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MVSKOKE NEWS

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WILD ONION DINNERS ARE BACK WHERE AND WHEN TO FIND THEM IN INDIAN COUNTRY

by **BRADEN HARPER**
MANAGING EDITOR



Wild Onion dinners return to the Mvskoke Reservation at various locations throughout the months of March and April. (MM File)

MVSKOKE RESERVATION, Oklv. - Wild onions are in bloom once again, and with them comes the tradition of wild onion dinners that bring Mvskoke people together from across the reservation. One of the largest dinners is hosted annually at the Salt Creek Methodist Church in Holdenville. Muscogee (Creek) National Council Representative Dode Barnett grew up attending those dinners her entire life.

"It was always a time for people to come and fellowship and eat some good food all at the same time," Rep. Barnett said.

Initially the church saw on average between 100-150 people in attendance at the dinners. Right before the Covid-19 pandemic hit, attendance numbers at Salt Creek had blossomed to somewhere in the ballpark of 1,000-1,200 people. Last year marked the first year the church had hosted a wild

onion dinner since the Covid-19 pandemic began. According to Rep. Barnett, that event saw over 700 people. For Barnett's family, wild onion dinners are one of the most important traditions of the year.

"One of my sons made the comment to me the other day, 'Onion dinners are bigger than Christmas,'" Rep. Barnett laughed. "To me and my family and a lot of other families in Hughes County and around the reservation it's truly a time for people to come, see each other, visit with each other, obviously have some amazing food by very accomplished cooks."

Salt Creek's wild onion dinners also feature craft vendors. Past dinners have seen upwards of 20 vendors. Many come for the wild onions, and stay for the shopping. According to Rep. Barnett, some people come as far as from Texas, Arkansas, and Kansas to attend the dinner.

Rep. Barnett asserted that the dinners would not be pos-

sible without the help of the volunteers who come out every year to serve the community. This includes volunteers from other churches, High School National Honor Society students and MCN Light-horse officers. Last year's wild onion dinner even saw volunteers from MCN tribal leadership including Principal Chief David Hill, MCNC Speaker Randall Hicks, Representative Charles McHenry, Representative Robert Hufft, and MCN Department of Health Chief Administrative Officer Rhonda Beaver.

No wild onion dinner would be complete without dessert. Rep. Barnett remarked that her favorite dish at the wild onion dinners are the grape dumplings. Salt Creek's eldest matriarch, Wisey Brown still oversees the event's dessert table every year.

Salt Creek's annual wild onion dinner is set to take place Saturday, March 2 starting at 11 a.m., wrapping up at

2 p.m. The event will be hosted at the Holdenville Creek Indian Community Center located at 224 E. Poplar.

A list of Wild Onion Dinners taking place across the MCN Reservation and around Oklahoma can be found below:

March 2 - Salt Creek Methodist | Holdenville Creek Indian Community Center | 224 E. Poplar St. | 11 a.m. - 2 p.m.

March 2 - D.D. Etchieson Indian UMC, Tahlequah | 412 W. Seneca St. | 11 a.m. - 1 p.m., \$12.

March 2 - Norman First American UMC, Norman | 1950 Beaumont Dr. | 11 a.m. - 3 p.m., \$15.

March 9 - Pickett Chapel UMC, Sapulpa | 17610 South Hickory | 11 a.m. - 3 p.m., \$15.

March 9 - Angie Smith Memorial UMC, Oklahoma City | 601 SW Grand Blvd | 11

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2024 MCN CHALLENGE BOWL RESULTS ANNUAL JOM COMPETITION IN ITS 23RD YEAR



The Glenpool Hvresse team receive their 2024 High School Challenge Bowl champion plaque. (Courtesy: MCN Communications)

by **MEREDITH JOHNSON**
REPORTER

OKMULKE, Oklv. - On Friday, Feb 16 the 2024 Muskogee (Creek) Nation Challenge Bowl season wrapped up. The annual competition, now in its 23rd year, was held at the College of the Muscogee Nation during the first three Fridays in February.

Glenpool seemed the team to beat again this year among all age groups, winning in the top two places each Friday with teams from Beggs taking home honors as well. The high school competition was held Friday, Feb 2. Winning first place was Hvresse from Glenpool. Second place was Glenpool Kococvmpv and Beggs "No Names" took third place.

The middle school competition was held Friday, Feb 9. Winning first place was Este Papv from Glenpool. Second place was Glenpool Wotko and Beggs "No Names" took third place.

Glenpool swept the board for the elementary school competition, held on Friday, Feb

16. Glenpool Kaccv won first, Glenpool Tvstvnkvkvlke won second, and Glenpool Fayv won third.

The Wilbur Gouge Honor Award goes to the team in each division that demonstrates character, respectfulness, and courteousness during the competition and throughout the day. It is named after MCN leader Wilbur Gouge. Gouge was among the first collaborators with Virginia Thomas (Mvskoke) in creating the Challenge Bowl.

According to the rule book, the teams are judged on observed conduct inside and outside the building, during game play, and the sponsor's behavior.

The Wilbur Gouge Honor for the high school competition and middle school competitions were the Coweta White teams. The Beggs "No Names" received the honor for the elementary competition.

The first MCN JOM Challenge Bowl was held in 2001 at Sapulpa High School. Since

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GOVERNOR STITT CONTINUES TO ADD STRESS TO TRIBAL GOVERNMENT RELATIONSHIPS STATE OF THE STATE ADDRESSES NEW TASK FORCE AND NA INCOME TAX LAWSUIT

by **BRADEN HARPER**
MANAGING EDITOR

OKLVHOMV CITY, Oklv. - On Monday, Feb. 5 Oklahoma Governor Kevin Stitt delivered his sixth State of the State Address to the 59th Oklahoma Legislature and invited guests at the state capitol. Muscogee (Creek) Nation leadership and leaders from other Oklahoma tribes were in attendance as well. In his speech, Governor Stitt addressed points on poverty, education and issues pertaining to the state's relationship with the Oklahoma tribes.

The governor was not shy in voicing his frustrations with the landmark McGirt decision, the U.S. Supreme Court case that upheld MCN's sovereignty to prosecute Native Americans who have committed crimes on the reservation. This year marks the fourth year since the decision was handed down in 2020. Governor Stitt argued it was a decision that was not in the best interests of all state residents.

"Many Oklahomans I talk to want clarity about who has authority to do what in our state. That's because today, our state is still dealing with the fallout from the McGirt decision. It's a decision that has rocked our state and caused division where previously there was none," Governor Stitt said.

Although Stitt has seen strife among relations with the Five Civilized Tribes, the state has recently negotiated compacts with other Oklahoma tribes including Apache, Citizen Potawatomi, and Wyandotte.

Governor Stitt referred to a question he asked in his first State of the State address in regard to



Muscogee (Creek) Nation Principal Chief David Hill and Second Chief Del Beaver walk out of the Oklahoma State Capitol after Governor Kevin Stitt delivered his State of the State address. February 5, 2024, Oklavhoma City, Okla. (Jason Salsman/MCN Communications)

whether Native Americans living in Oklahoma were required to pay state income tax. After which, the governor then referred to the Stroble v. Oklahoma, and Hooper v. Tulsa lawsuits.

The former suit is currently in litigation and involves Alicia Stroble, a Mvskoke citizen who is suing for income tax exemption because she is a tribal citizen, living within their jurisdiction and working for their tribe's government. The latter suit involves Choctaw citizen Justin Hooper, a man who was ticketed by Tulsa police for a traffic infraction even though he is a tribal citizen who committed a crime within MCN's tribal jurisdiction.

Although Governor Stitt voiced his displeasure over the Stroble case, he had stated earlier in his address that he envisioned eliminating the state income tax for all citizens. According to Stitt, eliminating the state income tax would be necessary in his opin-

ion in order to be competitive in attracting outside business and new residents.

"When I stop to think about Oklahoma in 20 years, here's what I see: I see people from all over the country moving here so they can keep more of their hard earned money thanks to our 0% income tax," Governor Stitt said.

Regarding law enforcement, Governor Stitt referred to his newly formed One Oklahoma Task Force, an initiative designed to address cross deputization and jail agreements with tribal law enforcement agencies. This task force was notably opposed by the Inter-Tribal Council of the Five Civilized Tribes. The formation of the task force originally stemmed from an incident involving Okmulgee Jail officials and MCN Lighthorse Police.

Governor Stitt's argument that

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WILD ONION DINNERS

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a.m.–3 p.m., \$12

March 9 - Eufaula-Canadian Tribal Town, Eufaula | 800 Birkes Rd. | 11 a.m. - 2 p.m., \$15.

March 9 - Hominy Friends Meeting House, Hominy | 510 Friends Rd. | 4 p.m. - Until Out, \$15.

March 16 - Mary Lee Clark UMC, Del City | 1100 Howard Dr. | 11 a.m. – 3 p.m.

March 16 - Tulsa Indian UMC, Tulsa | 1901 N. College Ave. | 11 a.m. – 3 p.m., \$15.

March 16 - Big Cussetah UMC, Morris | 20566 Prairie Bell Road | 11 a.m. – 3 p.m., \$15.

March 16 - Thloptlocco UMC, Okemah | 377187 E. 1170 Rd. | 11 a.m. – 3 p.m., \$12/\$10 veterans.

March 22 - Fife Indian UMC, Muskogee | 1100 Eufaula St. | 5 – 7 p.m., \$10.

March 23 - Broken Arrow IUMC, Broken Arrow | 20854 E. 141st St. S. | 11 a.m. - 2 p.m. \$15.

March 23 - Concharty UMC, Okmulgee | 19040 Garfield Rd. | Times/cost TBA.

March 30 - Okmulgee Indian Community Center, Okmulgee | 2900 N. Osage Pl. | 11 a.m. - 3 p.m., \$15.

April 6 - Springfield Indian IUMC, Okemah | N. 3810 Rd. | 11 a.m. - Until Out, \$15.

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then it has grown in size and support, and has been held at the College of the Muskogee Nation since 2020.

Conceived as a way to promote Creek culture, history, government, and language among children, the challenge bowl is based on fellowship and friendly competition. According to the Department of Education and Training, “The Challenge Bowl Committee made a commitment to set by example, positive role

models in good citizenship and tribal pride that would carry on throughout the year and not just during the few days of competition. The challenge bowl brings the schools, community, employees, and citizens together with the common goal of developing tribal pride within our youth.”

During the opening remarks for the highschool competition, Second Chief Del Beaver explained, “We want our kids to learn a little more about who we are, about your people. That’s why today is so important. Today is so special.”

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all Native Americans in the state must pay state income taxes was precipitated by how the Navajo (Diné) Nation does not build state government-funded roads, schools or hospitals within their jurisdiction. However Governor Stitt did not denote the differences in their status as a protected reservation, or how it is located in more than one lone state.

MCN Principal Chief David Hill responded to the points regarding tribal jurisdiction and the One Oklahoma Task Force made in Governor Stitt’s speech. In Chief Hill’s statement he replied,

“Governor Stitt once again demonstrated that honesty is not his strongest trait. McGirt has not caused confusion, but political games by politicians like Stitt have. The law is clear, but rather than work together to integrate tribal jurisdictions to improve public safety, he has sought to reject it and sowed division. The Governor’s task force is designed to undermine tribal jurisdiction and result in fewer police, fewer courts and fewer prosecutors to keep our communities safe. If the Governor wants to work with tribes, we stand ready. But we will not participate in a political stunt that will make our nations and our state weaker. Unfortunately, the Governor’s address today was more of the same. It was full of misleading and false rhetoric, and a fundamental misunderstanding of tribal governments and sovereignty.”

Governor Stitt is currently in the second year of his final term in office. A decision in the Stroble v. Oklahoma income tax lawsuit has yet to be handed down by the Oklahoma Supreme Court. The decision will potentially have a huge effect on Native American citizens residing within their tribe’s jurisdictional boundaries. Mvskoke Media will continue to follow the Stroble tax case for updates.



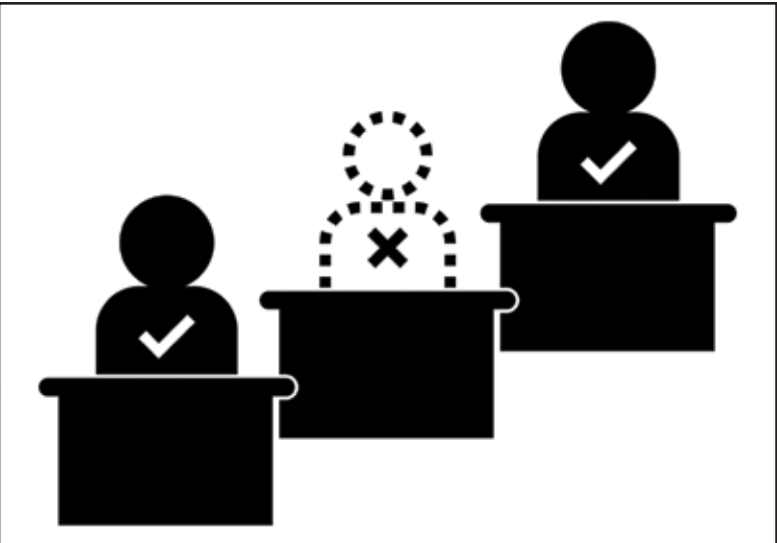
The Glenpool Este Papv team receive their 2024 Middle School Challenge Bowl champion plaque. (Courtesy: MCN Communications)



The Glenpool Kaccv team receive their 2024 Elementary Challenge Bowl champion plaque. (Courtesy: MCN Communications)

TULSA PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND CITY OFFICIALS ANNOUNCE NEW ATTEND TO WIN! INITIATIVE

NEW PROGRAM WILL TACKLE CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM IN NATIVE AND NON NATIVE STUDENTS



According to national data from the U.S. Department of Education, 26% of Native American students were chronically absent from school in the 2016-2017 school year. (Shutterstock)

by **BRADEN HARPER**
MANAGING EDITOR

TVLSE, Oklv. - On Feb. 7 Tulsa Public Schools launched the Attend to Win! initiative. The new program will address

chronic absenteeism in Tulsa. The broad-based effort was organized between TPS Superintendent Dr. Ebony Johnson and Tulsa City Mayor G.T. Bynum to address the chronic absenteeism crisis in Tulsa. Chronic absenteeism is

defined as missing more than 10% of instructional/school days annually, and has only increased on a national scale since the global Covid-19 Pandemic.

According to a statement released by TPS, “Right now, about 40% of Tulsa Public Schools’ students are chronically absent, which outpaces the national average of 30%.”

According to Bynum, chronic absenteeism is an issue that requires collaboration. Identifying and bringing attention to the issue is half the battle.

“Absenteeism is a critical issue we must address together as a community. I commend Dr. Johnson and Tulsa Public Schools for working to address a challenge that can lead to better outcomes for our youth,” Bynum said. “The City of Tulsa stands with TPS as we work collectively to raise awareness and remove barriers in this effort to help reduce chronic absenteeism in Tulsa.”

Currently TPS serves over

3,000 Native American students and families. Of those 3,000 students, roughly 985 are Mvskoke. Chronic absenteeism affects Native Americans disproportionately compared to other racial ethnicities. This contributes to lower on-time high school graduation rates. Native American on-time high school graduation rates are lower than the national average. Absenteeism can put students at greater risk of lower academic performance, and dropping out of school.

Historically, chronic absenteeism joins a long list of education issues Native American students have faced. Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries many Native Americans students were forced to

attend government and missionary-run boarding schools where they experienced violence, abuse and trauma. While not all Native American students shared the same traumatic boarding school experience, many were forced to attend and were stripped of their cultural and spiritual practices in the process per American assimilation policy. Federal policy has now changed in order to accommodate the unique needs of Native American students. However the consequences of earlier education policies that have led to intergenerational trauma still persist.

The Attend to Win! initiative has an open web forum for TPS families struggling with absenteeism. Filling out the online forum will allow school officials to understand the obstacles Native and non Native families struggle with, as well as provide them with ideas on how to solve absenteeism issues.

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HOMPETV TORKETV: CMN’S FOOD PANTRY OFFERS FREE SNACKS AND MEALS FOR STUDENTS

STUDENTS IN NEED CAN NOW GRAB FOOD ITEMS ON CAMPUS



A group of students grab different items from the College of Muscogee Nation’s food pantry. (Courtesy: CMN)

by SHAYLN PROCTOR
REPORTER

OKMULKE, Oklv.- The College of the Muscogee Nation (CMN) has now started their own food pantry, which is located at the campus’ turtle lodge. Hompetv Torketv translates to eating food or snacking. The food pantry consists of both perishable and non-perishable foods. This gives students the opportunity to pick up snacks or meals at no cost, and at a close distance to campus. The pantry is available to all enrolled CMN students.

CMN Case Manager Allison Barnes (Cherokee) spoke about the students’ needs the pantry addresses and its future. The need for a pantry arose when it was determined that students needed better and closer access to food items on campus.

According to Barnes, CMN Case Manager/Title IX Coordinator Lisa Bear and Case Manager/Civil Rights Compliance Coordinator Patricia Farrell were the two staff members who had the idea to create the food pantry.

The idea came from a need

for food after the campus cafeteria closed. Some students worked jobs where they were unable to eat dinner during cafeteria hours. With the installation of the pantry, it allows students to grab items to take home during evenings and weekends when there are no other options nearby. The pantry’s grand opening on Jan. 24 exceeded the college’s expectations. It saw students eagerly searching for and grabbing items.

The pantry stays open during off hours with the help of campus interns. When students leave the store, they are given refrigerated or reusable bags to take home.

“It has been a really great resource for students on campus to be able to go and get stuff that they like but also we had engineered it to where they can take stuff back and have it for several days in their dorms for like weekends,” Barnes said.

So far, CMN staff has received positive feedback on the pantry. Students have expressed their appreciation for access to food at no cost, especially when their options are limited. The store allots each student 25 items per

visit.

Donations were also accepted on the first day as well. According to Barnes, one donor brought six cans of SpaghettiOs, which immediately flew off the shelf. SpaghettiOs and Prime sports drinks are two of the most requested items from students. All food donations are welcome, however perishable foods must not be expired.

After each visit, students fill out a survey to allow staff to keep track of who is using the pantry. It also gives them indicators for popular items to stock in the future. Staff can also track to see when it might be time to start stocking new items in order to provide variety. A reported 10-15 applications for the pantry are taken per day.

Pete’s Pantry

In the future CMN hopes to expand their pantry to become comparable to the Oklahoma State University Institute of Technology (OSU-IT) Pete’s pantry. According to Barnes, an expansion to CMN’s pantry would potentially include other necessities like clothing and healthier food options for those who are diabetic or have other medical conditions that limit their dietary options.

OSU-IT Pete’s Pantry currently uses a grant for their pantry, which is also available at no cost for CMN students. CMN even provides shuttle services for students who use items from Pete’s Pantry. Pete’s Pantry currently provides pre-prepared frozen meals and clothing among other necessities.

“They have other things that we don’t have yet but that’s also a way for them that they can double up and can have different resources through OSU-IT if they choose but also they have what we have too,” Barnes said. “I love seeing the participation that we’ve had with this and I like the outcome that we’ve had. I hope that we can do more for our students as we get bigger and we can raise

more awareness of the need for a food pantry on campus.”

Barnes is grateful for the opportunity to provide food pantry services for CMN. “It’s like Christmas to me, I’m a gift giver. I’m a huge giver so just knowing that the important time of someone is like ‘I’m hungry’ and they have a place to get stuff that they like or they need and it’s at no cost

to them,” Barnes said.

For further information about donating to the pantry, contact Allison Barnes at 918-549-2844. She can also be contacted by email at abarnes@cmn.edu.

To keep up to date on campus events, follow The College of the Muscogee Nation’s Facebook page.

OKMULGEE MCN HEAD START STUDENTS ARE ALL AGLOW!

STUDENTS CELEBRATE VALENTINE’S DAY WITH MUSIC AND DANCING AT GLOW PARTY



Students, parents, and staff dance to music during their glow party. (Meredith Johnson/MM)

by MEREDITH JOHNSON
REPORTER

Movement and Childhood Development

Physical activities and movement do more than just blow off energy. Movement and physical activities within learning environments are shown to improve learning outcomes and school readiness. Recent studies in early childhood development underscore the importance of movement and physical activities. The reports indicate that movement, like dance, allows young children to develop motor skills, social and emotional skills, and physical awareness of themselves and others around them. But learning-through-play enthusiasts have recognized that movement and dance create joy, which was fully palpable and fully aglow as students, parents, and staff celebrated Valentine’s Day.

OKMULKE, Oklv. On Wednesday, Feb 14 the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Okmulgee Head Start held a Valentine’s Day celebration. The center organized a full day of celebration with a card exchange for the students, a glow party, and special treats including cupcakes and raspberry floats. Head Start parents were also invited to share in the festivities.

The glow party kicked off after lunch. Students and their parents got to twirl, spin, and trip the light fantastic for the dance party. The center’s staff decorated a large room with glow-in-the-dark and neon decorations. The party was complete with glow necklaces, wands, and sticks.

MCN ELDERLY NUTRITION HOSTS ANNUAL FOOD SHOW EVENT

DIFFERENT FOOD VENDORS OFFER FREE TASTE TESTING FOR ELDERS



Participants try out different foods at the food show. (Courtesy: MCN Communications)

GLENPOOL, Oklv.- For the past several years the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Elderly Nutrition Program has held their annual food show for elders 55 and older who utilize the program. This year’s event was held on Feb. 6 at the Glenpool Conference Center. The event had eight different vendors that provided different foods for taste testing.

MCN Director of Food Services Anna Sterner (Mvskoke) spoke about the event and the benefits it provides for elders. Sterner oversees the elderly nutrition program, the Native American caregiver program and the tiny village for homeless Mvskoke citizens.

The annual food show initially started on a much smaller scale at Okmulgee Nutrition several years back. Event organizers moved the event up north to the Glenpool Conference Center and partnered with their food vendor, Sysco for the event. Moving locations provided more space for vendors, and more space for cooking. The event was opened to elders from the program’s locations including Bristow, Okmulgee, Coweta, Wetumka, Dewar and Sapulpa.

According to Sterner, this year’s event had a great turnout, serving over 180 participants.

The taste testing vendors helped build a menu at each elderly nutrition program site. According to Sterner, the menus are designed based on the time of the year the meal is served.

“We like to have new items brought in that the participants can try to select things that they would like to see on either the spring or summer or the fall and winter menu,” Sterner said.

The event typically receives positive feedback from participants. Popular dishes this year included the enchilada and taco soups. Barbecue and salads provided at the event were also popular.

Good Eats and Good Company

Towards the end of the show each participant was asked to complete a survey of each item they tested. The survey gathers information for the program on which foods from the show were popular. When the program’s menus are

by SHAYLN PROCTOR
REPORTER

updated, each item is accounted for its popularity and nutritional value. The program wants to make sure as little food is put to waste as possible.

Sterner mentioned that elders sometimes struggle with different sweets and bread. Although bread is used in traditional meals, it’s not an ideal food for people who are diabetic.

“We had to cut back on our sweets recently and have been offering more fruits and vegetables. We have a salad bar at every site now of where we do serve twice a week, we have the salad bar open,” Sterner said.

According to Sterner, the food show is not only great for trying new meals that have nutritional value, it is also great to see fellow Mvskoke citizens from across the reservation. The show brings people together.

“I think that it’s a great opportunity for the participants to all get together and I know that normally they go to their site whether they live in Okmulgee, Bristow, Eufaula. But when they come to events like this, they get to see everyone from all the sites so they get to visit people that maybe they hadn’t seen in awhile and so it’s nice to see them fellowship and of course to enjoy the food and have a good time,” Sterner said.

The department plans to host next year’s food show either in the fall or winter.

The program offers meals at each site they serve. Meals are served daily, and most offer home deliveries pending the participant’s disability status. The program has also partnered with the MCN Department of Health to provide public health nurses who lecture on health education quarterly throughout the year.

For information about the MCN Elderly Nutrition program, or to learn more about the annual food show, they can be contacted by phone at 918-549-2426.

“ALL YOU NEED IS LOVE AND RESPECT”: LEARNING HOW TO SELF CARE

MCN CENTER OF VICTIM SERVICES’ VALENTINE’S DAY PARTY FEATURES COOKIE DECORATING AND VALENTINE’S DAY CARDS

by SHAYLN PROCTOR
REPORTER

OKMULKE, Oklv.- The Muscogee (Creek) Nation Center for Victim Services (CVS) hosted a Valentine’s Day-themed party for MCN tribal employees. It consisted of activities including Valentine’s Day card making, cookie decorating and self care. It was held at the MCN Housing Building on Feb. 13.

MCN Center for Victim Services Outreach Coordinator MaCaylin Autaubo (Wichita) spoke about the event. According to Autaubo, 51 people participated in the activities. The event aimed to recognize MCN employees for their hard work, encouraged mental health wellness and promoted self care.

The annual event started off as a small gathering, but has since grown. MCN CVS Director Shawn Partridge has seen the event grow into what it is today. This year’s theme was a play on the classic Beatles’ track, “All you need is love and respect”.

According to Autaubo, event planners wanted to provide stress-free activities because their department knows first hand how stressful a full-time job can be. They wanted to stress the importance of individuals taking intentional time out of the day for self care.

“We got really great feedback from employees just taking time to really acknowledge them and the work stress that they go through on a day to day basis. CVS is really a big advocate for self care and wellness, and making sure to take the time to take care of yourself and to also make sure that you’re coming to work with



Muscogee (Creek) Nation employees pose in front of Valentine’s Day-themed decorations. (Courtesy: MaCaylin Autaubo)

the best of your ability. By making sure you’re not running into burn-out and things like that, this party is just kind of a way for them to kind of take a step back, relax and have some fun with each other,” Autaubo said.

This year the event’s Valentine’s Day cards proved to be popular, with participants decorating each one with different colors and stickers. One participant remarked that she enjoyed taking time to sit down and work on her craft project because it was an activity she had not done since she was a child.

Each participant was given promotional items with helpful MCN CVS information and a take-home healthy relationship quiz, which rates respectful relationships. The quiz questions red flags that may appear in relationships, and what toxic behaviors may need to be changed. Advocates were also available to answer questions.

For further information about the MCN CVS program, or to learn more about upcoming events and services hosted by the program, they can be contacted by phone at 918-732-7979. Autaubo can be directly contacted at mautaubo@muscogeeneration.com.



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MVSKOKE PARENT’S LIST OF GRIEVANCES WITH TPS CONTINUES TO GROW
AARON GRIFFITH NAMED AS A PLAINTIFF IN A TPS BOARD LAWSUIT



Tulsa Public School Board members are named in a lawsuit filed by fellow board members and a Mvskoke parent who claim they violated the Oklahoma Open Meetings Act when selecting a new district superintendent in 2023. (Shutterstock)

by **BRADEN HARPER**
MANAGING EDITOR

TVLSE, Oklv. - The Tulsa Public Schools District continues to face grievances and scrutiny from parents like Aaron Griffith (Mvskoke). Just within the new year alone, Griffith has filed complaints against the TPS School Board regarding conflicts of interest, published an article suggesting a name change to a school building, and has been named as a plaintiff in a class action lawsuit against TPS board members.

A long-time citizen of Tulsa and a citizen of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, Griffith had previously filed complaints against the Oklahoma State Department of Education in 2023 regarding the Tulsa School of Arts and Sciences (TSAS). Those complaints claimed that TSAS was noncompliant with Title I Parents Right to Know disclosure agreements, Title VI and Johnson O’Malley (JOM)

parental involvement, as well as tribal consultation requirements. Griffith’s son attends TSAS, where his wife is also an educator.

TSAS Concerns

On Jan. 19 a formal written complaint was lodged by Griffith against the Tulsa School Board. The complaint claimed that the board violated school board policy 1102 regarding conflicts of interest. Griffith claims that TPS Superintendent Dr. Ebony Johnson and TPS Board President Stacey Woolley (Choctaw) violated this policy due to their titles held within the Council for Great City Schools as a member of the 2023 Michael Casserly cohort, and executive board member of the organization respectively.

Griffith has also voiced concerns on school safety. On Jan 31 a small grass and brush fire was observed near the TSAS property line, resulting in a school-

wide evacuation. According to an email sent to parents, the Tulsa Fire Department was called to the scene and quickly extinguished the fire. The resulting damage included a couple inches of burnt grass along the fenceline.

Although TSAS did not receive any damage from the fire, Griffith still found the matter concerning. Griffith claimed the fire was started by a homeless person living in an underpass located near the school. As a result, Griffith requested TSAS contact Tulsa Mayor G.T. Bynum and the Tulsa City Council to discuss new safety measures moving forward regarding municipal infrastructure.

Griffith recently got an article published that called for TSAS to rename the building it resides in, the Roosevelt building. Griffith claims the name is inappropriate because, “it is in direct conflict with the values, beliefs or best interests of the district or it becomes obsolete or inappropriate because of the community it serves or the programming it provides.”

The building is named after the 26th U.S. President, Theodore Roosevelt, who had infamously made a comment stating that nine out of ten good Indians are dead ones. The Roosevelt Administration also supported the allotment system and removal. The goal of these policies were to break up the structure of the Native American tribes and assimilate their citizens into American culture.

TPS Board Lawsuit

On Jan. 18 a lawsuit was filed by Griffith and two other TPS board members in Tulsa County District Court regarding the appointment of the district’s new superintendent. The suit’s first claim is that a proper, lawful search for a new superintendent was not conducted. The second is that the vote to instate then Interim TPS Superintendent Dr. Ebony John-

son as the new superintendent was influenced by decisions made in alleged backroom discussions between TPS Board President Stacey Woolley and former TPS Superintendent Dr. Deborah Gist.

The lawsuit claims that the TPS board majority members’ vote to appoint the new TPS Superintendent, Dr. Johnson violated the Oklahoma Open Meetings Act (OOMA). Woolley, Dr. Gist and other TPS board members are named in the lawsuit as defendants.

In the lawsuit’s petition it states, “Defendants’ Majority Members conspired with Defendants’ President Whoolley and Gist to arbitrarily and capriciously manipulate Board meetings and agendas; including the vote to retroactively suspend and contrary board policy.”

The lawsuit alleges that in addition to the OOMA violation, the majority members did not conduct a proper search for a new superintendent, violating TPS Board Policy 1401.

One of the TPS Board Members listed as a plaintiff in the lawsuit, Dr. Jennettie Marshall had previously filed a police report regarding the OOMA violation in December of 2023.

When asked for a statement on the lawsuit, TPS released the following statement to Mvskoke Media. It states,

“It will take time for us to fully review (the lawsuit). We won’t comment on any ongoing legal matters. We have urgent work to attend to as a school district. Superintendent Johnson and Team Tulsa will continue focusing

on the success and growth of the 34,000 young people in our care,”

TPS Native American Day Holiday

Griffith attended the most recent Tulsa Public Schools Indian Education Title IV Parent Committee meeting where he submitted a formal request to revise Policy/Regulation 3301-R. The revision regarded school holidays, particularly adding language to recognize the second Monday in October as Native American day. Although many schools within the district organize field trips to take students to the holiday’s festivities celebrated in downtown Tulsa, not all students within TPS have the opportunity to attend. If Griffith’s proposal is adopted into code, all Native American students within the district would not have to worry about missing class to celebrate the holiday.

The Title VI Parent Committee meeting only reviewed the proposal. For new policies to be written into code they must appear twice before the TPS School Board. The first appearance for information, the second for adoption consideration.

According to the Feb. 13 Tulsa School of Arts and Sciences Board of Trustees Regular Board Meeting agenda, items discussing the parental bill of rights and administrative safety and security recommendations were discussed.

Griffith’s letter to the editor article on the call to review the Roosevelt school’s name can be found on page eight.



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MCNNC JOINT COMMITTEES

MCN DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH RECEIVES FUNDING TO IMPLEMENT PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES FOR DRUG CRISES
FOUR NOMINATIONS FOR TRIBAL ADMINISTRATORS TO GO BEFORE FULL COUNCIL



The National Council held a Health, Education and Welfare committee session via teleconference and in person. (MM File)

by **SHAYLN PROCTOR**
REPORTER

OKMULKE, Oklv. - The Muscogee (Creek) National Council held a Health, Education and Welfare committee meeting Feb. 13.

The Council addressed the following legislation, the interpretation of which is attributed to language in the bills:

TR 24-006 A tribal resolution of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation authorizing the election board to execute an attorney contract between the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Election Board and Savage O’Donnell Affeldt & Weintraub Law Firm. Representative Thomasene Yahola Osborn sponsored the legislation, which passed 4-0. This will be presented to the full council at the regular session.

This contract will assist the election board in formatting and reviewing election policies and procedures.

TR 24-007 A tribal resolution of the MCN confirming the nominations of Grover Wind as the Office of The Veterans Affairs Services Administrator of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. Representative Mary Crawford sponsored this legislation, which passed 4-0. This will be presented to the full

council at the regular session.

Wind’s term will begin upon confirmation and will end with the concurrent term of the principal chief.

TR 24-008 A tribal resolution of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation confirming the nomination of Shawn Terry to serve as the Secretary of Health of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. Rep. Crawford sponsored the legislation, which passed 4-0. This will be presented to the full council at the regular session.

Terry’s term will begin upon confirmation and will end with the concurrent term of the principal chief.

TR 24-009 A tribal resolution of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation confirming the nomination of Kaila Harjo to serve as the Secretary of the Education, Employment, and Training of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. Rep. Crawford sponsored the legislation, which passed 4-0. This will be presented to the full council at the regular session.

Harjo’s term will begin upon confirmation and will end with the concurrent term of the principal chief.

TR 24-010 A tribal resolution of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation confirming the nomination of Carmin Tecumseh-Williams to serve as Secretary of Community and Human Services of MCN. Representative Dode Barnett sponsored the legislation, which passed 3-1. This will be presented to the full council at the regular session.

Tecumseh-Williams’ term will begin upon confirmation and will end with the concurrent term of the principal chief.

TR 24-016 A tribal resolution

of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation authorizing the Principal Chief to submit a 2024 American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services Grant to the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Department of Education. Rep. Crawford sponsored the legislation, which passed 4-0. This will be presented to the full council at the regular session.

According to the bill the MCN is providing vocational rehabilitation services that will include culturally-appropriate services to American Indians with disabilities that live within the reservation. The bill will provide a leveraged resource match of \$200,000 if the grant is awarded to the tribe.

NCA 24-009 A law of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation authorizing the expenditure of grant funds awarded from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Pass-Through Entity Southern Plains Tribal Health Board, Oklahoma Tribal Epidemiology Center, Tribal Overdose Prevention Program Grant. Representative Anna Marshall sponsored the legislation, which passed 4-0. This will be presented to the full council at the regular session.

If the legislation is adopted into law, the MCN Department of Health will receive grant funds in the amount of \$60,000. This will develop and implement public health services that address drug overdose crises. It will provide harm-reduction services and implement peer support in tribal communities.

NCA 24-010 A law of the MCN authorizing the expenditure of grant funds awarded from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Pass-Through Entity National Indian Health Board, Hear Her Campaign Grant. Rep. Marshall sponsored the legislation, which passed 4-0. This will be presented to the full council at the regular session.

The Hear Her Campaign brings awareness for pregnan-

cy-related complications. It is supported through a partnership and funding from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Office of Minority Health.

NCA 24-011 A law of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation amending NCA 21-097 (A law of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation authorizing the expenditure of American Rescue Plan Act (“ARPA”) funds received from the United States Department of the Treasury for the MCN citizen vaccine incentive). Rep Crawford sponsored the legislation, which passed 4-0. This will be presented to the full council at the regular session.

NCA 21-097 expended ARPA funds during the Covid-19 pandemic when there was a need to provide incentives for citizens to get Covid-19 vaccinations. A total of \$11,933,530.09 was spent from the initial \$40,000,000 budget. The remaining \$28,066,469.91 will be reallocated towards the National Council approval for further use.

NCA 24-012 A law of the MCN Amending NCA 21-150 (A law of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation authorizing the expenditure of American Rescue Plan Act (“ARPA”) funds from the United States Department of the Treasury to provide a second disbursement of COVID-19 impact relief individual assistance.) Rep. Crawford sponsored the legislation, which passed 4-0. This will be presented to the full council at the regular session.

The remaining \$43,829,232.40 in ARPA funds from the Covid-19 Impact Relief Individual Assistance Program will be reallocated towards the National Council approval for further use.

NCA 24-013 A law of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation amending NCA 21-077 (A law of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation authorizing the expenditure of American Rescue Plan Act (“ARPA”) funds from the United States Department of the Treasury Assistance Program) as amended by NCA

21-098. Rep. Crawford sponsored the legislation, which passed 4-0. This will be presented to the full council at the regular session.

The unencumbered \$37,031,526.09 in ARPA funds from the COVID-19 Impact Relief Individual Assistance Program will be reallocated towards the National Council approval for further use.

NCA 24-014 A law of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation amending NCA 21-093 (A law of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation authorizing the expenditure of American Rescue Plan Act (“ARPA”) funds from the United States Department of the Treasury for the MCN Vaccine Incentive for tribal employees) as amended by NCA 21-096. Rep. Crawford sponsored the legislation, which passed 4-0. This will be presented to the full council at the regular session.

The unencumbered \$22,355.51 in ARPA funds for the MCN Vaccine Incentive for tribal employees will be reallocated towards the National Council approval for further use.

NCA 24-015 A law of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Amending NCA 23-042 (A law of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation authorizing the expenditure of fiscal relief funding for the benefit of the MCN Community and Human Services Department). Rep Crawford sponsored the legislation, which passed 4-0. This will be presented to the full council at the regular session.

The MCN Developmental Disabilities Advocacy Program requested a revision for their original proposed budget. According to the bill, this fund will go toward two administrative support positions and programmatic costs in two years. The funds will include both administrative support and direct assistance in the amount of \$2,500,000.

For further information, visit: <https://www.mcnnc.com>.



Muscogee (Creek) Nation

District Boundaries & Voting Location

Bristow Indian Community 710 S. Main/ Bristow, OK	Muskogee Indian Community 335 N. 4h St/ Muskogee, OK
Checotah Indian Community 500 Owens Ave./ Checotah, OK	Okemah Indian Community 1112 S. Woody Guthrie/ Okemah, OK
Dewar Indian Community 903 E. 6th/ Dewar, OK	Okmulgee Indian Community 2900 N. Osage Pl./ Okmulgee, OK
Dustin Indian Community 140 N. Broadway/ Dustin, OK	Sapulpa Indian Community 1020 N. Brown/ Sapulpa, OK
Eufaula Indian Community 800 Birkes Rd./ Eufaula, OK	Tulsa Indian Community 8611 S. Union/ Tulsa, OK
Glenpool Indian Community 14023 W. Casper/ Glenpool, OK	Twin Hills Indian Community 8110 N. HWY 62/ Okmulgee, OK
Hanna Indian Community 402692 E. 1250 RD/ Hanna, OK	Weleetka Indian Community 602 S. Chickasaw/ Weleetka, OK
Holdenville Indian Community 224 E. Poplar./ Holdenville, OK	Wetumka Indian Community 608 N. Creek/ Wetumka, OK
Koweta Indian Community 30925 E. 141st/ Coweta, OK	Yardeka Indian Community 114089 S, 3980 RD./ Henryetta, OK

OBITUARIES/BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENTS/SUBMISSIONS

ERIC DON ROBERTS



Eric Don Roberts, age 39, passed away Sunday, February 4, 2024 in Holdenville, OK. He was born June 16, 1984 in Okemah, OK to Randy Roberts and Laquita Fish.

He graduated from Butner Public Schools. He worked as a ranch hand for most of his life. He enjoyed playing Wahoo, Farkle, softball, and spending time with his family.

Eric is survived by his parents, Randy Roberts of Okmulgee, OK, and Laquita Fish of Wewoka, OK; children, Audrey Roberts

of Wewoka, OK, Kason Fields of Glenpool, OK, Jordan Proctor of Okmulgee, OK; grandchild, Emoree; siblings, Roland Roberts of Okmulgee, OK, Chad Roberts of Wewoka, OK, Robin Roberts of Dustin, OK, Randy Roberts Jr. of Wewoka, OK; companion, Misselda Miller, along with numerous nieces, nephews, other relatives and friends.

Wake service were held Sunday, Feb. 11 at Greenleaf Missionary Baptist Church in Okemah, OK.

Funeral services were held Monday, Feb. 12 at Greenleaf Missionary Baptist Church in Okemah, OK with Rev. Wayne Harjo officiating. Interment to follow at Greenleaf Missionary Baptist Church Cemetery in Okemah, OK.

Pallbearers were Curtis Bigeagle, Josh Pickett, Albert Harjo, Coy Harjo, Mike Manley, Jo Hooper.

Honorary Pallbearers were Bryant Beaver, Bruce Fish, Kenneth West, Lyman Kionute Jr.

Arrangements were made by Stout-Phillips Funeral Home in Wewoka, Oklahoma.

Editor's Note: The following is a letter to the editor submission made by Mvskoike Citizen Aaron Griffith.

Tulsa Public Schools policy 8102 states sufficient cause to rescind the name of a facility exists when an individual or organization for which the facility is named is in direct conflict with the values, beliefs or best interests of the district or it becomes obsolete or inappropriate because of the community it serves or the programming it provides. The Roosevelt building currently occupied by the Tulsa School of Arts and Sciences meets this definition to qualify for rescision based on the namesake's quote and actions.

U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt declared "I don't go so far as to think that the only good Indian is the dead Indian, but I believe nine out of every ten are, and I shouldn't like to inquire too closely into the case of the tenth. The most vicious cowboy has more moral principle than the average Indian"

He admitted Oklahoma as one state instead of two, over tribal objections, despite a vote of Indian territory supporting Sequoyah statehood for purely partisan gerrymandering purposes.

With Motey Tiger's appointment, he began the illegal practice of US Presidents appointing and having final approval of Muscogee (Creek) Principal Chiefs with no authority to engage in such interference or influence.

It's time to rescind and rename this building to better reflect the contemporary community values and the current occupants it serves. My suggested solution to Superintendent Johnson and the TPS Board for what should be a non controversial new name is quite simple and obvious really, the Tulsa School of Arts and Sciences.

- Aaron Griffith
Mvskoike Citizen



The Tulsa School of Arts and Sciences (TSAS) currently resides in a building named after former U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt. TSAS parent and Mvskoike Citizen Aaron Griffith believes the building's name should be reviewed and changed due to comments President Roosevelt made regarding Native Americans while in office. The story on Griffith's full list of filed grievances and a lawsuit against members of the Tulsa Public School board can be found on page five.(Jerrad Moore/MM)

RANSOM WADE EATON

Ransom Wade Eaton was born on Dec. 10, 2023 at 11:13 a.m. at Hillcrest Tulsa. He weighed in at 7.13 lbs. Parents are Morgan Taylor of Henryetta and Fletcher Eaton of Okemah.





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