



## McMillan Assumes Princess Duties

Autumn Diane McMillan has assumed the rights, obligations & commitments of the 2016-2017 Choctaw Indian Princess & will serve as the Tribe's goodwill ambassador until the annual Choctaw Indian Fair in July 2017.

Tribal Chief Phyliss J. Anderson accepted the resignation of Breanna Isaac as reigning Choctaw Indian Princess.

Autumn, of the Tucker Community, is the 18-year-old daughter of Deanna McMillan & Fabien Tubby. She has two brothers, Coby Tré & Dominic, & a sister, Teresa. Her maternal grandparent is Anita McMillan, & paternal grandparents are Gene

& Helen Moore and Austin & Julia Tubby. She has an American Bulldog named Nala.

Autumn is a 2016 graduate of Choctaw Central High School & is currently a freshman at Mississippi State University. Her plans are to major in Communications, with an emphasis in broadcasting.

Her hobbies include beading, playing sports with family & friends, traveling, & reading books.

Autumn was sponsored by the Youth Opportunity Program.

The Princess' favorite Choctaw cultural tradition is beadmaking because she can express her creativity through the artwork she makes.



Chief Anderson, left, with the new 2016-2017 Choctaw Indian Princess Autumn McMillan.

## Tribe Holds Tree Lighting Ceremony

The holiday season kicked off on the Reservation as the Mississippi Band of Choctaw

Indians hosted the Tribal Christmas Tree lighting ceremony on the grounds of the Choctaw

Tribal Office complex in Choctaw on Thursday, Dec. 1.

The evening's entertainment featured a singing troupe from Red Water Elementary School as they performed several Christmas carols for the audience.

Chief Phyliss J. Anderson said the holiday season is a time of celebration and fellowship with family and friends and to show compassion for others.

"It's also a time that we need to reach out to people who are in need. As tribal members it is

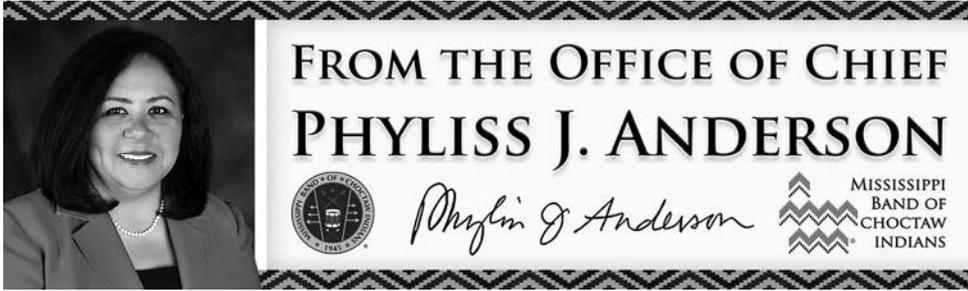
see CEREMONY, pg. 9



LEFT, Several students from Red Water Elementary School provided entertainment for the audience as they sang their favorite Christmas carols.

BELOW, Chief Phyliss J. Anderson & her husband, Ric, officially lit the Tribal Christmas Tree on the grounds of the Choctaw Tribal Office. (Picture inset, Santa Claus makes his appearance at the ceremony.)





Halito! I send you holiday greetings from the Tribal Offices. There is a Christmas song that says 'It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year,' and I hope everyone is filled with the holiday spirit while taking special moments to enjoy time with loved ones.

I always enjoy the music of the season and the fellowship, whether it's playing Secret Santa, watching a game or sharing a meal with family and friends.

The holidays are about a time of reflection, togetherness and praise for the greatest gift we have ever received - Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior - sent to save mankind from our sins. We serve an awesome God!

**CHRISTMAS TREE LIGHTING**

**CEREMONY**

Each year, I have the pleasure of hosting the Annual Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony. This year's event was held on Thursday, December 1, 2016, at the Choctaw Tribal Offices.

It was a beautiful night as we welcomed the holidays on our Choctaw Indian Reservation. I share my sincerest appreciation to the many tribal employees who help put up the beautiful tree, festive lights and decorations to brighten our tribal offices. I know all our children, employees and guests enjoy the efforts of those who decorate.

During the ceremony we enjoyed wonderful Christmas music presented by students from Red Water Elementary School. And, of course,

no Christmas gathering is complete without some cookies and hot cocoa from our very own Pearl River Resort.

Christmas is a time of giving and, on behalf of our Tribe, I was so happy to donate funds to the Choctaw Bible Translation Committee, the CCHS Solar Car Team, the Choctaw Veterans Committee and each of the Community Development Clubs.

We also were surprised and delighted to welcome a special visitor to the Choctaw Indian Reservation all the way from the North Pole - Santa Claus! Again, a great time was had by all and I thank everyone that attended this special holiday celebration.

**2016-2017 CHOCTAW INDIAN PRINCESS**

On Friday, December 2, 2016, I had the pleasure of crowning Autumn Diane McMillan the 2016-2017 Choctaw Indian Princess.

Autumn is from the Tucker community and is the daughter of Deanna McMillan and Fabien Tubby. She has two brothers, Coby Tré and Dominic, and a sister, Teresa.

Her maternal grandparent is Anita McMillan and her paternal grandparents are Gene



Chief Anderson visited Tribal elders on Dec. 6 for fellowship & games of bingo at the Elderly Activity Center. She presented each elder with a fleece blanket embroidered with the tribal seal & her signature.

and Helen Moore and Austin and Julia Tubby.

Autumn is a 2016 graduate of Choctaw Central High School and is currently a freshman at Mississippi State University where she is majoring in Communications with an emphasis in broadcasting.

Autumn was sponsored by the Youth Opportunity Program. I am confident Autumn will do a fantastic job serving as our goodwill ambassador and representing our great Tribe.

**ELDERLY BINGO**

On Tuesday, December 6th, I visited the Tribal Elderly Activity Center and enjoyed fellowship and bingo games with many of our elders.

I enjoy visiting with our elders throughout the year, but I especially love the Holiday bingo event as we spend time to visit and treat our elders with special Christmas gifts.

I want to thank the Elderly Center staff and elders for their hospitality during this visit.

I always appreciate the kind words and encouragement we receive on our visits and I look forward to serving all tribal members. During this cold season, let us all be mindful to pay extra attention and care to our tribal elders.

**TRIBAL GOVERNMENT LUNCHEON**

...continued next page

**CHOCTAW COMMUNITY NEWS**

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

be addressed to:

**COMMUNICATIONS PROGRAM**

**P.O. BOX 6010**

**CHOCTAW, MS 39350**

**TELEPHONE: 601-663-7736 FAX: 601-650-1565**

- Brian C. Willis .....Communications Manager
- Kathie Henry .....Communications Writer
- Taryn Carey .....Communications Writer
- Darron Tubby .....Communications Writer

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

On Thursday, December 22nd, we held the annual Tribal Government Christmas Potluck Luncheon for our tribal government employees at the Pearl River Gymnasium.

As always, the food was delicious, but even better was the fellowship and fun we enjoyed! Our employees work so hard throughout the year to provide important services for our tribal members and this is a time we can acknowledge and celebrate their efforts.

Our program featured games and several live holiday musical performances from Deidre Tubby, Joshua Peoples, Drew Harrison, and the Great Spirit Methodist Church Youth Choir.

We also announced winners of our community-wide Christmas decorating contests and the winner of our Em-

ployee of the Year contest.

I want to thank the all those involved in making our Christmas party another memorable event. It's certainly something we all look forward to each year.

**BOK HOMA CASINO CELEBRATES 6-YEAR ANNIVERSARY**

On Tuesday, December 20th, we celebrated the 6-year anniversary of Bok Homa Casino. Patrons enjoyed a special anniversary cake, hors o'doeuvres and live music throughout the night.

We have enjoyed the successes Bok Homa has brought to our Pearl River Resort and we are very appreciative to our loyal guests and associates for making this property a premier gaming destination in South



Members of the Great Spirit United Methodist Church Children's Choir of the Bogue Chitto Community pose with Chief Anderson & Choctaw Indian Princess Autumn McMillan after their performance at the Tribal Government Christmas Luncheon at the Pearl River Community Gymnasium on Dec. 22.

Central Mississippi.

The casino first opened on December 20, 2010. In addition to the 27,000 square feet of slot machines and quick-serve eatery, the casino features an Events Center and table games which includes

Blackjack, Mississippi Stud, and Three Card Poker.

Again, thank you to the many people involved in making this anniversary event a success.

**CLOSING**

As we reach the end of the year, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to each of you for your kind words of encouragement and support this past year. There have been times I have felt the strength of our tribal members as you prayed for our Tribe and leaders.

I am so encouraged by the progress we made in 2016 and I am very hopeful the New Year will bring our Tribe even more success.

We all face challenges and hardships, but I have no doubt the Lord our Father is guiding our Tribe. Great are his plans for each of us. I pray you find many comforts, peace and happiness in the New Year.

Many Blessings,

*Phyllis J. Anderson*

Phyllis J. Anderson, Tribal Chief



Bok Homa Casino celebrated its six year anniversary on Tuesday, Dec. 20. The event kicked off with the cutting of the anniversary cake as guests enjoyed hors d'oeuvres, live entertainment & received a choice of a free anniversary t-shirt or hat, while supplies lasted.

"We are pleased to be celebrating six years of continued success at Bok Homa Casino," stated Sonny Johnson, Interim President & CEO for Pearl River Resort, "Bok Homa is steadily growing as we continue

to make improvements, introduce new features, & provide our guests with a memorable gaming experience. This celebration also marks our one year anniversary of table games. I truly thank our wonderful guests & dedicated associates for their loyalty to Bok Homa Casino."

For more information on Bok Homa Casino, call 1.866.447.3275 or visit [www.bokhomacasinocom](http://www.bokhomacasinocom).

# Tribe Hosts Christmas Luncheon For Employees



**ABOVE,** It was a standing room crowd inside the Pearl River Community Gymnasium as the Tribe hosted their annual Christmas luncheon for Tribal government employees & guests on Dec. 22.

It was a time for holiday food, fellowship, fun, and appreciation as the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians (MBCI) hosted its annual Tribal Government Christmas Luncheon on Thursday, Dec. 22 at the Pearl River Community Gymnasium in Choctaw.

Tribal Chief Phyliss J. Anderson offered her appreciation to all employees in attendance

and credited them for the success of the Tribe in 2016.

“It’s the hard work that you put in day in and day out, coming to work everyday and making sure we’re able to serve our Tribal members and the needs they have. I want

you to know the work you do is not only for the Tribe, but something the good Lord gives you an opportunity to do.”

“I can honestly say the group of employees we have are just wonderful. You do such great things, which helps me do my job even better. I feel our heart is in the right place when we do our work. It’s very important to me that you, the tribal employees, understand how much I value and appreciate your hard work and I ask that you rededicate your time and commitment in 2017 so that we will continue to prosper in

...see LUNCH, pg. 10



*Pictured from left are Christmas Decoration Contest winners Tomika Bell (1st place), Daniel Lee Tubby (2nd place), Jennifer Thomas (3rd place), Choctaw Indian Princess Autumn McMillan, & Chief Phyliss J. Anderson.*



**ABOVE,** Entertainment was provided by, from left, Drew Harrison, Deidre Tubby & Joshua Peoples; **BELOW,** Members of the Great Spirit United Methodist Church Children’s Choir of the Bogue Chitto Community sang several Christmas carols.



*From left are Princess Autumn McMillan, Bogue Chitto honorable mention Renata Morris (with daughter) & Chief Phyliss J. Anderson*



*From left are Princess Autumn McMillan, Crystal Ridge honorable mention Savannah Guerrero & Chief Phyliss J. Anderson*

# HAPPY HOLIDAYS

FROM THE DEPARTMENTS & PROGRAMS OF  
THE MISSISSIPPI BAND OF CHOCTAW INDIANS



Choctaw Indian Princess Autumn McMillan  
Tribal Chief Phylliss J. Anderson



Tribal Administration



Switchboard



Finance



Mailroom



Human Resources



Janitorial Aides



Offices of the Tribal Council



Recreation



Red Water Facility Building



Children and Family Services



Public Works Department



Youth Opportunity Program



Department of Employment and Training



Adult Education Program



Boys & Girls Club - Pearl River Teen Center



Department of Public Safety



Choctaw Tribal Court System



Choctaw Legal Defense



Choctaw Wildlife and Parks and Choctaw Animal Control



Choctaw Fire Department



Choctaw Transit



Office of Economic Development



Department of Chahta Immi



Division of Early Childhood Education



Choctaw Elderly Activity Center



CHC Lab



Division of Schools



CHC Women's Wellness Center



Department of Natural Resources



CHC Pharmacy



Choctaw Health Center (CHC) Dental Center



CHC Respiratory and Inpatient



CHC Coding



CHC Administration



CHC Health Information Management



CHC Primary Care



CHC Diabetes Center



CHC Vision Center



CHC Behavioral Health



CHC's Ugly Christmas Sweater Contest



CHC Information Technology



CHC Business Office and Managed Care



CHC Billing



CHC Procurement



CHC Physical Therapy



Choctaw Housing Authority

# STARZ Entertain At PAB Meeting

December's Title I Parent Advisory Board (PAB) working lunch was held at the Ayipa Café in Choctaw. Fourteen Board members and 16 guests enjoyed a delicious meal prepared by Nan Hartness and her Culinary Arts students.

The Standing Pine Elementary School "STARZ," under the direction of Melody Starling, presented an extraordinary program. The students, accompanied by Josh Peoples, sang Christmas songs in Choctaw and English.

PAB Chair Ray Willis recognized Fannie Wil-

lis as December's Outstanding Choctaw Educator. She has worked with the Tribal Schools for 27 years. She worked with the Upward Bound program for eight years and will soon celebrate her 20th year at Choctaw Central Middle School.

Fannie attended Conehatta Elementary School and is a graduate of Choctaw Central High School. She furthered her education at East Central Junior College where she studied Intensive Business.

Fannie is married to Travis Willis. They have two sons, Jason (Ken-

dell) and Kevin (Tia). They are blessed with eight grandchildren.

Education committee member Wilma S. McMillan posthumously recognized the late Rita John Steve for her work ethic, kindness, love of the Lord, family and friends. Wilma presented framed pictures of Rita to her husband, Peter, and son, Landon John.

The board will meet again in February 2017. For more information, contact William F. Bell at 601-663-7660 or Dianne Johnston at 601-656-5724.



*Pictured above are members of Standing Pine Elementary School's STARZ singers.*



*Pictured from left are December's Outstanding Choctaw Educator award recipient Fannie Willis, Landon John, Wilma S. McMillan, & Peter Steve.*

## CEREMONY ..... continued from page one

very important that we take care of each other and also those that are less fortunate. We must reach out to families who need us and show them love. That is what Christmas is really about."

"I hope that everyone enjoys the Christmas season and the new year with your family, friends and loved ones. And remember that Jesus is the reason for the season," said Anderson.

Several organizations were honored for their service to Tribal members and received donations from the Tribe.

The Choctaw Bible Translation Committee received a \$20,000 donation to assist with projects as they are

translating the Bible into the Choctaw language for Tribal members.

The Choctaw Central High School Solar Car Team received a \$10,000 donation to assist with expenses for activities and equipment during the school year.

The Choctaw Veterans Committee received a \$10,000 donation to assist with expenses

during the year.

There were also several winners for door prizes. The event culminated with Santa Claus making an appearance as the children had their pictures taken with him in front of the Tribal tree.

Refreshments were provided by Pearl River Resort, compliments of Chief Anderson.



*Members of the CCHS Solar Car Team accepted a \$10,000 donation to assist with equipment & expenses for the upcoming school year.*



*Chief Anderson (far left) presents a \$20,000 donation to members of the Choctaw Bible Translation Committee to assist with projects for the upcoming year.*



*Members of the Choctaw Veterans Committee accepted a \$10,000 donation to assist with expenses for the upcoming year.*

LUNCH ..... continued from page four

the new year.”

Anderson then asked the audience to keep in their thoughts to those families who are coping with the loss of a loved one during this holiday season.

“I ask that you continue to pray for their healing. It’s very important that we reach out to all of our tribal members during this season. It’s also important that we do that in our daily work, but especially during the

holiday season.”

Winners of the 15th Annual Reservation-Wide Christmas Decoration Contest were recognized for their efforts as several participants received cash awards.

Out of 25 registered contestants representing seven communities, Tomika Bell of Bogue Chitto was named the overall winner and received a check for \$600. Daniel Lee Tubby

of Pearl River placed second and received \$500. Jennifer Thomas of Bogue Homa placed third and received \$400.

Contestants named as honorable mentions and recipients of a \$150 check included: Renata Morris, Bogue Chitto; Brenda Vaughn, Bogue Homa; Savannah Guerrero, Crystal Ridge; Lorena Alex, Pearl River; Prentiss Chitto, Red Water; Holly Peters, Standing Pine; and Kristen Lewis, Tucker.

In the last presentation of the event, Choctaw Wildlife & Parks Director Mitzi Reed was announced as the 2016 MBCI Employee of the Year. She was presented a plaque and a check for \$500.

At the conclusion of the luncheon, all in attendance stood and sang a favorite Christmas carol, *Silent Night*, to reflect on the true meaning

and spirit of the Christmas season.

Entertainment was provided by Drew Harrison, Deidre Tubby, Joshua Peoples, and the Great Spirit United Methodist Church

Children’s Choir of the Bogue Chitto Community.

MBCI Chief of Staff Rae Nell Vaughn served as emcee and Rev. Daniel Tubby offered the blessing of the food.



From left are Princess Autumn McMillan, Pearl River honorable mention Lorena Alex & Chief Phyliss J. Anderson



From left is Princess Autumn McMillan, Red Water honorable mention Prentiss Chitto (with children) & Chief Phyliss J. Anderson



From left is Princess Autumn McMillan, Standing Pine honorable mention Holly Peters & Chief Phyliss J. Anderson



Choctaw Wildlife & Parks Director Mitzi Reed (center) was announced as the 2016 MBCI Employee of the Year. Presenting the plaque & \$500 check were Princess Autumn McMillan (left) & Chief Phyliss J. Anderson.

**Prevent Elder Abuse**

**Identify It!**  
**Report It!**  
**Stop It!**

**Warning Signs**

- Fear, withdrawal, depression
- Shame, anxiety, embarrassment
- Unexplained bruises or injuries
- Hesitation to talk openly
- Isolation by caregiver
- Unkempt appearance
- Loss of self-esteem
- Unexplained disappearance of funds or valuable possessions

Recognizing the warning signs is the key to identifying and stopping an occurrence of elder abuse.

For more information on elder abuse, contact  
Family Violence and Victim’s Services  
at 601-650-1774

**REPORT CRIMES ANONYMOUSLY**

**Wetip** Inc.

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(1-855-484-3739)  
or visit [www.wetip.com](http://www.wetip.com)

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- Child Abuse
- Vandalism
- Illegal Drugs
- Bullying
- Assault
- Or any other illegal activity

You can call 24 hours a day & report your concern to us. No one will ask your name, you will remain anonymous. Your tip may lead to a **REWARD, up to \$1,000!**

# IN MEMORIAM

**NANNIE MAE MITCH**

Funeral service for Nannie Mae Mitch, 72, was held on Saturday, December 3, 2016, from the Mt. Zion Indian Baptist Church in Red Water. Rev. Duane Reinhardt & Rev. Carl Wilson officiated.

Burial was in the Old Mt. Zion Cemetery. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Ms. Mitch passed away on Nov. 30 at the Choctaw Residential Center in Choctaw.

She was a member of Mt. Zion Indian Baptist Church & enjoyed spending time with family & friends, yard & house work, & listening to gospel music.

She was preceded in

death by her husband, Cecil Mitch; parents, Lusan & Ike Billy; sisters, Rose Mary Wilson, Lillie Billie & Katie Willis; & brothers, Cephus Billy, Lewis Billy, John Billie, & Larry Billie.

Survivors include her daughter, Penny Mitch; sisters, Ruth Ann Willis, Nancy Sockey & Clarice Billy; brothers, Sampson Billy, Herman Billie & Carson Billy; three grandchildren; & a host of nieces, nephews, relatives, & friends.

**JOEL SHOEMAKE, JR.**

Funeral service for Joel Shoemake, Jr., 30, was held on Friday, December 23, 2016, from the Pearl River Community Center. Rev. Robert

Paul Tubby, Sr. officiated.

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

Mr. Shoemake passed away on Dec. 18 at the University Medical Center in Jackson.

He was a member of Pearl River Baptist Church & enjoyed being with family & friends, playing basketball, softball, washer throw, & texting.

He was preceded in death by his father, Joel Shoemake Sr.; a brother, Kerri Von Eric Ben; grandparents, Chester & Marguerite Ben, Elton Shoemake & Elizabeth Solomon; an uncle & twin nephews.

Survivors include his mother, Kathryn Ben Shoemake; sisters, Joni S. Bell, Kendall Ben & Karede Shoemake; & host of nieces, nephews, relatives, & friends.

in Tucker. Father Bob Goodyear, S.T., officiated.

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

Mr. Ben passed away on Dec. 20 in Choctaw.

He was a retired cafeteria manager with the Choctaw Tribal Schools. He enjoyed being with his family & participating in football, basketball, softball, stickball, & fishing.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Lester Ben & Vina Willis; sisters, Janice Mingo & Daphne Ben; & a nephew.

Survivors include his daughters, Melinda Ben, Bonnie Ben, Kandice Ben, Kendra Anderson, Amelia Ben, & Amber Ben; spouse, DeeSandra Ben; a sister, Senna Willis; brother, Christopher Ben; 18 grandchildren; & a host of nieces, nephews, relatives, & friends.

**VANIDA ISAAC LEWIS**

Funeral service for Vanida Isaac Lewis, 86, was held on Saturday,

December 24, 2016, at Hope Indian Baptist Church in Choctaw.

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

Ms. Lewis passed away on Dec. 21 at the Choctaw Residential Center in Choctaw.

She was a homemaker & enjoyed singing.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Horace Lewis; parents, Hugh Isaac & Celia Farmer Isaac; son, Gary Lee Lewis; sister, Beauty Ann Vaughn Willis; brother, Phillmon Isaac; two grandchildren; & a granddaughter.

Survivors include her daughters, Mavis Steve, Nancey Denson, Sandra Morris, Zula Mae Jim, & Sally Wesley; sons, Larry Lee Lewis, Horace Lewis, Jr., Howard Dewayne Lewis, & Fredrick Lewis; sister, Arnedia Duplessie; brothers, Deacon Williamson Isaac, Rev. Emerson Isaac & Deacon George Isaac; 36 grandchildren, 48 great-grandchildren; four great-great-grandchildren; & a host of relatives & friends.

*Come and Worship with us*



**Macedonia Baptist Church**  
130 Campus Drive  
Conehatta, MS 39057

*Sunday*

10:00 a.m. - Sunday School  
11:00 a.m. - Worship Service  
5:00 p.m. - Evening Service  
1st Sunday Service 4:00 p.m.  
Pastor: Rev. Samuel Dixon

*Wednesday*

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

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

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INDIAN  
Mennonite Church**

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Sunday - 10:00 am

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Philadelphia, MS 39350

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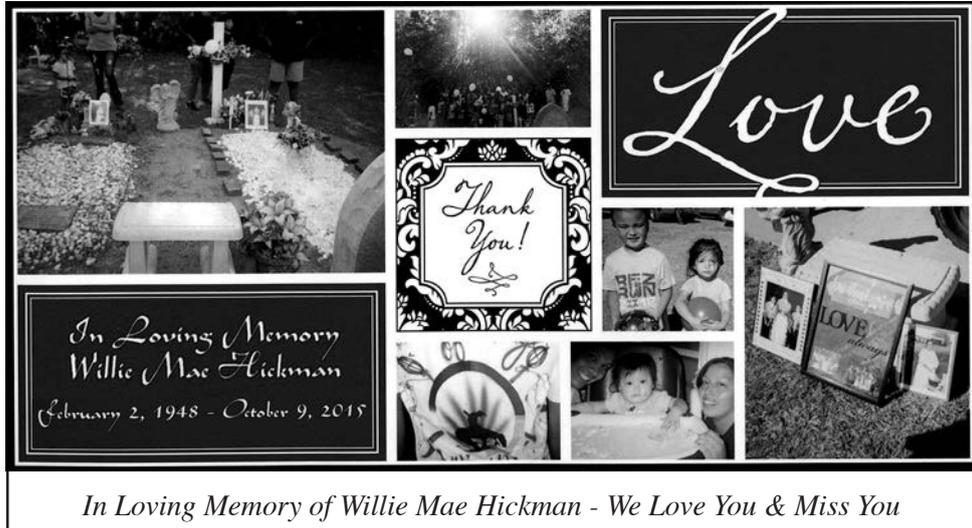
**Spirit of Life Christian Center**

Sunday 10:00 a.m.      Wednesday 6:30 p.m.

278 Black Jack Road  
Choctaw, MS 39350  
601-389-5446  
Pastor Thomas Ben

**MARK BEN**

Funeral service for Mark Ben, 53, was held on Friday, December 23, 2016, from the Holy Rosary Catholic Church



*In Loving Memory*  
*Willie Mae Hickman*  
*February 2, 1948 - October 9, 2015*

*Love*

*Thank You!*

*In Loving Memory of Willie Mae Hickman - We Love You & Miss You*

# HOLIDAY PARADES

The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians was well represented at the annual Philadelphia Christmas Parade on Dec. 12. Several entries placed in their respective categories. Pictured right is the Pearl River Resort float as they placed 3rd in the Commercial Division.



ABOVE, Pearl River Elementary School Princesses & Braves placed first in the Youth Division.



RIGHT, The MBCI Cub Scouts Pack 61, Boy Scouts Troop 61 placed third in the Youth Division.



## CHOCTAW COMMUNITY NEWS

### DECEMBER 2016

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Choctaw Indian Princess Autumn McMillan was part of the Bok of Homa Casino entry in the Laurel Christmas Parade on Dec. 3.



Choctaw Transit, pictured above, transported several children as part of their parade entry. Pictured below is the Tribal 4-H Program's float entry.



Participating in the Carthage Christmas Parade on Dec. 2 included several students representing Standing Pine Elementary School,



Pearl River Resort, Choctaw Fire Department, & Choctaw Indian Princess Autumn McMillan.