

CHOCTAW COMMUNITY NEWS

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Tribe Celebrates Nanih Waiya Day

Officials, members, and guests of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians gathered at the Nanih Waiya Ceremonial Mound site in Winston County on Thursday, August 8, 2024, to commemorate the return of the ancestral mound back to the

Choctaw people.

Serving as Mistress of Ceremonies was the 2024-2025 Choctaw Indian Princess Leilani Elyse Allen as she welcomed the audience and recounted how for generations, the historic Nanih Waiya Mound

has stood as a symbolic and astounding reminder of our past.

“Historical references tell us the miraculous story of the Choctaw people origination from these very grounds we stand upon. From that time to now, we will fully continue to write our own stories, see NANIH WAIYA, pg. 6



Pictured, from left to right, are Tribal Council members Richard Sockey (Standing Pine), Dorothy Wilson (Tucker), Loriann Ahshapane (Standing Pine), Sam John (Red Water), Ricky Anderson, Sr. (Red Water), Kent Wesley (Pearl River), Deborah Martin (Pearl River), Nigel Gibson (Pearl River), 2024-2025 Choctaw Indian Princess Leilani Elyse Allen, Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben, Chris Eaves (Crystal

Ridge), Timothy Thomas, Sr. (Conehatta), Hilda Nickey (Conehatta), Berdie Steve (Bogue Homa), Angela Hundley (Bogue Chitto), & Kendall Wallace (Bogue Chitto). Not pictured were Vice Chief Ronnie Henry, Sr. (Bogue Chitto), Gregory Shoemake (Conehatta), & Demando Mingo (Tucker).



New Princess, WSS Champions Crowned

Leilani Elyse Allen, center, was crowned the 2024-2025 Choctaw Indian Princess on Wednesday night, July 10. Pictured with the new princess is 2023-2024 Choctaw Indian Princess Nalani Luzmaria Thompson, left, & Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben.



The Choctaw Indian Fair culminated with two nights of championship games in five divisions on Friday & Saturday nights, July 12-13. Congratulations to the following division champions, Beaver Dam (Pushmataha Division), Bok Cito (Tulli Okchi Ishko Division), Koni Hata (Men's 35+ Division), Bok Cito Ohoyo (Women's Division), & Pearl River (Men's Division).





Halito!
 The 74th edition of the Choctaw Indian Fair has come and gone, and I want to thank every individual who had a hand in helping us make this the best Fair yet. No matter what role you had, large or small, your efforts are very much appreciated.

I congratulate all of the winners from our various competitions, and I look forward to presenting banners to our championship World Series

Stickball teams later this year at our annual Thanksgiving Feast. Information on the competition winners is included in this edition of the Community News.

I do want to once again offer my congratulations to our 2024-2025 Choctaw Indian Princess Leilani Elyse Allen. Since her crowning, Princess Leilani has been very busy participating in various events and activities, and her schedule will continue to be full in the next few months. She is doing a great job, and she has been an outstanding representative of our Tribe. I wish her the best as she continues her service throughout her reign.

With the new academic year



Presents artwork to Tribe

Tribal member & accomplished artist Jeffrey Gibson was in attendance for the Closing Ceremonies of the Choctaw Indian Fair on Saturday, July 13, to present an original artwork to Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben, on behalf of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians. This past spring, Gibson was a solo presenter at the Biennale Arte 2024 for the 60th International Art Exhibition at the United States Pavilion at the Giardini della Biennale in Venice, Italy. He is the first Indigenous artist to represent the U.S., making it the first time in the American Pavilion's more than 90-year history that an Indigenous artist has done it solo. Gibson has many permanent collections at some of the nation's most prestigious museums. Pictured, from left to right, are his aunt Lamona Billy, 2024-2025 Choctaw Indian Princess Leilani Elyse Allen, Jeffrey Gibson, Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben, & Martha Spencer of the Choctaw Museum.

beginning, I want to offer my best wishes to all of our Choctaw youth who are attending school, from early childhood

all the way up to college. We are very proud of how successful our students have been in

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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:
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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.

Jimmie Wins Business Plan Competition

Congratulations to MeShay Jimmie as she was named the winner of the Fast Start Program's Business Plan Competition. The program, hosted by the MBCI Office of Economic Development's Small Business Program, offers Tribal member entrepreneurs an opportunity to gain valuable information & assistance in starting their own business. At the end of the six-week course, entrepreneurs who developed a detailed plan were entered into a Business Plan Competition with the winner receiving \$1,000 to invest into their venture. A check presentation was held on Saturday, July 13, during Closing Ceremonies of the Choctaw Indian Fair. Pictured, from left to right, are 2024-2025 Choctaw Indian Princess



Leilani Elyse Allen, MeShay Jimmie, Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben, & Anna Denson of the MBCI Office of Economic Development.

previous school terms, and I have no doubt that we will see more successes this year.

I encourage parents/guardians and family members to take an active role in your children's educational and extra-curricular activities. You can truly see how much of a difference it makes when children know they have the support and encouragement of their families.

Good luck to all of our sports teams as they begin their seasons. No matter what sport you play, we are proud of your dedication and efforts, and we are rooting for you all the way!

I also want to thank all of our educational and support personnel in the Choctaw Tribal School System. Your hard work and dedication can help foster a nurturing environment of learning for our youth. I wish you a very successful school year!

The All Star stickball games were held on Wednesday, August 7th, at CCHS Warrior Stadium. The evening began with the Fichik Osi exhibition games, with a girls game and a boys game featuring players ages 6-8. These young men and women warriors did a great job, and I look forward to seeing them one day playing with the older youth and men's and women's teams.

The All Star women's and men's games were then played, and they were both exciting and action-packed. Congratulations to Fichik Malata Ohóyo and Fichik Čito Women's All Star MVP Kyra Hornbuckle and Men's All Star MVP Dudley Williams.

The Nanih Waiya Day Celebration was held at the Nanih Waiya Ceremonial Mound on Thursday, August 8th. It was wonderful to see everyone who came out to commemorate the return of our Mother Mound to our people. I am thankful that Nanih Waiya is once again a



Ribbon cutting for houses in Red Water

A ribbon cutting was held on Tuesday, August 6, 2024, for four housing units in the Red Water community. Two fully equipped ADA units (two bedrooms, two baths), and two standard units (three bedrooms, two baths) were completed. Site plans were done by Willis Engineering, and the site work was done by Morton Construction. House blueprints were done by Johnny Wynne & Associates, & the houses were built by IKBI, Inc. Remarks were made by Tribal Housing Board Chairwoman Loriann Ahshapanek, CHA Executive Director Gary Ben, Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben, Red Water Councilmen Sam John and Ricky Anderson, Sr., and Housing Board Commissioner Richard Isaac. Also in attendance were the 2024-2025 Choctaw Indian Princess Leilani Elyse Allen & the new housing tenants.



Ribbon cutting at SPES

A ribbon cutting was held on Tuesday, August 6, 2024, at the Standing Pine Elementary School (SPES) for their new parking lot extension. There are now 32 additional parking spaces, along with bus parking spaces. The extension was constructed with a grant from the BIE. Willis Engineering did the design, & Morton Construction was the contractor. Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben, 2024-2025 Choctaw Indian Princess Leilani Elyse Allen, Tribal Council Representatives Loriann Ahshapanek & Richard Sockey (Standing Pine), Sam John (Red Water), & Kent Wesley (Pearl River), SPES faculty & staff, & community members were in attendance for the event. Thank you to Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben, Choctaw Tribal Schools Administration, Construction Management, & other project partners for planning & completing this project for the SPES community.

part of our Tribal lands and that we stand united to celebrate our history, culture, and legacy. It is my hope that we never take for granted the hardships and sacrifices of our ancestors

who never gave up and whose perseverance paved the way for our successes today.

The 6th Annual Chief's Summer Slam Softball Tournament was held August 8th through

10th at the Choctaw Sportsplex in the Pearl River Community. I thank our Choctaw Recreation staff for their hard work

Chief Ben Elected to MDAH Board of Trustees

Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben, the fifth democratically elected chief of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, has been elected to the board of trustees of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History (MDAH). The action took place at the regular meeting of the MDAH Board of Trustees on Friday, July 12. His nomination will be submitted to the Mississippi State Senate for confirmation.

Chief Ben will be the first Native American and member of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians elected to the

MDAH Board of Trustees.

“Chief Ben brings an excellent background of public service and leadership experience,” said Spence Flatgard, MDAH Board of Trustees president. “MDAH will benefit greatly from his expertise and dedication. We are thrilled to have him on our Board.”

A lifelong resident of the Pearl River community, Chief Ben has a 15-year record of public service and leadership to the Choctaw Tribal government, including eight years as the Tribal Council representative for the Pearl River

community. He was elected as Tribal Chief in July 2019 and re-elected in 2023. He also served on the Mississippi State Flag Commission, which oversaw the selection of the new state flag that includes a symbol of native territory before statehood.

Chief Ben holds a bachelor’s degree from Mississippi College and an associate’s degree from East Central Community College.

A member of the Mississippi USA Semiquincentennial Commission that will commemorate the 250th anniversary



Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben

sary of the United States in 2026, Chief Ben is also a board member of the Mississippi **continued next page**

LETTER continued from page three

to make sure we had a fun and successful event. A great job to all of the participating teams, and congratulations to all of the winners!

Although we have concluded the World Series Stickball tournament and All Star Games, for some of our devoted players, the season doesn’t end until Labor Day. I look forward to seeing some of our stickball teams travel to Tushkahoma, Oklahoma to participate in the stickball tournament held

during the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma’s Labor Day Festival August 30th through September 2nd. To those who plan to attend the festival, I wish you safe travels and a safe and enjoyable time.

We also have the Battle of Nations football game coming up on Friday, September 6th. This year, our Choctaw Central Warriors will be traveling to Cherokee, North Carolina to take on the Cherokee High School Braves. This annual

match-up is a friendly rivalry and offers a chance for members of the two tribes to fellowship and enjoy time spent together. I hope many of you will be able to attend the game to support and cheer on our Mighty Warriors!

While we have been very busy with the Fair and other summer activities, we still have been continuing our work on several projects and have held some ribbon cuttings and groundbreakings in our com-

munities. If you drive by Highway 16 west of Oswald Road in Pearl River, you will see construction on the new Choctaw Central campus beginning to take shape. I am so grateful that we have the resources and manpower to be able to bring these much-needed projects into fruition. Thank you to the Tribal Council for their leadership and to my administrative staff and other Tribal programs who work hard every day to keep progress moving forward on our Tribal lands.

Tribal Members are at the very heart of our motivation to make sure we are providing the best for everyone, whether it be through economic development, education, housing, or quality of life. Thank you all for your support and encouragement. I pray for continued blessings upon our Tribe.

Chi Yakokilih,

Cyrus Ben, Tribal Chief



Ground breaking for housing units in Pearl River

Ground was broken on Tuesday, August 6, 2024, for 18 new housing units to be constructed at Solomon Drive in the Pearl River community. All units will be ADA-adaptable, with an ADA-friendly footprint to accommodate future handicap equipment, if needed. For Phase 1, Willis Engineering did the site planning & Johnny Wynne & Associates are doing blueprints for house designs. Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben, 2024-2025 Choctaw Indian Princess Leilani Elyse Allen, Tribal Council Representatives Hilda Nickey (Conehatta), Chris Eaves (Crystal Ridge), Kent Wesley & Nigel Gibson (Pearl River), Loriann Ahshapanek & Richard Sockey (Standing Pine), & Sam John (Red Water) were in attendance, along with CHA officials & project partners.

Commission for Volunteer Service and serves as a delegate on the Health Resources and Services Administration Tribal Advisory Council, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Office of Minority Health at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the Center for Indigenous Innovation and Health Equity

Tribal Advisory Committee. Board nominees must be confirmed by the state Senate. Members serve six-year terms. Other members of the board of trustees are Flatgard of Ridgeland, president; Nancy Carpenter of Columbus, vice president; Reginald Buckley of Jackson; Carter Burns of Nat-chez; Betsey Hamilton of New

Albany; Mark E. Keenum of Starkville; Lucius M. Lampton of Magnolia; and TJ Taylor of Madison. The Mississippi Department of Archives and History is the second-oldest state department of archives and history in the U.S. The department collects, preserves, and provides access to the archival resources of the

state, administers various museums and historic sites, and oversees statewide programs for historic preservation, state and local government records management, and publications. For more information, call 601-576-6850 or email info@mdah.ms.gov.

Casino guests donate to Tribal programs

CHOCTAW, Miss. – Silver Star, Golden Moon, and Bok Homa Casino continue their corporate philanthropy by giving back to three Tribal programs. In March 2024, the casino properties started a program at their cash out FABI kiosks that allowed for guests to donate the loose change from their winnings to one of the three Tribal programs: Choctaw Elderly Program, MBCI Boys & Girls Club, and the Choctaw Veterans Program. Over the past four months (March – June), guests’ choice to donate their extra change amounted to a total of \$69,539.98 donation today!

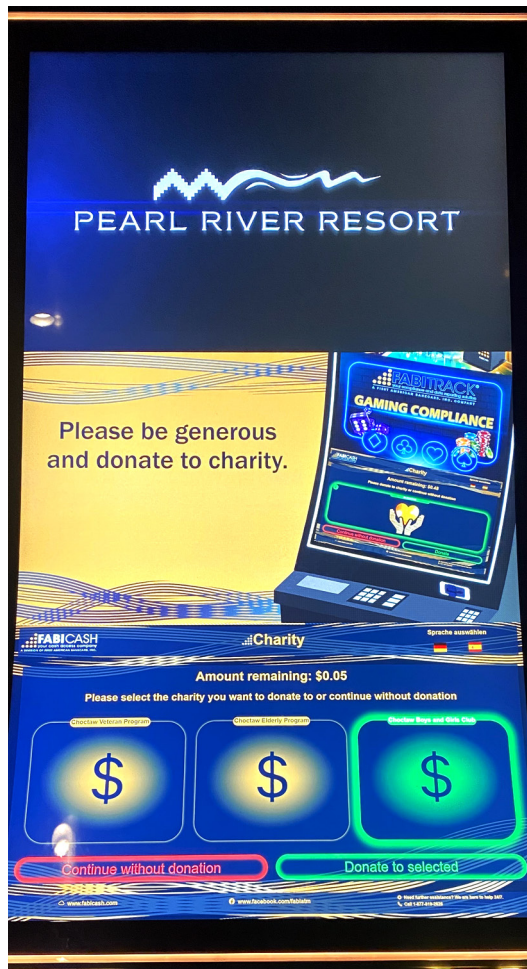
the FABI kiosk donation program and return the donations made by our guests to these three Tribal programs is truly amazing,” said Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben. “A donation like this can make a big difference to a program. It allows them to assist their program participants with various operational needs. I know each of these programs is grateful for this donation and will put this additional income to great use for our youth, elderly, and veterans.”

When guests “cash out” at a gaming machine, they receive a winnings ticket. They can take this ticket to a FABI kiosk to redeem for cash. Instead of receiving the loose change, they now have the option to donate it. Kiosks at all three properties have this donation option from a total of 26 kiosks.

our guests, we have been able to give back to these programs,” said Sonny Johnson, President and CEO. “Your contributions help supplement these organizations, and we are deeply grateful. We encourage everyone to continue supporting these Tribal programs as they continue to provide services within the community.”

Over the four months the donation option has been available the total at each property donated is: \$30,579.44 (Silver Star), \$22,495.55 (Golden Moon), and \$16,464.99 (Bok Homa). The first donation received by each program is: \$23,893.63 (MBCI Boys & Girls Club), \$23,258.30 (Choctaw Elderly Program), and \$22,388.05 (Choctaw Veterans Program). Moving forward, if donations stay consistent, each program should expect to receive on average a monthly donation of \$5,795.

“Thanks to the incredible generosity of



PICTURED, from left to right, are Standing Pine Councilman & CRDE Board Member Richard Sockey, Pearl River Resort Director of Public Relations Erica Clemons Moore, MBCI Boys & Girls Club Director Glen Billie, Pearl River Resort President/CEO Sonny Johnson, Choctaw Elderly Program Representative Lola Parkerson, Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben, 2024-2025 Choctaw Indian Princess Leilani Elyse Allen, Veterans Committee Chair Linda Williams, Choctaw Veterans Program Director Sammie Wilson, & Pearl River Resort Tribal Member Associates Catherine Lee & Claude Jim.

NANIH WAIYA continued from page one



Tribal drummers provided the steady drumbeat during the ceremony as Bogue Chitto Social Dancers performed several social dances. Tribal Veterans joined Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben, Tribal Council members, & Choctaw Indian Princess Leilani Elyse Allen as they posted community flags, along with flags from the United States, MBCI, & State of Mississippi.

either through the eyes of poverty, near extinction, successes of celebrations, still together and forever bonded to this place, our sacred Mother Mound,” said Princess Allen.

The Tribe commemorates the return of Nanih Waiya during the second week of August with traditional songs, social dancing, stickball games, traditional food, and an official Tribal holiday observed this year on Friday, August 9.

“Our Mother Mound, sacred to our ancestors and the heartbeat of our Tribe, was taken from us over a century ago. However, now and forevermore, she has been returned to her people,” added Princess Allen.

Pastor Ricky Thompson, Sr. of Pearl River Community Baptist Church offered the opening prayer, followed by the singing of the National Anthem in the Choctaw language by Nana Frazier.

Nanih Waiya (translated as “leaning hill”) has been revered for centuries as the Mother Mound and the heart of the Choctaw people. The darkest chapters of Choctaw history occurred as the Choctaw gradually lost their ancestral homeland as a result of nine treaties being signed with the United States between 1786-1830. The last treaty, The Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek of 1830, forced the Choctaw to give up the remainder of their lands, which included Nanih Waiya. The majority of Choctaws were removed to Oklahoma, but a small minority remained in Mississippi in isolation.

For a period after removal, Nanih Waiya remained under private ownership. Eventually, the State of Mississippi acquired it

and operated it as a park.

In 1945, Choctaws voted to adopt a constitution and the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians was established. Over the next decades, in keeping with the Choctaw Self-Determination doctrine, the Tribe became a leader in economic development in east central Mississippi.

In 2006, Mississippi Legislature State Bill 2803 officially returned control of Nanih Waiya to the Luke Family of Winston County. Soon, a member of the Luke Family deeded it back to the state, under the condition it be maintained as a park.

Coming full circle, Mississippi Senate Bill 2732 authorized the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks in April 2007 to transfer the mound back to the Tribe.

In August 2008, the deed was returned to the Tribe, and a proclamation was signed that year by Tribal leaders celebrating the mound’s return and declaring Nanih Waiya would never be sold, traded or negotiated with ever again.

“Those were the acts of the government removing our people. Many lives were lost, and those who survived moved west,” said Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben. “The ancestry of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians paid whatever price they had to as they went into hiding and survived on this land. They were not conquered, not removed by the Indian Removal Act and the government. That is what makes this so special.”

Chief Ben recalled when he was a member of the Tribal Council when Nanih Waiya was returned to the Tribe, the council unanimously decided to disavow Columbus Day as a federal holiday and create Nanih Waiya Day as a Tribal holiday to celebrate our people, our history, and give respect to the prices paid by our ancestors.

“I’m very thankful to the leadership that we’ve had in the years leading up to today. We’re thankful we’ll never lose this land, this mound again. I applaud the leadership of the past and present for their actions to make sure this land is secure and ours.

continued next page



The next generation of kabotcha players took to the field during the Fichik Osi exhibition game prior to the WSS All-Star games on Wednesday, August 7, at Warrior Stadium.

I hope you stop and reflect on how much this means to us as a people. I hope you enjoy today and be proud of being Choctaw.”

Traditional social dancing was performed by the Bogue Chitto Social Dancers, followed by a roll call of Choctaw Tribal communities as Tribal Council representatives carried and posted the flags of their respective communities at the base of the mound.

U.S. Air Force Chief Master Sergeant Rick Alex and U.S. Army Colonel (Ret.) Don Ahshapanek posted the State of Mississippi and United States flags, respectively, as Chief Ben posted the Tribal flag.

Pastor Thompson offered the closing prayer to conclude the event as attendees were treated to a traditional to-go meal.

As part of the Nanih Waiya Day Celebration activities, the annual World Series Stickball (WSS) All-Star Stickball Games were held on Wednesday, August 7, 2024, at Warrior Stadium on the campus of Choctaw Central High School in Choctaw, Miss.

All-Star participants were selected by

WSS officials and coaches for their skill and sportsmanship as they represented their respective teams in the women’s and men’s divisions of the WSS tournaments during the 74th Choctaw Indian Fair. Teams were

divided into Fichik Malata Ohoyo/Fichik Čito Ohoyo for the women & Fichik Malata/Fichik Čito for the men.

During the opening ceremonies, Chief **continued next page**



Participants of the Fichik Osi Exhibition Game

FICHIK MALATA OHÓYO

team members included Larisa Willis, Denise Denson, Brittney Wallace, Missy Bell, Latricia Joe, Nashima Thompson, Tiara Joe, Malaka Morris, Delaine McMillan, Tanna McClelland, Krystin Martin, Elyse Willis, Tamela Solomon, GaYueze Morris, Darien Tubby, Kierstyn



Thomas, Maleighia Joe, Hannah Peoples, Kylinn Bell, Lana Tubby, Maiya Joe, Melanian Jimmie, Leslie Tubby, Jasmine Chickaway, Summer John, Kayla Waiter, Hope Thomas, Talayah Kinsolving, Mikayla Bell, Breely Wilson, Mattison Bell, Jacobi Berg, Orita Jenkins, Channa Clemons, Cambree York, Natassia Isaac, Anissa Smith, Jada Sockey, Tayleona Joe, Vanessa Frazier, Taelor Sockey, Daysia Henry,

Melissa Wallace, Brooklyn Bell, Cass Billy, Shyatesa York, Neveah Stanley, Breyonce Jim, Candace Jefferson, Khalid Hickman, Brandie Farve, LaDonna Ward, Alex Miller, Aliyah Myers, Kyra Hornbuckle, Marie Wilson, Melody Jimmie, Onnahili Williams, Fichik Willis, Taylor Ben, Carly Keats, Kandice Lasiloo, Kyla Farmer, Leslie Fuller, & La'Caniya Anderson.

FICHIK ČITO OHÓYO

team members included Tikeshia McMillan, Cori Keats, Nequita Farmer, Ashlynn Stephens, Keshia Clemmons, Asha Robinson, Reese Tubby, Jashuntaye Isaac, Catelyn Martin, Hannah Lewis, Leia Phillips, Daysianara Lewis, Taelor York, Geraldine McMillan, Ashley Wesley, Shaylynn



Hunter, Ashley Riggen, Meloney Thames, Tiffany Thomas, Delaiah Billy, Renaysia Polk, Abby Billy, Gabrielle Wilson, Dori Dixon, Kodi Jimmie, Kelly Dumont, Kailyn Tom, Melia Solomon, Lyric McMillan, Rakisha Anderson, Kaley McMillan, Tayla Willis, Heather Tangle, Sarah Williams, Famie Willis, Robin Routh, Tashia Williamson, Ellagane Sam, Nancy Willis, Sarah Allen, Alanna Jim, Alyssa Farmer,

Searra Wilson, Joni Bell, Lynnita Murray, Lauren Ben, Justine Billy, Melayney Billy, Samihah Willis, Ciji Vaughn, Teagan Clemmons, Shelby Factor, Kelley Sockey, Angel Edwards, Amber Baptiste, Adrianna Myers, Genevieve Tom, Audrey Jimmie, Mandy Billy, Miley Billie, Sindle Williams, Diana Solomon, Relissia Ray, Shay Jackson, Autumn McMillan, Jessica Henry, Chasity Orellana, & Abrey Tubby.

NANIH WAIYA continued from page seven



**FICHIK OSI
GIRLS GAME**
Orange Crush def.
Green Machine 2-1



**FICHIK OSI
BOYS GAME**
Green Machine def.
Orange Crush 4-1

WOMEN'S ALL-STAR GAME
Fichik Malata Ohoyo def. Fichik Čito Ohoyo 2-1.
Kyra Hornbuckle - MVP

MEN'S ALL-STAR GAME
Fichik Čito def. Fichik Malata 2-1. Dudley Williams - MVP

Ben and Princess Allen reflected on the importance of Nanih Waiya Day. The opening prayer was offered by Pastor Shelly Peoples of Faith Missionary Baptist Church, and Lexi Flint performed the National Anthem in the Choctaw language.

The first contest of the evening was the Fichik Osi Exhibition Game featuring Tribal youth ages 6-8 as they showed off their skills. This year, the game was divided into halves for the girls and boys. In the girls' contest, Orange Crush defeated Green Machine 2-1. In the boys' contest, Green Machine defeated Orange Crush 4-1.

In the Women's All-Star game, Fichik Malata Ohoyo defeated Fichik Čito Ohoyo 2-1. Kyra Hornbuckle was named MVP.

In the Men's All-Star contest, Fichik Čito defeated Fichik Malata 2-1. Dudley Williams was named MVP.

FICHIK ČITO team members included Octavious Jones, Dayton Bell, Quincy Hill, Bryce Jimmie, Albert Charlie, Lorenzo Bell, Rocky Steve, Alonso Henry, Michael Lyons, Tryeston Thompson, Miles Yazzie, Jalen Willis, Louie Charlie, Braxton Amos, Trenton Frazier, Trent Thompson, Sabian Ben, Steve Thomas,



Marlon Bell, Sr., Brias Bell, Kashden Bell, Dresen Jimmie, Justin McMillan, Azalius Lewis, Quentin Naneato, Braylon McMillan, Ferris Tubby, Mitch Shoemake, Deyon Ben, Rodgrick Anderson, Wilson Dixon, Lorenzo Shoemake, Corey Bell, Dudley Williams, Sean Simpson, Deshane Wishork, Dwain Clemons, Harvey McMillan, Jr., Jasper Bell, Tayshaun Mingo, Orlando Dixon, Kanyon Jimmie, Brandon Shoemake, Trey Lilly, Jalen Shomo, Alexander Farve, Billy Eagleroad, III, Cedrony Stephens, Jordan Eagleroad, Gage Wesley,

Brian Wesley, Jr., Taiton Stokes, Demetrius Williams, Alaric Keams, Keyon Roach, Djon John, Darnell Colbert, Zyler Thomas, Tanner Watson, Liasha Alex, Gerren Isaac, Jawarrick Hickman, Jordan Truss, Tayshaun Thomas, Benjamin Lewis, Dakiren Wilson, Merrick Hickman, Mickinley Jim, Steven Steve, Kacy Bell, Brison LaSarge, Travis Bell, Mario McMillan, Justas Day, Jaylyn Tubby, Jeremiah Robinson, Pierson Farve, & Michael Mingo.

FICHIK MALATA team members included Romero Thomas, Treundes Willis, Samandon Kopaddy, Abram Cotton, Robin Willis, Parrion Hunter, Neshoba Reed, Kiezer Johnson, Tiak Willis, Lesley Morris, Jacob Bell, Jacob Cotton, Julian Vaughn, Canaan Nickey, Thurston John, Brighton Jimmie, Jermaine Tubby,



Rockky Isom, Kamden Frazier, Eric Billy, Jr., Devin Charlie, Jace Sam, Terrence Comby, Joshua Thomas, Daiton Henry, Zarius Johnson, Dakota Jefferson, Cohen Keats, Jerrod McMillan, Yunnish Billy, Tanner John, Deshawn Williams, Cody Stoliby, Logan Lyons, Keyshaun Nickey, Ervin Wishork, Randy Nickey, Gannon Vaughn, Nathan Adams, Sagel Jimmie, Jamal Willis, Bryce Billy, Josh Willis, Kahlon Logan, Ki Jim, Frankie Garcia, Jaden Davis, Zach Farmer, Ethan Boykin, Ricky John, Marcus Robb, Lawranzce Parkerson,

Robert Briley, Billie Isom, Joel Chastain, Jeriah Jimmie, Gabriel Cannon, Sebastian Johnson, Dylan Williamson, Caden Wilson, Isaiah Mingo, Cameron Farmer, James Denson, Rielly Denson, Cali Wilson, Timothy York, Jr., Daylen Perkins, Cylas Mingo, Hunter Jefferson, Julian Williams, Jamal Jim, Chay York, Justin Hundley, Stephen Wallace, Melton Robinson, II, Dante Frazier, Tobiah Ben, Braxton John, & Antonio Garcia.



Chief's Summer Slam Softball Tournament

The 6th Annual Chief's Summer Slam Softball Tournament was held August 8-10, 2024, at the Choctaw Sportsplex in Choctaw, Miss. Thirty-six teams competed in three divisions (Women's/Men's 40+, & Co-Ed), with cash prizes going to the top three finishers. Prior to the games beginning, an opening ceremony was held as Vice Chief Ronnie Henry, Sr. offered the invocation, followed by the singing of the National Anthem in Choctaw by Tribal youths Mylah & Keilani Gibson. After recognizing Tribal Council members in attendance, Angela Hundley of Bogue Chitto & Loriann Ahshapanek of Standing Pine, & the 2024-2025 Choctaw Indian Princess Leilani Elyse Allen, Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben threw out the ceremonial first pitch. Congratulations to the winners & finishers in the following divisions listed below.



(MEN'S 40+) 1ST - MBCI



(MEN'S 40+) 2ND - KONI HATA LEGENDS



(MEN'S 40+) 3RD - MBCI-INDIANS



(WOMEN'S 40+) 1ST - NATIVES LEGENDS



(CO-ED) 1ST - SUICIDE SQUAD



(WOMEN'S 40+) 2ND - DA AUNTIES



(CO-ED) 2ND - HOT HEADS



(WOMEN'S 40+) 3RD - LADY CHOCTAWS



(CO-ED) 3RD - INDIANS

ICWA Conference teaches requirements regarding custody of Native American children

Submitted by the Mississippi Administrative Office of Courts

Decisions about placement of Native American children from troubled families belong in tribal court, not state courts, experts on federal law told participants at the twelfth annual Indian Child Welfare Act Conference.

Three Native American attorneys who are experts in the history and application of the Indian Child Welfare Act, ICWA, spoke to nearly 200 people on Aug. 28 at the Silver Star Convention Center, Pearl River Resort at Choctaw.

Social workers, judges, court staff, tribal officials and other professionals who deal with Native American children in a Youth Court setting come together annually for the conference that educates about the steps which must be taken when social services workers, law enforcement officers and the judiciary encounter a child who may be Native American.

The conference is hosted by the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians in collaboration with the Mississippi Judicial College, the Mississippi Administrative Office of Courts and the state Department of Child Protection Services.

Sheldon Spotted Elk, Senior Director of Judicial and National Engagement at Casey Family Programs, the nation's largest private foundation focused on foster care and improving the child welfare system, told conference participants that when there is reason to believe that a child is Native American, first steps are to make inquiry about ancestry, and to notify the tribe so that the tribe may intervene.

"Make sure those things happen fast," he said. "Due diligence is really critical to your practice."

The Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services' policy is to immediately contact tribal officials. Ta'Shia Gordon, an attorney in the Office of Legal Counsel for the CPS, said, "When we receive a report on the hotline, if there is reason to believe this is an Indian child, inquiry begins. Upon contact with the family, inquiry begins. We work diligently."

ICWA, established by the U.S. Congress in 1978, sets out federal requirements regarding removal and placement of Native American children in foster or adoptive homes. The requirements apply to state child custody proceedings involving any Native American child who is a member of or eligible for membership in a federally recognized tribe.

There are 574 American Indian and Alaska Native tribes recognized by the U.S. government.

ICWA aims to preserve tribal culture and safeguard the rights of Native American children to their heritage. Spotted Elk, who now lives in Denver, Colorado, is a member of the Northern Cheyenne Nation. He described the Sun Dance, an annual ceremony held at the time of the first full moon after the summer solstice, the longest day of the year.

"It's really about us reconnecting with the earth....It's also renewing connections with one another. It's like Christmas."

Spotted Elk said, "It's impossible to be competent in everybody's culture. What you can do is be humble and be a



The 12th Annual Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) Conference was held at the Silver Star Convention Center on Wednesday, August 28, 2024. The opening ceremonies included the presentation of colors by the Choctaw Veterans Color Guard, singing of the National Anthem in the Choctaw language by Nana Frazier, invocation from the 2024-2025 Choctaw Indian Princess Leilani Elyse Allen, welcoming remarks from Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben, & drumming from the Southern Pine Drummers.

listener."

He told participants to recognize their own cultural biases and practice what he called "cultural humility."

He said, "I believe that when you understand your bias, you can show up with compassion for families."

Cultural biases affect how one views families and their circumstances. Cultural differences should not be measured as good or bad.

"It's just a different way of seeing the world. It's different. It doesn't mean it's wrong," said Christina C. Bell Andrews, who helped develop Arizona's ICWA guidelines.

She has eight biological children and cares for three other young relatives.

"I not only know ICWA. I live ICWA."

Andrews is Executive Director of the Wassaja Carlos Montezuma Center for Native American Health at Universi-

ty of Arizona Health Sciences in Tucson, Arizona. She previously served as a site manager for the Child Welfare and Juvenile Law Tribal-State Justice Partnerships program at the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. She holds bachelor's degrees in Spanish and Portuguese, master's degrees in English, public health and business administration, and a law degree.

Andrews is a member of the Tohono O'odham Nation and affiliated with the Hia-Ced O'odham and Pascua Yaqui of the desert Southwest. Tohono O'odham means "Desert People" and Hia-Ced O'odham means "Sand People."

She talked about Indian children playing on dirt floors on a desert reservation land that straddles New Mexico and Mexico. All the houses have dirt floors. There's one community water faucet and the

continued next page

Sessions held for Special Tribal Criminal Jurisdiction Expansion

The MBCI Office of the Attorney General hosted training sessions for Tribal employees and Tribal Members who were interested in learning more about the Special Tribal Criminal Jurisdiction Expansion. The two half-day sessions were held on Tuesday, August 20th, at the Silver Star Convention Center's breakout room.

Originally passed in 1994, the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) is the first federal legislation acknowledging domestic violence as a crime and provides resources to encourage Community Coordinated Responses to prevent violence against women. VAWA is subject to renewal every five years and was last reauthorized in 2022.

On July 9, 2024, the MBCI enacted Ordinance 24-006 which revised the Choctaw Tribal Code and sent an implementation date to expand crim-

houses have outhouses rather than indoor plumbing. That doesn't mean that the children are dirty or neglected, she said.

For attorney and playwright Mary Kathryn Nagle, becoming a mother made ICWA take on new meaning. An enrolled citizen of the Cherokee Nation who grew up in Oklahoma, Nagle has spent her career litigating, advocating and writing about tribal sovereignty and protection of Native American women and children. She is now the mother of a 9-month-old.

"Without our children, there will be no tribal nations," said

see ICWA, pg. 12

inal jurisdiction over non-Indian offenders who commit certain crimes on tribal lands as acknowledged in VAWA 2022.

Effective January 1, 2025, MBCI will implement Special Tribal Criminal Jurisdiction over non-Indian offenders who commit Domestic Violence,



Dating Violence, Protection Order Violations, Sexual Violence, Stalking, Sex Trafficking, Violence against a Child, Obstruction of Justice, and As-

saults on Tribal Justice Personnel. This step aims to enhance community safety more adequately by addressing crimes that impact tribal members.

NOTICE

SPECIAL TRIBAL CRIMINAL JURISDICTION EXPANSION

On July 9, 2024, the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians (MBCI) enacted Ordinance 24-006 which revised the Choctaw Tribal Code and set an implementation date to expand criminal jurisdiction over non-Indian offenders who commit certain crimes on tribal lands as acknowledged in the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) Reauthorization of 2022.

Effective January 1, 2025, MBCI will implement Special Tribal Criminal Jurisdiction over non-Indian offenders who commit Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Protection Order Violations, Sexual Violence, Stalking, Sex Trafficking, Violence against a Child, Obstruction of Justice, and Assaults on Tribal Justice Personnel. This step aims to enhance community safety more adequately by addressing crimes that impact tribal members.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: What is VAWA?

A: Originally passed in 1994, the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) is the first federal legislation acknowledging domestic violence as a crime and provides resources to encourage Community Coordinated Responses to prevent violence against women. VAWA is subject to renewal every five years and was reauthorized in 2022. Each reauthorization builds upon existing protections for victims of domestic violence and will be subject to another reauthorization in 2027.

Q: What is Special Jurisdiction?

A: After the 1978 Supreme Court decision in *Olliphant v. Suquamish Indian Tribe*, tribes did not have criminal jurisdiction over non-Indian offenders. A non-Indian could commit a sexual or violent offense against an Indian on tribal land, and tribal courts did not have jurisdiction to prosecute the offender. As a result, Congress enacted VAWA 2013 which included a provision that recognized and affirmed the inherent sovereign authority of tribes to exercise criminal jurisdiction over non-Indians who violated qualifying protection orders or committed domestic/dating violence against Indian victims

Q: What is the VAWA 2022 Special Tribal Criminal Jurisdiction Reauthorization?

A: VAWA 2022 was signed into Federal law on March 15, 2022, and went into effect on October 1, 2022. Amendments included changing Special Domestic Violence Criminal Jurisdiction (SDVCJ) to Special Tribal Criminal Jurisdiction (STCJ), eliminating the "sufficient ties" requirement, and expanding tribes' jurisdiction over the following covered crimes involving:

- Domestic violence (VAWA 2013 Current Covered Crime)
- Dating violence (VAWA 2013 Current Covered Crime)
- Protection order violations (VAWA 2013 Current Covered Crime)
- Sexual violence (VAWA 2022 STCJ Covered Crime)
- Stalking (VAWA 2022 STCJ Covered Crime)
- Sex Trafficking (VAWA 2022 STCJ Covered Crime)
- Violence against a Child (VAWA 2022 STCJ Covered Crime)
- Obstruction of Justice (VAWA 2022 STCJ Covered Crime)
- Assaults against Tribal justice personnel (VAWA 2022 STCJ Covered Crime)

Note: In cases of obstruction of justice and assault of Tribal justice personnel, the victim need not be Indian.

Q: What are the rights of defendants under VAWA 2022?

A: To exercise this jurisdiction, the tribal court must (among other things) guarantee the non-Indian defendant's constitutional rights, including the right to due process and federal habeas corpus, and if imprisonment may be imposed, the right to a trial by an impartial jury that is both a fair cross-section of the community and does not "systematically exclude any distinctive group in the community, including non-Indians." Tribes are also required to provide:

- Effective assistance of counsel for non-Indian defendants;
- Free, appointed, licensed attorneys for indigent defendants;
- Law-trained Tribal judges who are also licensed to practice law;
- Publicly available Tribal criminal laws and rules; and
- Recorded criminal proceedings.

Q: What crimes are not covered?

A: The following crimes will generally not be covered:

- Crimes committed outside of Indian country;
- Crimes between two non-Indians (with the exception of assault of Tribal justice personnel and obstruction of justice); and
- Drug offenses.

Q: What should victims of covered crimes do?

A: Victims should report incidents to the Choctaw Police Department by calling 911 for emergencies, and 601-656-5711 for non-emergencies. Support services and resources are available to assist those affected.

**ALL QUESTIONS SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO THE
MBCI OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
BY CALLING (601) 656-4507**

ICWA continued from page eleven

Nagle, who now lives in Washington, D.C.

ICWA “was passed in response to a crisis,” Nagle said. In the 1970s, “forty percent of Indian children were being taken from their families and their homes. Ninety percent of those placements were outside Indian Country....They were taking children not because they were abused ...but maybe they didn’t speak English, they didn’t go to

church.” Nagle said, “The goal of (ICWA) was to create guardrails.” Removal of children from tribal parents “can’t be just because they are speaking their indigenous language, or they don’t go to church, or they don’t have a certain standard of living.”

Generations of Native American people are scarred by nearly two centuries of government

practices that separated children from their families and their culture. More than 500 Indian boarding schools operated in 37 states.

Children were forcibly removed from their families and sent to boarding schools, many of them church-run. The schools’ programs sought to assimilate children by attempting to erase their native language and culture and replace those with English language, Christian religion and non-native culture.

Children were punished for speaking their native languages or practicing their tribal customs. Child-size handcuffs are among the artifacts found on the sites of several of the boarding schools. Children were abused, and suffered from disease and malnourishment. Thousands died in the boarding

schools. Seven of the boarding schools operated in Mississippi, Spotted Elk said.

Spotted Elk’s father and grandfather attended a day school, but went home on weekends. His father told of having his mouth washed out with soap when he spoke his native language, Cheyenne. Spotted Elk said that he and his two sons only learned to speak Cheyenne during COVID.

Andrews’ grandmother was among children who were taken while playing in the desert near their home. Her grandmother was taken away from her family, although her father was white. Her hair was cut and she was taught to clean, not to read.

She described being taught English, a language that

continued next page

CHOCTAW TRIBAL TEEN COURT

A TRIBAL COURT SERVICES PROGRAM
OPEN TO AGES 13-18



WHY JOIN TEEN COURT?

- EARN COMMUNITY SERVICES HOURS
- HEAR REAL COURT CASES
- BUILD YOUR COLLEGE RESUME
- LEARN ABOUT THE LAW
- PRACTICE PUBLIC SPEAKING
- CONNECT TO PATHWAYS OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT


AND MORE!

1ST CLASS POSPONED TO SEPTEMBER 18, 2024 5PM

ENROLL NOW!

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO REQUEST AN APPLICATION, CALL KATHLEEN FERRIS AT 601-663-7822
OR VISIT THE TRIBAL COURT SERVICES OFFICE LOCATED AT THE SMITH JOHN JUSTICE COMPLEX TO PICK UP AN APPLICATION.

September is Suicide Prevention Awareness Month



Suicide prevention and awareness is extremely important and it is imperative that we educate ourselves on how to notice signs and how to take action to help our friends and loved ones.

Click here: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/suicide/in-depth/suicide/art-20044707are>

988

SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE

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

Behavioral Health Dept.
210 Hospital Circle
Choctaw, MS 39350
Main Office: 601-389-4150
Hours: 8:00-4:30
After hours: 601-389-4400
Fax: 601-389-4152

SPECIAL DIABETES PROGRAM FOR INDIANS

28th ANNUAL 2 MILE FALL WALK/RUN

October 5, 2024
(RAIN OR SHINE)

NO REGISTRATION FEE

NO REGISTRATION FEE

PRE-REGISTRATION DEADLINE

Tuesday, September 17, 2024 by 4:30 p.m.

Please bring the registration and waiver form to the Diabetes Clinic on or before the deadline.

Registration begins at 7:00 a.m. on the day of the race.

Race will start at 8:00 a.m. from the CCHS parking lot to the Justice Complex and return to the CCHS parking lot.



For more information contact the Diabetes Center: Sharron Thompson @ 601-389-4390, Ethel Thomas @ 601-389-4389 or Willie Solomon Jr. @ 601-389-4388

How to Help If You Think a Friend or Loved One May Be Considering Suicide

Know the warning signs

And trust your instincts. If you are worried about someone, it's worth taking the next step.

Offer to help

Let your friend or loved one know that you are worried about them and want to support them. Just knowing that they are not alone will probably be a big relief.

Listen

Listen — and pay attention to online conversations and posts — don't judge, and try not to act shocked, no matter what they say. Take them seriously.

Encourage them to get help

Encourage them to go to an adult that they trust — a family member, teacher, or guidance counselor.

If they won't go for help or if you don't think they'll do it fast enough

Tell an adult that you trust, right away. It is also important to call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-8255) if you're worried, stressed, or aren't sure who to tell. Don't keep it a secret, even if your friend made you promise. You could be saving their life.

Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
<http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>

If in need, we encourage you or your loved ones to seek help!

she compared to nails on a chalkboard. Later in life, she wouldn't let her grandchildren speak her native language.

After the boarding schools closed around the country, government practices continued to place Native American children in non-native foster care and adoptive homes. Congress enacted ICWA in 1978 in response.

A 1989 landmark U.S. Supreme Court case that interpreted the enforcement of ICWA originated in Mississippi. Justice William Brennan, Jr., writing for the majority in the April 3, 1989, decision, recounted a history that preceded Congress' adoption of ICWA, noting that the legislation "was the product of rising concern in the mid-1970's over the consequences to Indian children, Indian families, and Indian tribes of abusive child welfare practices that resulted in the separation of large numbers of Indian children from their families and tribes through adoption or foster care placement, usually in non-Indian homes."

The dispute in *Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians v. Holyfield* involved adoption of twins, born in Gulfport to parents who were residents of the reservation in Neshoba County

and were members of the Choctaw tribe. The parents agreed to the adoption by a non-Native American couple. Two months after the adoption was finalized the Harrison County Chancery Court, the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians moved to vacate the adoption, asserting that the tribal court had exclusive jurisdiction under ICWA. The U.S. Supreme Court agreed.

More recently, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of ICWA in a June 15, 2023, decision in *Haaland v. Brackeen*. Challengers included couples who wished to adopt or foster Native American children, a woman who wished for her child to be adopted by non-natives, and the states of Texas, Louisiana and Indiana.

More challenges to ICWA are expected, said Nagle. A special interest institute and a high-powered law firm have made it known that they are looking for cases to use as vehicles to mount more challenges.

"I think that we are at a very pivotal moment," Nagle said. "At the end of the day, this is going to come back to the Supreme Court. There is a lot at stake here."

Tee-Up for the kids
2024 JOIN US FOR THE
4th Annual SHOTS 4 TOTS
OCTOBER 4
CASH PRIZES
FOUR PERSON SCRAMBLE | 24 TEAM MAX
TO REGISTER PAY AT MBCI CASHIER'S OFFICE OR CALL 601.650.1623 or 601.663.7348
 Submit receipts to Krystal Robinson to confirm your spot (601.650.1778)
Dancing Rabbit GOLF COURSE
 HOSTED BY CFD FIRE WOLVES
 SIGN-IN @ 8 AM START @ 9 AM
 Cost Per Player
\$125

Adult Education holds graduation ceremony

The Choctaw Adult Education Program held the Class of 2023-2024 commencement ceremony on Tuesday, August 13 at the Golden Moon Casino's VIP Room in Choctaw, Miss. This year's Class of 2023-2024 graduate was Michael Bell of the Pearl River community.

Members of the Choctaw Color Guard presented the flags, followed by the sounds of Pomp and Circumstance playing overhead as Mr. Bell made his way into the ceremony with family and friends looking on. Bro. Marco Patrick of Canaan Baptist Church offered the invocation and Choctaw Adult Education staff member Taina Thompson welcomed all in attendance.

"Today marks a significant milestone as we celebrate the achievement of our graduate," said Thompson. "We also celebrate a remarkable achievement, this being our 51st year of providing educational opportunities to adult learners. We are proud to have one GED student participating, representing the many that have re-



Michael Bell receives his diploma from Tribal Chief Ben.

ceived their diplomas through our program."

Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben served as guest speaker as he emphasized the graduation theme, "Empowering Lifelong Learning." With several military veterans and first responders in attendance, Chief Ben acknowledged the empowerment of knowledge and ability they must possess in order to serve our country and protect

see GED GRAD, pg. 14

SEPTEMBER IS SUICIDE PREVENTION AWARENESS MONTH

KNOW THE 12 SUICIDE WARNING SIGNS:

1. Feeling like a burden
2. Being isolated
3. Increased anxiety
4. Feeling trapped
5. Increased substance use
6. Looking for a way to access lethal means
7. Increased anger
8. Extreme mood swings
9. Expressing hopelessness
10. Sleeping too little or too much
11. Talking or posting about wanting to die
12. Making plans for suicide

5 STEPS TO HELP SOMEONE AT RISK:

1. Ask.
2. Keep them safe.
3. Be there.
4. Help them connect.
5. Follow up.

988 SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT CHOCTAW BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AT 601.389.4150. BUSINESS HOURS ARE MONDAY-FRIDAY, 8AM-4:30PM.

GED GRAD continued from page thirteen

lives when duty calls.

“In our walk of life, sometimes it’s just general knowledge that empowers you to follow the proper steps that our duty and responsibilities will lead us. I congratulate Michael and commend you on your path of life, for not stopping and giving up. You

pursued, you persevered and today is your celebration. You empowered yourself for what your life journey will offer you. I also thank the ABE staff for supporting this young man and empowering him to where he is today. The empowerment and knowledge he gained will now prepare him for the successes

of tomorrow.”

Terry Ben, Director of Choctaw Workforce Development, offered remarks as he also urged Mr. Bell to keep learn-

ing, keep reading, and to follow the old saying, “knowledge is power.” He also encouraged him to learn more from

continued next page



Pictured, from left to right, are Choctaw Adult Education instructor Randy Farve, teaching assistant Nehemiah Shaun Lewis, instructor Greta Monroe, graduate Michael Bell, Tribal Chief Ben, child care specialist Taina Thompson, & administrative assistant Jaxie Willis.



Graduates from MCC

Congratulations to reigning Choctaw Indian Princess Leilani Elyse Allen & Teara Phillips as they graduated from Meridian Community College on Friday, August 2, 2024. Allen received her AA Degree (University Transfer) & Phillips received her AAS Degree (Medical Assisting Technology). Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben was in attendance & congratulated them on their achievements & offered best wishes on their future endeavours.

MISSISSIPPI BAND OF CHOCTAW INDIANS
Tribal Scholarship
EST. 1994

APPLYING FOR THE TRIBAL SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM?

2025 Spring Applications are currently being accepted.
DEADLINE TO SUBMIT COMPLETED APPLICATION IS THURSDAY, OCTOBER 31, 2024.

FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS BELOW TO APPLY

Select ONE of the following websites:

- TSP Website: [Scholarship.choctaw.org](https://scholarship.choctaw.org)
- Application Website: <https://tribalscholarshipprogram.secure-platform.com/>

• Applicant must have an active email address.
• Choose TSP website or Application website.
• Read and follow instructions carefully on application Home page.
• Complete application and make note of information required.
• Submit application.
• Applicant will receive an email confirmation.
• Applicant must submit all transcripts as needed.
• Applicant will receive a follow-up email from assigned assistant.
• Files are complete after all documents are received.
• Applicant will receive confirmation email by assistant of file completion.

For more information or assistance, please call the Tribal Scholarship Office at 601.650.7409

EMAIL US: Scholarship.Program@choctaw.org
FOLLOW US Tribal Scholarship Program



Spencer retires from Chahta Immi

Longtime dedicated & beloved Tribal employee Martha Spencer was honored with a retirement reception at the Entertainment House in Choctaw on Monday, August 12. Martha served 35 years for the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians in various capacities, but working with the Chahta Immi Cultural Center was her most recent role. She played a vital part within the Choctaw Indian Fair Committee, where she served as stage manager for a number of years before retiring as the Chahta Immi Cultural Outreach Exhibit Manager. Representing the Tribe on local, state & national boards was a service she was accustomed to as well. Her loving personality & infectious smile will truly be missed by all & will always be considered a friend to the Tribe. Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben presented a token of appreciation for her distinguished service & offered her well wishes on her retirement & a new chapter in her life.

family and community members as their life experiences can provide additional knowledge.

“I encourage Michael to continue reading, enhance your knowledge and empower your

lifelong learning.”

Prior to the ceremony, Ben asked Bell what his plans will be after graduation, and he indicated he would like to go to college for vocational training.

“Knowledge is power, and

maybe in the next two years we can have another graduation ceremony for you,” Ben said.

Chief Ben and Director Ben then presented Bell with his diploma to the delight of family, friends, and supporters in the

audience.

Bro. Patrick offered the benediction to conclude the ceremony as a buffet luncheon was held in honor of the graduate, courtesy of the Pearl River Resort dining staff.



Dan retires from CHC

The Choctaw Health Center (CHC) held a retirement reception on Thursday, August 29, for longtime dedicated employee Brenda Dan. Family, friends, & colleagues were on hand to wish Miss Brenda well for her over 30 years of service. Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben was in attendance to personally congratulate her & to present a special gift in appreciation of her service to the Tribe. Congratulations to Brenda her retirement & best wishes on a new chapter in her life.



2024 Mississippi State Fair

4-H Day

OCTOBER 12, 2024

MBCI 4-H MEMBERS & VOLUNTEERS

For More Information contact:
Department of Natural Resources
4-H Office
Ronald Gibson, 4-H Program Supervisor
Phone: (601)656- 2070
Fax: (601)650-1992
Email: ronald.gibson@choctaw.org

MISSISSIPPI

MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION

OCTOBER 3-14, 2024

1207 Mississippi Street
Jackson, MS 39202

Elders enjoy Smith County Watermelons!

Submitted by Kaitlyn Ford, Tribal MSU Extension Agent

Each month, the Choctaw Elderly Activity Center and Tribal MSU Extension Agent, Kaitlyn Ford, hosts an educational activity. For the month of June, participants were able to eat authentic Smith County watermelons. There was a choice between red and yellow, and it was enjoyed by all! The watermelons were donated by Ford Farms of Taylorsville, Miss.



Looking Back
at
the 74th
CHOCTAW INDIAN FAIR
July 10-13, 2024





New Choctaw Indian Princess Crowned

(CHOCTAW, Miss.) - On Wednesday, July 10, 2024, during the opening night of the 74th Choctaw Indian Fair, Leilani Elyse Allen was crowned the 2024-2025 Choctaw Indian Princess. She becomes the 69th young Choctaw woman to hold the title of Princess and joins an elite and exclusive circle with the honor and responsibility of representing the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians.

Princess Leilani is the 21-year-old daughter of Marsha Allen and is from the Tucker Community. Her grandparents are Leslie & James Willis.

Leilani has two siblings, Malakai and Almera. She has a dachshund named Gus and a turtle named Oogway, after the tortoise in Kung Fu Panda.

She graduated from Meridian Community College in August 2024 with an associate's in business information systems. Leilani has plans to attend Mississippi State University to get her bachelor's degree in business information systems. She hopes to become a web developer one day. Leilani graduated from Choctaw Central High School in May 2021.

A strong supporter of Choctaw Tribal Schools' Exceptional Education Program, Leilani continues to volunteer for the Special Olympics programs held at Choctaw Central High School. She also participates, alongside her family, in the St. Jude Memphis Marathon Weekend in December in honor of her cousin Lucas who passed away from brain cancer in 2021. Leilani wore a gray and white Choctaw dress in the Pageant to honor her cousin, as gray is the designated color for brain cancer awareness.

Leilani enjoys playing tennis; reading thrillers, her favorite being *The Silent Patient*; and taking walks with her dog Gus. Leilani's favorite Fair activity is watching the thrilling action of *Chahta Kabotcha* (Choctaw Stickball)! She invites everyone to experience a game of *Chahta Kabotcha*.

The first alternate is Lexi Camille Rodriguez. She is the 16-year-old daughter of Abraham and Nakita Rodriguez and is from the Pearl River Community. She is a junior at Choctaw Central High School this fall. Lexi was sponsored in the pageant by the Pearl River Development Club.

The second alternate is Lexi Alaysia Flint. She is the 18-year-old daughter of Cindell Hickman and Corey Flint and is from the Red Water Community. She plans to attend the University of Mississippi this fall and major in allied health studies. Lexi was sponsored in the pageant by the Oka Homma Development Club.

Princess Leilani was also selected as Miss Photogenic, and Lexi Flint was selected as Miss Congeniality.

During her reign, Princess Leilani will serve as the Tribe's representative and goodwill ambassador at many special events, such as groundbreak-

ings, ribbon cuttings, conferences and other special ceremonies, occasionally alongside Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben. On a personal level, she will be a role model for little girls to look up to and will inspire many of them to one day run for Choctaw Indian Princess.

WSS champions crowned

The World Series Stickball (WSS), a staple of the Choctaw Indian Fair, concluded its 2024 run with two nights of championship games on Friday and Saturday nights, July 12-13, at Warrior Stadium in Choctaw.

From the opening ceremonies & exhibition games on July 2 to the exciting division finals, Choctaw Stickball enthusiasts witnessed 10 days of epic displays of athleticism, skill, determination, and pride among the players.

"The Choctaw spirit lives on. It shows how tough and resilient we are. You saw that in both the men's and women's games, the intensity," said Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben.

"Hats off to all the teams. It's been a great tournament as we are able to celebrate together. Once it's all over, we are Chahta, and may our culture continue. We're MBCI strong, Chahta strong, Chahta proud."

The first of three championship games scheduled for the WSS championship-themed "Friday Night Lights" included reigning champion Beaver Dam going for their fifth consecutive title as they faced Bok Cito for the Pushmataha (ages 10-13) Division championship.

continued next page



Pictured, from left to right, are First Alternate Lexi Camille Rodriguez, 2024-2025 Choctaw Indian Princess Leilani Elyse Allen, & Second Alternate Lexi Alaysia Flint.



Little Mr. & Miss CIF Winners

Congratulations to the winners of the Little Mr. & Miss Choctaw Indian Fair Pageant, held at the *Áyipa Village* stage on Wednesday, July 10. Winners in the following age groups included: (0-23 months) Ensley Robinson & Wyatt Shoemake; (2-4 years old) Laklyn Waiter & Colton Shoemake; (5-8 years old) Sahyimmi Isaac & Ja'shayen Bell.

Beaver Dam took a 1-0 lead with Adanian Isom's goal at the 8:10 mark in the first quarter.

Jayleb Dixon made it a 2-0 lead early in the second. Over a minute later, teammate Jaythan Dixon made it a 3-0 lead. With under a minute remaining, a goal by Kentray Frazier made it a 4-0 lead for Beaver Dam heading into halftime.

In the third, Jaythan Dixon made his second goal for Beaver Dam for a 5-0 lead.

Two more goals were added by Beaver Dam in the fourth as Cameron Truss scored at the 4:53 mark and Kyiz John's goal with 3:56 left on the clock invoked a mercy rule as Beaver Dam secured their fifth consecutive title with the 7-0 win.

It was Beaver Dam's 10th overall title since 1992 when the Pushmataha Division was introduced.

Hector Willis of Beaver Dam was named MVP of the series.

After the game, Bok Cito coach Elijah Jimmie offered his congratulations to Beaver Dam and thanked his coaches and parents for their support.

"I thank all of the parents for allowing us the opportunity to coach these kids. As far as the game, we held (Beaver Dam) as far as we could. We knew they were bigger and quicker than us, but it doesn't matter. In life, you're going up against obstacles, and these kids faced obstacles, and they didn't quit. I'm very proud of that. We try to teach them things they could

use on the playing field, as well as off. I believe that we did good and I appreciate that."

In the second championship contest, which featured another Beaver Dam-Bok Cito showdown, reigning champion Bok Cito was looking to repeat as they faced off in the Tulli Okchi Ishko (ages 14-17) final.

It was a defensive struggle in the opening quarter until Kai Morris scored with 1:30 on the clock to give Bok Cito the lead 1-0.

After two scoreless quarters, Chaisen Jimmie extended the Bok Cito lead 2-0 with his goal 4:08 in the fourth. With less than 2 minutes remaining, Azante Williams added his goal for the 3-0 lead and eventual back-to-back championships for Bok Cito.

"I love this game," exclaimed Bok Cito's Ajavon Samuel as he was named MVP of the series. "It's so fun, and I was really surprised I got MVP!"

It was Bok Cito's sixth overall title in the Tulli Okchi Ishko division since 1992.

Bok Cito coach Elijah Jimmie, who felt defeat in the earlier championship game, was elated for his team's victory.

"We faced a tough Beaver Dam team and they always have a good squad, great coaching staff. It was a fast paced, physical game, so we knew we had to do certain adjustments," said Jimmie.

"Both teams played well, and hats off to these kids. I know

they've been practicing in the hot sun, so it's due to all the players. Us coaches, we're just there to direct them, but they do the hard work. Good job to Beaver Dam and our team, Bok Cito."

Beaver Dam coach James Denson complimented Bok Cito on their win and offered his outlook of his team's future.

"It was a very tough game. Hats off to Bok Cito, they're a tough team and that's the reason why they're the defending champs and who they are, a very talented team," Denson said.

"It's a tough loss for us, but it was a good experience for us to play this team. We're a growing team, a young, upcoming team, so this is something good for us to learn and get experience from. We're happy we're in this position, we got to play under the lights and our crew enjoyed it as well. Big congrats to Bok Cito."

The final championship game of "Friday Night Lights," Koni Hata and Pearl River faced off in the Men's 35-Over Division final.

After a scoreless first quarter, Koni Hata struck first as Joey Stephens posted a goal at the 7:36 mark.

In the third, Koni Hata took a 3-0 lead with goals by Cory Bell (9:20) and Ricky Edwards, Jr. (5:06).

Edwards added another goal 9:00 minutes in the fourth and Mitch Shoemake scored with

7:11 remaining for a 5-0 lead and win.

It was Koni Hata's third title in six years, the last being in 2019 and 2021, and 5th overall since 2014. In 2020, the WSS was not held due to the coronavirus pandemic.

"It's been three years since we took the trophy home, and a lot of guys that turned 35 years old helped us get this far. We've been struggling, but we're back," said Koni Hata coach Timothy "OJ" Thomas, Sr.

Joey Stephens was named MVP of the series as he said it was a pretty intense game.

"I was surprised to get MVP, I was just out there playing what I was taught when I was younger."

Pearl River coach Frankie Garcia called it a good game and said Koni Hata centers were quicker on the draw this time.

"Their centers beat us with their speed. They got more 35 year olds that are really quick. We lacked speed on the center side."

"Choctaw Saturday Night" featured championship games in the women's and men's division as defending champions Koni Hata Ohoyo and Koni Hata were ready to repeat. Waiting across the field determined to play spoilers were finalists Bok Cito Ohoyo and Pearl River.

see WSS CHAMPS, pg. 20



Images from the WSS "Friday Night Lights" youth & men's 35-over championship games.

WSS CHAMPS continued from page nineteen

With seven overall titles since 2012, Koni Hata Ohoyo was gunning for their 3rd consecutive title as they faced a determined Bok Cito Ohoyo team that was ready to shock the stickball world and claim their first women's championship.

It was a defensive battle throughout the whole contest. Both teams were evenly matched as neither side had a greater advantage on offense. The game rested on the skills and speed of the centers as neither team wanted to show signs of fatigue. With no scores in the contest, it was still anybody's game.

At the end of 40 minutes, a championship would now be decided with sudden victory. As they say in sports, defense wins championships, but one burst of offense brings home the glory. Bok Cito Ohoyo's Leia Phillips can attest to that.

Throughout the contest, Phillips had her moments to score but never connected. With nearly 19 minutes in overtime, she finally got her moment as she broke free for a 15-yard shot with a Koni Hata Ohoyo defender bearing down on her.

"Most of the game, I was taking shots, and I was getting close, but I didn't hit the pole. When I finally saw an opening in the middle, I said, 'ok, calm down and take your shot. If they hit you, they hit you, and if your gonna make it, you make it cause God's gonna make it happen,' and He made it happen!"

Phillips was named MVP of the series.

"It feels unreal. I didn't expect it to be me because all my teammates are great," said Phillips. "It's not just me, it's everybody. I say good job BC Ohoyos, we did it!"

"She kept us going from the start," said Bok Cito Ohoyo



Images from the exciting "Choctaw Saturday Night" women's & men's championship games.

coach Jackie Morris about Phillips. "She played center/shooter and she was missing some shots in other games, but tonight, when we needed it, she connected."

Morris praised his team's hard work, determination and focus to bring home their first women's championship.

"It was a tough game as both teams went all out. We brought it home, finally! I'm just speechless. Koni Hata brought their A-game and you expect that from them every time you meet them. But now, we finally beat them. I know everybody was practicing hard like we did. All in all, it was a good game from both teams."

Koni Hata Ohoyo coach Jeron Johnson complimented Bok Cito on their win and expressed his appreciation for his team's determination.

"It was a good game and I'm glad we showed the fans how it was a physical game. We were going for a 3-peat, but Bok Cito had a good game on their side so give a lot of credit to them. On our side, our girls played well all the way to the end. It took overtime and it's not always easy to win in this game of stickball. This proves that even though we won back-to-back, we're still capable of losing. Now, I guess we're going to start over."

With one championship decided in what is considered an instant classic, can anything else top that, or at least be on par for that level of excitement? For the men's championship, Koni Hata would be facing Pearl River in a contest that certainly did not disappoint.

Just like the women's championship, it would end up being a defensive struggle. Unlike the previous contest, a bit of controversy would come into play for both sides.

After a scoreless first quarter, Pearl River finally got on the board in the second with Ayden McKinney's goal at the 6:56 mark. Immediately after the score, an official recount was requested as Pearl River was found to have too many players on the field, therefore negating the goal.

In the third, Koni Hata finally got on the board with Ira Anderson's goal at the 8:17 mark. Unfortunately, another official recount was requested as Koni Hata was found to have too many players on the field as well, thus negating their goal.

In the fourth at the 7:20 mark, Pearl River's Sebastian Johnson shot from 20 yards out to hit near the top of the post for a 1-0 lead. After another official recount, the score would stand. After a feverish flurry to score or defend, the game would fi-

nally culminate with fireworks going off at the :00 mark, signifying Pearl River's win over Koni Hata.

During the celebration, Pearl River coach Shaun Jimmie reflected on the win as a homage to his late father and former Pearl River coach Randy Jimmie who passed away in October 2023. He was the last coach to lead Pearl River to a championship in 2016.

"All I wanted to do was win for him. The team came out and did their job. That's all I asked of them and that's what they did. I told the defense and offense to suck it up in the fourth quarter, cause this is where it counts. I told them to keep at it and we will come out victorious if we keep doing that. And we did."

Jimmie then praised Johnson for his shot that secured the win and championship.

"He's a young guy and a pretty good player who was at the right place at the right time. That's all that counts, one score can win it all, and it did tonight. Next year, we are going to try and come out stronger. Every year, we get stronger, but any other team can win if they want it."

Kanyon Jimmie of Pearl River was named MVP of the series.

continued pg. 22

2024 WORLD SERIES STICKBALL CHAMPIONS/MVP'S



PUSHMATAHA DIVISION CHAMPIONS • BEAVER DAM



**PUSHMATAHA MVP
HECTOR WILLIS**



TULLI OKCHI ISHKO DIVISION CHAMPIONS • BOK CITO



**TULLI OKCHI ISHKO MVP
AJAVON SAMUEL**



MEN'S 35-OVER DIVISION CHAMPIONS • KONI HATA



**MEN'S 35-OVER MVP
JOEY STEPHENS**



WOMEN'S DIVISION CHAMPIONS • BOK CITO OHOYO



**WOMEN'S MVP
LEIA PHILLIPS**



MEN'S DIVISION CHAMPIONS • PEARL RIVER



**MEN'S MVP
KANYON JIMMIE**

WSS CHAMPS continued from page twenty

“It feels good and I couldn’t have done it without my team, and all glory to God and my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We had to keep playing cause I know we got the best team out there, and we never gave up cause anything could happen. Koni Hata is great and anybody could score. Respect all Choctaws, they know how to play the game. So keep on playing,” said Jimmie.

It was Pearl River’s fourth overall title since 1976.

Koni Hata coach Greg Shoemaker said it was an exciting game to close out this year’s fair, even though he would

have preferred the win. “It was one heck of a game. Shoot, it was an intense game. I couldn’t ask for a better group of men to play with us and we’re not walking away from

this game with our heads down. Our heads are up and with this loss, we’ll take that and we’ll be back next year. Go Blue!”

During the post-game awards ceremony, recipients of this

year’s Barry Ben Sportsmanship Awards were announced as Lady Beaver Dam (women’s division) and War Party (men’s division) were recognized.



Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben, 2024-2025 Choctaw Indian Princess Leilani Elyse Allen, & WSS Commissioner Thomas Ben presented this year’s Barry Ben Sportsmanship Awards to representatives of Lady Beaver Dam & War Party. Congratulations on your honor!

Rez Run results

The 12th edition of REZ RUN was held on Saturday, July 13, as hundreds of runners & walkers braved the warm morning air & participated in the 10K, 5K, or 1 mile fun run/walk as part of activities of the 74th Choctaw Indian Fair.

Overall winners were: 10K (female) Jazmin Russell & (male) Brennan Henry; 5K (female) Dazlie Tubby & (male) Ogana Swimmer.

Top finishers in each age category in the 10K & 5K runs are listed below.

10K - Female: (15-19) Katelin Williams; (20-29) Sierra Wallace; (30-39) Denise Powell; (40-49) Lauren Grimes; (50-59) Sheryl West; (60+) Betty Gill; **Male:**

(14-Under) Halayvi Davis; (15-19) Keondrae Anderson; (20-29) Jordan Isaac; (30-39) Brandon Butler; (40-49) Kyle Massey; (50-59) Gary Willis, Jr.; (60+) Roland Rhodes.

5K - Female: (14-Under) Nola Frazier; (15-19) Jamie McCarty; (20-29) Ava Dickerson; (30-39) Monique Bell; (40-49) Lydia Deere; (50-59) Marion Sockey; (60+) Gwen Ben; **Male:** (14-Under) Channing Bloodsaw; (15-19) Evan Hallford; (20-29) Jake Russell; (30-39) Mitchell Crawford;



Overall winners, from left to right, 10K female Jazmin Russell, 10K male Brennan Henry, 5K female Dazlie Tubby, & 5K male Ogana Swimmer.

(40-49) Jason Grisham; (50-59) Thomas Ben, Jr.; (60+) Kevin Pou.

To see complete order & time of all participants, go to the MS Race Timing & Management website at www.msracetiming.com.



Top 10K finishers in their respective age divisions included, from left to right, WOMEN'S DIVISION - Katelin Williams, Sierra Wallace, Denise Powell, Lauren Grimes, Sheryl West, & Betty Gill;

MEN'S DIVISION - Halayvi Davis, Keondrae Anderson, Jordan Isaac, Brandon Butler, Kyle Massey, Gary Willis, Jr., & Roland Rhodes.

Isaac, McMullen win Iron Warrior

Iron Warrior, one of the anticipated events featured at the 74th Choctaw Indian Fair, crowned this year's champions on Saturday afternoon, July 13. Former champion Maleah Isaac reclaimed the women's title and Ethan McMullen won his third consecutive men's title.

Strength, sheer will, and pure determination were tested as participants, with varying competition elements, must complete a course comprised of feats of strength to compliment their speed. This year's gauntlet included a Tire Deadlift, Power Stairs, Atlas Stones, Farmer's Carry, Tire Flips, Kill Switch, Conan's Wheel, and Truck Pull.

Time trial qualifiers were held on Thursday and Friday, July 11-12, with the top five fin-

ishers from each day advancing to the finals on Saturday.

Cash prizes are awarded in as winners receive a cash prize of \$600. Second place finishers receive \$250, third place \$150, fourth place \$100, and fifth place \$75.

"I enjoyed it," said Isaac on her win. "When I won it in 2022, I worked hard. This year, I didn't have much time to train since I was working and stuff, so it was very challenging for me. I was nervous, but I pushed through it. I'm thankful to go against these wonderful girls, they're really good. It was a fun experience, and I enjoyed myself."

Isaac had the winning time of 1:33.56. Placing second was Crystal Routh with her time of 1:35:75. Last year's champion Sarah Williams placed

third with her time of 1:42:16. Hallie Billie placed fourth with a time of 1:43:96, and Allison Meely finished fifth with her time of 1:53:15.

Although she had limited time to prepare, Isaac said she pushed herself to go out there and do the best she could.

"It was difficult for me, but I pushed myself and kept my mind on the goal. I went out there and did it with all the strength my body had."

When asked if she was looking forward to defending her title next year, Isaac replied, "Oh yes, of course!"

While the record for most



2024 Iron Warrior winners Maleah Isaac (left) & Ethan McMullen. It was Isaac's second win in three years in the women's division & McMullen's third consecutive men's division title.

Iron Warrior wins belongs to Miranda Stamper with six consecutive victories in the women's division, McMullen hopes to create his own legacy in the men's division with his third straight title.

see WINNERS, pg. 24



Pictured, from left to right, is Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben with Women's Division Finalists Sarah Williams (3rd), Crystal Routh (2nd), champion Maleah Isaac, 2024-2025 Choctaw Indian Princess Leilani Elyse Allen, Hallie Billie (4th), & Allison Meely (5th).



Pictured, from left to right, are Men's Division Finalists Justin Hundley (3rd), Seth Smith (4th), Tribal Chief Ben, champion Ethan McMullen, 2024-2025 Choctaw Indian Princess Leilani Elyse Allen, Randy Tangle (5th), & Cade Griffin (2nd).



Top 5K finishers in their respective age divisions included, from left to right, WOMEN'S DIVISION - Nola Frazier, Jamie McCarty, Ava Dickerson, Monique Bell, Lydia Deere, Marion Sockey, & Gwen

Ben; MEN'S DIVISION - Channing Bloodsaw, Evan Hallford, Jake Russell, Mitchell Crawford, Jason Grisham, Thomas Ben, Jr., & Kevin Pou.

WINNERS continued from page twenty-three

“I was looking at the names on the trophy and I don’t think there’s anybody that has done it four times in the men’s division, so I would like to be the first, if possible.”

McMullen had the winning time of 2:03:28. Cade Griffin placed second with a time 2:20:56 and Justin Hundley placed third with his time of 2:23:19. Seth Smith came in fourth with his time of 2:30:87 and Randy Tangle placed fifth with a time of 2:31:29.

“It’s a fun competition with a couple of guys I’ve gotten to know throughout these years. I really enjoy it and it’s awesome. The course is not easy at all, it wears you out, but it’s a great experience,” said McMullen.

While he didn't specifically train for this event, McMullen

says he stays active by playing sports all year round and lifting weights occasionally.

“I love coming here to the Choctaw Indian Fair. It’s one of the highlights of my year and I love the show everybody puts on.”

Iron Warrior organizer Sam Farve, a member of the Choctaw Fire Department, said the event was a great success, despite the afternoon heat bearing down.

“We had a lot of competitors to come out, especially during this time of day. This heat ain't no joke. I’m thankful we got some cooling fans, and the netting brought a little shade to cool us down a bit. We were trying to make sure everybody was hydrated.”

Farve said he is always thinking of new events to improve

the course. One component was the Power Stairs as the initial contraption was constructed of wood. Not to his expectation, he contacted Mark Patrick of M&M’s Welding/Fabrication in Carthage to build a new metal stand that could hold multiple weight plates.

“He built the Power Stairs for us and the pins with it, and it

turned out real awesome. Some people hadn’t seen it before.”

Since its inception in 2014, Iron Warrior has grown in popularity among Fair goers as an attraction showcasing abilities of local athletes.

“It’s a great event and I hope to keep it moving forward. For next year, maybe I can think of something we can put into it.”

CIF features arts, crafts exhibits

The 74th Choctaw Indian Fair featured arts and crafts exhibits displaying a variety of items created and submitted by Tribal members and categorized in the Adult, Youth, and 4-H Club Divisions.

There were a total of 182 exhibitors with various items on display. Each item was judged

based on its own merit and awarded with either a blue ribbon (1st place), red ribbon (2nd place), or white ribbon (3rd place) and a cash award.

There was also a booth dedicated to artisans of beautiful beaded graduation caps from recent graduates of various high schools and universities. There were 13 beaded caps on display.

Thank you to the MBCI Boys & Girls Clubs/Teen Center, Resource Center, 4-H Club members, Choctaw Elderly Activity Center, graduates, and others for taking part in displaying their items.

There were a total of 46 participants in the Youth Division. They included Elliana Wallace, Midnite Hall, Ky'Emri Bell, Chyler Thomas, Xandria Wallace, Keirra Reed, Kelise Perry, Dolan Ben, LaTaysia Hickman, Megan Dixon, Sagel Isaac, Tiger Hickman, Lincoln Sockey, Debash Ben, Jessias Williams, Doni Mason, Keilahn Bell, Elilee Steve, Crisney Perry, Kemyia Bell, Tiylee Buca, Aria Jenkins, Kacety Williams, Amyrah Reed, Maggie Jim, Laine Isaac, Kaysen Dixon, Zaydrian Reynolds, Asia Marquez, Knoxx Bell, Cayelea Frazier, Kheita Samuel, Kooper York, Jocelyn York, Heavenly



Cornhole Tourney Winners

Choctaw Central High School Gymnasium hosted this year's Choctaw Indian Fair Cornhole Tournament as numerous teams vied for cash prizes. On Friday, July 12, a tribal affiliated tournament was held featuring two divisions, Social & Competitive. Newly crowned 2024-2025 Choctaw Indian Princess Leilani Elyse Allen was in attendance to present awards to the winners.

TOP ROW, from left to right, Social Division winners - 1st place, Jada Wallace & Marsha Allen; 2nd place, Michael Ben & Jamison Gibson; 3rd place, Ricky Anderson, Sr. & Akeisha Littlejohn; **BOTTOM ROW**, from left to right, Competitive Division - 1st place, Espn Jackson & Randy Nick-ey; 2nd place, Dewayne Thomas & Kameron Thomas; 3rd place, Jeriah Jimmie & David Crosby.

continued next page

Harjo, Jaiycelyn Bell, Aryana Sam, Jaston Bell, Cayden Billy, Achilles Kelly, Kylianna Spivey, Jasmine Hickman, Isla Tangle, Kentray Frazier, Kree Bingham, & Khristi Bolton.

There were a total of 47 participants in the Adult Division. They included Sally Tubby, Waudine Brown, Jessica Kay, Cindy Willis, Gail Clemmons, Glenda Willis, Peggy Lewis, Fritz Thomas, Brenda Bell, Candy Jimmie, Billy Smith, Miriam Edwards, Emily Jenkins, Shelbi Bell, Tina Thomas, Maria Farmer, Joyce Lewis, Misty Brescia, Melody Charlie, Robert Sam, Sandie Gibson, Shaya Hicks, Martha Martinez, Merhaylee Bell, Jasmine Wallace, Valerie Sutton, Shanine McMillan, Amanda Busby, Elisa Sam, Jenna Anderson, Autumn McMillan, Kayla Stephens, Tehona Bell, Annalise Bell, Daishia Billie, Diane Hickman, George Wishork, Maria Frazier, Ta-

mara Hathorne, Carlee Jimmie, Wendy Wilson, Quintara Gibson, Delia Gibson, Vickie Orduno, Vita Thomas, Dina K. Gibson, & Kristena Thomas.

There were a total of 89 participants in the 4-H Division. They included Lola Kay, Faith Kay, Natayah Wilson, Alaysia Willis, Kinsley Thomas, Kahlon Edwards, Trevor Thomas, Chaisen Jimmie, Madalynn Jimmie, Thomasina Wickson, Lyric Billy, Kaaya Johnson, Kari Hicks, Xhaiden Edwards, Anilah Tubby, Au'Bryl Dotson, Damarii Sam, Emily Wickson, Kelise Perry, Jadalyn Lions, Addelyn Thomas, Jashayen Bell, Macy Clemmons, Amalynn Frazier, Jalaia Joe, Tegan Turner, Aria McMillan, Lillian Dreifus, Hazelin Joe, Dani Smith, Ryker Zimmerman, Jay'ce Chickaway, Joslian Winters, Christine Hickman, Kaydreus Gibson, Cheri Hicks, Xameya Clemmons, Crisney Perry, Jensyn

Bell, Adelyn Daniel, Mahayla Tubby, Cayden Billy, Rayon Sutton, Kailynn Perry, Cannon Wilson, Chloe Wilson, Corbin Wilson, Anesha Chapman, Khole Ben, Shyne Chickaway, Maci Bell, Jariah Hundley, LaZarus Isaac, Josiah Wishork, Nova Grace Willis, Kaimlee Christie, Tushka Zimmerman, Jaiden Wishork, Sam Holifield, Grayson Billy, Jep Johnson, Zendaya Jefferson, Miley Frazier, Kenisha Jefferson, Avangeline Hathorne, Symphanee

Billy, Khlandrick Hathorne, Gunter Wishork, Brayleigh Bell, Savanah Frazier, Jacob Frazier, Zuriana Willis, Colt Frazier, Rikkiaya Miller, Tarlayah Brescia, Raiyleigh Perry, Cohen McMillan, Wylex McMillan, Christian Hickman, Brycten Eaves, Jose Wallace, Flijah Holified, Calvin Hicks, Zendaya Frazier, Myla Frazier, Kynleigh Frazier, Me'laney Lindsey, Del'Laney Lindsey, & Hamiah Frazier.



TCDC wins CIF Community Booth Competition

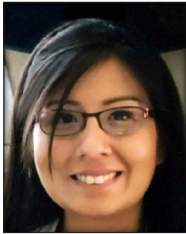
Congratulations to the Tennessee Choctaw Development Club as they placed 1st in the Choctaw Indian Fair Community Booth Competition. Their theme was, "Who We Were, Are And Will Always Be... Choctaw." Other community development clubs placing were Pearl River (2nd), Tucker (3rd), Red Water (4th), Conehatta (5th), Standing Pine (6th), Bogue Chitto (7th), Crystal Ridge (8th), & Bogue Homa (9th).





KARLA MARIA JIM ESPINOZA

Funeral services for Karla Maria Jim Espinoza, 40, was held on Wednesday, June 19, 2024, at the Tucker CERF Building. Pastor Curtis Willis, Sr., officiated.



Burial was in the Tucker Community Cemetery. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Mrs. Espinoza passed away

on June 11 at her residence in Land O' Lakes, Fla.

A graduate of the University of Vermont with a Bachelor's Degree in Fine Arts, she embraced her Choctaw heritage in her artwork. She was an avid crafter, painter, gamer, & enjoyed stitching, watching Korean dramas & Anime.

She is preceded in death by her daughter, Julia Ann Espinoza; parents, Walter Frank Jim & Louise Joe Amos; brother, Bronson Edward Jim, Sr.; & grandparents, Claude & Nancy Frazier Joe, Mary Lou Jim Isaac & Dixon Jim Isaac.

Survivors include her husband, Daniel Joseph Espinoza; sisters, April Jim & Liza Ketcher; brothers, Bruce Jim & Lance Jim; father & mother-in-law, Meliton Joe & Ann Marie Espinoza; sisters-in-law, Cristina Marie Espinoza, Maria Louise Jenkins, & Joanna Rose Espinoza; & extended family & friends in Texas, Pennsylvania, Vermont, & Georgia.

KATHY DAWN STEVE McMILLAN

Funeral services for Kathy Dawn Steve McMILLAN, 60, was held on Monday, June 24, 2024, at Holy Rosary Catholic Church in Tucker. Father Bob Goodyear, S.T., officiated.



Burial was in the church cemetery. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Ms. McMILLAN passed away on June 17 at Baptist Memorial Hospital in Jackson.

A long-time resident of Tucker community, she attended Holy Rosary Catholic Church. A graduate of Marion Heights Academy, she obtained her associate's degree at Hinds Community College & Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education from Mississippi State University. She was a teacher at Tucker Elementary School. She loved her job & students, fishing, traveling, & coaching basketball.

She is preceded in death by her parents, Hughie & Nancy Chickaway Willis; father, Robert Steve; sister, Vickie Steve Farmer; brother, Gary Chickaway; a niece, great-niece, & 2 nephews.

Survivors include her companion, James H. Bell, Sr.; daughters, Alisha Steve, Kristen Steve, Curry McMillan, Jennaya Steve, & Olivia Willis; sons, Gavin Steve, Jerrod McMillan, & Jeric McMillan; sisters, Karen Chickaway, Janice Martinez, Judith Yellow, & Dollianne Willis; brothers, Brian Willis, Rodney Steve, & Edward Humble; 14 grandchildren; a special nephew, Arrion Williamson; & a host of nieces, nephews, relatives, & friends.

GLORIANNA MARLENE SHUMAKE

Funeral services for Gloriana Marlene Shumake, 60, was held on Saturday, June 15, 2024, at Mt. Zion Baptist Church in Red Water. Rev. Carl Wilson officiated.

Burial was in the Red Water Community Cemetery. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Mrs. Shumake passed away on June 12 at the University of Mississippi Medical Center in Jackson.

She resided in Red Water community & enjoyed shopping & being with her grandkids. She was family oriented.

She is preceded in death by her parents, Dempsey Shumake & Zulene Dixon; daughters, Kristy Ariel Wilson & Reanna Cherea Wilson; sisters, Annie Merle Isaac & Rexalene Shumake Steve; brothers, Randall Crenshaw Shumake, infant John Randall Shumake, Hurley Russell Shumake, & Alex Randy Shumake; & grandchildren, two Baby Wilsons.

Survivors include her husband, Charles Wilson; daughters, Casondra Lashay Hickman & Kasey Wynette Wilson; son, Lucas Elliot Wilson; sister, Maybelline Shumake; brothers, Leonard Shumake, Garland Shumake, & Jerry Lee Shumake, mother-in-law, Bessie Wilson; 5 grandchildren; & a host of relatives & friends.

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UNITED PENTECOSTAL CHURCH

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TUESDAY EVENINGS - 6:00 pm

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SUNDAY SCHEDULE

10:00 a.m. Sunday School
11:00 a.m. Worship Service
5:00 p.m. Evening Service

1st Sunday Service 4:00 p.m.
Pastor: Rev. Samuel Dixon

WEDNESDAY SCHEDULE

6:00 p.m. Pray Meeting
6:30 p.m. Discipleship/
Family Ministry Class

To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."
- John 8:31-32

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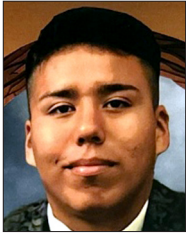
Spirit of Life
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Pastor Thomas Ben

LUCAS JAMES THOMAS, JR.

Funeral services for Lucas James Thomas, Jr., 23, was held on Saturday, June 22, 2024, at the Pearl River CERF Building. Bro. Shelly Peoples officiated.



Burial was in the Red Water Community Cemetery. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Mr. Thomas passed away on June 17 at the Choctaw Health Center in Choctaw.

He lived most of his life in Pearl River community & was a welder then a lineman for Utility 1. He enjoyed being with family, fishing, sports, hunting, gambling, & mud riding with friends.

He is preceded in death by his great-great-great grandmother, Grace Smith; great-great grandparents, Devin & Francis Mitch; great-grandparents, Carlton & Annie Ruth Briscoe, Golden & Dorothy Thomas, Alma Mitch, Woodrow Kopaddy, & Odell Frazier, Sr.; & an uncle, Antonio Anderson.

Survivors include his fiancé, Angel Thompson; parents, Lucas Sr. & Tiffany Thomas; daughters, Zoey Thomas & Ezaleia Thomas; son, Zackary Thomas; sisters, Lanena John, Bo Thomas, Kierstyn Thomas, Miley Thomas, & Catelyn Martin; grandparents, Patricia Kopaddy, Helen Moore, Anthony Anderson, Austin Tubby, Beverly Briscoe, & Donald Thomas; & a host of aunts, uncles, relatives, & friends.

SRI QUARTÉ GRANT

Funeral services for Sri Quarté Grant, 25, was held on Friday, June 28, 2024, at Macedonia Baptist Church in Cone-

hatta. Bro. Gerald Willis, Sr. officiated.

Burial was in the Conehatta Community Cemetery. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Mr. Grant passed away on June 22 at the University of Mississippi Medical Center in Jackson.

He lived his childhood in Ganado, AZ, then in Conehatta community. His clans are Má'iideeshgiizhnii (Coyote Pass Clan), born for the Choctaw, his maternal grandfathers are Tódich'íinii (Bitter Water), paternal grandfathers are Choctaw. He was young, vibrant, & radiated charisma, liveliness & had a passion for sports, often being in the weight room, stickball practices, playing basketball, & swimming. He loved traveling & embracing different cultures. He was always ready to help or listen to those in need. With deep love for family & friends, he enjoyed spreading laughter, fun, & positivity. He embraced opportunities with enthusiasm & an open heart. He loved playing video games. He was a member of Mountain View Baptist Church in Lukachukai, AZ, & also attended Choctaw Missionary Baptist Church where he conducted services for the Lord.

He is preceded in death by his great-grandmother, Marie Salabiye; grandmothers, Mary Ella Burwell & Donna Denson; grandfathers, Danny Salabiye, Jr. & Faron Denson; aunt, Tammy Grant; & uncles, Eric Burwell & Kevin Grant.

Survivors include his parents, Shaun & Gwynn Grant; sisters, Kyannah Grant & Kyarah Grant; brother, ShéChem Grant; a nephew, Kouvr Grant; grandparents, Raymond & Lo-



retta Hobbs; aunts, Pamelyn Hobbs & Beth Grant; an uncle, Kenneth Grant; & a host of relatives & friends.

LOUISA MARIE BELL

Funeral services for Louisa Marie Bell, 65, was held on Tuesday, July 2, 2024, at St.



Therese's Catholic Church in Pearl River. Father Bob Goodyear, S.T., officiated.

Burial was in Isaac Cemetery. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Louisa Marie Bell was born on June 17, 1959, to Henry Bell Sr. & Juanita Isaac Bell York. She passed into God's loving hands on the evening of June 27, 2024, at Baptist Memorial Hospital in Jackson.

Louisa, affectionately known as Louie, graduated from Choctaw Central High School in 1979 & had a long career with the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians & held various positions. At the time of her passing, she was employed with the Choctaw Police Department & Pearl River Resort. She had a passion for running, music, & cherished moments with her close friends. She showed unwavering strength & resilience, triumphing over life's challenges with grace. As a devout Catholic, she was a selfless person & a friend to all. Her smile, laughter, & presence will be greatly missed.

She is preceded in death by her parents, Juanita Isaac Bell York & Henry Bell, Sr.; stepfather, Theodore "Ted" York; sisters, Linda Jean Bell Schein & Cynthia Bell Rose; brothers, George Bell, Wendell Bell, Henry "Buxy" Bell, Jr., & Richard Bell; granddaughter, Jazmin Bell; nieces, Wanibe

Schein & Kelly Bell; & nephew, Del Shannon Mingo.

Survivors include her sons, Maynard Elliot Bell, Corey Neil (Briana) Bell, & Darrell (Beverly) Cotton; sisters, Hazel Bell Willis & Barbara Lynn Ben; 11 grandchildren, 2 great-grandchildren, & a host of nieces, nephews, extended family members, & friends.

PETER JOHN STEVE

Funeral services for Peter John Steve, 75, was held on Friday, July 5, 2024, at



Holy Rosary Catholic Church in Tucker. Father Bob Goodyear, S.T., officiated.

Burial was in Holy Rosary Catholic Cemetery. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Mr. Steve passed away on June 29 at Merit Health Hospital in Flowood.

A member of Holy Rosary Catholic Church, he was a 1969 graduate of Choctaw Central High School. He was a 36-year Veteran with the U.S. Marine Corps & Army National Guard & served in the Vietnam War & Desert Shield/Desert Storm. He was a former Choctaw Tribal Council Tucker Representative. He was employed many years with the Bureau of Indian Affairs & enjoyed his retirement with his grandkids, traveling, playing golf, shopping, & buying lottery tickets.

He is preceded in death by his wife, Rita Billy Steve; parents, John Bobo Steve & Rosalie Wilson Steve; sisters, Loretta Steve Wilson, Vivian Tubby, Audie Day, Margaret Clonch, Sally Canku, & Laura Brennen; & brothers, Maurice Steve,

OBITUARIES continued from page twenty-seven

John F. Steve, & Carl Steve.
Survivors include his daughter, Marion Steve Comby; step-daughter, Melina John; stepson, Landon John; sisters, Norma Steve Hickman, Kathy Steve, & Margie Journeycake; brothers, Joseph Steve & Timothy Steve; grandchildren, Robin Comby, Raven Comby, & Terrence Comby; 8 great-grandchildren; & a host of nieces, nephews, relatives, & friends.

MALINE MINGO BELL

Funeral services for Maline Mingo Bell, 74, was held on Thursday, July 11, 2024, at the Bogue Chitto Community Gymnasium. Deacon Kendall Wallace & Rev. Charles Doby Henry officiated.



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

Ms. Bell passed away on July 6 at Regency Hospital in Meridian.

A resident of Bogue Chitto community, she held numerous employment positions, her last being a secretary at the Bogue Chitto Facility Building until her retirement. She enjoyed making people laugh, dancing, being outdoors, going to the casino, & being with family & friends, especially her sister.

She is preceded in death by her husband, Wendell Bell; son, Del Shannon Mingo; parents, Emma Clemons Mingo & Arch Mingo; sisters, Lorene Cumberland & Pauline Mingo; & brothers, Charlie Hickman, Marzine Mingo, & John Mingo.

Survivors include her sister, Laline Rush; special nephews,

Dexter Mingo & Demyais Mingo; & a host of nieces, nephews, relatives, & friends.

JUSTICE CORDÉ FIELDER

Funeral services for Justice Cordé Fielder, 26, was held on Saturday, July 20, 2024, at St. Therese's Catholic Church in Pearl River. Father Bob Goodyear, S.T., officiated.



Burial was in Simon Isaac Cemetery. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Mr. Fielder passed away on July 6 in Hollywood, Fla.

He lived most of his childhood in Philadelphia/Choctaw, & spent his summers in Hickory. He graduated from Neshoba Central High School & attended East Mississippi Community College. He loved sports & played baseball, basketball & stickball with Pearl River (#120). He was a fan of the Los Angeles Lakers (Kobe Bryant), New Orleans Saints (Tyrann Mathieu), Auburn Tigers (Jarquez Hunter), & his siblings. He was outgoing & kindhearted, loved music & attending concerts, swimming, traveling with his crew, & being with his nieces. He enjoyed being in Miami with his Seminole friends, where he lived the past 7 years. He loved his family.

He is preceded in death by his grandmother, Madie Garcia; grandfather, Benjamin Fielder; & uncles, Donovan Garcia & William Fielder.

Survivors include his mother, Elaina Fielder; father, Ricardo Fielder; sister, Hama'ya Fielder; brothers, Trajan Fielder & Kaden Stallings; nieces, Zy'Llyasin & Y'Vanii Field-

er; and a host of relatives & friends.

BAXTER HALL, JR.

Funeral services for Baxter Hall, Jr., 52, was held on Wednesday, July 10, 2024, at Macedonia Baptist Church in Conehatta. Rev. Samuel Dixon officiated.



Burial was in the Conehatta Community Cemetery. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Mr. Hall passed away on July 7 at his residence.

He was a Baptist by faith & a resident of Conehatta community. He participated in the MBCI Day Training Program & enjoyed being with family & friends, listening to music, fishing, & being a fan of Ole Miss football.

He is preceded in death by his parents, Baxter J. Hall, Sr. & Martha Lou Isom Hall; sisters, Linda Faye Hall Ferris & Sandy J. Hall; & a brother, Jesse James Isom.

He is survived by his sons, Baxter "Tuchina" Hall, III & Andre Hall; a stepdaughter, Jessica Martin; sisters, Martha J. Hall & Glenda Hall; brother, Sylvester "Sly" Hall; 5 nieces, 3 nephews, 3 great-nephews, & a host of relatives & friends.

MACK WILLIE JIMMIE, JR.

Funeral services for Mack Willie Jimmie, Jr., 75, was held on Wednesday, July 17, 2024, at the Pearl River CERF Building. Deacon Leonard Jim-



mie, Jr. officiated. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Mr. Jimmie passed away on July 10 in Jackson.

He resided in Pearl River community & graduated from Choctaw Central High School, where he was on the first football team & won multiple awards in track. He worked in various positions for the Tribe & served as Choctaw Tribal Council Pearl River Representative from 1979-1981. He retired from employment after many years being a substance abuse counselor. He attained a bachelor's degree from Mississippi State University & was a founding member of the local Native American Church. He served as church elder & conducted services. He played stickball & later served as commissioner. He enjoyed being at the Choctaw Elderly Activity Center for fellowship, food, & playing dominoes. He loved his grandchildren.

He is preceded in death by his parents, Mack Willie Jimmie, Sr. & Nettie Sam; sisters, Maxine, Irma, & Joyce; & a brother, Adolph.

Survivors include the mother of his children, Trudy Elaine Jimmie; daughters, Sandie Gibson (Ronald) & Candy Jimmie; sons, Mack III, Chad, & Elijah (Natasha) Jimmie; a step son, Alexander Bell (Paul); sisters, Wanda McMillan & Janis Jimmie; sister-in-law, Donna Willis Jimmie; 21 grandchildren, four great-grandchildren, & a host of relatives & friends.

JENNIE DEE JACKSON

Funeral services for Jennie Dee Jackson, 81, was held on Wednesday, July 17, 2024, at Pearl River Baptist Church.

Bro. Robert Patrick officiated.



Burial was in New Canaan Cemetery. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Ms. Jackson passed away on July 12 at the Choctaw Residential Center in Choctaw.

She was employed with Wells Lamont until 1995, then became a dietary worker at the Choctaw Health Center until her retirement in 2022.

She enjoyed attending her families' sporting events, listening to the radio, Choctaw hymns, & a recording of her uncle's fiddle playing.

She is preceded in death by her husband, Jeff Jackson; parents, Roby & Sally Willis John; sisters, Bobbie Jean John Velez, Edwina John Bell, Rita Denson, Vannell J. Billy, Ida Mae Sam, & Laurine John Jackson; brothers, Edward Lee John & Bobby Lee John; sons, Darron Jackson & Gregory Van Jackson; & a granddaughter, Tineka Cherie Sam.

Survivors include her son, Wayne Rydell Jackson; daughter-in-law, Alma Jackson; five grandchildren; 16 great-grandchildren; & a host of nieces, nephews, relatives, & friends.

GLORIA JEAN FARVE FRAZIER

Funeral services for Gloria Jean Farve Frazier, 67, was held on Thursday, July 18, 2024, at the Tucker CERF Building. Pastor Eddie Johnson officiated.



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

Ms. Frazier passed away on July 12 at Regency Hospital in Meridian.

She graduated from Choctaw Central High School in 1975 as class valedictorian & participated in school activities, such as chorus & band, & excelled as a majorette. She worked several years at Tucker Head Start as program director, then pursued a career in nursing. She attended Meridian Community College & became a LPN in 1985. She was employed with the Choctaw Residential Center for over 25 years. Her passion to help & care for others was felt by the staff & patients. She enjoyed playing softball during her younger years, reading books, watching movies & TV. She loved being with her children, grandchildren, great-grandchild, & her family.

She is preceded in death by her husband, Don Frazier; parents, Albert C. Farve & Bernadine Willis Farve; son, Clinton Farve; sister, Sharon Farve Taylor; & brothers, Milton Van Farve & Cedric Mason Farve.

Survivors include her daughter, Angelina Farve; sisters, Linda Farve McMillan, Tammy Renell Wishork, & Rhonda Michelle Steve; brothers, Melford D. Farve & Brandon Farve; 3 grandchildren, 1 great-grandchild, & a host of nieces, nephews, relatives, & friends.

WILLKIE ELLIS FRAZIER, JR.

Funeral services for Willkie Ellis Frazier, Jr., 61, was held on Friday, July 19, 2024, at the Bogue Homa CERF Building. Rev. Lee Farmer officiated.



Burial was in Bogue Homa Community Cemetery. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

ments.

Mr. Frazier passed away on July 12 at his residence.

He lived in Bogue Homa community & enjoyed being with family & watching TV shows & movies.

He is preceded in death by his wife, Patricia Frazier; daughter, Amanda Frazier; son, Willkie Frazier, III; parents, Willkie Ellis Frazier, Sr. & Bernice Thomas Frazier; sister, Edna Fay Willis; & grandson, Antonio Frazier.

Survivors include his daughter, Cornelia Frazier; son, Mark Frazier; sister, Valerie Kaminski; brother, Paul Frazier; 16 grandchildren; 12 great-grandchildren; & a host of nieces, nephews, relatives, & friends.

GRANDALE DESHUN TUBBY

Funeral services for Grandale Deshun Tubby, 44, was held on Wednesday, July 24, 2024, at the Standing Pine Community Gymnasium. Bro. Shelly Peoples officiated.

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

Mr. Tubby passed away on July 14 at his residence.

He was a member of Spirit of Life Church & enjoyed playing stickball, baseball & football.

He is preceded in death by his grandparents, James Tubby, Annie Mae Martin Tubby, Harry Polk, & Betty Anderson Polk.

Survivors include his daughter, Deeshaylee Tubby; sons, Josiah Tubby & Zavian Tubby; parents, Patsy P. Tubby & Robert Anthony Tubby; adopted sister, Shenowa Mingo; brothers, Tatum Tubby & Jeremiah Tubby; adopted brothers, Dustin Polk & Shunray Polk; 3 grandchildren; & a host of uncles, aunts, nieces, nephews, relatives, & friends.

GALL TATANKA YOTANKA TUBBY

Funeral services for Gall Tatanaka Yotanka Tubby, 53, was held on Sunday, August 4, 2024, at the Pearl River CERF Building. Rev. Daniel Tubby officiated.



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

Mr. Tubby passed away on July 15 in Phoenix, AZ.

Born on July 12, 1971, in Philadelphia, MS, to parents Hildreth Carl Tubby & Elvira Thin-Elk Tubby, Gall lived his early life in Pearl River community. Later, he lived in South Dakota, Kansas, California, & Phoenix, Ariz. He enjoyed playing guitar, singing, & writing music & poetry. He had many friends & will be remembered for his smile & humor. He joined the National Guard & was honorably discharged. He worked in the gaming industry & was a laborer of many trades, always taking pride of a job well done.

He is preceded in death by his parents, Carl & Elvira Tubby; brother, Sean Tubby; sister Layla Tubby-Luis; grandparents, Hudson & Estelline Tubby, Aloysius Thin-Elk & Vivian Brave; & numerous uncles & cousins.

Survivors include his sons, Cameron Hickman & Antonio Gall (Madeline) Tubby; daughters, Shonesty Standing Elk & family, Oyaté Tubby (Ricky Parker); grandson, Zachary Ellis-Johnson & other grandchildren; Connie Duque; uncles, Vernon Tubby, Mark (Carmen) Tubby, Gene Thin Elk, & Calvin Thin Elk; aunts, Helen

(Nathaniel) Nickey & Lavon Deuchar; great-aunt, Deloris Balch; & numerous nieces, nephews, cousins, & friends.

PATRICIA MARTIN GIBSON

Memorial services for Patricia Gayle Martin Gibson, 66, was held on Thursday, July 25, 2024, at John E. Stephens Chapel. Pastor Thomas Ben officiated. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.



Ms. Gibson passed away on July 16 at Neshoba General Hospital in Philadelphia.

A resident of Pearl River community, she graduated from Choctaw Central High School in 1975 & studied at Mississippi State University. She was selected 1974-1975 Choctaw Indian Princess & served as goodwill ambassador for her family, community, & Tribe. She was employed with the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Branch of Education Choctaw Agency, & Choctaw Tribal Schools for 47 years & served in various capacities. Known for her personality & laughter, she had a special way of offering comforting words, understanding, & compassionate advice. She enjoyed being with her family & was devoted to her grandchildren. She was baptized at Spirit of Life Church.

She is preceded in death by her husband, Leonard Wayne Gibson; father, Phillip Martin; grandparents, Nicholas & Cleddie Bell, Willie & Mary Martin; great-aunt, Alice Bell; aunts, Ruby M. Willis, Dorothy Bell McMillian, & Annie Mae Martin Tubby; uncles, Lindy Dwight Bell, William Roger Bell, William Franklin Bell, Anthony William Martin, Sr., Raymond Carol Martin, Harry

Martin, & Edmund Martin; & nephews, Kevin Shumake & James Nicholas Shumake.

Survivors include her mother, Bonnie K. Bell Martin; daughters, Megan Gibson & Brittany Gibson; son, Nigel Gibson; sister, Debbie Martin; 11 grandchildren; 3 great-grandchildren; & a host of relatives & friends.

IDA MAE SAM

Funeral services for Ida Mae Sam, 62, was held on Friday, July 26, 2024, at the residence of Everette Sam, 195 Wolf Trail, Pearl River community. Pastor Thomas Ben officiated.



Burial was in Isaac Cemetery. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Ms. Sam passed away on July 22 at her residence.

She was employed with Chahta Enterprise Commercial Laundry as a truck driver & received the 2023 Employee of the Year. She enjoyed listening to music, being with her grandchildren, & being a New Orleans Saints, Oklahoma Sooners, & Kansas City Chiefs fan.

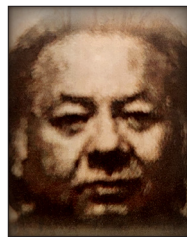
She is preceded in death by her parents, Vonnie & Minnie Tubby Sam, Beamon & Addie Dixon; daughters, Joann Sam & baby girl Sam; sons, Keith Gordon Sam & Joseph Travis Sam; sisters, Laura Ann Sam, Mary Lee Sam, & Sara Ann Sam; grandparents, Jamieson & Lucille Sam; a grandchild, Achaffa Crazyhorse Willis; companion, Joseph Billy, Jr.; & a nephew, Tim John.

Survivors include her daughters, Teresa Anderson, Sarah Billy, & Casandra Billy; sons, Alex Billy & Keithan Billy; brother, Everette Sam; 5 grandchildren; special friends, Sar-

ah Willis, Lavinnie Vaughn, Shannon Mingo, & Edmond Sam, Sr.; & a host of relatives & friends.

GEORGE WASHINGTON MCCOMBS, III

Funeral services for George Washington McCombs, III, 77, was held on Tuesday, July 30, 2024, at the Red Water CERF Building. Deacon Ricky Edwards, Sr. & Rev. Carl Wilson officiated.



Burial was in the Red Water Community Cemetery. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Mr. McCombs passed away on July 24 at the Choctaw Residential Center in Choctaw.

He was a Baptist by faith & grew up in Okla. He enjoyed attending pow-wows, stomp dances, arts & craft shows, & attending Seminole Nation Days in Okla., & the Choctaw Indian Fair.

He is preceded in death by his parents, George Washington McCombs, II & Cora Belle McGeisey McCombs; son, Cokie McCombs; sisters, Cora Lee McCombs & Betty Mae McCombs Harjo; brother, Raymond McCombs; & a grandson, Devin Grant Wilson.

Survivors include a daughter, Tenisha F. McCombs; son, Kimo McCombs; 9 grandchildren, 13 great-grandchildren, & a host of relatives & friends.

BETH THOMPSON HENRY

Funeral services for Beth Thompson Henry, 66, was held on Monday, July 29, 2024, at Holy Rosary Catholic Church in Tucker. Father Bob Good-year, S.T., officiated.

Burial was in the Holy Ro-

sary Catholic Cemetery. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.



Ms. Henry passed away on July 25 at the Choctaw Health Center in Choctaw.

A resident of Tucker community, she was a member of Holy Rosary Catholic Church. A graduate of Neshoba Central High School, she earned her Associate's Degree in Applied Science from Meridian Community College. She enjoyed playing basketball & softball, being at the casino, watching NBA games, helping others, & being with her family, grandchildren, & her two dogs.

She is preceded in death by her parents, Willie & Katie Thompson; & sisters, Shirley Benn & Wanda Davidson.

Survivors include her daughters, Fallon Henry Vazquez & Savannah Henry; son, Miles Henry; sister, Delores Cox; 5 grandchildren; & a host of relatives, & friends.

KATHLEEN NICKEY ISAAC

Funeral services for Kathleen Nickey Isaac, 80, was held on Thursday, August 1, 2024, at the Bogue Homa CERF Building. Bro. Leonard Jimmie, Jr. & Pastor Ricky Thompson, Sr. officiated.



Burial was in the Bogue Homa Community Cemetery. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Ms. Isaac passed away on July 27 at Forrest General Hospital in Hattiesburg.

continued next page

She was a member of Bogue Homa Baptist Church & enjoyed being with her family & grandchildren, attending family gatherings, watching game shows, & going to yard sales & the casinos.

She is preceded in death by her parents, Rev. W.C. Nickey & Josephine Anderson Nickey; daughter, Venisia Selicino Lopez; son, Randy Jefferson; sisters, Vada Nickey, Rosie Joe, & Emmaline Lewis; & grandchildren, Anthony Willis, Caitlin Allen, & Richard Jefferson.

Survivors include her daughters, Shelia Isaac York (Alvin), Sandra Willis, & Vonda Hickman (Levester); sisters, Ruby Thompson & Maylee McGeisey; brother, Nathaniel Nickey (Helen); 22 grandchildren, 30 great-grandchildren, 3 great-great-grandchildren, & a host of relatives & friends.

JERRY L. HICKMAN

Funeral services for Jerry L. Hickman, 67, was held on Friday, August 9, 2024,



at the Bogue Chitto Community Gymnasium. Pastor Ricky Thompson, Sr. & Bro. Leonard Jimmie, Jr. officiated.

Burial was in the I Sleep Cemetery. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Mr. Hickman passed away on August 6 at St. Dominic's Hospital in Jackson.

A resident of Bogue Chitto community, he enjoyed hunting, fishing, & being with family & friends. He played bass with the MockingBirds band & was a fan of Bok Cito Stickball, Mississippi State Bulldogs, & the Kansas City Chiefs. He also loved cuddling with his pet kitten, Snowbell.

He is preceded in death by

his long-time special companion, Fannie Bell; parents, Willie Hickman and Mable Bell Jackson; sisters, Willie Mae Hickman, Sylvia Wimberly, & Deborah Bell; & brothers, Thaddeus Hickman, Jeffery Hickman, Leonard Hickman, Darryl Hickman, & Flavion Hickman.

Survivors include his daughters, Quintiniya Bell, Quintanette Hickman, & Odessa (Brent) McCurley; a stepdaughter, Barbara Bell; sisters, Donna Williams, Flora Billie, & Angela John; 11 grandchildren, 1 great-granddaughter, & a host of nieces, nephews, relatives, & friends.

JEREMY DESHAUN STEPHENS

Funeral services for Jeremy Deshaun Stephens, 43, was held on Friday, August 9, 2024,



at Macedonia Baptist Church in Conehatta. Bro. Joseph Wesley & Bro. Gerald Willis, Sr. officiated.

Burial was in the Conehatta Community Cemetery. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Mr. Stephens passed away on August 6 at Anderson Hospital in Meridian.

A resident of Conehatta community, he was a member of the Koni Hata Stickball team & enjoyed fishing, playing sports, being with his kids, family & friends, watching Mississippi State football, & wrestling.

He is preceded in death by his parents, Leland Nickey & Judy Lynn Stephens; brother, Tearini Thomas; grandparents, Franklin & Odie Denson Stephens; aunt, Glenda Williamson (Wilburn); uncles, Harry Stephens, Lavern Nickey, Verlin Nickey, Melvin Nickey, Harvey Nick-

ey; cousin, Javan Williamson; & a nephew, Joseph McMillan, Jr.

Survivors include his daughters, Ashlynn Stephens & Piper Isaac; one son, Dylan Stephens; sisters, Joanie Tubby, Anna Chickaway, Ara Chickaway, Melanie Stephens, & Mylela Chickaway; a brother, Charles Nickey; two uncles, Charlie Nickey & Cecil Nick-ey; 14 nephews; 13 nieces; & a host of relatives & friends.

MARGIE REE THOMPSON VAUGHN

Funeral services for Margie Ree Thompson Vaughn, 64, was held on Thurs-



day, August 15, 2024, at the Nanih Waiya Indian Mennonite Church. Bro. Mark Roth, Bro. Harvey Yoder, & Bro. Carl Overstreet officiated.

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

Ms. Vaughn passed away on August 11 at her residence.

She attended Nanih Waiya Indian Mennonite Church, Morning Star Church, & the Vaiden Cowboy Church. She enjoyed singing, sewing, & being with family & friends.

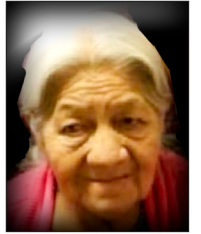
She was preceded in death by her husband, Russell Vaughn; parents, Will Thompson & Emma Wallace; brothers, Jackson Thompson, Sr. & Danny Thompson; grandparents, Essie C. Thompson & Henry Wallace; & an aunt, Dorothy "Dafey" Thompson.

Survivors include her daughter, Jessica Lewis (Brandon Dru); sisters, Rosie York & Willie Dean Denson; brothers, George Dixon & Jimmy Lee Thompson; nieces, Tracy

(Bobby) McMillan, Christina Ellis, & Misti York; great-nieces, Calleigh Nickey, Taylor Bacon, & Tori Bacon; & a host of relatives & friends.

LONNIE THOMAS WALLACE

Funeral services for Lonnie Thomas Wallace, 83, was held on Monday, August



19, 2024, at the Nanih Waiya Indian Mennonite Church. Bro. Joseph Wesley, Bro. Harvey Yoder, & Bro. Mark Roth officiated.

Burial was in the church cemetery. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Ms. Wallace passed away on August 13 at Anderson Regional Medical Center in Meridian.

She was a member of Nanih Waiya Mennonite Church. In the 1960's, she worked in Florida picking oranges then moved back to Mississippi. She worked at a clock factory in Louisville before working at Chahta Enterprise, then Chahta Commercial Laundry in Choctaw before her retirement.

She is preceded in death by her parents, Wade Thomas & Annie Tubby Willis; sons, Barney Lee Billy & Terry Lee Wallace; sister, Margaret Farmer; brothers, Freeman Thomas, Jake Harry Thomas, Paul Willis, Linwood Willis, Larry Willis, Lewis Willis, Delmon Willis, & John Mingo, Jr.; 3 aunts, 3 uncles, 4 special cousins, & a great-granddaughter.

Survivors include her daughters, Edna Cotton, Sharon Wallace, & Phyllis McMillan; a sister, Gail Clemons; brothers, Barney Willis & Perry Willis; 9 grandchildren, 26 great-grandchildren, 12 great-great grandchildren, & a host of relatives & friends.



COMMUNITY CLEANUP SCHEDULE

Tucker Community	14-SEP-24 9:30AM-11:30AM
Standing Pine Community	21-SEP-24 9:30AM-11:30AM
Conehatta Community	5-OCT-24 9:30AM-11:30AM
Bogue Chitto Community	1-MAR-25 9:30AM-11:30AM
Red Water Community	22-MAR-25 9:30AM-11:30AM
Pearl River Community	5-APR -25 9:30AM-11:30AM

Note: For any reason of bad weather, dates will be postponed to a later date, If you have any questions, Please call Marie Wilson at YOP office at (601) 650-7321.

GROUP-Office of Environmental Protection



Briscoe named 2024 Youth Athlete of the Year

Three athletes who competed in the 2024 State Games of Mississippi were named Ochsner Rush Health Athletes of the Year. They include Rowdy Briscoe, pictured right, of Choctaw



(Youth Athlete), Jaycie Collins of Meridian (Female Athlete) & Scott Gray (Male Athlete).

The State Games of Mississippi hosted more than 5,000 amateur athletes in 40 sports in 2024.

Based on the national program, the State Games of Mississippi established the annual "Athlete of the Year" award to recognize Mississippi's amateur athletes. Coaches, officials, athletes, volunteers, & spectators nominated athletes from each of the 2024 sports for the award. The nominees person-

ify the ideals of the State Games movement, such as participation, sportsmanship, special attributes, achievements, efforts, & positive attitudes.

Briscoe, 13, has always loved Stickball. "I got my own stickball sticks at two-years-old," he said. "I learned to play from my dad, uncles, friends & watching the games at the Choctaw Indian Fair. It is part of our tradition from our Tribe (Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians) & we are the next generation to help keep this 'granddaddy of all sports' alive."

In the eighth grade at Neshoba Central Middle School, Briscoe has been playing stickball for five years & has participated in State Games for six years. In 2024 Briscoe & his

CHOCTAW COMMUNITY NEWS

JULY/AUGUST 2024

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team, Beaver Dam, took home the gold medal – & Briscoe was named MVP by the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians. Not just a stickball athlete, he has participated in State Games Youth Baseball, bringing home

a bronze medal & two silver medals. Outside of State Games, Briscoe & his team have won their 4th Championship for the World Series of Stickball, Pushmataha division.

Jackson wins ACL title

Espn Jackson, a junior at Neshoba Central High School, won the High School Singles Championship at the 2024 American Cornhole League (ACL) World Championship tournament held in Rock Hill, SC, from Aug. 2-11.

With over \$700,000 in payouts and 30 events, the ACL World Championships is the biggest week of the year in cornhole. The event draws competitors of all ages and skill levels across multiple divisions, such as intermediate, competitive, advanced, and professional.

Jackson began playing cornhole two years ago. He is also



a member of the Neshoba Central baseball team and plans to accept a cornhole scholarship to Winthrop University in South Carolina, where he will major in physical education with hopes of becoming a baseball coach.

Espn is the son of Wendy & Melvin Jackson.