

Tribe Holds Tree Lighting Ceremony

The holiday season kicked off on Choctaw Tribal lands as Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben hosted the annual Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians' Lighting of the Christmas Tree, held on the grounds of the Choctaw Tribal Office complex in Choctaw on Tuesday evening, December 6.

Reigning Choctaw Indian Princess Cadence Nickey served as mistress of ceremony as she told the audience the holidays are officially here.

"What a great time it is to come together and celebrate the Christmas season with our Tribe's official lighting of the Christmas tree," said Nickey. "This lighting event adds to the excitement of commemorating the birth of our Lord & savior Jesus Christ, family time, and all the festive Christmas moments."

Music students from Tucker Elementary School's third and fourth grades, along with music teacher Diane Comby on keyboard, performed several favorite Christmas carols for the audience's entertainment.

"I'm very thankful for Ms. Comby and all the school staff, not only at Tucker Elementary, but all of the Choctaw Tribal Schools that help these children display their talents," said Chief Ben. "Talents can vary, some academically, some athletically, and sometimes its through arts or singing as they have done for us tonight. I am very grateful to share this night with our children and each and everyone of you."

Chief Ben added Christmas is a time to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ and also a time to be thankful for the blessings we have received.

"We ought to be thankful for the blessings that we are able to walk this great earth. As a Tribe, we've been very blessed that we can continue to share together the blessings that each and everyone of us are given. It's great that we can also celebrate with the wonderful children we have been blessed with."



ABOVE, 2022-2023 Choctaw Indian Princess Cadence Nickey & Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben & his family pose in front of the Tribal Christmas Tree.

RIGHT, Third & fourth grade music students from Tucker Elementary School provided musical entertainment for the audience, which included several Christmas carols.



LEFT, A special guest from the North Pole, Santa Claus, made an appearance at the Tree lighting event as he took time to listen to each child's Christmas wish list. **RIGHT,** Delicious cookies & hot chocolate were provided by Pearl River Resort as members of the Boys & Girls Club Teen Center helped distribute the goodies.

FROM THE OFFICE OF TRIBAL CHIEF CYRUS BEN



Halito!

I hope everyone enjoyed the holiday season! I have enjoyed participating in many of the traditional holiday festivities both on our Tribal lands and in the surrounding communities. It has been a great joy to see many of our family members, friends and neighbors and spend time with them at these wonderful events.

Despite facing another year with the COVID-19 pandemic, we have been able to keep our infection rates low, and we have kept safety restrictions to a minimum. However, we continue to be vigilant, and I urge you to do the same. While we keep alert about COVID, we must also be on our guard against the flu and the Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV). The same safety measures we have used to fight COVID should apply to the flu and RSV. Masks, social distancing, washing or sanitizing hands, disinfecting high-traffic surfaces and staying home if you are sick are important ways to stay healthy. Of course, the best way to protect yourself is to get vaccinated, whether it is for the first time or getting a booster shot. If you have not been vaccinated, and wish to, I encourage you to go to CHC and get vaccinated today.

Also, I continue to pray for families throughout Tribal lands who have lost loved ones this year or who are going through tough times. The holidays are often a sad time for many people because they serve as a reminder that their loved one is no longer with them or struggle with other problems. If you are going through a difficult time, talk to family members and friends or seek professional assistance. Let's not be afraid to reach out for help when we need it. May God give you the strength and comfort you need.

We have made many accomplishments throughout this year, and I am proud to share the news and celebrate each and every success with you. We have many projects that have begun or will be near completion soon. So, there will be more exciting new stories to tell. One of these being the Choctaw Community News will transition to an online format. With the majority of our news posted on our MBCI Facebook page, make sure you have liked and follow the page.

As we celebrate the beginning of a new year, my family and I want to wish you and your family a New Year filled with joy, peace and much success!

Here's to a wonderful 2023!

Chi Yakokilih,

Cyrus Ben, Tribal Chief



Bok Homa Casino Celebrates 12 Years of Success

Bok Homa Casino celebrated its 12th anniversary on Tuesday, December 20, 2022, in Sandersville, Miss. In attendance were Tribal Chief & Choctaw Resort Development Enterprise Chairman Cyrus Ben, 2022-2023 Choctaw Indian Princess Cadence Nickey, Tribal Council members Michael Briscoe & Demando Mingo, Bok Homa Casino & Pearl River Resort officials. Patrons enjoyed hors d'oeuvres, cake, cash & BonusBet prizes, & commemorative T-shirts to the first 500 guests. During the festivities, officials announced plans for a casino expansion in 2023. A special guest, the University of Southern Mississippi's mascot Seymore the Eagle, made an appearance to celebrate with casino guests & associates.



TREE LIGHTING continued from page one

Chief Ben then commended spiritual leaders throughout the Tribal communities and offered his appreciation for their service to Tribal members during moments of struggle and need. As a token of gratitude, he and his family and the Tribe presented donations totaling \$1,000 to each Tribal member affiliated churches in the outlying communities.

“The Tribe, along with my family, would like to give back to the churches that do so much in the communities. To all churches, church leaders, and everyone in the communities, please say a prayer for each and everyone of us. I thank you for doing so and please continue to diligently pray for one another,” said Chief Ben.

In addition, the Choctaw Bible Translation Committee received a donation of \$25,000 from the Tribe to assist with their projects in translating the Bible into the Choctaw language. The Choctaw Baptist Association Center, located in the Pearl River community, also received a donation to purchase a new copier machine to assist with their activities.

“It’s a blessing to be here together. We are families and friends, but in the end, we are one big family,” said Chief Ben. “We are very blessed to see another year and I hope each and everyone of you have a Merry Christmas and a happy new year. God bless you.”

Chief Ben, along with his family and Princess Nickey, made their way to the light switch to officially light the Christmas tree.

With the sound of “Here Comes Santa Claus” in the air, the Choctaw Fire Department had the duty of bringing Santa Claus to the event. The children were delighted to see him as they offered their Christmas

wishes and had their pictures taken with him.

Door prizes for children and adults were awarded throughout the evening as refreshments of hot chocolate and cookies were provided by Pearl River Resort, as well as hot apple cider, compliments of Chief Ben and family.

RIGHT, Chief Ben, on behalf of the Tribe, presented a \$25,000 check to the Choctaw Bible Translation Program to assist with their projects throughout the year.

BELOW, Representatives from Tribal member affiliated churches in the outlying communities were presented a check from the Tribe & Chief Ben & family totaling \$1,000 each for their work in the communities.



Tribe Holds Christmas Fiesta Luncheon

Holiday cheer, food, and fellowship was plentiful as the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians' Annual Tribal Government Christmas Luncheon, hosted by Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben, was held on Thursday, December 22, at the Silver Star Convention Center in Choctaw.

Reigning Choctaw Indian Princess Cadence Nickey and Asa Jimmie of the Tribal Administration served as co-emcees for the event.

This year's holiday theme celebrated the sounds and taste of a Christmas Fiesta, complimented with a Mexican/Hispanic-inspired lunch buffet. Employees also had the opportunity to participate in fun games and activities for great prizes.

Chief Ben offered his appreciation to all employees for their hard work and

dedication in the Tribe's numerous accomplishments in 2022.

"There are many deserving employees of our work force who continually show great enthusiasm, commitment, and a vested interest to serve our Tribe. It is our duty to do our part and I'm very grateful for each and everyone of you," said Chief Ben.

Lynette Willis, of the MBCI Office of the Attorney General, was recognized as the 2022 Employee of the Year. She also received a monetary award for her efforts.

Employees receiving Honorable Mention and monetary awards were Penny Johnson of Choctaw Transit and Jamion Shoemaker of Tribal Maintenance & Housing Repair.

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Tribal government employees enjoyed the Christmas Fiesta luncheon & activities at the Silver Star Convention Center on Thursday, December 22.



Chief Ben & Choctaw Indian Princess Cadence Nickey present 2022 Employee of the Year honors to Lynette Willis (pictured left) & Honorable Mention Penny Johnson.



Princess Nickey & Chief Ben with Christmas Decoration Contest winners, from left to right, (1st place) Floyd Anderson & family of

Conehatta, (2nd place) Tomika Bell of Bogue Chitto, & (3rd place) Delilah Gibson of Pearl River.



Princess Nickey & Chief Ben with community Honorable Mentions, from left to right, Lemuel Solomon of Bogue Homa, Holly Sam of Crystal Ridge, Christina Wilson of Red Water, & Annalise Bell of

Tucker. Not pictured are Annie Rose of Henning, TN, Isley Mingo of Pearl River, & Sulane Jim of Standing Pine.

Winners of the 21st Annual Reservation-Wide Christmas Decoration Contest were announced. Floyd Anderson of Conehatta was the overall winner as he received a monetary prize of \$600. Tomika Bell of Bogue Chitto placed 2nd and

received \$500. Delilah Gibson of Pearl River placed third and received \$400. Contestants named Honorable Mention from each community received \$150. They included: Lemuel Solomon, Bogue Homa; Holly Sam,

Crystal Ridge; Annie Rose, Henning, TN; Isley Mingo, Pearl River; Christina Wilson, Red Water; Sulane Jim, Standing Pine; and Annalise Bell, Tucker. A highlight video of the Tribe's accomplishments in

2022 and holiday greetings from various Tribal programs and departments were presented by Choctaw Video. Pictured below are the decoration contest winning entries and honorable mentions. Congratulations to all.



Overall winner - Floyd Anderson, Conehatta



Honorable Mention - Annie Rose, Henning, TN



2nd place - Tomika Bell, Bogue Chitto



Honorable Mention - Isley Mingo, Pearl River



3rd place - Delilah Gibson, Pearl River



Honorable Mention - Christina Wilson, Red Water



Honorable Mention - Lemuel Solomon, Bogue Homa



Honorable Mention - Sulane Jim, Standing Pine



Honorable Mention - Holly Sam, Crystal Ridge



Honorable Mention - Annalise Bell, Tucker

Groundbreaking for New Housing Project in Bogue Chitto

The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians hosted a groundbreaking ceremony for a new housing project in the Bogue Chitto Community. Tribal officials, along with project partners, gathered together to break ground on 25 new housing units for Tribal members who apply & qualify through the Choctaw Housing & Loan Program.

“I am extremely proud that my administration has been able to implement this housing project entirely through Tribal Government funding,” said Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben. “This is a prime example of our long-standing commitment to Choctaw Self-Determination.”



From left to right, MBCI Construction Management officials Cameron Jenkins, Eddie Sam, & Terrence Kinsolving; Choctaw Loan Program Director Darlene Willis; Tucker Tribal Council members Demando Mingo & Wilma Simpson-McMillan; 2022-2023 Choctaw Indian Princess Cadence Raine Nickey; Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben; Bogue Chitto Tribal Council member & Vice-Chief Ronnie Henry, Sr.; Bogue Chitto Tribal Council members Kendall Wallace & Angela Hundley; & MBCI Development Division Director Sarah Medlock break ground on a new housing project in the Bogue Chitto community.

The houses will be 1200-square-foot, three-bedroom, two-bathroom units. The estimated cost of the housing project is \$3.4 million. PryorMorrow served as project architect, & Willis Engineering managed the site design. It is anticipated that the project can be completed in 300 working days, or early 2024.

Housing Ribbon Cuttings held in Pearl River

RIGHT PHOTO, On November 21, 2022, the Choctaw Housing Authority (CHA) held a ribbon cutting of the new housing subdivision at Tiak Chitto near Frog Level Road in the Pearl River Community. The housing units are for homebound & handicapped individuals. Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben, along with Tribal Council members, CHA officials, project partners & Ms. Ebony Madyun from the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD), gathered to cut the ribbon. Reigning Choctaw Indian Princess Cadence Nickey served as event emcee.



BOTTOM PHOTO, A ribbon cutting was held for eight housing units in the Indian Hills area on Thursday, December 15, 2022, in the

Pearl River Community. Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben, reigning Choctaw Indian Princess Cadence Nickey, Tribal Council members Richard Sockey, Christopher Eaves, Wilma Simpson-McMillan, Deborah Martin, Nigel Gibson, Loriann Ahshapane, Kendall Wallace & Vice Chief Ronnie Henry, Sr., & CHA officials were on hand to celebrate the addition of more housing for Tribal members. The architect for the units was Johnny Wynne & Associates, the contractor was IKBI, & the engineer was Willis Engineering. These houses are under the administration of the CHA & are rental housing for low-income families.



Ribbon Cutting in

Henning On Thursday, December 29, 2022, a ribbon cutting was held for a new housing unit in the Henning, Tennessee community. Reigning Choctaw Indian Princess Cadence Nickey, Bogue Chitto Tribal Councilman Kendall Wallace, Choctaw Housing Authority (CHA) officials & the homeowner & family members were on hand to celebrate this addition to housing for Tribal members.



Christmas Cheer at Elderly Center

The Choctaw Elderly Activity Center held a Christmas luncheon on Friday, December 16, 2022. Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben, Mrs. TaRita Ben & several members of the Tribal Administration staff handed out gift bags. Reigning Choctaw Indian Princess Cadence Nickey

also helped handing out gift bags & Christmas cards. She & Chief Ben visited with the Elders as they were very excited to receive their items, and they were glad to have a visit from them. The Elderly Activity Center staff were also distributing fruit bags & ham to the Elders.

Reception held for Carleton of MBCI Attorney General's Office

A "farewell/good luck" reception was held on Friday, December 16, 2022, at the Tribal Council Hall in Choctaw for Melissa Carleton of the MBCI Attorney General's Office. Melissa, a hard working & dedicated employee of the Tribe for over 20 years, is leaving to start her next chapter in her career. Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben, along with Tribal Council members Angela Hundley, Kendall Wallace & Timothy Thomas, Sr., current & former colleagues in the AG's Office & throughout the Tribal Government,

came to wish Melissa well as she was joined by her husband, son & mother. Chief Ben presented tokens of appreciation to Melissa, & she offered her gratitude to the Tribe for the friendships made. Following her remarks, everyone enjoyed refreshments. We congratulation Melissa & wish her the best in her future endeavors!





Christmas Visit at Residential Center

The Christmas spirit was certainly in abundance at the Choctaw Residential Center in Choctaw on Wednesday, December 21, 2022. Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben, Mrs. TaRita Ben, 2022-2023 Choctaw Indian Princess Cadence Raine Nickey, & the Tribal Administration staff visited the Choctaw Residential Center & presented holiday gift

bags to the residents. Chief Ben & his elves enjoyed the looks of happiness on the faces of the residents as they received their gifts. They were glad for the visit from Chief Ben & his companions. Thank you Chief & Mrs. Ben, Princess Cadence & Tribal Administration staff for spreading Christmas cheer at the Choctaw Residential Center!



DFCS Hosts Party for Foster Care Program

On Friday, December 16, 2022, the Department of Family & Community Services held a Christmas party at the Pearl River Community Gymnasium for Tribal children under the care of the Foster Care Program. Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben offered brief remarks, & reigning Choctaw Indian Princess Cadence Nickey was in attendance to lend

a helping hand with the gifts. Several members of the Choctaw Fire Department sang Christmas carols & also handed out gifts to the children. Sheriff James Moore from the Kemper County Sheriff's Department in DeKalb delivered 288 Disney figurines to the Department of Family & Community Services. The figurines were given to the Tribal children at the party.



4-H Members Visit CRC

On Monday, December 19, 2022, several members & volunteers of the MBCI 4-H Program visited the Choctaw Residential Center in Choctaw to present Christmas cards & ornaments to the residents. As a community service project, the holiday items were hand crafted by 4-H members in the outlying Tribal communities during the November monthly meetings. Everybody enjoyed delivering the holiday gifts while bringing a smile to the residents.



SDPI Hosts Santa Fun Walk/Run

The MBCI Special Diabetes Program for Indians (SDPI) hosted the first Santa Fun Walk/Run on Saturday, December 10, 2022, in the Pearl River Community. Participants walked or ran the 1.5 mile course beginning at the CCHS entrance gate, turning around at the Manpower Building & returning to CCHS. Participants were encouraged to be in the holiday spirit by wearing Christmas themed apparel, such as a Santa suit, red & white sweat shirts & pants, or a Santa hat.

Covid->Meth->Suicide:

The Cause and Effect


Drug use is a huge risk factor for suicide and using meth specifically has been a contributing factor in the cause of suicide. Below, are a few more details of this cause and effect and how to reach out if anyone needs help in these areas. Please take care of your health, it is important!

- **Covid Affects:** Anxiety, depression, loneliness, sadness, substance abuse
- **Meth Risks:** dangers to your physical health, depression, hallucinations, hearing voices, paranoia that someone is trying to harm you
- **Suicide Risk:** harming yourself before someone can help you, hopelessness

Suicide Crisis Lifeline- (Text or Call) 988

COVID Hotline # 601-389-4075

COVID -19 Support Group: Thursday's 12:00-1:00, CHC Healing Grounds or Choctaw Behavioral Health Conference Room.



CRISIS TEXT LINE

Text HELLO to 741741

Free, 24/7, Confidential

A "Crisis" doesn't just mean suicide... it's any painful emotion for which you need support:
Bullying • School Stress • Depression • Anxiety • Suicide
Relationships • Friendships • Family Problems • Self-Harm

Choctaw Youth Resilience Initiative (CYRI) from Behavioral Health Dept.

210 Hospital Circle
Choctaw, MS 39350

Main Office: 601-389-4150
Fax: 601-389-4152
Hours: 8:00-4:30
After hours: 601-389-4400

TES Holds Jr. Beta Club Induction Ceremony

Tucker Elementary School (TES) held their National Elementary/Junior BETA Club candlelight induction ceremony on Wednesday, December 21, 2022, inside the school gymnasium.

A total of 28 new members were inducted into the club. Junior Beta is divided into two divisions: Elementary (grades 4-5) and Junior (grades 6-8).

National Beta Club is the largest independent, non-profit, educational youth organization in America. For more than 80 years, it has prepared today's students to be tomorrow's leaders as it's mission is to promote the ideals of academic achievement, character, service and leadership among elementary and secondary school students.

TES Principal Dr. Greg Carlyle welcomed all in attendance and lead teacher Sandra Isaac offered the invocation.

Remarks were given by special guests, which included Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben, Director of Schools Dr. Randy Grierson, Tucker Tribal Council members Wilma Simpson-McMillan and Demando Mingo, and 2022-2023 Choctaw Indian Princess Cadence Nickey.

Beta sponsor Ashland Wallace introduced the current club officers as they



Twenty-eight students at Tucker Elementary School were inducted into the National Elementary/Junior BETA Club on Wednesday, December 21, at the TES Gymnasium.

participated in the candle lighting portion of the ceremony. They included: Bryce-ton McMillan, president; Braeson Sam, vice-president; Lindraya King, secretary; Leim McMillan, treasurer; and Greatone Ben, reporter. Elliana Tubby served as inductee representative. Other current members include Madelynn Henry and Eric Shumake.

The candles utilized in the ceremony represented several virtues of the Beta Club, which included: (white) - light, purity and faith; (red) - pure love, wisdom and bravery; (blue) - truth, constancy and fidelity; (black) - dignity, restraint and seriousness of National Beta Club; and (gold/yellow) - warmth, friendship and faithfulness.

Teacher Gina Reiss led the inductees in reciting the Junior Beta Club pledge as they promised to: always strive to be honest and truthful; maintain a creditable scholastic

record; to be of service to their teachers and fellow men; to conduct themselves in an ethical and moral manner; and to reflect credit upon their school and community.

New members include Paycen Comby, Braydon Farmer, Mylah Gibson, Gabriel Hilario, A'Ria McMillan, Crisney Perry, Bella Steve, Karsyn Thomas, Esmaraldo Mingo, Kaidence Thompson, Elliana Tubby, Logan Denson, Cameron Gibson, Vashunti McMillan, Reyana Robinson, Damarii Sam, Kollier Thomas, Aidan Hilario, Marshall Mingo, Esiason Willis, Tamiyah York, Annabelle Anderson, Marlee Chino, Jyles Dixon, Devin Johnson, Brodie McMillan, Colsen Stell, & Kanyon Tubby.

Refreshments of cake, cookies and punch were served following the ceremony. Congratulations to the inductees!



Angel Tree Provides Christmas Gifts

The Choctaw Tribal Schools Angel Tree received great support from Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben, Choctaw Tribal Council members, & Division of Schools & Choctaw Tribal Schools staff. Over 50 children were the joyful recipients of these donated gifts for Christmas. Thank you to all who donated for your heartwarming acts of kindness!

PFE Board Hosts Christmas Working Luncheon

The Title I Parent & Family Engagement (PFE) Board met for their December Board meeting at the Ayipa Café. Thirty-one members, guests, & staff enjoyed a delicious Christmas lunch prepared & served by the Culinary Arts students at C-TEC & their instructor, Marinda Woodruff.

PFE Chair Diana Alex welcomed guests & introduced Lai'lee Wallace, third grade student at Bogue Chitto Elementary School, as she sang three Christmas songs in both Choctaw & English.

Ira Tubby was recognized as December's Outstanding Choctaw Educator. He

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TAG Students' Ornaments Displayed at Governor's Mansion

“Mississippi Hometown Christmas” was the theme chosen by Governor Tate Reeves and First Lady Elee Reeves for this year's “Christmas at the Mansion.” The theme reflected the beauty that our towns and cities bring to the state.

“Mississippi is rich in culture and history – from beautiful art and moving literature to incredible music and delicious food,” said Governor Tate Reeves. “This theme will pay tribute to the many unique communities across our state along with all the people and places that make Mississippi great. Since Mississippi’s founding, our Southern hospitality has continued to offer our visitors a memorable experience and there’s no better time to showcase what makes our state so special than during the Christmas season.”

The Governor and First Lady called on artists, towns, and cities around the state to create and donate ornaments – which were displayed throughout the Christmas season – that highlight the distinctive history, culture or story of their town, city, or region.

To showcase the artwork of Talented and Gifted (TAG) students from Choctaw Tribal Schools, traditional hand-beaded Christmas ornaments were created by the students to be used as part of the Christmas décor at the Governor’s Mansion.

The Choctaws have always been recognized for their distinctive artwork and now to see the younger generation carrying on this traditional talent has been gratifying. It was rewarding for the TAG students to visit the Governor’s Mansion on Tuesday, December 13, 2022, and see their ornaments on display.



Happy Holidays



From the Departments and Programs of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians



Tribal Administration



Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben
2022-2023 Choctaw Indian Princess Cadence Nickey



Choctaw Transit



Choctaw Loan Program



Career and Technical Education Center



Henning, TN Facilities



Vocational Rehabilitation



Pearl River Daycare



Workforce Development



Choctaw Health Center (CHC) Administration



CHC Managed Care / Business Office



CHC Behavioral Health



CHC Diabetic Care Clinic



CHC Maintenance



CHC Medical Coding / Billing



CHC Security



CHC Environmental Health



CHC Pharmacy



CHC Women's Wellness



CHC Respiratory Therapy



CHC WIC Office



CHC Health Information



CHC Procurement

CHRISTMAS PARADE FUN



Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben served as Grand Marshal of the Philadelphia Christmas Parade on Monday, Dec. 5, 2022, in honor of his recognition earlier this year as Citizen of the Year by the Philadelphia-Neshoba County Community Development Partnership.

Congratulations to Red Water Elementary School as they placed 1st in the Civic Categories of the Carthage Christmas Parade on Thursday, Dec. 1, and the Philadelphia Christmas Parade on Monday, Dec. 5!





Department of Chahta Immi



2022-2023 Choctaw Indian Princess
Cadence Raine Nickey



Choctaw Fire Department



Congratulations to Bok Homa Casino as they placed 1st in the Sandersville Christmas Parade on Saturday, Dec. 3!



MS School Districts to Receive Funding from EPA’s Clean School Bus Program

On October 26, 2022, the Biden-Harris Administration announced the Fiscal Year 2022 recipients of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) Clean School Bus Program rebate competition, awarding over \$36 million from President Biden’s Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to 9 school districts in Miss.

The grants will help school districts purchase over 96 clean school buses that will accelerate the transition to zero emissions vehicles and produce cleaner air in and around schools and communities.

Vice President Kamala

Harris and EPA Administrator Michael S. Regan joined schoolchildren, district leaders and community members in Seattle, Washington, as they made the announcement and highlighted how it will reduce greenhouse gas emissions, save schools money, and better protect children’s health.

The investment will also drive demand for American-made batteries and vehicles, boost domestic manufacturing, and create good-paying jobs.

“President Biden’s historic Bipartisan Infrastructure Law is accelerating our nation’s tran-

sition to electric and low-emission school buses while ensuring a brighter, healthier future for our children,” said EPA Administrator Michael S. Regan. “As many as 25 million children rely on the bus to get to school each day. Thanks to the Biden-Harris Administration, we are making an unprecedented investment in our children’s health, especially those in communities overburdened by air pollution. This is just the beginning of our work to build a healthier future, reduce climate pollution, and ensure the clean, breathable air that all our children deserve.”

The announcement includes funding for buses and infrastructure for districts in cities like:

Hollandale School District (Hollandale, Miss.) - \$1,580,000 for the purchase of 4 buses;

Grenada School District (Grenada, Miss.) - \$790,000 for the purchase of 2 buses;

Vicksburg Warren School District (Vicksburg, Miss.) - \$3,500,000 for the purchase of 10 buses;

Tate County School District (Coldwater, Miss.) - \$1,185,000 for the purchase of 3 buses;

Chickasaw County School District (Houlka, Miss.) - \$4,345,000 for the purchase of 11 buses;

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has worked for the schools for 28 years. Ira’s entire teaching career has been with the Choctaw Tribal Schools as he has taught hundreds of Choctaw students about their history & unique cultural heritage.

Ira attended elementary & high school in Kosciusko. After graduation, he furthered his education at Holmes Community College. He earned a Bachelor of Science Degree in Physical Education at Mississippi State University. Ira & his wife, Cynthia, have been married for 42 years & they have two sons & 14 grandchildren.

Sherry Tubby, C-TEC Administrator, shared some information about the Career & Technical Education Center:

- 200 students are being served in two blocks of time each day.
- Courses offered for the 2022-2023 school year are: Construction, Digital Media, Agricultural Sciences, Cul-



LEFT, Ira Tubby, December’s Outstanding Choctaw Educator. **CENTER**, Bogue Chitto Elementary School student Lai’Lee Wallace & BCES Culture Teacher Renata Morris. **RIGHT**, PFE Chair Diana Alex & C-TEC Administrator Sherry Tubby.

nary Arts, Engineering, Health Sciences, Work Based Learning, Educator Preparation, Welding, & Work Apprenticeship. Coming soon is the Electrical Pathways Program.

• Beginning in January 2023, the newly renovated Ayipa Café will be open to the public for lunch on Thursdays & Fridays.

Dr. Randall Grierson, Director of Schools, reported the following school news:

- The Anti-Bullying Poster Contest had over 100 entries.

Winners received a Wal-Mart gift card.

- BIE & Indian Health Services personnel will be working with our students on anti-bullying for three weeks.
- After School is now being offered to middle & high school students three days a week.
- Progress awards will recognize students who may not be on the honor roll.
- Mississippi State Superintendent of Education Dr. Kim S. Benton visited Choctaw on

December 6, to recognize the Choctaw Tribal Schools’ student achievements.

Board members voted to hold two PFE meetings in the first semester & two meetings in the second semester. Tia Grisham was elected to represent Red Water Community on the Board.

For further information, please contact Heather Adams at 601-663-7640 or Dianne Johnston at 601-656-5724.

Calhoun County School District (Pittsboro, Miss.) - \$9,875,000 for the purchase of 25 buses;

Jackson Public School District 2520 (Jackson, Miss.) - \$9,875,000 for the purchase of 25 buses;

Choctaw Central High School (Choctaw, Miss.) - \$3,660,000 for the purchase of 12 buses;

Aberdeen School District (Aberdeen, Miss.) - \$1,580,000 for the purchase of 4 buses.

“I am pleased to support the work that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is completing for the areas in my district,” said Congressman Bennie G. Thompson. “The \$5 million will help the school districts purchase clean school buses. Many of the students in my district rely on school buses while traveling to and from school. I am thankful for the Biden-Harris Administration and the work that they continue to do. This is only the begin-

ning for providing a healthier future and clean air that all children deserve.”

“Children’s health is a top priority for EPA and this historic funding is an innovative way to reduce the serious health impacts of diesel emissions as children ride to and from school,” said EPA Region 4 Administrator Daniel Blackman. “The BIL Clean School Bus Program will improve air quality and human health not only for our children, but for the communities where they live and play.”

In May 2022, EPA announced the availability of \$500 million for its Clean School Bus Program. Given overwhelming demand from school districts across the country, including in low-income communities, Tribal nations, and territories, EPA nearly doubled the amount of funding that will be awarded to \$965 million.

The rebate application period closed in August with an out-

standing response from school districts seeking to purchase electric and low-emission school buses across the country.

The agency has selected 389 applications totaling \$913 million to support the purchase of 2,463 buses, 95 percent of which will be electric. EPA will distribute awards to school districts in all 50 states, Washington D.C., along with several federally recognized Tribes and U.S. territories.

School districts identified as priority areas serving low-income, rural, and, or Tribal students make up 99 percent of the projects that were selected. More applications were under review, and the agency selected more to reach the full \$965 million.

Those school districts who received an award can now proceed with purchasing new buses and eligible infrastructure. Selectees will need to submit Payment Request Forms with

purchase orders demonstrating they have ordered new buses and eligible infrastructure.

EPA is also partnering with the U.S. Department of Energy and Department of Transportation to provide school districts with robust technical assistance to ensure effective implementation.

These awards are the first \$1 billion of a five-year, \$5 billion program created by President Biden’s Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. EPA is also designing the next rounds of program funding to launch in the coming months, which will include an ambitious grant competition.

Through future rounds of funding, EPA will make available another \$1 billion for clean school buses in Fiscal Year 2023. EPA encourages school districts not selected in the first round of rebates – and those that did not apply this funding cycle – to participate in future rounds.

Creative Christmas Draws Shoppers to Choctaw

A staple of the holiday season in Choctaw is the return of the annual Creative Christmas, held on December 9-10, 2022, at the former Dollar General location in the Choctaw Town Center in Choctaw. The event, coordinated by the Department of Natural Resources, had 79 vendors to participate. Since its inception in 1999, Creative Christmas allows individuals to showcase their creative talents in producing unique hand-made items, beaded jewelry & other beaded products, just in time for the holiday shopping season. Baked goods & lunch items were also on sale for those looking for a sweet treat or a filling lunch plate to curb their appetite. With the success of the event, people were already inquiring about next year's Creative Christmas!



CFP Grows Organic Movement in Mississippi

By Nancy Henderson,
farmflavor.com

In 2012, when the head chef at Pearl River Resort wondered why the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians wasn't growing produce for the casino restaurants, a group of organizers launched Choctaw Fresh Produce (CFP) to create jobs for tribal members. A handful of mini farms soon opened.

Today, CFP cultivates a total of 5 acres on four farms, some with the potential to add blueberries & fruit trees. Wildflowers attract pollinators & other beneficial insects.

"We realized after quite a few years of trial & error that CFP actually had a bigger responsibility of providing food security for the tribe, especially those living in food deserts with few nutritious, affordable options," said Daphne Snow, CFP farm manager.

"CFP is committed to providing as much organic, fresh,

locally grown & sustainably farmed produce as possible to tribal members. CFP also strives to regenerate the soil so that it is healthy for generations to come."

CFP Grows a Movement

At CFP, six employees grow all types of vegetables, introducing a new kind each season & concentrating on those that are culturally significant to the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, such as zucchini, lemon cucumber & collard greens. All start as seeds that sprout in the greenhouse & are later transplanted into 16 high tunnels where the plants grow directly in the ground, just like in the field.

Flexible clear sides can be raised & lowered, allowing for a longer growing season & more control over water usage & temperature.

"Organic produce helps CFP stand out as a shining star in the farming community as being one of only a handful of USDA-certified organic & Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certified small farms in Mississippi," Snow said. "We are committed to doing the best for the land & the people."

The most recent fall-winter & spring-summer crops provided more than 32,000 pounds of fresh produce to tribal schools,

senior centers, restaurants, grocery stores & the employee dining rooms at both tribal casinos. At pop-up markets, young tribal ambassadors sell vegetables by the roadside, while drive-through mobile markets educate students about where their food comes from & show tribal members how to prepare what they buy.

"Refocusing on traditional foods & incorporating them into new recipes has been a stepping stone to improving
continued next page



LEFT, Tomika Bell of Choctaw Fresh Produce shows tribal members where their food is grown & who grows it. **RIGHT**, CFP specializes in direct-to-store delivery throughout Central Mississippi to a broad variety of organic-focused buyers. Photo credit: Karen Pulfer Focht

Processing *Shokka Nippi*

By Melford Farve, CCN

When you think of traditional Choctaw foods, conjured images include cast iron pots cooking over an open fire, with split oak burning on a bed of red-hot embers, smoke billowing around the cooking area as cooks keep a watchful eye on the delicacies in the boiling cauldron.

There are several dishes prepared outdoors that are favorites of tribal members, such as hominy, fry bread, fried chicken, to name a few, but one dish near the top of the list is *shokka nippi* (hog meat).

Pork has been a Choctaw food staple for generations. Hogs were among the various

commodities that were traded between the Europeans/American settlers and the Choctaws during the 1800's.

The preparation in harvesting a hog is an eye-opening experience. This writer witnessed this process one fall morning in 1988 as families in the Bogue Chitto community were preparing for a feast for a Choctaw wedding.

A tribal hunter started the proceedings by shooting the hog in the head and the throat or chest area is severed. After some time to bleed out, the hog is cleaned & placed in a tub or barrel as boiling hot water is poured over it to loosen the hair. Using a sharp knife or blade, the entire hog is shaved.

After this process, the hog's head & the intestines are removed. Experienced hands take the lead to cut the hog into pieces. Nothing is wasted as a variety of food items are made.

There are a few families that still gather in the cooler months to butcher a hog, especially for an upcoming gathering. But traditions sometimes give way to faster and easier ways to cook hog meat, such as going to the local grocery store and asking the butcher to cut up pieces of a pork roast to cook.

Though the process of producing *shokka nippi* takes a lot of work, the resulting reward is time of fellowship for all those working together, and



Photo from 2015 shows a Tribal member preparing the hog to be doused with scalding hot water to loosen the hairs. The hog will then be shaved prior to being processed.

also gives the younger generation an opportunity to learn and continue a tradition.

the community’s health education,” says Tomika Bell, CFP local food coordinator. “Also, having community gardens within the tribal communities not only provides access to fresh food to alleviate food insecurity but is also a source of social support & emotional well-being for the whole community of residents.”

Locally raised food has so many benefits including health. “Improving access to healthy,

culturally appropriate foods will help lower rates of diabetes & obesity, which affect Native Americans at disproportionately high rates.”

Small Footprint, Big Impact

CFP’s outreach efforts show tribal members where their food is grown & who grows it.

“I believe Choctaw Fresh Produce’s biggest role is to restore the food systems that support Choctaw self-determi-

nation, wellness, culture, values, communities, economies, languages & families, all while rebuilding relationships with the land, plants & water that sustain us,” Bell said.

“The impact has been far greater than most people know,” Snow said. “Our footprint is small, but our voice is loud. There are many ways to make a difference, & to help your neighbor & farm locally are at the top of the list.”

MSU avian conservation efforts soar with Tombigbee Forest Bird Partnership

By Trey Barrett

STARKVILLE, Miss.— While the U.S. & Canada have lost approximately a quarter of bird life—or 2.9 billion breeding adult birds—since 1970, Mississippi State researchers are finding ways to improve working forests for avian conservation.

Two-thirds of Mississippi, or approximately 19.2 million acres, is forestland. The state’s working forests support a \$13.8 billion forestry & forest products industry. A new partnership, the Tombigbee Forest Bird Partnership, aims to showcase & maintain the values of sustainable forest management in these private forestlands to increase bird populations.

Kristine Evans, an associate professor in the Mississippi State Department of Wildlife, Fisheries & Aquaculture & the

associate director of MSU’s Geosystems Research Institute, is working closely with partners from multiple organizations & private companies on this effort. She has done extensive work with landbird conservation efforts & recently was recognized as one of three avian conservationists in the Western Hemisphere to receive the annual Partners in Flight Award, given by a network of more than 150 landbird conservation organizations.

Evans, a scientist in MSU’s Forest & Wildlife Research Center, explained how working forests can make a difference in avian conservation.

“Across the southern U.S., 86 percent of forests are privately owned, many managed for timber production. Working forests are critical to sustainability of biodiversity & economic security in rural southern land-



Kristine Evans, an associate professor in the Mississippi State Department of Wildlife, Fisheries & Aquaculture, participates in a bird count.

(Photo by David Ammon)

scapes, & support many imperiled species,” she said.

While the partnership will focus on improving avian conservation in these forests, Evans pointed out how many of these

see BIRDS, pg. 20

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IN MEMORIAM

LARRYLE ANDREW McMILLAN

Graveside service for Larryle Andrew McMillan, 45, was held on Wednesday, December 7, 2022, at Isaac Cemetery in Pearl River. Rev. Ricky Thompson, Sr. officiated. John E. Stephens Chapel was in charge of arrangements.



Larry McMillan; daughters, La-Shayla McMillan, Laraya McMillan, & Larena McMillan; sisters, Trescilla Willis, Gina Willis, Nandrea McMillan, & Donya McMillan; brothers, Nicky Charlie & Hildrethson Willis; 7 grandchildren, & a host of nieces, nephews, relatives, & friends.

ARLIE DEE YORK

Funeral service for Arlie Dee York, 74, was held on Thursday, December 8, 2022, at Pearl River Baptist Church. Pastor Curtis Willis, Sr. officiated.



Burial was in Phillips Cemetery. John E. Stephens Chapel was in charge of arrangements.

Mrs. York passed away on December 4 at the Choctaw

Health Center.

She was a cook at the Choctaw Detention Center & was previously a teacher aide at Pearl River Daycare. She enjoyed yard sales, Choctaw hymns, crossword puzzles, & calling her friends & family.

She is preceded in death by her parents, Riley & Arlester Phillips; son, Alejandro York; sisters, Chirstine Phillips Johnson, Joanna Phillips Henry, & Audrey Phillips Sam; brothers, Roy Phillips, Sr., D.C. Phillips, John Robert Phillips, M.C. Phillips, & Newman Phillips; 2 nieces & 2 nephews.

Survivors include her daughter, Sonya York; sons, Jerry York, Jr. & Eric York; brother, Kenneth Phillips; a special nephew, Jonah Phillips; 8 grandchildren, 10 great-grandchildren, & a host of nieces, nephews, relatives, & friends.

VANASSA NINETTE SMITH

Funeral service for Vanassa Ninette Smith, 50, was held on Sunday, December 18, 2022, at the Pearl River CERF Build-

ing. Pastor Thomas Ben officiated.

Burial was in Frazier Cemetery. John E. Stephens Chapel was in charge of arrangements.

Ms. Smith passed away on December 6 at her residence.

She was an officer with the Choctaw Police Department. She enjoyed watching her children playing sports & watching the Dallas Cowboys.

She is preceded in death by her parents, Roger Smith & Melba Jean Bell; & a son, Jaston Frazier.

Survivors include her daughters, Hailey Ellingburg & Raleigh Lunderman; sons, Casius Lunderman & Jad Frazier; a sister, Priscilla Morris; & a host of relatives & friends.

DORIS ANN ALLEN BELL

Funeral service for Doris Ann Allen Bell, 78, was held

continued next page



BIRDS continued from page nineteen

lands already provide significant habitat for birds.

“At one TFBP site, we detected 76 bird species. That’s comparable to most protected, non-production forests,” she said. “We seek to raise awareness of the value of these managed forest systems for biodiversity while making small management enhancements that will increase sustainability of forest resources for wildlife without impacting economic returns.”

Evans has also helped lead the East Gulf Coastal Plain Landbird Conservation Plan, which details long-term population & habitat objectives of 29 prioritized landbird species across six Southern states. The objectives identified in the plan will be utilized in the partnership.

“We must enhance our understanding of how forest management activities influence species diversity & abundance at the landscape scale to help achieve forest

sustainability objectives. By combining ecological theory with forest management, we can better integrate conservation measures, particularly for at-risk species, while simultaneously achieving land use objectives,” Evans said.

The partnership—which spans a 1 million-acre, 75-mile radius around Starkville, encompassing 19 northeastern Mississippi counties & six northwestern Alabama counties—includes the American Bird Conservancy, which helms the effort.

Emily Jo “EJ” Williams, vice president of the American Bird Conservancy’s Southeast & Atlantic Coast Region & project lead, stated the project’s goals.

“We want to communicate the values of the forests, sustain & increase conservation among avian species and utilize the TFBP area for demonstrations & outreach to local communities,” Williams said.

Local communities, including the Mis-

issippi Band of Choctaw Indians, are also involved. The tribe has about 28,000 acres of land & is in the process of rebuilding its dictionary. ABC scientists are assisting the tribe in identifying native bird species.

“We’re learning about the cultural importance of the birds from Choctaw Native Americans & some of the names for trees & birds in the Choctaw language,” Williams said. “It’s so important to think about that in our landscape.”

Through this project, William hopes local communities can learn the impacts private forests have on avian ecology.

“We want communities to realize how they can benefit from these forested landscapes & help them realize why these landscapes are so valuable,” Williams said.

For more on MSU’s Forest & Wildlife Research Center, visit www.fwrc.msstate.edu.

on Monday, December 12, 2022, at the Pearl River Community Center. Rev. Ricky Thompson, Sr. officiated.



Burial was in Phillips Cemetery. John E. Stephens Chapel was in charge of arrangements.

Ms. Bell passed away on December 8 at her daughter's residence.

She was a secretary with Red Water Elementary School & had prior stints in San Diego, CA, & Choctaw Central Middle School. She also served in supply offices with the Choctaw Health Department & General Services Administration in Fort Worth, TX. She enjoyed making traditional Choctaw attire & was a fan of Red Water Elementary School, Choctaw Central High School & Oka Homma Stickball teams.

She is preceded in death by her parents, Maggie Allen & Gassler York; a sister, Bertha Taylor; brothers, Donald Hubert Allen & Glen York; & 2 aunts.

Survivors include her daughter, Rhonda Renee Bell; a sister, Carol Adkinson; brothers, Carlton Allen & Aaron "Ace" York; six grandchildren, 11 great-grandchildren, & a host of relatives & friends.

MARC ANTHONY JIM, SR.

Funeral service for Marc Anthony Jim, Sr., 52, was held on Saturday, December 17, 2022, at the Pearl River Community Center. Rev. Ricky Thompson, Sr. officiated.



Burial was in the Greenhill Methodist Cemetery. John E. Stephens Chapel was in charge of arrangements.

Mr. Jim passed away on December 13 at the Baptist Medical Center in Jackson.

He loved basketball & baseball, shopping, & his security job.

He is preceded in death by his parents, Dennis Jim, Sr. & Sally Ann Allen Jim; sister, Denise Jim & Angie Jim; & brothers, Darwin Jim, Ryan T. Jim, Harold Jim, & Derrick Mingo; an aunt & 2 uncles.

Survivors include his daughters, Sharon Brown-Jim & Makaiya Jim; sons, Jeremy Crump, Marc Lewis, Marc Jim, Jr., Joshua Jim, Antonio Houston, & Emanuel Sean Isaac; sisters, Damita Jim & Anita Jim; brothers, Justin Jim, Dennis Jim, Jr. & Jamie Jim; 17 grandchildren & a host of nieces, nephews, relatives, & friends.

TRUDY MAE CHAPMAN

Graveside service for Trudy Mae Chapman, 74, was held on Monday, December 19, 2022, at the Bogue Homa Community Cemetery. Deacon Rich Hollingsworth officiated. John E. Stephens Chapel was in charge of arrangements.



Ms. Chapman passed away on December 13 at the Care Center in Laurel.

She was a Catholic by faith & a devoted homemaker. She enjoyed gardening, traveling, & being with family.

She is preceded in death by her parents, Frank Asa Chapman & Mary McMillan Chapman; sisters, Theresa Willis, Mary Jane Vaughn, & Rosie Sorrells; brothers, John Mingo, Clifton Chapman, & Gene Ray Chapman.

Survivors include daughter, Ruby Denise Myrick (Stephen); sisters, Shirley Briscoe, Betty Sutton, Annie Jalalza-

deh, & Norma Davis; brother, Claude Chapman; 3 grandchildren & a host of nieces, nephews, relatives, & friends.

THURDIS RAY TUBBY, JR.

Funeral service for Thurdis Ray Tubby, Jr., 26, was held on Thursday, December 22, 2022, at Hope Indian Baptist Church in Pearl River. Deacon Williamson Isaac & Rev. Travis Willis officiated.



Burial was in Bogue Chitto Community Cemetery. John E. Stephens Chapel was in charge of arrangements.

Mr. Tubby passed away on December 13 at the Choctaw Health Center in Choctaw.

He was a member of Hope Indian Baptist Church & was employed in the poultry business. He enjoyed gospel hymns & early rap music, hunting, fishing, working on vehicles, & playing stickball.

He is preceded in death by his grandparents, Leon & Arlene Anderson Tubby, Jerry Clemons, Sr. & Betty Bell; & a brother, Thurdrek Hoshuti Hitha Tubby.

Survivors include his parents, Thurdis Ray Tubby, Sr. & Rose Nell Clemons; daughter, Macy Deselle Tubby; companion, Jennifer Wickson; sister, Hope Thomas; brother, Coleman Willis; an uncle & a host of nieces, nephews, relatives, & friends.

EDNA DEANN SOCKEY

Funeral service for Edna Deann Sockey, 36, was held on Tuesday, December 20, 2022, at the Standing Pine Communi-



ty Gymnasium. Rev. Shaunde Ahshapanek & Rev. Timothy Tubby officiated.

Burial was in Standing Pine Community Cemetery. John E. Stephens Chapel was in charge of arrangements.

Ms. Sockey passed away on December 15 at her residence.

She was employed with Choctaw Housing Authority & was skilled in residential repairs. She was also interested in auto maintenance.

She is preceded in death by her grandparents, Houston & Edna Sam Lewis, Mike & Valera Sockey.

Survivors include her parents, Clyde Sockey & Waudine Sockey; daughters, Jaleann Jalisa Sockey & Malena Lynn Mitch; son, Simuel Blane Sockey; sisters, Michelle Dixon, Sheila Willis, & Kimberly Lewis; brothers, Peter Sockey, Christopher Sockey, Cameron Sockey, & Kyle Sockey; & a host of aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, relatives, & friends.

HARLEY VAUGHN

Funeral service for Harley Vaughn, 61, was held on Friday, December 23, 2022, at Hope



Indian Baptist Church in Pearl River. Deacon Williamson Isaac & Rev. Travis Willis officiated.

Burial was in Hope Indian Baptist Cemetery. John E. Stephens Chapel was in charge of arrangements.

Mr. Vaughn passed away on December 17 at Anderson Regional Medical Center in Meridian.

He was a Baptist by faith & was a member of Hope Indian Baptist Church. A 1980 graduate of Choctaw Central High

OBITUARIES continued from page twenty-one

School, he attended Haskell Indian Junior College then East Central Junior College & earned a certificate in carpentry. He was an Inventory Specialist with Choctaw Tribal Schools for 33 years & retired in February 2022. He enjoyed hunting, fishing, woodworking, traditional social dancing, drumming, & playing stickball with Bok Cito. He was a CCHS band booster & Choctaw Indian Fair stage crew member.

He is preceded in death by his parents, Clifton & Rene Bell Vaughn; sisters, Judy Thompson, Earline Hickman, & Betty Phillips; & brothers, Jerry Vaughn, Harry Vaughn, & Jimmy Vaughn, Sr.

Survivors include the mother of his children, Rae Nell Vaughn; daughters, Hillary Vaughn, Mahlih Bowden, & Breanna Vaughn; sisters, Rosalie Bell, Lorena Alex, Nancy Vaughn, & Pauline Vaughn; brothers, Thomas Vaughn & Roger Vaughn; 5 grandchildren; & a host of nieces, nephews, relatives, & friends.

BETHANY CHARLES THOMPSON

Funeral service for Bethany Charles Thompson, 73, was held on Wednesday, January 4, 2023, at Bogue Chitto Baptist Church. Deacon Randy Jim & Rev. Charles Doby Henry officiated.



Burial was in Bogue Chitto Community Cemetery. John E. Stephens Chapel was in charge of arrangements.

Mr. Thompson passed away on December 19 at Christus St. Michael Health System in Texarkana, TX.

A native of the Bogue Chitto community, his family moved

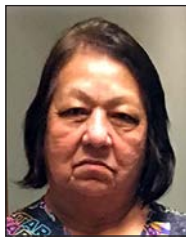
to Oakland, CA. After graduation, he moved to South Carolina & worked on a road crew. He then moved to Arkansas & worked as a tree trimmer, laborer, & elementary school janitor. He was a Baptist by faith & enjoyed fishing, going on car rides, & watching his favorite western movies.

He is preceded in death by his parents, Fommie & Sally Hickman Thompson; wife, Carolyn Wiliston Thompson; & sisters, Janice Thompson Bell and Nancy Thompson Sockey Mingo.

Survivors include his daughter, Lisa A. Parker; sons, Charles W. Thompson & Clarence Troy Thompson; 8 grandchildren, 26 great-grandchildren, & a host of nieces, nephews, relatives, friends, & a special friend, Arlene Jones.

IVA LOU STEVE

Funeral service for Iva Lou Steve, 67, was held on Thursday, December 29, 2022, at the Bogue Chitto Community Gymnasium. Rev. Mark Patrick officiated.



Burial was in Bogue Chitto Community Cemetery. John E. Stephens Chapel was in charge of arrangements.

Ms. Steve passed away on December 25 at Choctaw Residential Center in Choctaw.

She was a CNA at Choctaw Health Center until her retirement in 2020. She enjoyed baking, sewing, taking photographs, watching her grandkids compete in sports, & visiting the casinos.

She is preceded in death by her parents, Bob & Rosaline Bell; sisters, Linda Christensen, Gina Nene, Anita Cot-

ton, & Evelyn Jefferson; a brother, Robert Bell; a grandson, Kayvion Cunningham; & a companion, Nolan Gibson.

Survivors include her daughters, Amelia Steve & Carla Bobo; son, Jeremiah Steve; sister, Verna Bell; sons-in-laws, Kyle Thompson & Cordero Bobo, Sr.; 13 grandchildren, 2 great-grandchildren, & a host of nieces, nephews, relatives, & friends.

LAURA SOLOMON

Funeral service for Laura Solomon, 69, was held on Tuesday, January 3, 2023, at Millington Chapel in Millington, TN. Rev. Willie Solomon, Jr. & Bro. Eugene Norris officiated.



Burial was in Northridge Woodhaven Cemetery in Millington, TN.

Ms. Solomon passed away on December 26.

A native of the Conehatta community, she moved to Memphis, TN, in the early 1960's & became an artisan in traditional beading & pottery making. She loved attending arts & craft shows, pow wows, & fishing with her grandchildren. She was a member of Range Hills Baptist Church & was passionate of her faith & family.

She is preceded in death by her parents, Phillip Favre & Katie Mae Stephens; husband, Hillman Solomon, Sr.; daughter, Heather Solomon; & sons, Hillman Solomon, Jr. & James Solomon.

Survivors include her daughters, Myra Frazier, Darnell Gibson, Patricia Craig, & Brenda Solomon; sisters, Agnes King, Regina Shoemake, & Linda Chickaway; a brother,

Gary Johnson; 8 grandchildren, 6 great-grandchildren, & a host of nieces, nephews, relatives, & friends.

INFANT IAN AMES ASHBY WILLIS

Memorial service for Ian Ames Ashby Willis, 2 year old infant, was held on Saturday, January 7, 2023, at Lake Pushmataha in Choctaw. Bro. Eddie Johnson officiated.



Infant Willis passed away on December 26 at his residence.

He is preceded in death by his grandparents, Ronald & Synthia Willis, & Susan Irene Frazier.

Survivors include his parents, James & Ariane Willis; grandfather, Elvie Frazier; one who helped raise him, Alanna Frazier; sisters, Ari'Rose Willis, Taylee Charlie, Arianna Charlie, & Necie Charlie; brothers, Liam Willis, J'Bree Willis, Roman Charlie, Jr., & Eisley Charlie; & a host of relatives & friends of the family.

BRUCE COTY THOMPSON

Funeral service for Bruce Coty Thompson, 39, was held on Friday, December 30, 2022, at the Bogue Chitto Baptist Church. Rev. Charles Doby Henry officiated.



Burial was in Bogue Chitto Community Cemetery. John E. Stephens Chapel was in charge of arrangements.

Mr. Thompson passed away on December 27 at his residence.

He was a member of Bogue

Chitto Baptist Church & Bogue Chitto Development Club. He was involved with the Nanih Waiya Stickball Team & enjoyed the company of others.

He is preceded in death by his grandparents, Ellis & Lena Thompson, Tom Amos & Maggie Billie.

Survivors include his parents, Darlene Thompson & Harold Amos; a sister, Rebecca Blanco; 4 aunts; & a host of family & friends.

HOUSTON COTTON

Funeral service for Houston Cotton, 76, was held on Thursday, January 5, 2023, at his residence at 998 Indian Road in Louisville, MS. Deacon Joseph



Wesley & Rev. George Dixon officiated.

Burial was in Choctaw Christian Church Cemetery. John E. Stephens Chapel was in charge of arrangements.

Mr. Cotton passed away on December 27 at the Choctaw Health Center in Choctaw.

He was employed with Winston County Sanitation until his retirement. He enjoyed watching western movies, being a fan of Clint Eastwood, talking on the phone, & listening to music.

He is preceded in death by his parents, Molpus & Ronie Chapman Cotton; brothers, George Cotton, KC Cotton, Jerry Chapman, & David Cotton; 3 nieces & a nephew.

Survivors include his daughter, Histina Thomas; sister, Pauline Lewis; 2 grandchildren, & a host of nieces, neph-

ews, relatives, & friends.

ANTHEN JOHNSON, JR.

Funeral service for Anthen Johnson, Jr., 50, was held on Friday, January 6, 2023, at the Pearl River Community Center. Deacon Williamson Isaac & Rev. Travis Willis officiated.



Burial was in Phillips Cemetery. John E. Stephens Chapel was in charge of arrangements.

Mr. Johnson passed away on December 31 at his residence.

He was previously employed with Pearl River Resort before moving to Allied Universal

Security Service. He enjoyed going to the shooting range, watching Netflix, Sci-fi, documentaries, & being a Raiders fan.

He is preceded in death by his parents, Anthen Johnson Sr. & Ivora Willis Hickman Johnson; sisters, Sylvia Louise Hickman, Deborah Hickman Bell, & Miranda Johnson Wallace; & brothers, Jeffery Dale Hickman, Darryl Drufuss Hickman, Leonard Wayne Hickman, & Flavian Roger Hickman.

Survivors include his wife, Cynthia Johnson; step-daughters, Kalah Clemons & Kerrigan Clemons; sister, Angela Hickman John; 6 step-grandchildren, & a host of nieces, nephews, relatives, & friends.

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Warriors Participate in 5th Indigenous Bowl

Congratulations to 2022 Choctaw Central Warriors football team members, pictured from left to right, Brydon Wesley LaSarge, Gannon Vaughn, & Jeriah Jimmie, as they participated in the 5th Annual Indige-



nous Bowl in Minneapolis, Minn., on Sunday, December 11, 2022, at U.S. Bank Stadium, home of the NFL's Minnesota Vikings. The game, highlighting graduating seniors, is part of an effort to offer 75 Native American high school football players from federally recognized tribes across the country the opportunity to further develop & showcase their talents that might otherwise escape the notice of college recruiters. The event was sponsored by American Indian advocacy group 7G Foundation & the NFL. LaSarge & Jimmie were on the Red Knights squad as Vaughn was on the Bad Medicine squad. Bad Medicine came away with a 33-16 victory.

CHOCTAW COMMUNITY NEWS

DECEMBER 2022

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Williams Qualifies for National Bowling Championships

Congratulations to Allie Williams as she recently won the Tennessee Road to the Gold bowling tournament & qualified for the Junior Gold National Bowling Championships in Indianapolis this summer. She is currently a freshman at Ottawa University (KS) & is a member of the women's bowling team. A 2022 graduate of Neshoba Central High School, Williams was part of Neshoba Central's bowling team that earned five state championships. She earned First Team All-State three times & Second Team All-State in her freshman season. At Neshoba, she earned MVP for the bowling team three times. Williams was the Clarion Ledger Girl's Bowler of the Year Runner-Up & a Mississippi Sports Awards Girl's Bowler of the Year finalist.



CHOCTAW COMMUNITY NEWS

The Choctaw Community News is available at no charge upon request. Donations to help cover the cost of printing, mailing are welcomed.

Correspondence should be addressed to:

COMMUNICATIONS PROGRAM

P.O. BOX 6010

CHOCTAW, MS 39350

TELEPHONE: 601-663-7736

Brian C. Willis, *Communications Manager*
Melford Farve, *Communications Writer*
Darron Tubby, *Communications Photographer*
Diana Solomon, *Communications Photographer*
Deon Denson, *Communications Photographer*

Items of interest to the local & Native American community are welcomed. Letters to the editor should be signed; we reserve the right to edit material.

CCMS Lady Warriors Win Titles

Congratulations to the Choctaw Central Middle School 7th & 8th grade Lady Warriors as they captured the MS Conference basketball tournament championships on Thursday, December 15, 2022, in Carthage. The Lady Warriors defeated the Neshoba Central Middle School Lady Rockets in the finals.