Wells Honored with Tenn. Governor’s Art Award

Sally Wells, a revered Tribal elder of Tennessee’s Choctaw community, was recently honored as one of 12 recipients of the 2019 Tennessee Governor’s Arts Award, Tennessee’s highest honor in the arts.

Since 1971, the Governor’s Arts Awards have celebrated those who have made outstanding contributions to the state’s cultural life. An awards ceremony took place in Conservation Hall at the Governor’s Executive Residence on October 23 in Nashville.

see WELLS, pg. 7

Tribe Hosts USET Annual Meeting, 50th Anniversary Celebration

The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians (MBCI) hosted the Annual Meeting of United South and Eastern Tribes, Inc. (USET) & United South and Eastern Tribes Sovereignty Protection Fund (USET SPF) from Monday, November 4 through Thursday, November 7 in Choctaw.

Opening ceremonies included The Passing of the Fire ceremony at Lake Pushmataha. The Passing of the Fire between USET member Tribal Nations who host the meetings has become a USET tradition. Unique to this year’s fire ceremony, all USET member Tribal Nations contributed sage, tobacco, cedar, & other items to the fire as a ceremonial expression of unity. The unity ashes were then placed in 50th Anniversary commemorative jars for attendees as a keepsake from this special occasion.

see USET ACTIVITIES, pg. 8

Tribe Hosts Annual Thanksgiving Feast

Members of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians (MBCI) gathered at the Silver Star Convention Center in Choctaw to give thanks for the many blessings upon the Tribe & celebrate the upcoming holiday season during the 2019 Reservation-Wide Tribal Thanksgiving Feast on Thursday, November 14.

Hundreds were in attendance as Tribal drummers led a procession that included members of the Choctaw Veterans Color Guard posting the U.S. & MBCI flags. Standing Pine Elementary School students Tyris Stokes, Yuriana Crosby & Yazzlynn Alex sang the National Anthem in Choctaw & Tribal Council Bogue Chitto representative Ronnie Henry, Sr. offered the invocation.

Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben spoke of the Tribe recently hosting the annual meeting & 50th anniversary celebration of USET, Inc. (United South & Eastern Tribes) & how the MBCI was one of the four founding member tribes in 1969.

see TRIBAL FEAST, pg. 10
Halito!

The fall season of 2019 brought us lots of reasons for celebration. Our tribe as a whole has stayed very busy the last couple of months supporting our local schools via athletics & literacy campaigns, preparing for events & activities while staying vigilant during various weather conditions.

We started off October with Read Aloud Month. I, along with other tribal members & tribal employees, had the pleasure of reading to many classes across the Choctaw Tribal Schools & a few local schools as well.

Reading is extremely important for children & adults because not only can a child learn 4,000 to 12,000 words per year through reading, but it has been shown to reduce stress, slow the heartbeat & relieve muscle tension; therefore, not only can it be fun, but beneficial to your physical & mental health.

To accomplish this, the goal is to read for at least 20 minutes each day. Thank you to all the classrooms who welcomed guest readers & I hope we all helped instill into our next generation the value & importance of reading.

On October 7, I signed a proclamation declaring October as Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Domestic violence is not a Choctaw tradition, & we all should do everything we can to take a stand against this public health & social issue.

There are on average 20 people a minute who experience domestic violence, which equals to more than 10 million abuse victims annually. Of those 10 million, nearly 1-in-4 women & 1-in-7 men have experienced severe physical violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime.

Domestic violence touches the lives of children, leaving a devastating impact & lifelong repercussions from the emotional & physical trauma. Thank you to our Family Violence & Victims Services & Department of Family & Community Services for all the educational activities they held during the month of October.

We closed out October with various fun events for our kids throughout the Reservation. Tribal Council members & Development Clubs in the various communities hosted fun Halloween activities for their members.

The second annual Halloween Extravaganza was held the Monday before Halloween. It was great to see so many families come out to this event.

Chief Ben joined in the fun as he helped distribute candies during the 2nd annual Halloween Extravaganza on Oct. 28.
Thank you to all those programs & departments who participated in all of the different events held throughout that week. We also had a few programs & business open their doors to trick or treaters on Halloween. It is great to see our community come together & provide safe trick-or-treat activities for our Tribal youth.

On November 4-7, the Tribe hosted the 50th Annual United South & Eastern Tribes (USET) Conference at Pearl River Resort. Over the four days, the Tribe held a fire ceremony, welcome reception, past-presidents luncheon & gala that featured live action exhibits of the four founding Tribes (Cherokee, Choctaw, Miccosukee & Seminole).

With more than 600 people in attendance for the conference, it was a collaborative effort of many to plan, prepare & conduct a conference of this magnitude. Thank you to everyone who was involved in planning & executing all the activities before, during & even after the conference.

It was definitely an event like no other that we have ever had the chance to be a part of. On many different occasions during the week people commented on the outstanding job our Tribe had done & in doing so set the bar high for other Tribes in the future.

On November 7, Pearl River Resort’s IT Department was recognized & awarded in the Tribal Business/Enterprise category for their work on becoming the first Tribally-owned & operated Sportsbook in the U.S. at the 10th Annual Industry Awards held during the 19th Annual TribalNet Conference & Tradeshow. Congratulations to the PRR IT Department for receiving this impressive award in making MBCI an innovator in this industry.

I would like to say a special ‘Thank You’ to all our Veterans & active military. A Veterans Appreciation Luncheon was hosted at the newly renovated Spectrum at Golden Moon. It was so wonderful to see so many veterans & their families join us.

We owe a lot to you & thank you every day for the sacrifices all veterans made, & active military continue to make, on our behalf. Also thank you to the departments/organizations/programs/families that chose to participate in the Veteran’s Day Parade. It was a cold one but a wonderful tribute to those that sacrificed so much for all of us.

If you are in the Womens, Infants & Children (WIC) program at the Choctaw Health

see CHIEF, pg. 4
A check in the amount of $45,600 was recently presented to the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians by Central Electric Power Association (CEPA) through a TVA new construction incentive program for the Pearl River Elementary School Upper Elementary Building. Accepting the check on behalf of the Tribe was Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben. PryorMorrow served as the architectural and engineering firm responsible for the design of the building, as well as the TVA Preferred Partner. Pictured, from left, are Michael Taylor, AIA – President, PryorMorrow PC; Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben; Aaron Akers, CGS – Director of Economic Development, CEPA; and Ashley Weekly, PE – MEP Engineer, PryorMorrow PC.

**High School Sports Highlight**

Our Choctaw youth have proven themselves time & again the wide range of talent that we as a tribe possess. Our Choctaw community is well represented across our local area schools & of course our very own Choctaw Central High School. I encourage everyone to attend the various athletic events to show our youth that we support them in all of their endeavors.

Cross Country teams had their championships the first week of November. Congratulations to all the runners who participated that day. We had quite a few Choctaw runners compete in both the 4A & 5A races, as well as a few in the 3A run.

Sierra Wallace placed third overall out of 148 runners with her time of 21:14.27 in the 5k race. She was awarded a bronze medal in addition to being named an All-State medalist. The Lady Warriors finished 6th overall out of 20 teams.

Alonso Henry placed 8th in the 3A race.

**CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF TRIBAL NATION UNITY 1969-2019**

**Chief .......................................................... from page three**

Center, you have experienced a new method of purchasing this month. The introduction of the eWIC card was rolled out on November 14 & went live on November 15. A job well done to the MBCI WIC Program staff for their hard work to bring the eWIC card into our community!

I hope everyone enjoyed their Thanksgiving. It is a time to spend with family & be thankful for every blessing we have been given. The Friday after Thanksgiving is Native American Heritage Day, which was created to celebrate the contributions Native Americans had made & continue to make to this great country.

November is also a time most schools learn about Native Americans & Thanksgiving. I am glad so many of our Tribal members, programs, our Princess Elisah Jimmie & myself took the opportunity to go into various classrooms in our area this month to educate our fellow Mississippians about the Choctaw People.

We are proud to be Choctaw, & we should take every opportunity available to educate folks about our continued impact in this community.

**November 13, 2019**

Chief Cyrus Ben
Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians
101 Industrial Road
Choctaw, MS 39350

Dear Chief Ben,

Our heartfelt thanks for hosting this year’s Annual Meeting and 50th anniversary celebration at the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians. We can’t imagine a more successful week of inspiring ceremonies, productive meetings, and plans for continued success.

From the beginning, we knew the week would be special. As the Passing of the Fire Ceremony began at Lake Pushmataha, the first rays of the morning sun broke through the clouds, as if to bestow a blessing on the upcoming events and activities.

During the removal of most Choctaw to Indian territory, a Choctaw miko described the tragedy as “a trail of tears and death.” Since then, the Mississippi Band of Choctaw have been one of the most successful Tribal Nations in Indian country, an inspiring example of the strength and determination of a people to overcome extreme hardship.

USIT has grown into one of the most prominent and effective intertribal organizations in Indian country. Working together, we have implemented programs that enhance the lives of Tribal citizens throughout the south and eastern United States.

Please pass along our thanks not only to Tribal Council, but also to all of the kind and hard-working staff who helped make this Annual Meeting one of the most memorable and successful ever.

Sincerely,

Kirk Francis
President

Kentryl A. Carroll
Executive Director
overall out of 171 runners with his time of 18:00.86 & was named an All-State medalist. The Warriors finished 8th overall out of 25 teams.

Cross Country seniors are Anastasia Ben, Justine Isaac, Alonso Henry, Dewayne Cotton & Cody Roach.

CCHS Football, in its second year under head coach Pepper Posey, went 4-6 this season as the Warriors put up some great wins, close games & showed true heart & grit out on the field. This was not a season anyone should be ashamed of, & I know the team will work hard in the off season to come back stronger next year.

Homecoming was held October 4 & included a full day of activities that culminated with the crowning of the 2019 Homecoming Queen. Congratulations to the CCHS Homecoming Court & to Homecoming Queen Shemah Crosby.

Neshoba Central held their Homecoming the same night, & it was my pleasure to go & support Sophomore Maid Sydney Nickey & Junior Maid Onnahili Williams.

Senior Night was held for CCHS football, band, cheer, & cross country on October 25. Twelve football players, seven band members, six cheerleaders, & five cross country runners (names & pictures are on pages 18-19) were celebrated prior to the game & at halftime. Each of these seniors will be missed in their respective sport/activity, but we know they will continue to do great things.

I hope everyone enjoyed the sky divers who carried in the American flag & our Tribal flag & brought the game ball prior to the start of the final home game of the season (pictured right). It was a great addition to the pre-game ceremony, & I want to thank All American Skydiving Team for their amazing jump!

On November 8, Neshoba Central High School held their Senior Night. Choctaw football players Bryce Parkerson & Bryce Thomas; cheerleader Sunshine Clemmons & band member Dinah Jim were recognized. We are proud of your accomplishments at NCHS, & we wish you the best!

The CCMS Warriors football team ended their season against Scott Central. Seventh grade had a 1-4 record & eighth grade 0-5 record.

CCHS slow-pitch softball held their Senior Night on October 1, celebrating three talented student-athletes. All have been players since middle school & have been contributors on & off the field. Congratulations to Melanie Jimmie, Maiya Joe & Tia’Rain Saunders on your senior season. It’s bittersweet as you close out your high school career, but the best is still yet to come.

CCHS softball team ended their season 18-10 in the quarterfinal game against Newton County on October 10. It was a great final season of slow-pitch for our Lady Warriors. I want to congratulate slow-pitch Class I State Champions Lake High School & Class II State Champions Neshoba Central High School. It’s important for us as a Tribe to recognize that all four of these top slow-pitch softball teams include Choctaw student athletes. We are well represented as a Tribe.

Congratulations to Tribal members Tia’Rain Saunders (Senior - CCHS), Tenly Grisham (Sophomore - NCHS) & Hama’ya Fielder (Sophomore - NCHS) for their selection to the Clarion Ledger’s 2019 All-State slow pitch softball team. What a great honor & recognition for these talented players!

Please remember, as we move into our winter season, there are going to be times of much colder temperatures. It is our duty as a whole to check up on our Tribal elders & persons who may need extra assistance.

Let’s take the time to look after each other & make sure everyone has what they need. Make sure that you yourself are prepared for the winter season. We will share some preparedness & safety tips in this issue of the Community News.

Enjoy the upcoming holiday season, especially time spent with family and friends.

Chi Yakokilii Chitto,

Tommy Ben, Tribal Chief
The Choctaw Health Center (CHC) announces recent appointments in the executive-level staff.

Dr. Kerry M. Scott was appointed Interim Chief Medical Officer. He began his role on December 1, 2019.

Dr. Kerry M. Scott, DO, MBA, FACOFP

Dr. Scott has been the Director of Primary Care at the CHC since 2015. Prior to accepting this position, he was in a group practice with Meridian Medical Associates, P.A. in Meridian. During this time, he served as Chief of Family Medicine at Anderson Regional Medical Center in Meridian.

Dr. Scott is also active in medical education & was an Assistant Professor of Medicine & an Adjunct Clinical Professor at William Carey University College of Osteopathic Medicine in Hattiesburg. He worked with the Physical Diagnosis course & served as a mentor to medical students & clinical nurse practitioner students.

Dr. Scott spent time working in rural Mississippi at Lumberton Family Health where he was the physician for the town of Lumberton. He was an integral member of the community & served as a role model & mentor for area youth.

Dr. Scott is passionate about men’s health & spends a great amount of time educating the community about prostate cancer. In 2016, he wrote a paper entitled, “Treatment Options for Erectile Dysfunction After Prostate Cancer Therapy,” for which he was inducted as a Fellow of the American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians earlier this year. He is the fourth physician in Mississippi to receive this prestigious honor.

Dr. Scott received his BS degree from Dillard University in New Orleans, LA. He received his Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine degree from the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine in Philadelphia, PA. He recently received his Master’s in Business Administration from the Haub School of Business at Saint Joseph’s University in Philadelphia, PA.

Dr. Scott is Board Certified in Family Medicine & Osteopathic Manipulative Treatment.

...continued next page

Give Kids A Smile in February

Submitted by the Choctaw Dental Department

The Indian Health Services (IHS) Division of Oral Health is embarking on an unprecedented campaign.

All IHS, tribal & urban dental programs are able to participate in the American Dental Association’s (ADA) 15th Annual Give Kids a Smile® Day to be held on Friday, February 7, 2020.

Give Kids A Smile (GKAS) was launched nationally by the ADA in 2003 & has grown over its 15-year history. For the first time, the dental programs of all American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities will partner with the ADA for this outstanding event that improves the lives & health of all of our communities’ children.

Our goals in participating on a nationwide scale are as follows:
1. Change the public perception of dental care that is provided in our IHS/Tribal dental care system.
2. Help in recruitment of dentists & other oral health professionals in IHS & tribal dental programs.
3. Publicize the successes of IHS, such as the decreases in cavities in 1-5 & 6-9 year-old AI/AN children.
4. Improve access to dental care & preventive services for AI/AN children.

...continued next page
**Mary Teresa (Terri) Smith**

Mary Teresa (Terri) Smith is the new Women’s Wellness Center Coordinator. She has been a Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP) for over 21 years & a Registered Nurse for over 34 years.

She graduated from the Mississippi University for Women in 1998 with a Master of Science Degree in Nursing & FNP Certification. Her previous education included a Bachelor of Science Degree in Nursing from the University of Southern Mississippi in 1987 & an Associate Degree in Nursing from Meridian Junior (now Community) College in 1985.

Smith has been certified by both the American Nurses Credentialing Center & the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners since 1998. Having retired from the State of Mississippi on June 1, 2018, she went to work the same day for East Central Health Network, a rural health clinic & a residency program for family practice physicians. A clinic merger led to the elimination of her position & ultimately to her employment at CHC, which she reported has been a longtime goal for her.

Smith’s professional experience includes teaching nursing at Meridian Community College, working in the Medical Clinic of East Mississippi State Hospital, & working with the Infectious Disease Specialist at Anderson Physician Alliance. Her favorite position prior to CHC was her first FNP job—Women’s Health provider at Greater Meridian Health Clinic.

Smith & her husband, Tommy, have been married for over 33 years with three grown children. They live in Enterprise where she served on the Town Board for three terms. They are members of Enterprise Baptist Church where Tommy serves as a deacon & they both sing in the choir.

Chocotaw Health Center is delighted to have Smith accept this position.

*Continued from page one*

**Wells**

“Tennessee’s artistic heritage & culture is some of the richest in the nation. These 12 outstanding recipients are true leaders in the arts & culture in our state, & they help make Tennessee the special state it is,” Governor Bill Lee said. “(First Lady) Maria & I congratulate them, & we are so glad they call Tennessee home.”

The recipients symbolize the tremendous variety of the arts & culture of Tennessee. The Governor’s Arts Awards are presented in three categories — FolkLife Heritage, Arts Leadership & Distinguished Artist.

Wells, a member of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians & resident of Smyrna, Tenn., received the FolkLife Heritage Award. She is a bead worker, dressmaker, traditional cook, & speaker of the Choctaw language. Her life & work represent a direct link to a deep & rich Native American cultural heritage.

Janice Birchfield of Roan Mountain, Hattie Marshall-Duncan of Jackson, & Sue Williams of Morrison were also recipients of the FolkLife Heritage Award.

Other Governor’s Arts Awards recipients include:

- **Arts Leadership Award - Rich Boyd of Nashville, Linda Caldwell of Etowah, Ashley Capps of Knoxville, & the Country Music Hall of Fame & Museum in Nashville;**
- **Distinguished Artist Award - Charlie Daniel of Powell, Joanna Higgs Ross of Nashville, Brenda Lee of Nashville, & Richard Penniman (Little Richard) of Nashville.**

Raised on the Choctaw Reservation, Wells spent her childhood in the Bogue Chitto community near Philadelphia, Miss. As one of eight children, she attended the local Indian school system.

Her family then joined a small migration of Mississippi Choctaw seeking agricultural opportunities in West Tennessee. The new Tennessee Choctaw community kept close ties to the Mississippi reservation.

Wells attended the public schools of Lauderdale County, as her family continued to speak the Choctaw language & pass along their culture. At family gatherings, she helped prepare hominy & other Choctaw foods, frequently cooking over an open fire in the traditional manner.

Wells credits her mother for teaching her how to create traditional Choctaw clothing & beadwork. She continues to create art & promote & preserve Choctaw culture.

Wells spent much of her career working for the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Indian Health Service. She is also a founder & board member of the Native American Indian Association, a volunteer role she has held for 37 years.

She serves as Chair of the Arts & Crafts Demonstration Village at the Tennessee Indian Education Pow Wow, Tennessee’s largest Native American cultural event, held annually at Long Hunter State Park in Nashville. She ensures all vendors & demonstrators are Native artists practicing authentic art forms.

In 2015, Wells was one of the first master artists chosen to teach in the Tennessee Arts Commission’s Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Program, an initiative created to support the state’s finest tradition bearers as they preserve rare & endangered art forms.

Her apprentice was her granddaughter, Madi Dean, to whom she taught Choctaw beadwork using seed & bugle beads, as well as making traditional Choctaw collar necklaces, earrings, bracelets, & hanging necklaces that go with traditional clothing worn on special occasions.

“This is our life, making jewelry & clothing for our culture, & I pass it on down, what skill I have, in the community & to the children & grandchildren, so they would continue it,” said Wells.

In 2019, Wells was chosen as an artist in residence at the Creative Discovery Museum in Chattanooga, where she provided hands-on demonstrations to museum guests. Her work has previously been displayed at the Tennessee Arts Commission gallery.

“Sally’s skill is undeniable. She possesses an innate drive to make authentic beadwork reflective of her Choctaw heritage,” said Liza Blair, Creative Discovery Museum folklorist.

“She is the kind of artist who understands the need to share ideas & techniques, be that with students during a classroom demonstration, participants attending the Native American Indian Association festival, or members of the community.”
The Board of Directors Meeting began with a Grand Entry led by the Board of Directors & included a presentation of Tribal Nation flags. The Board & other Tribal representatives were dressed in traditional regalia for this event. Videos, pictures & social media provided further opportunity for Tribal Nations to commemorate the history of USET & share who they are with the world.

On Monday night, all attendees gathered for a welcome reception hosted by the MBCI. USET honored several important influences during celebrations throughout the week. The four founding Tribal Nations - hosts Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida, & Seminole Tribe of Florida - received special recognition throughout the events.

The Earl J. Barbry, Sr. Lifetime Achievement Award, USET’s highest honor, were awarded to USET’s first president, Joe Dan Osceola (Seminole Tribe of Florida) & Robert Glenn Thrower, Jr. (Poarch Band of Creek Indians).

On behalf of the late Chris Thompson (Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe), Chris’ family accepted the Chris Thompson Economic Professional Excellence Award.

In the spirit of acknowledging 50 years of advocacy & collaborations, USET honored many organizations throughout Indian country for their partnership & teamwork throughout the years. USET also recognized their relationship with others for their commitment to justice for USET member Tribal Nations & all of Indian country.

Hobbs Straus Dean & Walker received special recognition as they submitted USET’s incorporation paperwork back in 1969.

During the week, Tribal leaders discussed important topics, such as protecting Tribal Nation homelands, building sustainable Tribal Nation economies, constitutionality threats & challenges, & protecting communities through the restoration of Tribal jurisdiction.

During the President’s Panel, past USET Presidents discussed their experiences & prospects for the next 50 years for the organization & for Indian Country.

The USET/USET SPF Board met through Thursday, Nov. 5, with various events & special experiences for attendees & participants.

Highlights included the 50th Anniversary Gala on Tuesday evening, Nov. 5, & a Choctaw youth stickball exhibition on Wednesday afternoon, Nov. 6. Also included were tours of the lands of the MBCI, their facilities, & communal offerings that have experienced tremendous growth as a result of their strong leadership.

**USET Welcomes Three New Tribal Nation Members**

Three Tribal Nations were welcomed as new members of the Annual Meeting of USET & USET SPF. The Tribal Nations are the Rappahannock Tribe, the Chickahominy Indian Tribe, & the Chickahominy Indian Tribe-Eastern Division.

Working together with USET staff, these Tribal Nations will further support the well-being of their Tribal citizens through health, environmental, & economic development programs. USET membership now includes 30 Tribal Nations in the south & eastern U.S.

Once the USET/USET SPF Board approved of the additions, the new Tribal Leaders were seated at the table with current member leadership.

**USET/USET SPF Secretary Lynn Malerba, Lifetime Chief of the Mohegan Tribe of Connecticut, commented, “We are so pleased to welcome three new members to our USET family. We believe they will enhance our collective efforts by bringing their own unique experiences, culture, & history to the conversation & our advocacy efforts.”**

The mission of the Rappahannocks continue to make in Virginia & the nation.

The Chickahominy Indian Tribe are an Algonquin people whose lands once stretched from the southeastern coastal plain to near the Arctic Circle. Although sometimes referred to as Powhatan, the Chickahominy were independent people, never under the control of Chief Powhatan.

The Chickahominy Indian Tribe-Eastern Division shares an early history with the Chickahominy Indian Tribe. Then in 1921, they organized as the Chickahominy Indians Eastern Division.

The three Tribal Nations were federally recognized on January 29, 2018, through the Thomasina E. Jordan Indian Tribes of Virginia Federal Recognition Act.

At the Annual Meeting, Tribal leaders discussed important topics such as protecting Tribal Nation homelands, constitutionality threats & challenges, reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act, & protecting sovereign immunity in Indian Country.

Tribal leaders & other attendees celebrated 50 years of USET, which was founded on May 27, 1969.

---

*Choctaw youth played a Stickball exhibition game for USET attendees & guests at Warrior Stadium on the campus of Choctaw Central High School.*
Tribe becomes Rural Certified Community by TVA

The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians (MBCI) has been named a Rural Certified Community by the Tennessee Valley Authority Economic Development (TVAED) program following a rigorous review of the tribe’s business development practice.

The Tribe’s economic development program is the first in Mississippi to be certified under the TVA program.

“Achieving this certification is a great accomplishment for our economic development team at Mississippi Choctaw,” said Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben.

“This was a tough competition that required us to demonstrate the highest professional standards with our economic development efforts. As the leader of the Mississippi Choctaws, I will continue to work hard & compete aggressively to recruit new economic development projects.”

The Rural Certified Communities Program provides third party evaluation & feedback of organizational structure operation & strategic planning efforts to recognize rural economic development organizations who are prepared to compete for job creation & investment.

The MBCI was selected to participate in the program following an initial review by Strategic Development Group, the independent third party consulting firm engaged by TVAED for management of the program.

TVAED serves the seven states that make up the TVA service area—almost all of Tennessee & parts of Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, Virginia, & Kentucky.

“TVA was created to help improve the quality of life in our region, particularly in rural areas & we are proud to further that mission by supporting the Rural Certified program,” said Heidi Smith, TVA General Manager, Global Business.

“Communities who are able to differentiate themselves & understand their unique assets will be better prepared for economic success. We are proud to partner with the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians to help further growth in the area.”

Through participation, the Tribe received direct feedback of organizational planning from the site selection perspective, including but not limited to:

• SPOT Analysis (Strengths, Problems, Opportunities, Threats);
• Strategic Plan;
• Program of Work;
• Marketing Plan;
• Annual Budget;
• RFI Package;
• Product & Organizational Process; and
• Workforce Readiness.

TVA’s Rural Certified Communities Program was established to ensure rural economic development organizations across the region are prepared & able to proactively:

• Retain existing jobs & investment,
• Recruit new jobs & investment,
• Enhance community livability assets, and
• Foster business & community support for economic development.

“We’re very pleased with the designation and the recognition,” said John Hendrix, director of economic development for the Tribe. “We work daily to insure the self-sufficiency of the Tribe by building an economic environment that is conducive to business.”

As one of the country’s original first nations, the MBCI is the only federally recognized American Indian tribe living within the State of Mississippi. With over 11,000 members, Choctaw lands cover over 35,000 acres in 10 counties. Providing permanent, full-time jobs for over 5,000 Tribal-member and non-Indian employees, the Tribe is a major contributor to the state’s economy.

Thanksgiving Feast Held in Henning, TN

The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians & Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben hosted a Community-Wide Thanksgiving Feast in the Henning, TN community on Saturday, November 16, 2019. Community residents gathered at the Henning Multi-Purpose Building for a day of fellowship & food. A special presentation was made during the program as a new Kubota tractor was unveiled to the community members. Also in attendance were reigning Choctaw Indian Princess Eliah Jimmie, Tribal Council Representatives Vice-Chief Dorothy Wilson & Wilma Simpson-McMillan (Tucker), Ronnie Henry, Sr. & Roderick Bell (Bogue Chitto-Henning), & Timothy Thomas, Sr. (Conehatta).
“That organization has grown from four tribes to where we stand today at 30 tribes. It’s the same significance of our Tribe here as we continue to grow & it’s great to see our people come & gather in one room to have a great time as we go into this holiday season. As a Tribe, we’re very blessed,” said Ben.

As we live in an ever-changing world, Ben said we should reflect on the blessings that we have individually & as a Tribe.

“There are many communities that don’t have a tight-knit relationship, but I’m very thankful as a Tribe we do. We support each other in so many ways, we are family. We are one & we ought to be very thankful.”

Ben announced that he & members of the Tribal Council made an additional $10 million available to the government & enterprise budgets for Fiscal Year 2020. In addition, Tribal government employees received a 3-percent & 5-percent cost of living increase to supplement their income.

“I thank the working people of the community for the work that you give, day in & day out. I applaud you because without each & everybody’s effort, we would not have the operation we have today.”

Growing up in the Pearl River Community, Ben acknowledged that guidance from individuals & the support of Tribal leadership has affected not only his life, but the lives of Tribal members. Now he wants the opportunity to give back.

“You never realize where you’re going to make an impact. And to those of you if I never...continued next page
Powtawche Valerino: Supporting NASA’s Space Launch System Program

The following interview was posted on NASA.gov in observance of Native American Heritage Month.

TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF. WHAT IS YOUR BACKGROUND/TRIBAL AFFILIATION?

EDUCATION?

Halito (hello in Choctaw). My name is Powtawche Valerino, & I am a guidance engineer who works for Aero- dyne Industries at the NASA-Marshall Space Flight Center. In particular, I support NASA’s Space Launch System program on the Engineering & Science Ser-

services & Skills Augmentation contract.

I obtained an undergraduate degree in mechanical engineering from Stanford University, & a masters & doctoral degree in mechanical engineering with a specialty in aero-astronautics from Rice University. I am half African-American & half Native-American (Mississippi Choctaw), & was born in New Or- leans, LA.

HOW HAS THIS SHAPED YOU PERSONALLY & PROFESSIONALLY?

I spent my formative years on the Choctaw Indian Reservation in Philadelphia, MS, & in Missoula, MT, where I loved playing outdoors, watching farm animals, & observing everything around me. I believe liv- ing in these settings mo- tivated me to explore & respect nature.

I enjoyed reading the stories behind constel- lations that filled the sky & once dreamed about becoming an astronomer. Even now, I still like to study how var- ious indigenous tribes utilized & interpreted the placement of stars for navigation & season- al activities.

I completed elementary, middle, & high school in New Orleans, & was blessed by God. I pray with a great amount of talent we have in our community & our Tribe. These group of kids go & do for others, whether it’s community in- volvement or just giving a hand, they do it in so many ways,” said Ben.

Chief Ben, along with Choctaw Indian Princess Elisah Jimmie & World Series Stickball Commissioner Thom- as Ben, presented ban- ners to WSS champions crowned during the 70th Annual Choctaw Indian Fair in July 2019.

Team members & coaches in attendance accepting the banners included: Beaver Dam, Pushmataha Division (ages 10-13); Pearl Riv- er, Tulli Okchi Ishko Division (ages 14-17); Koni Hata, Men’s 35+ Division; Koni Hata Ohoyo, Women’s Divi- sion; & Bok Cito, Men’s Division.

2019 WSS Men’s Champion - Bok Cito
Tribe Hosts Veterans Day Parade

The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians (MBCI) honored veterans of our proud nation’s military and those who are currently serving on active duty during the 17th Annual MBCI Veterans Day Parade on Friday, November 8 in Choctaw.

The parade route began at the Multi-Sports Complex parking lot, traveling down Back Jack Road and concluding at the Choctaw Veterans Memorial, located on the southside parking lot of the Geyser Falls Water Theme Park.

Various organizations offered appreciation to veterans as this year’s theme was, “You Are My Superhero.” Parade participants were encouraged to dress as their favorite super hero in honor of a true super hero - a Veteran.

Reigning Choctaw Indian Princess Elisah Jimmie served as emcee of the post-parade program and award ceremony.

“Today we recognize those who have protected and continue to protect our way of life. All of our veterans have protected our democracy, our freedom, our way of life. Today we honor and thank them and tomorrow we must continue to honor them,” said Jimmie.

“Without our veterans, we wouldn’t be where we are today. Without them, we wouldn’t be able to reach where we could be tomorrow.”

Members of the Choctaw Veterans Color Guard posted the flags of the U.S. and MBCI. Nana Frazier performed the National Anthem in Choctaw and Pastor Thomas Ben offered the invocation.

Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben, who along with the Choctaw Veterans Committee hosted the procession along Black Jack Road in the Pearl River Community.

NASA ............................................................. continued from page eleven

I am humbled to be working in space industry. I appreciate that NASA encourages outreach because I enjoy sharing these moments with students.

YOUR THOUGHTS ON STEM VERSUS STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math) EDUCATION?

While I was in 6th grade, my elementary school organized a school-wide assembly where musicians showcased their instruments to all the students. It was my first time seeing & hearing so many brass, wind, & string instruments up close.

After listening to a musician perform rich low tones so confidently on the cello, I imagined myself playing the cello too. As a result, I started

...continued next page
first Military Service Appreciation Luncheon earlier in the day at the Spectrum at the Golden Moon Hotel and Casino, said it was great to see and honor many Tribal veterans and their families that gathered. He also told the audience we need to pray and support those that are on active duty as freedom is not free.

“One of the honors I had was walking through Arlington Cemetery, walking upon that hill and watching the guards at the Tomb of the Unknown Solder, knowing there were men and women who ultimately sacrificed for us,” said Ben.

“We are thankful that most came home and are with us today. They may have sacrificed time away from family and friends, but they also gave their time to serve each and everyone of you. The honorary moments that are being given, this is for the men and women that serve in the military of the United States of America.”

Mississippi Army National Guard Major Reginald Brownlee of the 298th Combat Support Sustainment Battalion served as guest speaker as he recognized all those that are a part of a great brotherhood and sisterhood known as the U.S. Military.

“To our veterans and active duty service members, it is your service and sacrifice that has kept our country safe and free. No matter which branch you served in or how many years you served, raising your hand and committing yourself to service in the armed forces was and is a brave, selfless act,” said Brownlee.

All veterans have protected our democracy and our way of life as Brownlee said we must honor them everyday and in every way possible.

“The best way to honor our veterans is to take an active part in maintaining freedom in America. We must teach future generations what it means to be an American and respect all Americans. We must volunteer in our communities, take care of our veterans and their families, vote in elections, and continue to make America the very best that it can be.”

This year’s parade grand marshals, chosen by the Choctaw Veterans Committee, were Cubert Bell, Sr. of Hennes-ning, TN (Marines) and the family of the late Sgt. LeeAnn Simpson-Cubert Bell, Sr. (pictured center). Pictured right, guest speaker Maj. Reginald Brownlee was presented a Choctaw basket as a token of his appreciation.

Chief Ben & Choctaw Indian Princess Elisah Jimmie presented the Choctaw Warrior’s Eagle Feather award to parade grand marshals Wilma Simpson-McMillan & James McMillan (pictured left) on behalf of the late Sgt. LeeAnn Simpson & Cubert Bell, Sr. (pictured center). Pictured right, guest speaker Maj. Reginald Brownlee was presented a Choctaw basket as a token of his appreciation.

see PARADE, pg. 14

Cherokee National Tribal Museum

To take the cello lessons that was offered at our school.

Playing the cello in school & community orchestras has allowed me to travel or perform with many people from different backgrounds. For this reason, I am a strong advocate for the education of science, technology, math & the arts in school.

If having access to instruments impacts other students as it did me, kids would have more opportunities to engage with a broader group of people & to gain greater understanding of the world.

Also, art can be used to solve problems or convey ideas, especially in science & engineering. It is very common to meet engineers & scientists who happen to be accomplished musicians & artists as well.

Similarly, my Choctaw heritage has always incorporated art & creativity for tools used in daily activities. For example, the combination of function, art, & use of natural resources are what make hand-woven Choctaw baskets so beautiful & ingenious.

Choctaw baskets are made of swamp or river cane reeds. They can be woven tight enough to be used as corn or flour sifters, & even tighter to hold water.

Several of my relatives are artists or have hobbies in the creative arts (e.g. beadwork, visual art, & music), & I learned to appreciate the creative process by observing them. I discovered that patience & practice are very important in developing a particular skill, so I applied that to my studies in school, as well as my hobby as a cellist.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO YOUNG NATIVE AMERICANS SEEKING A CAREER IN A STEM FIELD?

If you live on a reservation or in a rural setting, finding resources to help you explore the STEM fields can be difficult. In addition, staying focused in STEM subjects can be challenging if you don’t have access to family or friends that can assist you with your goals. This is why it is imperative that you seek help from a larger community.

Reach out to teachers & school counselors who can connect you to science & engineering camps. Network with professional science & engineering organizations like AISES, SACCNAS, AIAA, & ASME, & attend their meetings or conferences. Talk to professionals about their work & what they did to get there. Try to find mentors to connect with.

Get a solid foundation in math & physics because these are the building blocks for any field in engineering. Don’t be afraid if these subjects are hard in the beginning. Ask questions in your classes, & don’t be afraid to get help with understanding concepts.

Try to apply for an internship to gain insight on what a particular profession entails. Lastly, don’t give up!

Editor: Yvette Smith
Chief Ben awarded Bell and Simpson’s parents, Wilma Simpson-McMillan and James McMillan, the Choctaw Warrior’s Eagle Feather award which signifies courage, strength and sacrifice for their service to their respective military branch.

Maj. Brownlee was presented an authentic Choctaw basket by Chief Ben as a token of appreciation for his remarks given at the event.

The Choctaw Veterans Committee sponsored the Veterans Day Parade Poster Contest, which was open to Choctaw Tribal Schools students in grades 7-12. The winner was Choctaw Central High School senior Kendra Allen of the Tucker Community. She was the recipient of a $100 cash award.

Winners of the parade categories included the Choctaw Fire Department (float), Pearl River Resort (vehicle) and Choctaw Central High School’s Visual Arts students (walking).

The MBCI Protective Services Unit conducted a 21-gun salute, followed by the playing of Taps to conclude the ceremony.

Choctaw veterans in attendance received a commemorative T-shirt compliments of the Choctaw Veterans Committee, Chief Ben & the Tribal Administration.
DOECE News

October was a busy month for the Department of Early Childhood Education (DOECE) program as our children participated in several activities!

On October 18, the DOECE hosted its annual Green Corn Festival. This year, the festival was hosted by Pearl River Head Start & Pearl River Day Care & was held at the Pearl River Amphitheater.

The children did wonderfully as they performed traditional Choctaw social dances & dressed in their Choctaw clothing & beadwork. The Elderly Nutrition Program also danced & we always welcome them to participate with us. DOECE provided a traditional meal for all those in attendance after the dancing.

Many thanks to all volunteers & workers who helped make this year’s Green Corn Festival a success! Special thanks to Chief Cyrus Ben for his remarks & to Choctaw Indian Princess Elisah Jimmie for serving as emcee. A big THANK YOU to everyone who helped with the food, from the cooks to the fire keepers & servers. Yakoki!

Other activities our children participated in included the Harvest Fest, sponsored by Agriculture & Rural Development, & Healthy Families Fest, sponsored by Family & Community Services.

We have a lot of fun at Early Childhood & we want to provide services to as many children as we can. We still have room for children at Red Water Head Start (601-298-9282), Bogue Chitto Head Start (601-656-7224), & Tucker Head Start (601-389-2053). Please feel free to contact these centers for more information & fill out an application.

Early Childhood is a full-day, full-year program & we provide comprehensive services to our children. We do follow income guidelines; however, children with disabilities, homeless children, & foster children do receive priority for enrollment.

Transportation is provided to & from school for children in Head Start. We encourage anyone with a child 3 years or older to enroll in our program!
BCES Chief’s List Students
Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben recently congratulated students from Bogue Chitto Elementary School who were named to the Chief’s List (all A’s) for the 1st 9-weeks. Included on the list were:
(1st grade) Raylynn Amos, Omri Henry, Kyler Hickman, Envy Isaac, Tierra Isaac, Clayson Rush; (2nd grade) Sadie Farve, Reshawn Lewis; (3rd grade) Liyah Baca; (8th grade) Chesney Amos, Shaleah Amos, Amilia Sebastian.

Know Your Rights Workshop Held
The Mississippi Center For Legal Services Corporation & Choctaw Legal Defense hosted a free workshop, Know Your Rights - The People’s Law School Choctaw Community Law Day Workshop, on November 13 at the Golden Moon VIP Room in Choctaw. Attendees were presented information regarding issues such as the Violence Against Women Act, Victims of Crime Act, Tribal Law and Order Act, wills (estate) & deeds, SSI & disability rights, elderly scams, substance abuse awareness, debt & bankruptcy, & financial literacy.

PREVENT ELDERS ABUSE

Warning Signs
- Fear, withdrawal, depression
- Shame, anxiety, embarrassment
- Unexplained bruises or injuries
- Fear to talk openly
- Isolation by care giver
- Inadequate food, clothing, medication
- Lack of funds
- Elder’s bills not paid
- Dishonest
- Poor hygiene
- Confined to bed
- Home in dilapidated condition
- Loss of self esteem
- Disappearance of valuables

Report or Refer
Call 911 if there is an emergency
Call to refer Elder Abuse cases to any of these agencies
- Family Violence & Victims Services 800-855-1778
- Office of the Attorney General 801-487-4200
- Choctaw Police Department 801-487-7511

Consider asking the Elder:
- Is anyone hurting or scaring you? Are you afraid?
- Who pays your bill? Do you have food and your medicine?
- Read these questions privately where you will not be overheard by the alleged abuser.

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

For more information on elder abuse please contact Family Violence and Victims Services at 801-487-1774. Referrals to the Family Violence Program are kept anonymous.

Identify It! ▲ Report It! ▲ Stop It!
Runners Compete at Cross Country Championships

Tribal member athletes recently participated in the 2019 MHSAA State Cross Country Championships at Choctaw Trails in Clinton.

On November 4, Neshoba Central High School competed in the Class 5A championships.

In the girls championship, 8th grader Katelin Williams (#1373) placed 29th overall out of 122 runners with her time of 24:04:06 in the 5K race. The Lady Rockets finished 10th overall out of 17 teams.

Saltillo High School claimed the 5A girls championship.

In the boys championship, sophomore Thomas Saunders (#1379) placed 28th overall out of 129 runners with his time of 19:31:0. Freshman Logan Lyons (#1377) placed 75th with his time of 22:52:6 & freshman Omar Williams (#1380) placed 93rd with a time of 23:51:6. The Rockets placed 9th overall out of 18 teams.

Brookhaven High School won the 5A boys championship.

On November 6, Choctaw Central High School, Leake Central High School & Newton County High School competed in the Class 4A championships.

In the girls championship, Choctaw Central High School junior Sierra Wallace (#62) placed 3rd overall out of 148 runners with her time of 21:14:27 in the 5k race. She was awarded a bronze medal in addition to being named an All-State medalist.


The Lady Warriors finished 6th overall out of 20 teams. Newton County finished 13th.

Corinth High School won the 4A girls championship.

In the boys championship, Choctaw Central senior Alonso Henry (#65) placed 8th overall out of 171 runners with his time of 18:00:86 & was named an All-State medalist.


Corinth High School won the 4A boys championship.

Pictured from left are All-State Medalists Sierra Wallace & Alonso Henry.
CCHS Hosts Senior Night

Senior Night was celebrated on Friday, October 25 at Choc- taw Central High School for members of the Warriors football team, band, cheerleaders, & cross country teams.

During pre-game ceremonies, football players honored by Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben and members of their families included Jaden Alex, Kashden Bell, Jayson Briscoe, Gerald Isom, Deontrae Joe, Azalius Lewis, Colin Martin, Miles Steve, Lonzo Thomas, Sherente Tubby, Graviel Velasco, & Manning Willis.

Members of the All American Skydiving Team made a surprise appearance as they carried the game ball into the stadium from above.

During halftime, band members honored included Bryce Ketcher, Michael Wilson, Malatah Henry, Mercedes Peters, Martina Willis, Kaliyah Tubby, & Hunter Orduno.

Cheerleaders honored included Jaida Bell, Melanian Jimmie, Rayven McMillian, Tia’Rain Saunders, Kelsey Tangle, & Kaliyah Tubby.

Cross country members included Anastasia Ben, Justine Isaac, Dewayne Cotton, Alonso Henry, & Cody Roach.
Lady Warriors Sign Letters of Intent
Choctaw Central High School Lady Warrior Softball seniors recently signed letters of intent to continue their collegiate athletic careers at their respective schools. Signing ceremonies were held at the CCHS Softball Complex as family members, teammates, coaching staff, school officials, & friends were in attendance. **LEFT**, On Friday, November 1, Tia’Rain Saunders signed with the Jones College Bobcats softball program. **RIGHT**, On Friday, November 8, Maiya Joe signed with the Meridian Community College Eagles softball program.

Neshoba Central Seniors Honored
Senior members of the Neshoba Central Rockets football team, cheer & band program were honored during Senior Night ceremonies on Friday, November 8 at the NCHS Football Stadium. Rocket Seniors honored were Bryce Parkerson, Bryce Thomas, Sunshine Clemmons, & Dinah Jim.

Choctaw Central Softball Seniors Honored
Senior members of the Choctaw Central Lady Warriors slow-pitch softball team & press box announcers were honored during Senior Night ceremonies on Tuesday, October 1 at the CCHS Softball Complex. Lady Warriors honored were Tia’Rain Saunders, Maiya Joe & Melanian Jimmie. Announcers were Alonzo Henry & Bryce Ketcher.
Roach a Medalist at World Martial Arts Games


This year’s Games featured over 1,000 competitors representing 20 countries in division for youth & adult, under belts & Black Belts.

Roach, a 6th Kyu Blue Belt, tried out for the USMAT & Mississippi Coach Thaddeus E. Davis on March 16, 2019. He endured close to six hours of training to show he was capable of competing on the international level.

His physical & mental fortitude was tested in Basics Drilling, Sparring, Kata, & Grappling. Even though he has been training in martial arts briefly, Roach showed Coach Davis & the team captains he had what it takes to be a future world champion.

After his acceptance onto the team, Roach was on strict training regimen as he was required to hit a certain weight & maintain it for his fighting division. He was required to practice his Kata diligently to get it as close to perfect as possible & maintain a strict diet.

His formal training leading up to the World Games included Shotokan Karate on Mondays & Fridays, Grappling on Mondays & Fridays after Shotokan class with open mats on Wednesdays.

Classes were 90 minutes in duration, each session for a total of 3 hours on training days. Many of those days went over the 90 minute mark for fine tuning.

The USMAT was established in 1999 to bring together the country’s best traditional martial artists to compete against the world’s best in the World Martial Arts Games. They have established itself as a powerhouse in international competition.

CTEC Students Tour Facilities
Choctaw Central High School students attending the Career & Technical Education Center (CTEC) recently toured the IKBI Housing Manufacturing Center & the CSI Cyber Security Lab located in Choctaw. For more information or to schedule a tour, please call 601-504-2966.

ABOVE, Information Technology students Jaylen Bell, Oren Ferris, Kevin Gibson, & Connery Hodges were accompanied by their instructor, Lisa Greenwood, & tour facilitator Vicki Timmons of IKBI, Inc. Students enjoyed using the virtual reality equipment & learning more about the Choctaw Code Talkers. BELOW, Construction students Nehemiah Solomon, Scottie Bell, Garcia Denson, Cohen Keats, & Kendrick Wesley were accompanied by their instructor, Fred Lyons, & tour facilitator Aaron Bradley of IKBI, Inc. Students enjoyed seeing the stages of a housing construction & the trades involved in building houses.

ECCC Students Complete Electrical Utility Lineman Course
These students recently completed requirements in East Central Community College’s 16-week course in Electrical Utility Lineman & were honored during a ceremony held Thursday, Nov. 21, on the Decatur campus. Pictured are (kneeling, from left) Jaylin McGill of Heidelberg, Hunter Smith of Conehatta, Caleb Chandler of Noxapater, Trace Wallace of Union, Tavarus Jones of Heidelberg; (standing, from left) Will Burton of Mize, Ethan Ferguson of Brandon, Ryan Overby of Toomsuba, Josh Mitchell of Meridian, & Tanner Bullock of Houston. Also pictured (back row, at right) is instructor Curtis Bradley. (EC Photo)
ECCC Baseball Players Sign With 4-Year Programs

Two East Central Community College baseball players signed National Letters of Intent on Nov. 13 to continue their academic & athletic careers at four-year programs.

Sophomore pitcher Tanner Knight signed with Louisiana Tech in Ruston, La. The Bulldogs compete in NCAA Division I & Conference USA.

Sophomore outfielder Dakota Kennedy signed with Mississippi College in Clinton. The Choctaws compete in NCAA Division II & the Gulf South Conference.

Kennedy, who prepped at Eupora High School, is a 6-5 right-handed pitcher. He appeared in 17 games as a freshman in 2018, starting 11 contests. He finished with a 5-5 record, including seven doubles, a team-leading three home runs. He tied for the team lead in RBI’s with 33 & was third in stolen bases with 15.

From left, Dakota Kennedy & Tanner Knight. (EC Photo)

Upgrade in Skills Lands Promotion

Submitted by the MBCI Office of Economic Development

The Tribe’s Office of Economic Development, Choctaw Employment Assistance, & East Central Community College (ECCC) – Integrated Technologies staff have partnered to improve the skills of our current maintenance employees.

The Choctaw Health Center, Choctaw Tribal Maintenance, Choctaw Tribal Schools, & Pearl River Resort employees have completed the core curriculum & Level 1 of the NCCER classes in HVAC & Electrical.

Norman D. Samuel of the Bogue Chitto Community has been attending both classes through ECCC. His immediate supervisor, Pearl River Resort Maintenance Director Gregory Daugherty, saw the job Norman was doing & the effort he put into his classwork. He was recently promoted from maintenance worker to supervisor.

Norman was hired with the Pearl River Resort Maintenance Department in September 2015 as a Maintenance Engineer Attendant. This position included working on the casino floors & hotel repairs.

He was promoted in October 2016 to Maintenance Engineer as he worked in the HVAC shop assisting with repairs on air handler units, performing PM work on air handlers, primary & secondary circulating pumps, electrical motor replacements, changing filters, & many other tasks.

Norman developed an interest in this field & when the opportunity came up to take HVAC & Electrical classes toward NCCER certification, he signed up.

His classwork in both classes has been exceptional. With hard work & dedication, Norman gained a tremendous amount of experience & knowledge.

In July 2019, Norman was promoted to Facility Shift Supervisor over the HVAC/Electrical/Plumbing shop. He schedules daily repairs, PM schedules, ordering supplies, & equipment.

Norman works closely with contractors & other departments making sure the work being performed is done correctly & on a timely manner.

Norman thanks his wife, mother, & the Pearl River Resort for believing in him & giving him the opportunity. He also thanks Chief Cyrus Ben & the Tribal Administration.

Norman plans to continue working with the Pearl River Resort after earning his NCCER Certification to become more proficient as a supervisor & further himself in management.

Congratulations Norman on a job well done! For more information about NCCER certification or skills training, contact Sarah Swaner-Medlock, Operations Manager for Economic Development, at 601-663-7585.

Kudzu

Submitted by Kaitlyn Ford, MSU Tribal Extension Agent

Kudzu [Pueraria montana (Lour.) Merr.], often called “the vine that ate the South,” is a perennial, high-climbing vine native to eastern India, China, & Japan. It was introduced into the U.S. in 1876 at the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia & was recognized as highly nutritious livestock forage in 1905.

By 1946, an estimated 300,000 acres were planted. In addition to its use as forage, kudzu was also widely planted for soil stabilization in the South. It has been used some as an ornamental & for certain edible & medicinal uses.

It is a noxious weed in Florida, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Mississippi, Missouri, Pennsylvania, Texas, & West Virginia. It can be problematic in all southeastern states & in almost all habitats except aquatic. Kudzu can host Asian soybean rust, a potentially serious pathogen in soybeans [Glycine max (L.) Merr.]

DESCRIPTION
Vegetative Growth

The genus Pueraria belongs to the Pea (Fabaceae or Leguminosae) family. Of the 17 Pueraria species native to the tropics & East Asia, only two grow in the U.S., P. phaseoloides (Roxb.) Benth. & P. montana.

see KUDZU, pg. 24
**How to Prepare for a Winter Storm**

Winter storms can cause power outages that last for days. They can make roads and walkways extremely dangerous and also negatively affect critical community services including public transportation, childcare, and health programs. Injuries and deaths may occur from exposure, dangerous road conditions, carbon monoxide poisoning, and other winter storm conditions. Be better prepared this winter, and learn more at ready.gov/prepare.

### Now/Prepare

**Signs up for local alerts and warnings.** Create and test emergency communication plans.

**Stock emergency supplies, and install battery-powered or battery-backup carbon monoxide detectors and smoke detectors.**

**Winterize your home.** Visit this page to help you prepare.

**Review your property’s insurance, and safeguard critical documents.**

**Get trained on specific needs your family may have.** Also, consider joining your local Community Emergency Response Team (CERT).

Identify a place nearby where you can safely warm up should you lose heat in your home.

### During/ Survive

**Stay indoors and off the roads.** If you must drive, keep emergency supplies in your car.

**Close off rooms to consolidate and retain heat.**

**Dress in layers, and use blankets to stay warm.**

**Bring pets into a warm place and out of the storm or severe cold.**

**Never use a generator, camp stove, charcoal grill, or gasoline- or propane-powered heater indoors.** These stoves can start accidental fires, cause electric shock, and/or cause deadly carbon monoxide poisoning.

**Never heat a home with a cooktop or oven.**

**Limit your time outdoors, and stay dry.**

### After/ Be Safe

**Only drive if necessary.** Remove snow and ice from your headlights before starting your car, and check regularly if driving. Clean all snow and ice from your car before driving.

**Dress in warm clothing, stay dry, and protect exposed extremities to cold and wind, and avoid overexertion clearing/driveways snow.** Overexertion can lead to a medical emergency.

**Monitor local news and alerts for emergency information and instructions.**

---

**Now/Prepare for a Winter Storm**

**EMERGENCY SUPPLIES**

You may not be at home when the storm starts, so it is important to have basic supplies of food and water as well as a way to stay warm without power in several locations such as your workplace, vehicle, and/or school. You can build your supplies over time by adding a few items each week or month. Gather, in advance, the necessary supplies and items you will need to stay safe after the winter storm passes. For a complete list of emergency supplies, visit http://www.ready.gov/

**Check these supplies off your Winter Storm Preparedness Checklist once you add them to your emergency kit, which appears at the end of this document.**

---

### EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION

Make sure you have everything you will need to get in touch with your family either through cellular phones or email.

### MEDICAL NEEDS

Be equipped to tend to any current or unexpected medical conditions your family members may have. Ask your doctor about storing prescription medication such as at least a three-day supply of heart and blood pressure medication, insulin for diabetes, and generic prescription drugs such as inhalers for those with asthma. Include battery backup power for power-dependent mobility devices, oxygen, and other assistive technology needs.

### CRITICAL DOCUMENTS

Place any important documents in a sealed, waterproof container to keep them dry and easily accessible.

---

**TOOLS AND SAFETY ITEMS**

Small items like matches, flashlight, a multi-tool, pocket knife, and a whistle (to signal for help) can make a huge difference for your family while weathering a storm.

**FOOD/SUPPLIES**

Have at least a three-day supply of non-perishable food and water for your family. Remember to store anything specific to your family’s needs.

---

**WARM CLOTHING & BLANKETS**

Warm clothes and blankets can help prevent hypothermia. Do not forget warm, waterproof, and protective footwear as well as gloves.

**Ask yourself,** “What would I need for myself and my family if a winter storm struck?” and “Would I be able to get my family there if we did not have access to a grocery store or pharmacy for at least three days?”

Add any of these specific items to your Winter Storm Preparedness Checklist.

---

**COLD WEATHER DANGERS**

If you detect symptoms of frostbite, which is the freezing of the skin and body tissue beneath the skin, in either yourself or another person, seek medical care IMMEDIATELY. Additionally, hypothermia occurs when one’s body temperature drops to dangerously low levels, so, before addressing symptoms of frostbite, first determine whether you or someone else is showing signs of hypothermia.

**UNDERSTANDING WIND CHILL**

As the wind increases, your body is cooled at a faster rate, causing the skin temperature to drop. This is why it sometimes “feels” colder than the actual temperature. Wind chill is the temperature “it feels like” when you are outside. The NWS provides a Wind Chill Chart to show the difference between air temperature, and the perceived temperature, and the amount of time until frostbite occurs.

**SIGNS OF HYPOTERMIA**

- Uncontrollable shivering
- Memory loss, disorientation
- Incoherence, slurred speech
- Drowsiness
- Unsteady gait

**SIGNS OF FROSTBITE**

- Loss of feeling and white or pale appearance in extremities, similar to fingers, toes, ear lobes, face, and the tip of the nose

**WHAT TO DO**

If you detect symptoms of frostbite:

1. Cover exposed skin, but do not rub the affected area in an attempt to warm it up. Possible results in the formation of ice crystals in the tissue, and rubbing could damage the tissue. Seek medical help immediately.
2. For more information, visit the CDC’s page on frostbite and hypothermia.

**WHAT TO WEAR**

- **If you must go outside**, wear several layers of loose-fitting, lightweight, warm clothing rather than one layer of heavy clothing. The outer garments should be tightly woven and water-repellent.
- **Wear mittens**, which are warmer than gloves.
- **Cover all of your body.** Wear a hat and a scarf, covering your mouth to protect your face and to help prevent loss of body heat.

---

**What is Frostbite?**

Frostbite is a form of cold injury that occurs when the skin and underlying tissues are exposed to freezing temperatures. It can cause permanent damage to the skin, nerves, tendons, ligaments, and muscles, and may even lead to amputation. Frostbite can occur in any part of the body, but the most common areas are the ears, fingers, toes, and nose.

**What is Hypothermia?**

Hypothermia is a condition that occurs when the body’s core temperature drops below normal. It can be caused by being exposed to cold temperatures, and it can be a life-threatening condition. The signs of hypothermia include shivering, confusion, and difficulty speaking. If left untreated, hypothermia can lead to permanent brain damage or death.

---

**FLOOD INSURANCE**

Most property insurance policies do not cover flood losses, so you will need to purchase separate flood insurance if your property is at risk for flooding due to a storm. Talk to your insurance agent about buying flood insurance. Flood insurance is available for homeowners, renters, and business owners through the National Flood Insurance Program in participating communities. Keep in mind that a policy purchased today will take 30 days to go into effect, so act now. Learn how to protect yourself financially from flood damage by visiting FloodSmart.gov.

**PETS**

Don’t forget to make a plan for your pet too! To learn more tips, go to ready.gov/animals.
KUDZU .......................................................... continued from page twenty-two

Of the two species, only P. montana var. lobata (Willd.) Maesen & S. Almeida (kudzu) are problems in the continental U.S.

Kudzu is a perennial, semi-woody, trailing to highclimbing, twining vine reaching around 80 feet in length. Trailing stems may root when in contact with the soil & produce large, tuberous roots, which are edible & sometimes eaten in Asian countries.

Twinning generally occurs around objects less than 4 inches in diameter. Stems are covered with stiff, rust or golden hairs when young & as they grow, turn brown, semi-woody, & smooth. Stems can grow up to 10 inches in diameter.

Leaves are alternate & trifoliately compound (Figure 3) with leaflets 2–8 inches long. Leaves are covered with hairs & typically lobed (Figure 3). Petioles are 6–12 inches long with swollen bases & deciduous, ovatellanceolate stipules.

Flowering
Kudzu flowers August through September. Flower panicles are axillary, 2–12 inches long, & open from bottom to top (Figure 1). Flowers are about 1 inch in diameter & occur in twos or threes in a spiral pattern up the main axis.

Lower petals are lavender or violet-purple, & upper petals are similar in color or pinkish with a yellow patch near the base. Flowers are fragrant to attract pollinators.

Clustered fruit are produced from September to January. They are flattened legumes (or pods) 1.2–3 inches long, 0.3-0.5 inch wide, & covered with stiff golden-brown hairs, very similar in appearance to soybean pods.

Seeds are egg-shaped to nearly square & are around 0.1 inch in diameter. Seed viability is variable but generally very poor.

Dispersal
Kudzu spreads primarily by rooting at nodes along stems in contact with soil.

HABITAT
Kudzu is problematic in all habitats except aquatic. It forms dense thickets, quickly shading out trees & relatively drought tolerant & will grow in a wide range of soils. Once established, kudzu is difficult to eradicate.

DISTRIBUTION
Kudzu is widespread throughout the Midwest, particularly on slopes. Kudzu normally occurs from Maine to Florida & as far west as Nebraska & Texas. It has also escaped in Washington & Oregon. In 2009, kudzu was found near Ontario, Canada.

CONTROL METHODS
Mechanical
Some mechanical methods of kudzu control may be used in areas that can be grazed, mowed, or tilled. Mechanical controls, including hand removal, can be successful for small infestations, but the root must be removed from the soil. Because stems can propagate through fragmentation, be careful to remove all stems.

Chemical
See Table 1 for recommended herbicides for kudzu control. Metsulfuron can be applied over pines, but it should not be applied on foliage of desirable vegetation. Imazapyr, picloram, aminoxyprachlor, & clopyralid can be absorbed by roots & damage desirable trees & other broadleaf plants.

Do not apply within two times the dripline to avoid injury. Clopyralid can be applied over certain hardwoods with safety. See label for list of tolerant species. Non-ionic surfactant should be added with foliar applications.

Biological
Livestock readily graze kudzu. Continuous grazing may result in stand loss.

References


Table 1. Chemical control for kudzu.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Herbicide</th>
<th>Formulation</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aminocyclopyrachlor (Method)</td>
<td>2 lb ae/gallon</td>
<td>Foliar</td>
<td>10-18 oz/acre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aminocyclopyrachlor + Chlorsulfuron (Perspective)</td>
<td>55.2% Foliar</td>
<td>4.8-11 oz/acre</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aminocyclopyrachlor + Metsulfuron (Streamline)</td>
<td>52.1% Foliar</td>
<td>9.5-11.5 oz/acre</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aminocyclopyrachlor + Metsulfuron + Imazapyr (Viewpoint)</td>
<td>61.7% Foliar</td>
<td>16-20 oz/acre</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aminopyralid (Milestone)</td>
<td>2 lb ae/gallon</td>
<td>Foliar</td>
<td>7 oz/acre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aminopyralid + Triclopyr (Milestone VM)</td>
<td>2 lb ae/gallon</td>
<td>Foliar</td>
<td>64-96 oz/acre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clopyralid (Transline, Lontrel, etc.)</td>
<td>2 lb ae/gallon</td>
<td>Foliar</td>
<td>21 oz/acre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metsulfuron (Escort, MSM, etc.)</td>
<td>60% Foliar</td>
<td>4 oz/acre</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glyphosate (Roundup, Accord, etc.)</td>
<td>3 lb ae/gallon</td>
<td>Foliar</td>
<td>2% solution or 128 oz/acre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imazapyr + Metsulfuron (Lineage Clearstand)</td>
<td>72.7% Foliar</td>
<td>25 oz/acre</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picloram (Tordon, Tropper, etc.)</td>
<td>2 lb ae/gallon</td>
<td>Foliar</td>
<td>64 oz/acre</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

LEFT, Figure 1. Kudzu grows violet flowers from August through September. CENTER, Figure 2. Kudzu twines over everything in its path on this rural road in Mississippi. RIGHT, Figure 3. Kudzu leaves are alternate & trifoliately compound with leaflets 2-8 inches long.
CTLP NEWS

October

The Choctaw Tribal Language Program (CTLP) participated in the annual Harvest Festival, hosted by the Department of Agriculture & Rural Development.

Children from the area Tribal daycares, head starts, & elementary schools met a host of animal characters & learned their Choctaw names, played a language game, & received candy at the CTLP booth.

For Read-Aloud Month, the CTLP staff visited Pearl River Elementary School with Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben. Students were treated with a story in Chahta Annopá, a goodie bag, & a visit with Shawi.

November

CTLP helped facilitate an assessment workshop with Lynn Thompson of the Center of Applied Linguistics under a partnership with the Annopá Tikbishtiya Project/DOS.

The workshop was held to train a new grant staff member & five certified Choctaw language instructors to use the Choctaw ELLOPA (Early Language Listening and Oral Proficiency Assessment). This tool will help track students’ proficiency in the Choctaw language & measure future increases.

On-going

Chahta Annopá Ábachí is an in-house language training session with the staff. Fluent staff members teach Chahta Annopá to the non-fluent staff members while encouraging everyday usage of the Choctaw language.

Weekly community language classes are being held at the Conehatta Facility Building during the evening hours from 6:00-7:30. Classes are held on Thursdays until Dec. 19.

The family-oriented community language classes are held to revitalize our Choctaw language & increase the usage of the language by providing opportunities to speak the Choctaw language.

Sessions are in Choctaw & English to accommodate non-speakers. A sample topic with sentences (introduction & greetings) include:

Halito, Sa hohchifo yat ______. Chishnátoh?
Chi hohchifo yat nátah?

If you are interested in participating in an upcoming class during the spring, contact Peggy Williams at 601-650-7437 for more information.

CTLP’s weekly Chahta language development sessions have started for the new year. Every Wednesday, we review & discuss words for the dictionary project, develop new words, and/or translate phrases with several program & community members. We invite you to come join us at the language program trailer.

For more information or language resources, please contact the Choctaw Tribal Language Program at 601-650-7440 or 7436.

“Chahta Annopá Ik Hapi Kanýoh Kiyah”
Dancing Rabbit Festival

The 33rd annual Dancing Rabbit Festival, held on Saturday, Oct. 5, in Macon, Miss., commemorates the signing of the Treaty of the Dancing Rabbit Creek on September 27, 1830, between the Choctaws & the U.S. Government.

The signing, which took place at the southwest corner of Noxubee County, was the last major land cession treaty signed by the Choctaws ceding 11 million acres in exchange for 15 million acres in Indian Territory, what is now present-day Oklahoma.

For the second consecutive year, Choctaw Tribal members were invited to join in the festivities to share their culture to the citizens of Noxubee County.

Taking part in the celebration were Cultural Affairs Program (CAP) Coordinator Phyllis McMillan & members of her family, Wendy Thompson & her children, Jeremy Billie, Curtis Willis, Jr., Priscilla Williams, & Trudy Jimmie.

Moccasin Making Class

A Moccasin Making Class was held at the Choctaw Hospitality Institute (CHI) for members of the Pearl River Teen Center on Thursday, Oct. 10, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Five students on break from Neshoba Central School attended the class. CAP staff members Trudy Jimmie, Lorena Alex, Casey Bigpond, May McGeisy, Priscilla Williams, & temporary employees Gina Thompson & Stephanie Dixon were instructors for the class.

The teens, with the help of their instructors, completed their moccasins.

Choctaw Drummers

For ten days, CAP’s Casey Bigpond was teaching a select group of Choctaw Head Start students how to beat the Choctaw drum. The small drums used by the drummers were beautifully handcrafted by Bill Farmer. The children showcased their skills at the annual Green Corn Ceremony held at the Pearl River Amphitheater on Friday, Oct. 18.

Choctaw Days

The Lauren Rogers Museum of Art in Laurel hosted a special event called “Choctaw Days” on Oct. 22. The event was an interactive cultural educational program filled with activities showcasing Choctaw culture.

Jennifer Thomas, of the Bogue Homa Community, & the museum staff, headed by Museum Curator of Education Hillary Steinwinder, coordinated cultural learning experiences for the area schools’ fourth grade classes.

May McGeisy, Wauseka York & Priscilla Williams attended “Choctaw Days” to provide support for Thomas & Steinwinder.

Students were given guided tours & a chance to participate in interactive cultural demonstrations & dance performances.

Shawi Tours with Chief for Read Aloud Month

Shawi, the Department of Chahta Immi’s mascot, made several surprise appearances with Tribal Chief Cyrus...continued next page
Ben to participate in the Read Aloud campaign at Choctaw Tribal Elementary Schools during the month of October.

The Read Aloud activities afforded the students, Chief Ben & Shawi special times to share with each other.

Students listened to their Tribal Chief read stories as they were also taught Choctaw words & lessons on character traits, such as showing respect & common courtesy.

Phyllis McMillan & May McGeissey of CAP joined the campaign as they also read stories to the Choctaw Tribal Schools students.

**Choctaw Clothing for USET**

During the last week of October, the CAP staff carried out an arduous but meaningful task of sewing three early 1960’s style Choctaw dresses, five Choctaw shirts, & four dress aprons to be worn at the United South & Eastern Tribes (USET) conference, held in Choctaw.

Sewing was done by Trudy Jimmie, Lorena Alex, Casey Bigpond, Priscilla Williams, & May McGeissey of CAP. Also helping out were Gina Thompson, Stephanie Dixon, Cornelius Dan, Diane Thomas, Martha Hall, Joyce Jim, Diane Lutz, & Veronica Steward representing other organizations.

Due to the lack of space at the CAP office, sewing sessions took place at the Manpower Building from Monday, Oct. 28 to Thursday, Oct. 31.

Early in the afternoon of Nov. 1, the staff pieced together all parts for the dresses & shirts. It was a challenge for the staff, due to the small time frame they were given to finish the project.

**Requests**

During the month of October, the CAP staff was very busy with presentation requests. November is Native American Heritage Month; therefore, it is anticipated that it will be another busy & exciting month for CAP.

**Call the CAP office at 601-663-7506, or FAX 601-650-1631 for more information on Choctaw culture.**

**SPECIAL PROJECTS / MEDIA PROGRAM NEWS**

**CCHS Cultural Presentations**

Special Projects/Media Program (SP/MP) staff members Sequita Phillips, Ty Isaac & Eddie Johnson conducted a series of presentations on Choctaw history & culture to Choctaw Central High School’s sophomore World History class on Sept. 24-25.

Students were informed about the history of the Nanih Waiya Mound & were given a historical overview of the mound.

**SP/MP staff member Sequita Phillips drills the class with questions regarding the Nanih Waiya Mound.**

**Shawi is hugging a student as Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben hands out cultural education materials to the class.**

**SP/MP staff members Ty Isaac & Sequita Phillips pose with members of Ms. Johnson’s sophomore World History class at CCHS.**

**Diane Thomas holds up one of the completed dresses made for a USET presentation.**
**IN MEMORIAM**

**MARY JANE BILLY**

Funeral service for Mary Jane Billy, 61, was held on Monday, October 7, 2019, at the Red Water Community Gymnasium. Deacon Gary Chickaway & Rev. Carl Wilson officiated.

Burial was in the Old Mt. Zion Cemetery.

Ms. Billy passed away on Oct. 3 at Regency Hospital in Meridian. She was a member of the Mt. Zion Choctaw Indian Baptist Church & was employed at Pearl River Resort as a Slot Attendant. She enjoyed being with family & friends, cooking, attending pow wows, being on the phone, & taking care of her dog.

She is preceded in death by her parents, Cephus & Mary Willis Billy; sisters, Nelvie John, Shirley Billy, Verlene Billy, & Minnie Pearl Willis; foster sister, Angela Denise Bell; grandparents, 7 aunts & 10 uncles.

Survivors include a nephew she had guardianship over, Taylum Wishork; sisters, Marilyn York, Trescilla Phillips & Ron York; parents, Charlie & Minnie Billy; sisters, Nel Willis & Gina Willis; brothers, Frankie Willis & Darwin Willis; foster children, Antonie John & Ashley John; 3 aunts, 3 uncles, & a host of nieces, nephews, relatives, & friends.

**CATHLEEN THOMAS**

Funeral service for Cathleen Thomas, 74, was held on Thursday, October 10, 2019, at the Greenhill Methodist Church in Pearl River. Deacons Williamson Isaac, Daniel Tubby & Rev. Travis Willis officiated.

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

Ms. Thomas passed away on Oct. 6 at the Choctaw Residential Center in Choctaw.

She was a member of Canaan Baptist Church but enjoyed attending other churches when invited. She enjoyed doing beadwork, Choctaw social dancing, fishing, playing washers, cooking, & watching Beaver Dam Stickball.

She was preceded in death by her parents, Cleve Thomas & Hazel Tubby; sister, Annie Roe Thomas-Wesley; & brothers, Odie Jim, Arthur Thomas, Sr., Sam Thomas, Sr., & Leon Thomas, Sr.

Survivors include her sister, Addie Marie Thomas; brother, Alvin Thomas; & a host of nieces, nephews, relatives, & friends.

**Priscilla Ann Clemons**

Funeral service for Priscilla Ann Clemons, 48, was held on Saturday, October 12, 2019, at Hope Indian Baptist Church in Pearl River. Rev. Robert Paul Tubby & Rev. Robert Patrick officiated.

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

Ms. Clemons passed away on Oct. 9 at the Choctaw Health Center in Choctaw.

She was a cook at the...continued next page

---

**DCI NEWS ........................................................................................................................... continued from page twenty-seven**

mid-20th century share-cropping & homelife of Mississippi Choctaws.

Each class had an opportunity to watch videos on the subjects & engage in a question & answer session with the staff.

**Fall Harvest**

The SP/MP, along with other Tribal programs, participated in the 2019 Fall Harvest Fest, sponsored by the Department of Natural Resources on Oct. 23.

SP/MP staff member Sequita Phillips & Ron York teamed with CAP staff members Lorena Willis & Gina Willis; brothers, Frankie Willis & Darwin Willis; foster children, Antonie John & Ashley John; 3 aunts, 3 uncles, & a host of nieces, nephews, relatives, & friends.

**MAC State Arts Conference Presentation**

The SP/MP participated in the Mississippi State Arts Conference, held on Thursday, Oct. 24, at the Mississippi State Capitol Building in downtown Jackson.

Program staff members Eddie Johnson & Ty Isaac served on a panel at the conference that focused on documenting Mississippi’s stories. They provided a presentation on the Choctaw Tribal Elders Oral History Project to conference attendees.

The 2019 State Arts Conference was hosted by the Mississippi Arts Commission with the aim to provide a chance for people from across the state to share their ideas, network with other artists & professionals, & take part in professional development opportunities.

---

**Sequita Phillips engages with children in the “towwa pilah” activity at the Fall Harvest Festival at the Department of Natural Resources.**

**Attendees of the Mississippi State Arts Conference in Jackson included, from left, Maria Zeringue, Ty Isaac, Sequita Phillips, Eddie Johnson, Rosemary John, Jasmine Stransberry, Rory Doyle, & Chris “Big Yayo” Mabry.***
Choctaw Central High School cafeteria. She enjoyed spending time with family, conversing with her best friend, attending her family’s sporting events, cooking, & social dancing at the Choctaw Indian Fair.

She was preceded in death by her parents, Jerry Clemons, Sr. & Betty Ann Bell Clemmons; foster parents, Vernon & Elsie Jim; brothers, Johnny Clemmons, Sr. & Jerry Clemsons, Jr.; & a grandchild.

Survivors include her daughters, Nadiyta Cotton, Nadaysha Johnson & Kaymerin Smith; son, Harris Johnson, III; child she loved as her own, Dreydon Tubby; sister, Rose Nell Clemmons; brother, Jared Jaye Jim; 6 grandchildren; & a host of relatives & friends.

JOYCE LYNN JIMMIE KING

Funeral service for Joyce Lynn Jimmie King, 61, was held on Tuesday, October 15, 2019, at Hope Indian Baptist Church in Pearl River.

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

Ms. King passed away on Oct. 12 at Anderson Regional Medical Center in Meridian.

She was preceded in death by her parents, Mack Willie Jimmie, Sr. & Nettie Sam Tubby; sisters, Maxine Dixon & Irma Boulley; & brother, Adolph Jimmie.

Survivors include her sons, Alan Reed Jimmie & Treyvin Wayne Bell; sisters, Wanda McMllan & Janis Jimmie; brother, Mack Willie Jimmie, Jr.; 4 grandchildren; & a host of relatives & friends.

EDWARD WESLEY

Funeral service for Edward Wesley, 74, was held on Sunday, October 20, 2019, at the Pearl River Community Center. Deacon John Smith & Rev. Travis Willis officiated.

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

Mr. Wesley passed away on Oct. 17 at his residence.

He was preceded in death by his parents, John H. Wesley & Minnie Hall Chapman; wife, Annie Roe Wesley; sisters, Minnie Sam, Magalline Hall, Serena Wesley Bell Spears, & Rita Faye Wesley; & brothers, Roger Hall, Carl Daniel, Hall, Edward J. Wesley, Danny Wesley, Silmon Wesley, & Johnny Wesley.

Survivors include his sisters, Betty Hall Tubby, Jane Tubby, Norma Hall, Joanna Ben, & Janice Lewis; brother, Jerry Wesley; & a host of nieces, nephews, relatives, & friends.

IDA DIXON BILLIE

Funeral service for Ida Dixon Billie, 84, was held on Friday, October 25, 2019, at the Mt. Zion Choctaw Indian Baptist Church. Rev. Carl Wilson officiated.

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

Mr. Jim passed away on Oct. 18 at Regency Hospital in Meridian.

He was employed with Big G Grocery, Piggly Wiggly & Day Training Program. He...see OBITS, pg. 30
Vernon Thomas

Funeral service for Vernon Thomas, 62, was held on Saturday, October 26, 2019, at Hope Indian Baptist Church in Pearl River. Deacon Williamson Isaac & Rev. Robert Paul Tubby officiated. Burial was in the Greenhill Methodist Church Cemetery. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements. Mr. Thomas passed away on Oct. 22 at the Choctaw Health Center in Choctaw.

He was employed with Pearl River Resort. He enjoyed being with his family & friends, making stickball sticks & towa, hunting, fishing, watching football, & playing stickball with Beaver Dam.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Claude Jim, Sr. & Patsy Thomas; son, Eric Carlton Thomas, Leon Thomas, Jr., & Ronnie Thomas; wife, Nancy Charley Thomas; son, Eric Shane Charley; brothers, Myron Thomas, Sr., Guy Thomas, Sr., Sam Thomas, Jr., Charles L. Thomas, & Ivory Thomas; & 2 grandchildren.

Survivors include his daughter, Veronica Thomas Stephens; son, Verdon Lance Thomas; sister, Joanne Hickman; brothers, Ferlin Thomas, Carlton Thomas, Leon Thomas, Jr., & Ronnie Willis; 9 grandchildren; special daughters, Nan drea McMillan & Donya McMillan; & a host of nieces, nephews, relatives, & friends.

Jarrett Coleman Gibson

Funeral service for Jarrett Coleman Gibson, 40, was held on Friday, October 25, 2019, at the Bogue Chitto Baptist Church. Deacon Kendall Wallace & Rev. Charles Doby Henry officiated. Burial was in the Bogue Chitto Community Cemetery. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements. Mr. Gibson passed away on Oct. 22 at Anderson Regional Medical Center in Meridian.

He was a member of Bogue Chitto Indian Baptist Church & served in several committees. He enjoyed being with family & friends, being a Mississippi State University fan, supporter of Bok Cito Stickball, listening to music, watching videos, & coaching youth basketball.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Sharon Ann Bell & John Lee Gibson; grandparents, Katherine Jackson Bell & Tom “Shorty” Bell, Norma Gibson & Paul Lee Gibson; brother, Tommy Paul Gibson; 8 aunts; 3 uncles; 10 great-aun ts; 5 great-uncles.

Survivors include his brothers, Rafael Gibson & Shaukota Gibson; a host of nieces; a goddaughter; 2 aunts; 2 uncles; 2 great-aunt s; a great-uncle; & a host of relatives & friends.

Tessa Mae Sanders

Funeral service for Tessa Mae Sanders, 42, was held on Friday, November 1, 2019, at the Pearl River Community Center. Deacon Ricky Edwards & Rabbi Ahmeteaha Yeroozedek officiated. Burial was in the Gibson Cemetery. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

She was an office manager at the Choctaw Detention Center. She enjoyed movie marathons, games, listening to music, & being on social media.

She was preceded in death by her parents, Algie M. Steve & Nelson John, Jr.; sister, Betty Gibson; & a host of grandchildren, great-grandchildren, nieces, nephews, relatives, & friends.

Delores Ann Bell

Funeral service for Delores Ann Bell, 74, was held on Wednesday, November 6, 2019, at the Holy Rosary Catholic Church in Tucker. Father Bob Goodyear, S.T., officiated. Burial was in the I Sleep Cemetery. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

She was a cafeteria cook at Tucker Elementary School. She enjoyed playing Bingo, fishing, tending to her rose garden, & spending time with her grandchildren.

She was preceded in death by her parents, Annie Mitch & Tony Bell; sons, Jerome Steve & Roy Steve; sisters, Rita Faye Denson & Hilda Bell-Sutton; & brothers, Formen Bull, Jr., J.D. Bell, Ives Bell, Grady John, & Homer Bell.

Survivors include her daughter, Christine Bell-Phillips; sons, Danny Steve, McKinley Steve & Nelson John, Jr.; sister, Betty Gibson; & a host of grandchildren, great-grandchildren, nieces, nephews, relatives, & friends.

...continued next page
Bernice Frazier

Funeral service for Bernice Frazier, 79, was held on Wednesday, November 22, 2019, at the Bogue Homa Community Gymnasium. Rev. Charles Doby Henry officiated.

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

Ms. Frazier passed away on Nov. 16 at Hospice Ministries in Ridgeland.

She was a teacher’s aide for the head start & adult education program & later a CHT for the Bogue Homa community. She enjoyed being with her family, reading, doing crossword puzzles, beading, visiting casinos, & collecting recipes.

She was preceded in death by her parents, Riley & Zonie Thomas; & brothers, Dorsey Thomas & Olen Thomas.

Survivors include her daughters, Valerie Kaminski & Edna Willis; sons, Wilkie Frazier, Jr. & Paul Frazier; sisters, Vernita Thomas, Imogene Thompson, Berdie Steve, & Marilyn Nickey; brothers, Andrew Thomas & Wayne Thomas; 10 grandchildren; 28 great-grandchildren; 4 great-great grandchildren; & a host of nieces, nephews, relatives, & friends.

Jeffery Willis, Sr.

Funeral service for Jeffery Willis, Sr., 54, was held on Thursday, November 21, 2019, at the Hope Indian Baptist Church in Pearl River. Deacon Williamson Isaac & Rev. Charles Doby Henry officiated.

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

Mr. Willis passed away on Nov. 18 at his residence.

He enjoyed being with family & friends, watching football, fishing, working on vehicles, & cooking outdoors.

He was preceded in death by his father, Bill Willis; son, Samuel Ryan Phillips; brothers, Daniel Carl Willis & Bruce Eric Willis.

Survivors include his daughters, Meagan Henry & Trisha Willis; sons, Jeffery Willis, Jr. & Jonah Phillips; mother, Geraldine Mitch; sisters, Lora Orduno, Karon Bryant & Florence Hodges; brothers, Naveon Willis & Alan Willis; 5 grandchildren; & a host of relatives & friends.

Lester Grant Willis

Funeral service for Lester Grant Willis, 40, was held on Wednesday, November 27, 2019, at the Bogue Chitto Community Gymnasium. Pastor Thomas Ben officiated.

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

Mr. Willis passed away on Nov. 22 at the University Medical Center in Jackson.

He enjoyed being with family & friends, fishing, playing dominos, cards, softball, & doing mechanic work.

He was preceded in death by his mother, Laverne Willis; sister, Patricia Willis, brother, Julius Willis; & an aunt & uncle.

Survivors include his companion, Vanessa Cotton; daughters, Tara Dawn Willis, Quintara Willis & Isis Willis; sons, Treundes Willis & Trevon Willis; father, Patrick Willis; sisters, Andrea Willis, Erica Farve, Demetria Morris, Delanie Briscoe, & Kendra Polk; brothers, Tony Willis, Michael Dan & Julian Willis; an aunt; & a host of nieces, nephews, relatives, & friends.

Doris Lynn Billie

Funeral service for Doris Lynn Billie, 72, was held on Wednesday, December 4, 2019, at St. Therese’s Catholic Church in Pearl River. Father Bob Goodyear, S.T., officiated.

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

Mrs. Billie passed away on Nov. 30 at the Baptist Leake Medical Center in Carthage.

She was with the Choctaw Health Center’s Behavioral Health Program prior to her retirement. She was also a volunteer to various youth programs & enjoyed cooking for family & friends, beading traditional Choctaw crafts, & social dancing.

She was preceded in death by her parents, Wilburn Isaac & Millie Davis; sisters, Judy Isaac, Cira Isaac & Kathy Isaac; & a brother, Harold Isaac.

Survivors include her husband, Herman Billie; daughter, Priscilla Lilly; foster daughter, Vanda Wallace; sons, Glen Billie, Brian Billie & Jeremy Billie; sister, Ina Solomon; 10 grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren; & a host of relatives & friends.

Doris Lynn Billie

Funeral service for Doris Lynn Billie, 72, was held on Wednesday, December 4, 2019, at St. Therese’s Catholic Church in Pearl River. Father Bob Goodyear, S.T., officiated.

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

Mrs. Billie passed away on Nov. 30 at the Baptist Leake Medical Center in Carthage.

She was with the Choctaw Health Center’s Behavioral Health Program prior to her retirement. She was also a volunteer to various youth programs & enjoyed cooking for family & friends, beading traditional Choctaw crafts, & social dancing.

She was preceded in death by her parents, Wilburn Isaac & Millie Davis; sisters, Judy Isaac, Cira Isaac & Kathy Isaac; & a brother, Harold Isaac.

Survivors include her husband, Herman Billie; daughter, Priscilla Lilly; foster daughter, Vanda Wallace; sons, Glen Billie, Brian Billie & Jeremy Billie; sister, Ina Solomon; 10 grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren; & a host of relatives & friends.

Lester Grant Willis

Funeral service for Lester Grant Willis, 40, was held on Wednesday, November 27, 2019, at the Bogue Chitto Community Gymnasium. Pastor Thomas Ben officiated.

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

Mr. Willis passed away on Nov. 22 at the University Medical Center in Jackson.

He enjoyed being with family & friends, fishing, playing dominos, cards, softball, & doing mechanic work.

He was preceded in death by his mother, Laverne Willis; sister, Patricia Willis, brother, Julius Willis; & an aunt & uncle.

Survivors include his companion, Vanessa Cotton; daughters, Tara Dawn Willis, Quintara Willis & Isis Willis; sons, Treundes Willis & Trevon Willis; father, Patrick Willis; sisters, Andrea Willis, Erica Farve, Demetria Morris, Delanie Briscoe, & Kendra Polk; brothers, Tony Willis, Michael Dan & Julian Willis; an aunt; & a host of nieces, nephews, relatives, & friends.
Slow-Pitch Softball State Champions

ABOVE, Congratulations to the Neshoba Central Lady Rockets as they claimed the 2019 MHSAA Class II Slow-Pitch Softball State Championship on Oct. 19. They swept Wayne County 10-2 & 6-5 to claim their 8th consecutive state softball championship. Tribal members of the Lady Rockets include, bottom row from left, Jeyda Ben, Nautica Bacon, Annalise Bell, Erica Lyons, Sa’Nya Jackson, Xiomara Fireplace, Allie Williams, & Elleigh Willis; top row from left, Charmayne Morris, TaBaleigh Hickman, Ariel Henry, Mataeya Dixon, Landaey Henry, Daylynn Mingo, Lala Morris, Shante Beaulieu, Mya Willis, Hama’ya Fielder, Tenly Grisham, Mauhree Jones, & Chloe Thompson. RIGHT, Congratulations to the Lake Lady Hornets as they claimed the 2019 MHSAA Class I Slow-Pitch Softball State Championship on Oct. 19. They lost the first game to Houston 5-2, but came back to win 9-2 & 13-3 to claim their first state softball championship. Tribal members on the Lady Hornets include, from left, Alyssa Sockey & Lyric Lay.

Softball Players

Make 2019

All-State List

Congratulations to the following Tribal members named to the 2019 All-State slow-pitch softball team, as selected by the Clarion-Ledger in consultation with high school coaches in Mississippi. ABOVE LEFT, First Team selection included Neshoba Central Lady Rocket sophomore Tenly Grisham. She batted .670 with 15 home runs, 25 doubles, two triples, & 56 RBIs to help lead Neshoba Central to their eighth consecutive MHSAA state championship. ABOVE RIGHT, Lady Rocket sophomore Hama’ya Fielder was named a Second Team selection as she batted .564 with 12 home runs, 16 doubles, one triple, & 69 RBIs to help Neshoba Central to their eighth consecutive MHSAA state championship. LEFT, Choctaw Central Lady Warrior senior Tia’Rain Saunders batted .553 to lead Choctaw Central to the third round of the MHSAA Class II state tournament.

Lady Warriors Make 3rd Round, Class II

Congratulations to the Choctaw Central Lady Warriors as they made it to the 3rd round of the 2019 MHSAA Class II Slow-Pitch Softball State Tournament. They were swept by Newton County 12-3 & 8-5. Members of the Lady Warriors include, kneeling from left, Tayla Wil lis, Leisa Phillips, Kylinn Bell, Tori Isaac, Neera Bell, Tia’Rain Saunders, Malaka Morris, & Delaiah Billy; standing from left, Ahmaya Williams, Maiya Joe, Melanie Jimmie, Ciji Vaughn, Mattison Bell, Miley Billie, Kodi Jimmie, Tyra Billy, & Belinda Frazier.