide unique skills and expertise."

Six current CNEM team members recognized with Red Feathers include George Jesse, Sara Billings, Carol Williamson, J.P. Maples, Brandon Burchfield and Steve Cash. Former CNEM employees receiving Red Feathers were Adam Kuhlman, Dewayne

Price and Steve Dunn.

CNEM Executive Officer Steve Cash said he is proud of the perseverance exhibited by every CNEM team member who contributed to the searches and investigation.

"I was excited for our team to be recognized because I know how much effort they put into each search," Cash said.

Cash said the Chickasaw Nation's longstanding partnerships with the OSBI and other agencies were vital to a comprehensive, coordinated investigation.

"We are thankful to Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby and the Chickasaw Nation for enabling us with the training, support and resources to respond to requests like these," Cash said. "We're incredibly honored to receive these Red Feather awards."

## About Chickasaw Nation Emergency Management

Chickasaw Nation Emergency Management (CNEM) was established in 2017 to provide a comprehensive and integrated system to help save lives, prevent injuries, protect property and preserve the Chickasaw Nation's invaluable cultural and economic resources in the event of a major emergency or disaster.

The CNEM service area includes the Chickasaw Nation's treaty territory of 7,648 square miles and encompasses 13 Oklahoma counties. The CNEM team coordinates with local, state, tribal and federal disaster relief and public safety entities, both within and outside the Chickasaw Nation. For more information, visit [Chickasaw.net/CNEM](http://Chickasaw.net/CNEM).

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Send mail to:

P.O. Box 1548, Ada, OK 74821

Chickasaw Times: (580) 332-2977; Fax: (580) 332-3949

email: [Times.Chickasaw@Chickasaw.net](mailto:Times.Chickasaw@Chickasaw.net)

Chickasaw Headquarters: (580) 436-2603

Bill Anoatubby  
Governor



Chris Anoatubby  
Lt. Governor

Vicky Gold  
Communications Management  
and Support Services  
Executive Officer

Tony Choate  
Media Affairs  
Executive Officer

### Contributors

Chickasaw Times: Farrah Chishty  
Media Relations/Media Affairs: Justin Lofton, Patrick Cravatt, KC Cole, Gene Lehmann, Loné Beasley, Dana Lance, Chance Plett, Dalee Weston  
Tribal Communications: Jennifer Jones, Cole Hackett, Krystal Russell, Jamie Dukes, Linda Day, Jared Kemp, Josh Caldwell, Troy Stanberry, Shelby Pletcher, Aubrey Halford, Katelyn MacKenzie, Calee Ragsdale, Mallory Graves  
Photographers: Mike McKee, Mike Scott, Cameron Miller, Savannah Lutrell, Marcy Gray

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# Chickasaw Nation Department of Health wins national award for performance excellence



Chickasaw Nation Medical Center Vice Chief of ED Dr. Olivia Reed performs an ultrasound on a patient.

The Chickasaw Nation Department of Health (CNDH) has earned the prestigious Malcolm Baldrige Award for Quality and Performance Excellence.

“We are extremely blessed to have the dedicated employees and leadership of the Chickasaw Nation Department of Health working every day in service of the Chickasaw people and other First American patients,” said Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby. “I congratulate them on receiving this prestigious Baldrige Award. Since first compacting to provide our own health services 30 years ago, our employees have committed themselves to excellent and convenient care for our patients. We will continue to strive for improved health outcomes for First Americans.”

Chickasaw Nation Secretary of Health Dr. Charles Grim said achieving this distinction reflects a longstanding visionary commitment to ensuring all First Americans have access to high-quality and safe health care.

“Being a recipient of the Malcolm Baldrige Award is proof that our culture of excellence is not just a goal, it is who we are,” Grim said.

“Each day, our health care professionals and staff all deliver safe, quality care and aspire to make a meaningful impact in the lives of our customers. They are

driven by excellence and never settle for anything less. It is so good to see them recognized on a national stage for the work they do for our people,” he said.

“It is a great accomplishment, and we are both excited and humbled to be one of the 2024 Malcolm Baldrige Award winners.”

Grim said Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby laid the foundation and leadership for making the achievement possible.

“We must thank Governor Anoatubby for leading the way. It is under his dedicated and insightful leadership that the Chickasaw Nation Department of Health has earned this distinction. This achievement reflects his longstanding visionary commitment to ensuring that all First Americans have access to high-quality and safe health care. We feel honored to be a part of that vision.”

The Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award is the nation’s only presidential award for performance excellence. It falls under the auspices of the U.S. Department of Commerce’s National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST).

“2024 has been an incredible year for the Chickasaw Nation Department of Health,” said Chickasaw Nation Under Secretary of Medical Staff and Quality, Chief Medical Officer and Chief Quality Officer Dr. John Krueger. “We received notice from the Depart-

ment of Commerce in October that we were one of five organizations this year to be awarded the Malcolm Baldrige Performance Excellence award. The Malcolm Baldrige Performance Excellence award is one of the most prestigious honors an organization in any industry can receive. Winning this award, recognizes not only our leadership, innovation and commitment to performance excellence and quality but most importantly, it recognizes the heart and soul of the Chickasaw Nation Department of Health organization — our dedicated employees. It is the unwavering commitment to our mission and vision that makes us stand out on this national stage.”

Grim said seeking the Malcolm Baldrige award is a multilevel application process that requires an organization’s intentional focus and dedication to performance excellence and quality in areas such as customer experience, workforce strength, operational and financial sustainability, organizational culture, and clear strategy for growth.

He said this nationally recognized process allows organizations to identify evidence-based best practices and recognize and address areas of improvement.

For CNDH, the process that started the Malcolm Baldrige Performance Excellence journey began at the state level with an application for the Oklahoma Quality Foundation award (OQF). CNDH submitted the application for the OQF award in 2019 and was awarded the top-level state award in 2021.

Winning the top state award made CNDH eligible to embark on the prestigious, nationally known Malcolm Baldrige Award for Quality and Performance Excellence.

Grim said the application process relies heavily on trusted performance data and a strong collaboration of all CNDH leaders and staff.

The CNDH Malcolm Baldrige application was submitted in April 2024. In July 2024, CNDH became one of nine organizations across all United States industries to receive an on-site visit from a panel of Malcolm Baldrige judges. This panel interviewed leaders and staff regarding topics of mission, vision, services, workforce and strategy.

“In October, I received a call

from U.S. Department of Commerce sharing the good news that CNDH had won the Malcolm Baldrige award. CNDH was honored to be one of only five awardees named in 2024,” Grim said.

NIST representatives said CNDH had demonstrated organizational resilience and “showed long-term success through favorable performance levels and trends in comparison to competitors and appropriate benchmarks and relevant metrics” over a five-year period. This long-term resilience was evident in other outside accolades such as CNDH’s five-star performance on the CMS Hospital Compare Program and other notable benchmarked quality programs.

“The 2024 Baldrige Award recipients are role-model organizations that are helping us address some of our nation’s most critical needs, and they demonstrate the resilient spirit of the American people,” U.S. Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo said in a press release.

“Each awardee demonstrates how the Baldrige process makes it possible for any type of organization to achieve excellence on behalf of the people and communities they serve,” Raimondo said.

“Our dedicated commitment to excellence included process adjustments and modifications to support the journey to being a world-class leader in health care. They included intentional efforts toward improving key performance indicators, creating a robust Workforce Support Division, increasing focus on population health and engagement, expanding our Patient Experience Division, hiring a chief quality officer and many other service enhancements,” Grim said.

“The 2024 Baldrige criteria focused on leadership and governance, strategy, operations, operational continuity, workforce, customers and markets, community engagement and finance,” he said.

Grim said CNDH being recognized as a Baldrige award recipient is based on the Chickasaw Nation’s entire health network and its total workforce of 2,200.

“The award application and win include all CNDH hospital, clinic, public health and nutrition services teams. CNDH included all teams in the application narrative and performance results focusing

on results for innovation, transformation and agility in the areas of leadership, customer experience, workforce engagement, operations, strategy, and measures and performance results.

“This includes all geographical clinic locations in Ada, Ardmore, Purcell and Tishomingo as well as, our nutrition, WIC and Office of Environmental Health sites.”

Grim said the excellent rating CNDH received was not based on one year, but multiple years of top-level performance.

“Part of Baldrige performance excellence is resilience. Can you show processes and results over time,” he said.

In that time frame, Grim said CNDH has also implemented many quality improvements to include things such as: engineering systematic approaches, implementing robust quality improvement systems, expanding its medical staff leadership, the nursing education team, adding a simulation training center, increasing its residency programs and benefiting from enhanced staff feedback and action taken following listening sessions.

“This level of excellence does not just happen overnight,” Grim said. “It is the product of countless hours, unwavering dedication and a relentless pursuit of continuous improvement. From the front lines of patient/customer care to the teams supporting behind the scenes, every Chickasaw Nation Department of Health employee plays a critical role in making us who we are.

“I thank each of them for everything they do to make this organization extraordinary.

“The Chickasaw Nation Department of Health is a special place with hardworking people, serving and caring for Chickasaw and other First American families. And while the Malcolm Baldrige Award celebrates our dedication to providing top-rated health care, it also challenges us to keep pushing forward, to continue raising the bar and to set even greater standards for excellence.

“I am excited about what the future holds for our patients and people,” Grim said

CONTRIBUTED BY Lone’ Beasley, Media Relations

## Chickasaw Nation light displays available at several locations until Dec. 31

Celebrate the magic of the holiday season at the Chickasaw Nation Christmas light displays every evening until Dec. 31, from 5-10 p.m. Dozens of light displays

will be open to bring joy to families in our communities this holiday season. Visit one of the many sites listed below to fill your holidays with cheer!

Chickasaw Nation Headquarters  
520 E. Arlington  
Ada, Oklahoma  
5-10 p.m.

Chickasaw Capitol  
411 W. 9th  
Tishomingo, Oklahoma  
5-10 p.m.

Ada Chickasaw Nation Community Center  
700 N. Mississippi Ave.  
Ada, Oklahoma  
5-10 p.m.

Chickasaw Nation Information Center  
504 W. Main St.  
Tishomingo, Oklahoma  
5-10 p.m.

Carl Albert Service Center  
1001 N. Country Club Road  
Ada, Oklahoma  
5-10 p.m.

Tishomingo Health Clinic  
817 E. 6th St.  
Tishomingo, Oklahoma  
5 p.m.-8 a.m.

Lighthorse Police Department  
1130 W. Main  
Ada, Oklahoma  
5-10 p.m.

Ardmore Health Clinic  
2510 Chickasaw Blvd.  
Ardmore, Oklahoma  
5 p.m.-8 a.m.

Chickasaw Cultural Center  
867 Cooper Memorial Drive  
Sulphur, Oklahoma  
6-9 p.m.

Purcell Health Clinic  
1438 Hardcastle Blvd.  
Purcell, Oklahoma  
5 p.m.-8 a.m.

Chickasaw Nation Medical Center  
1921 Stonecipher Blvd.  
Ada, Oklahoma  
5-10 p.m.



## Governor Anoatubby helps commemorate opening of facility

# Ribbon cut on new Tishomingo water plant



Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby, center, joined Tishomingo city leaders and area dignitaries, along with engineering firm representatives cut the ribbon to celebrate completion of the Tishomingo water treatment plant, Oct. 18.

TISHOMINGO, Okla. – Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby was a special guest at a ribbon cutting to celebrate completion of the Tishomingo water treatment plant, Oct. 18.

Governor Anoatubby said it takes many different entities working together to make complex projects like this come to fruition.

The Chickasaw Nation, the city of Tishomingo, Oka’ Institute, other community stakeholders and federal agencies, along with engineering firm Burns & McDonnell worked together to develop a plan for a new water treatment plant at the existing plant site.

“It is something that we can be

proud of, not only for the project itself, but the message it sends to everyone: You can, when you work together, accomplish a lot, and that is what has happened right here,” Governor Anoatubby said.

The new water plant modernizes plant operations and provides additional capacity for community growth, while also improving water quality and system reliability, according to Tishomingo Mayor Laura Wood.

“Six years ago, city leadership took an initiative to plan a better future for the city of Tishomingo,” Wood said. “The new plant will allow for opportunities and growth and a community ready

to prosper. I’m excited to see where this journey takes us.”

Oka’ Institute Director Duane Smith said the benefits of the project extend beyond improving the quality of life of local residents.

“If you have water and wastewater infrastructure, it’s the foundation for economic development,” he said.

The new water treatment plant is one of several projects in which the Chickasaw Nation is collaborating with the Tishomingo community, Governor Anoatubby said.

CONTRIBUTED BY Dana Lance, Media Relations

# Deputy US Surgeon General visits Chickasaw Nation



Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby welcomes Deputy U.S. Surgeon General RADM Denise Hinton on a recent visit to the Chickasaw Nation.

ADA, Okla. – The Chickasaw Nation recently hosted Deputy U.S. Surgeon General Rear Admiral (RADM) Denise Hinton as she and members of her team gained a historical perspective of Chickasaw Nation advances in First American health outcomes.

Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby said dramatic improvements have been made in access as well as variety of health care availability for Chickasaws, as well as members and citizens of other tribes.

“It has been quite a journey from a time we didn’t have clinics or hospitals in the Chickasaw Nation,” Governor Anoatubby said. “We did have hospitals in Lawton and Tahihina that are still in those communities, but it was quite a drive for anyone who was qualified to take advantage of their services.”

Governor Anoatubby said citizens often were forced to drive up to 100 miles one way to access medical care. Today’s standard travel distance is reduced to only

35 miles, with the added benefit of tribal transport provided for those who can not drive.

Governor Anoatubby said the Chickasaw Nation’s partnership with the U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) and the Indian Health Service (IHS) has been critical to the tribe’s ability to serve needs.

“We have shared goals,” Governor Anoatubby said. “In order to be able to provide services, we have to have collaboration. We have to have a good working relationship with Public Health Service and Indian Health Service. That relationship is pivotal in advancing the quality and access to health care that we have today.

“We have a mission here at the Nation to enhance the overall quality of life of the Chickasaw people.” He said the same availability of services is extended to members and citizens of other tribes.

Governor Anoatubby said the Chickasaw Nation’s mission extends into many other areas, such as education, care of elders and

a host of additional programs, which also include other First Americans.

“The collaboration we have with Public Health Service and Indian Health Service has been instrumental in our being able to improve the health outcomes we enjoy in our communities over the years. We certainly look forward to continuing that relationship.

“It is a partnership. We work together and have similar goals for the future betterment of the people we serve.”

Governor Anoatubby said a significant positive turn in Chickasaw health outcomes came with passage of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, which allowed tribes to compact for and contract for programs intended to serve First Americans.

“In 1994, we compacted for the entire health system with services provided within our area,” Governor Anoatubby said. “This compact did more than just allow us to take responsibility for our own health care system. It allowed us to take control of our tribe’s destiny. It was a major leap in reasserting ourselves, our government and our sovereignty to enhance our ability to self-govern.”

A holistic and mission-driven approach to health care led to listening sessions in which tribal citizens were invited to express their health care concerns and needs.

“We learned what mattered to them, and what needs and priorities they had. They helped inform us of the decisions we needed to make and the direction we needed to go when it came to health care and the services we needed to offer,” Governor Anoatubby said.

Eventually this led to expanding services to those struggling with addiction, mental health issues and partner violence. It also included initiatives in nutritional health, lifestyle and physical fitness.

“We provided community facilities where our people could exercise and obtain healthy foods. We included paths that linked our health care services to our governmental services such as education, rehabilitation, social and legal services, and more,” he said.

From 2005 to 2010, Women, Infants and Children (WIC) offices were opened, as well as a diabetes center.

“When you incorporate other activities like the wellness centers, the health clinics, the outreach services, all those things begin to have synergy. We are able to assist people in every possible way.”

Governor Anoatubby said by 2009, the tribe’s economic development initiatives and business investments began providing enough revenue to increase health care funding. This led to replacing the Carl Albert Indian Health Facility, opened in 1980, with the 2010 opening of the Chickasaw Nation Medical Center (CNMC) in Ada in a joint venture with IHS.

“We believe a joint venture is one of the best programs Indian Health Service has when it comes to the operation of a health care facility,” Governor Anoatubby said. “We have utilized that not only to build a facility here, but to replace the facilities in Ardmore and Tishomingo.

“We have a joint venture now we are working diligently to come to terms on, which I believe will be the premier health facility in Oklahoma, if not the region,

serving patients at a higher level than has ever been served in Oklahoma,” Governor Anoatubby said. “We are thankful again for the partnership we have and look forward to the time we come to terms on this new joint venture.

“We believe the sky is the limit, and we’re going to do the very best we can to serve the people and have the highest level of health care for our people they’ve ever had,” Governor Anoatubby said.

Deputy U.S. Surgeon General Rear Admiral (RADM) Hinton said she was impressed by the beauty of the land, the warm reception she and her team received and the impressive health outcomes achieved by the Chickasaw Nation.

“The area is beautiful. Driving here to the Chickasaw Nation and seeing the (Chickasaw Nation Medical Center) facility, it is incredibly gorgeous,” Hinton said.

“We appreciate coming here and being greeted by Governor Anoatubby and talking about the partnership and the importance of the partnership between the Indian Health Service and the Public Health Service within the Department of Health and Human Services,” she said.

“The Chickasaw Nation, in and of itself, is so critically important. Our impression is the Chickasaw Nation, Indian Health Service and the community at large is just that – a community.

“The social determinants of health represented (by the Chickasaw Nation) are not just in words and paper and concepts but are lived here every day,” she said.

CONTRIBUTED BY Lone Beasley, Media Relations

## New Chickasaw citizen excited to discover her heritage and place in the world



Governor Bill Anoatubby visits with Mike and Cheri Tensel at the Chickasaw Annual Meeting and Festival.

As a foster child shuffled from home to home between the ages of about 9 months to age 6, Cheri Tensel had no sense of heritage or family history to provide hints to her own personal identity.

“My identity was so nonexistent I didn’t even know what my name was,” Tensel said.

“How am I supposed to know what my name is when people pronounce it differently? I’m a foster kid,” she said. “I don’t have a parent to tell me.

“One of my foster families said, ‘People keep calling you Sherry or Cheri (pronounced Cher-ee). What is your name?’

“I decided it’s Cheri, like mon cherie. It’s French for love,” she said, with a laugh.

“My last name changed from foster family to foster family, so that was never consistent.”

Tensel (her married name) was born in California and moved with her mother to Idaho when she was about 9 months old, and due to her mother’s various personal issues, she was in and out of numerous foster homes.

“Finally, the state took me away, and I became a ward of the state,” she said.

The people she now considers to be her family adopted her

when she was 6 years old. When she turned 18, she asked the state to unseal her records.

“When you’re a ward of the state, your records are sealed until you turn 18,” she said. “If both the child and parent want to be found, they both have to submit paperwork to (the state health and welfare department) and say so.”

Both did. The mother-daughter reunion was relatively short-lived, and they soon parted ways. Many years later, Tensel renewed her search without success until she took a DNA test and learned for the first time of her First American heritage.

This new information did not have an impact until she began speaking with those with whom she is genetically related on her mother’s side.

“I got in contact with my mother’s siblings, and they told me they are tribal members and encouraged me to apply for citizenship,” she said.

They also told her she is descended from Cyrus Harris on her mother’s side of the family.

Yet one more twist of fate was on the horizon that would lead to Tensel and her husband Mike

attending this year’s Chickasaw Annual Meeting and Festival.

They were on vacation in Palm Springs, California, from their home in Pocatello, Idaho, to meet her newly discovered family members on her father’s side and happened to strike up a conversation with a stranger from Oklahoma.

“I started telling her about my DNA test and that we were visiting my new family members,” Tensel said.

The stranger turned out to be Chickasaw Nation Director of Marketing Shelly Miller.

“What are the chances of that?” Tensel said. “Shelly encouraged me to attend this year’s Annual Meeting and Festival.

“The need and yearning of my whole life was to have a place in the world, to have an identity.

“It’s cool because now I have a place. For somebody like me who has never had a culture to call my own, adopted and never knowing my traditions, I was a blank slate. It is super fun being a part of something. I’m really excited to be here,” she said.

CONTRIBUTED BY Lone Beasley, Media Relations

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# Chickasaw law student advocates for marginalized communities



Chickasaw citizen and second-year law student Malorie Stick has a passion for First American advocacy. Photo provided.

With reflection on the past, Chickasaw Malorie Stick is crafting a positive future for under-represented communities in the law field.

Stick is a current Juris Doctor candidate at the University of Colorado Law School focusing on tribal, family and juvenile law. She was raised in Durant, Oklahoma, where she attended high school and graduated with honors. While in high school, Stick first recognized her interest in law as a member of the school's speech and debate team.

"Speech and debate team is what first inspired me to pursue the law as a career, because I enjoyed the public speaking, advocacy and arguing both sides of an issue," Stick said.

After high school, Stick attended Oklahoma State University (OSU) where she graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in philosophy and a Bachelor of Science degree in political science in 2023. During her time at OSU, Stick said her sorority's motto, "Building Stronger Girls," inspired her to build on her own strengths. She invested most of her time and energy into class work, but also excelled outside of

the classroom, becoming chapter president of Gamma Phi Beta her senior year.

"The experience that I got as president made me even more confident about law school, as I did lots of public speaking, problem-solving and ensuring sound judgment at our executive meetings," Stick said.

Stick took time in college to reflect and educate herself on systematic oppression by taking courses like feminist philosophy and joining the belonging, equity, diversity and inclusion committee in her sorority.

"These experiences grounded me in my passion for tribal justice and, more generally, justice for minority communities," Stick said.

In the summer of 2023, Stick became a legal intern at a law office where she assisted firm partners with case files concerning criminal, juvenile and family law as well as civil litigations.

"My experience there was imperative in confirming for me that I wanted to be a lawyer," Stick said. "It is hard to be sure about pursuing the law until you actually see how an attorney's day-to-day work life looks."

Stick is currently in her second year of law school at Colorado Law in Boulder, Colorado, and expects to graduate in May 2026. However, she is already planning for the future and, in turn, positively impacting her community.

Stick currently serves as the first-year law student advocate on the National Native American Law Students Association (NNALSA) executive board. She also serves as president of the Colorado Law Native American Law Students Association.

"Through my involvement in these organizations, I've gained invaluable leadership experience, built connections with First American lawyers and had the opportunity to work closely with the Native community. This ex-

posure has deepened my understanding of the challenges Native people and Native students face, and has equipped me to be a more effective and committed advocate in the future," she said.

Stick took on the role of a judicial extern for Judge Kelley Southland in Colorado's 17th Judicial District in the summer of 2024. She completed legal research regarding family law issues such as child support, property division and custody disputes. However, her favorite part of the externship took place in the courtroom.

"I got to watch how attorneys interacted with the judge, with self-represented litigants, the division clerks and how they presented in court," Stick said. "This afforded me the opportunity to envision the type of attorney I want to be and to learn effective advocacy strategies for family court."

Stick currently works at the American Indian Law Clinic at Colorado Law as a student attorney.

"There are seven student attorneys in the clinic including me, and we all practice law under our professor's license," Stick said. "We represent individual tribal members, tribes, nonprofits and tribal entities in a variety of areas."

Stick said she has gained a better understanding of the issues faced by tribal communities in her student attorney position by representing First American clients. The position has also pushed her into the political landscape to make a stand against voter discrimination among First American communities. Stick recently returned from Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota where she and her fellow student attorneys spent 13 hours at a polling site as election observers.

"We went there to ensure the Oglala Lakota (Sioux) people got their votes in as there is a long history of voter discrimination

in South Dakota," Stick said. "We were at the polling site to serve as an on-site presence to watch polls and intervene if someone was turned away from voting."

The polling site Stick observed did not face voter discrimination. However, there were practical issues such as limited space for voters to have their own booths and untrained poll workers.

"The American Indian Law Clinic and the voting rights trip has given me an idea of what work needs to be done in Indian Country and what it is like to represent tribal members and tribal interests as an attorney," Stick said.

Upon graduation, Stick hopes to begin her legal career practicing family and tribal law.

"I'd like to work with divorce and custody matters, while devoting the other half of my time to representing tribal governments or tribal members in various matters," she said.

Stick said sovereign policy is important to her because it allows tribal members within a federally recognized sovereign nation to have a government that is of, by

and for the people of the tribe.

"This form of self-governance, where a government operates exclusively to benefit its citizens, is a rare privilege," she said. "The Chickasaw Nation serves as a prime example of how tribal sovereignty enables a government to thrive and invest in its people, ultimately contributing to a stronger society."

Stick said the support she has received from the Chickasaw Nation has been instrumental in her academic journey.

"The Chickasaw Nation has had a profound impact on my life, particularly in the area of education," Stick said. "From providing critical funding for college to supporting my path through law school, their commitment to my success has been unwavering. I can also trace this support back to my childhood when the Chickasaw clothing grant helped ease the financial strain of needing winter school clothes. That early support instilled in me the confidence that I was capable and deserving of a quality education."

CONTRIBUTED BY Dalee Weston, Media Relations

## Chickasaw Holiday Art Market set for Dec. 7

SULPHUR, Okla. - A Chickasaw Holiday Art Market featuring the work of Chickasaw artists is set for Saturday, Dec. 7 in Sulphur.

The Market will be in the Artesian Hotel ballroom. The event will run from 10 a.m. through 6 p.m.

Holiday Art Market visitors will discover Chickasaw artwork that makes for the perfect holiday gift. Original art, paintings, handwoven items, pottery, ceramics, beadwork, jewelry and one-of-a-kind knives will be available.

All Holiday Art Market pieces have been produced exclusively by Chickasaw artists.

Chickasaw artists featured at

the Holiday Art Market include Margaret Roach Wheeler, Brent Greenwood, Dan Worcester, Joanna Underwood Blackburn, Beverly Callahan, Mary Wilds, Dustin Mater, Wayne Edgar, Susie Edgar, J. Daniel Worchester, Angeline Colley, Pat Cox, Wayne Walker, Kristen Walker-Martinez, Steven Martinez, Amy Gantt, Lisa Hudson, Tyson Hudson, Nicole Willis, Ashley Wallace, Sue Fish, Don Grace and more.

The Holiday Art Market is hosted by the Chickasaw Artist Board.

For more information on the Holiday Art Market, contact Joanna Underwood Blackburn at blackburnartstudios@gmail.com

## On the road to Rhodes College

# The Chickasaw Nation Department of Culture and Humanities returns to Memphis



From left: Joe Thomas, Literary Arts Division Executive Officer; Vanessa Rogers, Associate Professor of Music for Rhodes College; Jill Brown, curriculum contractor for Culture and Humanities; Paula Kedy, curriculum advisor for Culture and Humanities; Stephanie Holt Lucas, curriculum contractor for Culture and Humanities; Brad Lieb, Director of Archaeology and Field Study; and Brady Davis, Chickasaw Inkana Foundation Executive Officer.

After conducting a successful curriculum workshop for Memphis area social studies teachers in 2023, a team from the Chickasaw Nation Department of Culture and Humanities returned to Rhodes College in September of this year to share with faculty members and students about the historical connections that Memphis has to the Chickasaw people, history and culture.

As part of a program spearheaded by the Rhodes College Committee of Academic Affairs, the culture and humanities team were asked to present two workshops, both of which included an in-depth study of Memphis sites that are historically significant to the Chickasaw Nation. The team also had the opportunity to provide information about Chickasaw curricula and other resources that have been developed for students, educators, schools and more.

Rhodes College Associate Professor Dr. Vanessa Rogers, repre-

sented the Office of Faculty Development in coordinating the development of the workshops with the Chickasaw Nation Department of Culture and Humanities. Rogers lauded the success of the program, "Rhodes College was excited to further the relationship that Cara Djonko-Moore began last year with the Chickasaw Nation and its outstanding staff. We found them to be knowledgeable, enthusiastic, and eager to share their expertise with our students and staff. I had the opportunity to meet with the Chickasaw Nation team a number of times as the team worked to develop an unforgettable experience for our students and staff."

The culture and humanities team, led by Chickasaw Nation Literary Arts Division Executive Officer Joe Thomas, consisted of curriculum specialists, Paula Kedy, Stephanie Holt Lucas and Jill Brown. Also, serving on the team was Dr. Brad Lieb, Director of Chickasaw Archeology

and Field Studies for the heritage preservation division.

Presented as a "Lunch and Learn," Dr. Lieb provided an overview of Chickasaw history in the Memphis area, including a description of the dramatic 1795 incident in which Chickasaw leaders Piominko and General William "Chooshemattaha" Colbert with warriors, confronted Spanish colonial Louisiana officials at Fort San Fernando de las Barrancas. This fort was built on the Fourth Chickasaw Bluff without the entire tribe's permission.

Dr. Lieb also discussed of later years that saw the emergence of the Chickasaw Factory, or U.S. trading post, located near the old Spanish fort site. This trading post was a place of significant early commerce and fur trade in the area for both the Chickasaw and the Memphis area. Discussing Removal, Dr. Lieb shared of how the Chickasaws passed through the city of Memphis on July 4th, 1837, removing them-

selves to the west in compliance with the odious and unfair U.S. law known as the Indian Removal Act of 1830.

Regarding this unique project Dr. Lieb expressed "It is with pride and dignity intact that Chickasaws return by invitation to Memphis today to share cultural and historical information."

Comments by students and staff members helped to illustrate the importance of the program. One student commented, "These workshops were incredibly informative. I have lived in Memphis my entire life and never knew that this place was part of the historic Homeland of the Chickasaw Nation."

Dr. Rogers emphasized the need for further collaboration with the Chickasaw Nation, stating, "The Rhodes College Leadership Team has been meeting to determine ways to further this important partnership and to find ways to include more Chickasaw content in the courses that we offer."


The Chickasaw Inkana Foundation, located in Tupelo, Mississippi, was also represented at the curricula workshop. Brady Davis, Chief Executive Officer of the Chickasaw Inkana Foundation,

provided a booth and information to college students, educators and workshop participants, highlighting the foundation's mission and the highly anticipated Chickasaw Heritage Center.

Thomas and the culture and humanities team members were pleased to have the opportunity to share historical information that will offer new areas of research and learning for the students and faculty of Rhodes College. "It was a remarkable opportunity for the department of culture and humanities," stated Thomas. "It is our desire to continue to partner with Rhodes College to ensure the students and the Memphis community understand the rich historic connection our Chickasaw people have to their great city."

The department of culture and humanities is actively working to develop more curricula resources, including lesson plans that align with the social studies standards for the Chickasaw Homeland states, including Mississippi, Tennessee, Alabama and Kentucky. To learn more about Chickasaw Nation Curriculum, visit Chickasaw.net/Curriculum.

CONTRIBUTED BY Paula Kedy and Joe Thomas, Culture and Humanities



2024  
**Chickasaw Nation**  
**VIRTUAL**  
**MEMORIAL**

Join us for the 2024 Chickasaw Nation virtual memorial to honor the lives of Chickasaw citizens and Chickasaw Nation employees lost this past year.

[Chickasaw.net/Memorial](https://Chickasaw.net/Memorial)

*We are a strong and resilient Nation and we are truly blessed and Unconquerable*

**C**hokma  
As we are approaching the close of 2024, I wish to thank our Lord for blessings that we have received in our great Chickasaw Nation. Our Nation is strong and places our citizens and their welfare at the forefront. We remain strong because we are all one people. We are resilient and we are truly Unconquerable.

I want to say thank you for your trust in me, and the privilege to remain chair or co-chair of valuable health care programs with the Tribal Leaders Diabetes Committee, as well as the service I get to be involved in with the Centers for Disease Control.

Your legislators continue to work hard for you, and we continue to work closely with all branches of our government to maintain continuity.

I trust you had valuable family time during our Thanksgiving season, and I wish you a very Merry Christmas with a new year full of hope, love and security.

Connie Barker, Legislator  
Seat 2, Pickens District  
Connie.barker@Chickasaw.net  
(580) 272 4175



**CONNIE BARKER**

Chickasaw Tribal Legislature

*Christmas is the perfect time to reflect on blessings and visit with family and friends*

**C**hokma! I hope you all had a wonderful Thanksgiving. It's such a special time of year when you gather with family to share a meal and reflect on all the things you are grateful for. In November, I was grateful to be able to attend the Elders Thanksgiving luncheon. It was a fun day filled with great food, a lot of laughter and wonderful conversations with the elders. Thank you to Governor, Lt. Governor, Karen Cook and her entire team for making it so festive and fun. They worked extremely hard to decorate everything, prepare and serve the delicious food, and they made sure everyone had a great time.

Thanksgiving is a special time for sure, but Christmas has always been my favorite time of year. I am looking forward to attending as many of the different Christmas events that I can, as well as spending the holiday with my friends and family. One of my favorite things to do is to take my grandson to see the beautiful Christmas lights. I am thankful that the Chickasaw Nation takes great pride in making sure that all our grounds are top notch, all year-round. But at Christmas time--it just looks magical. I hope you get a chance to help celebrate the holiday season at the Christmas Light Reception at the Chickasaw Nation Tribal Library in Ada.

You will be able to walk the grounds with a cup of hot chocolate, listen to Christmas music and view the twinkling lights. If you couldn't attend the event, the Christmas lights will continue to shine every evening until Dec. 31. For more information- email Mayson.Husband@Chickasaw.net.

Christmas is the perfect time to relax, spend quality time with your family and reflect on the blessings of the past year. My hope is that God will bless you with good health, and all the things you and your family need to be successful for the New Year in 2025. I would like to extend a heartfelt, Nittak Hollishto' Ayoppa! Merry Christmas to you and your family! Anowa chipisla'cho. It is always a pleasure to serve as your Legislator in the Pontotoc District. Please contact me anytime at Karen.goodnight@Chickasaw.net, or call (580) 235-2654.



**DR. KAREN GOODNIGHT**

Chickasaw Tribal Legislature

*Senior center welcomes new manager; Chickasaw Nation mug spotted in NM*

**D**ecember already, can you believe that? I am excited to announce that our senior center in Panola District has a new employee, Ms. Racheal Collins. She is the official Panola District senior center manager. The elders are excited to have her on hand! When not handling the activities of the center, Racheal enjoys spending time doing outside activities such as overseeing all the farm animals (goats, cows, and horses), and riding when she has the chance. She and her husband, Danny, can be found at the dirt track most weekends watching their son Beau behind the wheel. They also enjoy time with their 4-year-old grandson, Bryer. Dirt track racing is a family event. Occasionally their daughter Bailey will drop by to be a part of the action! Racheal is the great-great-granddaughter of original enrollee, Sally Grinslade. She is excited to be a part of the Panola District senior center team.

Our other team members at the senior center are: Donna Nunley, Mandy Stephens and DeEtta Owens. Thank you, ladies, for your hard work.

Back in September my husband and I (along with Slick and Milo) traveled to Gila National Forest, located in New Mexico. The Gila Wilderness turned 100 in 2024. It has over three million acres of forested hills, majestic mountains, and range land. The village of Reserve is in Catron County, New Mexico. It has a town population of 293 and is the county seat of Catron County. Catron County is New Mexico's largest county by area and the third least populous county in the state.

We traveled over two hours into the Gila Wilderness leaving behind cell phone reception, rural electricity and water service. We spent time on the N-Bar Ranch mule/horseback riding and exploring the area. One of the first things I encountered when entering the mess hall was a large red mug with the words the Chickasaw Nation printed on it! There were eleven riders total that had gathered for this event. Each of us only knew the person we had come with. Our group of riders were from Iowa, California, Florida and Oklahoma. What a surprise to be so far from home and run into something so familiar as a tribally labeled drinking mug! Turned out one of the riders was a principal and JOM coordinator in a public school located in the Chickasaw Nation boundaries of Oklahoma. The influence of Chickasaw Nation spans far and wide!

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Psalms 23:6

May you and your family be blessed and have a Merry Christmas.

Beth  
(580) 272- 7850 beth.alexander@Chickasaw.net



**RACHEAL COLLINS**

**Firewood for elders**

Eligible Chickasaw elders who use a fireplace or woodstove to heat their home can receive one rick of wood per month from November through March. To apply for the supplemental wood program, Chickasaw citizens must be aged 60 or older and reside within the Chickasaw Nation boundaries.

For more information, visit Chickasaw.net/Firewood or call (580) 795-9790.

**Registration and speaker submissions open for Dynamic Women of the Chickasaw Nation Conference May 29-30**

The Dynamic Women of the Chickasaw Nation Conference is now accepting registrations for participants and submissions for potential presenters. This event will take place May 29-30 at the WinStar World Casino and Resort Convention Center. Nominations are also being accepted for the 2025 Dynamic Woman of the Year Award which will be presented at the conference.

Recognizing the strength and leadership of First American women from all walks of life, the theme for the 2025 conference is "Honoring Our Past, Shaping Our Future."

Participants are required to register by visiting Chickasaw.net/DynamicWomen. The conference will also be available to watch online. For more information, please contact (580) 272-9326 or CreativeArts@Chickasaw.net.

Conference organizers are also seeking speakers and panelists to share their valuable skills, talents and community contributions. Speakers will present and discuss ways they have impacted their communities, whether through academics, philanthropy, professional successes or other passions related to empowering change. Speakers must be First American. Preference will be given to Chickasaw women. To apply to present at the 2025 Dynamic Women of the Chickasaw Nation Conference, contact (580) 272-9326 or CreativeArts@Chickasaw.net.

Presented annually at the conference, the Dynamic Woman of the Year Award is given to a Chickasaw woman who exemplifies the character, strength and values of the Chickasaw Nation. Chickasaw women aged 35 and older may be nominated for this award. Current Chickasaw Nation employees and elected or appointed officials are not eligible. Nominations must be emailed to CreativeArts@Chickasaw.net by Jan. 26, 2025, at 11:59 p.m.

For questions or more information, call (580) 272-9326 or visit Chickasaw.net.

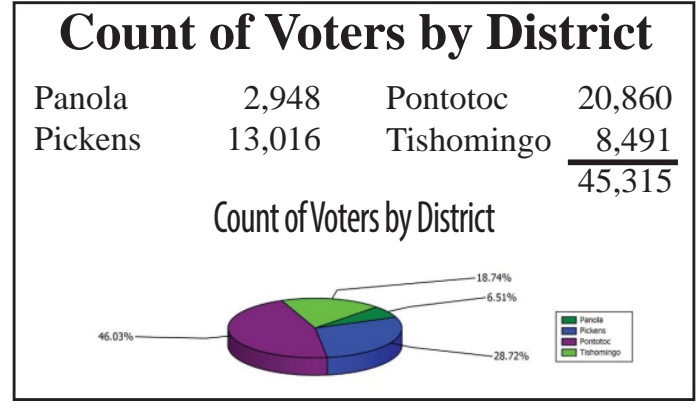
**Winter Fruit and Vegetable Program offers fresh, frozen and shelf stable fruits and vegetables**

The Chickasaw Nation Winter Fruit and Vegetable Program provides healthy fruits and vegetables to Chickasaw seniors (ages 55 and older), Chickasaw citizens with 100% disability, and Chickasaw Warrior Society members.

Participants will receive fresh, frozen and shelf-stable fruits and vegetables now through March 2025.

The Chickasaw Warrior Society is comprised of Chickasaw veterans and active military. This organization encourages community and personifies the Chickasaw warrior spirit, and the winter fruit and vegetable program is honored to serve its members. Members of all ages are eligible to join the winter fruit and vegetable program.

For more information, visit ChickasawNationHealth.net/FarmersMarket or call (580) 436-7255. A toll-free number is also available at (855) 572-3433.



**2024-2025 Tribal Legislature**

Following is a list of the Chickasaw Nation Tribal Legislators including their address and phone numbers. If you have any questions or need any information, please contact the legislator in your area.

**Pontotoc District**  
Seat #

1. Toby Perkins  
6305 CR 1570  
Ada, OK 74820  
(580) 399-2606  
Toby.Perkins@Chickasaw.net

2. Nancy Elliott  
620 Ann  
Ada, OK 74820-4410  
(580) 399-4374  
Nancy.Elliott@Chickasaw.net

3. Lisa Impson  
P.O. Box 2669  
Ada, OK 74821-2269  
(580) 235-3185  
Lisa.Impson@Chickasaw.net

4. Karen Goodnight  
P.O. Box 759  
Washington, OK 73093-0759  
(580) 235-2654  
Karen.Goodnight@Chickasaw.net

5. Lisa J. Billy  
P.O. Box 1412  
Purcell, OK 73080-1412  
(580) 399-7083  
LisaJ.Billy@Chickasaw.net

**Pickens District**  
Seat #

1. David Woerz  
P.O. Box 669  
Ardmore, OK 73402-0669  
(580) 235-3240  
David.Woerz@Chickasaw.net

2. Connie Barker  
P.O. Box 2269  
Ada, OK 74821-2669  
(580) 272-4175  
Connie.Barker@Chickasaw.net

3. Charles Marris  
P.O. Box 2669  
Ada, OK 74821-2669  
(580) 272-7366  
Charles.Marris@Chickasaw.net

4. Shana Tate Darter  
P.O. Box 2669  
Ada, OK 74821-2669  
(580) 235-1438  
Shana.Darter@Chickasaw.net

**Tishomingo District**  
Seat #

1. Scott Wood  
101 West Main Street  
Tishomingo, OK 73450  
(580) 221-1430  
Scott.Wood@Chickasaw.net

2. Derrick Priddy  
501 E. Wyandotte Ave  
Sulphur, OK 73086-6016  
(580) 618-0647  
Derrickpriddy05@gmail.com

3. Dusk Monetathchi  
P.O. 2669  
Ada, OK 74821  
(580) 618-1740  
Dusk.Monetathchi@Chickasaw.net

**Panola District**  
Seat #

1. Beth Alexander  
P.O. Box 1264  
Colbert, OK 74733-1264  
(580) 272-7850  
Beth.Alexander@Chickasaw.net



**No Hunger Holidays event in Marietta, Dec. 12**

The Chickasaw Nation, in collaboration with Feed the Children, will host a drive-thru event to distribute care packages to hundreds of families during the annual No Hunger Holidays event, Dec. 12 in Marietta, Oklahoma.

Families will receive an assortment of food, hygiene items, toys and books. The care packages will be available to the public from 11 a.m.-2 p.m. at the Love County Fairgrounds while supplies last.

This ongoing partnership between the Chickasaw Nation and Feed the Children helps families during the holidays and brings awareness to childhood hunger in Oklahoma.

For more information about food-based programs, contact Chickasaw Nation Nutrition Services at (580) 447-1862. Visit FeedTheChildren.org to donate to the No Hunger Holidays program and learn more about these events across the country.

### Sybil Alexander honored at Northern California Chickasaw connect gathering

As we enter the season of celebration, there's no better time to share the story of honoring Chickasaw citizen Sybil Alexander. On October 19, your legislators had the privilege to attend the Northern California Chickasaw connect gathering. Sybil, one of the founding members, has been an active member since the council was formed in 2011 and has never missed a meeting! She finds joy in welcoming new members and organizing the annual picnic.



LISA J. BILLY

Chickasaw Tribal Legislature

One of the group's core values is to honor and celebrate significant milestones in the lives of its members. In this spirit, the members recognized that Sybil Alexander deserved nothing less than a traditional Native American blanket ceremony, a sacred ritual rich with cultural meaning. This ceremony serves as a way to honor traditions, celebrate and show deep respect for the individual. The blanket, prayed over before being presented, symbolizes warmth, protection, unity and blessings from our Father in heaven. A heartfelt prayer and song were offered in Sybil's honor, making it a beautiful and powerful moment to stand on stage and be a part of this tribute.

Sybil Alexander was born in Tishomingo, Oklahoma and was raised by her grandparents. Later in her childhood, her family relocated to Richmond, California. Sybil is a very proud citizen of the Chickasaw Nation. She is very supportive of Governor Anoatubby and clearly understands the importance of having a courageous leader at the helm of our tribe. After all, she is the great-granddaughter of Cyrus Harris, the first elected Governor of the Chickasaw Nation following Removal. Thank you to the members who made this happen and a special thank you to Bill Morgan and Olin Jones, who serve as the chairs of the group. Thank you also to David Clubb for his outstanding past contributions to the group.

It is an honor to serve as your Pontotoc district legislator. Please let me know how I can serve you. P.O. Box 1412, Purcell, OK 73080; (580) 399-7083 or follow me on Facebook @ LisaJBilly, Chickasaw tribal legislator or follow me on Insta@lisajbilly



### Programs and Services continue to expand to better serve our citizens

Chokma! Greetings from the Pontotoc District! As 2024 comes to a close and we enter into the holiday season, it seems appropriate to reflect upon the past year and be mindful of the ways in which we have been blessed. On a personal note, I have been blessed with wonderful family, friends and with good health, so I have much for which to be thankful. Likewise, the Chickasaw Nation continues to be blessed. Over the past few months, we have had many opportunities to gather with citizens to fellowship, strengthen relationships with one another and to share in our culture. We have also continued to grow and expand beneficial programs and services to better serve our citizens.

Some of the programs and services that have received increases and have been expanded are the eyeglasses and contacts program, storm shelter program (now known as the Homeowner Preparedness program), assisted living supplemental benefit program, burial assistance program, and higher education grants and scholarships. In addition, for our elders, the elder Homeland tour will see an expansion and an elder clothing grant has been created. For a complete listing of all programs and services available please refer to the 2025 Programs and Services Guide. If you have not yet received yours in the mail, you should receive it soon. It can also be accessed online at Chickasaw.net/Service Directory.

I always enjoy attending the many Chickasaw Citizen Connection and Chickasaw Community Council meetings across the country and look forward to seeing you at one soon. I hope you all enjoyed a happy Thanksgiving and I wish you a very merry Christmas and a joyous and prosperous new year! May 2025 bring you continued health and happiness.

As always, I consider it a privilege to serve as your legislator and look forward to hearing from you. May God continue to bless the Chickasaw Nation.

Chokma'shki!  
 Lisa  
 Pontotoc District, Seat 3  
 (580) 235-3185  
 lisa.impson@Chickasaw.net

### RSV and flu vaccinations offered at Chickasaw Nation Department of Health, encouraged for infants

As the weather turns colder, respiratory illnesses such as the flu, colds and respiratory syncytial virus, also known as RSV, become more common.

RSV is a viral disease that primarily affects children and seniors but can occur in people of all ages. RSV spreads easily, can last for many days and can cause serious complications such as pneumonia.

These conditions are especially dangerous for infants and can cause severe illness and hospitalization.

The Chickasaw Nation Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends the RSV antibody in all infants up to 8 months of age and First American children through 19 months. The RSV vaccine is recommended for adults ages 60 and older. One injection protects for five months. The RSV antibody injection is a passive immunization, which means it protects against disease without activating the immune system.

For additional information, please visit ChickasawNationHealth.net or call (580) 272-1037.

### NCAI offers cooperation between many tribes; Chickasaw Honor Guard in action

Chukma to the wonderful people of the Chickasaw Nation who are rich in heritage and powerful in spirit. As we prepare for the holidays, I hope all is well with each and every family.

This year for the first time I attended a portion of the 81st Annual NCAI, National Congress of American Indian conference. I was thoroughly amazed to see the cooperation between so many First American tribes as we join together to face issues defending sovereignty, pushing for providing basic needs to many of our native brothers and sisters on various reservations across the nation. It was also great to see our Chickasaw legislator David Woerz moderating the fourth General convention and reporting NCAI Treasury status, great job Mr. Woerz.

DUSK MONETATHCHI  
 Chickasaw Tribal Legislature

Back in November on Veterans Day I was fortunate to see our Chickasaw Honor Guard in action at the Johnston County Memorial site, Tishomingo, Oklahoma. I was proud of how they represented the Chickasaw Nation and all the veterans.  
 Chukma ski'  
 Dusk Monetathchi  
 Tishomingo District Legislator  
 Seat 3  
 Follow me on FB  
 Dusk.Monetathchi@Chickasaw.net  
 580-618-1740



### Chickasaw motor vehicle tag program

Chickasaw citizens can receive a rebate after purchasing a Chickasaw Nation license plate at state-licensed tag agencies throughout Oklahoma.

Citizens provide their citizenship card at the time of purchase. The name on the card must match the name on the registered vehicle's title.

After the purchase is complete, a rebate will be issued for a percentage of the license plate fees and taxes. Citizens can receive this rebate via direct deposit or a mailed check. This is a continual benefit that is applied at every registration renewal or payment of excise tax.

To find a local tag agency, visit the Oklahoma Tax Commission website.

For more information about the motor vehicle tag program and how to register for a rebate, call (580) 272-5798 or visit Chickasaw.net/LicensePlate.

### Oklahoma City Zoo ticket discount for nutrition program participants extended

In partnership with Chickasaw Nation nutrition programs, the Oklahoma City Zoo is offering 50% off general admission tickets for eligible families through Dec. 31.

Guests who present their Chickasaw EBT/WIC card, Summer EBT card or Packed Promise card with a valid photo ID will receive 50% off admission per person for themselves and three guests.

For more fun discounts, visit OKCZOO.org. For more information about Chickasaw Nation nutrition programs, visit ChickasawNationHealth.net.

### Chickasaw employee devotes free time to beautify the city of Ada



The Chickasaw Nation has donated wildflowers to a flower bed in the city of Ada to both beautify the area and create a habitat for monarch butterflies within city limits.

Tishia Agee, Sr. Programming Producer for KCNP Chickasaw Community Radio, can often be found during her lunch hour watering a public garden bed east of the Sugg Clinic, located in downtown Ada, Oklahoma. Agee played a pivotal role in gaining permission from the city to have the Chickasaw Nation plant a monarch butterfly garden at this location.

While small in size — a 6-by-10-foot flower bed — the bed is plenty of space to give traveling monarch butterflies a place to rest and eat during their nonstop migration to Canada, and vice versa.

"It does not take much space to plant these gardens," Agee said. "Let's say you live in an apartment and only have a patio. If you just have a couple of potted milkweeds or a potted nectar plant or two, you are helping pollinators."

With North America having a monarch butterfly popu-

lation of nearly 1 billion in the 1990s, scientists estimate this population has declined by nearly 80% in recent times. Much of this decline can be attributed to the loss of food and habitat.

"I became educated about the plight of butterflies, particularly monarch butterflies, at the (National Learn About) Butterflies Day at the (Chickasaw) Cultural Center. I learned that if I planted certain nectar flowers and milkweed, which is the only food for monarch babies, that I could help," Agee said. "I also learned the (Chickasaw) Nation was seeking out places to put gardens in an effort to support butterflies."

Agee said she knew of the idle flower beds near the Sugg Clinic. After she received permission from the city of Ada to use the space, she contacted the Chickasaw Cultural Center horticulture team. Their team evaluated the site and planted various plants that provide food and habitat for butterflies.

"The original garden was installed about five years ago," Agee said. "Over time, certain plants had taken over and the garden needed a refresh. I contacted the horticulture department again this year. Once again, the horticulture crew came over. Within a few hours, the weeds were all cleaned out. The next day, milkweed and other plants that are beneficial to butterflies were planted."

Educational plaques are installed describing the individual plants used within the garden.

Agee's passion for butterflies goes back to when she was a small girl, marveling at the beauty of the butterflies as they fluttered around her family garden.

"I became interested in caterpillars and butterflies as a little kid living in the country," Agee said. "We used to watch (cocoons) off our dill weed. We put them in jars and picked them develop. They weren't monarchs, but just as pretty."

CONTRIBUTED BY KC Cole, Media Relations

Answers to the puzzle on page 20

#### MATCH THE APP TO ITS PHONE BY COLOR!

- CN Resident
- CN At Large
- AVA Walk
- Chickasaw Language Basic
- Chickasha Emojis
- Rosetta Stone Chickasaw
- Choctaw Hymns
- Chickasaw Bank Mobile
- MomCircle

APP DAY DEC. 11

## Birthday



RAEALYN JAMES DEMPSEY

Raelyn James Dempsey was welcomed into the world at 10:46 p.m. on October 22, 2024 in Frederick, Maryland. She weighed 8 lbs., and measured 20 inches at birth.

Raelyn is the daughter of Shon Dempsey and Andrea Dempsey and the granddaughter of James B. Dempsey Sr. and Charlene Dempsey. Raelyn is the six times great-granddaughter of Chickasaw Hall of Famer, John McLish.

We're so excited that you're here and you've already become our little ray of sunshine.



MAHEALANI MARIA KILI RAINE SMITH

We are thrilled to announce the birth of Mahealani Maria Kili Raine Smith. She was born at 8:25 p.m., August 11, 2024 at Monterey, California to Mareion Smith and Susan Lewis. She weighed 7 lbs., 3 oz., and measured 20 inches at birth.

She is the granddaughter of Loren and Killy Lewis, Paula Pratt, and Irish Smith. She is the great-great-granddaughter of Edmon Lewis, an original enrollee.

## Maleah Johnson inducted into the National Honor Society



MALEAH JOHNSON

Chickasaw Citizen Maleah Johnson has met the requirements of scholarship, leadership, character, and service and thus deservingly was inducted into the National Honor Society, October 2024. She is an active participant in the National Honor Society Chapter at Norman High School. In just her sophomore year at Norman High she has already accumulated an impressive list of accomplishments.

She is a member of the Chickasaw Youth Leadership Program. She is secretary of the Technology Student Association and she is a member of Tiger Palooza, a student-led philanthropic organization at her school. While maintaining a rigorous academic and social schedule Maleah is also on the cross country and basketball teams.

Maleah is honored and delighted to be a part of various extracurricular activities and continues to make her family proud.

## Lauren Craft graduates from Portland State University earning an applied health and fitness degree



Chickasaw citizens Jaxon Montgomery, 8, and Ariana Ramirez, 8, of California competed at the Riverside San Bernardino Indian Health 2024 Native Youth Mini Olympics, Saturday, October 25. Jaxon won Gold, Silver, and Bronze. Ariana won Gold and Bronze. They got the honor of meeting basketball stars Kenny Dobbs "Best Slam Dunk Artist in the World" from the Choctaw Nation and Alan Palesano (White Iverson). We are so proud of them for representing the Chickasaw Nation!

## Carl Albert Indian Hospital reunion



The Carl Albert Indian Hospital Reunion was hosted Nov. 9, 2024 at Wintersmith Park Lodge, Ada, Oklahoma. The employees (current and former) that attended are: front row from left, Marilyn Morgan, Mary Johnson, Peggy Colbert and Louise Gore. Back row from left, Lan Vandevener, Dennis Williams, Chebon Buck and Rhonda Brown.

## Chickasaw sisters, Morgan and Abbie, earn great achievements in rodeo and marketing



MORGAN NOTGRASS

Morgan Notgrass was recently crowned 2024 Rodeo Queen for the Williamson County Fair and Rodeo in Taylor, Texas.

Morgan is a junior at Vista Ridge High School, Cedar Park, Texas and a proud member of the Chickasaw Nation.

She is actively involved in her local FFA Chapter and serves on the officer team and competes in various career and leadership development events within FFA. She has spent the last three years raising and showing animals including four pigs and two lambs. She is a former "Student Visionary of the Year" for the Leukemia-Lymphoma Society where she led a team of high school students to raise \$67,000 to fight blood cancer. She is a member of National Charity League and serves as class vice-president and participates in a variety of volunteer opportunities within her community.

Morgan looks forward to the year ahead as Rodeo Queen and being an ambassador for the Williamson County Fair and Rodeo!

She is the daughter of Chickasaw citizen Blake and Allison Notgrass. She is the granddaughter of Clyde and Wanda Ashley (Chickasaw), Debbie Rippstein and Nelson and Carla Nagle.



ABBIE NOTGRASS

Abbie Notgrass is a senior at Vista Ridge High School, Cedar Park, Texas and citizen of the Chickasaw Nation.

Recently Abbie competed with her two teammates to earn the title of National Champion in Marketing Plan at the FFA National Convention in Indianapolis, Indiana. The team (including Abbie Notgrass (Chickasaw), Riley Horn and Austin Sassenberg, all seniors at Vista Ridge High School), had previously earned the Texas State Champion title in April 2024, earning them a spot to compete with the state champion teams from all over the Nation.

The team presented a 15 minute marketing presentation featuring Vital Farms Eggs. In their presentation, they highlighted research and marketing strategies, while also taking questions from industry leaders in Marketing and Agriculture.

This is a huge accomplishment as Abbie and her team beat state champion teams from all over the Nation (the top four finalists were Texas, California, Oklahoma and Nebraska.) This win was a record placing victory for their high school, and a proud moment for the Chickasaw Nation.

Determination and perseverance took the team all the way to be National Champions!

## Health tip with Dr. Judy Goforth Parker

New Year's resolutions to focus on healthier lifestyles



Dr. Judy Goforth Parker

With the recent celebration of Thanksgiving and the upcoming celebration of Christmas and the new year, it is important for us to be cautious of our health and our family's health. First Americans and Alaska Natives have the highest prevalence of diabetes, two times the rate of non-Hispanic whites (NIHB). It is important to be aware of the risks of diabetes, especially as First Americans. With New Year's resolutions approaching, it would be a good idea to include a healthier lifestyle as a goal for the upcoming year, along with taking extra precautions to monitor yourself and family for prediabetes.

Did you know that millions of people are at risk for prediabetes, yet many have no idea? Prediabetes often has no symptoms, but early detection is key to preventing the development of Type 2 diabetes. According to the CDC, 1 in 3 U.S. adults have prediabetes. The good news is identifying your risk level takes just one minute.

Early awareness of prediabetes can be life-changing, as prediabetes can be reversed. People who find themselves at risk can take simple steps, such as improving diet and increasing physical activity, to prevent the progression to Type 2 diabetes. So why not take a minute out of your day to take a 1-minute prediabetes risk test? This simple test could be your first step toward a healthier and brighter future. The prediabetes risk test can be located on the CDC website: [cdc.gov/prediabetes/risktest/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/prediabetes/risktest/index.html).

There is sometimes a negative stigma around the diagnosis of Type 2 diabetes. Individuals feel as if it is their fault for the diagnosis, resulting in lower self-esteem and sometimes depression. This can cause difficulties for an individual to have the motivation to start a healthy lifestyle. This can be especially difficult for a young person who is still developing.

Parents can help their children live healthy lifestyles by having positive attitudes about wellness. Being healthy begins internally, meaning mental health should be

considered when making healthy lifestyle changes to a child's life. Parents maintaining positive attitudes and behaviors while supporting their family to build healthier lifestyles is important when maintaining positive mental health statuses. Remember it is okay to have a treat occasionally and to never make a child feel guilty, or yourself, for the occasional treat. Promoting fruits and vegetables as good snack alternatives is a start to a healthier lifestyle, as well as substituting with whole grain foods and lean proteins. Make physical activity fun for your child. Join them on an evening walk, bicycle ride, swim, yoga session or going to the gym together. Support your child and give yourself grace to allow healthier lifestyles for one another. This includes healthy mental health when implementing and maintaining lifestyle changes.

Studies show that drinking water instead of sugary drinks, alcohol, or energy drinks offers multiple benefits for diabetes prevention. Unlike the other beverages, water contains no sugar, caffeine, or artificial additives, so it helps maintain stable blood sugar levels without causing spikes or crashes. Hydration with water also supports kidney function by flushing out excess glucose and toxins, which can improve insulin sensitivity. Since water has zero calories, it's ideal for weight management, unlike high-calorie sugary drinks and alcohol, which can lead to weight gain and an increased risk of insulin resistance. Lastly, avoiding sugary beverages and alcohol can support cardiovascular health, lowering both blood pressure and triglyceride levels, both of which are linked to diabetes risk. In these ways, water is a healthier choice for maintaining balanced blood sugar and reducing the risk of Type 2 diabetes.

Healthier lifestyles can be achieved! It is important to first set goals for yourself. This can be included in your New Year's resolution. Regulating stress, staying motivated, consulting with a trained lifestyle coach, discovering healthy food options and alternatives for you and your family, and adding more physical activity throughout the year are all excellent goals to have in the upcoming year!

## Wish granted by Make-a-Wish Oklahoma



CHRISTOPHER GARRETT MORGAN

Chickasaw citizen Christopher Garrett Morgan recently had his wish granted by Make-a-Wish Oklahoma. His wish was to go to Hawaii.

Garrett and his parents enjoyed seven days and six nights in Waikiki, and attended a luau and a waterfall hike among other exciting things.

Garrett is a 2022 kidney transplant patient at Oklahoma Children's Hospital. He is a post-transplant lymphoproliferative disorders (PTLD) survivor completing six rounds of chemotherapy. PTLD is a group of potentially life-threatening conditions that affect patients who have had an organ or bone marrow transplant. Garrett currently attends East

Central University (ECU), Ada, Oklahoma pursuing a biology major. He plans to attend medical school when he graduates from ECU.

Garrett is the son of Scott and Melissa Morgan, of Roff, Oklahoma. He is the grandson of Vicky Gold, Roff, Gayle and Shelby Morgan, Roff and Buddy Tartsah.

His family decided to make this an extra special wish for Garrett and they joined him in Waikiki. Family members that traveled with Garrett were his parents; his grandma, Vicky Gold; aunt and uncle Rachael and Derek Collins, cousins, Redek, Ralee and Rylan Collins; uncle and aunt Marcus and Brittny Tartsah and cousins, Maddox and Hartleigh Tartsah.

# Vanderbilt honors Mater; Hushtola Art Market draws near



Acclaimed Chickasaw artist Dustin Mater is shown with a few of his ledger paper portraits commissioned by Vanderbilt University to honor 12 Chickasaw and Cherokee students who fought for admission to the university in the 1800s.

NASHVILLE, Tenn. - Vanderbilt University honored Chickasaw artist Dustin Mater with a formal ceremony Nov. 12, officially unveiling 12 portraits of Chickasaw and Cherokee students who attended the highly respected university.

The academic university commissioned Mater to paint por-

traits of First American students who fought for admission to Vanderbilt in the late 1880s, won admission and then went on to pursue stellar careers in Indian Territory and later Oklahoma.

Mater, a national and internationally acclaimed artist in several art genres, was on hand at the ceremony to greet attendees and



Former Chickasaw Princess Abby Gaines poses with her award-winning graphic arts entry "Spam Shakers." The piece won second place at the Southeastern Arts Show and Market (SEASAM) conducted each year during Chickasaw Annual Meeting and Festival.

speak about his project, which he finished in February 2024.

The Chickasaw artist is also planning to show works at this year's Hushtola Art Market. The event will be hosted 11 a.m. to 7 p.m., Dec. 14-15, at WinStar World Casino and Resort in Thackerville, Oklahoma. The juried art show is perfectly timed for holiday shopping.

Hushtola Art Market offers awards and cash prizes in 21 categories including Best of Show and Best of Division.

It is open to adult artists from any federally recognized tribe. It marks the second year the Chickasaw Nation has hosted Hushtola Art Market.

Mater was commissioned by Dan Sharfstein, professor of law and history at Vanderbilt, after a chance encounter in September 2023 at Vanderbilt's Curb Center, which hosted "Roots of the Cedar Tree" art exhibit in which Mater was involved.

"The more we talked, I remember thinking how cool it was these Native sons were the first nonwhite students admitted to

Vanderbilt," Mater said.

The portraits are painted on Mater's signature "ledger paper," artifacts from the late 1800s to 1903 given to him approximately six years ago. The ledger paper used was from a map of Tishomingo, Indian Territory, dated 1898. The other is a map of Tahlequah, Indian Territory, also from 1898, which pays tribute to the First American tribes that each student represents.

"It was an honor to be asked to contribute to this endeavor," Mater said. "To see First Americans honored for their temerity and fight to gain higher education and serve our people is quite inspiring."

Another celebrated artist just emerging on the scene is Abby Gaines, a former Chickasaw Princess whose differing art genres have proved popular with art lovers. She also will be showing and competing in Hushtola Art Market after enjoying a successful prize-winning exhibit at the Southeastern Art Show and Market (SEASAM) in October.

Gaines' "Spam Shakers" won

second place in the graphic artists competition at SEASAM.

"SEASAM treated me well," Gaines said. "My piece, 'Spam Shakers,' which placed second, sold to a patron on the first day of the show, and I also sold all 25 prints I brought with me of the same piece."

Gaines called the piece "pop art" with a special meaning to First American citizens.

The painting depicts a female Chickasaw stomp dancer using Spam cans as shell shakers. Chickasaw women strap cans onto their legs to keep the rhythm of the stomp dance singer. The shakers are usually made of evaporated milk cans filled with river rocks.

Traditionally, Chickasaw women used shakers made of turtle shells or deer hooves, which can still be enjoyed today but are not used as much as metal cans. In Gaines' graphic art, it shows a Chickasaw woman keeping the rhythm with cans of Spam attached to her legs.

"Growing up, my family always had Spam in our household, and other family and friends can identify with it too," Gaines said with a laugh. "It was a lighthearted piece to show our humor and cultural significance all at once."

So popular was the piece, Gaines has ordered additional prints for Hushtola Art Market. Additionally, other works will be available to purchase.

Gaines gave up her Chickasaw Princess crown in September. Calling the end of her reign "bittersweet," she is now focused on working full time for the Chickasaw Nation and attending East Central University in Ada, Oklahoma, as a studio art major.

CONTRIBUTED BY Gene Lehmann, Media Relations

## Chickasaw studies food sovereignty



Chickasaw citizen Sierra Hampton is a graduate student at the University of California, Berkeley, majoring in environmental science, policy and management. Hampton is researching Chickasaw food sovereignty for her dissertation. Photo provided.

After visiting the Māori in New Zealand, a Chickasaw citizen and University of California, Berkeley, student has embarked on writing a dissertation about Chickasaw food sovereignty for her Ph.D. in environmental science, policy and management.

"I got into the Ph.D. program with this project in mind," Sierra Hampton said. "This is what I am really passionate about."

Hampton is from Valley Springs, California. The 32-year-old earned a Bachelor of Arts in political science from UC, Berkeley, and a Master of Science in international development and management from Lund Univer-

sity, Sweden.

Hampton came up with the idea of highlighting traditional Chickasaw food production and meal preparation after visiting New Zealand for her master's thesis.

"I was trying to look at how (Māori people) assert their right of self-determination," Hampton said. "They would say, 'We use the courts, international forums, public media, but at the end of the day, we just grow our own food on our own land.'"

The U.S. Food Sovereignty Alliance describes food sovereignty as the right of First American communities to have healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound, sustainable methods, as well as having the right to define their own food and agricultural systems.

"Food sovereignty is really essential to sovereignty as a people," Hampton said. "It seeks to address issues like hunger, environmentally unsustainable food production, economic inequality and issues of social justice through political methods."

Hampton's dissertation relies heavily on Chickasaw people around the world taking food sovereignty into their own hands.

"I have spoken to 37 Chickasaw citizens so far," Hampton said,

and will continue this research through summer 2025. "We talk about different food related activities — if they hunt, fish, grow their own food, if they cook. We also talk about values. I want to know why those things are important to them."

Hampton works directly with Chickasaw Nation departments specializing in food production, distribution and consumption for her research as well. She has leaned on Rhonda Sellers, an ecological resource coordinator for the Chickasaw Cultural Center in Sulphur, for help in better understanding Oklahoma's ecosystem.

"Rhonda is an unbelievable wealth of knowledge," Hampton said. "I come from California, so I don't know a lot about native Oklahoma plants. She's been my resource for education on Oklahoma horticulture."

Hampton also credits Jennifer Bryant, Chickasaw Cultural Center Director of Horticulture, for her guidance through the research process.

"Jennifer has been my point person in the Chickasaw Nation, my partner," Hampton said. "She has helped me formulate questions, get in touch with citizens, and she comes to (the Chickasaw Nation) Institutional Review Board meetings with me. None of

this would be possible without her."

Hampton has enjoyed visiting Oklahoma to discover the vast amount of food sovereignty resources already made available to Chickasaw citizens by the Chickasaw Nation.

"The Chickasaw Nation Horticulture Department maintains the spiral gardens at the (Chickasaw) Cultural Center, a space where they use sustainable management techniques, and community members learn about traditional and nontraditional crops, pollinators and medicinal plants," Hampton said. "The Chickasaw Nation Fish & Wildlife Services started a program a little more than a year ago to issue hunting and fishing licenses to citizens at no charge to hunt within our territory. It's really cool to see how these programs are developing in real time."

Upon submission of her dissertation, Hampton is eager to reconstruct her research into an educational book for the public.

"I just hope people who are interested in our culture and who are interested in food will pick it up and read it," Hampton said. "I want it to be something that Chickasaw citizens can inform themselves on, get excited about and really take pride in."

Hampton also expects to develop her findings into a children's book catered to First American children.

"My goal is to help Chickasaw youth really understand food sovereignty and envision themselves contributing to it," Hampton said.

Hampton hopes to work directly with fluent Chickasaw speakers to create a Chikashshanompa' (Chickasaw language) version of the children's book as well as an English version with key Chickasaw words.

Hampton said she plans to have her books finished and ready for print by 2026. She said she thinks her research will shed light on the collective efforts of Chickasaw people to preserve self-governance through food sovereignty.

"Our Chickasaw people are enacting our food sovereignty," Hampton said. "It's no single activity or person but our people together building foundations and strategies for food sovereignty for today and future generations."

To learn more or share your own stories and thoughts about food and food sovereignty, please contact Hampton at SierraBonnieMoon@gmail.com or (510) 646-5402.

CONTRIBUTED BY Dalee Weston, Media Relations

## Steering students to success

Few milestones in a life can immediately change a person's standard of living. One of the most important is acquiring that first driver's license. For those without public transportation, a driver's license opens a doorway to employment, education and health opportunities, as well as the ability to travel recreationally. For teens, this definitive moment seems lifechanging.

"The driver education training program (DETP) helps any Chickasaw citizen with the driver's license process. DETP offers driver's education classes and driver's license exams to all Chickasaw citizens who qualify. It began by focusing on teenagers 15 to 16 years of age working closely with the Toksali SMART (Successful

Mindsets with Attitude and Readiness for Tomorrow) Program but is now open to all Chickasaw citizens and collaborating with other tribal programs that help adults with the licensing process as well," Jim Proctor, DETP manager, said.

The Chickasaw Nation Driver Education Training Program provides the necessary skills to obtain an Oklahoma driver's license. Decades of driving knowledge is passed on to those taking the course.

"Our senior manager, Scott Fortner, has taught driver's education for 35 years," Proctor said. "Kevin Farve (Ardmore instructor/examiner) and I were licensed through Service Oklahoma and worked through the certification

process to instruct classes and administer Oklahoma driver's license exams. This procedure included background checks, passing a written test and driving skills test as part of the state certification. It was a pretty big process."

For Chickasaw youth living out of the Chickasaw Nation boundaries, the youth support reimbursement program helps applicants with driver education expenses.

While Chickasaw youth are the program's primary participants, other Chickasaw citizens are helped through the Chickasaw Nation Community Services Division as well.

"We help any Chickasaw citizen who needs their driver's license,"



The Chickasaw Nation's Driver Education Training Program offers driver education training and examinations to eligible Chickasaw citizens.

Proctor said. "The classes were initially geared toward teenagers getting their first-time license, but we also help adults who have never had a license or may have lost their license for a variety of

reasons."

Adult programs through Chickasaw Employment Access (CEA) work in conjunction with DETP

SEE DETP, PAGE 17

# Griffin ranks second as USA archer



Griffin Witty is currently ranked second in the nation in the under 18 fixed pin compound archery division presented by the United States Archery Team.

Consistency has earned 17-year-old Griffin Witty the acknowledgment of being one of the top archers in the nation. For the 2024 outdoor archery season, he placed second in the under 18 fixed pin compound archery division presented by the United States Archery Team (USAT). Last year, he ranked an impressive third place within the organization.

To earn these top spots in his chosen sport, Griffin competes in nearly 20 local and national tournaments a year. A roller coaster sport with a lot of ups and downs, in early August Griffin was ranked at the top of his division in the nation.

"Frankly, it was shocking that I was ranked No. 1," Griffin said. "I didn't expect to win (at the tournament) that placed me first. I didn't expect to win by the margin I did. It was gigantic. It felt great."

Griffin shoots with the Aslan Archery Academy, located near his hometown of Highland Ranch, Colorado. The academy prepares all levels of archers, from recreational shooters to those competing in international competitions. As one of the nation's top fixed pin compound bow archers and recognized by the USAT as the second-best fixed pin archer for the under 18 division for the 2024 outdoor season, Griffin is known as a consistent archer.

"I started shooting in local leagues in 2019," Griffin said. "The United States Archer Team puts together the five best archers in each age division. There are also bow categories. There are recurve bows, bare bows, compound bows and the (compound)

fixed pin categories. I am in the fixed pin category."

This allows him to use sights in the form of pins attached to his bow. Once competition begins, he is not allowed to adjust these sights.

"In every other division, archers can adjust their sights whenever they would like," Griffin said. "Even in the Olympics you'll see archers adjusting their sights. The moment we start our rounds, we must lock our pins in place. Since I am shooting the same distance at competitions, I only use one pin."

Compound bows are a technical upgrade to traditional bows. Many sportsmen and hunters alike prefer compound bows due to their speed and accuracy. Compound bows are often constructed of strong, flexible and light human-made materials. Fiberglass, aluminum or carbon fiber can all be found in these bows, as these materials allow for increased performance and lighter weight.

Using a mechanical pulley and cam system, compound bows are thought of as being more accurate than traditional bows. With the pulley system, the bow requires less strength to hold when fully drawn, providing additional time to aim. With less fatigue to the archer, the archer has more time to align single shots on target, and shooting is more consistent throughout a tournament.

"This gives the user more consistent power," Griffin said. "It generally makes the bow better by increasing speed through energy efficiency."

Compound bows usually have a higher draw weight - the force



The Witty family, from left: Griffin, 17, Bryn, 15, Adelyn, 9, Todd, Monica and Max, 12.

measured in pounds to pull the bow to full draw length - than traditional bows. This allows for a straighter trajectory at a greater distance, increasing both speed and accuracy of the arrow to the target.

Griffin took up the sport by seeing his father practice in the backyard of his home while preparing for hunting season. Together, they thought it would be a great way to spend time as a father and son. He has been shooting for as long as he can remember. Griffin has been involved in the sport competitively since the age of 12.

"I shoot in part because it is a connection with my dad," Griffin said. "It's also something I feel I can work at to get better and better. I keep improving."

To continue to be ranked among the best in the nation, Griffin spends hours practicing. He practices at least three times a week for two and a half hours per session. Griffin shoots at least 100 arrows during practice and spends additional time maintaining his equipment, such as re-fletching worn arrows.

Griffin's sport has become a family affair. His parents, Monica and Todd, take turns taking him to tournaments around the nation.

"My family supports me a ton," Griffin said. "It's hard on them, but at least one person travels with me to each tournament. The first few tournaments were dad, then it was mom. My grandpa has taken me to Florida. My brother came to support me at nationals."

Monica is excited that her son is doing so well at the national level. "It is exciting to see him do so

well. Archery is something that he really loves," Monica said. "I like to see him work hard and push himself to improve. Academics come naturally to Griffin, but this is something that he has to really work for, and it has taught him some very beneficial life lessons."

As he ages out of his under 18 division, Griffin sees himself competing collegiately. Currently in four Advanced Placement (AP) classes, he dreams of pursuing a career in the archery field.

"Competing as a professional would be really cool," Griffin said. "But I am also interested in designing bows and the engineering that goes into them. I am looking to go to school at Texas A&M. They arguably have the best archery program. Texas A&M also has a nationally acclaimed engineering program. They are one of the few colleges to send an archer to the Olympics this year."

While his family is the main contributor to Griffin's success, he has received some help from the Chickasaw Nation. He is a recipient of the annual Chickasaw Nation Activities Grant that helps with school-aged children in after-school activities. He is also a member of the Chickasaw Honor Club, which provides monetary incentives for good grades. He and his siblings also use the annual school clothing grant.

Griffin said he receives his Chickasaw heritage from his mother, and his father also brings Muscogee blood into the family line. As a Chickasaw citizen, Griffin's First American heritage is important to him. Honoring his roots is a way to honor his family. His Chickasaw family can be

traced back to a homestead in the Newcastle area.

"My Chickasaw heritage is a way to connect with my grandpa," Griffin said. "It's also just part of who I am. It's quite literally in my blood."

Monica believes her family is connected to the tribe, even though they live outside of Chickasaw Nation treaty territory.

"My dad, Richard Burket, is currently serving as the treasurer of the North Texas Chickasaw Community Council," Monica said. "While most of my (tribal) information comes from my dad, the Chickasaw Nation does reach out to us as well. We have (Chickasaw) events close to us in the Denver area. We receive the newspaper, and my dad goes to the annual Chickasaw Elders (Conference). We are plugged-in in many ways."

"In 2018, we had a family reunion in Oklahoma," Monica said. "It was really cool because we stayed at the Chickasaw Retreat and Conference Center. We were able to go to the (Chickasaw) Cultural Center with all my kids."

"I loved that weekend," Griffin said. "The cultural center was great. It was good to spend time there, and it was interesting. I didn't know all that much about my heritage up until that point. There are many people, including myself, who would have no idea how we lived. It represents how our ancestors lived, better than a textbook can."

CONTRIBUTED BY KC Cole, Media Relations



Author Sarah Elisabeth Sawyer with her book "Otis W. Leader: The Ideal American Doughboy." The book was selected by the Oklahoma Center for Books to be placed on the Great Reads from Great Places list in the adult category at the 2024 National Book Festival of the Library of Congress.

## Chickasaw WWI veteran's story lives on

ADA, Okla. — The Chickasaw Nation is filled with stories passed down from generation to generation. Sarah Elisabeth Sawyer's book "Otis W. Leader: The Ideal American Doughboy" recounts the story of a First American World War I veteran. The book was featured at the Library of Congress National Book Festival in August and won two Oklahoma Book Awards.

Each year, the Affiliate Centers for the Book chooses a book that represents its state's heritage to go to a Washington, D.C. convention where each state and territory has a table for their "Great Reads." Sawyer's book was selected by the Oklahoma Center for the Book to be Oklahoma's "Great Read."

Sawyer is a story archaeologist who looks at past lives and events to share with the world. She works diligently to uncover historic events and allow people's legacies to live forever. Through years of dedicated research through of dedicated research and excerpts from Leader's personal journal, Sawyer weaves together

the story of Otis W. Leader's journey during the war.

"Otis W. Leader: The Ideal American Doughboy" describes the life of Leader and his service to his country. Leader was a 35-year-old man of Chickasaw, Choctaw, Cherokee and Irish descent. Leader was a widower with three children. He was accused of being a German spy, despite being a patriot. Sawyer said Leader's mind was set to serve his country even before America entered the war. He knew he wanted to do his part.

According to Sawyer, Leader was one of the first to be shipped off to France in WWI and was one of the initial First American soldiers to step foot on French soil. Upon his arrival in France, there was a Fourth of July parade. An artist at the event noticed how Leader stood out from the crowd.

"The artist had spotted Otis in the Fourth of July parade," Sawyer said. "He thought, 'Who better to represent the American soldiers than an American Indian?'"

"He was chosen in France to represent the ideal American

doughboy and along those lines, he was chosen to represent the state of Oklahoma at the Library of Congress's National Book Festival," said Sawyer. "Otis will be doing everyone proud once again."

Sawyer said Leader personifies what it means to be selfless and to fight for what is right.

The book also took home two awards in the nonfiction and design category at the Oklahoma Book Awards.

"When they called out Otis W. Leader, it was an explosive moment for all of us," Sawyer said. "It felt like the winning touchdown."

Sawyer said she could not be prouder of the Chickasaw Press and Jackson Davis, senior graphic designer, who designed the cover and interior of the book. Davis took Otis' handwriting and created a new font to put in the book as well as newspaper articles and letters in Leader's journal.

"It was just a beautiful moment to capture," Sawyer said.

Sawyer said Leader's story is

SEE LEADER, PAGE 17

# Tribe seeds collaboration to help preserve monarch butterfly population



The Wynnewood Historical Society, based out of the historic Eskridge Hotel Museum, has received plants from the Chickasaw Nation to both beautify its garden and create a butterfly habitat.

SULPHUR, Okla. — At the Chickasaw Nation, collaborations come in many shapes and sizes.

One of these collaborations is the planted butterfly gardens in and around the Chickasaw Nation.

Thousands have become familiar with the Chickasaw Nation Butterfly Garden located at the Chickasaw Cultural Center in Sulphur. The garden is a butterfly-friendly habitat filled with the endangered monarch butterfly's favorite foods, especially milkweed. Large butterfly statues and educational panels highlight the efforts to restore damaged habitats.

In efforts to increase habitat and natural foods available to butterflies during their annual migration from Mexico to Canada, the Chickasaw Nation has harvested hundreds of thousands of native butterfly-friendly seeds. While keeping several for its own seed bank, the Chickasaw Cultural Center grows thousands of seeds to be distributed to Chickasaw citizens and organizations willing to plant them.

The hatahposhik (butterfly) is meaningful within Chickasaw culture. Butterflies represent perseverance and the ability to adapt and change. Butterflies also serve

as the symbol of the annual Dynamic Women of the Chickasaw Nation Conference.

Since 2015, the Chickasaw Nation has worked with numerous First American tribes to establish butterfly-friendly habitats throughout Oklahoma. This effort increases the availability of food critical to monarch butterfly survival.

While the Chickasaw Cultural Center hosts the crown jewel of a network of gardens sponsored by the Chickasaw Nation and other First American tribes, there are many gardens maintained by the Chickasaw Nation. These include sites at the Chickasaw White House, Boggy Depot State Park, WinStar Golf Course and Chickasaw Nation Headquarters.

In addition to plants being made available to Chickasaw citizens and other First Americans, the Chickasaw Nation distributes seeds and plants to individuals and community nonprofits at no charge. The nonprofit organizations include museums in Wynnewood, Lawton and Seminole, along with a beautification endeavor near the Sugg Clinic in Ada, Oklahoma.

The Wynnewood Historical Society's garden — located at the historic Eskridge Hotel Museum

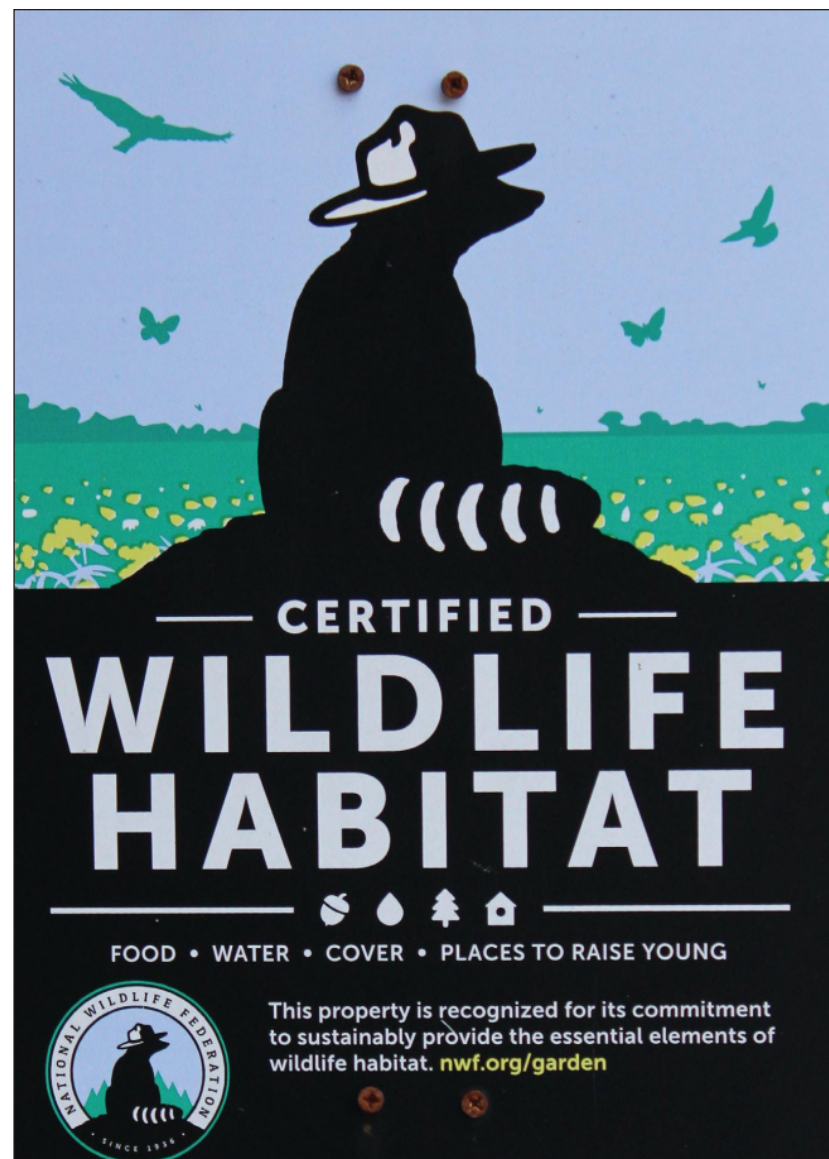
— is designed to help all butterflies that call southern Oklahoma home.

Former Education Supervisor at the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation Luann Waters, has worked with and represented the Wynnewood Historical Society for more than 20 years. She first became aware of the Chickasaw Nation's aim to protect and increase food for monarch butterflies while attending a butterfly seminar at the Chickasaw Cultural Center.

"I explained the historical society was considering a butterfly garden. I asked if they would come over and look at the site," Waters said. "Thalia Miller made a trip to see the site. She asked if we'd like plants from the Chickasaw Nation. The plants were brought over and planted by Thalia and Rhonda Sellers.

"When they came out, they brought enough plants to fill the flower beds along our fence line. They put them in the ground, and then I took it over," Waters said. "It was like a godsend. I knew they knew their plants and all the help received was appreciated."

The Wynnewood Historical Society began its butterfly garden more than five years ago. The garden is now certified as a



The Wynnewood Historical Society's Eskridge Hotel Museum has been certified by Monarch Watch and the National Wildlife Federation for creating habitat needed by butterflies in southern Oklahoma.

"Monarch Waystation" by Monarch Watch, and it is certified as a wildlife habitat by the National Wildlife Federation.

"The help did not stop after the initial visit. Representatives from the Chickasaw Nation would later come back and provide additional help and recommendations to keep the plants alive and well," Waters said.

As a waystation and habitat site, the garden "provides food, water, shelter as monarchs migrate through North America." The garden supports other butterflies and provides a habitat for them to raise their young as well. "This garden gives monarch butterflies a chance to stop en route as they migrate back and forth from Canada to Mexico," Waters said. "To receive certification, you must fill out an application and explain the habitat you have. It feels like a badge of honor for us to have these certifications — to have this location recognized."

According to Waters, butterfly gardens do not have to take up large spaces or take a lot of time to maintain. As little as 6 feet of space planted with the right flora will attract butterflies. As native plants to Oklahoma, an hour or less a week is needed to maintain

these gardens.

While plants from the milkweed family make up most of the vegetation in the Wynnewood Historical Society's butterfly garden, they also have tickseed, ironweed and butterfly weed, among others. Waters indicated that while monarchs are a major concern for the garden, they plan to provide habitats for all butterflies.

"Tickseed will bring in all different sorts of butterflies," Waters said. "Bumblebees just love it. Hummingbirds also come to the tickseed. It's not just a one species kind of plant."

From 2015 to 2017, the Chickasaw Nation cooperated with six First American tribes to establish 50,000 milkweed plants throughout Oklahoma to increase the availability of the food critical to monarch butterfly survival. The Tribal Alliance of Pollinators includes the Chickasaw, Muscogee (Creek), Seminole, Eastern Shawnee, Osage, Miami and Citizen Potawatomi. The Chickasaw Nation continues this partnership and plants milkweed throughout its reservation.

CONTRIBUTED BY KC Cole, Media Relations

# Murray and Garvin County played important roles in Chickasaw Nation progress



The Artesian Hotel in Sulphur, Murray County, Oklahoma.

Located in the heart of the Chickasaw Nation, Murray County and its neighbor to the north, Garvin County, have played crucial roles in the progress of the Chickasaw Nation.

The natural springs and healing waters of what is now Sulphur, the county seat of Murray County, drew people to the area. Chickasaws, who arrived in Indian Territory following forced removal from their historic Homeland in the 1830s, revered the area for the springs and natural beauty.

The first residence in Sulphur was on a ranch south of Pavilion Springs established by Noah Lael, son-in-law of former Chickasaw

Nation Governor Cyrus Harris. He sold the ranch in 1882 to a Chickasaw family. Lael's wife, Lucy Harris Lael, daughter of Governor Harris, is interred at Oaklawn Cemetery in the Garvin County community of Wynnewood.

Settlers moved into the Sulphur area in the late 1800s and began developing the land around the springs into a resort. Soon, hotels and bathhouses dotted the landscape in this area now called "Sulphur Springs."

By 1900, the city of Sulphur Springs had about 1,200 residents and was home to two newspapers, a telephone service, two schools, and enough hotels and boarding houses to accommodate

another thousand visitors.

To protect and preserve the mineral springs, the Chickasaw and Choctaw Nations ceded 640 acres of land in 1902 to the federal government to create the Sulphur Springs Reservation. At the tribes' insistence, a promise was added to the agreement by the government that all people would have free access to the springs for all time.

In 1906, the area was named Platt National Park, the first national park in Oklahoma. In 1976, the park was joined with the 2,350-acre Lake of the Arbuckles and additional lands to form the Chickasaw National Recreation Area.

Built adjacent to the park in 1906, the original Artesian Hotel served as an elegant destination for park tourists until the grand hotel was destroyed by fire in 1962. A 72-unit motor lodge style structure, the Artesian Motor Hotel, was built in its place in 1965 and fell into foreclosure in the early 1970s.

The Chickasaw Nation purchased the Artesian Motor Hotel, Sept. 1, 1972, which marked the first business owned and operated by the Chickasaw Nation and proved to be one of the most successful tribal ventures of that era.

Promptly renamed the Chickasaw Motor Inn, the business served as tribal headquarters un-

til 1977 when it moved to Ada.

In 1972 when the Chickasaw Nation purchased the motor inn, there were a little more than two dozen tribal employees. Today, the Chickasaw Nation employs more than 14,500 workers worldwide.

After more than three decades of serving throngs of guests, the inn, later renamed the Chickasaw Motor Lodge, was demolished in 2006 to make way for construction of the new Artesian Hotel.

Ground was broken in 2010 and the hotel opened with great fanfare Aug. 1, 2013.

The Artesian Hotel is designed in homage of the original hotel and features 81 rooms, a restaurant, banquet room, swimming pools and a full-service spa.

The hotel complements other tourist destinations in the Murray County area, including the Chickasaw National Recreation Area, the Chickasaw Cultural Center, ARTesian Gallery & Studios, the Chickasaw Visitor Center, Bedré Fine Chocolate and the Chickasaw Welcome Center.

## Garvin County Chickasaw Connections

Garvin County was named for Samuel J. Garvin, who married First American Susan Muncrief in 1870. He operated a mercantile business in Pauls Valley.

Garvin County's most populated city, Pauls Valley, was founded by Smith Paul, a North Carolinian. Three of Paul's descendants, Samuel Paul, William G. Paul and Homer Paul, were inducted into the Chickasaw Hall of Fame.

Another notable Garvin County Chickasaw is Fredrick Tecumseh Waite. Born in 1853, Waite was the grandson of Ela-techa, or Ellen Brown McClure Paul, who was the wife of Smith Paul and mother of Samuel Paul.

As a politician, Waite was elected as a representative and senator from his home district for the Chickasaw Nation; elected as speaker of the House; elected as attorney general of the Chickasaw Nation and appointed by Governor William Guy as national secretary for the Chickasaw Nation. During his political career, Waite strongly advocated for tribal sovereignty while battling the federal government's attempts to dismantle his people's government.

Throughout the decades, many notable Chickasaw citizens have called both Murray and Garvin County home and have made a lasting impact on the Chickasaw Nation's progress.

CONTRIBUTED BY Dana Lance, Media Relations

## Packed Promise and Amazon Business deliver healthy foods for Chickasaw children



The Chickasaw Nation has partnered with Amazon Business to expand and enhance the Packed Promise program for its citizens. A greater selection of items, faster delivery times and the ability to order food as needed are all positive aspects of the new partnership.

The Chickasaw Nation has partnered with Amazon Business to expand and enhance the Packed Promise program for its citizens.

"The Chickasaw Nation Packed Promise program continues to grow and meet the nutritional needs of Chickasaw children throughout our treaty territory by offering shelf-stable meal delivery to increase food access, food security and diet quality," Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby said during his 2024 State of the Nation Address.

Launched in 2015, the Packed Promise program is an innovative supplemental nutrition benefit service that increases food

access, food security and diet quality for Chickasaw children.

Children's development, health and well-being depend on access to a safe and secure source of food. In Oklahoma, 25.6% of children are food insecure, meaning they either go hungry or do not receive the minimal nutritional amounts set forth by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

In rural Oklahoma, 15.5% of the households are food insecure, said Joy Standridge, Chickasaw Nation Director of Nutrition Services.

"In the Chickasaw Nation and the state of Oklahoma, we have

a high rate of food insecurity," Standridge said. "There is a high rate of hunger. In children, it's often as many as 1 in 4."

Food insecurity often results in poor nutrition. Poor nutrition stemming from not having access to wholesome, nutritious foods to maintain properly balanced diets including fresh fruits and vegetables can profoundly affect an individual's whole life, she said.

"To ensure our children reach their full potential, we must work together," she said.

Packed Promise is a home delivery food service. Families approved for the program gain the ability to shop online through Amazon Business every month. Families receive an allowance per child per month to use through Amazon.

Also, an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card is mailed for each child in the household to buy fresh, frozen or canned fruits and vegetables at WIC-participating grocery stores or at Chickasaw Nation-participating farmers markets. The EBT card is reloaded every month the child is participating.

Packed Promise started in 2015 as a federal demonstration grant from the USDA Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act to End Childhood Hunger. The Chickasaw Nation was one of five awardees and one of two tribes awarded nationally.

Upon conclusion of the federal

grant, in 2019, Chickasaw Nation invested tribal dollars into the Packed Promise program.

To offer more options for participants, Packed Promise launched online shopping services through a partnership with Amazon Business this year. Eligible families make their own food selections from the Chickasaw Nation online store available through Amazon Business.

The partnership also helped alleviate the challenges of serving rural clients, said Standridge.

"Packed Promise was designed to overcome common barriers of living in a food desert such as lack of transportation, long distances to food sources and lack of grocery stores. As a change in the traditional model of a central distribution center, the home delivery portion creates an experience similar to online grocery shopping where families choose nutrient dense, shelf-stable food items they prefer from a food ordering website," Standridge said.

Feedback from participants has been overwhelmingly positive, she said.

A greater selection of items, faster delivery times and the ability to order food as needed are all positive aspects of the new partnership.

"Packed Promise clients are thrilled with the variety of products and the ease of shopping online. Many have commented on

the speed of delivery. Clients had not previously experienced two day and in some cases same day delivery of food."

A father recently called Packed Promise staff to express appreciation for the program and said it not only helps out financially, but it has also changed some of his family's eating habits such as eating more beans, tomatoes and other vegetables they do not normally choose to buy. He said it has provided healthier options for his family.

The children also get involved by selecting the items to order and clients can now order and request items to be added that meet their dietary needs, Standridge said.

To be eligible, children must be ages 4-18, students in pre-K through 12th grade and qualify for free or reduced-cost school meals. Benefits are available to Chickasaw citizens living within the Chickasaw Nation boundaries and in Atoka, Caddo, Canadian, Cleveland, Comanche, Cotton, Hughes, Pittsburg, Pottawatomie and Seminole counties.

This year, Packed Promise served an average of nearly 1,900 school-aged Chickasaw children each month.

For more information, visit [Chickasaw.net/PackedPromise](http://Chickasaw.net/PackedPromise) or call (844) 230-3785. Apply online at [PackedPromise.com](http://PackedPromise.com).

CONTRIBUTED BY Dana Lance, Media Relations

## Chickasaw Nation WIC honored with national recognition



Chickasaw Nation WIC parents, from left, Jordan and Maci Parnacher with their third child Jentzen.

ADA, Okla. - The Chickasaw Nation Women, Infants and Children (WIC) supplemental nutrition program team recently received a 2024 Breastfeeding Performance Bonus Award from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and was just one of 15 agencies nationwide to receive the award.

The award is in recognition of the Chickasaw Nation WIC team's outstanding achievement in improving its rate of fully breastfed infants during the fiscal year of 2023.

"The Chickasaw Nation achieved a 5.17% increase in fully breastfed infants in fiscal year 2023 and is one of 15 WIC state agencies (in the United States) that were awarded this year," Kiley Larson, USDA Acting Director Funding and Technology Division Supplemental Nutrition and Safety Programs, Food and Nutrition Service, wrote in the award letter. "I commend the Chickasaw Nation (WIC) agency for its exemplary efforts in WIC breastfeed-

ing promotion and support, and I hope you will keep breastfeeding a high priority as we continue to improve WIC breastfeeding rates. We are proud of your achievement which demonstrates your continued promotion and support of breastfeeding."

The Chickasaw Nation WIC program serves all eligible families with nutritious foods, breastfeeding support and other educational resources. Services are designed for pregnant or postpartum women, infants and children up to age 5. Participants must live within the Chickasaw Nation.

Chickasaw Nation WIC Director Katrina Lewis said the recognition is the result of the collaboration among the WIC team and the Chickasaw Nation Department of Health, as well as an unwavering commitment to provide mothers, infants and families support during every step of their breastfeeding journey.

Client Maci Parnacher is one of those mothers. The Ada mother gave birth to her third child,



Laura Robinson, Chickasaw Nation WIC Breastfeeding Education and Promotion Manager, visits with a client virtually. The Chickasaw Nation WIC team recently received a 2024 USDA Breastfeeding Performance Bonus Award and was just one of 15 agencies nationwide to receive the award.

a boy, in 2023 and planned to breastfeed, just as she had her two older children.

"I've breastfed all three of my babies and I've loved it every single time. I chose it for the health benefits that occur, not only for me but for the baby too," she said.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, infants who are breastfed have reduced risk of asthma, obesity, Type 1 diabetes, ear infections and other health issues. Breastfeeding can help lower a mother's risk for high blood pressure, Type 2 diabetes, ovarian cancer and breast cancer.

Parnacher also enjoys the mother-child bonding moments breastfeeding provides.

"All three breastfeeding journeys have been different, and the WIC ladies are so good to encourage me. Especially this last time around, my son was born with a lip tie and a really high palate, so it made it difficult for him to nurse."

A lip tie is a condition where

the tissue that connects the upper lip to the gums is too short, making it difficult to move the lips.

Parnacher also experienced issues with a low milk supply and mastitis. When she needs support and encouragement, help is just a text message or phone call away.

"The ladies are really good to encourage me to keep going when I wanted to give up. They supplied me with resources from reading resources to online resources and they gave me a silicone breast pump. That really helped me get through," Parnacher said. "We are 18 months into (breastfeeding) and he's still going strong. There are no signs of him wanting to stop any time soon."

Other resources available to Chickasaw Nation WIC families include a "warm" line — a phone number any mom can call for advice — as well as community events and programs such as a breast pump loaner program, virtual education classes and support groups and the MOM Circle mobile app, which are all designed to support breastfeeding mothers.

"We do lots to try to support and celebrate moms and breastfeeding. As natural as it is, it can be challenging and it's a skill that moms have to learn with each child because every child is different," Laura Robinson, Chickasaw Nation WIC Breastfeeding Education and Promotion Man-

ager, said.

Chickasaw Nation WIC staffs three International Board Certified Lactation Consultants as well as breastfeeding peer counselors. Lactation consultants are also available to Chickasaw Nation employees, regardless of WIC participation.

Robinson said every Chickasaw Nation WIC team member is trained in breastfeeding support and encouragement and peer counseling.

"I think that really sets us apart from a lot of other WIC agencies. We are there to connect with moms. We genuinely care and want them to feel that, and we want them to feel supported," Robinson said.

Lewis said the increase in breastfeeding rates is the result of many Chickasaw Nation teams working together to provide the same resources and reach as many families as possible.

"I think we are really seeing a lot of the fruits from that effort of working together and collaborating internally, which we're really proud of," she said.

The national recognition was a surprise, Lewis said, but it is a testament of the Chickasaw Nation WIC team's commitment to work together to meet the Chickasaw Nation's mission, "to enhance the overall quality of life of the Chickasaw people."

"This award shows the dedication and the heart of our WIC employees, from nutrition specialist to our breastfeeding peer counselors to registered dietitians and lactation consultants. We really work together as a team," Lewis said.

The Chickasaw Nation WIC program provides 4,000 women, infants and children nutrition benefits and education. Chickasaw Nation WIC serves First American and non-First American clients.

For more information, visit [ChickasawNationHealth.net/WIC](http://ChickasawNationHealth.net/WIC) or call (580) 421-4581.

For 24-hour breastfeeding support, contact (888) 439-8970.

CONTRIBUTED BY Dana Lance, Media Relations

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### Calling all donors: Chickasaw Nation Blood Drive

Become a hero and save lives by donating blood.

Due to the constant need for blood donations, the Chickasaw Nation is partnering with Our Blood Institute (OBI) and the Choctaw, Cherokee, Seminole and Muscogee nations in the Tribal Blood Drive Challenge.

OBI provides lifesaving blood to the Chickasaw Nation Medical

Center and to hospitals throughout the state of Oklahoma. Every blood donation given locally can potentially save up to three lives.

Donation sites will be available throughout the Chickasaw Nation.

Schedule an appointment at OBI.org or call (877) 340-8777 for any questions.

# Children's Village hosts Gathering of Native Americans



For more than two decades, the Chickasaw Children's Village has helped prepare young Chickasaws for their future endeavors. Recently, the children's village hosted a Gathering of Native Americans event showcasing the community's strengths and available resources.

The Chickasaw Children's Village hosted a Gathering of Native Americans (GONA) event recently in Kingston, Oklahoma. The event focused on cultural immersion and highlighted how continued connection to families and culture helps to prevent mental health crises.

"The GONA is a curriculum that was developed for the prevention of substance (misuse) and suicide prevention," said Chickasaw Nation Sr. Suicide Prevention Coordinator Deanna Carpitche. "It's about healing, especially from past traumas. This trauma can be carried over through gen-

erations."

Cultural speakers, the Chickasaw Nation Dance Troupe and the Chickasaw Princesses were also in attendance to impart First American cultural traditions and values to children at the Chickasaw Children's Village. Arts and crafts, and group discussions concerning First American culture, traditional storytelling and more took place during the event.

Using curriculum provided by GONA, the Chickasaw Nation assisted and organized the event. The Chickasaw Children's Village was selected to host the event, due to the various age groups liv-

ing at the village.

"We chose to have the GONA at the (Chickasaw Children's) Village because this is the first time GONA was taking place in the Chickasaw Nation," Carpitche said. "It turned out well."

GONA's culturally based curriculum and planning process includes addressing individual community issues and empowering First American and Alaska Native audiences, reflecting their cultural values, traditions and spiritual practices.

Themes at GONA events focus on four main points, including belonging, mastery, interdependence and generosity. According to GONA, these themes are an important step to transformation and healing to build a stronger future.

Belonging ensures everyone feels welcomed and included in a safe, open and trusting environment. Mastery allows those involved to take stock of historical trauma and how it has affected their communities. This displays the community's resilience and illustrates what binds them together. Interdependence initiates the planning processes to recognize resources and relationships, and to experience and strengthen interconnections. Exercising the creative gifts to be shared with other participants, generos-

ity symbolizes each participant's ability to give to their families and communities. These resources help address and prevent substance misuse disorders, prevent suicide and promote overall mental health, as well as establish a supportive and nurturing community for First American youth. GONA has been recognized as an effective culture-based intervention since 1992. GONA events and collaborations start important conversations on issues identified by the community.

These are led by skilled facilitators — adults, youth and elders — who effectively lead groups to understand community needs and concerns in terms of their strengths. A GONA is facilitated by the United States Department of Health and Human Service's Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

For more information, visit [SAMHSA.gov/tribal-ttac](http://SAMHSA.gov/tribal-ttac) or call (301) 257-2967.

CONTRIBUTED BY KC Cole, Media Relations

## About the Chickasaw Children's Village

The Chickasaw Children's Village, a residential and educational care facility located in Kingston, Oklahoma, is open to First American children grades one through 12. The Chickasaw Children's Village provides a safe and nurturing home-like environment for First American youth.

Staff develop individual needs assessments and work to address each student's emotional, spiritual, social and physical needs.

Applicants must be First American students eligible for enrollment in Kingston Public Schools. Children are encouraged to participate in extracurricular activities. Tutoring services and flexible academic curriculum are designed to meet the needs of

every student, including courses for college-bound, vocational, remedial, special education and at-risk students.

Designed as an alternative to the dormitory approach to housing students, each cottage accommodates approximately eight students and two houseparents who offer support, direction and guidance. In addition, students have access to a library, computer lab, mental wellness resources, an agriculture education facility and recreation areas.

The Chickasaw Children's Village recently celebrated its 20th anniversary.

For more information visit [Chickasaw.net](http://Chickasaw.net) or call (580) 564-3060.

# Innovative Esports League brings students to Chickasaw Nation STEM Academy



Brothers Andy and Asher Jordan of the Chickasaw Nation Y-Not Robotics team are two members of Chickasaw Nation Esports League. Open to students in grades 7-12, applications for the spring league will close Dec. 15.

Esports is one of the fastest growing organized competitive hobbies in the world. The Chickasaw Nation Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) Academy is capitalizing on the modern phenomenon by introducing a new esports league to Chickasaw youth.

"Esports are recreational video games played competitively," said Chickasaw Nation STEM Virtual Programs Supervisor Clayton Edwards. "Esports has a lot to teach children. How the games are programmed, the teamwork

involved, maintaining internet connections, voice chat used in connecting to people that are far away — all are avenues to access STEM to kids who are already playing these games."

Education at the Chickasaw Nation STEM Academy goes beyond teaching in the traditional classroom setting.

"First American students have a lower number of participants in STEM fields," Edwards said. "We show them that STEM is not just in some boring book. Our goal is to show them other paths and op-

portunities to learn about STEM."

Using entertainment and toys is nothing new for education specialists at the STEM Academy to entice children to learn through play. Since 2008, the program has collaborated with FIRST LEGO League to introduce First Americans to the world of science. Through play, STEM Academy students learn through hands-on experience and challenges using robots built with the popular LEGO bricks, flight simulators and more.

The new STEM Academy esports program will include both high school and middle school esports leagues.

"Competitions are mostly going to be team games, with a few individual games," Edwards said. "We want to feature team games to get the kids involved. For those accepted onto the team, we have a few requirements, such as maintaining grades and practicing once a week during the eight-week seasons."

Edwards has been working with Chickasaw Nation STEM Academy students since 2011. He has been a part of many changes and educational adaptations within the

academy for the last decade.

"The STEM Academy used to be heavily influenced by the younger LEGO League. This was followed up by the high school robotics programs," Edwards said. "We found we were losing like 90% of the kids during the transition between the two. LEGO (bricks) are good to get the kids involved; everyone knows and likes to build with LEGO (bricks)."

"We added two additional robotics programs for seventh, eighth, ninth and 10th graders. It's more of a progression to help kids stay with the STEM Academy, along with the summer camps."

The esports program was designed to keep and pique the interest in students at the STEM Academy. Esports is open to boys and girls in grades 7-12 and to Chickasaw citizens at-large.

"One of the things we are really excited about with this program is that we are not limited by Chickasaw Nation boundaries," Edwards said. "Any Chickasaw citizen across the U.S. (with an internet connection) can participate. They can be a part of the Chickasaw STEM Academy esports team. It doesn't matter

where they live."

Currently, the video games being played include Apex Legends, Chess, Fortnite, Halo Infinite, League of Legends, Mario Kart 8, Minecraft, Overwatch 2, Rocket League and Super Smash Bros.

The team will compete in additional games in the future.

Applications for the esports team can be found at [Chickasaw.net/esports](http://Chickasaw.net/esports).

Deadline to apply is Dec. 15. Internet access and gaming devices are necessary. Gaming devices supported include PCs, Xbox One, Xbox Series S, Xbox Series X, PlayStation 4, PlayStation 5 or Nintendo Switch.

"Many of the skills the kids are learning are preparing them for college. Organizing practices, time scheduling and setting goals are all skills that transfer into life," Edwards said. "College is where esports is really blowing up. There are currently more than 300 schools offering esports scholarships."

CONTRIBUTED BY KC Cole, Media Relations

# Pickleball players compete at Chickasaw Annual Meeting and Festival



Chickasaw elder Bobby Crabtree warming up before the start of the pickleball tournament during Chickasaw Annual Meeting and Festival.

TISHOMINGO, Okla. — Always open to new innovations, Chickasaws have picked up the paddle to join the millions playing one of the fastest growing sports in the nation, pickleball. Ten teams gathered Sept. 28, during the weeklong Chickasaw Annual Meeting and Festival to play in the third annual pickleball tour-

nament.

Randy Elmore and Christy Stewart of Sulphur, Oklahoma, won the 55 and up mixed doubles division, while James Ian and Doug Kennedy were the first place winners in the 54 and under division. Each received a first place plaque and participation medals.

"Pickleball has really taken off across the country," Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby said.

Wilyon Smith, manager of the Tishomingo Wellness Center and pickleball chairperson, sees the sport continuing to expand in the future.

"Pickleball is a growing sport," Smith said. "We put on our first tournament three years ago. Our tournaments are getting bigger each year. We inspire to host clinics for more people to learn. Along with Tishomingo, Ardmore and Sulphur have good leagues as well. Pickleball has entered the state and it's not leaving."

Cash prizes were awarded to first and second place winners in each division. Games lasted up to 30 minutes and were single elimination rounds.

The tournament began with an invocation by Luther John, while Governor Anoatubby spoke a few words of encouragement. Lt. Governor Chris Anoatubby was also in attendance.

Pickleball combines the best aspects of tennis, badminton and ping pong. Played on a court smaller than traditional tennis court — the size of a double's badminton court — a ball reminiscent of a wiffle ball is hit over a net of a height of 36 inches, much like tennis. Rackets, or rather paddles like table tennis,

are used to keep the ball in play.

"This is not an expensive sport. You can get a basic paddle set and balls cheap. You can chalk or tape your own lines. Basically, all you need is a net, paddles and ball and you can play," Smith said.

Scoring in pickleball is much the same as the games it is modeled after. Only the serving side can earn points, which takes place if the opponents are unable to return the ball due to hitting it into the net, hitting the ball out of bounds or making some other error. Games are typically played to 11 points, with the winning team having a two-point margin over the losing team.

All skill levels were represented during the tournament, from seasoned professionals to those who were just learning the game. Those who had not played before were welcome to play with those with years of experience.

Jamie Uhles of the team Pickle Peppers was one of the newest players at the tournament. Coming to the tournament alone, Smith and his team found a tournament partner for her.

"I have been playing pickleball for six weeks," Uhles said. "My friend got me into a league in Norman. It's pretty similar to tennis, but it's not. If tennis, badminton and table tennis made a baby, you would have pickleball. I enjoy it. I have gotten my

mom into the game. She enjoys it too. You can be as competitive as you want to be or have a friendly game. My mom has bad knees and can't play tennis anymore, but she can play this for fun. It is a low impact sport."

Chickasaw elder Bobby Crabtree traveled from Fort Worth, Texas, to participate in the pickleball tournament. This is his second tournament played during the Chickasaw Annual Meeting and Festival.

"I just love it. I saw in the newsletter that they were playing again this year," Crabtree said. "I have other obligations, so I am only here for the day to play pickleball."

Pickleball is one of the many games and tournaments played by Chickasaws during the Chickasaw Annual Meeting and Festival. Other games include horseshoes, cornhole and traditional stickball games.

"Pickleball is sound for fitness, both physically and mentally," Smith said. "Played competitively or for fun, it is a great form of exercise."

CONTRIBUTED BY KC Cole, Media Relations

# Chickasaw elders tour the historic Homeland



Chickasaw elders and companions pose for a photo at Chisha' Talla'a'. Front row, from left: Marikate Hulbutta, Georgina Gooden, Janet Baird, Karla Craig, Mary Hyden, Sheila Voyles, Rubye McMillan, Jeanette Haywood, Jana Henderson, Melissa Brackin, Kathleen Morgan, Pat Riley, Gail Glase, Sandra Williams, Roxanna Newsom, Kealise Linville and Leah Carver. Back row, from left: Rhonda Coleman, Jerry Coleman, Tim Baird, Foster Craig, Patrick Hyden, Dennis Voyles, Maegan McMillan, Pam Hisaw, Coy Hisaw, Tom Haywood, Tommy Henderson, Bill Bailey, Patsy Bailey, Larry Childs, Martha Childs and Carrie Mayes.



Chickasaw elders and companions gather for a photo outside the Natchez Trace Parkway Visitor Center, from left: Tommy Henderson, Chickasaw elder Jana Henderson, Chickasaw elder Sandra Williams, Karla Craig and Chickasaw elder Foster Craig.



Sauls Mound, named after owner John Sauls before the property was purchased by the state of Tennessee, is the tallest known Middle Woodland Mound in the United States. Approximately 22 meters tall and 100 meters in diameter, Sauls Mound is located at Pinson Mounds State Archaeological Park.



Piominko's statue in Tupelo, Mississippi, commemorates the bond between the community of Tupelo, Mississippi, and the Chickasaw Nation. Piominko was born in the 1750s and played a pivotal role in ensuring security for the Chickasaw Nation.

For five enlightening days, a group of spirited Chickasaw elders immersed themselves in rich cultural heritage and explored significant historic sites in Alabama, Mississippi and Tennessee that bear witness to their ancestors' enduring legacy.

Each stop, from the revered Piominko Statue in Tupelo to the poignant Chokka' Falaa' Monument, offered a chance to honor their past, celebrate their identity and strengthen the unbreakable bonds of kinship that define the Chickasaw Nation.

The Piominko Statue, located in front of Tupelo City Hall in Lee County, Mississippi, was the first historic stop on the Homeland tour. The 6-foot-tall bronze sculpture of Piominko was unveiled in 2005 with the Chickasaw Inkana Foundation hosting annual commemorations honoring the Chickasaw leader since that time. Sculpted by artist William Beckwith, the statue was built to honor the rich history of the tribe and fortify a bond between the Chickasaw Nation and Tupelo, Mississippi, community.

Chickasaw Nation Cultural Interpreter Bill Brekeen said "Piominko" is a contraction for "Hopayi' Minko," meaning "prophet leader."

Piominko served as a pre-Removal leader for the Chickasaw Nation. He met with Southeastern First American tribes, state governors and George Washington to reach agreements benefiting the tribe. One of Piominko's most noteworthy achievements was his signing of the Treaty with the U.S. and Chickasaw of 1786 (also known as Treaty of Hopewell). This treaty officially established the name "the Chickasaw Nation" and formally recognized the boundaries of the historic Chickasaw Homeland.

Sandra Williams, a Chickasaw elder, said the Piominko statue was her favorite stop on the tour because it represents a celebration of Chickasaw culture from people not directly involved.

Elders also visited the Chokka' Falaa' (Long Town) Chickasaw Monument, a site to honor Chickasaw ancestors whose remains were found nearby. The remains were unearthed after the North Mississippi Medical Center began construction on its hospital in 1996. Understanding the significance of the find, the Chickasaw Nation, Mississippi State Univer-

sity and the Mississippi Department of Archives and History respectfully agreed to preserve, protect and interpret the remains and artifacts.

"It took seven weeks to perform the excavations," Brekeen said.

Long Town was the largest known community of Chickasaw people in the 1700s. After excavations, the late Rev. Charlie Carter led a private reburial ceremony in 1997. One month later, Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby and more than 100 Chickasaw citizens returned to the Homeland for another ceremony. The late Chickasaw elder Pauline Walker led a prayer in Chickasaw during the memorial. Long Town marked the first repatriation and reburial by the Chickasaw Nation in Mississippi.

The tour also included a visit to the Chickasaw Preserve, which is located along a portion of the Chickasaw community of Chisha' Talla'a', Post Oak Grove, in Tupelo, Mississippi. The land, home to Chickasaw ancestors in the 1600s and 1700s, consists of rolling hills and native vegetation situated along Coonewah Ridge. The property was purchased in the 1960s by the late John Ray and Lottye Betts Beasley, who worked to preserve the land after learning its historical value. In 2005, the Chickasaw Nation and the Archaeological Conservancy combined efforts to acquire and begin preservation of the site.

The Beasleys coined the name "Cedarscape" for the property due to the immense number of cedar trees nestled in the acreage. Charles Penna, a research and media specialist for the Chickasaw Nation Heritage Preservation Division, said the strong presence of cedar trees is due to the lack of annual burns and hardwood harvesting.

When cedar trees must be removed from the property, they are processed through a wood-chipper. The chips are used on the trails to provide beautification and erosion control.

The Pontotoc County Post Office and Museum in Pontotoc, Mississippi, was another stop on the tour. After the signing of the Treaty of Pontotoc Creek in 1832 and the supplemental treaty in 1834, all land held by the Chickasaw Nation was surveyed to be sold. The United States General Land Office was constructed at this location to handle land sales,

essentially creating the city of Pontotoc.

The museum portion of the Pontotoc County Post Office and Museum also features cultural items and artifacts donated for display, including a Removal-era replica dress made by the late Pauline Brown.

Elders were able to visit the Chickasaw Village Site along the Natchez Trace Parkway in modern-day Tupelo, Mississippi. The site dates back to the early 1700s. Once a flourishing community confirmed by archaeological fieldwork, interpretive panels and informational markers help guide visitors along the walkway to visualize life in the community more than 200 years ago.

The Chickasaw Village Site is mere steps from the future Chickasaw Heritage Center, expected to open in 2026. The Chickasaw Heritage Center will educate visitors about Chickasaw history from prehistoric times to 1837, before the tribe's forced Removal to Indian Territory. The Chickasaw Heritage Center will also have an exhibit connecting visitors to the Chickasaw Nation today.

The strong presence of Chickasaw history along the Natchez Trace Parkway led elders to the Natchez Trace Parkway Visitor Center where they received information about the Natchez Trace from an on-site ranger. The original Natchez Trace was a part of a larger precontact and historic Southeastern First American trade network. Later, the route was frequented during the early 1800s by boatmen from Kentucky, known as "Kaintucks." The Kaintucks traveled the Mississippi, Ohio, Tennessee and Illinois rivers down to markets in Natchez and New Orleans on flat boats filled with goods. Once commodities were sold, Kaintucks would dismantle and sell the lumber from their boats and travel back home on foot through the Old Natchez Trace.

Stands or inns operated by Chickasaw ancestors offering food and shelter became popular along the Old Natchez Trace. Chickasaw elders visited Buzzard Roost Spring near Cherokee, Alabama, where a stand built by Levi Colbert, or Ittawamba, an early Chickasaw leader, attracted travelers like the Kaintucks. Although Colbert's inn is no longer standing, Buzzard Roost Spring

still serves as a piece of history preserved in nature.

The Homeland tour included visitation of Southeastern First American mound sites, stretching from northeast Mississippi to southwest Tennessee. Built between the Woodland Cultural Period (approximately 1000 B.C.-1000 A.D.) and Mississippian Cultural Period (approximately 1000-1600 A.D.), mounds were often made for spiritual purposes or burial sites.

The laborious process of mound building included excavating large quantities of soil by hand, transporting the dirt to a desired location and methodically stacking baskets of soil onto the site.

"I'm in construction, and I know what it takes to bring that much dirt in," Chickasaw elder Foster Craig said. "To think about those people hundreds and thousands of years ago carrying that in baskets and stacking it up just blows my mind."

Bynum Mounds near Houston, Mississippi, is one of the oldest mound sites along the Natchez Trace Parkway, established by Southeastern First Americans in the Middle Woodland Cultural Period between 1000 B.C. and 1000 A.D.

"There were six mounds here, but we only see two," Brekeen said.

The location contains a 200-foot paved pathway along the site with an interpretive shelter featuring maps and pictures of archaeological finds from past digs.

Pharr Mounds is the largest Middle Woodland Cultural site in northern Mississippi, spanning across 90 acres. The approximately 2,000-year-old site consists of eight dome mounds created and used by Southeastern First American ancestors. Although weathered with age, the mounds still stand tall in a picturesque meadow with lush trees lining the background.

"The scenery is just awesome," Chickasaw elder Gail Glase said.

The Shiloh Indian Mounds at Shiloh National Military Park are hidden in the forest along the Tennessee riverbank. Six mounds, rectangular in shape with flat tops, scattered throughout the plaza were likely used as platforms for social and spiritual structures and residences. A seventh mound, oval in shape with

a rounded top, is settled at the southernmost tip of the site.

Nearly 50 miles northwest of the Shiloh Mounds are the Pinson Mounds in Pinson, Tennessee. Pinson Mounds State Archaeological Park envelopes 1,200 acres and 17 mounds, making it the largest known Southeastern First American mound complex of the Middle Woodland Cultural Period. The area became a state park in 1974 and has since gained paved hiking trails and picnic areas for the general public to enjoy, as well as a museum with First American exhibits, an archaeological library and a theater.

After a five-day journey through ancestral history, Chickasaw elders returned to Ada, Oklahoma, with new friends and a better understanding of the historic Homeland.

"This has really been a first-class trip — from the transportation and meals to the lodging and staff," Craig said. "The Chickasaws always do things first-class."

## Learn more about the Chickasaw Elders Homeland Tour

Chickasaw elders 60 years of age or older can participate in the all-expenses-paid trip to the Chickasaw Homeland. An elder is only required to submit one application for consideration of future tours. Two Homeland trips take place each calendar year, with elder applications being selected at random. Elders are permitted one travel companion. Companions must be a spouse or blood relative above the age of 21. Visit [Chickasaw.net/EldersTour](http://Chickasaw.net/EldersTour) to apply. For more information, contact the Chickasaw Nation Department of Community Services Aging Division at (580) 795-9790.

# Chickasaw brings First American culture to Colorado



Ellen Shamas-Brandt, founder of Celebration of Native Arts, shares First American heritage with Littleton, Colorado.

Musician, playwright and founder of Celebration of Native Arts (CoNA) Ellen Shamas-Brandt, Ph.D., completed a collaboration with Ken Caryl Concerts April 13. The collaboration brought varied music compositions developed by First American composers to Littleton, Colorado. The event, named "Focus on Native Composers," featured arrangements by Chickasaw composers Jerod Impichchaachaaha' Tate and Nicolette Blount. Works by Beverley McKiver, Brent Michael Davids, Jessica McMann, Raven Chacon, Michael Begay and Connor Chee were also presented during the hourlong performance.

"As co-producer of this concert, I gathered a program of music from eight different Native American classical composers," Shamas-Brandt said. "It turns out all these master composers are all living. These are composers who you can continue to explore and watch in the future. We are pleased with both the turnout and the talent we were able to find."

"Focus on Native Composers" was performed at no cost at the St. Philip Lutheran Church to a crowd of nearly 160 people, with another 25 viewing on livestream. The event was open to the public. Compositions were performed by the Young Voices of Colorado Signature Ensemble, and teachers

and students from the Columbine Music Teachers Association.

"It was important to me to have some Native American performers in the concert as well," Shamas-Brandt said. "It was so fantastic to see it all come together! While the show was recorded, my mother said it would not do it justice without showing the electricity in the room."

According to Shamas-Brandt, the first composition featured was created by Tate and titled "We are The Storm." Blount contributed two compositions performed in her play "Savage — The Unconquerable Wanda Savage."

As a co-producer, Shamas-Brandt wore many hats. She selected songs that were to be performed, finding the musicians for the performances, coordinating rehearsals, putting together the written program and advertising for the event, among the many other essential but often overlooked details.

"Celebration of Native Arts strives to have professional performances," Shamas-Brandt said. "This is a community group, working together with others. Having children and people into their 70s performing together is wonderful."

As founder of CoNA, Shamas-Brandt's contributions to the art scene go beyond music. The organization's stated goal is to promote First American theater, music and dance. CoNA plans to do this by alternating between theater and musical productions that contain First American themes each year.

Along with First American topics, Shamas-Brandt's personal work has also included mainstream theater productions and feature writing topics.

"I have done book and music reviews for a digital magazine," Shamas-Brandt said. "While not published, two of my short plays were selected for the Native Voices at the Autry (Museum of the American West) short play festivals. My first was 2018, the other was earlier this year."

Native Voices at the Autry is solely devoted to producing works by the Indigenous people of North America and Hawaii. The Autry Museum of the American West's exhibits and collections focus on telling the stories of all people of the American West. These stories are told through lectures, films and theater. The museums are home to more than 600,000 pieces of art and cultural objects. The Autry Museum of the American West is a premier collection for First American materials.

Receiving Chickasaw heritage from her mother, Annawyn DeBenning Shamas, Shamas-Brandt believes her mother empowered her through the love of fine arts. She has been involved in performing arts for more than 50 years.

"I took violin and piano lessons from a young age," Shamas-Brandt said. "We were involved in choir at church. I did my first play at the age of 6. I would usually do about a play a year."

The arts are not the only interest for Shamas-Brandt. Education also plays a chief role in her life. She earned a Ph.D. in educational leadership and innovation from the University of Colorado at Denver. Along with her doctoral thesis, she has published an educational article and many feature stories.

Shamas-Brandt believes co-authoring "Educational Gymnastics: The Effectiveness of Montessori Practical Life Activities in Developing Fine Motor Skills in Kindergartners," could be considered part of her academic writing.

"When I am Googled (searched on the internet), my work on Montessori usually pops up first," Shamas-Brandt said. "I am proud of this. My knowledge of statistics, learned while pursuing my Ph.D., allowed quantitative data to be incorporated into the study."

Montessori was an Italian educator who developed an educational process to teach children based on a child's natural interest, rather than traditional teaching methods. The Montessori sys-

*"The arts feed my soul. They are something we all need and share, they bring people together"*

Ellen Shamas-Brandt

tem stresses real-world skills and hands-on learning.

"I have always wanted to teach," Shamas-Brandt said. "Originally, I thought I would teach piano privately. Near the end of my undergraduate program, I realized I wanted to teach in the school system."

Shamas-Brandt said she comes from a line of educators. She believes education comes naturally to her and can be thought of as another form of performance arts.

"Teaching is in my blood. Both of my grandparents on my mother's side were educators. I taught at the elementary level for 20 years," Shamas-Brandt said. "Teaching is like getting up on a stage and performing. I see a lot of crossover between teaching and the arts. A teacher is in front of a group of students, thinking of the most interesting ways to help them learn."

Asked about her experiences with immersive education, the same type of learning method employed by the Chickasaw Nation to teach advanced Chickasaw language classes, Shamas-Brandt explained she has only practiced this learning method as a student herself.

"I attend an adult piano camp in Vermont every year," she said. "It is 10 days of total piano immersion. Living in a dorm-like setting, we all live, eat and breathe piano. I have made good friends and look forward to seeing them each year."

"I have experienced immersive education more than I have learned about it. But I think if you really want to learn something, to become a part of you, that it is a great way to learn. I would love to learn another language with im-

mersion."

As a singer, Shamas-Brandt has used the Rosetta Stone Chickasaw app to learn Chickasaw words and the Chickasaw language. She has also used the Chickasaw language website to learn the pronunciation of various Chickasaw words during performances, including "Focus on Native Composers."

"I used Rosetta Stone at this concert," she said. "A couple of the songs by Chickasaw composer Nicolette Blount used Chickasaw words. I enjoyed learning how to enjoy them. I would love to go to a Chickasaw Immersion camp."

Shamas-Brandt's father, sister and mother have each been recognized with high educational laurels. Her father, Jimmy Shamas, obtained a Juris Doctorate. Her sister, Laura Shamas, has also earned her Ph.D. Annawyn DeBenning Shamas will be honored as a 2024 Oklahoma State Distinguished Alumni Award recipient and was a well-respected actress and director in the Tulsa area.

Living in various places throughout her life, Shamas-Brandt considers Tulsa, Oklahoma, her hometown. She is proud of her Oklahoma heritage and the extraordinary contributions individual Chickasaws have contributed to the arts.

"I am proud that anytime a person looks up Native American composers on the internet, the first name that pops up is Jerod (Impichchaachaaha') Tate," Shamas-Brandt said "He is the most famous living Native American classical composer."

"It just happened this way, but Chickasaw composers bookended our concert. The first composition of the concert was Tate's, and the last was a powerful composition by Nicolette Blount," Shamas-Brandt said.

CONTRIBUTED BY KC Cole, Media Relations

# Chickasaw Naval aviator honored by his command, completes commercial airline training



Lt. Cameron Baxter in front of his training plane, the T-6B Texan II. In 2.5 years, he racked up more than 1,000 flight hours training other pilots.

Chickasaw naval aviator Lieutenant (Lt.) Cameron Baxter was recently honored for obtaining 1,020 flight hours in 2.5 years, all while training nearly 600 future military aviators. Few instructors fly so many hours in such little time. In August, Lt. Baxter was presented with a Navy and Marine Corps commendation medal for his accomplishment. It was bestowed to him for significantly contributing to his training squadron's success.

"Being a flight instructor was very rewarding — easily one of the best jobs I've had. There's a certain feeling of satisfaction you get when you see your students have their first 'Aha!' moment when the figurative light bulb comes on, and they finally nail that maneuver they were working on," Lt. Baxter said.

Lt. Baxter was stationed at Naval Air Station, Whiting Field, Milton, Florida. He is currently stationed aboard the USS America (LHA-6), an amphibious assault ship based in Sasebo, Japan.

Although Lt. Baxter has been in the Navy for just more than nine

years, he has been influenced by the military his entire life. As the son of a U.S. Marine, Lt. Baxter has lived all over the world. His father, retired Gunnery Sergeant Bryan Baxter, attributes his son's success to hard work, dedication, perseverance and determination, along with the educational help from the Chickasaw Nation.

As an accomplished aircraft pilot, Lt. Baxter has been certified to fly the T-6B Texan II training aircraft, among others. The Navy has also trained Lt. Baxter to fly helicopters, including the MH-60R Seahawk. The MH-60R has many missions, including antisubmarine warfare, surface warfare, electromagnetic warfare, command and control, and many noncombat missions.

Lt. Baxter is known as "Shrimp" among his fellow pilots and maintenance crew. Like many others, this personalized name was given to him through light, good-natured hazing.

"Shrimp is my call sign. In early 2019, I went on an underway with a group of guys. The guys I was with were all really tall, like



Stationed aboard USS America based in Sasebo, Japan, Lt. Baxter is currently embarked as an air department officer controlling aircraft flying off and on the ship.

6'3" or taller. For reference, I'm about 5'9" on a good day, so they were kind of already calling me 'Shrimp,' as a way of teasing me," Lt. Baxter said.

"We had pulled into port in California, where we were allowed to get off the ship and enjoy liberty. At one of the various Mexican restaurants we attended, I must have bitten into some shrimp that was left out too long. I quickly came down with food poisoning. That was all it took for my call sign to stick. It was a very long time after that before I had shrimp again," Lt. Baxter said.

Among military commands, call signs are unique monikers used to identify leaders, military personnel or subunits. These are used to make it more difficult for opponents to gather valuable intelligence during missions.

Lt. Baxter has also found the time to enhance his professional status by completing commercial airline training. Lt. Baxter has completed both Commercial Multi-Engine Rating at the Sanders Aviation Flight School in Jasper, Alabama, and the Delta



Lt. Cameron Baxter in front of a jet engine at civilian flight school.

Airlines Transportation Pilot Certification Training Program in Atlanta, Georgia.

These two courses are requirements for Lt. Baxter to fly commercial airlines, which he plans to do when exiting active duty within the next two years. According to Lt. Baxter, the Chickasaw Nation's higher education programs helped to fund the education courses.

"Years after joining the Navy, while working on my commercial aviation ratings, I reached out to the Chickasaw education program. They granted me two separate Career Technology Program grants," Lt. Baxter said.

"I owe the Chickasaw Nation a lot of credit. They have been supportive throughout the years, largely in funding my education expenses, both in school and in my commercial aviation flight training," Lt. Baxter said.

According to Gunnery Sgt. Baxter, the Chickasaw Nation helped shape Lt. Baxter into the officer he is today.

"Cameron is a success story," Gunnery Sgt. Baxter said. "He

has had much success as a small-town high school graduate from Silo, Oklahoma. The Chickasaw Nation assisted Cameron throughout school, college and getting into Navy Officer Candidate School. While in school both of our boys received clothing grants from the Chickasaw Nation and assistance with orthodontist costs.

"The Chickasaw Nation assisted with college tuition and book cost while Cameron was attending both Southeastern Oklahoma State University and Georgia Southwestern State University," Gunnery Sgt. Baxter said.

Lt. Baxter is proud of his Chickasaw heritage. He said he receives his Chickasaw blood from his mother, Alisa. His Chickasaw grandfather is Billy Moore of Kingston, Oklahoma. They are direct descendants of original Dawes enrollee Joseph Sim Miller.

CONTRIBUTED BY KC Cole, Media Relations

## Patricia Ann Tunson



Patricia Ann Tunson, affectionately known as 'Pat' died October 11, 2024. She was born July 27, 1943 in Portales, New Mexico to Hughie "Bud" Clyde and Sister Eva Roberta Stephenson. She was the fourth of nine children.

In the summer of 1953, her family moved from New Mexico to Pleasant Grove, Utah and later they relocated to Provo, Utah where she attended and graduated from Provo High School.

From an early age she had a love for the Lord. While living in Provo her mother was introduced to Dr. Rosemary Redmon Cosby (Mama) during a church service in Ogden, Utah. Inspired by Dr. Redmon Cosby's testimony the family soon relocated to Salt Lake City and continued attending church services with Dr. Redmon Cosby in her basement apartment. She would tell the story how prior to meeting Dr. Redmon Cosby she had a dream that she was helping a black

woman whom she loved. Meeting Dr. Redmon Cosby and attending her church services was a pivotal moment in her life especially given that the dream she had about helping a woman, turned out to be Dr. Redmon Cosby.

Mrs. Tunson was baptized May 20, 1963, at the age of 18, at Wasatch Springs and she received the precious gift of the Holy Ghost.

God dealt with her to help Dr. Redmon Cosby and her family. Her mother did not initially agree, however, after she became ill with diphtheria her mother changed her mind. While driving her to live with Dr. Redmon Cosby her throat and airways opened and her symptoms began to subside. They realized God was moving. God blessed her to move in with Dr. Redmon Cosby and she began helping with her children and her home especially when Dr. Redmon Cosby went on missionary trips.

She shared that they kept in contact through letters and in one of the letters Dr. Redmon Cosby wrote, "Pat, you have to hold on my dear... you are my girl".

She was blessed with many gifts. She worked diligently in the Church and had a true ability to adapt to many different jobs. She helped with the church services, worked with souls and even played the accordion during services. She also worked with the church businesses while assisting Dr. Redmon Cosby in whatever role that she was needed. At the Southern Plantation restaurants, she supported Dr. Redmon Cosby with cooking, helping in the commissary, with food preparation, as well as waitressing.

On February 12, 1966, on a bright and snowy day she was

united in holy matrimony to Jimmie Tunson Jr. Their marriage made headlines; they were the first interracial couple to be married in Salt Lake City, Utah. To their union six children were born, Tonya, Kim, Erica, Jimmie, Jason, Machoel.

She remained a faithful member of Faith Temple Pentecostal Church. She stayed in the church, as Dr. Redmon Cosby had instructed us to do. She continued faithfully in her service for the Lord with our co-pastors, Bishop Robert C. Cosby and First Lady, Evangelist Mary M Cosby.

She would say, "I need to do whatever my hands find to do." No task was too small. She took joy in washing vegetables or running errands or whatever Bishop and Mrs. Cosby needed.

She also loved to laugh! She thoroughly enjoyed RHOSLC. She would say, "Mary made the show!" She would call or text anyone who had time to listen to her recap the latest episode or interview with Mrs. Cosby. She recalled Dr. Redmon Cosby saying that we would one day be on television and she was happy to have lived to see it come to fruition. She stuck by Mrs. Cosby and would often comment how much Mary was just like Mama.

Mrs. Tunson was always a hard worker. She was mindful to share her knowledge of the many tasks she had tended over the years. She wanted to be sure Bishop and Mrs. Cosby continued to have help and support. Pat loved Bishop, Mary and Robert Jr. dearly. On the night prior to her passing, she was planning to help Bishop and Mrs. Cosby the following day.

God had other plans. From 17 years old she continued to help wherever she could

until she peacefully departed this life at the age of 81 years. Our dear Sister Patricia Ann Tunson went home to be with the Lord October 11, 2024.

She was a devoted wife, mother, daughter, sister and friend. She was dearly loved and will be greatly missed.

She was preceded in death by her loving husband, Jimmie Tunson Jr.; her parents, Hughie Clyde and Eva Roberta Stephenson; two brothers and one sister.

She leaves to cherish her memory six children, Tonya Robinson (Clyde), of Indianapolis, Kim Booker, Erica Walker (Cedrick), Jimmie Tunson (Lori), Jason Tunson, all of Salt Lake City; and Machoel Tunson, of Canoga Park, California; nineteen grandchildren, Dominique, Andrew, Timothy "TJ", Keith, Marcus, Shanyce, Clarice, LaTasha, Cedric, Savahn, Ashleigh, Andre', Brittanay, Jayla, Taurean, Jaylynn, Bryce, Trayven, Allante; twelve great-grandchildren; Bishop Robert C. Cosby Sr., First Lady Evangelist Mary M. Cosby, Robert Jr., her Faith Temple Pentecostal Church Family, and a whole host of relatives and friends.

## Wesley Scott Baumann



Wesley Scott Baumann, 60, of Shawnee, Oklahoma died Nov. 10, 2024 in Shawnee.

He was born March 5, 1964 in Oklahoma City to William R. and Neta L. (Ulmer) Baumann. He graduated from Carl Albert High School and then worked as a professional welder for his career. When he wasn't working, he loved to fish and hunt. Wesley was a fantastic fisherman.

Wesley was preceded in death by his parents; and brother, Stanley Baumann.

He is survived by his siblings: Crag Baumann, of Shawnee, David Baumann and partner Melody, of Midwest City, Oklahoma, Keith Baumann and wife, Rhonda, of Bella Vista, AR, and Jennifer Baumann, of Midwest City; as well as a host of aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, cousins and friends.

A ceremony to celebrate his life was November 16, 2024 in the chapel at Walker Funeral & Cremation Service with Dr. Stephen Hale officiating.

## HUD

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

designed to have resources that we have available work toward a common goal with economic development. It has really added a lot to our ability to do the job better."

Governor Anoatubby recalled a HUD and Chickasaw Housing Authority housing project in his hometown of Tishomingo, Oklahoma, when he was a high school student.

"I remember there was a lot of excitement in the community. We didn't have a lot of quality housing, and that became the pillar of our relationship with Department of Housing and Urban Development."

Before the Chickasaw Nation's mission was formally adopted, both entities were working to improve lives, Governor Anoatubby said.

"It was very clear that the leadership of the Chickasaw Nation and HUD were working toward a mission that we would later set, and that is 'to enhance the overall

quality of life of the Chickasaw people,' and we have made that a part of everything that we do each and every day."

When Governor Anoatubby began work with the Chickasaw Nation in 1975, the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (ISDEAA) also became law.

"(It) gave us more authority over our business and our own future. We were able to develop the Chickasaw Nation," he said.

By working toward the mission, developing programs, utilizing the legal aspects of the ISDEAA and eventually developing economic strategies, the Chickasaw Nation improved tribal revenue and had less dependence on federal funds.

"HUD has been a great partner to us and really enhanced our ability to evolve into what we have today and meet the ever-changing needs of our communities," Governor Anoatubby said.

During the visit, the group

toured the Chickasaw Nation Medical Center campus; Tashka Inchokka', a neighborhood community constructed for Chickasaw veterans; Hilltop Meadow neighborhood; the Chickasaw Nation Child Development Center; the Chickasaw Wellness Center; and the Ada community center.

### Chickasaw Nation Housing

Established in 1966, the Chickasaw Housing Authority was one of the first such entities in the state formed with the mission to extend housing programs to Chickasaw people.

It was organized just three years after Overton James' appointment as Governor of the Chickasaw Nation and before the existence of tribal headquarters or businesses. The Chickasaw Housing Authority's function was to administer programs from a new federal agency, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in Chickasaw Nation boundaries.

"Housing is foundational to the success of Chickasaw families," Chickasaw Nation Secretary of Community Services Wayne Scribner said. "The Chickasaw Nation's longstanding relationship with HUD has helped us provide programs and services to support housing needs and community development for our citizens.

"We have worked with HUD for more than 50 years, building a strong and successful partnership. Their recent visit to Ada allowed us to share the progress we have made for Chickasaw families in the community," Scribner said.

Throughout the 1970s and '80s, the Chickasaw Housing Authority worked hard to secure limited and extremely competitive HUD grants to fund projects.

The housing authority and the Chickasaw Nation worked diligently to develop several housing programs, including home ownership services and rental assistance for low-income residents. While there was a Chickasaw preference for services, the housing authority also served other low-income residents of Oklahoma.

The Indian Housing Act of 1988, a housing program developed specifically for First Americans, provided another step toward assisting Chickasaw people to obtain safe homes.

The 1988 act streamlined acquiring grant funds for the Chickasaw Housing Authority. The act amended the 1937 Public Housing Act, added funding and regulations specific to First American housing authorities, and created a First American housing unit that addressed First Americans' unique needs.

The ability to expand housing programs came with the 1996 passage of the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act, or NAHASDA, which allowed tribes to receive and control the use of HUD funds directly.

NAHASDA allowed flexibility with provided funding, tailoring housing programs to the specific needs of their citizens.

Addressing the continually changing housing needs of its Chickasaw citizens, the Chickasaw Nation has developed a number of housing services in addition to home ownership and rental assistance for low-income families. Other services include homeownership counseling and home loan services, home maintenance and repair, as well as home improvement assistance, driveway construction and storm shelter installation.

For more information, visit Chickasaw.net.

CONTRIBUTED BY Dana Lance, Media Relations



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### Holiday Market

DEC. 1-21

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*Closed*  
NOV. 28-29

*Saturday*  
DEC. 7 • 10 A.M.-7 P.M.

The Chickasaw Market observes Chickasaw Nation holidays and closures.

**DEC. 7**  
10 A.M.-7 P.M.  
ART FAIR  
"T'WAS THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS" READING

**DEC. 14**  
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## OCTOBER 2024 MINUTES

CHICKASAW TRIBAL LEGISLATURE  
REGULAR SESSION  
Legislative Building  
Ada, Oklahoma  
October 18, 2024

## AGENDA ITEM #1 CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Chairperson Lisa Johnson-Billy called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

## AGENDA ITEM #2 ROLL CALL

**Members present:** Beth Alexander, Connie Barker, Shana Tate Darter, Nancy Elliott, Dr. Karen Goodnight, Lisa Impson, Charles Marris, Dusk Monetathchi, Toby Perkins, Derrick Priddy, David Woerz, Scott Wood, Lisa Johnson-Billy

**Staff present:** Marilyn Coltz, Doretta Sellers, Harold Stick, Les Wesberry

**Guest present:** Dana Lance

## AGENDA ITEM #3 INVOCATION

Invocation was given by Mr. Monetathchi.

## AGENDA ITEM #4 Election of Officers

Chairperson Johnson-Billy announced the election for Chairperson.

Mr. Woerz nominated Ms. Connie Baker for Chairperson. He called for nominations to cease, and Ms. Barker be elected by acclamation. All members were in favor of the nomination.

Chairperson Barker announced the election for Secretary.

Ms. Impson nominated Dr. Karen Goodnight for Secretary. She called for nominations to cease, and Dr. Goodnight be elected by acclamation. All members were in favor of the nomination.

Chairperson Barker nominated Mr. Harold Stick to serve as Sergeant-At-Arms for the next year. All members were in favor of the nomination.

Chairperson Barker nominated Ms. Doretta Sellers to serve as Recording Secretary for the next year. All members were in favor of the nomination.

## AGENDA ITEM #5 READING OF MINUTES - September 20, 2024

A motion was made by Mrs. Alexander and seconded by Mr. Priddy to approve the minutes of September 20, 2024.

**Members voting yes:** Beth Alexander, Shana Tate Darter, Nancy Elliott, Dr. Karen Goodnight, Lisa Johnson-Billy, Lisa Impson, Charles Marris, Dusk Monetathchi, Derrick Priddy, Scott Wood, Connie Barker

11 yes votes

**Members abstaining:**

Toby Perkins, David Woerz

2 abstentions

The motion to approve the minutes of September 20, 2024 carried.

## AGENDA ITEM #6 UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was no unfinished business to discuss

## AGENDA ITEM #7 REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

(A) **FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT** by Committee Chair Nancy Elliott

**General Resolution Number 42-004 Approval of Development Budget Revision Complementary Medicine Building, Ada South Campus**

This resolution approves the revision to the Development Budget for the Complementary Medicine Building, Ada South Campus in the amount of \$32,279,395. This project will consist of a 44,500 square foot single-story facility.

Historically the Chickasaw Nation Department of Health has looked for ways to increase the health and wellbeing of the Chickasaw people and all Native Americans whom they serve. The proposed facility will house a complete outpatient wellness program with physical, occupational, speech, chiropractic, and massage therapy. This will allow providers to collaborate on patients requiring more than one service, as well as the coordination of appointment times and reduction of time spent visiting multiple facilities. The new facility will be located on the Ada South Campus, near the Chickasaw Nation Medical Center.

A motion was made by Ms. Elliott and seconded by Mr. Wood to approve GR42-004.

**Members voting yes:** Beth Alexander, Shana Tate Darter, Nancy Elliott, Dr. Karen Goodnight, Lisa Johnson-Billy, Lisa Impson, Charles Marris, Dusk Monetathchi, Toby Perkins, Derrick Priddy, David Woerz, Scott Wood, Connie Barker

13 yes votes

All members were in favor of the motion to approve GR42-004 unanimously.

Ms. Elliott concluded her report.

(B) **LAND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE REPORT** by Committee Chair Toby Perkins  
**General Resolution Number 42-001 Authorization and Approval of Lease No. GS-07P-LOK01487 in Sulphur, Murray County, Oklahoma**

This resolution approves Lease No. GS-07P-LOK01487 to The United States of America, acting by and through the designated representative of the General Services Administration, for the purpose of offices for the National Park Service in the Sulphur Visitor Center. The term of the lease shall be for ten (10) years, five (5) years firm, for which the Chickasaw Nation will receive twenty-six thousand, seven hundred and fifty dollars (\$26,750.00) per annum. The space for the National Park Service is located on the first floor of the Sulphur Visitor Center.

A motion was made by Mr. Perkins and seconded by Mrs. Alexander to approve GR42-001.

**Members voting yes:** Beth Alexander, Shana Tate Darter, Nancy Elliott, Dr. Karen Goodnight, Lisa Johnson-Billy, Lisa Impson, Charles Marris, Dusk Monetathchi, Toby Perkins, Derrick Priddy, David Woerz, Scott Wood, Connie Barker

13 yes votes

All members were in favor of the motion to approve GR42-001 unanimously.

**General Resolution Number 42-002 Authorization for Acquisition of Real Property in Ada, Pontotoc County, Oklahoma**

This Resolution authorizes and approves the Chickasaw Nation's request to acquire real property in Pontotoc County, Oklahoma, located at 1600 E. Beverly Street in the town of Ada, Oklahoma 74820, for the Chickasaw Nation's expansion of land base in Ada, Oklahoma.

A motion was made by Mr. Perkins and seconded by Mrs. Alexander to approve GR42-002.

**Members voting yes:** Beth Alexander, Shana Tate Darter, Nancy Elliott, Dr. Karen Goodnight, Lisa Johnson-Billy, Lisa Impson, Charles Marris, Dusk Monetathchi, Toby Perkins, Derrick Priddy, David Woerz, Scott Wood, Connie Barker

13 yes votes

All members were in favor of the motion to approve GR42-002 unanimously.

**General Resolution Number 42-003 Authorization and Approval of Grazing Lease 4200447486 On Joint Tract in Atoka County, Oklahoma**

This resolution approves Grazing Lease No. 4200447486 (G09-2077), for grazing purposes only, for all of Section 18, Township 2 North, Range 12 East, Atoka County, Oklahoma, containing 632.32 acres, more or less, in favor of the Choctaw Ranches, Division of Commerce, Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. The proposed lease will be for a ten (10) year term beginning on January 1, 2025, and expiring on December 31, 2034, with a per annum rental payment of \$11,000.00 for a term of ten (10) years for a total rental payment of \$110,000.00. Of this amount, \$27,500.00 is owed to the Chickasaw Nation for the duration of the lease. A request has been made by the Choctaw Nation to waive the requirements for the administrative fees, performance

bond and insurance. This lease was approved by the Choctaw Nation in Choctaw Nation Council Bill CB-80-24 on July 13, 2024.

A motion was made by Mr. Perkins and seconded by Mrs. Alexander to approve GR42-003.

**Members voting yes:** Beth Alexander, Shana Tate Darter, Nancy Elliott, Dr. Karen Goodnight, Lisa Johnson-Billy, Lisa Impson, Charles Marris, Dusk Monetathchi, Toby Perkins, Derrick Priddy, David Woerz, Scott Wood, Connie Barker

13 yes votes

All members were in favor of the motion to approve GR42-003 unanimously.

Mr. Perkins concluded his report.

## AGENDA ITEM #8 NEW BUSINESS (comments from citizens)

Chairperson Barker made announcements and she presented a plaque and a beaded gavel to Ms. Johnson-Billy for serving as Chair for the past two years.

## AGENDA ITEM #9 ADJOURNMENT

The Legislative Session adjourned at 9:24 a.m.

Respectfully submitted, Dr. Karen Goodnight, Secretary Chickasaw Tribal Legislature  
Prepared by: Doretta Sellers, Recording Secretary Chickasaw Tribal Legislature

## NOVEMBER 2024 RESOLUTIONS

**General Resolution Number 42-005****Authorization and Approval of Grazing Lease 4200445032 (G09-2078) On Joint Tract in Pittsburg County, Oklahoma****Explanation:**

This resolution approves Grazing Lease No. 4200445032 (G09-2078), for grazing purposes only, more particularly described as part of the E/2 SE/4 NW/4 SW/4 and the W/2 SW/4 NE/4 SW/4 lying north of road in Section 13, Township 6 North, Range 14 East, Pittsburg County, Oklahoma, containing 7.5 acres, more or less, in favor of CJ Winn. The proposed lease will be for a three (3) year term beginning September 1, 2024, and expiring on August 31, 2027, with a total rental payment of \$270.00. Of this amount, \$67.50 is owed to the Chickasaw Nation for the term of the lease. This lease was approved by the Choctaw Nation in Choctaw Nation Council Bill CB-78-24 on July 13, 2024. The lessee has requested to prepay all rentals in lieu of a performance bond.

**Property Location:**

Part of the E/2 SE/4 NW/4 SW/4 and the W/2 SW/4 NE/4 SW/4 lying north of road in Section 13, Township 6 North, Range 14 East, Pittsburg County, Oklahoma, containing 7.5 acres, more or less, in the Choctaw Nation

**Presented by:**

Land Development Committee

**Yes votes:** Beth Alexander, Shana Tate Darter, Nancy Elliott, Dr. Karen Goodnight, Lisa Impson, Lisa Johnson-Billy, Charles Marris, Dusk Monetathchi, Toby Perkins, Derrick Priddy, David Woerz, Scott Wood, Connie Barker

**General Resolution Number 42-006****Approval of Development Budget Revision Records Information Management Building****Explanation:**

This resolution approves the revision to the Development Budget for the Records Information Management Building in the amount of \$11,795,155. This project will consist of a 37,861 square foot single-story facility.

Originally purchased in 2002, the current Administrative Service Center warehouse has served as the primary location for the Chickasaw Nation's physical records for 20 years. Over time, the building has begun to deteriorate putting our physical records at risk of environment damage. The current facilities housing our physical historical and business records are not climate controlled, are in a flood plain, and have begun to leak increasing the risk of physical records being damaged or destroyed.

In addition, based on an analysis of trends of boxes received and destroyed over a 10-year period, it is estimated that it will take approximately 12,000 additional square feet to store our physical records over the next 10 years for records information management.

**Presented by:**

Finance Committee

**Yes votes:** Beth Alexander, Shana Tate Darter, Nancy Elliott, Dr. Karen Goodnight, Lisa Impson, Lisa Johnson-Billy, Charles Marris, Dusk Monetathchi, Toby Perkins, Derrick Priddy, David Woerz, Scott Wood, Connie Barker

## COMMITTEE REPORTS

**Committee of the Whole Meeting  
November 12, 2024**

**Present:** Beth Alexander, Shana Tate Darter, Nancy Elliott, Dr. Karen Goodnight, Lisa Impson, Charles Marris, Dusk Monetathchi, Toby Perkins, Derrick Priddy, David Woerz, Scott Wood, Connie Barker

**Absent:** Lisa Johnson-Billy

**Finance Committee  
November 12, 2024**

**Present:** Charles Marris, Nancy Elliott, David Woerz, Scott Wood, Connie Barker

**Absent:** Lisa Johnson-Billy

**Land Development Committee  
November 12, 2024**

**Present:** Toby Perkins, Shana Tate Darter, Charles Marris, Dusk Monetathchi, Connie Barker

**Absent:** Lisa Johnson-Billy

**LEADER** CONTINUED  
FROM PAGE 10

timeless, and she admires his bravery to leave his home and family in Oklahoma to fight for a cause bigger than himself.

"He embodied the heroism and the courage and bravery of our American troops throughout history, especially First American ones," Sawyer said. "So just thinking

about his faith and his courage carrying him through every major combat Americans faced during the Great War is outstanding."

For more information or to purchase the book, visit ChickasawPress.com.

CONTRIBUTED BY Allie Proctor, Media Relations

**DETP** CONTINUED  
FROM PAGE 9

to alleviate barriers and help citizens get their driver's license.

Employment access programs also offer training and resources to remove employment barriers, access to vocational certificates and licenses and career preparation. Programs include the Chickasaw Nation's Toksali SMART Program, Chickasaw Institute of Technology, School-to-Work program, Day Training program, Re-entry Transitional Employment and Vocational Rehabilitation, among others.

"While most participants are high school aged, participants from other (Chickasaw Employment Access) programs are older and have simply never had a driver's license or have somehow lost it," Proctor said. "We help adults with the licensing process from beginning to end. We provide driver's permit study material, behind-the-wheel training, drive exams and assist with all licensing fees. Vehicles are provided through DETP for driver's education behind the wheel instruction and provided for participants taking their driver's license skills test."

The employment benefits of having a driver's license can last a lifetime. Often, one of the first questions asked on employment applications is the applicant's availability and/or if they have reliable transportation to work.

"Our students do not have much to worry about," Proctor said. "Through our program, our participants take the drive exam test in the same vehicles they received driver's ed. instruction. Many of our participants, youth and adult, may not have a vehicle available for testing. That's not a worry with our program."

Another advantage to the program is all costs and fees associated with driver's education or obtaining a driver's license is available at no charge for all Chickasaw citizens.

Driver education courses include 10 hours of classroom instruction along with six hours of behind the wheel training. According to Proctor, this training can be fun for participants but also can be a little nerve racking depending on the student's driving experience and comfort level behind the wheel.

"We teach classroom material from the Oklahoma Drivers Manual," Proctor said. "During the driving phase of class, we teach all driving skills needed to be a safe driver and reinforce those to our participants. We aim for our students to develop a strong understanding of driving laws and skills that will serve them throughout their lives."

Driver's education classes and driver's license exams take place in Ada and Ardmore. Participants must be Chickasaw citizens and are required to attend all classroom sessions to be eligible to receive their driver's education certificate of completion.

Applicants 16 years old must have had their learner permit for at least six months, presenting a copy of their driver's education completion certificate before testing. Applicants aged 16 and a half must have had their learner permit for at least six months, with no driver's education classes required. Applicants 18 and older must have held a learner permit for at least 30 days.

Drive exam skills include testing a student's ability to make left and right turns, properly park on a hill or incline and parallel park along with other driving maneuvers.

For more information, visit Chickasaw.net/Services/Education-Training/Driver-Education-Training-Program or call (580) 310-9242.

CONTRIBUTED BY KC Cole, Media Relations

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Submit a request at [Genealogy.Chickasaw.net](http://Genealogy.Chickasaw.net).

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Holisso: The Center for Study of Chickasaw History and Culture  
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(580) 622-7130

Chickasaw Nation Department of Culture and Humanities  
1020 N. Mississippi  
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**APP DAY ..... DEC. 11**

Answers can be found on page 7

**ATTENTION CHICKASAW NATION DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH PATIENTS:**

**Outpatient Physical Therapy in Ada is moving!**

Last day seeing patients at Seabrook will be **Thursday, Dec. 12**

New location will be open and begin seeing patients **Monday, Dec. 16**

The new location is next to the Chickasaw Nation Medical Center inside the Alternate Care Site.

**Alternate Care Site**  
1901 Afehna Drive  
Ada, OK 74820

*the Chickasaw Nation*

**OKC ZOO** Access Programs for Q4 2024

OKC Zoo general admission is 50% off (limit 4 people per card) for Oklahoma SNAP/EBT/WIC and Tribal WIC Program EBT card holders thru 12/31/24.  
Adults 12-64 are \$8.00 (reg. \$16.00) and Kids 3-11 and Seniors 65+ are \$6.50 (reg. \$13.00)  
The Zoo is open daily from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The last entry time is 4:00 p.m. For more information about OKC Zoo times, direction and amenities, visit [okczoo.org](http://okczoo.org)! Program subject to renew each quarter pending participation.

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