



Cotton named new IHS Deputy Director for Field Operations

The Indian Health Service announces the appointment of Dr. Beverly Cotton, an enrolled member of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, as the new IHS deputy director for field operations for four IHS Area Offices: Albuquerque, Navajo, Oklahoma City, and Tucson.



Dr. Beverly Cotton

As the newest deputy director for field operations, Dr. Cotton provides management oversight and resource allocation to the four areas under her leadership. Dr. Cotton joins Rear Adm. Chris Buchanan and James Driving Hawk in this position, with each deputy director of field operations responsible for four IHS areas. IHS is the 18th largest public health care system in the nation.

“Dr. Cotton exemplifies the quality leadership that the Indian Health Service prides itself on,” said IHS Director Roselyn Tso. “She has dedicated her career to the health and well-being of American Indians and Alaska Natives—first as a direct care provider and then as a leader within IHS for over a decade. I could not be more confident entrusting our Albuquerque, Navajo, Oklahoma City, and Tucson Areas to her leadership.”

Dr. Cotton previously served as the director for the Nashville Area, the largest geographic and culturally diverse region in the IHS, spanning 24 states and serving 36 tribal nations and three urban Indian health programs. She also served as the previous acting director for the IHS Office of Clinical and Preventive Services, where she was the principal advisor for

see DR. COTTON, pg. 5

King wins 2025 CTS Spelling Bee

Lindraya King, seventh grader representing Tucker Elementary School, claimed the title of overall champion speller during the Choctaw Tribal Schools’ 31st Annual District-Wide Spelling Bee on Friday, Jan. 17. The competition was held at the Pearl River Elementary School Gymnasium.

Elijah McMillan & Ansen McMillan, both eighth graders from Choctaw Central Middle School, placed 2nd & 3rd respectively.

The top three spelling bee grade winners represented their respective schools in the competition. Participants included:

(Bogue Chitto Elementary School, BCES) - Brayden Mingo, 8th grade; Taelor Crosby, 5th grade; Echo McMillan, 4th grade.

(Choctaw Central Middle School, CCMS) - Kaecetyn Wil-

liams, 7th grade; Ansen McMillan, 8th grade (3rd overall); Elijah McMillan, 8th grade (2nd overall).

(Conehatta Elementary School, CES) - Kaelynn Chickaway, 7th grade; Carson Jimmie, 8th grade; Midnite Hall, 7th grade.

see SPELLING BEE, pg. 10



Pictured above, from left to right, are Spelling Bee top finishers Elijah McMillan (2nd overall), Ansen McMillan (3rd overall), Lindraya King (overall winner), & Choctaw Indian Princess Leilani Elyse Allen.

CHOCTAW TRIBAL SCHOOLS GIRLS BASKETBALL CHAMPIONS

Congratulations



RED WATER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LADY BRAVES



CHOCTAW CENTRAL MIDDLE SCHOOL WARRIORS

CHOCTAW TRIBAL SCHOOLS BOYS BASKETBALL CHAMPIONS



Halito!

As we celebrate the symbolic turning of the page and rededicate ourselves to new beginnings, I want to wish all of you the very best in 2025. It is my hope that the progress we have made in the past several years will continue. Despite the uncertainty and obstacles that the future might bring, we can still move forward together, united, giving our very best efforts for the benefit of all our Choctaw People.

We have several projects that are either in the works or already nearing completion. I look forward to sharing these success stories with you in the coming months.

If you drive past the new Choctaw Central campus construction site, you can truly see the main building taking shape. It is so exciting to think about the day when students, teachers, and staff members will take their first steps around the completed campus. This is just one of the great examples of how we are investing in our future. I am so proud to have been part of the team that is bringing a new and much-needed high and middle school campus to our Tribal youth.

Last year, we celebrated the 30th anniversary of the establishment of our Pearl River Resort. Beginning in 1994 with the Silver Star Hotel and Casino, we continued to expand upon our successes and added more properties and brought more entertainment options to our clients and job opportunities to Tribal Members and to the people in the surrounding communities.

Our success helped bring economic stability and growth to the Tribe, for the benefit of the people. And by creating economic prosperity here in east central Mississippi, the local economies of our neighbors have also benefited. Our Resort continues to be one of the pre-



Chief, Princess attend investiture for Justice Branning

A ceremonial investiture for Mississippi Supreme Court Justice Jenifer B. Branning was held on Monday, January 13, 2025, at the Ellis Theater in Philadelphia, Miss. Among the distinguished guests in attendance included Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben & reigning Choctaw Indian Princess Leilani Elyse Allen. During her tenure as a state senator, Justice Branning played a vital role in the passing of important tribal legislation, including the Tribal ID Bill (House Bill 277), Regalia Bill (Senate Bill 2595), & the MBCI License Plate Bill (Senate Bill 2288). Pictured above, from left to right, are State Representative C. Scott Bounds, Justice Branning, Chief Cyrus Ben, Choctaw Indian Princess Leilani Allen, & Governor Tate Reeves. Pictured below, Justice Branning was presented a Choctaw basket by Chief Ben on behalf of the Tribe.

mier destinations in the Southeast. We opened Crystal Sky in Louisville, Mississippi, and we celebrated the 14th anniversary of the Bok Homa Casino in Sandersville last month. Both properties are continuing the great legacy of success at Pearl River Resort!

Our students are in the second half of their school year, and it won't be long before we watch our seniors walk across the stage to receive their diplomas. I am proud of the accomplishments of each and every one of our youth. Whether it is in the classroom, sports, or other extracurricular activities, I know we will see and recog-

nize big achievements, as we did in the fall semester.

I encourage parents and family members to take every opportunity to be there for your children. If your kids know you have their back, that will give them a great boost as they strive for success. I look forward to visiting with students at their schools, whether it is at sports games, academic competitions, senior nights, spring festivals, other school activities, and of course at commencement.

Even as our Tribe and its people have many successes in the modern world, we have not forgotten our rich cultural

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CHOCTAW COMMUNITY NEWS

The Choctaw Community News is available at no charge upon request. Donations to help cover the cost of printing, mailing are welcomed. Correspondence should be addressed to:
COMMUNICATIONS PROGRAM
P.O. BOX 6010
CHOCTAW, MS 39350
TELEPHONE: 601-663-7736

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



Participates in Dr. King Parade

The City of Philadelphia, Miss., held the annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Parade on Saturday, January 18, 2025. Community members came out to honor & remember the legacy of Dr. King. Among the parade participants included the reigning Choctaw Indian Princess Leilani Elyse Allen, along with American Indian Day Princesses Ava Gibson & A'Ria McMillan & Brave Kayden Billy from Tucker Elementary School, & Choctaw students who attend Neshoba Central High School & are members of the JROTC & the Big Blue Band.

heritage. Choctaw is not just a word to us. Our culture and history are part of the very fabric of who we are. I am grateful that the spring season brings us opportunities to participate in cultural activities. As I write this letter, several of our stickball teams have begun or will begin practicing soon for the upcoming World Series Stickball tournament in July. Our Tribal elementary school stu-

dents are practicing their dance steps as they get ready for our annual spring festivals. Many of our artisans are working tirelessly to create some beautiful works of art that will be showcased by our Tribal Members or available for purchase at the Choctaw Indian Fair.

I am so proud to see our people continue to carry our culture forward to the next generations, and I urge any Tribal

Member interested in learning more about their culture to make that effort. Sit with our Elder artisans and learn from them. Make it your life's mission to learn and then to teach others about the Choctaw cultural legacy.

Again, I wish all of you the very best this year. We have had much to be thankful for in years past, and we have much to be thankful today as we

move forward in 2025. Thank you for all that you do for our Tribe! Let us remain united in our shared goal and purpose of creating success and prosperity for all our Choctaw People.

Chi Yakokilih,

Cyrus Ben, Tribal Chief



Office of the Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben

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Phone: (601) 656-5251 • Fax: (601) 650-1606

January 27, 2025

Halito, Tribal Members:

I am writing to you in light of the concerns many of you have expressed regarding the recent executive orders and actions taken by the federal government, particularly regarding birthright citizenship. I want to assure you that the executive order issued by the Trump administration regarding **birthright citizenship** does not impact our status as United States citizens.

Many of you have heard or read about the Trump Administration's Executive Order issued on January 20, 2025, titled "*Protecting the Meaning and Value of American Citizenship*," which is set to apply as of February 19, 2025 and onwards, but not retroactively. In this Executive Order, the Trump Administration states that not only must a person be born in the United States to be eligible for **birthright citizenship**, but that person must also be subject to the jurisdiction of the United States. The Executive Order excludes the following persons from birthright citizenship "(1) When that person's mother was unlawfully present in the United States and the person's father was not a United States Citizen or lawful permanent resident at the time of said person's birth, or (2) when that person's mother's presence in the United States was lawful but temporary, and the person's father was not a United States citizen or lawful permanent resident at the time of said person's birth."

In response to this Executive Order, several states sued in Federal District Courts challenging the Executive Order. The United States Department of Justice (DOJ) responded by opposing the litigation. In their response, the DOJ interpreted "subject to the jurisdiction of the United States," by citing language from an 1884 United States Supreme Court case regarding Native Americans. In the 1884 case, *Elk v. Wilkins*, the Supreme Court held that citizens of Tribal Nations are not subject to the jurisdiction of the United States and are not entitled to United States citizenship because they owe immediate allegiance to their Tribal Nations. The DOJ asserted that children of non-citizens in the United States illegally and children of temporary visa holders should be considered subject to foreign powers and therefore are not eligible for birthright citizenship.

The DOJ's legal argument was not that Native Americans are not presently United States Citizens. In fact, Congress enacted the **Indian Citizenship Act of 1924**, which declares that **Native Americans born within the United States are citizens of the United States.**

While the legal argument that brought Native Americans into the fold, did not acknowledge the present status of Native American citizenship, the DOJ was using the language in the *Elk* case to defend the language of the Executive Order and not to imply Native American citizenship was being questioned or is in jeopardy. However, carrying your State issued Identification Card, Tribal Identification Card, or CDIB with you at all times is always a safe and proactive measure as it ensures your proof of identity.

Myself and my administration are actively communicating with our federal, state, and local representatives to stay informed about federal/state laws or decisions affecting our tribe. We will continue to engage with lawmakers to advocate for the best interests of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians. I will continue to defend our rights as members of a sovereign nation and urge the United States Government to honor its trust and treaty responsibilities.

Yakoki

Cyrus Ben
Tribal Chief

"CHOCTAW SELF-DETERMINATION"

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day - A day of quiet reflection, call to action; Peltier sentence commuted by Pres. Biden

From the United South and Eastern Tribes Sovereignty Protection Fund

(Nashville, TN) - January 20, 2025, marks the annual celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

"On this day of coinciding significance, during a time of perpetual American strife and division, let today serve as both a marker and reminder. Let this be another moment when

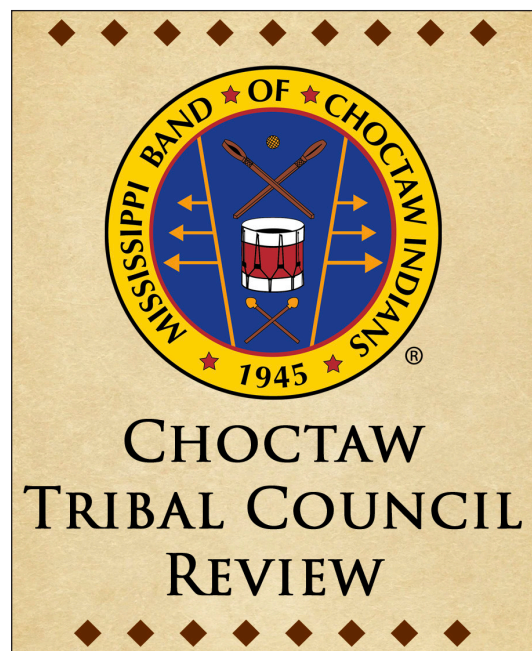
we decide to be better, void of moral turpitude and hate, but rather filled with the kindness, love, and reverence we should express for one another as children of our Creator. As our shared journey continues, as the days ahead arrive at our doorsteps, let us lead with courage and call upon the teachings we have been blessed with to elicit profound conviction, reflecting the values we should all share in common as part of our great-

er American community and as fellow human beings," said USET/USSET SPF Executive Director Kitcki A. Carroll.

This morning, in the aftermath of a winter snowstorm, when the air was still bitterly cold, and as his Administration came to an end, the news was announced that President Biden has commuted the sentence of Leonard Peltier! Perhaps it was apropos on this day that we celebrate the birth of Dr. Mar-

tin Luther King, Jr. who often stated, "the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice." In this case, after over forty-seven years behind bars, the arc finally arrived at the doorstep of justice for Mr. Peltier and his family.

"Our USET/USSET SPF family joins relatives across Indian Country in expressing our gratitude, joy, and relief that Leonard Peltier has been freed from
continued next page



REGULAR CALL MEETING JANUARY 14, 2025

ORDINANCE NO. 25-001, amending Sections §35-1-3 and §35-1-19 of the Limited Liability Company Code, was ENACTED - 15 YES (L. Ahshapanek, R. Anderson, Sr., N. Gibson, A. Hundley, S. John, D. Martin, D. Mingo, H. Nickey, G. Shoemake, R. Sockey, B. Steve, T. Thomas, Sr., K. Wallace, K. Wesley, D. Wilson); 0 NO; 2 ABSENT (C. Eaves & R. Henry, Sr.)

SUMMARY: In accordance with Title XXXV, Chapter 1 of the Choctaw Tribal Code (*Limited Liability Company Code") through the enactment of Ordinance No. 16-III, amendments to sections §35-1-3 Definitions & §35-1-19 Certificate of For-

mation of the Limited Liability Code are necessary to authorize formation of limited liability companies by MBCI's Tribally owned business entities. For more information, please contact the Office of the Attorney General.

ORDINANCE NO. 25-002, amending Title XV of the Choctaw Tribal Code, was ENACTED - 15 YES; 0 NO; 2 ABSENT.

SUMMARY: In accordance with Title XV of the Choctaw Tribal Code ("Gaming Code") through the enactment of Ordinance No. 16-KKKKK, amendments were made to the Gaming Code to incorporate recent regulatory changes, correct spelling errors, & increase the number of commissioners to reflect the addition of a third gaming facility. For more information, please contact the Choctaw Gaming Commission.

RESOLUTION CHO 25-027, confirming the appointment of members to the Tribal Enrollment Committee, was ADOPTED - 15 YES; 0 NO; 2 ABSENT.

SUMMARY: The Resolution approves the confirmation of Rebecca Steve to serve as Chairperson of the Tribal Enrollment Committee & shall serve the remaining term which will expire January 2027; & confirmation of Renata Morris to serve as a member of the Tribal Enrollment Committee & shall serve the remaining term which will expire January 2026. For more information, please contact the Office of Tribal Enrollment.

RESOLUTION CHO 25-028 (B), approving a Land Use Permit for J. Bell in

the Bogue Chitto Community, was ADOPTED - 15 YES; 0 NO; 2 ABSENT.

SUMMARY: The Resolution approves a one-year land use permit to J. Bell in the Bogue Chitto Community. For more information, please contact the Real Estate Program.

RESOLUTION CHO 25-029, approving the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians' Land Use Plan, was ADOPTED - 15 YES; 0 NO; 2 ABSENT.

SUMMARY: The Resolution approves the MBCI's revised land use plan with in collaboration with Choctaw Housing Authority, Choctaw Loan Program, Choctaw Wildlife & Parks, & MBCI's Department of Public Works. For more information, please contact the Real Estate Program.

RESOLUTION CHO 25-030, authorizing Amy Pauls of Mississippi State University to publish doctoral research relating to the Choctaw Tribal Schools, was ADOPTED - 15 YES; 0 NO; 2 ABSENT.

SUMMARY: For more information, please contact the Policy and Legislative Office.

RESOLUTION CHO 25-031, approving the Revised Employee Handbook for the Youth Opportunity Program's Summer Employment Program, was ADOPTED - 15 YES; 0 NO; 2 ABSENT.

SUMMARY: For more information, please contact the Youth Opportunity Program.

RESOLUTION CHO 25-032, approving the 2025-2026 School Calendar for
continued next page

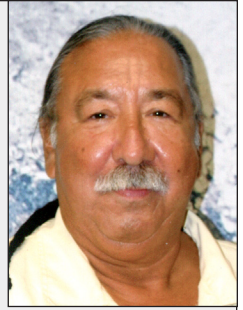
over 47 years of unjust imprisonment. We applaud President Biden and this Administration for its bravery and righteousness in extending clemency to Mr. Peltier in the sunset of his life. Additionally, we express our appreciation to everyone over the years who advocated so strongly for his release. While nothing can truly set right the violation of his rights and decades of wrongful captivity, this action of compassion brings some healing and justice to Mr. Peltier and his family, as well as this painful chapter in the history of Tribal Nation-United States relations,"

said USET SPF President Kirk Francis.

Today's action to allow Leonard Peltier to serve the remainder of his sentence in home confinement surrounded by family, coupled with the reasons why we celebrate the life and achievements of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. today, is a reminder of the good that is possible, even when it may feel like darkness and storm clouds fill the sky. While today is often a day for quiet reflection, it should equally serve as a resounding call to action...a reminder that anything is possible, even if the arc is long.

Message from Tribal Chief Ben regarding the future release of Indian activist Leonard Peltier

"On the last day of his presidency, when the final pardons and clemencies were announced, I, along with many across Indian Country, was pleased upon hearing that President Biden had commuted the sentence of Leonard Peltier. After 47 years in prison, the activist who fought for Indian rights is finally free. For this to happen on the day we celebrate the birth of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. is truly fitting. It brings to mind Dr. King's words: "We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope," I want to thank President Biden and his Administration for hearing the relentless calls from Indian Country for Peltier's release. Today, we celebrate both his freedom and the enduring legacy of Dr. King."



Choctaw Tribal Schools, was ADOPTED - 15 YES; 0 NO; 2 ABSENT.

SUMMARY: For more information, please contact the Department of Schools.

RESOLUTION CHO 25-033, approving a Memorandum of Understanding between the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians & the Mississippi Forestry Commission, was ADOPTED - 15 YES; 0 NO; 2 ABSENT.

SUMMARY: The Resolution approves the Memorandum of Understanding between the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians & the Mississippi Forestry Commission & the Green Infrastructure Center to use Urban & Community Forestry Assistance Program funding to assist MBCI

with urban & community forestry planning & building local capacity to plant & care for its urban forests. For more information, please contact the Forestry Program.

RESOLUTION CHO 25-034(B), approving 105(1) Lease Agreements & Renewals with the U.S. Department of the Interior, was ADOPTED - 15 YES; 0 NO; 2 ABSENT.

SUMMARY: The Resolution approves the 105(1) lease agreements & renewals with the Department of the Interior for lease compensation in accordance with 25 U.S.C. §5324(1)(2), which requires that the Secretary of the Interior enter into leases with Indian Tribes that either own or have a trust interest in facilities used

to administer & deliver services funded by the U.S. Department of the Interior through self-determination contracts & Tribally Controlled Schools Grants. For more information, please contact the Development Division.

To request a copy of the Resolution and/or attachment, please fill out a request for a Resolution/Ordinance form and submit it to the Policy & Legislative Office at krystina.thompson@choctaw.org or cheriena.ben@choctaw.org.

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

DR. COTTON continued from page one

policy development, budget formulation, and delivery of headquarters programs, services, functions, and activities related to clinical, preventive, and public health services throughout IHS. She has served as acting deputy director of field operations since September 2024.

"I am honored to serve as one of the deputy directors for field operations working in partnership with the area directors for the Albuquerque, Navajo, Oklahoma City, and Tucson Areas to deliver on the

IHS mission," said Dr. Cotton. "In this role, I look forward to executing on a common goal to streamline and maximize operational services."

Dr. Cotton joined the IHS in 2011 as the national sexual assault nurse examiner coordinator and later established the Tribal Forensic Health Care Training Program. In 2013, she became the director for the IHS Division of Behavioral Health, leading a team of professionals in the development of new grant programs, training projects, and initiatives. Before

joining the IHS, she worked as a primary care pediatric nurse practitioner and in several registered nurse roles, including as the emergency department nurse manager for her Tribe's hospital in Choctaw, Mississippi.

Dr. Cotton holds an associate's degree in nursing from Meridian Community College, a bachelor's degree in nursing from the University of Southern Mississippi, a master's degree in nursing from the University of Alabama at Birmingham, and a Doctor of

Nursing Practice degree from Vanderbilt University.

The IHS, an agency in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, provides a comprehensive health service delivery system for approximately 2.8 million American Indians and Alaska Natives who belong to 574 federally recognized tribes in 37 states. Follow the agency via social media on Facebook, X, and LinkedIn.

“Give Kids A Smile” Month

On Monday, Feb. 3, Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben signed a proclamation declaring February as “Give Kids A Smile” Month on Choctaw Tribal lands. In attendance to witness the signing were members of the CHC Dental Department, the CHC leadership team, & several young Tribal members who were dental patients. “Give Kids A Smile” is a program launched nationally in 2003 that provides free dental care to children. Offered by dedicated dentists & dental teams, this initiative aims to improve children's oral health through preventive care, education, & treatment. Not only do we address dental needs, but we also raise awareness about the importance of oral hygiene.



CHC COVID-19 VACCINE INCENTIVE PROGRAM

November 4, 2024 - March 31, 2025

Help Stop The Spread of Winter Flu
And Other Respiratory Diseases

GUIDELINES

- ✓ Individuals aged 6 months and older are eligible to receive the Flu, RSV, and COVID-19 vaccines.
- ✓ We encourage all eligible individuals to receive all three vaccines during the same visit.
- ✓ Incentives are available exclusively for those who receive the COVID-19 vaccine.
- ✓ Vaccine recipients must choose an available incentive item on the day they receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

Thank you for participating in our vaccination program and helping to keep our community safe.



If you have any questions, please call (601) 389-4255



FAQ'S

1. Can I receive the RSV vaccine more than once?

No, the RSV vaccine is administered only once.

2. What if I have taken the vaccine elsewhere?

Please inform us if you have received any of the vaccines at another facility. Individuals who have already been vaccinated are not eligible to receive the vaccine a second time.

3. Am I eligible to receive an incentive if I received the COVID-19 vaccine elsewhere?

No. To qualify for the incentive, you must receive the COVID-19 vaccine at Choctaw Health Center and collect your incentive on the same day.

Thank you for helping us combat the spread of winter flu and other respiratory diseases.



For further assistance, feel free to contact us at (601) 389-4489.

YOUR WELLNESS MATTERS!

Many important preventive screenings were postponed due to safety concerns during the pandemic, but now we're able to refocus on this important aspect of your overall wellness. Our *Wellness Matters* program focuses on preventive care, including screening tests that can check for diseases early, when they may be easier to treat. Schedule an appointment for this important screening today!



Isaac named BARMC Native American Liaison

Baptist Anderson Regional Medical Center (BARMC) recently welcomed Renee Isaac, LMSW, as their Native American Liaison.

Native to the Standing Pine community, Ms. Isaac boasts no barriers in communicating with patients through the Choctaw language. She recently earned her Master of Social Work degree at the



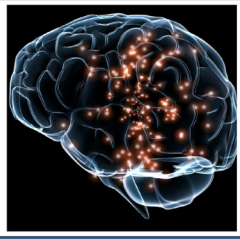
Renee Isaac,
LMSW

University of Southern Mississippi and became a Licensed Master Social Worker (LMSW).

Ms. Isaac also encompasses substantial knowledge of Tribal programs and resources as she was previously employed by the Choctaw Children's Advocacy Center

continued next page

HOW DOES METHAMPHETAMINE AFFECT YOUR BRAIN?



Memory Loss

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Paranoia

Defects in basic motor skills

Increase of aggressive behavior and mood swings

HOW DOES METHAMPHETAMINE AFFECT YOUR BODY?



- Anxiety, confusion, and insomnia
- Severe dental problems "meth mouth"
- Decaying teeth
- Teeth grinding
- High blood pressure leading to heart attacks, strokes, death
- Liver, kidney, and lung damage
- Paranoia, delusions, hallucinations, mood disturbances, or violent behavior
- Permanent damage to the heart and brain
- Weight Loss
- Skin sores
- Intense itching, causing skin sores from scratching

"Sometimes the smallest step in the right direction ends up being the biggest step of your life. Tip toe if you must, but take the step." - Naem Callaway



For more information contact Choctaw Behavioral Health @ 601-389-4151



SDPI PRESENTS: 19th ANNUAL SPRING INTO FITNESS 2 MILE WALK RUN

SATURDAY MARCH 22, 2025

REGISTRATION BEGINS AT 7 AM
RACE BEGINS AT 8 AM

CEYSER FALLS PARKING LOT
(601) 389-4370

PRE-REGISTER DEADLINE
2/28/25 • 4:30 PM

Emergency Response and Overdose Prevention Act



Mississippi House Bill 692

Mississippi House Bill 996

For more information contact Choctaw Behavioral Health 601-389-4150

This flyer was developed under OSF G-64-1-586-0D

and completed an internship at the MBCI Department of Family and Community Services.

As Ms. Isaac's onboarding is now complete, she expresses her enthusiasm to begin assisting and attending the needs of Tribal members at BARMC.

To contact Ms. Isaac, her phone number is 601-553-6000, or email at renee.isaac@BMHCC.org. Her hours are from 7:30 a.m.-4:00 p.m., Monday-Friday. BARMC is located on 2124 14th Street, Meridian, MS.

CTS hosts FLL Tournament

The Choctaw Tribal Schools held the 22nd Annual FIRST LEGO League (FLL) Tournament on Saturday, Feb. 1, at the Pearl River Elementary School Gymnasium.

FLL is a hands-on, interactive engineering program that captivates students' interest in science & technology as they learn problem solving & team building skills. A challenge is released in early fall based on a real-world scientific topic. This year's challenge was called SUBMERGED, as students utilized creative thinking & LEGO technology to explore the layers of the ocean & innovate for a better future with healthy oceans.

Over one hundred students participated in this year's event. Eight teams representing the six participating schools included: Bogue Chitto Ele-

mentary School (BC Aqua Explorers); Conehatta Elementary School (Conehatta Warriors); Pearl River Elementary School (Tushka Chiponta, Loksi Osi, Nita Osi); Red Water Elementary School (Red Bubble Guppies); Standing Pine Elementary School (Native Tech Tigers); & Tucker Elementary School (Tucker Gems).

A team's performance was evaluated based on four equally weighted components, each accounting for 25 percent of the total score. Core Values, Robot Design, and Innovation is evaluated during judging sessions, while the robot performance is evaluated separately during the Robot Game.

An awards ceremony was held at the conclusion of the tournament. The following

see FLL TOURNEY, pg. 8

FLL TOURNEY continued from page seven

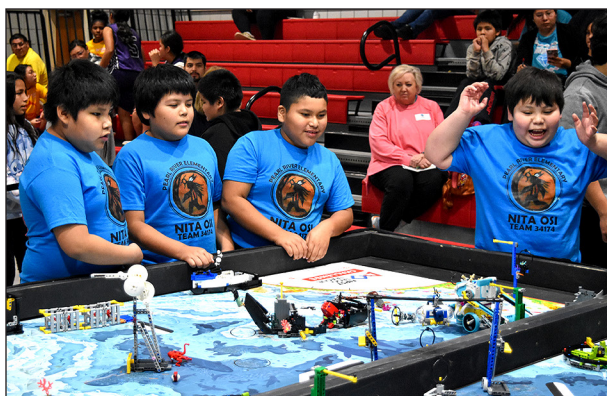
awards were presented.

Robot Performance Award

The Robot Performance Award was presented to Tucker Elementary School's Tucker Gems as their robot achieved the best score on the competition field.

Robot Design Award

The Robot Design Award was presented to Pearl River Elementary School's Nita Osi. This award recognizes a team that designed a mechanically sound robot that was durable, efficient & highly capable of performing challenge missions. The team utilized outstanding programming principles, including clear, concise & reusable code that allowed their robot to perform challenge missions autonomously & consistently. Solid engineering



Eight teams representing six schools from the Choctaw communities participated in this year's event. Teams had three 2.5 minute matches to complete as many missions as possible to acquire points.

principles & a well-developed strategy was used to design & build an innovative, high performing robot.

Innovation Project Award

The Innovation Project Award was presented to Pearl River Elementary School's Loksi Osi for their utilization of diverse resources to for-

mulate an in-depth & comprehensive understanding of the problem they identified. The team's solution was exceptionally well considered & creative, with good potential to solve the problem researched.

This award recognizes a team that effectively communicated the problem & their proposed solution to both judges & other potential supporters.

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Robot Performance Award recipients - Tucker Gems. Team members were Esmaralda Mingo, Vashunti McMillan, Mylah Gibson, A'Ria McMillan, Crisney Perry, Braydon Farmer, Paycen Comby, Lindraya King, & Coaches Kristina Taylor & Jennifer Bounds.



Innovation Project Award recipients - Loksi Osi. Team members were Adelyn Daniel, Zaine Bell, Rainee Billy, Neyalih Dixon, Shohmalali Dixon, Hazelin Joe, Mikel Osceola, Elilee Steve, Cayzrea Stoliby, Hazzen Thomas, Neilani Thompson, Anna'Laiya Tubby, Marin Williams, Eva Willis, Hayes Gordon, & Coach Gloria Seward.



Robot Design Award recipients - Nita Osi. Team members were Tamaloa Bald Eagle, Mylee Ben, Padmae Billie, Teyana Clemons, Ahlaraic Hernandez, Ambriauna Hickman, Jayce Isaac, Riley Isaac, Kylus John, Maydream York, Dakaizlee Clemons, Kashay Charlie, & Coach Gloria Seward.



FLL Core Values Award recipients - Tushka Chiponta. Team members were Jaric Anderson, Manali'l Bald Eagle, Andym Big Pond, A'mi Clemons, Kahlon Edwards, Kady Hickman, Anzaerius Huddleston, Hunter John, Traih'sin John, Iylah King, Payton Meely, Annaleigh Tubby, Dawson Tubby, Jaciryn Vaughn, D'Anthony Willis, Laiya Willis, & Coach Gloria Seward.



Champion's Award recipients - Native Tech Tigers. Team members were Milayla Shomo, Kenaric Cotton, Avery Hardy, Liliana Frazier, Avia Thompson, Jack John, Brayden Sam, Grayson Tangle, Cerulean Lewis, Krailee Chapman, Simuel Sockey, Faith Lewis, Zendency Frazier, Hunter Sam, Violet Farve, Joe Joe, & Coaches Jayasri Mitch & Kaylan Gibson.

FLL Core Values Award

The Core Values Award was presented to Pearl River Elementary School's Tushka Chionta. This award celebrates a team that is empowered by their FLL experience & displayed extraordinary enthusiasm & spirit. They accom-

plished more together than they could as individuals through shared goals, strong communication, effective problem solving, & excellent time management. This team's members showed each other and other teams respect. They recognized that both friendly competition

& mutual gain are possible, on & off the playing field.

Champion's Award

The Champion's Award was presented to Standing Pine Elementary School's Native Tech Tigers. This award recognizes a team that embodies the FLL experience, by fully embracing the CORE Values while achieving excellence & innovation in both the Robot Game & Project.

The Native Tech Tigers will represent the Choctaw Tribal Schools as they advance to the FLL Mississippi Championship in Biloxi on Saturday, March 8.

Special thanks to Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben & Director of Schools Delnita Jones for offering words of encouragement & support during the opening ceremony, Deidre Tubby for singing the National Anthem, Choctaw Veterans Color Guard

members Meritza & Henry Shumake, Jr. for presenting the flags, Pastor Thomas Ben for offering the invocation, and to the volunteers who donated their time, energies, & talents to the Choctaw Tribal Schools' FLL Tournament.

Special thanks also to the following individuals who served as judges: (Robot Design) Paula Covarrubias & Henry Shumake, Jr.; (Project Presentation) Jessica Lewis & Raven Mingo; (Core Values) Emily Bell & Tia Grisham; & Robot Performance referees Matthew C. Bell & Matthew Bell.

Special appreciation to all coaches & technical mentors for the countless hours spent on teaching, facilitating & encouraging the students in this program. Your contributions will have a lasting impact on our "Engineers of Tomorrow."

Students named to 2nd nine-weeks honor rolls

Several schools within the Choctaw Tribal Schools system recently recognized students named to the 2nd nine-weeks honor roll for the 2024-2025 school year. Students recognized on the Chief's List (all A's), Principal's List/Honor Roll (all A's & B's), & Perfect Attendance at their respective schools are listed below.

CHOCTAW CENTRAL MIDDLE SCHOOL

Chief's List

Seventh grade - Karyton Hudson.

Principal's List

Seventh grade - Rodgrick Anderson, Taylor Bacon, Jaiyelynn Bell, Laken Dixon, Lovelle Dixon, Paizley Dixon, Melody Frazier, Jayden Hardy, Caybriana Hickman, Amaya Isaac, Daislin Isaac, Ambraysia Isom, Chrysander Jones, Lai-la Lewis, Mel'Laney Lindsey,

Leim McMillan, Chrisaenn Stoliby, Kyrie Tubby, Destiny Willis, & Kaylene Willis.

Eighth grade -Konley Anderson, Sherman Billie, Wyatt Chickaway, Nevaeh Garcia, Ansen McMillan, Tekhyius Primer, Khanzlee Richardson, Amee Stell, & Arizona Willis.

Perfect Attendance

Seventh grade - Taylor Bacon & Destiny Willis.

Eighth grade -Wyatt Chickaway, Easlin Nickey, & Aryana Sam.

PEARL RIVER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Chief's List

First grade - Ky'Emri Bell, Zavion Hickman, Kayleigh Isaac, Janaya Jim, Koi Morris, Armani Tubby, Harmony Dixon, Eason Hickman, Landon Johnson, Elanna Tubby, Honoree Lewis, Esther Wilson, Samarion Wilson, Mattie Mon-

toya, Kheita Samuel, & Simeon Willis.

Second grade - Imayya Alex, Torrence Farmer, Maegan Hernandez, Majesty Isaac, Emma Johnson, Karalane Willis, Liam Willis, Nevaeh Dixon, Maelyn Henry, Kohen Routh, De'andre Tubby, Ivyona Tubby, Marcin Billy, Alaire Ketcher, Aeston Martin, Onnesy McMillan, Jaysa Gibson, Natalie Jim, Daylen Rodriguez, & Rayen Willis.

Third grade - Jayden Anderson, Zayvier Wesley, Kaison Thomas, Carly Baker, & Aceton Willis.

Fourth grade - Tamatoa Bald Eagle, Mylee Ben, Jayce Isaac, Xaiden Leach, Hamaya Morris, Jaylon Williams, Christopher Barojas, Dakaizlee Clemons, Teyana Clemons, Kodchakorn (Padmae) Billie, & Kaycson Clemons.

Fifth grade - Neyalih Dixon, Marin Williams, Eva Willis,

Hayes Gordon, Rainee Bily, Shohmalali Dixon, Mi'Kel Osceola, Elilee Steve, & Anna'Laiya Tubby.

Sixth grade - Mana Bald Eagle, Kady Hickman, Iylah King, Laiya Willis, A'mi Clemmons, Anzaerius Huddleston, Xavian John, Jaciryn Vaughn, D'Anthony Willis.

Principal's List

First grade - Zailey Davis, Qeyahli Grant, Arrow McMillan, Oakley Willis, Ericson Bell, Zayvian Denson, Bella Jimmie, Malakai McMillan, Cyan Thompson, Armoni Anderson, Z'Davion Frazier, Phoebe Gibson, Roman Lewis, Skyler Shumake, Creighton Thomas, Emmarie Tubby, Kroy Anderson, J'than Cotton, Blakelyn Deon, Paistyn Dixon, Madelynn Frazier, Kaydreus Gibson, Ella Hickman, Otter Shore, Madden Stell, & Aivlyn Tubby.

see HONOR ROLL, pg. 10

HONOR ROLL continued from page seven

Second grade - Chloe Dixon, Zaraylie Tubby, Lawson Williams, Gabriel Brown, Shantel Clemons, Pailyn Eaves, Na'Tyah Gibson, Juana Pablo-Lewis, Tushkahoma Thomas, Haiden Willis, Amiracle Edwards, Gracelyn Frazier, Alayna Jim, Kelcedi John, Traiy'tin John, Kamila Pablo-Lewis, Anilah Tubby, Khyon Williams, Maeleanna Williams, Koi Bell, Zabdiel Felipe, Sydney Isaac, Telayli Smith, Wyatt Stoliby, Kazyon Willis, & Adonai York.

Third grade - Semaycelynn Bell, Hayden Dixon, Kysen Dixon, Ayame Jim, Beth Lewis, Ashmariah McMillan, Adriel Mitch, Amarion Wesley, Calvin Willis, Im'unique Allen, Tayzlynn Hickman, Khalani Isaac, Remington Isaac, Hush-toposhik McMillan, Alston Meely, Knoxx Bell, Kleilali Dixon, Kemper Stafford, Jacoby Tubby, Sharnellaya Tubby, Keyon Willis, William Wilson, Denaje Bell, Arlando Bigpond, Shelnaliya Frazier, Cadence Meely, Aviona Tubby, & Josie Wallace.

Fourth grade - Ashlynn McMillan, Lane Willis, May-Dream York, Cecin Anderson, John Luke Billy, Braycen Cutler, Kaylee McMillan, Cainen Reynolds, Javonni Willis, Baylan Buffalomeat, Tyson Gibson, Kason Isaac, Bryson John, Kyler Willis, J'Hazlyn Bell, Ahlaric Hernandez, Riley Isaac, Kylus John, Kaeden Marshall, & Kaiseton Shell.

Fifth grade - Saniyah Nickey, Cayzrea Stoliby, Lyla Tubby, Jakaus Bell, Xaelianna Charlie, Adelyn Daniel, Alice Ferris, Bryceton John, Collyns McMillan, Liliana Thompson, Charlee Wallace, Dreyne Williams, Zaine Bell, Kolvin Isaac, Hazelin Joe, Bryden Lewis, Kawhi York, Okshomichi Bell, Madalynn Jimmie, Mariah McBeath, Hazzen Thomas, Neilani Thompson, & Nolan Willis.

Sixth grade - Natanya Allen, Andym Bigpond, Jaythan Dixon, Khalon Edwards, Paeton Gibson, Traih' sin John, D'Analyn Bell, Jayzn Dixon, Amyree Johnson, Kyzler Nick-ey, Felicianna Orduno, Dawson

Tubby, E'miley Tubby, Kazden Ben, Deonte Isaac-Carter, Jordana Polk, Chanceton Shoemake, Annaleigh Tubby, Jaric Anderson, Jr., Truin Dixon, Becca Isaac, Hunter John, Payton Meely, Alicia Stell, & Randalin Wilson.

**RED WATER
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Chief's List**

Demeyah Johnson, Eliza Tangle, Jerrion Willis, Isabelle Flint, Serena Tubby, & Jadyn Joe.

Principal's List

Na'lijah Amos, Dennis Dixon, Gunner Grisham, Jakyrie Lewis, Michael Lyons, Jr., Lincoln Sockey, Lynlee Bell, Maila Chickaway, A'annah Evans, Atticus Jim, Bentley Lyons, Alaneya Willis, Hazlyn Willis, Aiyanna Chandler, Kyson Gibson, Landry Wilson, Macey Davis, Miley Dixon, Priceton Gibson, Ellynn Grisham, Zaenillah Lopez, Caiden Sampson, Zayden Willis, Helena Gibson, Ja'Zairen Solomon, Maizelyn Chickaway, Zuri

Flint, Bayleigh Nickey, Cayson Willis, Ginger Burnside, Kajun Burnside, & Nylah Wilson.

**TUCKER ELEMENTARY
SCHOOL
Chief's List**

First grade - Kayden Billy, Ava Gibson, Vatinna Isaac, Kayelin McMillan, Caroline Sikes, Trevor Tubby, Jacaiya Willis, & Vyla Willis.

Second grade - Easley Charlie, Carter Dixon, John Chase Isaac, Asylem Jefferson, Zoey Jim, Bonnie Orellana, La' Deidra Orellana, Kelise Perry, MaTayiah Stokes, & Julyssa Willis.

Third grade - Necie Charlie, Bresaya Isaac, Kasey Nickey, & Cliff Willis, Jr.

Fifth grade - Arialyn Henry & Carter York.

Seventh grade - Lindraya King.

Eighth grade - Logan Denson.

Principal's List

First grade - Cobain Martin, Tamia Taylor, & Bri' naylin Thomas.

Second grade - KoiDe Isaac, Bryncess Thomas, Darrell Thomas, Jr., & Noah Tubby.

Fourth grade - Kennedi Fields, Keilani Gibson, Taylia Henry, Cooper Jefferson, Eve Lewis, Faithlyn Mingo, & Rhyus York.

Fifth grade - Karson Bell, James Polk, Liam Thomas, & Lai'Lee Wallace.

Sixth grade - Jayston Bollin, Paycen Comby, Braydon Farmer, Mylah Gibson, Gabriel Hilario, A'Ria McMillan, Crisney Perry, Brayden Sam, & Bella Steve.

Seventh grade - Greatone Ben, Taylee Charlie, Madelynn Henry, Pepper Jones, Elliana Tubby, & Camila Claire Willis.

Eighth grade - Vashunti McMillan & Esmaralda Mingo.

SPELLING BEE continued from page one

(Pearl River Elementary School, PRES) - Ambriauna Hickman, 4th grade; Kady Hickman, 6th grade; Kyzler Nickey, 6th grade.

(Red Water Elementary School, RWES) - Nylah Wilson, 7th grade; Jadyn Joe, 8th grade; Aleyah Lyons, 8th grade.

(Standing Pine Elementary School, SPES) - Grayson Tangle, 5th grade; Cerulean Lewis, 5th grade; Braden Sam, 5th grade.

(Tucker Elementary School, TES) - Ariana Charlie, 7th grade; Pepper Jones, 7th grade; Lindraya King, 7th grade (overall winner).

Student Hezekiah Ben offered the invocation during the opening ceremony as the Pledge of Allegiance was led by students Mylee Ben, Padmae Billie, Kylus John, Xaiden Leach, & Kyler Willis.

After a welcome from PRES Principal Suzanne Hyatt, remarks & words of encourage-

ments were offered by Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben.

LeAnn Boswell serves as District Spelling Bee Coordinator. School spelling bee coordinators include: Debora McMahon, BCES; Joshua Sheehan, CES; Susie Henry, CCMS; Donna Crawford, PRES; Jennifer McMillon, RWES; Deidre Tubby, SPES; & Pam Breland, TES.

CCHS English instructor Andy Hardy served as pronouncer. Judges were Kendall Grisham, Amy Pauls, & Allen Peoples.

Because of an increase in the Scripps Bee enrollment, a Semi-Final Online Competition qualifier round was added to this year's Mississippi Spelling Bee. Semi-finals will include the top three spellers from counties across the state. The top 20-25 spellers will advance to the in-person Mississippi Spelling Bee state competition in Columbus on March 21-22.

Lady Braves, Warriors win CTS basketball titles

The Red Water Elementary School Lady Braves and Choctaw Central Middle School Warriors claimed this year's championships in the Choctaw Tribal Schools' 7th-8th Grade Basketball Tournament finals, held at Choctaw Central High School's gymnasium on Thursday, January 16.

The Lady Braves defeated the Choctaw Central Lady Warriors 44-28 to complete the perfect season with a 13-0 record. The Warriors battled the Conehatta Choctaws into OT

before coming away with a 58-46 victory.

In his first year as Red Water Lady Braves head coach, William Gray, said it was a great win, especially this being their first Tribal Schools girls championship.

"This was really big. This group set in their mind from August that this was their goal, to win this last game. We knew if we just take care of the ball, we had the best opportunity to win. We knew it was going to be a challenge coming here.

Any time you play Choctaw Central in this gym, it's always a challenge, but our girls were confident. They knew what they could do, and they showed it tonight."

Red Water earned a berth in the championship game with their semifinal win over Conehatta Lady Choctaws 41-18 on Jan. 15. Choctaw Central defeated Bogue Chitto Lady Braves 20-10 in the other semifinal contest.

Red Water never trailed in the contest as they jumped out to

an early 4-0 lead until a Choctaw Central basket cut the lead to 2. Red Water then went on a 7-0 run until Choctaw Central ended the first quarter scoring 5 unanswered points to trail Red Water 11-7.

The Red Water defense stifled the Choctaw Central offense as they were held to a field goal in the 2nd quarter as Red Water scored 8 to take a 19-9 lead into halftime.

Choctaw Central cut the lead to 8 with a basket to start the see **CTS TOURNEY, pg. 12**



CTS GIRLS CHAMPIONS - RED WATER LADY BRAVES team members include (in no order) Chaylea Kopaddy, Reagan Willis, Genisia Shumake, Jadyn Joe, Addison Willis, A'Dronai Lewis, Kaylynn Willis, Nylah Wilson, Lyla Gibson, & Summer Lewis. Also pictured are Head Coach William Gray, Assistant Coach Christina Wilson, RWES Principal Elter Wilson, & Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben.



CTS BOYS CHAMPIONS - CHOCTAW CENTRAL WARRIORS team members include (in no order) Jaston Bell, Bryson Billie, Sherman Billie, Wyatt Chickaway, Jayleb Dixon, Cameron Gibson, Benjamin Gomez, Kraedon Jim, Ansen McMillan, Tekhyius Primer, Cameron Truss, Nico Wesley, & Rainen Willis. Also pictured is Head Coach Jimmy Tangle, CCMS Principal Shannon Smith, & Chief Ben.



CTS GIRLS FINALIST - CHOCTAW CENTRAL LADY WARRIORS team members include (in no order) Kalyana Allen, Falcia Ben, Tenayah Shoemake, Karsyn Wallace, Paizley Dixon, Alaysia Dixon, Tarlaysha Dixon, Khloe Farve, Nevaeh Garcia, Jaden Isaac, Brooke Thomas, Kyra Tubby, Mel'Laney Lindsey, Sanaeya Martin, Caybriana Hickman, & Eleanor Smith. Also pictured is Head Coach Kristen McBeath, CCMS Principal Shannon Smith, & Chief Ben.



CTS BOYS FINALIST - CONEHATTA CHOCTAWS team members include (in no order) Jayce Solomon, Zahyce Bell, Elliot Wishork, Zerious Shoemake, Mikal Anderson, Cedric Williams, Carson Jimmie, Conner Anderson, Eli Williamson, Benzley Davis, Day-sen Shoemake, Elias Williamson, Aleric Thomas, Jaydon Evans, Taio Thomas, & Alex Smith. Also pictured are Head Coach Willa Thomas, CES Principal Brian Parkman, & Chief Ben.

CTS TOURNEY continued from page eleven

3rd quarter, but Red Water came back on a 8-0 run to go up by 16. Choctaw Central cut the lead as they went on a 7-0 run before trading baskets to close out the quarter trailing 32-20.

Red Water held a 12-8 advantage in the fourth as they concluded their perfect season with a 44-28 victory.

"I'm thankful for the opportunity to coach this group of girls and doing this for the school and the community of Red Water. It means all the world to us," said Coach Gray.

All-Tournament selection Reagan Willis had a game high 16 points for Red Water while teammate Genisia Shumake had 12 points and was named game MVP.

Addison Willis and Chaylea

Kopaddy scored 4 points each, A'Dronai Lewis and Lyla Gibson each added a 3-pointer, & Nyla Wilson a basket for Red Water.

For Choctaw Central, Kalyana Allen scored a team high 7 points, followed by Karsyn Wallace & Paizley Dixon with 6 each, Teneyah Shoemake 5, and a basket each by Khloe Farve & Mel' Laney Lindsey. Shoemake and Farve were both selected to the All-Tournament team.

Other selections to the All-Tournament Team were Carlee Henry of Bogue Chitto and Jaycee Shoemake of Conehatta.

To earn a berth in the boys' championship game, Choctaw Central defeated Bogue Chitto Braves 36-18 in the first semifinal game on Jan. 15, followed by Conehatta Choctaws' victory over Red Water Braves 28-9

in the other semifinal contest.

Warriors coach Jimmy Tangle knew coming into the contest that Conehatta would be a formidable opponent.

"Conehatta came ready to play. They were well prepared and we knew that coming into the tournament. We prepared as well and did an excellent job. But I have to give my hats off to them, they were pretty good."

After going head to head in the opening quarter, the game was tied at 7-7 heading into the 2nd quarter.

Choctaw Central went on an offensive tear as they took a 17-3 advantage into halftime with a 24-10 lead.

Momentum shifted in the 3rd quarter as Conehatta stormed back as they went on a 27-9 advantage and a 37-33 lead into the 4th quarter.

Choctaw Central chipped at the lead until they tied the game 42-42 with :24 seconds left. The Warriors regained the lead with :6 seconds remaining, but Conehatta made a running layup at the buzzer for a 44-44 tie at the end of regulation.

Heading into overtime, Coach Tangle told his players to calm down, be focused & be mentally tough.

"I told them to do what we're supposed to do, since it is the

beginning of a new ballgame. They executed well, had some turnovers, but overall they pulled together and got the job done."

In overtime, the Warriors traded baskets with Conehatta before scoring 12 unanswered points for a 58-46 win and a championship.

"Coming into the season, these boys they worked real hard. We had to stay focused throughout the season & you can see what the results were. The boys did very well," said Coach Tangle.

Ansen McMillan had a team high 14 points for the Warriors as teammate Jayleb Dixon had 13 points and was selected game MVP. Cameron Gibson had 11 points and was named to the All-Tournament Team.

Also scoring for the Warriors were Rainen Willis with 8, Kraedon Jim 4, Jaston Bell 3, Nico Wesley and Cameron Truss 2 each, and Bryson Billie with a point.

For Conehatta, Elliot Wishork had a game high 21 points, followed by Cedric Williams who had 8. Both were named to the All-Tournament Team.

Also scoring for the Choctaws were Daysen Shoemake and Carson Jimmie with 6

continued next page



Chief Ben presented MVP awards to Red Water's Genisia Shumake (above) & Choctaw Central's Jayleb Dixon (right)



CTS All-Tournament Teams were announced during the post-game ceremony. They included (in no order): **(GIRLS)** Reagan Willis, RWES; Teneyah Shoemake & Khloe Farve, CCMS; Carlee Henry, BCES; & Jaycee Shoemake, CES. MVP was Genisia Shumake,



RWES; **(BOYS)** Cameron Gibson, CCMS; Cedric Williams & Elliott Wishork, CES; Jalen Gibson, RWES; & Elgin Amos, BCES. MVP was Jayleb Dixon, CCMS. Presenting the medals were Chief Ben, far right, & Choctaw Central Athletic Director Brent Farmer, far left.

points each, Mikal Anderson 3, and Connor Anderson 2.

Other selections to the All-Tournament Team were Jalen Gibson of Red Water and Elgin Amos of Bogue Chitto.

"It's great to see these young people showing their pride, not only for their community, but also for the Tribe as they're representing all of the Choctaw Tribal Schools," said Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben.

"Tonight, we saw a great girls game that battled to the end.

In the boys game, we watched what we thought was going to be a run away in the second, but Conehatta roared back in the third quarter. It was a great finale in regulation, pushing it to overtime. That's what you want to see, any athlete that's giving it all they have. Congratulations to each student-athlete, the coaches and their community for supporting them. What a great way to end their middle school season!"

MBCI athletes play in All-Star football game

Two Tribal student-athletes representing the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians participated in the 2025 Native American All-Star Football Game on Jan. 7 at the Ford Center at The Star in Frisco, Texas, world headquarters of the Dallas Cowboys.

Cruz Wilson, a senior at Choctaw Central High School, and Trajan Isaac, a senior at Spring Hill High School in Columbia, Tenn., were two of 60 Native American high school football players selected from across the U.S. to participate in the game.

The game was produced by the Native American Athletic Foundation (NAAF), in partnership with the National Football League (NFL) and Nike. From Jan. 3-7, participants gathered at The Star for high-quality coaching, college preparation, leadership training, life skills and positive coping tools, all designed to inspire and prepare them for future success.

Both Wilson and Isaac were on Team Wa-Ya as they defeated Team Ta'Tanka 37-34 in OT for the victory.

"We are excited and honored to work with the NFL to make

an impact in the lives of Native athletes," said Michael Stopp, Executive Director, NAAF. "Our organization was established to use sports to develop the next generation of leaders in Indian Country. This partnership and this year's game take an important step forward in meeting our mission."

As the world headquarters and practice facility of the Dallas Cowboys, the Ford Center provides a once-in-a-lifetime experience for these young people, many of whom are traveling from Tribal reservations in remote areas. Playing on the same field as NFL professionals will help reinforce their commitment to sports, education, and community leadership.

"The Native American All-Star Football Game provides a unique opportunity to celebrate the diversity and talent within our game while fostering the development of the next generation of leaders," said Roman Oben, NFL vice president of football development. "Through this partnership, we aim to create a lasting impact by giving Native athletes the same opportunities to succeed both on and off the field. This



17th ANNUAL CHOCTAW CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL SPRING INTER-TRIBAL POW-WOW

Friday & Saturday, March 14-15, 2025
Pearl River Recreation Softball Field • Choctaw, MS

FREE ADMISSION • POW-WOW OPENS TO THE PUBLIC AT 9:00 AM FRIDAY & SATURDAY

HEAD STAFF

MC: Cubert Bell
ARENA DIRECTOR: Kirk McMillan
HEAD MAN: Bonifacio Hernandez
HEAD LADY: Celia Isaac

HEAD GIRL: Lexi Rodriguez
HEAD BOY: Ajay Lewis
HEAD GOURD: Victor Isaac

HOST DRUM: BLUE NATION

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

FRIDAY

9:00 TO 11:00 AM – Choctaws got TALENT contest (If you have talent come show it)	12:00 Noon TO 2:00 PM – Committee Auction
11:00 TO 12:00 Noon – Flute Music – James D. Willis	3:00 TO 4:00 PM – CCHS Social Dancing
2:00 TO 3:00 PM – Hand Drum Contest	4:00 TO 6:00 PM – CCHS POW-WOW PRINCESS Contest Registration
4:00 TO 5:00 PM – Blue Nation Inter-Tribal Singing	6:30 TO 7:00 PM – PRINCESS CONTEST
5:00 TO 6:00 PM – Gourd Dancing	
6:00 TO 10:00 PM – GRAND ENTRY and Dancing	

PRINCESS CONTESTANTS (ages 14 yrs. old to 21 yrs. old) MUST BE PART OF FRIDAY EVENING GRAND ENTRY

SATURDAY

9:00 TO 11:00 AM – Gospel Singing – Adam Bell	11:00 TO 12:00 Noon – Gourd Dancing
12 Noon TO 3:00 PM – Grand Entry	3:00 TO 5:00 PM – Committee Auction
4:00 TO 5:00 PM – Dinner Break	5:00 TO 6:00 PM – Gourd Dancing
6:00 TO 10:00 PM – GRAND ENTRY	

ALL DANCERS, VENDORS, DRUMMERS & ROYALTIES WELCOME!
PLEASE BE RESPECTFUL AND DO NOT BRING DRUGS & ALCOHOL!

For more information, contact:
Randall Chickaway, 601.480.3261 • Ralph Isaac, 601.741.0021 • Rowena York, 601.663.7715



Cruz Wilson (#3) & Trajan Isaac (#10) were members of Team Wa-Ya as they defeated Team Ta'Tanka 37-34 with a field goal in OT.

also reflects the NFL's commitment to building character, promoting inclusivity and strengthening communities across the country."

Nike provided uniforms for the football game and camp as part of its efforts to grow the game of football, and sport in general, among Native American and Indigenous youth – a core tenet of its ongoing Nike N7 efforts.

"As a champion for athletes and sport, Nike is committed

to building inclusive communities, breaking down barriers to access for athletes around the world, and expanding sport for the next generation," said Scott Henson, Nike brand director.

The NAAF, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, is dedicated to creating athletic and educational opportunities for Native youth. The NAAF aims to shape future generations by building resilience and character both on the field and in their Tribal communities.

SENIOR NIGHT 2025

Newton County Senior Night

Newton County High School held Senior Night activities for basketball on Friday, Jan. 17. Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben & Choctaw Indian Princess Leilani Elyse Allen recognized Tribal student-athlete & Cougar senior, Dasan King, & presented him with a gift. Congratulations & best wishes on your future endeavours.



Neshoba Central Seniors Honored

ABOVE, Neshoba Central High School held Senior Night activities for basketball on Friday, Jan. 17, 2025. Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben & Choctaw Indian Princess Leilani Elyse Allen recognized Tribal student-athletes & presented gifts to Lady Rocket senior Lanayah Henry & Rocket senior Laysin Williams. RIGHT, Chief Ben presented a senior recognition gift to Tribal student-athlete & Rocket soccer senior Lucas Maxwell-McArthur. He has been on the soccer team since he was in the eighth grade. Congratulations & best wishes on their future endeavours.



Nanhi Waiya Senior Night

Nanhi Waiya Attendance Center held Senior Night activities on Friday, Jan. 24, 2025. Senior members of the Lady Warriors & Warriors basketball teams were recognized as Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben was in attendance to present gifts to Tribal student-athletes on the teams. Amongst the seniors honored included Warrior Josh Gonzalez, & Lady Warriors Nyshea Hoskin & Haiden Anderson. Congratulations & best wishes & success on your future endeavours.

Kosciusko Senior Night

Kosciusko High School held Senior Night activities on Wednesday, Jan. 22, 2025. Asa Jimmie, on behalf of Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben, was in attendance to present a gift to Tribal student-athlete Alleiyah Butler, a senior on the Lady Whippets basketball team. Congratulations to her on her senior year & best wishes on her future endeavours.



Choctaw Central Senior Night

Choctaw Central High School held Senior Night activities for several sports on Friday, Jan. 31, 2025. Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben & Choctaw Indian Princess Leilani Elyse Allen were joined by coaches as they presented gifts to Tribal student-athletes. Several seniors were honored in multiple sports. Seniors recognized in their respective sports included: (**Lady Warriors Bowling**) Aiyanna Fraizer, Lachantay Jefferson, & Evelyn Tubby; (**Warriors Bowling**) Damien Billie & Abram Isaac; (**Lady Warriors Powerlifting**) Anesha Chapman & Sissy Phillips; (**Warriors Powerlifting**) Sanjaya Chickaway & Keagan Henry; (**Lady Warriors Soccer**) Gillion Eaves, Desiny Hickman, Khyal Johnson, Dayanara Lopez, Raiyleigh Perry, & Akaylin Bell; (**Warriors Soccer**) Damien Billie, Christian Davis, Abram Isaac, Stonewall King, Alexaviar Thompson, & Anthony Tubby; (**Lady Warriors Basketball**) Brecailyn Billy, Raiyleigh Perry, & Karidee Willis; (**Warriors Basketball**) Alex Argueta, Keyshawn Ben, Chance Briscoe, Zylie Clemons, Andre Dan, Kaden Edwards, & Jamari Wesley. Congratulations to all these student-athletes & best wishes & continued success on their future endeavors!



LADY WARRIORS BOWLING

photos continued next page



WARRIORS BOWLING



LADY WARRIORS BASKETBALL



LADY WARRIORS POWERLIFTING



WARRIORS BASKETBALL



WARRIORS POWERLIFTING



LADY WARRIORS SOCCER



WARRIORS SOCCER

Heads to Bowling Championships



ABOVE, Congratulations to the Choctaw Central High School Warriors Bowling Team as they captured the Class I Central Regional Championship & earned a berth in the MHSAA Class I State Bowling Championships on Thursday, Jan. 30, at Fannin Lanes in Brandon. The Warriors placed fifth overall. Team members include (in no order) Damien Billie, Abram Isaac, Seth Lewis, Hayden Willis, Malloy Williams, Ladainian Isom, Brandon Lewis, Cameron Truss, & Angel Willis. Also pictured is Coach Kendall Steve & Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben. **BELOW,** Congratulations to Tribal student-athletes & Neshoba Central High School Lady Rockets & Rockets Bowling Team members Isla Tangle & Zaymian Williamson as both teams won the Class II Central Regional Championships to earn a berth in the MHSAA Class II State Bowling Championships at Fannin Lanes in Brandon on Friday, Jan. 31. The Lady Rockets placed 4th overall & the Rockets placed 3rd. Congratulations to all!



NASA Tourney Results

The 2025 Native American Sports Association (NASA) Basketball Tournament was held in Choctaw, Miss., Jan. 16-18. Nearly 70 teams participated in women's & men's divisions in three age categories (18+, 40+, & Trailblazers 50+). Championship games were held at the Pearl River Community Gymnasium & Choctaw Central High School Gymnasium. Congratulations to the following champions & finalists in the following divisions. (TRAILBLAZERS) Women's champion - GWY; finalist - Hoop Angels; Men's champion - The Aftermath (Red Storm); finalist - Choctaw Legends. (40+) Women's champion - Hoop Angels; finalist - Sharp Shooters; Men's champion - Has Beens; finalist - Mambas; (18+) Women's champion - Team Hustle; finalist - Tenacity; Men's champion - Eight Clans; finalist - IDM. Congratulations to all the winners & finalists!



Wesley to be inducted into North American Indigenous Athletics Hall of Fame

By: Brian Ogden, MSU
Associate Director/
Communications

STARKVILLE – Former Mississippi State softball pitcher Aspen Wesley will be inducted into the North American Indigenous Athletics Hall of Fame this summer, the organization announced. Wesley's induction ceremony is scheduled for Saturday, June 7, in Green Bay, Wisconsin.

A graduate of Mississippi State and member of the softball program from 2020-24, Wesley was the first member of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians to pitch in the SEC. She closed her career among

the top 10 in school history in career strikeouts, wins, shutouts and appearances.

The 2024 campaign capped her career in highlight-reel fashion. She earned Second Team All-SEC honors after being named the National Pitcher of the Week twice and setting MSU records for the most wins and shutouts in SEC play in a single year. Along the way, she threw State's first no-hitter in conference play since 2013 and became the first Bulldog to hold opponents to a batting average below .200 in league games.

Wesley went on to play professionally with the Texas Monarchs in the WPF this

summer where she was named an all-star. She is currently playing professionally in New Zealand.

The North American Indigenous Athletics Hall of Fame (NAIAHF) honors and recognizes the indigenous sport cultures of 27 countries of North America by recognizing outstanding leadership and achievement in individual and team athletics. By honoring and celebrating the empowered journey of the annually inducted individuals and teams, the hope is their stories may inspire future generations to follow their dreams in athletics and life.

Inductees are recognized



and honored, past and present, as Indigenous to North America including but not limited to Tribal, First Nation, Métis, Inuit, including federally recognized and self-identified descendant in the listed categories throughout the year.

Nominations are accepted for individuals in seven categories: athlete, coach, team, builder, media, official and trainer.



Women's 40+ Division Champions - Hoop Angels



Women's 40+ Division Finalist - Sharp Shooters



Men's 40+ Division Champions - Has Beens



Men's 40+ Division Finalist - Mambas



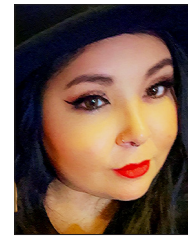
Women's Division Champions - Team Hustle



SAVANNAH BLAIR HENRY

Funeral service for Savannah Blair Henry, 32, was held on Wednesday, January 8, 2025, at Tucker CERF Building. Bro. Eddie Johnson officiated.

Burial was in Holy Rosa-ry Catholic Cemetery. John



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

Ms. Henry passed away on Jan. 2 at Providence Hospital in Mobile, AL.

She enjoyed watching movies, playing games, whether at the casino, board games or arcade games. She worked at Pearl River Resort for 7 years as a cocktail server where she made many friends.

see **OBITUARIES**, pg. 18



Women's Division Finalist - Tenacity



Men's Division Champions - Eight Clans



Men's Division Finalist - IDM

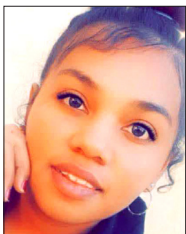
OBITUARIES continued from page seventeen

She is preceded in death by her mother, Beth Henry; & sister, Gwendalyn Leann Simpson.

Survivors include her daughter, Madelynn Henry; son, Oliver Carr; father, Jerome Henry; sisters, Fallon Vasquez & Jasmine Henry; brothers, Miles Henry, Jeremy Henry & Jeremiah Henry; very special people, Jeremy Bell & Courtney Rivers; & numerous nieces, nephews, & friends.

SHALONDA LATRICE TUBBY

Funeral services for Shalonda Latrice Tubby, 30, was held on Monday, January 13, 2025, at Hope Indian Baptist Church in Pearl River. Deacon Williamson Isaac & Rev. Ricky Thompson, Sr. officiated.



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

Ms. Tubby passed away on Jan. 9 in Neshoba County.

She was a resident of Pearl River community & enjoyed being with her children, family, & friends, & making jokes.

She is preceded in death by her grandparents, Ann Tubby, & Truzzle & Ruthie Luckett; great-grandparents, Bates & Lillie Clemons, George & Mary Willis-Tubby; aunts, Bertha Luckett, Sandra Tubby, & Sally McWilliams; nephew, Marc Talley; & a cousin, Sean Tubby.

Survivors include her parents, Sandy Tubby & A.J. Luckett; daughters, Armani Tubby & Teria Shell; sons, Ja'Qualin Clemmons, Tre'lin Tubby, & Ta'Corey Shell; sisters, Leandra Talley, Shamicka Tubby & Bertha Joe; brothers, Sheldon Tubby & Anthony

Tubby; grandfather, Presley Tubby; aunts, Jennifer Arreola, Rene Luckett, Shirley Reen Luckett, & Shirley Ruth Simpson; uncles, Patrick Tubby, Eric Tubby, Robert Tubby, & Roy Luckett; & a host of nieces, nephews, relatives, & friends.

ANDREW SHAUN GIBSON

Funeral services for Andrew Shaun Gibson, 33, was held on Thursday, January 23, 2025, at Conehatta CERF Building. Pastor Thomas Ben and Pastor Tim Tubby officiated.



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

Mr. Gibson passed away on Jan. 10 at his residence in Topeka, Kan.

He grew up in the Conehatta community & graduated from Riverside Indian School in Okla. He attended Haskell Indian Nations University in Lawrence, Kan. He was employed at Subway. He had a sense of humor & loved to sing, dance, make TikTok videos, baby sitting, being with friends, & talking on the phone.

He is preceded in death by his grandparents, Nuga G. Swimer, Patrick Twiss, Jesse Williams, & Winona Williams; aunts, Deana Farve Chickaway & Wynema Williams; & an uncle, Reggie Williams.

Survivors include his parents, Angela P. Twiss Bell & Arman Williams; brothers, Dyron Gibson & Nikko King; special aunt, Cassandra Michelle Twiss; aunts, Priscilla Twiss, Nicole Twiss, Beatrice Diane Sam, & Marjean Williams;

uncles, Martin Smith & Jesse James Williams; & a host of relatives & friends.

CARY HICKMAN

Funeral services for Cary Hickman, 67, was held on Saturday, January 18, 2025, at Bogue Chitto CERF Building. Rev. Charles Doby Henry officiated.



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

Mr. Hickman passed away on Jan. 14 at Choctaw Health Center in Choctaw.

Known as "Agon," he was born in Mississippi but grew up in Ripley, Tenn., in the Gold-dust community. He enjoyed visiting his home community of Bogue Chitto. He lived in Memphis, Tenn., for several years before moving back to Bogue Chitto in 2016. He enjoyed working on vehicles when he was younger, fishing, telling jokes, playing pool, helping out during wakes, & listening to music. He worked at several plants, temp agencies in Tenn., & being a caregiver.

He is preceded in death by his wife, Angela Hickman; parents, Homer Sam Hickman & Nola Thompson; sisters, Clara Hickman & Adelaide Jackson; brothers, Robert Hickman, Dewayne Hickman, & 2 twin boys; a niece, Noranna Davis; & nephews, Chris Johnson & Donald Hickman.

Survivors include his daughters, Amber Hickman & Allison Joe; son Andrew Hickman; sisters, Reba Jo Lewis & Vivian Ben; 10 grandchildren, 1 great-grandchild, 4 nieces, 4 nephews, 20 great-nieces &

nephews, & a host of relatives & friends.

JASPER NOAH BELL

Funeral services for Jasper Noah Bell, 24, was held on Friday, January 24, 2025, at Bogue Chitto CERF Building. Deacon Kendall Wallace & Bro. Jordan Kanagy officiated.



Burial was in Nanih Waiya Mennonite Cemetery. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Mr. Bell passed away on Jan. 19 at Choctaw Health Center in Choctaw.

He was a resident of Bogue Chitto community & attended Nanih Waiya Mennonite Church. He is a 2019 graduate of Sherman Indian High School in Riverside, CA, where he ran cross country & played basketball. He was employed at Pearl River Resort as a Kitchen Steward. He enjoyed playing stickball, basketball, baseball, listening to music, playing video games, & being with his canine companion, Maximus.

He is preceded in death by his mother, Hansy Marie Bell; & grandparents, Roma Joe Bell, Cornelia Tubby Bell, & Homer Bell.

Survivors include his father, James Homer Bell, Sr.; brothers, Jonah Sid Williams & James Homer Bell, Jr.; foster sisters, Summer John, Mary John, & Leanna Bell; foster brother, Anthony Alexander John; aunts, Glenda Bell & Mary Jane Dixon; uncles, Gerald Bell & Paul Bell; five nieces, two nephews, & numerous relatives & friends.

continued next page

VERNITA MAE THOMAS

Graveside services for Vernita Mae Thomas, 80, was held on Friday, January 31, 2025, at Bogue Homa Community Cemetery. Bro. Jack Foster officiated. John E. Stephens Chapel Funeral Services was in charge of arrangements.

Ms. Thomas passed away on Jan. 28 at Asbury Hospice House in Hattiesburg, MS.

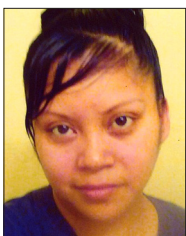
She enjoyed reading.

She is preceded in death by her parents, Riley Thomas & Zona Nickey; sisters, Imogene Thompson & Bernice Frazier; & brothers, Billy Wayne Thomas, Dorcey Thomas, & Olen Thomas.

Survivors include her sons, Gary Thomas & Greg Thomas; sisters, Marilyn Nickey & Berdie Steve; brother, Andrew Thomas; & a host of relatives & friends.

AVODAH MICHELLE WALLACE

Funeral services for Avodah Michelle Wallace, 41, was held on Sunday, February 2, 2025, at Bogue Chitto CERF Building. Rev. Mark Roth officiated.



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

Ms. Wallace passed away on Jan. 29 at University of Mississippi Medical Center in Jackson.

She lived most of her life in Bogue Chitto community & enjoyed being with her children, family & friends, going to the casino, & telling jokes.

She is preceded in death by her grandparents, Leonard & Emma Lee Wallace; sister, Emmie Lee Wallace; aunts, Diane

Joe & Mahala Wallace; & an uncle, Jim Wallace.

Survivors include her mother, Martha Martinez; stepfather, Antonio Martinez, Sr.; daughters, Tessa Standing Elk, Laney Standing Elk, & Ariana Martin; sons, Jonathan Wallace & Robert Martin; sister, Arlana Solomon; brothers, Dexter Mingo, Randall Morris, Jr., Bryant Wallace, & Antonio Martinez, Jr.; & a host of relatives & friends.

SYLVESTER JAMES HALL

Funeral services for Sylvester James Hall, 49, was held on Monday, February 3, 2025, at Macedonia Baptist Church in Conehatta. Rev. Tim Tubby officiated.



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

Mr. Hall passed away on Jan. 29 at Choctaw Health Center in Choctaw.

He was a resident of Conehatta community & was employed with Pearl River Resort as a casino porter until his illness in 2021. He enjoyed being with his children, playing basketball & his guitar.

He is preceded in death by his parents, Baxter Jackson Hall, Sr. & Martha Lou Isom Hall; sisters, Linda Faye Hall

& Sandy Jane Hall; & brothers, Jessie Hall & Baxter Hall, Jr.

Survivors include his daughters, Khole Martin & Hayli Hall; son, Kaden Hall; sisters, Glenda Hall & Martha Hall; 3 nieces, 4 nephews, & a host of relatives & friends.

CHARLES EDWARD ISAAC

Funeral services for Charles Edward Isaac, 63, was held on Wednesday, February 5, 2025, at Bogue Chitto Community Gymnasium. Rev. Leonard Jimmie & Rev. Ricky Thompson, Sr. officiated.



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

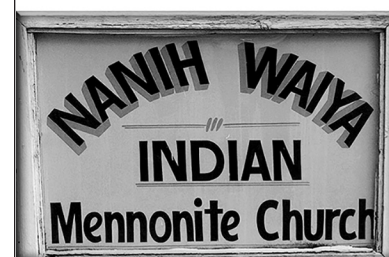
Mr. Isaac passed away on Jan. 30 at Choctaw Residential Center in Choctaw.

He was an Army National Guard Veteran. He worked as a cook at Bogue Chitto Elementary School then a member of Outside Grounds Maintenance at Pearl River Resort. He was a member of Pearl River Baptist

Church & enjoyed being with family & friends, & being a fan of the LSU Tigers.

He is preceded in death by his wife, Twana Tubby Isaac; grandparents, Bob & Geneva Thompson Bell, Isaac & Maggie Anderson Isaac; parents, Junius & Sudie Bell Isaac; sister, Veronica Thomas; & brothers, Leonard Bell, Willie Solomon, Sr. & an infant brother.

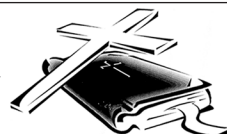
Survivors include his daughters, Xavier Isaac, Jill Draven, Shelley Robinson, Shasta Isaac, & Felicia Robinson; sons, Andrew Isaac & Isiah Isaac; sister, Janie Isaac Williams; brothers, Curtis Willis, Sr., Kendall Frazier, & Lucas Frazier; 11 grandchildren; aunts, Fairra Thomas & Thallie Lewis; uncles, Johnny Isaac & Hayward Bell; brother-in-law, Tony York; & a host of nieces, nephews, family, & friends.

Welcome To

**10341 Road 789
Philadelphia, MS 39350**

Sunday Service: 10:00 a.m.

*Come &
Worship
with us*

**MACEDONIA BAPTIST CHURCH**

130 Campus Drive
Conehatta, MS 39057

SUNDAY SCHEDULE

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

1st Sunday Service 4:00 p.m.

Pastor: Rev. Samuel Dixon

WEDNESDAY SCHEDULE

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

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



LOCATED IN THE TUCKER COMMUNITY
(Adjacent up the hill from Tucker Elementary School)

*We invite you and your family
to join our family for services.*

**SUNDAY SERVICES - 2:00 pm
TUESDAY EVENINGS - 6:00 pm**

Come Join Us...



Spirit of Life
CHRISTIAN CENTER

SUNDAY: 10:00 a.m. WEDNESDAY: 6:30 p.m.

**278 Black Jack Road
Choctaw, MS 39350
601-389-5446**

Pastor Thomas Ben



**WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
ADULT BASIC EDUCATION
VOLUNTEER INCOME TAX ASSISTANCE (VITA) 2024**
TELEPHONE: 601.650.1756 or 601.650.1755

Choctaw Adult Education will provide **FREE** income tax service to all Choctaw Tribal Members beginning **Monday, February 03, 2025**, at the Manpower Training Center from **9:00 am** until **4:00 pm** through **Friday, April 04, 2025**. The **deadline** to bring your information to Choctaw Adult Education to prepare income taxes is **April 04, 2025**, by **4:00 pm** to meet your filing deadline.

THE FILING DEADLINE IS APRIL 15, 2025.

What to do:

- ☐ Complete Intake Sheet
- ☐ Complete Virtual Taxpayer Form (last page only)

**CLOSED FOR LUNCH FROM
12:00 PM TO 1:00 PM**

What to enclose in the **IMPORTANT TAX RECORDS** envelope:

Any of the following forms and information that apply to you:

- ☐ Photo identification cards
- ☐ Social Security cards and Birthdates for everyone on the return (spouse and dependents)
 - ☐ Married Filing Separate will need to provide spouse Social Security and Birthdate
 - ☐ Widowed will need to provide spouse Social Security, Birthdate and date of death
- ☐ W-2's (wages) - ALL
- ☐ W2-G (gambling winnings)
- ☐ 1099 G (unemployment compensation)
- ☐ 1099 C (cancellation of debt)
- ☐ 1099 MISC (distribution, royalties, etc)
- ☐ 1099 NEC (nonemployee compensation)
- ☐ 1099 R (retirement)
- ☐ INT (savings account)
- ☐ SSA 1099 (Social Security Benefits)
- ☐ 1098 T (college expenses)
- ☐ Child Care Expenses
- ☐ Letter 6419 (Total Advance Child Tax Credit Payments)
- ☐ Notice 1444 - C (Your 2021 Economic Impact Payment)
- ☐ Bank Information for direct deposit (account number and routing number)
 - ☐ Checking Account
 - ☐ Savings Account

BE ADVISED: Some tax returns are beyond our scope of service and should be taken to a professional tax preparer.

*Members working for the Tribe **and** living on the reservation may be eligible for a state tax exemption. Proof of employment and residence is required to complete an exemption affidavit.

CHOCTAW COMMUNITY NEWS

JANUARY 2025

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Small Business Directory

Below is a listing of Tribal member businesses offering diverse services. For updates or inquiries regarding this directory, please contact the Office of Economic Development at 601-650-1605.

(Food/Beverage)

BIGGIE'S SNOWIE

Owner, Terry Kinsolving
10061 Road 604
Philadelphia, MS 39350
Phone: 601-504-9004
email: terrance.kinsolving@choctaw.org

(Barbershop)

D'S NATIVE EDGE

Owner, Demando Mingo
202 Choctaw Town Center
Choctaw, MS 39350
Phone: 601-504-0496
email: demando.mingo@choctaw.org

(Storage)

HWY 16 MINI STORAGES

Owner, Henry Dixon
313 Deer Trail
Choctaw, MS 39350
Phone: 601-650-6521
email: webbdixonjr1@hotmail.com

(Construction/Renovation)

HOUSEWORX LLC

Owner, Henry Dixon
313 Deer Trail
Choctaw, MS 39350
Phone: 601-650-6521
email: webbdixonjr1@hotmail.com

(Food/Catering)

**KINGS AND QUEENS BAR-B-QUE,
CATFISH, SEAFOOD**

Owner, Mike Briscoe
140 Choctaw Rd.
Heidelberg, MS 39355
Phone: 601-422-7900
email: briscoe601@yahoo.com

SOLOMON'S BBQ

Owner, Will Solomon
115 Cobblestone Rd.
Walnut Grove, MS 39189
Phone: 601-291-1983
email: willie.solomon@choctaw.org

(Graphic Design)

KUNTRYBOYDESIGNS

Owner, Kendall Wallace
13141 MS-491
Philadelphia, MS 39350
Phone: 601-663-5376
email: ndnchoctaw@yahoo.com

(Insurance)

PEARL RIVER INSUARANCE

Owners, Leticia & Edward Rangel
300 Choctaw Town Center, Suite 106
Choctaw, MS 39350
Phone: 601-663-0971
email: lrangel@pearlriverins.com

(Beverage)

PINKYY PEARL NUTRITION

Owners, Cecilia Ketcher & Mahlih Bowden
300 Choctaw Town Center, Suite 103
Choctaw, MS 39350
Phone: 601-389-8091
email: pinkyypearlnutrition@gmail.com

(Party/Event Rentals)

SPONGY'S INFLATABLES LLC

Owner, Emerson Billy
Phone: 769-258-9086
email: spongysinflatables@gmail.com