VACCINE ROLL OUT

Since being delivered to the Choctaw Health Center in mid-December 2020, the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine has been administered to CHC frontline healthcare workers, Tribal Elders, individuals 16 years and older with high risk medical conditions as defined by the CDC, and now individuals 16 years or older. The vaccine is not a cure, but a prevention and precautionary method that boosts your immunity to help fight the virus. If you get vaccinated, continue to wear your masks, wash/sanitize your hands, stay 6 feet apart and stay home if you are feeling sick. The COVID-19 vaccine is safe and once more of the vaccine is made available, everyone is encouraged to get vaccinated. If you are 16 years old or older and would like to get the COVID-19 vaccination, please call Public Health Services’ COVID-19 Hotline at 601-389-4118 or 601-389-4109 to schedule an appointment, Monday-Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Ground Broken for New CHC Drive-Through

A groundbreaking ceremony was held for the new Choctaw Health Center (CHC) drive-through on Wednesday, Feb. 24. The 200 square-foot expansion, designed by Singleton Architects, costs approximately $385,000, which is funded by HHS-Provider Relief Funding, a grant provided for Tribal hospitals, clinics & urban health centers to support COVID-19 response. The drive-through will be a valuable safety asset for distributing medication to patients, especially during this pandemic. Additionally, the drive-through would benefit patients with limited mobility. Construction is expected to begin on March 1 & be completed by late spring/early summer 2021. Project contractor is Matt Boatner Construction, Inc. Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben, 2019-2021 Choctaw Indian Princess Elisah M. Jimmie, CHC & Tribal officials & project partners were on hand to break ground on the new addition.

The Choctaw Central Lady Warriors & Neshoba Central Lady Rockets fell short in their bids to claim state championships in this year’s MHSAA State Basketball Tournament at the Mississippi Coliseum in Jackson. (See story on page 18)
Halito!

I wish you all a Happy New Year as we look forward to a new beginning in 2021. The year 2020 was filled with some of the most unprecedented and extraordinary events we have ever witnessed. With a global pandemic, a strong economy weakened by the virus and many lives turned upside down, it was a very difficult year for all of us. Even here on Tribal lands, we were not shielded from the effects of the pandemic.

Despite the tough times, I continue to applaud our frontline employees, first responders and Tribal employees who make sure services to our Tribal members continue without major interruption. I cannot express enough appreciation for all that you have done in service to our Tribe. Although this is a new year we are still very much in a pandemic, and we must continue taking all precautions to keep ourselves, our family, our friends and our community safe.

On January 11, 2021, Mississippi Governor Tate Reeves signed into law House Bill 1, which ratified the adoption of a new state flag. I was fortunate to be on hand for the signing and for the official raising of the flag ceremony. Last year, I proudly served on the flag commission which selected the design of the new state flag, chosen out of hundreds of submissions.

When I agreed to serve on this flag commission, it was my goal to help ensure that the native people of Mississippi would be recognized in some way on this new flag. That goal was achieved with the placing of the gold star made up of diamonds that is at the top of the semi-circle of stars. The star represents MBCI and all indigenous people who have historical ties to our present-day State of Mississippi. Voters approved the new state flag in the November elections.

A ribbon cutting ceremony was held on Tuesday, January 19, 2021, for the new branch of the Mississippi Coding Academies (MCA) to be located at our Choctaw Central High School. It is my hope that through this new program, our students will be inspired to explore yet another area of opportunity for them in the field of coding.

I participated in a ribbon cutting ceremony on Thursday, January 21, 2021, for Mama ‘n’ Em Southern Table & Bar at the Golden Moon Hotel and Casino. Mama ‘n’ Em Southern Table & Bar is a casual-style restaurant that offers Southern favorites...redefined. I am excited for this new venture at the Golden Moon and offer my best wishes for its success.

On Thursday, January 28, 2021, the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians hosted a ribbon cutting ceremony for the new Standing Pine Early Child Care Center (SPECCC). I, along with Tribal Council Representatives Richard Sockey and Loriann Ashishapanek, 2019-2021 Choctaw Indian Princess Elisah Monique Jimmie, DOECE Director Tina Routh, her staff, SPECCC Director Sharon

Pictured at the opening of Mama ‘n’ Em Southern Table & Bar are, from left to right, Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben, Pearl River Resort’s CJ Hencyk & Choctaw Indian Princess Elisah Jimmie.
Williams, DOECE Brave Jacob Frazier and Princess Talia Ben, and other Tribal officials, were on hand to celebrate the day and cut the ribbon. Following the ceremony, we were given a brief facility tour by Director Routh, and I was happy to be able to visit with the students.

Also on Thursday, January 28, 2021, representatives Mark Taylor and Jackie Hester from The Citizens Bank made a check presentation to Choctaw Tribal Schools. The check presentation took place at the Pearl River Elementary School (PRES) Upper Elementary Building. Following the check presentation, PRES Principal Suzanne Hyatt and I offered a brief tour of the new Upper Elementary facility to Mr. Taylor and Ms. Hester.

The funds for this check came from the School Stash Debit Card Program at The Citizens Bank. It is a great program that allows parents, guardians, alumni, and fans of Choctaw Tribal Schools to have a percentage of their purchases using their school’s branded debit card go back to our Tribal schools. It’s an easy and free way to raise money for local schools.

The program runs from January to December, and The Citizens Bank donates to the schools in January of each year. The Citizens Bank customers who used their Tribal School Stash debit card in 2020 generated $2,492.75, and that is the amount that was presented. This was a $495.90 increase over 2019.

There is also a Reward As Scholarship program that juniors and seniors can apply for each year. All they have to do is email their report card, or drop a copy off at the bank. They get an entry for every A that they have; it can be for band, football, PE, or whatever. It is a $1,000.00 cash scholarship, and the school the winner is from also gets $500.00. This program operates in 14 counties, and a scholarship is given in each county.

We appreciate The Citizens Bank for their support of our Tribal schools. If you are interested in opening an account, you can visit the main branch at 521 Main Street in Philadelphia.

It has been my honor to visit our local schools during Senior Nights and offer my congratulations to our Tribal member seniors in soccer and basketball. They have worked so hard throughout their years at school, and I want to wish all of them best of luck throughout the rest of their senior year and in the future. We want to see more great accomplishments from these bright young minds after they leave high school.

Despite the COVID restrictions placed upon our students and staff at our Tribal schools, everyone is doing well at handling the operational changes we have had to implement. Some students are on full-time virtual learning, while others are on the hybrid A/B schedule.

Typically week 1 A Group has in-school Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, while B Group will come Thursday and Friday. Week 2 A Group in-school days are Monday and Tuesday, while B Group will be Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. Make sure to check your school’s Facebook page for the schedule. We hope that we can return to normalcy soon, but for now, our students are having a successful school year in the safest possible environment we can offer.

On Monday, February 1, 2021, I went to the Neshoba County Tax Assessor’s Office to receive our specialty MBCI car tags. Back in 2020, Senate Bill 2288 was passed by the State Legislature and signed by Governor Tate Reeves. The MBCI License Plate Bill authorizes the issuance of distinctive motor vehicle license tags to Tribal members of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians who wish to pay $33 fee for the specialized  tag.

The tag will feature the Tribal Seal with the word “Chahta” and eight diamonds to represent the Tribal communities. I had previously secured the presale of 300 tags for vehicles in the Tribal government fleet. The MBCI Car Tag became

see LETTER, pg. 4
available for sale on February 12, 2021. Applicants will be required to present either a MB-CI-issued Tribal Identification card, Certificate of Degree of Indian Blood or a non-enrolled member Certificate of Degree of Indian Blood to their local county tax assessor’s office. All organizational funds will be distributed back to the Tribe for use in specialty population needs such as Tribal Elders.

Congratulations to the Neshoba Central High School Lady Rockets bowling team on becoming MHSAA Class II State Champions for the fifth year in a row! That is an outstanding accomplishment! Team member Allie Williams was the top bowler for the entire tournament.

Congratulations also to the Neshoba Central High School Rockets bowling team. They came in second place this year. Congratulations again to the Neshoba Central Lady Rockets and Rockets for an outstanding season!

The 2021 Choctaw Tribal Schools District Spelling Bee was held on Friday, February 5 at Choctaw Central Middle School. I was excited to be there to encourage and congratulate each contestant. Congratulations to each overall grade winner and to the overall district winner! We are proud of you!

February is my special time to go and visit our little ones at each community early childhood center. It is always a fun time for me, and I hope that the children and staff members enjoy the goody bags that I gave to them. Thank you to the early childhood workers for their hard work and dedication of, and wish them continued success.

The week of February 15-19 was a challenging time for many of our fellow Tribal members in our communities. The strong winter storm and its aftermath left many people without access to power, water, heat and even food. I am so thankful to the community members who lent a helping hand and reached out to their neighbors in need.

I authorized the opening of our facility buildings as shelters for those individuals who needed a warm place to stay, and we provided other accommodations as needed. Due to the severity of the situation while still undergoing COVID precautions, we were able to use CARES Act funding to offer one-time payments of $250 to assist Tribal members relieve any hardships they may have endured during this crisis.

A huge thank you goes to the Tribal government employees who helped distribute these payments and to the support staff who helped with traffic flow, parking, food delivery to workers, trash cleanup and other areas of service.

On Wednesday, February 24, 2021, a groundbreaking was held for the new Choctaw Health Center (CHC) pharmacy drive-through. I, along with 2019-2021 Choctaw Indian Princess Elisah Monique Jimmie, CHC and Tribal officials and project partners were on hand to break ground on this new addition. The drive-
through will be a valuable safety asset for distributing medication to patients, especially during this pandemic. Additionally, the drive-through would be beneficial to patients with limited mobility.

The 200 square-foot expansion, designed by Singleton Architects, costs approximately $385,000, which is funded by HHS-Provider Relief Funding, a grant provided for Tribal hospitals, clinics and urban health centers to support the response to COVID-19. Construction for the drive-through is expected to begin on March 1, 2021, and completed by late spring/early summer 2021. The contractor for this project is Matt Boatner Construction, Inc.

Speaking of CHC, any CHC frontline employee and First Responder who wanted the vaccine have received their COVID-19 inoculation, and now we are moving into Phase 1B and 1C, which means we are now distributing the vaccine to Elders 57 years of age and up and Tribal members 16 years of age and older who have underlying medical conditions and are eligible to receive care at CHC.

You are not required to get the vaccine, but you are encouraged to do so. The vaccine is considered safe and effective. Getting the vaccine increases your chances of having a milder reaction to the virus, should you become infected. If you get vaccinated, and continue to follow the safety guidelines, you will have the best possible protection against COVID-19.

If you fall into either categories of Phase 1B or 1C, please call the CHC Public Health Services COVID-19 Hotline at (601) 389-4118 or (601) 389-4109 to schedule your appointment for vaccination.

As noted above, the vaccine is being distributed, but we are still in the early phases. Remember, we are still under a State of Emergency here on Tribal lands. We continue to be on a partial government shutdown, with restricted access to Tribal government offices and buildings.

Also, all persons two years of age or older are under a mask mandate on Tribal lands, as is required by Executive Order No. 2020-09, which limits the number of people at gatherings, includes a curfew and prohibits the use of outdoor recreational areas. We must continue to be vigilant and follow all safety guidelines.

Wear a mask while out in public, keep at least six feet apart from others around you, wash your hands with soap and warm water frequently or use hand sanitizer, disinfect frequently-touched surfaces and items, stay home if you are feeling sick and call your healthcare provider if you have any COVID symptoms.

If we all work together, we can get the COVID-19 virus off our Tribal lands. Let’s be in prayer for those who are fighting the virus and for families grieving the loss of loved ones. Thank you for your service to our Tribe, and thank you for your prayers, words of support and encouragement.

Chi Yakokilih!

Cyrus Ben, Tribal Chief
Tribe Celebrates Historic Confirmation of Haaland as Interior Secretary

Congresswoman Deb Haaland of New Mexico and a citizen of the Pueblo of Laguna was confirmed as the Nation’s 54th Secretary of the Interior by a 51-40 vote by the U.S. Senate on Monday, March 15, 2021. Haaland’s confirmation marks a historic milestone in U.S. history as she will be the first Native American to lead the U.S. Department of the Interior and hold a Cabinet-level position.

Haaland made history alongside Rep. Sharice Davids as one of the first Native American women to serve in Congress in 2018 and was re-elected to serve a second term in 2020 before President Joe Biden nominated her to serve as the Secretary of the Interior. The Department of the Interior, one of the largest federal agencies, has oversight over the Bureau of Indian Affairs and Bureau of Indian Education and is responsible with the execution of key parts of the trust obligation to Tribal Nations, historic preservation, and the management of a majority of federal lands.

It also conserves and manages the Nation’s natural resources and cultural heritage, provides scientific and other information about natural resources and natural hazards to address societal challenges, and create opportunities for the American people, and honors the Nation’s special commitments to American Indians, Alaska Natives, and affiliated island communities.

“The U.S. Senate voted to confirm Representative Deb Haaland as the first Native American to serve as Secretary of the Department of the Interior. This historic and symbolic confirmation gives us great hope that underrepresented voices will be elevated in the Biden Administration. I have had the pleasure of meeting with De Haaland on multiple occasions and am confident she will do an excellent job in this new role,” stated Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben.

“I look forward to working with soon-to-be Secretary Haaland and her team at the Interior Department. On behalf of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, I offer our heartfelt congratulations. Let us lift her up in prayer as she prepares for the important job in this new role,” stated Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben.

In Congress, Haaland focused on policies that would benefit New Mexico families, environmental and economic justice, climate change, and the missing and murdered indigenous women crisis. Haaland delivered her letter of resignation to Speaker Nancy Pelosi on Tuesday, March 16, after she delivered her final House Floor address.

State Leaders Raise New Flag at State Capitol

On January 11, 2021, Governor Tate Reeves signed the bill ratifying the newly adopted state flag at the Two Mississippi Museums in Jackson. Afterwards, Gov. Reeves joined Lieutenant Governor Delbert Hosemann & Speaker of the House Philip Gunn to lead a flag-raising ceremony on the grounds of the Mississippi State Capitol.

Legislators retired the 1894 flag last summer & created a nine-member Commission to Redesign the Mississippi State Flag to select a new banner to represent the state. Appointees to the commission included: Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben, Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians; Dr. Mary Graham, President of Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College; Robyn Tannehill, Mayor of Oxford; TJ Taylor, Policy advisor for House Speaker Philip Gunn; Judge Reuben Anderson, former Supreme Court Justice & MDAH Board of Trustees President; Sherri Carr Bevis, Community Relations Liaison to the Singing River Health System & former teacher; J. Mack Varner, Vicksburg attorney; Frank Bordeau, Vice President, Property & Casualty for BXS Insurance in Mississippi, Mississippi Arts Commission representative; & Betsey Hamilton, Real estate broker & appraiser, Mississippi Department of Archives & History representative.

The commission solicited ideas from the public, held open meetings at the Two Mississippi Museums, & conducted polls before selecting a design to place on the ballot for voters.

The new state flag of Mississippi was officially raised during a ceremony on the grounds of the State Capitol in Jackson on Jan. 11. Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben & members of state flag commission were in attendance to witness the historic event.

The bill creating the commission also instructed lawmakers to enact the proposed flag

continued next page
Southern-Style Restaurant Opens at Pearl River Resort

Pearl River Resort is pleased to announce the grand opening of a new restaurant, Mama ‘n’ Em Southern Table and Bar. The grand opening & ribbon cutting ceremony was held on Jan. 21.

“It’s a casual & comfortable atmosphere, our restaurant staff even wear blue jeans,” said Sonny Johnson, President & CEO of Pearl River Resort. “And the menu is very diverse; you’ll find fresh Gulf seafood like redfish & oysters as well as standard fare like fried chicken, dumplings, meatloaf, burgers, & thick cut bologna sandwiches. There’s truly something for everyone.”

Located in the Golden Moon Casino, Mama ‘n’ Em adds another dine-in/carry-out option for guests of Pearl River Resort. The charming décor includes butcher paper table coverings & wooden barrels. You might even spy a little moonshine behind the fully stocked bar.

As with our other restaurants, Mama ‘n’ Em is designed with socially distant seating & reservations, while not required, are encouraged at opetable.com.
assistance. The Federal Transit Administration requires entities receiving Section 5339 grant funding to adopt a plan to assure compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. For more information, please contact the Choctaw Regional Transportation & Maintenance Facility Program.

RESOLUTION CHO 21-031, authorizing the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians (MBCI) to apply for & administer Utility Infrastructure Funding from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)—Rural Utilities Service to construct a new water treatment plant & supporting facilities for the Pearl River Community, was ADOPTED - 10 YES; 1 NO; 0 ABSTAIN; 6 ABSENT.

SUMMARY: Grant funds will be used to construct a new water treatment plant & supporting facilities for the Pearl River Community. For more information, please contact the Department of Public Works.

RESOLUTION CHO 21-032(B), approving an Expenditure Plan for Forest Management Deductions, was ADOPTED - 10 YES; 1 NO; 0 ABSTAIN; 6 ABSENT.

SUMMARY: The Resolution approves an Expenditure Plan for Forest Management Deductions in the amount of $45,311.48. For more information, please contact the Department of Natural Resources.

RESOLUTION CHO 21-033(B), approving an Industrial Power Contract with Central Electric Power Association (CEPA) in the Red Water Community, was ADOPTED - 10 YES; 1 NO; 0 ABSTAIN; 6 ABSENT.

SUMMARY: CEPA plans to use an existing power line to service the Coronavirus Emergency Response Facility in the Red Water Community & will require the Tribe to enter into a 10 year Industrial Power Contract. For more information, please contact the Realty Program.

RESOLUTION CHO 21-034(B), approving a right-of-way in favor of CEPA in the Pearl River Community, was ADOPTED - 10 YES; 1 NO; 0 ABSTAIN; 6 ABSENT.

SUMMARY: CEPA submitted a right-of-way application for a power line to service the new addition to the MBCI Food Distribution Building located on Industrial Road in the Pearl River Community. For more information, please contact the Realty Program.

RESOLUTION CHO 21-035(B), approving a right-of-way in favor of CEPA in the Bogue Chitto Community, was ADOPTED - 10 YES; 1 NO; 0 ABSTAIN; 6 ABSENT.

SUMMARY: CEPA submitted a right-of-way application for a power line servicing the Coronavirus Emergency Response Facility in the Bogue Chitto Community. For more information, please contact the Realty Program.

RESOLUTION CHO 21-036(B), approving a right-of-way in favor of CEPA in the Conehatta Community, was ADOPTED - 10 YES; 1 NO; 0 ABSTAIN; 6 ABSENT.

SUMMARY: CEPA submitted a right-of-way application for a power line servicing the Coronavirus Emergency Response Facility in the Conehatta Community. For more information, please contact the Realty Program.

RESOLUTION CHO 21-037(B), approving a right-of-way in favor of CEPA in the Pearl River Community, was ADOPTED - 10 YES; 1 NO; 0 ABSTAIN; 6 ABSENT.

SUMMARY: CEPA submitted a right-of-way application for a power line servicing the Coronavirus Emergency Response Facility in the Pearl River Community. For more information, please contact the Realty Program.

RESOLUTION CHO 21-038(B), approving a right-of-way in favor of CEPA in the Pearl River Community, was ADOPTED - 10 YES; 1 NO; 0 ABSTAIN; 6 ABSENT.

SUMMARY: CEPA submitted a right-of-way application for a power line servicing the Coronavirus Emergency Response Facility in the Pearl River Community. For more information, please contact the Realty Program.

RESOLUTION CHO 21-039(B), approving a right-of-way in favor of CEPA in the Standing Pine Community, was ADOPTED - 10 YES; 1 NO; 0 ABSTAIN; 6 ABSENT.

SUMMARY: CEPA submitted a right-of-way application for a power line servicing the Coronavirus Emergency Response Facility in the Standing Pine Community. For more information, please contact the Realty Program.

RESOLUTION CHO 21-040(B), approving a right-of-way in favor of CEPA in the Tucker Community, was ADOPTED - 10 YES; 1 NO; 0 ABSTAIN; 6 ABSENT.

SUMMARY: CEPA submitted a right-of-way application for a power line servicing the Coronavirus Emergency Response Facility in the Tucker Community. For more information, please contact the Realty Program.

RESOLUTION CHO 21-041, approving the lease of certain property to MBCI New Markets 1, LLC for use in a New Markets Tax Credit Transaction to finance the construction & development of two new Early Childhood Centers, construct an expansion to one of the Early Childhood Centers, including, without limitation, the addition of two new classrooms & to renovate & expand an elementary school; to approve the final negotiation & execution, delivery & performance of the documents in connection therewith; to approve the Limited Waivers of Sovereign Immunity contained therein; & other matters related thereto, was ADOPTED - 8 YES (L. Akshapanek, M. Briscoe, C. Eaves, N. Gibson, D. Martin, H. Nickey, R. Sockey, & T. Thomas, Sr.); 3 NO (T. Anderson, B. McMillan, & W. McMillan); 0 ABSTAIN; 6 ABSENT.

SUMMARY: The Resolution approves leases to MBCI New Markets 1, LLC for use in the New Markets Tax Credit Transaction to finance the construction & development of two new early childhood centers & expansion of one of the early childhood centers. The funding will also be used to add two new classrooms & renovate & expand Pearl River Elementary School. For more information, please contact the Office of the Attorney General.

RESOLUTION CHO 21-042, approving New Markets Tax Credit Transaction to finance the construction & development of two new Early Childhood Centers, construct an expansion to one of the Early Childhood Centers, including, without limitation, the addition of two new classrooms & to renovate & expand an elementary school; to approve the final negotiation & execution, delivery & performance of the documents in connection therewith; to approve the Limited Waivers of Sovereign Immunity contained therein; & other matters related thereto, was ADOPTED - 8 YES (L. Akshapanek, M. Briscoe, C. Eaves, N. Gibson, D. Martin, H. Nickey, R. Sockey, & T. Thomas, Sr.); 3 NO (T. Anderson, B. McMillan, & W. McMillan); 0 ABSTAIN; 6 ABSENT.

SUMMARY: The Resolution approves leases to MBCI New Markets 1, LLC for use in the New Markets Tax Credit Transaction to finance the construction & development of two new early childhood centers & expansion of one of the early childhood centers. The funding will also be used to add two new classrooms & renovate & expand Pearl River Elementary School. For more information, please contact the Office of the Attorney General.
Waivers of Sovereign Immunity contained therein; & other matters related thereto, was ADOPTEd - 8 YES; 3 NO; 0 ABSTAIN; 6 ABSENT.

SUMMARY: The Resolution approves the New Markets Tax Credit Transaction to finance the construction & development of two new early childhood centers & expansion of one of the early childhood centers. The funding will also be used to add two new classrooms & renovate & expand Pearl River Elementary School. For more information, please contact the Office of the Attorney General.

RESOLUTION CHO 21-043, approving Amended FY 2020 Budget & FY 2021 Budget for the Choctaw Residential Center Enterprise, was ADOPTEd - 10 YES (L. AhshapaneK, T. Anderson, M. Briscoe, C. Eaves, N. Gibson, B. McMillan, W. McMillan, H. Nickey, R. Sockey, & T. Thomas, Sr.); 1 NO (D. Martin); 0 ABSTAIN; 6 ABSENT (R. Bell, R. Henry, Sr., R. Isaac, W. McMillan, R. Sockey, K. Wallace, & D. Wilson).

SUMMARY: The Resolution approves an amended FY 2020 Capital Expenditures Budget in the amount of $213,059 & approves the FY 2021 budget for the Choctaw Residential Center Enterprise, including Operating Expenditures in the amount of $7,552,849 & Capital Expenditures in the amount of $652,907. The Choctaw Residential Center Board of Directors approved a distribution to the Tribal Government General Fund FY 2021 in the amount of $500,000. For more information, please contact the Choctaw Residential Center.

RESOLUTION CHO 21-044, confirming an appointment to the Tribal Election Committee, was ADOPTEd - 11 YES (L. AhshapaneK, T. Anderson, M. Briscoe, C. Eaves, N. Gibson, D. Martin, B. McMillan, W. McMillan, H. Nickey, R. Sockey, & T. Thomas, Sr.); 0 NO; 0 ABSTAIN; 6 ABSENT (R. Bell, R. Henry, Sr., R. Isaac, S. Johnson, K. Wallace, & D. Wilson).

SUMMARY: The Resolution confirms the appointment of Melanie Benn as an Alternate to the Tribal Election Committee & term expires on October 11, 2022. For more information, please contact the Tribal Election Office.

REGULAR CALL MEETING JANUARY 12, 2021


SUMMARY: The Ordinance amends amendments to Title XV, Gaming of the Choctaw Tribal Code. For more information, please contact the Choctaw Gaming Commission.

ORDINANCE NO. 80, creating a Plan of Development for the Choctaw Public Health & Human Services Agency of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians (MBCI), was ENACTED - 13 YES (L. AhshapaneK, T. Anderson, R. Bell, N. Gibson, R. Henry, Sr., S. Johnson, D. Martin, B. McMillan, W. McMillan, R. Sockey, T. Thomas, Sr., K. Wallace, & D. Wilson); 0 NO; 0 ABSTAIN; 4 ABSENT (M. Briscoe, C. Eaves, R. Isaac, & H. Nickey).

SUMMARY: The Ordinance creates a plan of development for the Choctaw Public Health & Human Services Agency for the MBCI. The plan will include a proposed operational budget with funding resources, changes to the MBCI Executive Organizational chart & any other necessary information needed for the creation of a new Choctaw Public Health & Human Services Agency. For more information, please contact the Choctaw Health Center.

RESOLUTION CHO 21-045(B), approving the relinquishment of membership of a Tribal member, was ADOPTEd - 8 YES* (R. Bell, R. Henry, Sr., R. Isaac, W. McMillan, R. Sockey, K. Wallace, & D. Wilson. *Chief Ben broke Tie vote); 7 NO (L. AhshapaneK, T. Anderson, N. Gibson, S. Johnson, D. Martin, B. McMillan, & T. Thomas, Sr.); 0 ABSTAIN; 3 ABSENT (M. Briscoe, C. Eaves, & H. Nickey).

SUMMARY: The Resolution approves the relinquishment of membership of tribal member (M.G.) M.G. will be accepted into membership of another Tribe & wishes to relinquish membership with the MBCI. For more information, please contact the Tribal Enrollment Office.

RESOLUTION CHO 21-046(B), approving name change for previously enrolled Tribal member, was ADOPTEd - 8 YES*; 7 NO; 0 ABSTAIN; 3 ABSENT.

SUMMARY: The Resolution approves one name change for a previously enrolled Tribal member. For more information, please contact the Tribal Enrollment Office.

RESOLUTION CHO 21-047(B), approving Tribal enrollments, was ADOPTEd - 8 YES*; 7 NO; 0 ABSTAIN; 3 ABSENT.

SUMMARY: The Resolution approves Tribal enrollment of 54 persons beginning with the name E. Allen & ending with M. Wishork in the MBCI & does hereby direct that roll numbers be assigned. With the Adoption of this Resolution, there will be 11,034 enrolled Tribal members. For more information, please contact the Tribal Enrollment Office.

RESOLUTION CHO 21-048, confirming an appointment to the Choctaw Gaming Commission, was ADOPTEd - 8 YES*; 7 NO; 0 ABSTAIN; 3 ABSENT.

SUMMARY: The Resolution confirms an appointment to the Choctaw Gaming Commission. The position of the Associate Commissioner of the Choctaw Gaming Commission has expired. The Tribal Council confirms the reappointment of Trina Jim as Associate Commissioner with a term expiring on December 31, 2024 or until a successor has been nominated by the Tribal Chief & confirmed by the Tribal Council. For more information, please contact the Policy & Legislative Office.

RESOLUTION CHO 21-049, approving revisions to Choctaw Gaming Commission Regulations, was ADOPTEd - 8 YES*; 7 NO; 0 ABSTAIN; 3 ABSENT.

SUMMARY: The Resolution approves revisions to Chapter 2 of the Choctaw Gaming Commission Regulations. For more information, please contact the Choctaw Gaming Commission.

RESOLUTION CHO 21-050, approving Revisions to Choctaw Gaming Commission Regulations, was ADOPTEd - 8 YES*; 7 NO; 0 ABSTAIN; 3 ABSENT.

SUMMARY: The Resolution approves revisions to Chapter 15 of the Choctaw Gaming Commission Regulations. For more information, please contact the Choctaw Gaming Commission.
RESOLUTION CHO 21-051, approving the terms of retention in the attorney-client agreement for legal services with the Law Offices of O. Joseph Williams, PLLC, was ADOPTED - 8 YES* (L. Ahshapanek, T. Anderson, N. Gibson, R. Henry, Sr., R. Isaac, S. Johnson, D. Martin, B. McMillan, R. Sockey, T. Thomas, Sr., & K. Wallace); 3 NO; (R. Bell, W. McMillan, D. Wilson); 0 ABSTAIN; 3 ABSENT (M. Briscoe, C. Eaves, & H. Nickey).

SUMMARY: The Tribal Council wishes to engage the services of the Law Offices of O. Joseph Williams, PLLC to advise it on general legal advice & counsel on an as-needed basis, as well as litigation services. For more information, please contact the Office of the Tribal Council.

RESOLUTION CHO 21-052(B), designating a site for a residential subdivision in the Pearl River Community, was ADOPTED - 8 YES* (R. Bell, R. Henry, Sr., R. Isaac, W. McMillan, R. Sockey, K. Wallace, & D. Wilson). *Chief Ben broke Tie vote); 7 NO (L. Ahshapanek, T. Anderson, N. Gibson, S. Johnson, D. Martin, B. McMillan, & T. Thomas, Sr.); 0 ABSTAIN; 3 ABSENT (M. Briscoe, C. Eaves, & H. Nickey).

SUMMARY: The Resolution designates a site of 98 +/- acres of land for a residential subdivision in the Pearl River Community. For more information, please contact the Office of Construction Management.

RESOLUTION CHO 21-053, authorizing the Choctaw Health Center (CHC) to enter into a Clinical Education Affiliation Agreement with the University of Mississippi Medical Center (UMMC) School of Nursing, was ADOPTED - 8 YES*; 7 NO; 0 ABSTAIN; 3 ABSENT.

SUMMARY: CHC & the UMMC School of Nursing desire to enter into a clinical education affiliation agreement to promote & advance education in healthcare & related services by providing clinical rotations at CHC. CHC would assist in providing an education nursing setting for UMMC’s student interns under a defined curriculum of study & supervision. For more information, please contact the Choctaw Health Center.

RESOLUTION CHO 21-054, authorizing CHC to enter into a Clinical Education Affiliation Agreement with Alcorn State University (ASU) School of Nursing, was ADOPTED - 8 YES*; 7 NO; 0 ABSTAIN; 3 ABSENT.

SUMMARY: CHC & ASU School of Nursing desire to enter into a clinical education affiliation agreement to promote & advance education in healthcare & related services by providing clinical rotations at CHC. CHC would assist in providing an educational nursing setting for ASU’s advanced student interns under a defined curriculum of study & supervision. For more information, please contact the Choctaw Health Center.

RESOLUTION CHO 21-055, authorizing Julie Zahn of Liberty University to conduct research on Choctaw Tribal Schools regarding the shortage of teachers in rural Native American schools, was ADOPTED - 8 YES*; 7 NO; 0 ABSTAIN; 3 ABSENT.

SUMMARY: Julie Zahn, a doctoral student at Liberty University, is required to fulfill doctoral research in order to complete her doctoral degree in Curriculum & Instruction with a focus in Special Education. For more information, please contact the Policy & Legislative Office.

RESOLUTION CHO 21-056, authorizing the MBCI, Choctaw Tribal Schools to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Mississippi Department of Education regarding Mississippi Standards & Assessments, was ADOPTED - 8 YES*; 7 NO; 0 ABSTAIN; 3 ABSENT.

SUMMARY: The Resolution approves the 2021-2022 school calendar for Choctaw Virtual Learning Center. For more information, please contact the Department of Schools.

RESOLUTION CHO 21-057, approving the 2021-2022 Policy Handbooks for the Choctaw Tribal Schools, was ADOPTED - 8 YES*; 7 NO; 0 ABSTAIN; 3 ABSENT.

SUMMARY: The Resolution approves the following handbooks: (1) 2021-2022 Choctaw Tribal Schools’ Parent & Student Handbook; (2) 2021-2022 Choctaw Tribal Schools’ Staff Handbook; (3) 2021-2022 Choctaw Central Dormitory Student Handbook; & (4) 2021-2022 Choctaw Virtual Learning Center Handbook. For more information, please contact the Office of Finance & Accounting.

RESOLUTION CHO 21-058, approving the 2021-2022 School Calendar for the Choctaw Tribal Schools, was ADOPTED - 8 YES*; 7 NO; 0 ABSTAIN; 3 ABSENT.

SUMMARY: The Resolution approves the 2021-2022 school calendar for Choctaw Tribal Schools. For more information, please contact the Department of Schools.

RESOLUTION CHO 21-059, approving the 2021-2022 School Calendar for the Choctaw Virtual Learning Center, was ADOPTED - 8 YES*; 7 NO; 0 ABSTAIN; 3 ABSENT.

SUMMARY: The Resolution approves disposing of surplus Tribal vehicles by donation to local law enforcement agencies, was ADOPTED - 8 YES*; 7 NO; 0 ABSTAIN; 3 ABSENT.

SUMMARY: The Resolution approves disposing surplus Tribal vehicles by donation to local law enforcement agencies in counties where the Tribe has trust land. The Procurement Officer has determined there are certain vehicles that are no longer of any value to MBCI Tribal Government programs because of high mileage & excessive maintenance costs. The Tribe will donate vehicles to local law enforcement agencies pursuant to a random drawing as outlined in the resolution as it would support the collaborative relationship between those law enforcement agencies & the Tribe. For more information, please contact the Office of Finance & Accounting.

RESOLUTION CHO 21-060, disposing of surplus Tribal vehicles, was ADOPTED - 8 YES*; 7 NO; 0 ABSTAIN; 3 ABSENT.

SUMMARY: The Resolution approves disposing of surplus Tribal vehicles by sale to Tribal members by sealed bid. The Procurement Officer has determined there are certain vehicles that are no longer of any value to MBCI Tribal Government programs because of high mileage & excessive maintenance costs. For more information, please contact the Office of Finance & Accounting.

RESOLUTION CHO 21-
062, approving a Nonexclusive Franchise Renewal Agreement between the MBCI & BCI Mississippi Broadband, LLC, d/b/a MaxxSouth Broadband to construct, operate, & maintain a cable system in the Pearl River, Bogue Chitto, Tucker & Red Water Communities, was ADOPTED - 8 YES*; 7 NO; 0 ABSTAIN; 3 ABSENT.

SUMMARY: The Tribe desires to enter into a renewal of the franchise agreement with MaxxSouth to construct, operate, and/or maintain cable services in the Pearl River, Bogue Chitto, Tucker & Red Water communities. The franchise agreement will commence upon date of passage of this Resolution & will continue for a term of 10 years unless renewed, revoked, or terminated. For more information, please contact the Office of Utilities Management.

RESOLUTION CHO 21-063, approving a business lease with Trustmark National Bank in the Pearl River Community, was ADOPTED - 8 YES*; 7 NO; 0 ABSTAIN; 3 ABSENT.

SUMMARY: The Resolution approves a renewal business lease between the MBCI d/b/a Choctaw Shopping Center Enterprise & Trustmark National Bank in the Pearl River community. For more information, please contact the Choctaw Shopping Center.

SPECIAL CALL MEETING JANUARY 29, 2021

RESOLUTION CHO 21-064, confirming appointments to the Board of Directors of Chahta Holding Group, Inc., was ADOPTED - 11 YES (L. Ahshanapanek, T. Anderson, M. Briscoe, C. Eaves, N. Gibson, S. Johnson, D. Martin, H. Nickney, R. Sockey, T. Thomas, Sr., & D. Wilson); 0 NO; 0 ABSTAIN; 6 ABSENT (R. Bell, R. Henry, Sr., R. Isaac, B. McMillan, W. McMillan, & K. Wallace).

SUMMARY: The Resolution approves the appointment of 3 members to the Board of Directors of Chahta Holding Group, Inc. Chief Ben nominated Karen Adams & Kenny Tubby to a 4 year term expiring on January 14, 2025. Chief Ben nominated Gilbert Thompson for reappointment as Chairman of Chahta Holding Group, Inc., to a 4 year term expiring on January 14, 2025. For more information, please contact the Policy & Legislative Office.

Signed resolutions are available at www.choctaw.org. To request a copy of the attachment, please fill out a request for a Resolution/Ordinance Attachment Form and submit it to the Policy & Legislative Office at krystina.thompson@choctaw.org.

Requests for attachments to Tribal Enrollment Resolutions will not be honored due to confidentiality rules.

COVID-19 VACCINATION

ATTENTION!
COVID-19 Vaccinations Are Now Available for Individuals 18 Years or Older!

Beginning March 9, 2021
Choctaw Health Center Parking Lot
Must schedule an appointment beforehand

Drive-Through:
» Wear a mask
» Wear a short sleeved shirt
» Remain in vehicle

Walk-In:
» Wear a mask
» Wear a short sleeved shirt

To schedule an appointment or ask for eligibility, please call the Public Health Services’ COVID-19 Hotline at 601-389-4118 or 601-389-4109

If weather does not permit, vaccinations will take place in the Event Center at Choctaw Health Center. Please follow signage after check-in with the front desk.

To Protect Yourself, Your Coworkers, Your Patients, Your Family, and Your Community

- Building defenses against COVID-19 in this facility and in your community is a team effort. And you are a key part of that defense.
- Getting the COVID-19 vaccine adds one more layer of protection for you, your coworkers, patients, and family.

Here are ways you can build people’s confidence in the new COVID-19 vaccines in your facility, your community, and at home:
✓ Get vaccinated and enroll in the v-safe text messaging program to help CDC monitor vaccine safety.
✓ Tell others why you are getting vaccinated and encourage them to get vaccinated.
✓ Learn how to have conversations about COVID-19 vaccine with coworkers, family, and friends.

It all starts with you.

www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/vaccines
Choctaw Opportunity Zones Could Boom In 2021

The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians’ two Opportunity Zone designations are expected to garner attention soon as a result of a projected big boost from the new administration in Washington.

The MBCI secured Opportunity Zone designation for two tracts of its Tribal lands when the program was initiated in 2018. They are located in the Pearl River Community near Philadelphia, Miss., & a 17-acre industrial site in Louis ville, Miss. (pictured below)

The program was designed to stimulate economic development & job creation by incentivizing long-term investments in low-income neighborhoods. Private investments in Opportunity Zones are eligible for various tax advantages.

The program has been slow to take hold with investors, primarily because of delayed clarifications of the regulations. But a recent article in Forbes magazine stated that President Biden has signaled an interest in focusing on Opportunity Zones, stating he is “bringing into his administration members of the previous two administrations who were some of the original architects of the program. In other words, the potential exists for a more regulated, targeted & monitored version of Opportunity Zones to take off—particularly in a climate of rising tax rates & cities ravaged by Covid-19.”

John Hendrix, Director of Economic Development for the MBCI, said the areas are ideal for a variety of manufacturing or other business uses. He mentioned the Tribe is in talks with several interested parties considering Choctaw for new or relocated businesses.

“Private investors who utilize our Opportunity Zones will be able to delay and/or reduce their capital gains taxes. After 10 years, the investor will pay zero taxes on any new capital gains realized through an Opportunity Zone project,” says Hendrix.

All signs point to 2021 being the year for Opportunity Zones to reach their hyped potential amidst the support of leaders in both Republican & Democratic parties. The MBCI feels its designation as an Opportunity Zone, along with a slew of other tax advantages, will make it a desirable location for private investment.

continued next page

Christmas Decorating Contest Winners Honored

Fifty-one Tribal members participated in the 19th Annual Reservation-Wide Christmas Decorating Contest, sponsored by the Office of the Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben. Tomika Bell of Bogue Chitto was named overall winner & received $600. Kim Ferris of Pearl River placed 2nd for $500 & Christina Wilson of Red Water placed 3rd for $400. Honorable Mentions selected from each Tribal community received $150. They included: Susan Steve, Bogue Chitto; Rochelle Wallace, Bogue Homa; Karen Thomas, Conehatta; Holly Sam, Crystal Ridge; Andrea Thompson, Henning; Charles Ben, Pearl River; Belinda Cruz, Red Water; Sulane Jim, Standing Pine; & Lacie Fields, Tucker. Presenting checks to winners in attendance were Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben & 2019-2021 Choctaw Indian Princess Elisah Jimmie.
and the effort everyone undertook to make this happen,” said Cyrus Ben, Tribal Chief of the MBCI. “In addition to immediately benefitting Choctaw children, the NMTC program will allow us to continue to make investments in our future.”

The NMTC Program attracts private capital into low-income communities by permitting in individual & corporate investors to receive a tax credit against their federal income tax in exchange for making equity investments in specialized financial intermediaries. The credit totals 39 percent of the original investment amount & is claimed over a period of seven years.

The Tribe opened both the Pearl River & Standing Pine Early Childhood Education Center(s) & the Pearl River Elementary School expansion in late 2020.

The projects received a total tax credit allocation of $15,000,000 – this translated into a final net benefit to the Tribe of $2,323,190. As of the closing $1,573,190 was deposited into the Tribe’s coffers. An additional $750,000 in funds will be used to further expand the Pearl River Early Childhood Center. Dakotas America provided the tax credit allocation & Wells Fargo was the tax credit investor in the projects.

The NMTC was established by Congress in 2000 & it annually authorizes the amount of credit, which the Treasury then allocates to qualified applicants. Since 2003, the program has parcelled out credits worth $27 billion.

The NMTC has supported more than 5,300 projects in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, & Puerto Rico. Some 43 percent of the US’s roughly 73,000 census tracts qualify for NMTC investments; by 2016, approximately 3,400 had received NMTC projects. In recent years, all applicants have pledged to place at least 75 percent of their NMTC projects in “severely distressed” census tracts.

MBCI Hosts Opening of MCA TechShare Classroom

Officials with the Mississippi Coding Academies (MCA) and the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians’ Office of Economic Development held a ribbon cutting ceremony opening MCA’s TechShare remote coding classroom in Choctaw on January 19.

Choctaw Central High School is one of only three MCA satellite locations presently in Mississippi.

TechShare, made possible by a grant from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and support from the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), connects coders in remote venues with MCA instructors at academic locations in Jackson and Starkville.

TechShare campuses are serving high school graduates in rural communities, helping them quickly gain skills for high-tech employment.

“We could not be more pleased to have USDA and ARC support for this exciting new initiative bringing 21st-century skills to our rural counties,” said Mike Forster, chairman of Mississippi Coding Academies. “This support provides the springboard for the MCA to expand its reach into smaller cities like Louisiville, Choctaw, and Columbus.”

Beginning in 2021, the TechShare program will establish additional “satellite” locations and implement remote learning tools to reach young adults who don’t live near the physical academies. Those same tools will help extend programming to some of the state’s most underserved areas. Municipal school district partners have already been identified in communities near the Starkville location for a pilot program.

“We are excited by the new partnership between the MCA and the Choctaw Tribal Schools,” said MBCI Economic Development Director John Hendrix. “A young adult trained in computer coding will have a variety of promising career options when they enter the workforce. We are thrilled to make this available to our Tribal students.”

Choctaw Tribal Schools Director Dr. Randy Grierson said he first learned of MCA at a Louisville Rotary Club meeting. Hearing about the program made him want to partner with MCA and give his high school students a pathway to good jobs after graduation, while implementing more computational thinking into the full K-12 curriculum.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the MCA staff moved classes entirely into the cloud, allowing everyone to attend virtually. Remote productivity tools such as Discord, Slack, and Microsoft Teams have been added to the curriculum and will be continued moving forward with TechShare.

Ben Hubbard, who directs MCA’s Starkville and TechShare campuses, said, “Computers touch so many aspects of our daily lives. Having the ability to program one to perform a needed task is a necessary skill for the 21st century.”
Tribe Installing Technology to Neutralize Covid-19 Virus

The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians (MBCI) is updating all of its commercial & industrial buildings with needlepoint bipolar ionization, a technology that will greatly enhance air quality & provide neutralization against Covid-19.

“In an effort to make our buildings as safe as possible for our tenants & Tribal employees, we researched a variety of air improvement systems & found this to be the most effective solution,” said John Hendrix, Economic Development Director for the Tribe. 

“We are one of the first in the state of Mississippi to utilize this cutting-edge technology, but we believe it will quickly become the new standard in indoor air purification.”

Needlepoint bipolar ionization works to safely clean indoor air, leveraging an electronic charge to create a high concentration of positive & negative ions. These ions travel through the air continuously seeking out & attaching to particles, setting in motion a continuous pattern of particle combination. As these particles become larger, they are eliminated from the air more rapidly. It eliminates mold, bacteria, & many viruses, & also controls gases & odors.

Needlepoint bipolar ionization has been used for years to purify air & lessen the spread of disease. In June 2020, Global Plasma Solutions was the first company to test the technology against the Covid-19 virus, demonstrating a 99.4 percent reduction of the strain.

“In light of the devastating losses the Tribe received this year from the coronavirus, we determined that the most important thing we could do going forward is invest in technology that will provide for the safest working environment possible for our members & everyone who works on our Tribal lands,” said Jerry Cain, Environmental Manager for the MBCI. “We chose Global Plasma Solutions to install this technology in our commercial buildings after seeing the research showing the impressive reduction of Covid-19 within an indoor space. The installation of this technology will provide benefits to the Tribe in reducing the Covid-19 ambient levels immediately, & improving air quality & safety generally in the long term.”

COVID-19 Precautions, Dealing With Stress

By the Choctaw Behavioral Health Prevention Team

We want to stress the importance of safety measures to prevent & reduce the spread of COVID-19. Yes, the virus is still here & yes, the numbers are decreasing & that’s exactly what we want. However, we cannot let our guard down.

The CDC has approved three vaccines & will provide updated information as it becomes available. Although some states are lifting mandates & opening at 100 percent, we must continue to be cautious & protect ourselves, our families & our communities. We’ve come too far to turn back now.

New COVID-19 variants have been discovered in South Africa, Brazil & The United Kingdom & are found to be more contagious than the initial virus. These variants are being explored & research is still being done to determine how the vaccine will affect these new strains.

WHO DOES IT AFFECT?

COVID-19 knows no boundaries, no one is exempt. Individuals with underlying conditions & older adults have

continued next page
proven to be the most vulnerable and high risk.

As of today, the CDC reports 28,456,860 million cases in the U.S. & 513,122 deaths. So, who does it affect? EVERYONE!!

HOW DOES IT AFFECT YOU?

COVID-19 causes:
• Shortness of breath
• Fever
• Headaches
• Cough
• Fatigue
• Body aches
• Death

HOW DO WE STOP THE SPREAD?

CDC guidelines recommend these safety measures:
• Social distancing
• Wear a mask
• Avoid gathering in large crowds
• Wash hands often
• Stay home when sick
• COVID-19 vaccine

WHERE TO FIND HELP?

If you or someone you know needs help or additional information, please contact your Behavioral Health Prevention Team at 601-389-4150, or go to the website, www.cdc.gov. We can do it!

Three vaccinations have been approved & are currently being administered. We seem to be rounding the corner on COVID

see STRESS, pg. 16

Chief Ben Gets COVID Vaccination

Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben recently received his second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. Getting the vaccine and following the recommended safety guidelines is the strongest defense against COVID-19. “I encourage all of you to get the COVID vaccine shot. Take the step to not only protect yourself, but also your loved ones and your community,” said Chief Ben. For more information on the COVID vaccination schedule, please contact Choctaw Public Health Services at (601) 389-4118 or (601) 389-4109.

PUBLIC NOTICE


Information and guidance constantly changes as the pandemic continues. Choctaw Health Center (CHC) will continue to monitor for changes and provide you with updates. The most current guidance for issuance of order for quarantine exposure to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) is provided below from CHC:

1. Any patient who has presented for and undergone COVID-19 testing with COVID-19 symptoms, history of recent exposure, or household contact with COVID + person will be required to have the Order for Quarantine Exposure to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) completed. The patient will be required to sign the order.

2. A member of the health care staff (physician, nurse practitioner, or public health representative) will review the terms of the quarantine order with the patient and advise the patient that violation of the quarantine order is a Class A offense that is punishable under Choctaw Tribal Code.

3. The signed quarantine order is to be given to the patient for their records and a copy of this order is to be sent by the designated health care staff to CHC Health Information for scanning into the patient’s electronic medical record.

4. This quarantine order will also serve as the patient’s excuse from work duty during the quarantine period.

5. The patient will be advised to contact their healthcare provider at the end of the quarantine period for clearance to return to work activities.

6. Persons who voluntarily test without symptoms, without history of exposure, and without current household contact with a COVID + person will be excused from the issuance of quarantine orders.

7. Persons who are voluntarily testing for COVID-19 as requested by employer or other entity for surveillance purposes (no recent exposure, no COVID-19 symptoms, and no present COVID-19 illness) will be excused from the issuance of quarantine orders.

8. The period of quarantine is 14 days. Patients may opt to end quarantine earlier than 14 days if they have remained asymptomatic:
• After day 10 without testing
• After day 7 after receiving a negative test result (test must occur on day 5 or later)

9. Vaccinated persons with an exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 are not required to quarantine if they meet the following criteria:
• Are fully vaccinated (i.e., ≤2 weeks following receipt of the second dose in a 2-dose series, or 2–6 weeks following receipt of one dose of a single-dose vaccine)
• Are within 3 months following receipt of the last dose in the series
• Have remained asymptomatic since the current COVID-19 exposure

If you have questions about COVID-19, you may contact the Public Health Services Hotline at 601. 389.4109 or 4118 Monday – Friday 8:00 am to 4:30 pm and Saturdays 9:00 am – 1:00 pm. If you need to speak to a nurse practitioner or a doctor, call the CHC Telehealth Clinic at 601.389.4313 or 4315 Monday through Friday from 8:00 am – 4:30 pm.

Choctaw Health Center and Public Health Services sincerely appreciates everyone’s understanding and patience as we continue to work together to persevere through the issues of COVID-19 and the impact on our tribal communities.

Again, as a reminder, the CHC Drive-Thru Testing Tent is open for testing 7 days a week from 8:00 am to 6:00 pm.
Tucker Student Wins MCM-Meridian Contest

Brayla N. Thomas, third grade student at Tucker Elementary School, was named one of 10 winners of a contest hosted by the Mississippi Children’s Museum–Meridian (MCM-Meridian) to get students excited for the museum’s grand opening on Saturday, March 27.

MCM-Meridian asked students in pre-kindergarten to 19 & can finally see the light at the end of the tunnel.

Although we’ve come a long way, we must continue to be vigilant in our efforts to prevent the spread of COVID-19 as 2020 caused many stressful situations. Stress is a leading cause of suicidal thoughts & dangerous behaviors. So how we deal with stress can be a lifesaving tool.

WHAT IS STRESS?
Stress is a feeling of emotional or physical tension. It can come from any event or thought that makes you feel frustrated, angry, or nervous.

Stress is your body’s reaction to a challenge or demand. In short bursts, stress can be positive, such as when it helps you avoid danger or meet a deadline.

The most dangerous thing about stress is how easily it can creep up on you. You get used to it. It starts to feel familiar, even normal. You don’t notice how much it’s affecting you, even as it takes a heavy toll. That’s why it’s important to be aware of the warning signs & the strategies to use in these moments of stress overload.

WHAT ARE THE WARNING SIGNS OF STRESS?
- Fly off the handle easily
- Fatigue
- General aches & pains
- Sweaty
- Can’t sit still
- Nerves on the edge
- Constant fidgeting
- Headache

HOW CAN WE COPE WITH STRESS?
1) If you’re getting into a stressful situation, back out of it if you can. It’s better to wait until later or just avoid it altogether unless it’s something you have to deal with.
2) Stop & take 10 slow & deep breaths by keeping your entire focus on the breath.
3) Pay close attention to the language of the conversation in your mind during a stressful situation.
4) Identify persistent & recurring problems (& people) that are inducing stress, & try to solve or avoid them as appropriate.
5) Take a break, take a walk, sit outside or listen to a favorite song – do something different;
6) Don’t give more than necessary importance to your financial position. Live within your means & do the best you can with what you’ve got.
7) Learn to let go of things that are beyond your control.
8) Practice love, compassion & forgiveness. Don’t harbor feelings of anger, resentment or jealousy.
9) Eat a healthy diet.
10) Get your rest.

WHERE TO FIND HELP?
If you or someone you know are having suicidal thoughts & in need of help, please contact your Behavioral Health Prevention Team at 601-389-4150, as well as The Suicide Prevention Hotline at 1-800-273-Talk. You Are Not Alone!

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
1-800-273-TALK (8255)
suicidepreventionlifeline.org

(Promoted by the MBCI-Methamphetamine & Suicide Prevention Initiative (MSPA), Grant #BH16HHS0075-05-00 / Choctaw Behavioral Health - Reference: National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.)

Stress ........................................................................................ continued from page fifteen

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National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
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(Promoted by the MBCI-Methamphetamine & Suicide Prevention Initiative (MSPA), Grant #BH16HHS0075-05-00 / Choctaw Behavioral Health - Reference: National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.)
CHOCTAW COMMUNITY NEWS

Braelynn Thomas, 3rd grade student at Tucker Elementary School, is pictured with her teacher, Tanya Tullos. Pictured right is her winning entry.

sixth grade in the following Mississippi & Alabama counties (Lauderdale, Kemper, Neshoba, Newton, Jasper, Clarke, Choctaw, Sumter) to participate in a contest, Dream BIG...Sky’s the Limit, sponsored by East Central MS Retired Educators Association and Alan & Marilyn Brown.

As one of 10 winners out of over 420 entries, Braelynn will receive a prize package consisting of an MCM-Meridian T-shirt, bag, & a golden ticket admitting free entry for one adult & one child.

“My Big Dream is to own a pet spa. I want to help animals feel good. I love pets and I think they are cute! Cats like playing with yarn and dogs like playing with a ball or chew toy. I want all pets to feel good and be healthy. Dogs need a bath once a day and so do cats! Then they can smell good and fresh.”

“When MCM-Meridian opens this Spring, we will be a place for play, learning, creativity, and curiosity!” Said Clair Huff, Assistant Director of Education & Programs. “From the very beginning, our community has supported the MCM-Meridian dream that will inspire & educate children, families, & educators. And with this contest, we hope to hear the dreams & goals of children in our community so that we can guide them to achieve those dreams for a bright future. With hard work & cooperation, dreams really do come true, & MCM-Meridian is a shining example of that.”

The Mississippi Children’s Museum - Meridian (MCM-Meridian) is the East Mississippi satellite campus of the statewide Mississippi Children's Museum (MCM)—a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that creates unparalleled experiences to inspire excellence and a lifelong joy of learning.

MCM-Meridian is building a 25,000-square-foot facility with exhibit space designed around three primary initiatives: Literacy and Arts; STEM; and Health and Nutrition with Cultural Arts and Mississippi History woven throughout all galleries.

Outdoors is a 25,000-square-foot exhibit gallery that allows children a safe and magical space to explore and enrich the learning experience. The museum’s exhibits, programs, and outreach opportunities will provide engaging, explorative, hands-on educational activities for children of all ages.

MCM-Meridian is a strategic part of the statewide Mississippi Children’s Museum which is dedicated to inspiring ALL of Mississippi’s children from ALL backgrounds to discover and achieve their potential. To learn more about MCM-Meridian, visit www.mcmmeridian.org.

Behavioral Health Hosts Giveaway in Bogue Homa

The Choctaw Behavioral Health Department hosted a informational bag giveaway drive-thru for residents of the Bogue Homa Community in Jones County on Friday, Feb. 26. The event was held in conjunction with the Choctaw Tribal Opioid Response (TOR) Project as a way to address Opioid & Stimulant Use Disorders in Tribal communities through clinical services, prevention & public education.

RIGHT, Behavioral Health staff is pictured with Bogue Homa Tribal Councilman Michael Briscoe who participated in the drive-thru. Behavioral Health staff appreciates all who assisted & attended the event.

TOP TRIBAL SPELLERS

Congratulations to the following Tribal member students who recently placed in their respective Spelling Bee competitions. RIGHT, Kaegen Henry, eighth grader from Choctaw Central Middle School, was the overall winner of the 2021 Choctaw Tribal Schools District Spelling Bee on February 5. The competition was held at the CCMS Gymnasium in Choctaw.

LEFT, Tayshaun Chickaway was runner-up in the 2021 MAIS Overall Spelling Bee, held on Friday, January 15, on the campus of Hartfield Academy in Flowood. Chickaway is a student at Kemper Academy & is the son of Gabriel Chickaway & Tomika Bell.
The Choctaw Central Lady Warriors hoped for a comeback late in their Mississippi High School Activities Association (MHSAA) Class 4A girls state basketball championship game with Pontotoc on March 4 in Jackson, but a last second 3-point attempt to push the game into OT bounced off the rim, giving Pontotoc a 55-52 victory & this year’s state title.

Choctaw Central, playing for their third state title in five years, thrives on their ability to close out games on the strength of their 3-point shooting. They could only muster 3-of-25 (.120 percent) in the contest.

Pontotoc, also known as the Lady Warriors, used a huge 17-4 advantage in the third quarter to jump ahead of Choctaw for a 36-26 lead heading into the fourth quarter. This was after coming out of halftime trailing Choctaw 22-19.

Choctaw Central, playing for their third state title in five years, opens the contest on a 10-1 run as junior Carly Keats connected on a pair of 3-pointers & a basket & senior Shantasia John scored a field goal for a 10-6 lead to end the first.

After a scoreless quarter, Choctaw Central senior Meloney Thames added 7 points in the second as John & Keats added a field goal & senior La liana Crosby chipped in a free-throw for a 22-19 halftime lead. Pontotoc came out on a 5-0 run to take the lead, but a Keats basket tied the game at 24-24. Pontotoc came out rolling & regained the lead as they compiled 12 unanswered points before Keats added another basket for Choctaw Central as they trailed 36-26 heading into the fourth.

After a Pontotoc basket, Keats hit 2 free-throws before Pontotoc got their largest lead of the night (14 points) behind 2 field goals for a 42-28 lead. Sensing urgency, Choctaw Central came out with a rejuvenated offense & stifling defense as Keats & Thames combined to score 19 points to Pontotoc’s 10.

In the waning moments of the contest, Choctaw Central senior Lyleonia Johnson connected with a 3-pointer & a basket as Choctaw trailed 54-52 with :18 seconds left. After Pontotoc made 1-of-2 free throws, Choctaw hurried the ball up the court. After a missed 3-point attempt & quick rebound, Thames took the last 3-pointer to send the game into OT but the ball bounced off the rim as time expired.

“It didn’t turn out like we wanted it to,” said Choctaw Central head coach Bill Smith.
“If we made that first 3-pointer of the game, we might not have been in this situation, but it is what it is. You got to give Pontotoc credit, they played well. They got really hot in the third quarter. That run they made was the difference.”

Thames had a game high 22 points, 8 rebounds & 3 steals. Keats had 20 points & 6 rebounds. John had 4 points & 3 rebounds, Johnson 5 points & 4 rebounds, & Crosby 1 point & 4 rebounds. Kyla Farmer had 4 rebounds & 3 steals.

For the game, Choctaw Central made 21-of-67 field goals (.313 percent) & 7-of-9 free throws (.778 percent). They concluded the season with a 29-4 overall record.

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Congratulations to the following area players & coaches who recently participated in All-Star basketball contests.

Choctaw Central senior Meloney Thames participated in the 2021 Mississippi-Alabama All-Star Girls Basketball Game March 12 at the Multiplex at Cramton Bowl in Montgomery, AL.

Thames, a Jackson State University signee, had 10 points, 2 steals and 2 rebounds for Team Mississippi as they fell to Team Alabama 102-70.

Serving as Team Mississippi head coach was Choctaw Central coach Charlie Named.

Pearl River Teen Center proudly announces that Hannah Charlie has been named as this year’s Youth of the Year candidate for the Boys and Girls Club of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians organization. Hannah has been a member of The Club for five years and has become one of the most hardworking and dedicated members. She will be among other top candidates to compete for the 2021 National Youth of the Year title, which will be held virtually on March 25.

Students of the Month Named

Congratulations to the Rotary Club’s Students of the Month for January. Pictured from left to right are Noah Bates, Neshoba Central High School; Traiton Martin, Choctaw Central High School; Mackenzie Thomas, Philadelphia High School; & Student of the Month Chairperson Elizabeth Frohse.

Choctaw Central juniors Kyla Farmer and Carly Keats, and Neshoba Central junior Hama’ya Fielder participated in the 2021 Mississippi Sports Medicine All-Star Girls Basketball Game, held on March 20 at A.E. Wood Coliseum on the campus of Mississippi College in Clinton.

All three were selected to the Class 4A-6A North Team as they defeated the South Team 63-58.

Keats had a team high 12 points, 5 assists, 2 rebounds and a steal and was named Most Valuable Defensive Player of the contest. Fielder had 8 points and 5 rebounds. Farmer had 2 rebounds.

Serving on the coaching staff for the North was Neshoba Central coach Jason Broom.

Players, Coaches Named to All-Star Contests

Bill Smith.

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refocused and went on a 12-2 run to secure the 65-52 win.

Neshoba Central junior Hama’ya Fielder & sophomore Shaylynn Hunter each scored a team high 15 points, followed by junior Veronica Williams’ 10 points. Senior Shante Beaulieu added five points, senior Jeleiysa Jim three, & seniors Elleigh Willis & Bailey Willis both had two.

The Lady Rockets concluded their season with a 22-6 overall record.

The Lady Tornadoes were led by senior Mackenzie Thomas’ game high 19 points.

Holmes County Central 39-36 in the finals on March 5.
Vivians Signs With Hinds Football Program
Choctaw Central High School senior Trevell Vivians signed a letter of intent to play collegiate football as a member of the Hinds Community College Eagles team next season in Raymond, MS. A signing ceremony was held in the Choctaw Central High School Gymnasium on Tuesday, Feb. 9 as Vivians was surrounded by family, teammates, coaches, friends, & supporters.

State AAA Champions
Congratulations to Iris Farve & the Clinton Christian Academy Lady Warriors as they claimed the 2021 Mid-South Association of Independent Schools (MAIS) Class AAA State Girls Basketball Championship as they defeated Bowling Green (LA) 44-36 on Feb. 27 at the campus of Oak Hill Academy in West Point, MS. Farve was named an All-Tournament selection.

Tangle Receives SMCC Honor
Sydni Tangle, a sophomore guard with the Southwest Mississippi Community College (SMCC) Lady Bears basketball team, was recently selected as a member of the 2021 SMCC Hall of Fame. Tangle had a distinguished basketball career at Leake Academy & was named to the NJCAA 2nd Team All-Academic & Distinguished Academic All-State during her freshman year at SMCC. Tangle served as Choctaw Indian Princess from 2018-2019.
Fielder a Member of 1,000 Points Club

On Tuesday, Feb. 9, Neshoba Central Lady Rocket Hama'ya Fielder was recognized for becoming a member of the 1,000 Points Club, having made 1,000 points (to date) in her basketball career. Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben, Director of Administration Jason Grisham, coaches, teammates, family, friends and fans were present to congratulate Hama'ya on her achievement.

Nanih Waiya Attendance Center’s Senior Night was held at on Friday, Feb. 5, for members of the basketball teams. Seniors honored included Tribal members Jalia Cotton & Channa Clemmons, Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben, Secretary/Treasurer Chris Eaves (Crystal Ridge Tribal Council Representative) & Choctaw Indian Princess Elisah Jimmie were in attendance to recognize these outstanding seniors.

Basketball Senior Night was held on Tuesday, Feb. 2 at Neshoba Central High School. Tribal member seniors honored on the Lady Rockets & Rockets teams included Shante Beaulieu, Onnahili Williams, Jeleisya Jim, Mahli Mitch, Elleigh Willis, Bailey Willis, & Brighton Jimmie.
Senior Night was held at Choctaw Central High School on Thursday, Jan. 28, for members of the Lady Warriors & Warriors basketball teams. Seniors honored included Laliana Crosby, Shatashia John, Lyleonia Johnson, Meloney Thames, Sarah Williams, Daysia Henry, Billie Isom, Speedy Lewis II, Brayson Samuel, & Traiton Martin.

Choctaw Central High School’s Lady Warriors & Warriors soccer seniors were honored during Senior Night on Thursday, Jan. 22. Seniors honored included Leilani Charlie, Charlita Gibson, Jaiden Thomas, Sierra Wallace, Madison Wilson, Kearson Grisham, Brannon Jim, Alarys Johnson, & Jaiden Thomas. Also honored was bowling team senior Tayshaun Thomas. (Photos continued next page)
Philadelphia High School hosted Senior Night for members of their basketball teams on Friday, Jan. 8. Tribal member Kayla Mingo was among the seniors recognized as Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben & 2019-2021 Choctaw Indian Princess Elisah Monique Jimmie were on hand, along with her family, to congratulate her.

Newton County High School honored basketball seniors as part of Senior Night activities on Friday, Jan. 22. Tribal member Jayden Mack was recognized as Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben joined her family as they congratulated her on her accomplishment.

Tribal members Tyra Wilson, Davian Jefferson & McKenzie Frazier were among the basketball seniors honored during Northeast Jones High School's Senior Night on Dec. 1, 2020. Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben congratulated them on their accomplishments.

Tribal member Arissa Willis was among the basketball seniors recognized during Leake County High School's Senior Night on Friday, Jan. 29. Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben, 2019-2021 Choctaw Indian Princess Elisah Monique Jimmie & Standing Pine Tribal Council Representative Loriann Ahshapanek celebrated with Arissa & her family.
Warriors Receive Post-Season Honors
Several members of the Choctaw Central Warriors football team recently received post-season honors as they were recognized by Region 4-4A coaches during the 2020 season. Eli Joe was named the region’s Most Valuable Quarterback & defensive lineman Trevell Vivians was named to the Super 22 Team. Named to the All-Region 1st Team were linebacker Gage Wesley, linebacker Billie Isom, wide receiver Elias Bell, offensive lineman Kyler Jefferson, & defensive lineman Notah Tubby (not pictured). Honorees on the All-Region 2nd Team included running back Bryden Wesley, cornerback Jawarrick Hickman, defensive back/linebacker Cohen Keats, versatile athlete Jerriah Jimmie, & offensive lineman Gannon Vaughn.

CTS Basketball Champions Crowned
The Choctaw Central Middle School Lady Warriors (above) & Red Water Elementary School Braves (above right) claimed this year’s Choctaw Tribal Schools’ 7th & 8th Grade Basketball Tournament Championships on Friday, Jan. 15. The tournament was held at Choctaw Central High School’s gymnasium. The Lady Warriors defeated the Conehatta Elementary Choctaws 41-23. The Red Water Braves bested the Braves of Bogue Chitto Elementary 51-41.

RIGHT, All-Tournament Team selections included (in no order) GIRLS, Braycie McMillan (CCMS), Dazlie Tubby (Conehatta), Karidee Willis (Red Water), Sunshine Thomas (Tucker), Tahja Bell (Bogue Chitto); BOYS, Keyshawn Ben (CCMS), Ervin Wishork
Choctaw Public Works Department issued a public notice regarding Waste Management’s new trash pick-up schedule effective January 11, 2021.

**MONDAY ROUTE**

**Pearl River Community**

(All Roads)

Edinburg Area - Isaac Lane, Grant Drive.

New Harmony Area - New Harmony Road, County Road 604, County Road 149, Rolling Hills Circle, Rolling Hill Road, Park Place Drive, Hilltop Drive, Cemetery Road, Wolf Trail, Fox Trail, Wolf Trail Extension.

Goat Ranch Area - Goat Ranch Road, Goat Ranch Lane, Goat Ranch Drive, Goat Ranch Spur Road, Honey Suckle Lane, Roger Bell Road.

North Oswald Area - Bell Drive, Choctaw Street, Indian Hills Circle, Indian Hills Spur, Indian Hill Drive.

South Oswald Area - Oswald Road, Ball Park Road, Ball Park Cove, Willis Road, Isaac Cemetery Road, Pine Ridge Road, Pushmataha Drive, Lewis Road.

**TUESDAY ROUTE**

**Tucker Community**

(All Roads)

Pearl River Community

Blackjack Road Area - Blackjack Road, Evlyn Jefferson Road, Jefferson Road, Archie Hickman Road, Dixon Road, Nashoba Lane Hummingbird Lane, Jim Road, Rock Springs Trail, Dancing Rabbit Ridge.

James Billie Road Area - James Billie Road, Solomon Drive, River Oaks Circle, Deer Trail, Redbud Lane, Cedar Hill Drive, Hickory Drive, Dogwood Drive, River Ridge Circle.

Industrial Road Area - Industrial Road, Annex Circle, Utilities Circle, Industrial Road Extension.

**WEDNESDAY ROUTE**

**Bogue Chitto Community**

(All Roads)

**Pearl River Community**

North Oswald Area - North Oswald Road, Youth Court Circle, Government Quarters Circle, Lagoon Road, Duplex Drive, Duplex Circle, York Road, Thompson Cut Drive, Martin Road.

Frog Level Road Area - Frog Level Road, Tiak Chitto Drive, Tiak Chitto Circle.

**THURSDAY ROUTE**

**Conehatta Community**

Highway 489 Mills Road, Mills Cove, Will Brown Road, Choctaw Road, Otha Cove, Red Oak Road, Conehatta Prospect Road, Tushka Drive, Shomati Hina, Nanib Hina Road, Campus Drive, Campus Drive Extension, Old Ballfield Road.

**FRIDAY ROUTE**

**Conehatta Community**

Decatur Conehatta Road, Hugh Mitchell Road, Hugh Mitchell Cove, Anderson Road, Choctaw Circle Road, Choctaw Circle Extension, Conehatta Lake Road, Albo Stamper Road, Hoye Pace Road, Hoye Pace Extension.

**U.S. Census Bureau Thanks You**

The U.S. Census Bureau recognized MBCI for participating in Census 2020. The MBCI Census Complete Count Committee encouraged participation by offering weekly $100 Walmart gift card drawings, giveaways of MBCI face masks, T-shirts & Census tote bags with census items, flyer distributions, cup signage advertisements, Census banners placed in all Tribal communities, poster distribution to all departments & schools, drive-thru questionnaire assistance in all Tribal communities, weekly Facebook live episodes of Who Wants To Be A Censusaire GameShow, & a grand-prize drawing of $2,020 to close out Census 2020. The decennial Census occurs once every 10 years with April 1st being Census Day. Next Decennial Census will be in 2030.

**Choctaw Transit Receives Multimodal Grant**

The Mississippi Transportation Commission announced $10.2 million in funding for multimodal transportation projects throughout the state. The commission approved the Mississippi Department of Transportation (MDOT) to award a total of 47 grants to regional & municipal airports, ports, railroads & public transit systems throughout Mississippi.

“MDOT’s focus stretches far continued next page
Graveside service for Mark Tinsley John, 55, was held on Wednesday, December 23, 2020, at Conehatta Community Cemetery. Rev. Gerald Willis, Sr. officiated. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Mr. John passed away on December 15 in Choctaw.

He was a Army National Guard Veteran & storage business owner. He enjoyed socializing, listening to music, watching sports, & being a Koni Hata stickball fan.

He was preceded in death by his father, Emmett Tinsley John; & brother, Billy Ray John.

Survivors include his wife, Angela H. John; mother, Evelyn Williamson John; daughters, Tasheena J. Tubby & Tabitha John; son, DeMarcus John; brothers, Alan Ray John & DeRoy Wolf; 5 grandchildren; & a host of relatives & friends.

Graveside service for Andy Win Lewis, 36, was held on Monday, December 21, 2020, at Chihowa I Chuka Assembly of God Cemetery in Philadelphia. Rev. Tim Cleveland & Rev. Eric Wright officiated. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Mr. Lewis passed away on December 17 at Rush Foundation Hospital in Meridian. He was employed with Patient Care EMS in Carthage & a Madden Volunteer Fireman for 15 years. He enjoyed being with his children & traveling.

Survivors include his parents, Winfred & Sindy Benson Lewis; daughter, Paige Lewis; son, Ezequiel Lewis; sisters, Natalie Watkins & Karin May; & a host of relatives & friends.

Graveside service for Kernan Wade Comby, 50, was held on Wednesday, December 23, 2020, at Standing Pine Community Cemetery. Pastor Shelly Peoples officiated. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Mr. Comby passed away on December 18 at Merit Central Hospital in Jackson.

He was previously employed with the Tribe’s recreation program, poultry industry, wire harness production, & Pearl River Resort. He enjoyed fishing, playing guitar & bass, Facebook, & playing games on his phone.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Sarene & William Comby, Jr.

Survivors include his daughter, Brittany Willis; sisters, Marcia Comby & Sally Webb; brothers, Gordon Sam, Samuel Comby & William “Tank” Comby, III; 1 grandson, 10 nephews, four nieces, & a host of great-nieces, great-nephews, relatives, & friends.

Graveside service for Dorine Johnson, 56, was held on Saturday, December 26, 2020, at Conehatta Community Cemetery. Rev. Ricky Thompson, Sr. officiated. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Ms. Johnson passed away on December 21 at Merit Health River Oaks in Flowood.

She enjoyed attending the Choctaw Indian Fair.

She was preceded in death by her parents, Harry & Dora Sockey Johnson; sister, Ruby Johnson; brothers, James Johnson, Anthony Johnson & Ricky Johnson; & grandparents, Edgar & Beatrice Johnson, Mike & Nephus Amos Sockey.

Survivors include sisters, Lena Johnson & Sherry Shumake; 2 aunts, 6 nieces, 7 nephews, & a host of relatives & friends.

Graveside service for Dean Bowen Comby, 63, was held on Monday, December 28, 2020, at Greenhill Methodist Cemetery in Pearl River. Rev. Daniel Tubby officiated. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Mr. Comby passed away on December 21 at his residence.

He was a U.S. Marine Corps Veteran & was employed with Choctaw Resort Development Enterprise then Choctaw Health Center as a Custodial Supervisor. He enjoyed camping with family, telling stories, & cheering for Beaver Dam stickball.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Jones Comby & Rosa Isaac; & a brother, Theo Comby.

Survivors include his wife, Wanoka Wofford; daughter, Brittney Wilson; son, Kellen Wofford; sisters, Susie Alex, Mary Helen Umholtz, Delores Hodridge, & Annette Kizer; brothers, Jimmy Isaac, Sr., Jones Leonard Comby, David Comby, & Harold “Doc” Comby; 2 grandchildren & a host of

Beyond Mississippi’s highways & interstates; it also includes intermodal transportation & its vast network of railroads, airports, public transit, & ports & waterways,” said Commissioner Tom King, Chairman, Mississippi Transportation Commission. “All modes work together to promote economic growth & development throughout the state.”

Funding for these multimodal grants comes from the Multimodal Transportation Improvement Fund. Money from this fund is allocated specifically to support multimodal grants each year. Grant applications, which include project details & funds requested, are reviewed & approved by a multimodal committee specific to each separate mode of transportation.

Choctaw Transit received a $31,538 grant & was among 21 projects to receive a total of $1.8 million for public transit improvements.

Also announced were eight projects totaling $3.8 million for port improvements, four projects totaling $1.3 million for railroad improvements & 14 projects totaling $3.3 million for airport improvements.

For more information on MDOT’s multimodal resources & other grants, visit GoMDOT.com.
OBITUARIES ...................................................................................................................... continued from page twenty-seven

relatives & friends.

**Craig Tushka Nayukpah Bell**

Graveside service for Craig Tushka Nayukpah Bell, 48, was held on Sunday, December 27, 2020, at Conehatta Community Cemetery. Pastor Thomas Ben officiated. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Mr. Bell passed away on December 22 at Rush Foundation Hospital in Meridian.

He was employed with the Tribe’s recreation program in Conehatta. He enjoyed being with family & friends, watching sports, being a MSU Bulldogs fan, & playing stickball.

He was preceded in death by his mother, Sandie Anderson; wife, Mindy Smith Bell; infant daughter, I’Sallyn Bell; & step-mother, Annie Williams Bell.

Survivors include his daughter, Cornelia Ja’Rose Holittopa Bell; foster son, Sean Wallace; father, Hayward Bell; sister, MyLyndie Hoyot Ima Bell; brother, A. Momit Abi Bell; 1 nephew, 1 aunt, a brother-in-law, & a host of relatives & friends.

**Michael Lee Frazier**

Graveside service for Michael Lee Frazier, 55, was held on Saturday, January 9, 2021, at Nanih Waiya Mennonite Cemetery. Pastor Patrick Evans & Rev. Glenn Myers officiated. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Mr. Frazier passed away on December 27 at his residence in Independence, MO.

He was employed with Team Solutions at Ford Company’s Kansas City Assembly Plant. He was previously employed with Choctaw Transit. He was a bull rider, enjoyed working on cars, visiting family, attending the Choctaw Indian Fair, & being with his dogs.

He was preceded in death by his father, Leroy Frazier, Sr.; sisters, Margaret Frazier Todd & Margie Gail Frazier Williams; brothers, Roy Frazier & Timothy Frazier; grandparents, Lee Jim, Sr. & Lonie Cotton Jim, Fob Frazier & Lavada Sam Frazier; 3 aunts, 4 uncles, a niece & a nephew.

Survivors include his daughter, Jessica Frazier; sons, Drew Frazier, Tilman Frazier & Sennelvke Frazier; mother, Bobbie Jean Frazier; brother, Leroy Frazier, Jr.; one niece & a host of relatives & friends.

**Deanna Ashley Willis**

Graveside service for Deanna Ashley Willis, 27, was held on Monday, January 11, 2021, at Holy Rosary Catholic Cemetery. Father Bob Goodyear, S.T., officiated. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Ms. Willis passed away on December 28 at Merit Health Rankin in Brandon.

She enjoyed being with family & friends, baking, beading, social dancing, listening to music, fishing, social media, & being a fan of the Alabama Crimson Tide.

She was preceded in death by her father, Richard Lane Willis; & grandparents, J.R. Willis, Gordon Willis, Sr. & Delphia I. Willis.

Survivors include her mother, Glenda Faye Willis; sister, DeLana Willis; brother, Brandon B. Willis; fiancé, Deron Wilson; & a host of nieces, nephews, relatives, & friends.

**Anita Farmer McMillan**

Graveside service for Anita Farmer McMillan, 79, was held on Tuesday, January 5, 2021, at Holy Rosary Catholic Cemetery. Father Bob Goodyear, S.T., officiated. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Ms. McMillan passed away on December 29 at Baptist Memorial Hospital in Columbus.

She was employed with the Choctaw Residential Center for 18 years. She enjoyed cooking, watching cooking shows & NBA games, gardening, sewing, crossword puzzles, sharing stories, & attending her grandchildren’s sporting events.

She was preceded in death by her parents, John McMillan & Grace Tubby; sisters, Valerie Tubby, Sheryl Martinez & Angela Tubby; & a brother, Harold Brant Tubby.

Survivors include her son, Miguel Pedraza; a niece, Destiny Tubby; & a host of relatives & friends.

**Janice Darlene Pedraza**

Graveside service for Janice Darlene Pedraza, 58, was held on Monday, January 4, 2021, at Holy Rosary Catholic Cemetery. Father Bob Goodyear, S.T., officiated. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Mrs. Pedraza passed away on December 31 at Rush Foundation Hospital in Meridian.

She was previously employed with the Pearl River Resort as a Housekeeper & enjoyed playing Bingo, going to the casino, fishing, & being at home.

She was preceded in death by her parents, John McMillan & Grace Tubby; sisters, Valerie Tubby, Sheryl Martinez & Angela Tubby; & a brother, Harold Brant Tubby.

Survivors include her son, Miguel Pedraza; a niece, Destiny Tubby; & a host of relatives & friends.

**Christian Isaiah Steve**


Mr. Steve passed away on January 2 at University Medical Center in Jackson.

He was a U.S. Army Veteran. He was a Security Officer at the Choctaw Health Center. He held previous positions at Pearl River Resort & was a truck
driver with KLLM Transportation. He loved being with family & friends, playing sports & lifting weights.

He was preceded in death by his grandfather, Jerome Steve; & great-grandparents, Bernadine & Albert Farve, Etheline & Cecil Taylor, Delores Bell & Roy James Steve, & Geneva & Raymond Farmer, Sr.

Survivors include his parents, Layla Taylor & Aaron Steve; sister, Angel Steve; grandparents, Sandra Isaac, Linda McMillan & Virgil Taylor; & a host of relatives & friends.

**ADRIEL ERROL STEPHENS**

Graveside service for Adriel Errol Stephens, 35, was held on Friday, January 8, 2021, at Union Calvary Indian Baptist Cemetery. Rev. Robert Patrick officiated. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Mr. Stephens passed away on January 3 at his residence.

He was previously employed with Pearl River Resort & Tribal Day Labor Program. He enjoyed fishing, listening to music, & watching WWE, Ole Miss & New York Giants football games.

He was preceded in death by his father, Norman Delane Stephens.

Survivors include his sons, Conner Stephens, Ashton Stephens & Errol Stephens; mother, Gloria Nell Willis; sisters, Latisha Stephens, Ashley Dixon & Kayla Stephens; brother, Todd Stephens; & a host of nieces, nephews, relatives, & friends.

**RHONDA LOU BILLY**

Rhonda Lou Billy, 57, passed away on Thursday, January 7, 2021, at University Medical Center in Jackson.

She was born in Chicago, IL then moved with her family to Mississippi in the Pearl River Community. She was employed with Pearl River Resort’s Surveillance Department. She enjoyed being with family, beading, sewing, & cheering for the New Orleans Saints & Alabama Crimson Tide.

She was preceded in death by her father, Norman Delane Stephens & Errol Stephens; mother, Millan & Virgil Taylor; & a host of relatives & friends.

**TRAVIS WILLIAM ISAAC**

Graveside service for Travis William Isaac, 49, was held on Friday, January 15, 2021, at Isaac Cemetery in Pearl River. Bro. James Ray Johnson officiated. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Mr. Isaac passed away on January 9 at Lackey Memorial Hospital in Forest.

He worked at Silver Star Casino & Hotel as a hotel desk clerk & table game dealer. His hobbies included attending pow wows, traveling, & cheering for the Chicago Blackhawks, Chicago Cubs & Alabama football. He was a member of St. Theresa Catholic Church.

He was preceded in death by his father, Carlton Gabriel Isaac, Sr.

Survivors include his mother, Charlene Isaac; brothers, Carlton Isaac Jr., Tyrone James Isaac & Byron Kent Isaac; & a host of nieces, nephews, relatives, & friends.

**SHANNON ROSE WILLIS**

Graveside service for Shannon Rose Willis, 43, was held on Saturday, January 23, 2021, at Hope Indian Baptist Cemetery in Pearl River. Deacon Williamson Isaac & Rev. Travis Willis officiated. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Ms. Willis passed away on January 13 at Mississippi Baptist Hospital in Jackson.

She was a homemaker & was formerly employed with Pearl River Resort. She enjoyed caring for her family, family gatherings & being a New Orleans Saints fan.

She was preceded in death by her grandparents, Rosemary Wilson, Claude & Gladys Willis; & two infants.

Survivors include her...
parents, Hulon & Mary Bell Willis; daughters, Alexandria Willis, Brittany McMillan, Gabriella McMillan, & Ashland McMillan; son, Blake McMillan; stepsons, Brandon McMillan & Lee McMillan; brother, Marcus Willis; special friend, Ashley McMillan; two grandchildren & a host of relatives & friends.

Jenny Marie Deon

Graveside service for Jenny Marie Deon, 48, was held on Friday, January 22, 2021, at John Memorial United Methodist Cemetery in Red Water. Rev. Ruth Ann McDonald officiated. Wilcox Funeral Home was in charge of arrangements.

Ms. Deon passed away on January 14 at Merit Health Rankin in Brandon.

She attended John Memorial United Methodist Church & was a receptionist with the MBCI Risk Management Department. She loved to get together with family & friends, traveling, listening to music, & making new friends.

She was preceded in death by her parents, Raymond & Deles John Deon; & grandparents, Biblo & Eunice Isaac John, & Florence Deon.

Survivors include her sons, Christian Deon, Iverson Allen & Rajon Allen; sisters, Connie Deon & Juliana Ketcher; 1 grandchild, an aunt, an uncle, two nieces, & a host of relatives & friends.

Thurman B. Thompson, Jr.

Graveside service for Thurman B. Thompson, Jr., 62, was held on Saturday, January 23, 2021, at Holy Rosary Catholic Cemetery in Tucker. Father Bob Goodyear, S.T., officiated.

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

Mr. Thompson passed away on January 15 at Merit Health Central in Jackson.

He was a U.S. Marine Corps Veteran & lived in the Pearl River Community most of his life, except for 11 years when he lived in St. Louis, MO. He worked on a riverboat for seven years, Pearl River Resort as Security Director, & the Choctaw Police Department as an investigator. His hobbies included working on vehicles, going to junkyards & spending time with his grandkids.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Thurman B. Thompson, Sr. & Minnie Steve Thompson; & a son, Moses Earl Thompson, Sr.

Survivors include his daughter, Elishia Thompson; sisters, Ann Marie Wesley & Patricia Cotton; brother, Cecil Steve; two grandchildren & a host of relatives & friends.

Timothy Richard John

Graveside service for Timothy Richard John, 42, was held on Monday, February 8, 2021, at Isaac Cemetery in Pearl River. Pastor Thomas Ben officiated. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Mr. John passed away on January 15 in Dallas, TX.

He enjoyed being with family, traveling, playing stickball, making stickball sticks, fishing, listening to music, & being a fan of the Cleveland Indians.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Harry Smith John & Mary Lee Sam; grandparents, Smith & Cecilia Wilson John, Vonnie & Minnie Sam; 3 aunts & 4 uncles.

Survivors include his daughters, Selena Jim, Summer John, Mary John, & Leanna Bell; sons, Anthony John & Jacob Cotton; sisters, Teresa Anderson & Stacy Goodin; 3 grandchildren, 5 aunts, an uncle, & a host of relatives & friends.

Susie Lane Brown

Graveside service for Susie Lane Brown, 68, was held on Sunday, January 24, 2021, at Canaan Cemetery. Pastor Thomas Ben officiated. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Ms. Brown passed away on January 16 at Merit Health River Region Hospital in Vicksburg.

She was employed with Pearl River Resort. She was previously employed with Choctaw Electronics & Marshall Durbin Chicken Hatchery. She always put family first.

She was preceded in death by her parents, Easlen Lewis & Rosie John; husband, Hugh W. Brown; daughter, Jennifer Elliot; sons, Michael Elliot & Timothy Brown; sister, Velma Bell; & brothers, Johnny Lewis & Watson Lewis.

Survivors include her daughters, Onnie Elaine Obeid, Jennifer Marshall & Molly Brown; sisters, Addie Love & Rosie Ann Mitchell; 13 grandchildren; 8 great-grandchildren & a host of relatives & friends.

Tamera Ann Solomon

Funeral service for Tamera Ann Solomon, 45, was held on Saturday, January 30, 2021, at Whitten Memorial Baptist Church in Memphis, TN. Burial was in Memorial Park Cemetery in Memphis. Memorial Park Funeral Home was in charge of arrangements.

Ms. Solomon passed away on January 18 at her residence.

She loved her life, ice, her pets, & music. She enjoyed arguing with her brother, having long talks with her nephew, Julian, & drinking coffee with her mother. Her passion was going to the lake with her daughter. She provided the family with laughter, fun times, drama, game nights, & love. She battled health issues for years.

She was preceded in death by her father, Hoye Solomon; & brother, Rodney Solomon.

Survivors include her mother, Mary Solomon; daughter, Sayda Solomon; brother, Randy Solomon; a nephew & a host of relatives & friends.

Randy Lee McMillan, Sr.

Graveside service for Randy Lee McMillan, Sr., 68, was held on Monday, January 25, 2021, at Holy Rosary Catholic Cemetery in Tucker. Father Bob Goodyear, S.T., officiated. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Mr. McMillan passed away on January 19 at Anderson Regional Medical Center in Meridian.

He lived in Tucker Community most of his life. He was a maintenance supervisor & took care of family & did what he could for everyone. He was a member of Holy Rosary Catholic Church.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Arnold John McMillan & Katherine Isaac McMillan; daughter, Desire McMillan; & brothers, Donald Dale McMillan & Clyde McMillan.

Survivors include his son,
Charles Freeman Ben
Graveside service for Charles Freeman Ben, 53, was held on Saturday, January 30, 2021, at Holy Rosary Catholic Cemetery in Tucker. Father Bob Goodyear, S.T., officiated. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Mr. Ben passed away on January 23 at Anderson Regional Medical Center in Meridian.
He was a driver for Community Regional Transportation. He enjoyed being with family & friends, hunting, fishing, playing Bingo, officiating stickball games, & coaching sports, playing washers, & being a fan of the New Orleans Saints, Atlanta Braves & Florida State Seminoles.

He was preceded in death by his mothers, Lucy Lewis & Melissa Farmer; brothers, Howard Lee Ben, Grady Farmer, Raymond Farmer, Sr., Arrell Farmer, & Ernie Clemons.

Survivors include his son, Anthony Shane Ben; companion, Loretta Steve; father, Freeman Ben; sisters, Minnie Farmer, Patsy Shoemake, Pearlie Willis, Nancy Willis, & Dorethea Cole; brothers, James Farmer, Levern Nickey, Alvin Jefferson, Jared Jim, & Denford Nickey; 4 grandchildren, & a host of nieces, nephews, relatives, & friends.

Sybil Bell Tubby
Graveside service for Sybil Bell Tubby, 74, was held on Friday, January 29, 2021, at Nanih Waiya Mennonite Cemetery. Rev. Glen Myers & Rev. Mark Roth officiated. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Mrs. Tubby passed away on January 24 at Anderson Regional Medical Center in Meridian.

She retired from Bogue Chitto Elementary School as a teacher’s assistant in 2012. She was a member of the Great Spirit United Methodist Church & taught children’s Sunday school & coordinated the choir. She enjoyed reading, gardening, traveling, being with family, & arts & crafts.

She is preceded in death by her parents, Sam & Melissa Willis Bell; son, Lydell Bell; sisters, Sara Littlevoice, Reecie Bell, Nellie Bell, Betty Bell, & Sybil Tubby; & a brother, Carlos Bell.

Survivors include her husband, Daniel Tubby; daughter, Lisa Royal; sisters, Marie Bell, Cindy Bell & Kathy Sam; one granddaughter, an aunt, & a host of nieces, nephews, relatives, & friends.

Cindy Bell
Graveside service for Cindy Bell, 62, was held on Friday, January 29, 2021, at Nanih Waiya Mennonite Cemetery. Rev. Glen Myers & Rev. Mark Roth officiated. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Ms. Bell passed away on January 26 at her residence.

She retired from Bogue Chitto Elementary School as a teacher’s aide. She was a member of Great Spirit United Methodist Church & was church treasurer. She enjoyed being with family, shopping & traveling.

She was preceded in death by her parents, Sam & Melissa Willis Bell; sisters, Sara Littlevoice, Reecie Bell, Nellie Bell, Betty Bell, & Sybil Tubby; & a brother, Carlos Bell.

Survivors include her son, Cameron Hickman; sisters, Marie Bell & Kathy Sam; one granddaughter, an aunt, & a host of nieces, nephews, relatives, & friends.

Clarissa Jean Isaac Crowell
Graveside service for Clarissa Jean Isaac Crowell, 43, was held on Thursday, February 4, 2021, at Holy Rosary Catholic Cemetery in Tucker. Father Bob Goodyear, S.T., officiated. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Ms. Crowell passed away on January 28 at her residence in Columbus, MS.

She enjoyed attending her sons’ games, playing cards, & grilling. She held various jobs & was employed with Sunflower.

She is preceded in death by her father, Adair King; daughter, Quandasia Crowell; sister, Lucretia King; brothers, Emmett Ray Battiest Jr. & Stephen Isaac.

Survivors include her mother, Ina Isaac Solomon; sons, Trevor Isaac, TyQuantez Crowell & TyQuan Crowell; special companion, Gerome Council; sisters, Mira Battiest & Jackie Matthews; brothers, Kyle Isaac, Ramsey King, Sr., & El-ray King; & a host of nieces, nephews, relatives, & friends.

Jonathan Karl Willis
Graveside service for Jonathan Karl Willis, 46, was held on Tuesday, February 2, 2021, at Isaac Cemetery in Pearl River. Pastor Thomas Ben officiated. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Mr. Willis passed away on January 29 at the Choctaw Residential Center in Choctaw.

He attended New Canaan Church & enjoyed fishing, playing softball & stickball. He loved dancing with the Pearl River Social Dance group prior to his accident. He enjoyed socializing & making jokes.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Karl & Barbara Wishork Willis; grandparents, RJ & Nellie Zoe Bell Willis; 2 aunts & 2 uncles.

Survivors include his wife, Tammy T. Willis; daughter, Suwannie Kiylish Willis; sister, Rachel Willis Thomas; 7 aunts, 1 uncle, & a host of nieces, nephews, relatives, & friends.

Darrell Glenn Willis
Services for Darrell Glenn Willis, 62, will be held at a later date. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Mr. Willis passed away on January 29 at Anderson Regional Medical Center in Meridian.

He was a U.S. Marine Corps Veteran.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Robert Russell Willis & Corine Henry.

Survivors include his wife, continued next page
Hazel Bell Willis; daughter, Millicent Robyn Wallace; sons, Matthew Bell & Kellen Miles Willis; sisters, Barbara Jean Willis, Donna Jimmie, Iva Denson, Cynthia Billy; brothers, Mark Robin Willis & Stuart Jordan Willis; 5 granddaughters, & a host of nieces, nephews, relatives, & friends.

NorA Mae Chapman

Graveside service for Nora Mae Chapman, 67, was held on Friday, February 5, 2021, at Standing Pine Community Cemetery. Pastor Bill Boykin officiated. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Ms. Chapman passed away on January 31 at the University Medical Center in Jackson.

She retired from Pearl River Day Care. She enjoyed being with family & friends, listening to music, going to the Choctaw Elderly Activity Center, doing arts & crafts, puzzles, & being with her dog Koni. She was a fan of Alabama football, Bok Cito stickball & boxer Manny Pacquiao. She attended Emmanuel Baptist Church.

She was preceded in death by her parents, Clifton Lewis & Catherine Willis; & a brother, Brainard Lewis.

Survivors include his wife, Gloria Thomas Willis; daughters, Kristen Crosby, Shavon Willis & Kravon Willis; sons, Clifton Ray Willis, Cliff Willis & Christopher Willis; sisters, Loretta Willis, Rachel Jackson & Cathleen Jordan; brothers, Raymond Wilson, Jr., Lance Wilson & Travis Wilson; 18 grandchildren & a host of relatives & friends.

Raphael James Billy, Sr.

Graveside service for Raphael James Billy, Sr., 70, was held on Thursday, February 4, 2021, at Pearl River Community Cemetery. Rev. Jason Martin officiated. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Mr. Billy passed away on February 1 at his residence.

He was employed with Pearl River Resort until his retirement. He enjoyed going to flea markets & watching wrestling & westerns on TV.

He was preceded in death by his parents, James & Dullie Billy; son, Raphael James Billy, Jr.; step-daughter, Clarissa Nickey Wilson; step-sons, Kenneth Nickey & Gregory Nickey; sister, Rita Mingo Wishork; one grandson & a great-grandchild.

Survivors include his wife, Nevalena Denson Billy; daughters, Daphne Billy Anderson; son, Donald Billy; step-sons, Alvin Nickey & Jimmy Nickey; 14 grandchildren & 26 great-grandchildren.

Shirley Ann Thompson Benn

Graveside service for Shirley Ann Thompson Benn, 73, was held on Tuesday, February 9, 2021, at Holy Rosary Catholic Cemetery in Tucker. Father Bob Goodyear, S.T., officiated. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Ms. Benn passed away on February 3 at Golden Triangle Baptist Memorial Hospital in Columbus.

She was employed in various positions with the Tribe & retired as a switchboard operator in July 2020. She enjoyed being with her family, traveling, fishing, cooking, crocheting, & making fried fruit pies. She was a fan of Choctaw Central athletics, especially basketball.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Robert C. Benn; parents, Willie & Kittie Willis Thompson; & a sister, Wanda Davidson.

Survivors include her daughters, Melanie Benn & Denise Benn John; 5 grandchildren, 4 great-grandchildren & a host of relatives & friends.

Noland Roby Gibson

Graveside service for Noland Roby Gibson, 56, was held on Saturday, February 13, 2021, at Phillips Cemetery in Pearl River. Minister Curtis Willis, Sr. & Pastor Thomas Ben officiated. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Ms. Willis passed away on February 5 at OCH Regional Medical Center in Starkville.

She held various positions with the Tribe & was a receptionist with Tribal Maintenance. She was a member of Bogue Chitto Baptist Church & loved her family dearly. She enjoyed cooking, fishing, singing Choctaw hymns, & being a fan of the Alabama Crimson Tide.

She was preceded in death by her parents, Earl Willis, Sr. & Susan Bell Willis; brothers, Willie Ervin Willis & Richard B. Willis; a grandchild, a great-grandchild, a nephew, & a great-niece.

Survivors include her daughter, Lucinda L. Willis; sons, Marcus D. Willis & Simeon Willis; step-father, Alvin Williams; sisters, Mary Ann Jefferson, Linda Steve, & friends.
Karen W. Thomas, & Renata Willis; brothers, Earl Willis, Jr. & James K. Willis; special companion, James Mingo; 20 grandchildren, 4 great-grandchildren, & a host of nieces, nephews, family, & friends.

SAM SONNY AMOS

Graveside service for Sam Sonny Amos, 69, was held on Sunday, February 14, 2021, at Bogue Chitto Community Cemetery. Rev. Charles Doby Henry officiated. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Mr. Amos passed away on February 6 at his residence in Hope Mills, NC.

He was a U.S. Air Force Veteran & served 24 years.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Wade & Christine Amos; & brothers, Willie Gene Amos, Willie Jim Amos, Alexander Earl Amos, & Stephen Amos.

Survivors include his wife, Marina Amos; daughters, Stacey Amos & Sabrina Amos; son, Samuel Amos; sisters, Janice Amos & Sue Amos; 2 grandchildren & a host of nieces, nephews, relatives, & friends.

KEVIN WAYNE BUTLER

Graveside service for Kevin Wayne Butler, 57, was held on Saturday, February 20, 2021, at Holy Rosary Catholic Cemetery in Tucker. Father Bob Goodyear, S.T., officiated. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Mr. Butler passed away on February 7 at his residence.

When he was younger, he helped his family run the Co-Op store in Pearl River. He was employed as a Houseman with Pearl River Resort until his resignation. He enjoyed being with his family & friends & telling jokes. He was a fan of the Dallas Cowboys.

He was preceded in death by his maternal grandmother, Nellie Billie; paternal grandparents, John L. Butler & Grace S. Butler; mother, Patsy Sam Buffington; an aunt, niece & a grandson.

Survivors include his wife, Mary Jane Butler; sons, Shane Butler, Sidney Butler & Shaun Butler; father, Jerry Butler; sister, Christina Fortenberry; brothers, Ken Butler, Karl Butler & Kenny Johnson; 3 grandchildren, an aunt, & a host of nieces, nephews, relatives, & friends.

EARL JAMES FARMER, JR.

Graveside service for Earl James Farmer, Jr., 42, was held on Monday, February 22, 2021, at Pine Bluff Cemetery in Sebastopol. Pastor Matt Clark officiated. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Mr. Farmer passed away on February 12 at Anderson Regional Medical Center in Meridian.

He was employed with Pearl River Resort until his illness. He enjoyed telling jokes, stick ball, fishing, softball, baseball, & making dream catchers.

He was preceded in death by his daughter, Janielle Farmer; sister, Heather Farmer; & grandparents, Arthur & Dorothy Polk Farmer, Homer & Cornelia Tubby Bell.

Survivors include his wife, Leslie Farmer; father, Earl Farmer Sr.; mother, Mary Dixon; step-father, Billie Hockett; daughters, Shaylon Farmer, Nequita Farmer & Earlianna Farmer; step-daughter, Jayden Wilcher; sons, Deshaune Farmer, Dakota Farmer, Cameron Farmer, & Quinncy Farmer; sisters, Patricia Joe, Aleisha Lewis, Julie Farmer, & Ashley Farmer; brothers, Leon Wesley & James Farmer; 4 grandchildren & a host of relatives & friends.

MARY SUE JEFFERSON

Graveside service for Mary Sue Jefferson, 64, was held on Friday, February 26, 2021, at Conehatta Community Cemetery. Pastor Thomas Ben officiated. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Ms. Jefferson passed away on February 12 at her residence.

She attended St. Catherine Catholic Church. She retired from the child care development field & enjoyed being with family, playing cards, sewing, knitting, & listening to music.

She was preceded in death by her parents, Goldman & Millicent Dixon Jefferson; daughter, Daphne Thomas; son, Isaiah Thomas; sister, Cindy Jefferson; brothers, Bobby Jefferson & Robert Jefferson; & common law husband, Steve Williams.

Survivors include her daughters, Jessica Thomas-Arauz, Lahoma Thomas-James & Marley Alex-Townsend; son, Matthew Thomas; sisters, Sylvia Jefferson & Minnie Shoemake; brother, Leran Jefferson; 9 grandchildren, 7 great-grandchildren & a host of nieces & nephews.

Clifton Chapman

Graveside service for Clifton Chapman, 74, was held on Saturday, February 27, 2021, at Bogue Homa Community Cemetery. Pastor Thomas Ben officiated. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Mr. Chapman passed away on February 14 at Forrest General Hospital in Hattiesburg.

He was a U.S. Army Veteran. He was preceded in death by his parents, Frank Asa Chapman & Mary McMillian Chapman; sisters, Theresa Chapman Willis, Mary Jane Chapman & Rosie Mae Chapman; brother, continued next page
John Mingo; & two nephews.

Timothy York, Sr.

Graveside service for Timothy York, Sr., 53, was held on Monday, February 22, 2021, at Pearl River Community Cemetery. Pastor Thomas Ben officiated. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Mr. York passed away on February 19 at his residence.

He was employed at Choctaw Health Center & was previously at First American Plastics & Molding in Ocean Springs. He enjoyed being with his children & watching them play sports, especially Beaver Dam stickball, making jokes, being at the casino, & playing Bingo.

He was preceded in death by his grandparents, Baxter & Grace Sam York; parents, Tony York, Sr. & Betty Griffin; sister, Andrea Lynn York; & brothers, Iron Eyes Cody York & Tracy Scott York.

Survivors include his daughters, Coyo York & Mahala York; sons, Timothy York, Jr. & Devonte Bell; sisters, Michelle York, Misti York, Diane Isaac, & Deborah York; brothers, Tony York, Jr., Joshua LittleSky York, Tatum Morris, & William York; 2 grandchildren & a host of nieces, nephews, relatives, & friends.

Nevalena Denson Billy

Graveside service for Nevalena Denson Billy, 75, was held on Wednesday, February 24, 2021, at Hope Indian Baptist Cemetery in Pearl River. Deacon Williamson Isaac & Bro. Leonard Jimmie officiated. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Mr. Thompson passed away on February 20 at Mississippi Baptist Hospital in Jackson.

He was an Oklahoma National Guard & U.S. Army Reserve Veteran. He studied electronics & computer technology. He cared for his family, Choctaw traditions & service to his country. He enjoyed fishing, shooting guns with his nephew, social dancing, & participating in activities at the Choctaw Elderly Activity Center.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Tubby & Palonia Willis Thompson; sisters, Dorothy Thompson & Margaret Thompson Suzoa; brother, Jerry Nelson Thompson; & a nephew.

Survivors include his niece, Antonia Thompson; nephews, Chris Thompson, Eli Suazo, William Mask, & Joey Mask; & a host of relatives & friends.

Leroy Frazier, Jr.

Graveside service for Leroy Frazier, Jr., 52, was held on Tuesday, February 23, 2021, at Nanih Waiya Indian Mennonite Cemetery. Pam Smith & Pastor Patrick Evans officiated. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Mr. Frazier passed away on February 21 at Merit Health Residential Center in Choctaw.

Survivors include his parents, Ezzell Denson & Ludie Mae Anderson Wesley; sister, Geneva Frazier; brother, George T. Denson; half-sisters, Annie Ruth Steve, Louise Denson, Ruth Denson, & Mable Jim; half-brother, Cecil Denson; husband, Raphael Billy, Sr.; daughter, Clarissa Nickey; & sons, Kenneth Nickey, Gregory Nicky & Ronnie Nicky.

Survivors include her sons, Jimmy Dale Nicky & Alvin Ray Nicky; sister, Kaffie Isaac; 9 grandchildren, 10 great-grandchildren & a host of nieces & nephews.

Richard Keith Thompson

Graveside service for Richard Keith Thompson, 77, was held on Thursday, February 25, 2021, at Holy Rosary Catholic Cemetery in Tucker. Father Bob Goodyear, S.T., officiated. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Mr. Thompson passed away on February 20 at Mississippi Baptist Hospital in Jackson.

He was employed with Pearl River Resort & enjoyed playing volleyball & tennis when he was younger. He enjoyed being with his family, fishing, reading, & working on his vehicles prior to his illness.

He was preceded in death by his father, Leroy Frazier, Sr.; sisters, Margaret Todd & Margie Gail Frazier Williams; brothers, Roy Frazier, Tim Fra-
CHOCTAW COMMUNITY NEWS

Mr. Martin passed away on February 24 at University Medical Center in Jackson.

He was employed with Pearl River Resort as a Table Games Dealer then Security Supervisor until health complications. He enjoyed being with family, fishing & playing stickball with Beaver Dam.

He was preceded in death by his parents, John & Zella Tubby Martin; a daughter, Keshia Wallace; & an uncle.

Survivors include his wife, Addie Wallace Martin; daughters, Lavonda Vargas, Cadenza Martin, Latonya Martin, Lydia Martin, & Kristen Wallace; sons, Kendall Wallace, Kendril Wallace & Tyler Wallace; sisters, Delores Martin, Jennifer Martin Bell & Roxanna Martin; brothers, Robert Dean Martin & Kenneth Martin; 31 grandchildren, 1 great-grandchild, an aunt, & a host of relatives & friends.

SHARON ROSE MARTIN

Grave-side service for Sharon Rose Martin, 52, was held on Tuesday, March 2, 2021, at Old Mt. Zion Cemetery in Red Water. Deacon Gary Chickaway & Rev. Carl Wilson officiated. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Mrs. Martin passed away on February 24 at Anderson Regional Medical Center in Meridian.

She was employed as a Data Entry Clerk with the Tribal Scholarship Program. She enjoyed traveling, watching her favorite TV shows, gatherings, & being with family.

She was preceded in death by her parents, Gene Autry Dixon & Susie Sam; sister, Velma Sam; & brother, Jerry Sam.

Survivors include her husband, Glenn Martin, Sr.; special child, Jacob Comby; step-daughters, Carla Dixon, Sheila Martin & Odessa Martin; step-sons, Avery Mingo, Harry Martin & Glenn Martin, Jr.; sister, Eva Sam; brother, Robert D. Sam; nieces, Valerie Sutton, Camryn Vivians, Andrea Sam; nephew, Matthew Sam; & a host of relatives & friends.

FREEMAN FRAZIER, SR.

Grave-side service for Freeman Frazier, Sr., 56, was held on Tuesday, March 2, 2021, at Conehatta Community Cemetery. Pastor Thomas Ben officiated. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Mr. Frazier passed away on February 24 in Neshoba County.

He was a Catholic by faith & enjoyed being with family & friends, fishing, hunting, playing cards, pool, washers, & playing the guitar.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Luke & Freddie Willis Frazier; wife, Sally Ann Jim Frazier; daughters, Ingrid Johnson & Susie Mae Frazier; son, Freeman Frazier, Jr.; stepson, DeAnthony Frazier; sister, Veronica Thomas; & a grand-daughter.

Survivors include his daughter, Crystal Frazier Williamson; son, Rodney Frazier; Kalisha Thomas, whom he raised as his own; sisters, Shirley Shoemake, Tenalyea Russell & Theresa Sockey; brothers, Timothy “OJ” Thomas, Lucas Frazier, Kendell Frazier, James Frazier, & Christopher Stoliby; six grandchildren, two aunts, an uncle, & a host of nieces & nephews.

ROSIE MAE SORRELLS & EVERETT PRICE SORRELLS, JR.

Graveside services for Rosie Mae Chapman Sorrells, 68, & her husband, Everett Price Sorrells, Jr., 81, were held on Thursday, March 4, 2021, at Bogue Homa Community Cemetery. Deacon Rich Hollingsworth officiated. Memory Chapel Funeral Home was in charge of arrangements.

Mrs. Sorrells passed away on February 4 at her residence.

She was a Mississippi Army National Guard Veteran & served 34 years. She was deployed to the age of 58 to serve in Afghanistan in 2010. She returned home in 2011 & retired from the National Guard in 2012. In 1996, she was employed by the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians as an Adult Education Assistant Teacher. She retired after 16 years.

She enjoyed going to church at Immaculate Conception Catholic Church every Sunday with her sisters, Annie Jalalzadeh & Betty Sutton, & having coffee afterwards. She loved her family & enjoyed spending time with her grandson, Shaun, whom she absolutely adored. She was married to Everett Price Sorrells, Jr. for 39 years.

She was preceded in death by her parents, Frank Asa Chapman & Mary McMillan Chapman; sisters, Theresa Chapman Willis, Mary Jane Chapman Vaughn; brother, John Mingo; & two nephews.


Mr. Sorrells passed away on February 24 at Gulfport Memorial Hospital in Gulfport.

He enlisted in the Mississippi Army National Guard after high school & served as an Administrative Support Technician until his retirement in March 1999 after 42 years of service. He was an avid collector of baseball cards, coins, & stamps. He enjoyed watching baseball & football, & collected memorabilia of his favorite team, the New York Yankees. He also loved to spend time with his family, especially his grandsons. He was married to Rosie Chapman Sorrells for 39 years prior to her death.

He is preceded in death by his parents Everett, Sr. & Laura Ruth Davis Sorrells; first wife, Eloise Robertson Sorrells; brothers, Sidney Sorrells, Charles (Chuck) Sorrells & Roy Sorrells; & a nephew.

Survivors include his three children, Everett Cody Sorrells, Mary Elizabeth Sorrells & Franklin Price Sorrells; sisters, Marie Sorrells, Linda Gentry & Sandra Boyles; 2 grandchildren, & a host of nieces & nephews.
BASIC COVID-19 VACCINE INFORMATION

- The COVID-19 Vaccine will help protect you from getting COVID-19.
- There are currently two vaccines that have received Emergency Use Authorization from the Food & Drug Administration, Pfizer & Moderna.
- Two doses of the vaccine are needed to get the most protection.
- The COVID-19 vaccine will NOT give you the COVID-19 virus because none of the vaccines available in the United States use the live virus.
- The COVID-19 vaccine teaches our immune system how to recognize and fight the virus that causes COVID-19.
- In clinical trials the Pfizer COVID vaccine has been 95% effective in preventing individuals from getting the COVID-19 virus when exposed.
- The vaccine is 95% effective; however, there is still a small chance you can get the COVID-19 virus. What the vaccine can do is limit the severity of the virus.

mRNA vaccines are a new type of vaccine to protect against infectious diseases. To trigger an immune response, many vaccines put a weakened or inactivated germ into our bodies. Not a mRNA vaccine. Instead, they teach our cells how to make a protein—or even just a piece of a protein—that triggers an immune response inside our bodies. That immune response, which produces antibodies, is what protects us from getting infected if the real virus enters our bodies.

For more information on the COVID vaccine contact CHC Public Health at 601-389-4118 or 601-389-4109.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q The vaccine came out too fast! How do I know it’s safe when other vaccines take years?
A Through Operation Warp Speed the Federal Government spent nearly $12.4 BILLION on vaccines. Pfizer/BioNTech was paid $1.05 Billion to focus solely on this one vaccine.

Q Is the vaccine really safe and effective?
A In clinical trials the Pfizer vaccine has shown to be 95% effective. If you happen to get the COVID-19 virus the vaccine could help lower the severity of symptoms.

Q I have underlying conditions like heart disease, should I get the vaccine?
A Talk to your doctor first, but the vaccine is recommended for individuals 16 years and older. If you have a severe allergic reaction to any type of medication, you should talk to your doctor before getting the vaccination.

Q Once I am vaccinated, can I go back to normal life?
A Unfortunately, it will be a long time before things get back to normal. Everyone should continue to take all precautionary measures.

MYTH: The COVID-19 vaccine will alter your DNA.
FACT: The two current vaccines by Pfizer and Moderna are both messenger RNA vaccines. Your DNA is not affected at all.

MYTH: If I get the vaccine, I will not get COVID-19.
FACT: You greatly lower your risk of getting the COVID-19 virus; however no vaccine is 100% effective. The Pfizer vaccine is about 95% effective, which is really good.

MYTH: The vaccine has COVID-19 in it, so I will get sick from the vaccine.
FACT: The vaccine does NOT have any part of the COVID-19 virus as an ingredient. You can experience some side effects after taking the vaccine. This is a normal sign that your body is building protection.

MYTH: The COVID-19 vaccine contains a microchip.
FACT: This is a rumor. The current vaccine does not contain a microchip. The vaccine does have lipids nanoparticles that are tiny particles of an oil-like substance that surround and protect the actual vaccine.

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2021
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Questions about the COVID-19 Vaccine?
We are here to help you with information about the COVID-19 vaccine: before, during and after vaccination.

Choctaw Health Center urges all who have serious health conditions to get the COVID-19 vaccination as soon as possible. Serious Health conditions include:

- Respiratory Diseases
- Heart Conditions: coronary artery disease & heart disease
- Cancer
- Obesity
- Kidney Disease
- Diabetes
- Sickle Cell Disease
- Asthma (Moderate to Severe)

BEFORE YOU ARRIVE:
- Make sure you are eligible for care at Choctaw Health Center.
- Talk with your doctor if you are unsure about the vaccine.
- Be sure you are able to return 21 days for the second dose.

DURING APPOINTMENT:
- Bring proof of identification.
- You will be given a COVID-19 Vaccination Record Card.
- Give yourself extra time for a waiting period.

AFTER VACCINATION:
- Must wait a minimum of 15 minutes to monitor for reactions.
- DO NOT lose your record card. It will be needed for next dose.
- Be sure you are able to return 21 days for the second dose.