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By BRIA OVERS, WORD IN BLACK

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By Kimberly Marsh

**A Brief Primer On Tulsa School Board Elections**

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KANDEE WASHINGTON PHOTO KANDEE WASHINGTON FOR TULSA SCHOOL BOARD D2, FACEBOOK

**KanDee Washington**

Kimberly Marsh  
The Oklahoma Eagle

**The Tulsa Public Schools (TPS) District Two school board seat is considered a “revolving door” by residents in the area.** Candidate KanDee Washington, campaigning for the seat, wants to create more stability in the district’s representation. It is a district that stretches west to east along I-244, encompassing residents on both sides of the interstate highway. The area is particularly threatened by an environment that is putting TPS accreditation status at risk. Staffing challenges, low test scores, low math and reading scores, illiteracy, and “F” lists are all problems in District 2. *Cont. A2*



KANDEE WASHINGTON PHOTO KANDEE WASHINGTON FOR TULSA SCHOOL BOARD D2, FACEBOOK

**KanDee Washington**

## WASHINGTON: “There’s no place for politics in the school system.”

From A2

*Editor’s Note: In an earlier article, The Oklahoma Eagle reported on four candidates running for the Tulsa Public School Board in the April 2 election (See link: School Board Candidates Are Seeking Your Vote, March 8, 2024). Two additional candidates declined invitations to participate in recent public forum. One was KanDee Washington in District 2. And another was Maria Seidler in District 6. Neither appeared at a candidates’ event at the University of Tulsa on Feb. 26. The Oklahoma Eagle contacted both candidates. The Eagle seeks to ensure that our readers know about the views and platforms of all candidates. Washington explained that her schedule conflicted with the forums and spoke with The Eagle in detail. Seidler has appeared at other candidate’s events but said a conflict prevented her from attending the Feb. 26 forum. (See article, pp. X)*

Washington bills herself as a community-oriented candidate. When The Oklahoma Eagle met with her last week, she spoke compassionately about raising her five children, their successes in TPS, and her wish to offer continued support for their endeavors. She is knocking on doors to talk with constituents and attending events to discuss her platform, which emphasizes parental involvement and focuses

“

**Parents should be involved in more events that include the teaching staff.**

KANDEE WASHINGTON, candidate, TPS School Board, District 2

on students’ learning needs, welfare, support for teachers, and school safety. More than two decades of being an involved parent, PTA member, and supporter of numerous extracurricular activities with her children has informed her understanding of TPS functions.

“I’ve always tried to keep up with it throughout the years. I have worked in corporate America in Tulsa for over 20 years. I went back to school and got into the medical field, which is something I did to satisfy my daughter and my niece because they are both nurse practitioners, and so there’s a plan to have a clinic in the near future,” Washington said.

### Competed earlier for the District 2 seat

Washington is running for a seat vacated by Diamond Marshall, who was appointed by the TPS board following the resignation of Barbara Perez more than a year ago. Washington had vied for that appointment. She is competing for the seat in the April 2 election with Calvin Moniz, a lawyer, a community volunteer, and a 15-year resident of District 2. Read more about Moniz in the Feb. 26 edition of The Oklahoma Eagle. (<https://theok Eagle.com/2024/03/08/school-board-candidates-are-seeking-your-vote/>)

Washington concurs with other school board candidates that there is no place for politics in the

school system as it creates conflict and drama.

She said State Superintendent of Public Instruction Ryan Walter’s approach to TPS demands should be delivered with more compassion for all.

“I know that it’s important that we meet the standards, the guidelines. Everybody needs rules and regulations that support life. So, if there is a guideline that we need to meet as a state (requirement), then I believe we need to strive to achieve that, period. But if we don’t, we need to put the work in with everyone, all hands on deck, to make a difference so that our students can feel that they can learn. I believe we need to find out what their need is and meet the need so that they can be successful.”

### Community Support and Parent Involvement

Regarding building more community support, Washington said parents should be involved in more events that include the teaching staff.

“If they were to get together and invite teachers to come, we could have a day of reckoning or a day of peace,” Washington said. “We need to start bringing the teachers and the community together. That’s the only way we’re going to be able to make a difference, because things have gotten so far out of hand to where we have students kind of raising

Cont. A9

### TPS board primer

## A Brief Primer On Tulsa School Board Elections

John Neal  
The Oklahoma Eagle

*Editor’s Note: With elections for the Tulsa Public Schools Board of Education scheduled for April 2, 2024, The Oklahoma Eagle is continuing to provide information on the candidates for each district for the benefit of our readers. See our previous report: Board Candidates Are Seeking Your Votes (March 8, 2024)*

School board elections nationwide have taken on more importance than ever as local school boards grapple with several pressing issues. First, the hot topics are student learning losses resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, a chronic shortage of teachers, and ideological issues which in earlier eras were not prominent in non-partisan school board elections and decision making.

Tulsa Public Schools (TPS) is grappling with these and other issues. The upcoming TPS board elections on April 2, 2024— in which three of seven seats on the board are under contest — has brought discussion of these topics to the surface in Tulsa.

The elections next month will be for representatives for north-central District 2, south-central District 5; and south-east District 6.

### The candidates are the following:

**District 2**  
Calvin Michael Moniz, 38. Website: <https://www.moniz4tps.com/>

**KanDee Washington**, 56. Candidate’s Facebook: KanDee Washington for Tulsa Public Schools Board of Education

**District 5**  
John Thomas Croisant, Incumbent, 46. Website: <https://www.johnfortps.com/>

**Teresa Pena**, 58. Website: <https://www.teresafortps.com/>

**District 6**  
Maria Mercedes Seidler, 68. For more information on Seidler, visit <https://www.linkedin.com/in/mmseidler/>

**Sarah Smith**, 45. Website: <https://www.sarahsmith4schools.com/>

Tulsa Public Schools is the largest public school district in Oklahoma with slightly over 33,000 pupils. With 79 percent minorities, it is a remarkably diverse district. And with 80 percent economically disadvantaged students, it is also facing significant challenges.

In the past couple of years, TPS has been subject to special scrutiny and monitoring by the Oklahoma School Board of Education (OSBE), the state’s public school accreditation agency. The Tulsa school district is currently operating under “Accreditation with Deficiencies.” The district, unique among Oklahoma schools, has been called on to provide monthly in-person monthly updates to OSBE on efforts to improve academic performance and other issues the State Board has targeted for improvement.

Ryan Walters, president of OSBE, was elected to be Oklahoma’s Superintendent for Public Instruction in January 2023. In this capacity, Walters has targeted TPS with harsh criticism. His attack led to the resignation of past TPS Superintendent Deborah Gist in August 2023. Walters has repeatedly threatened to wrest control of the school district operation from the local school board.

### Elections and issues

The elections on April 2 could determine the direction of the Tulsa school district and shape the course of its academic and financial direction under newly appointed Superintendent Ebony Johnson. Johnson is under immediate pressure to improve student academic performance in state testing the last half of this 2023-24 school year.

Special scrutiny by the State Board is being placed on test scores and so called “failing schools, predominately located in Tulsa’s northside. The local school board has banded together to achieve higher academic performance and maintain local control. However, Johnson’s efforts to improve performance have displaced key administrative personnel and placed enormous pressure on teachers and staff with few additional resources.

The local school board has been sharply divided on several issues. The most recent and perhaps divisive is a lawsuit that challenges the process used to elevate Johnson as superintendent. Prior to being named superintendent, she was TPS’s chief learning officer.

Cont. A5

# Hannah Diggs Atkins: Librarian, Legislator, and Ambassador

By STEFANIE LEE DECKER, THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF OKLAHOMA HISTORY AND CULTURE



A librarian, a legislator, and an ambassador, Hannah Diggs Atkins was born November 1, 1923, the daughter of James and Mabel Diggs in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Hannah married Charles Nathaniel Atkins and had three children, Edmund Earl, Charles Nathaniel, and Valerie Ann. In 1943 Atkins received a Bachelor of Science degree from Saint Augustine's College and later obtained a Bachelor of Library Science from the University of Chicago in 1949. She held a number of positions as a law and reference librarian before moving to Oklahoma in 1952. She worked as the branch librarian for the Oklahoma City Public Libraries (1953-56) and at the Oklahoma State Library, first in the position of reference librarian, then as the chief of the General Reference Division and acting law librarian (1962-68). She also taught both law and library science courses at the University of Oklahoma.

In 1968 Hannah Atkins was elected to the

Oklahoma House of Representatives, and she served as the first African American woman to be a legislator until 1980. During her term as representative she fought for child welfare, health care, tax and mental health reforms, and civil rights. In 1980 she was appointed by Pres. Jimmy Carter as a United States delegate to the Thirty-fifth Assembly of United Nations, an honor she considered the highlight of her career.

After her term as state representative ended, Atkins was appointed assistant director of the Oklahoma Department of Human Services (1983-87) and later to the dual post of secretary of the state and cabinet secretary of social services (1987-91). She held positions and memberships in the American Civil Liberties Union, NAACP, National Association of Black Women Legislators, Oklahoma Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Oklahoma Chapter of the National Women's Political Caucus (co-founder), and Oklahoma

Black Political Caucus (founder). She also served in different capacities in the Democratic National Committee.

Throughout her career Hannah Atkins acquired numerous awards and honors, including Theta Sigma Pi Woman of the Year (1968), National Public Citizen of the Year (1975), Hannah Atkins Day, University of Oklahoma (1978), and Oklahoma ACLU Angie Debo Award (1980). She was inducted into the Oklahoma Women's Hall of Fame in 1982. She was also honored with an endowed professorship in the political science department at Oklahoma State University. In 1998 she received an honorary doctorate from the University of Oklahoma and in 2000 an honorary doctorate from Oklahoma State University. Into the twenty-first century Atkins continued to serve her community as a member of the Oklahoma Task Force for the Bombing Memorial. Hannah Atkins died on June 17, 2010.

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**HANNAH ATKINS**, 1983 (2012.201.B0044.0887, Oklahoma Publishing Company Photography Collection, OHS).

## Featured Last Week



After Juno Tulsa closing, what's the state of health care for N. Tulsa?



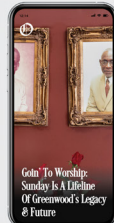
Tulsa Public Schools Reckoning Is Imminent



OK's Foster Family Shortage Forces Children From Their Communities

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## TPS board primer

# Questions about *procedure and transparency* at the center of board members' legal challenge

From A3

Two board members - Jennette Marshall (District 3) and E'Lena Ashley (District 4) - initiated the suit. Both are African American, and neither is up for reelection. They have been at odds with the board majority on various issues. In their lawsuit, Marshall and Ashley object to the procedure the board used to select Superintendent Johnson.

They seek to redo the selection with a nationwide search. The lawsuit also seeks to roll back some of Johnson's personnel decisions and reset board agenda setting and deliberation processes. The lawsuit was amended in February seeking a 'temporary injunction' preventing TPS 'from carrying out any further action under the authorization of Defendant Johnson', thereby thwarting Johnson's administrative actions and crippling efforts to comply with the State Board mandates. The District Court has not acted on this amended filing."

A massive state audit requested by the two board members is still in process.

### Spotlight on District 2

Of the seven districts on the school board, District 2 is one of the most interesting and misunderstood. To help voters comprehend the dynamics as they weigh the choices in the upcoming election, The Oklahoma Eagle is providing some key facts about the district.

All TPS Board of Education district boundaries were subject to mandatory redistricting following the 2020 U.S. Census. At the end of 2022, the TPS Board of Education adopted new district boundaries, which will affect district voting eligibility in the 2024 election. The board focused on changing as little as possible, but there were some boundary changes.

The new boundaries for District 2 changed somewhat but still includes



PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

almost all the same schools as in prior years. Schools in District 2 include Emerson, Kendall-Whittier, McKinley, Mitchell, Owen, Sequoyah, Springdale, and Unity elementary schools; Carver Middle School and Rogers College Middle School; Phoenix Rising 9-12; and Rogers College and Booker T. Washington high schools.

District 2 is the most diverse of all TPS districts. Stretching west to east along I-244, it encompasses residents

on both sides of the interstate highway. It includes significant representations of predominately white (33%), African American (17%), Hispanic (36%), and other ethno-racial populations.

### District 2 Campaign Financial Reports

Calvin Moniz filed financial campaign reports detailing \$3,850 in campaign election contributions,

including \$2,900 from Lynn Shusterman.

KanDee Washington has filed a Campaign Organizational report but has filed no other campaign report. Additional reports are only required when campaign contributions or expenditures exceed \$1,000.

The next financial report is due a week before the election. Single contributors are limited to \$3,300 in a school board election.

**JOHN NEAL**, the author, is a former resident of Sand Springs. He is well versed in urban renewal, its uses and abuse, as a former city manager in Oklahoma and departmental consultant for the city of El Paso, Texas. In 2008, he was that city's planning director when the city won multiple awards for its planning accomplishments. He is now retired and resides in Austin, Texas.



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VIOLA FORD FLETCHER, 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre Survivor. PHOTO: AFRO PHOTO/STEPHEN HOPKINS

Viola Ford Fletcher

# Oldest Living Survivor of Tulsa Race Massacre *Tells Her Story*

Alexis Taylor  
Word In Black

Viola Ford Fletcher was a mere seven years old when she was forced to reckon with hatred and racism in America.

The date was May 31.

The place was the Greenwood section of Tulsa, Okla., and at the time it was known as the “Black Wall Street.” African-American entrepreneurs and leaders from every walk of life called the area home as they worked to build and sustain the safe haven they created.

From churches to libraries, schools, and — yes — even a hospital, the Black people of Greenwood stood tall on their accomplishments. They were a proud people, carving out the best life they could in Jim Crow’s America. But in 1921, being African American and thriving— not just surviving— was an offense paid for in blood.

“On the morning of May 30, 1921, a young Black man named Dick Rowland was riding in the elevator in the Drexel Building at Third and Main with a White woman named Sarah Page,” according to the Tulsa Historical Society and Museum. What happened next is debatable.

The National Archives Museum reports that on May 31, 1921, Rowland, a shoe shiner, was arrested and locked inside of the Tulsa courthouse for an alleged assault. The same day, word of the alleged attack hit the local newspaper, inciting residents to gather “outside the courthouse to either witness or prevent Rowland’s possible lynching.”

“During this gathering, shots rang out,” reports the National Archives Museum. “White mobs invaded the Greenwood District...mobs bombed, looted, set fire to buildings and shot at random while Black residents defended

their homes and businesses.”

The Tulsa Race Massacre of 1921 had begun.

“We were frightened and rushed, scared,” Fletcher told the AFRO. “I saw people getting killed and I could smell and see housing burning.”

The June 3 edition of the AFRO-American Newspapers included telegraphs from Tulsa reporting “every colored church, business house and home destroyed,” with a damage estimate of \$5,000,000.

“We had churches, we had parks, stores and almost anything a family could use,” said Fletcher, recalling the area formerly known as Black Wall Street.

The Associated Negro Press at the time reported that the burning of Greenwood’s New Mt. Zion Baptist Church alone netted an \$85,000 loss — or \$1,481,098.59 in today’s time, according to the inflation calculator made available by the National Bureau of Labor Statistics.

African Americans around the country condemned the attack, and called on James Brooks Ayres Robertson, governor of Oklahoma at the time, to do something about the droves of arrests of “colored men, not Whites, giving the Whites an unfair fighting advantage.”

At least 100 people were reported killed in the days immediately after the massacre, but today, that number is believed to be closer to 300, according to the Tulsa Historical Society and Museum. More than 30 blocks of the Black community in Tulsa were razed. Roughly 800 were injured, and after the National Guard was called in, approximately 6,000 Black Tulsans were “held at the Convention Hall and the Fairgrounds, some for as long as eight days.”

While the smoke faded, the memories never could — especially because the terror faced by the survivors of the massacre continued for those who fled into the Ku Klux

Klan territory of Claremore, Okla., roughly 29 miles from Tulsa.

“They were afraid to go back to Tulsa so they became sharecroppers — on the road like gypsies going from this farm to this farm to that farm. Claremore wasn’t very safe,” said Ike Howard, Fletcher’s grandson. “They were running for their lives and ended up in an area that harbored and nurtured the Ku Klan Klan. They didn’t know that and had to keep moving.”

The AFRO documented the trauma of the Tulsa Race Massacre affected her mother, Lucinda Ellis, for decades.

Fletcher said her mother “couldn’t sleep at night and she would walk the floor and scream and holler from a dream that they were burning our houses.”

Eventually, the family had to make a tough decision tied directly to the terrorism they survived so many years prior.

“Her mother had to be put into a nursing home because she would wake up everybody in the house and say ‘Fire! They are burning down the house!’” said Howard. “She reacted to it in real time like it was happening again. Eventually, she had to put her mother into a nursing home because she was a young woman with children, had to work and had to get some sleep.”

But sleep didn’t come easy for anyone who escaped the massacre with their lives and the clothes on their back. Howard said that to this day, Fletcher’s body doesn’t get true rest. She too struggles to sleep, as the brutality of that massacre returns at night. After all, when the rioting reached her doorstep she was asleep, like most other elementary school students her age.

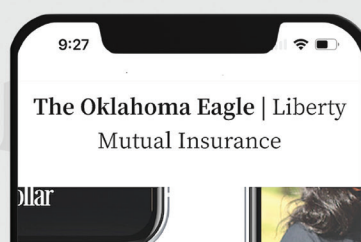
“I know she was traumatized,” said Howard, noting that his grandmother still wrestles with post traumatic stress disorder.

Cont. A7

The Oklahoma Eagle

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**Viola**  
Ford  
Fletcher  
SURVIVOR

**Hughes**  
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Benningfield  
Randle  
SURVIVOR



VIOLA FORD FLETCHER (L), HUGHES VAN ELLIS, SR. (C), LESSIE BENNINGFIELD RANDLE (R), 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre Survivors. ILLUSTRATION THE OKLAHOMA EAGLE

## Viola Ford Fletcher

# ‘Don’t Let Them Bury My Story’: A story of perseverance

From A6

Still, less than three months shy of her 110 birthday, Fletcher is adamant about telling her story—no matter what it takes. On May 30, 2023 she released a book titled, “Don’t Let Them Bury My Story.” Howard, who helped write the book, accompanied her to Baltimore to worship on Feb. 25 inside of West Baltimore’s Empowerment Temple.

“This is one story of a lady who persevered through the ignorance and the atrocities of Black Wall Street, but there are plenty other stories out there to be told,” said Howard. “Her perseverance is off the charts — to survive that event, work as long as she did, and still hold her head up high as a beacon for every woman and every Black American to emulate.”

While Fletcher was in Charm City, Baltimore City Council President Nick Mosby was on hand to honor her with a citation from the City of Baltimore for “being the oldest living survivor of the Tulsa Race Massacre and a key witness and advocate in the national movement to honor those whose lives were unjustly taken.”

Rev. Dr. Robert R.A. Turner, pastor of Empowerment Temple, celebrated Fletcher as “someone who is living Black history— not someone you read about— but someone that you can actually see, touch and observe in present form, not in book form.”

“She is here and she is proud,” said Turner.

When asked what true reparations would look like for her, Fletcher said even in 2024, “there’s a lot to be done about it.”

After the massacre, African Americans who escaped faced a harsh reality. Many dreams — including those of Fletcher — were dashed. As Fletcher fled Tulsa in 1921 with her family, she left behind her childhood dreams of being a nurse.

“**Her perseverance is off the charts — to survive that event, work as long as she did, and still hold her head up high as a beacon for every woman and every Black American to emulate.**”

Rev. Dr. Robert R.A. Turner, pastor of Empowerment Temple

“They had hospitals, but we couldn’t afford to go to them, so they had little old ladies called ‘midwives’ and families helped each other,” said Fletcher, confirming that her own grandmother was a midwife of Cherokee and Black descent named Dora Love.

Howard said if his grandmother had been given an opportunity to go to school she could have made those dreams come true. Instead, according to her book, Fletcher ended up serving others as a maid for years. Her family also lost the opportunity to build wealth by passing down through homeownership.

“Real estate is the key to generational wealth,” said Howard. “She could have sold that house that they had. They could have flipped that house and leveled up. You can do the math on that with yesterday’s dollars and today’s equivalent.”

Lawyers for both Fletcher and Lessie Benningfield Randle, born Nov. 14, 1914, have fought in court for the two women, now the only survivors of the massacre after Fletcher’s brother, Hugh Van Ellis, died in 2023 at age 102.

The women say they are owed reparations for the trauma they still carry, as a result of the public nuisance that took place during the massacre. Last year their claims were dismissed. However, on Feb. 20 the Oklahoma Supreme Court agreed to allow lawyers for the women to present their case in oral argument for 30 minutes.

A hearing will be held April 2, at 1:30 p.m. at the Oklahoma Supreme Court. There will be a live stream of the proceedings. Tune in to see lawyers defend Fletcher’s right to reparations for the massacre by going to the Oklahoma Supreme Court website, clicking on the “resources” tab and selecting the date for April 2 on the calendar.

## Related

**Tulsa Honors Two Survivors**  
Nov. 17, 2024

A Ceremony of Life for Hughes Van Ellis. A Birthday Party for Lessie Benningfield Randle. Both are survivors of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre. - THEOKEAGLE.COM

**Hughes Van Ellis: Survivor, Community Advocate, Eternal Optimist**  
Oct. 06, 2024

The most poignant story he told was of being an infant in the community of north Tulsa in late Spring of 1921, when a massacre, highlighted by the murder of over 300 people, wiped out the entire neighborhood. - THEOKEAGLE.COM

**2001 Tulsa Race “Riot” (Massacre) Commission Report Update: From Rhetoric To Remedy**  
Sep. 29, 2024

The Interim Study report, built on the 2001 Report recommendations, is now informed by recent data from historians and contributors, who passionately shared their findings throughout the three-hour session. - THEOKEAGLE.COM

ALEXIS TAYLOR  
AFRO Staff Writer

## Clemency

# Oklahoma panel denies clemency for death row inmate, paves way for lethal injection

Sean Murphy  
Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — A state panel on Wednesday denied clemency for an Oklahoma death row inmate convicted of shooting and killing two people in Oklahoma City more than two decades ago, paving the way for his lethal injection next month.

The Oklahoma Pardon and Parole voted 4-1 to deny recommending clemency for Michael Dewayne Smith, 41, who has been sentenced to die for the slayings of Janet Moore, 41, and Sharath Pulluru, 22, in separate shootings in February 2002. Smith has exhausted his appeals and is scheduled to be executed on April 4.

Appearing in a video interview from death row with his hands shackled and wearing a red prison jumpsuit, Smith expressed his

“deepest apologies and deepest sorrows to the families” of the victims, but denied that he was responsible.

“I didn’t commit these crimes. I didn’t kill these people,” Smith said, occasionally breaking into tears during his 15-minute address to the board. “I was high on drugs. I don’t even remember getting arrested.”

Prosecutors say Smith was a ruthless gang member who killed both victims in misguided acts of revenge and confessed his involvement in the killings to police and two other people. They claim he killed Moore because he was looking for her son, who he mistakenly thought had told police about his whereabouts. Later that day, prosecutors say Smith killed Pulluru, a convenience store clerk who Smith believed had disrespected his gang during an interview with a newspaper reporter.

During Wednesday’s hearing, prosecutors with the Oklahoma

attorney general’s office played video of Smith’s confession to police in which he said: “I didn’t come there to kill that woman. She was just in the wrong place at the wrong time.”

Smith’s attorney, Mark Henricksen, argued that Smith is intellectually disabled, a condition worsened by years of heavy drug use, and that his life should be spared and he should be allowed to spend the rest of his life in prison. Henricksen said Smith was in a PCP-induced haze when he confessed to police and that key elements of his confession aren’t supported by facts.

“At the time of these homicides he was smoking PCP daily and heavily,” Henricksen said.

Henricksen said Smith’s trial attorneys also failed to present evidence of his intellectual disability to jurors.

But prosecutors disputed Henricksen’s claims of intellectual disability and say Smith remains a

danger to society, noting that he has been caught with weapons on death row as recently as 2019 and that he remains involved with gang members who continue to communicate with him.

“He has expressed a desire to kill more,” said Assistant Attorney General Aspen Layman.

Unless a court halts Smith’s scheduled lethal injection, he will be the first inmate executed in Oklahoma in 2024 and the 12th since Oklahoma resumed executions in October 2021 following a nearly six-year hiatus resulting from problems with lethal injections in 2014 and 2015. Oklahoma has executed more inmates per capita than any other state since the 1976 reinstatement of the death penalty. □

SEAN MURPHY. Murphy is the statehouse reporter for The Associated Press in Oklahoma City. He has covered Oklahoma news and politics since 1996.



PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

## Mental Health Law

# Lawmakers Seek Changes to Mental Health Law

Whitney Bryen  
Oklahoma Watch

An Oklahoma City woman was hallucinating when she grabbed her mother's sweatshirt and dragged her toward the front door, according to a police report. The woman yelled, "What did you do with my mother?" as she slammed her mother's head into the wall and pushed her off the front porch.

Her mother told Oklahoma City police that her daughter had schizoaffective disorder and begged officers to take her for a mental health evaluation, which could result in forced treatment, interrupting three years of similar episodes.

Officers refused, according to the report. Police knocked on the front door, but the woman turned up the music she was playing and ignored them, the report states.

She was no longer hurting anyone. There was nothing officers could do.

Oklahomans with mental illness or substance abuse conditions can be detained for stabilizing treatment if they pose an immediate threat of harm to themselves or others. But the requirement that harm be immediate disqualifies many in need of help, leaving them to further deteriorate, often resulting in homelessness, incarceration, serious injury or death.

A Tulsa lawmaker aims to change that with House Bill 3451.

Oklahoma is one of only six states whose civil commitment laws still mandate immediate or imminent threats, according to research from the Treatment Advocacy Center.

In a 2020 report, the Treatment Advocacy Center condemned Oklahoma's law for requiring significant mental and physical deterioration before someone can be placed under an emergency hold.

"When you require an imminent standard,

**The overriding thought has to be, 'is it necessary to deny this person their civil liberties?'**

Brian Wilkerson, director of litigation and legal services for the Oklahoma Disability Law Center.

when you require deterioration, you are essentially saying, 'get sicker and maybe we'll get the right moment before you harm yourself,'" said Sabah Muhammad, senior legislative and policy counsel for the center. "And the question is, why isn't your detachment from reality, from your ability to access your self-determination, why isn't that deterioration harm enough?"

From July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023, mental health providers approved 2,062 involuntary admissions at publicly-funded treatment centers, according to data provided by the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services.

Law enforcement officers are the state's default responders for someone in a mental health or substance abuse crisis. Armed police can escalate confusion and paranoia often leading to arrests and detention, where jailers with minimal training are responsible for their health and safety, which can have fatal consequences. A recent Oklahoma Watch investigation found that 28 jail detainees died from untreated mental health or substance use conditions in 2022.

When someone is taken into protective custody by police, they're placed in handcuffs and taken to a hospital or crisis center for evaluation by a mental health professional who can admit eligible patients for up to five days. Those who need more than five days can be ordered to remain in treatment by a judge using the same criteria.

A bill filed last month could result in earlier intervention, reducing law enforcement encounters, arrests and long-term commitments. But it also means suspending people's rights sooner.

The proposal by Rep. Jeff Boatman, R-Tulsa, expands who is eligible for commitment to include someone who has a history of threatening or posing physical harm to themselves or others as a result of mental illness or substance abuse.

It also includes extreme destruction of property as a reason for detention. House Bill 3451 is one of more than 2,000 new bills filed for the 2024 legislative session.

Brian Wilkerson, director of litigation and legal services for the Oklahoma Disability Law Center, said the law is intentionally narrow. Instead of adding reasons to detain someone, lawmakers should clarify the current language to ensure the danger someone poses warrants violating their rights, he said.

"The overriding thought has to be, 'is it necessary to deny this person their civil liberties?' however short that might be," Wilkerson said. "It should be a last resort."

Sen. Darrell Weaver, R-Moore, filed a bill that would strike the word immediate from the law. Boatman filed a similar bill in 2022, but Department of Mental Health officials told Boatman that without urgency the criteria were too broad. Boatman agreed to drop the bill until better language was developed.

Rep. Jared Deck, D-Norman, is working with Boatman on the new bill. The pair met Wednesday with about 25 mental health providers, hospital representatives, Department of Mental Health employees and policy researchers. Boatman said he filed the bill to initiate discussions about how to improve the law and will continue to update the proposal as more stakeholders weigh in.

"I'm just trying to give everybody making these decisions a little more leeway," Boatman said. "At some point, we have to let judges be judges and mental health experts be mental health experts."

Dewayne Moore works for the state mental health department and teaches the law to cadets. "This is one of the only exceptions where a person's liberty can be taken away from them," Moore said. "So, this criteria should be narrowly defined, balancing someone's need for

Cont. A10



KanDee Washington

## Student Mental Health & Safety priorities

From A3

themselves or deciding what they want to do on their own, as if they're grown. But they are still children. They're still under 18. So there's just a lot that we could put into play."

**“Tulsans should learn more about the school system.”**

KANDEE WASHINGTON, candidate, TPS School Board, District 2

Washington suggested a few ideas to address her concern for student mental health and safety: having more counseling resources, therapy dogs, clear backpacks, and increased security measures, including cameras. More options should be available directly for the students to air their concerns and cope with issues that interfere with their learning ability.

"If the students have an issue, (they) can always talk it out with a counselor, a therapist. If not, there should be a quiet room at every school...so that they can get that focus back and get over whatever their anxiety is...the pain, the anger, the rage. When you have all that, how can you learn algebra, geometry, and calculus? How can you focus enough to know one equation? Seriously, how can you write an essay about a happy place when all you know is doom and gloom?"

Washington said Tulsans should learn more about the school system and encourage parental involvement. She said that the board should



KANDEE WASHINGTON PHOTO KANDEE WASHINGTON FOR TULSA SCHOOL BOARD D2, FACEBOOK

welcome all opinions and concerns.

"That's not to say everything will turn out the way the parents want it to be. But it just feels good to be heard. There could even be a school board night where it's parent expression night. I know that when I knock on doors, sometimes people have a lot to say, and they just don't know what's available." Washington noted that not all Tulsans know they can attend board meetings, watch them online, ask questions, or voice concerns.

### Where to Vote and Attend School Board Meetings

Early voting for the April school board elections is set for March 28 and 29 at the Tulsa County Election offices, 555 N. Denver Ave., from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Registered voters may find their district and polling locations at Tulsa County Election Board Polling Locations.

Regular meetings of the Tulsa Public Schools Board of Education are usually scheduled on the first and third Mondays of each month. More

information available is on the TPS website: Tulsa Public School Board Meetings - Request to Speak and TPS board meetings are also live-streamed at Tulsa Public School - Livestream and past board meetings are posted for viewing.

KIMBERLY MARSH is a contributing writer at the Oklahoma Eagle. She is a native Oklahoman. Public education is one of her passions.

Maria Seidler

## Attorney Suing TPS Seeks Board Seat



MARIA SEIDLER PHOTO PROVIDED

John Neal  
The Oklahoma Eagle

A Tulsa attorney who filed a lawsuit against Tulsa Public Schools wants a seat on the school board. In January 2024, attorney Maria Seidler filed a lawsuit against TPS on behalf of two TPS board members over the hiring process used to select Ebony Johnson as school district superintendent. But Seidler told The Oklahoma Eagle in an interview that she wants to be known foremost as a candidate who is a "conservative and a Christian."

Seidler is running for the District 6 Tulsa school board seat for election on April 2. District 6 serves constituents residing in the area south of Admiral Boulevard and east of Yale Avenue. Schools in the district include Bell, MacArthur, Salk, Zarrow International, Hale Middle School, Memorial Middle School, Hale High School, and Street School. Click here for a district map at the TPS website: Tulsa Public Schools District 6 Map

Candidate Seidler filed the lawsuit on behalf of school board members E'Lena Ashley (District 4) and Jennette Marshall (District 2) without charge, as Seidler does with other issues when she agrees. In this case, Seidler

told the entire board before filing the lawsuit she was likely to because, "What you have done way too often if you don't like a rule, you just ignore it."

Defendants named in the lawsuit filed in the State of Oklahoma District Court of Tulsa County in January 2024 are TPS, Dr. Ebony Johnson, most of the members of the TPS Board of Education, and former superintendent Deborah Gist. The lawsuit alleges process and other issues with the administration and school board.

Seidler is a critic of the activities and the leadership of TPS Board President Stacey Woolley and former superintendent Deborah Gist, something Seidler calls the "Gist machine."

"I hate to say it, but I think that includes Superintendent Ebony Johnson." Seidler supports and her lawsuit seeks a national search to replace former superintendent Gist.

### Other candidate positions

Maria Seidler founded Legal Overwatch for Parents' School Rights in her self-described role as a "conservative attorney." In that role, she has spoken and taken legal action on behalf of parental and religious rights Seidler supports. According to Sooner Politics, she also filed a complaint with the Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE), calling for an investigation and possible revocation of the teaching certificate of Summer Boismier. Boismier left Norman Public Schools as a teacher over a book-banning policy dispute.

In an interview on Fresh Black Coffee talk show, she told hosts on a YouTube clip, that she initially supported Superintendent for Public Instruction Ryan Walters. Be, she added, she later gave Walters some advice.

"You have the power over the accreditation over every school district in this state." She added, "He has the chance to be the Trump over the Oklahoma (State) Department of Education and for the education of our children."

Board candidate Seidler also opposes the "bully tactics of the school board(s)." She filed another lawsuit against the Stillwater Board of Education on behalf of an individual thrown out of a meeting for allegedly straying off the agenda topic by quoting biblical scripture. The

case was ultimately dismissed.

### Community involvement

Seidler said "our students are behind" in Tulsa and Oklahoma generally, but "too much obligation is placed on schools to solve the problem." She advocates for more community involvement in policy development and decision-making, particularly listening to parents and "teachers talk to me." Seidler faults the TPS School Board agenda process for not getting more public participation in decision-making.

"Lots of other groups have the school board ear. What I hear from parents are not headline issues."

Seidler singled out one issue in particular: bullying. "I get lots of calls about bullying. Victims are teased and bullied. They are the ones that get in trouble. Victims don't have a voice. Due process is not available to our students at all."

Maria Seidler was born in Pittsburg, Kan. Before volunteering, she had professional experience, including working as an attorney in regulatory and policy matters in the energy sector. She told The Oklahoma Eagle she once had a teaching certificate.

In the District 6 election, Seidler is competing against Sarah Smith. Smith wrote on her campaign website, "As a mother and community volunteer, I fully support public education. Every child deserves an equal opportunity to excel." Smith lists as her priorities "Learning Outcomes; Student, Educator & Family Support; Transparency & Accountability."

The Oklahoma Eagle has written about Smith's candidacy in an earlier article: School Board Candidates Are Seeking Your Vote, March 8, 2024

JOHN NEAL, the author, is a former resident of Sand Springs. He is well versed in urban renewal, its uses and abuse, as a former city manager in Oklahoma and departmental consultant for the city of El Paso, Texas. In 2008, he was that city's planning director when the city won multiple awards for its planning accomplishments. He is now retired and resides in Austin, Texas.

The Oklahoma Eagle

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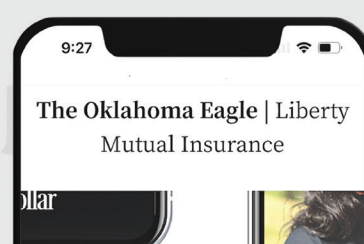




PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

**Mental Health Law**

# Increasing resources & access to mental health care

From A8

treatment with their constitutional rights.” Moore said he isn’t opposed to changing the language of the law, but more important is training officers, mental health workers and judges to interpret it. Kathy Wolff, of Weatherford, was a psychiatric nurse for more than 40 years, caring for kids in state custody and teaching nursing at Southwestern Oklahoma State University where she was in charge of rotations for the psychiatric unit. Now, she is retired and advocates for changes to the law that would send more patients to emergency care. “I support temporarily suspending their liberties to get them the help they desperately need,” Wolff said. “In this state of mind, they can’t make decisions about treatment or fend for themselves. Aren’t we

taking away their right to care if we don’t help them?” Hallucinations, delusions, paranoia and other symptoms can prevent people with acute mental illness or addiction from caring for themselves, Wolff said. At least half of patients with schizophrenia and 40% of patients with bipolar disorder also have a condition that makes them unaware of their diagnosis or the severity of it, hindering their ability to make treatment decisions, according to a National Institute of Health report. Left untreated, those symptoms can lead to job loss, homelessness, substance abuse, suicidal thoughts or violent behavior. “There could be a mental health center on every corner in Oklahoma and they wouldn’t go in because they don’t know they need to,” Wolff said. “Oklahoma is supposed to protect its citizens and we’re not doing that.

We’re allowing them to suffer.” Changes to the law would likely increase the number of patients receiving mental health crisis care, which means the state would need more providers and beds. A new mental health hospital planned for Oklahoma City will add 100 state-run beds and an urgent care center for people in crisis, according to the Department of Mental Health’s website. Increasing mental health workers and access to care are the aim of three more bills filed by Boatman. They would allow social workers to complete their licensure while working a full-time job; expand insurance coverage for behavioral healthcare; and fund psychiatric and psychological programs at Oklahoma State University Medical Authority. Wilkerson said the state should invest more time and money to increase access

to treatment earlier, reducing mental health emergencies and the need for crisis care. In November 2022, the U.S. Department of Justice launched a probe into Oklahoma’s poor access to mental health care and Oklahoma City police response to crises. “It’s a failure on us as a community in not providing those services on the front end,” Wilkerson said. “If we were doing that, we wouldn’t have to debate the merits of taking away someone’s freedom.”

**WHITNEY BRYEN** is an investigative reporter at Oklahoma Watch covering vulnerable populations. Her recent investigations focus on mental health and substance abuse, criminal justice, domestic violence and nursing homes. Contact her at (405) 201-6057 or wbryen@oklahomawatch.org. Follow her on Twitter @SoonerReporter.

**GOP House Speaker**

# House GOP designates Rep. Kyle Hilbert as next speaker



SPEAKER-DESIGNEE KYLE HILBERT (R-BRISTOW) GESTURES TO HOUSE SPEAKER CHARLES MCCALL (R-ATOKA), during a press conference announcing Hilbert’s Republican Caucus designation as the next speaker of the House. PHOTO TRE SAVAGE

**Tres Savage**  
NonDoc

As Speaker Charles McCall introduced the man fellow Republican House members had just chosen as the designee to succeed him this morning, he stepped to the side and let Rep. Kyle Hilbert take the podium. “Remember, Kyle,” McCall said with a grin. “You asked for it.” Hilbert returned the favor with a joke of his own by referencing that McCall has been speaker during all eight of Hilbert’s years in office. “He is the best speaker I’ve ever served under,” Hilbert said. Barring some massive change between now and the Legislature’s formal vote on organizational day in November, Hilbert, 29, will become the youngest speaker of the House in Oklahoma history. Asked about his youthful exuberance, Hilbert referenced Americans’ pain seeing “octogenarian politicians” in Washington and said he will be able to relate to the lives of many Oklahomans as a parent raising small children. “It’s an exciting time. When you look at census data for the state of Oklahoma, there are more Oklahomans under 40 than over 40,” Hilbert said. “I think (there is benefit) having a speaker of the House who has a young family and knows what it’s like [when] mom and dad are working but you

also have kids and the challenges of trying to find daycare or daycare closes for a day or childcare closes. What does that look like?” McCall (R-Atoka) called Hilbert “capable” and “experienced,” noting his service as vice chairman of the powerful House Appropriations and Budget Committee before he became House speaker pro tempore — the second-highest-ranking position in the body — in February 2022. “He has come into this body eight years ago, which was my first term that I found myself as speaker of the House,” McCall said. “Kyle has worked through the absolute worst times in state history as I have and emerging to the best times in state history that we see today. I’m very confident that Kyle Hilbert will continue to lead the House of Representatives to better and greater things.” Hilbert said that is a good benchmark for legislative service. “The question is did you make it better tomorrow than it was yesterday,” he said.

**Sources: Two-thirds support for Kyle Hilbert**

With 81 members, the Republican Caucus constitutes a supermajority in the 101-member House. Speaking on the condition of anonymity, people with information about Monday’s vote said Hilbert won on the first ballot by receiving

54 votes, or two-thirds support. Rep. Lonnie Sims (R-Jenks) and Rep. Kevin West (R-Moore) split the remaining votes. “I’m very happy with the whole entire process. Everything was above board,” West said. “Really, to me it came down to a question of the style of leadership. I look forward to working with Pro Tem Hilbert as he moves forward in his new role as speaker designate.” West noted that the House GOP leadership race did not draw the same contentions and campaigning from outside groups that defined the final days of the Senate GOP race. “No it didn’t, and I’m very grateful for that as well,” West said. Sims agreed, saying he was “honored to be in the mix.” “I was just really proud of my colleagues and proud of our caucus for the way the race was run. It was very respectful,” Sims said. “We’d heard all the horror stories about the past speaker races and how divisive they can be, and I really thought that inside the caucus room and out we handled it very professionally.” In February, Republican senators selected Senate Floor Leader Greg McCortney (R-Ada) to succeed Senate President Pro Tempore Greg Treat (R-OKC). Between Treat and McCall’s departures from the Legislature later this year, 2025 will feature new leadership in both chambers.

Rep. Josh West (R-Grove) is widely viewed a leading candidate to assume a leadership role under Hilbert. Asked about rumors that he will be the next House majority floor leader — an influential position being vacated by term-limited Rep. Jon Echols (R-OKC) — West simply congratulated Hilbert. “I’m excited for Kyle with his upcoming role, but I’m also excited for the state of Oklahoma,” Josh West said. “Kyle is a capable and confident leader, and I’m proud of the campaign he ran. This was 15 months in the making, and our team stuck with the plan and message, and it paid off. Now the work begins.” Hilbert said during Monday’s press conference that McCall still has plenty of work to do this session and that he appreciates his wisdom and leadership. “You’re not done yet, we’ve still got some work out of you still to come,” Hilbert said, turning to media to speak about McCall. “But when his time is over, he could look back and know that he did a phenomenal job.”

**WILLIAM W. SAVAGE III (TRES)** has served as the editor in chief of NonDoc since the publication launched in September 2015. He holds a journalism degree from the University of Oklahoma and covered two sessions of the Oklahoma Legislature for eCapitol.net before working in health care for six years. He is a nationally certified Mental Health First Aid instructor.



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 Elder Julius W. Bland  
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 Wednesday Bible Study 6:00 pm  
 Rev. Dr. Robert R. Allen Turner

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**'BANK OF MOM AND DAD' ISN'T ALWAYS  
AN OPTION FOR BLACK YOUNG ADULTS | A12**

**HEAD START PRESCHOOLS AIM TO FIGHT  
POVERTY, BUT THEIR TEACHERS STRUGGLE | A13**

# The Steep Price Of School Underfunding



PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

## School Underfunding

**Fedrick C. Ingram,**  
*secretary-treasurer  
of the 1.7 million  
member American  
Federation of  
Teachers, says  
America can't thrive  
if it continues to  
deny equal rights and  
opportunity to Black  
people.*

## The Numbers You Feel

**Fedrick C. Ingram**  
Word In Black

**T**here are numbers you know, and then there are numbers you feel. For instance, I know that Black children make up 15% of this country's K-12 public schools.

I also know that Black folks make up roughly the same percentage of U.S. citizens.

But when I read *The Adequacy and Fairness of State School Finance Systems*, a report from the Albert Shanker Institute, and saw that Black children are 3.5 times more likely than white children to be in chronically underfunded school districts, well, I can feel that number.

That's because I was that number.

What should feel like a lifetime ago feels like yesterday for me growing up as a Black boy in a tough part of Miami. I know what it feels like to read from outdated textbooks and play music with broken instruments. Those experiences propelled me to pursue higher education at Bethune-Cookman University. It inspired me to become an educator, and to return to the classrooms and communities that have been economically forgotten.

Yet as sobering as the report is for Black K-12 students and their families, it is by no

means a new trend. The root of the issue lies deep in our country's troubling past.

After Reconstruction — those few brilliant years when America lived up to its promise of righting the wrongs of slavery and race-based violence — the country returned to its worst instincts. It closed its eyes to an epidemic of lynchings and fought against movements to desegregate stores, the military, and education.

To keep Black people out of white neighborhoods, America invented redlining, the New Deal-era practice of designating Black neighborhoods as less desirable and locking Black folks into houses they couldn't sell for profit. That practice was outlawed in the 70s, but it all but ensured that schools in those districts, funded through property taxes, would suffer. They simply did not have the resources to match schools in whiter, more affluent communities.

And the damage persists. Without adequate funding, Black students in chronically resource-starved schools are often taught by younger, inexperienced teachers who aren't being paid very well. Black students are also 1.2 times more likely to encounter a law enforcement officer than a school counselor — hardly the support they need to thrive. And, Black students are more than twice as likely to “receive a

Cont. A13

## Intergenerational Wealth

**'Bank of Mom and Dad' Isn't Always an Option for Black Young Adults**

**Bria Overs**  
Word In Black

**P**arents want the best for their children — to see them thrive, graduate college, get a good job, and start a family of their own. Young adults turn to their parents for advice and, on occasion, financial assistance to achieve these key milestones of adulthood.

Texas resident Kayla G., 28, is one of those young people. She used a full-ride scholarship to get through college, but her parents provided support — filling out her FAFSA and paying for groceries — while she completed her undergraduate degree. After graduation, she moved home rent-free, got a marketing job, earned a master's

Cont. A13

School Underfunding

## Resource Starved



PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

From A12

referral to law enforcement or be subject to a school-related arrest” than their white peers.

This is the reality our community feels and suffers from every day.

Even for Black children who, like me, made it out of underfunded schools to head to historically Black colleges and universities, the news is not much better.

The HBCU network of more than 100 schools does an incredible job for our community, matriculating 10% of all Black students and graduating half of the nation’s Black doctors, lawyers, and teachers.

Still, a 2023 Department of Education report found that HBCUs in 16 states have been underfunded by some \$12 billion. Heartbreaking, if not fully surprising.

Despite our endless push for education, even when it meant hiding knowledge for fear of abuse and death, America has yet to truly, meaningfully invest in schools that serve Black children.

I do not pretend that I alone can cure this ill, but I wake up every day in my position here at the AFT striving to ensure all our students — but especially our Black students — are getting the education they want so they can have the future they deserve.

We do this by helping distribute millions of free books to kids and families. We do this by pushing for more career and technical education programs that offer kids multiple pathways to the American dream. We do this by rallying with local and state leaders to push back against extremist policies that target our children, our communities, and our history.

We do this work because we know that a democracy cannot thrive if one community is repeatedly — persistently — starved of resources. And we know that America cannot thrive if it continues to deny equal rights and opportunity to Black people, who have fought, cried, and died in a seemingly endless struggle to ensure their home country lives up to its founding promise of liberty and justice for all.

**FREDRICK C. INGRAM** is the Secretary-Treasurer of the American Federation of Teachers, serving 1.7 million members, including pre-K through 12th-grade teachers; school and college support staff; higher education faculty; federal, state and local government employees; and nurses and other healthcare professionals. Ingram is the immediate past president of the 140,000-member Florida Education Association. He also has served as an elected vice president of the AFT’s executive council.

Intergenerational Wealth

## The ultimate goal is intergenerational wealth



PHOTO CHARLOTTE MAY / PEXELS

From A12

degree, and paid off her car.

While rent is not something she worries about, she does cover other expenses, including her phone bill, car insurance, and health insurance.

“They definitely don’t just pay for everything, and I’m not living a complete ‘princess life’ over here,” she tells Word In Black. “But it is helpful. For all of my 20s, I’ve been able to save.”

According to the Pew Research Center, 23% of young adults in America say they are mostly financially independent, while 45% say they are completely independent from their parents. The study doesn’t break things down by race, but other research gives insights into the Black parent and Black young adulthood experience.

### Links to the Racial Wealth Gap

A 2021 study exploring the intersection of the Black-white wealth gap and parental financial assistance by researchers and professors at The New School and the State University of New York at Buffalo found that for some Black parents, giving money to their young adult children is quite difficult — through no fault of their own. Their ability to financially assist is not only affected by the long-standing racial wealth gap, but it can also contribute to its widening as well.

“The racial wealth gap is largely linked in an intergenerational way to policies and structures in which Black people have been excluded from,” says Darrick Hamilton, Henry Cohen professor of economics and urban policy and founding director of the Institute on Race, Power and Political Economy at The New School. In other words, it may be easier for white people to build and maintain wealth than it is for Black people because of government policies, for example, such as ineligibility for benefits from the G.I. Bill after World War II.

Black young adults are less likely to receive financial assistance from parents for education, homeownership, and other things than their white counterparts. 14% of Black people surveyed for the study reported receiving parental aid for college, 2% for homeownership,

and nearly 20% for other reasons.

The researchers wrote these numbers are low in comparison to white survey takers, not because Black parents don’t want to help their children. The inability to give has more to do with the “socioeconomic position of Black parents,” and “in turn, translates into the intergenerational reproduction of the racial wealth gap.”

### Effects of Financial Assistance for Parents and Their Children

Low-income parents, especially, face trouble by providing aid. Nearly half of lower-income parents and 37% of middle-income parents said helping their young adult children financially hurt their own finances. In the reverse, though, a third of young adults said they were helping their parents, and those with lower incomes were more likely to help.

Kayla’s three other siblings, who are in their 30s and mid-20s, also live at home. She says, in the past, her parents hadn’t expressed any issues with all six family members living under one roof. That is, until recently.

“Those conversations are happening, and there may be some shifts,” she says. “I can’t say they ever said they felt like we were taking money out of their pocket — not verbatim, at least — but I definitely feel like there’s starting to be a bit of financial strain because we’re all grown.”

On the flip side, that same 2021 study noted Black young adults fare better in terms of income and net worth when they have assistance from their parents. This has been the case for Kayla. She says thanks to her parents, she’s been able to “grow up slowly” and prepare for her 30s by learning how to budget, save, and invest.

“I think that’s a really undervalued thing in our society because everyone’s so quick to grow up fast and jump right into the world,” she says. “Being home has allowed me to mature slowly. I feel like I’m much wiser about things like how I view money. I’m better prepared to kind of go out there, and when I’m ready because I’ve been able to save up, I can purchase my own place.”



**DORIS MILTON**, 63, sits for a portrait at the Bethel New Life holistic wellness center Thursday, Feb. 15, 2024, in Chicago. PHOTO AP PHOTO/CHARLES REX ARBOGAST

Head Start

## Head Start preschools aim to fight poverty, but their teachers struggle to make ends meet

**Moriah Balingit**  
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — In some ways, Doris Milton is a Head Start success story. She was a student in one of Chicago’s inaugural Head Start classes, when the antipoverty program, which aimed to help children succeed by providing them a first-rate preschool education, was in its infancy.

Milton loved her teacher so much that she decided to follow in her footsteps. She now

works as a Head Start teacher in Chicago.

After four decades on the job, Milton, 63, earns \$22.18 an hour. Her pay puts her above the poverty line, but she is far from financially secure. She needs a dental procedure she cannot afford, and she is paying down \$65,000 of student loan debt from National Louis University, where she came within two classes of getting her bachelor’s degree. She dropped out in 2019 when she fell ill.

“I’m trying to meet their needs when nobody’s meeting mine,” Milton said of teaching

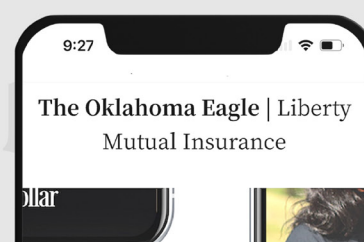
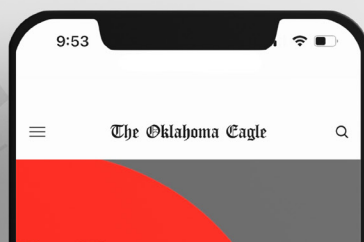
preschoolers.

Head Start teachers — 70% of whom have bachelor’s degrees — earn \$39,000 a year on average, far less than public school teachers with similar credentials. President Joe Biden wants to raise their pay, but Congress has no plans to expand the Head Start budget.

The Oklahoma Eagle

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KIMBERLY MANNING (L) AND CHANTELE LOTT were selected as first place recipients in their respective Toastmasters' speech contests. PHOTO PROVIDED

## Toastmasters Award Manning And Lott With First Place Recognition

Dr. Jerry Goodwin  
The Oklahoma Eagle

Toastmasters International recently recognized individuals for their public speaking skills at a local competition. Kimberly Manning and Chantelle Lott received first place honors for their presentations at the District 16 Area Level International Speech contest.

Toastmasters, celebrating its centennial in 2024, is a nonprofit educational organization that builds confidence and teaches public speaking skills through a worldwide network of clubs that gather online and in person according to its website.

Manning won first place in the Area U3 of the District 16 Area Level International Speech contest. Her speech topic was "Passion is Paramount."

"I have always been impressed with people who could express themselves clearly and concisely. When I learned that Toastmasters was an organization that helped with developing

communication, listening, and leadership skills, I was all in," said Manning.

She joined a corporate Toastmasters club in 2012 while she was employed with State Farm. Competing in several international contests, she made it to the quarter finals, where she competed with contestants from around the world. She is currently a member of the Friends of Greenwood Toastmasters Club, which meets virtually every Thursday.

Lott won first place in Area U2 of the district contest. Her topic was "Your And." She also received second place in a table topics contest, which challenges one to speak extemporaneously on a random question.

"I joined Toastmasters because I always had this vision of becoming a motivational speaker. As a business owner, I am using the skills I develop to further my leadership and speaking capabilities," said Lott.

She became a member of the All Stars Toastmasters Club in 2022. It holds in-person membership meetings every Monday.

With their awards, Manning and Lott advanced to the next stage. The goal is to represent the district at the 2024 World Championship of Public Speaking competition.

"Toastmasters is the most diverse organization I have ever been a part of. It is worldwide and diverse in every sense of the word, including age, occupation, religion, national origin, education level, political background, and anything you can think of," said Manning.

As of March 2, Manning won first place at the next Division level. She is now scheduled to participate at the District 16 annual conference at the Tulsa Renaissance Convention Center on April 20.

If she wins at the annual conference, then she will present at the World Championship of Public Speaking. She will be required to deliver a new speech. Her new speech will be "Something to Celebrate."

Manning is co-owner of Mack's Wings. Lott is owner of Bounceless, an activewear brand for women company.

## Greenwood Women's Business Center To Host Annual Summit



ALISA JOSEPH is vice president of programs for the U. S. Black Chambers of Commerce. PHOTO PROVIDED

Dr. Jerry Goodwin  
The Oklahoma Eagle

The Greenwood Women's Business Center will host its annual summit, *GBC InnovateHER Women's Summit*, at the Doubletree Hotel at Warren Place, 6110 S. Yale Ave., on March 13, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. Complimentary tickets are available. For ticket reservations or for more information, visit [www.gbcbwomensummit.com](http://www.gbcbwomensummit.com).

The summit will feature workshops with U. S. Small Business Administration officials, U. S. Black Chambers of Commerce executives, and keynote speeches from leaders in business.

Speakers scheduled to attend are Erica Keese, Nicole Barton, Cyndi Carter, Ayris T. Scales, and

Alisa Joseph.

Keese, founder and CEO of Your Goal Concierge, will offer a person-centered and an integrative approach in giving safety, support, and enhancement to entrepreneurs. Others featured speakers are Nicole Barton, owner/photographer of Nicole Barton Photography and SHE IS TULSA magazine; Cyndi Carter, SBA economic development specialist and Native American Affairs representative covering the State of Oklahoma; and Ayris T. Scales, senior vice president for Social Responsibility and Global Initiatives for Nareit, the worldwide representative voice for REIT-based real estate investment with policymakers and the global investment community.

As part of the Summit, five awards also will be given to outstanding women in the

community. The day includes breakfast, an awards luncheon, vendor booths, a live pitch competition, complimentary headshots from Sooner Marketing, and unparalleled networking opportunities.

The U.S. Black Chambers of Commerce created the Greenwood Women's Business Center in partnership with the Greenwood Chamber of Commerce and the Small Business Administration. Alisa Joseph, vice president of programs for the U.S. Black Chambers of Commerce said this Second Annual Summit is important to the Center's mission.

"We're very excited about what the Center team is doing," said Joseph. "An annual Women's Summit is an opportunity to be able to provide women, men, aspiring business owners, (and) existing business owners with resources, information, and access to capital and contracts that they may not have, have ordinarily known about, or had not been in tuned into in the Tulsa ecosystem."

"We wanted to have a one-stop shop that provided a variety of resources and information, speak (to) featured business moment(s) (with) women business owners, and (tell) their success stories to inspire, to motivate, to share ... as pure learning for our businesses in Tulsa so that they could see firsthand ... envision what it is that they could be (and) what success would look like for them."

Corporate sponsors can contact [info@greenwoodwbc.com](mailto:info@greenwoodwbc.com) or call (539) 867-4127 for more information.

## Johnson Releases New Book On Social Justice



'10 WAYS WE CAN ADVANCE SOCIAL JUSTICE: WITHOUT DESTROYING EACH OTHER' is Hannibal B. Johnson's 11th book. PHOTO PROVIDED

Dr. Jerry Goodwin  
The Oklahoma Eagle

Tulsa historian Hannibal B. Johnson has penned a book on the topic of social justice. In the new book, he offers 10 pathways how a community can further social justice.

The book is titled "10 Ways We Can Advance Social Justice: Without Destroying Each Other" and is published by Balkan Press.

"I wrote '10 Ways We Can Advance Social Justice: Without Destroying Each Other' to provide options for people who want to engage around social justice issues, but don't know quite how. It's a primer designed to encourage people to get involved, even if the issues of most concern to them seem overwhelming and intractable. There are ways to make a meaningful difference in our own lives and the lives of others," said Johnson.

The recent book release is Johnson's 11th book. His first book was "Black Wall Street: From Riot to Renaissance in Tulsa's Historic Greenwood District."

He defines social justice as "the universal recognition of our shared humanity. Stated differently, social justice is an aspirational concept - a moving target - that would be

reflected in a world without inequality and inequity."

"It's been said that 'the arc of the moral universe bends toward justice.' That may well be true, but the arc doesn't bend by itself. If it bends toward justice, then it does so because of the individual and collective agency of committed people. If the arc is to be bent, then we must bend it. We must work toward social justice," said Johnson.

In an interview with The Oklahoma Eagle, Johnson said he wants his book to have an impact on its readers.

He said he believes "people will be inspired and renewed by the book - that readers will internalize the imperative of working toward social justice and engaging (or continuing to engage) with the issues most profound and compelling for them. Fundamentally, it's about understanding our agency and reclaiming our power in service of social justice."

Johnson is scheduled to have a book signing event at the Greenwood Cultural Center on May 2 at 7 p.m.

The book is available on Amazon. For more information, visit <https://www.hannibalbjohnson.com/>

## Events

### March Women's History Month

**Mar. 9**  
Tulsa Health Department is conducting Community Listening Session at Zarrow Regional Library, 2224 W. 51st St., on March 9 at 12 p.m. Registration is required. To register, visit [tulsa-health.org/strategicplan](http://tulsa-health.org/strategicplan).

**Mar. 12**  
Screening of Carol Anderson's "I, Too" at the Greenwood Cultural Center, 322 N. Greenwood Ave., 5 p.m. A question-and-answer session will occur after film moderated by Onika Asamoah-Caesar. The event is sponsored by the Black Wall Street Times. For more information, see Black Wall Street Times social media pages.

**Mar. 13**  
2024 Greenwood Women's Business Center InnovateHER Women's Summit at the Doubletree Warren Place, 6110 S. Yale Ave. The program is sponsored by the Greenwood Women's Business Center, 102 N. Greenwood Ave., Suite 201, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. For more information, contact [info@greenwoodwbc.com](mailto:info@greenwoodwbc.com) or [gbcbwomensummit.com](http://gbcbwomensummit.com).

**Mar. 23**  
Artist Helen Juliet Atkins is hosting a free community tile making workshop at the Greenwood Cultural Center, 322 N. Greenwood Ave., at 1 p.m. The tiles will be featured in the Pathway to Hope Resilience Artwork (Underpass artwork on Boston Ave.). She is hosting the project with support from the Oklahoma Arts Council Art in Public Places and the Oklahoma Department of Transportation. For more information, contact Michelle Burdax at [mburdax@greenwoodculturalcenter.com](mailto:mburdax@greenwoodculturalcenter.com) or (918) 596-1020.

**Mar. 25**  
National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) is hosting its monthly support group for family members, significant others, and friends of people with mental health conditions at St. Augustine Catholic Church, Education Center, 1720 E. Apache St., 6 p.m. - 7:30 p.m. The meetings are held on the fourth Monday of each month. For more information, call (918) 587-2965 or contact [staugustineparishtulsaok@yahoo.com](mailto:staugustineparishtulsaok@yahoo.com).

**Mar. 27**  
Women's History Month - "And So I Stayed" will be shown at Tulsa Community College at its VanTrease Performing Arts Center for Education (PACE), 10300 E. 81st St., on March 27 from 6 p.m. - 8 p.m. The film is an award-winning documentary by Natalie Patillo and Daniel A. Nelson about survivors of abuse fighting for their lives and spending years behind bars. This is the story of how the legal system gets domestic violence wrong, according to a press release about the film. The program is sponsored by the T. Oscar Chappelle Family and the TCC Foundation. For more information, contact [ramona.curtis@tulsacc.edu](mailto:ramona.curtis@tulsacc.edu).

**Mar. 30**  
Queendom will be held at the Historic Big 10 Ballroom, 1624 E. Apache St., 8 p.m. - 10 p.m. The program will feature poets, musicians, singers, dancers, comics, and more. According to the organizer, the "showcase will leave you inspired, entertained, and empowered. (It is the ultimate 'Girl Power' moment!)" The event is sponsored by J'Parle' Artist Group Inc. For ticket information or more information, see [www.jagtulsa.org](http://www.jagtulsa.org).

**Apr. 4-7**  
World Stage Theatre Company presents "Choir Boy," directed by Justin Daniel in the Liddy Doenges Theatre, 110 E. 2nd St. For ticket information, visit [www.tulsapac.com](http://www.tulsapac.com) or (918) 596-7111.

**Apr. 6**  
North Tulsa Economic Development Initiative (NTEDI) Fundraiser at Pine Premier Child Care, 518 E. Pine St., beginning at 11 a.m. Lunch, featuring smoked turkey legs, hot links, and hot dogs with chips will be available for purchase. The proceeds will benefit NTEDI student book scholarships. To place a drop-off meal order, call (918) 813-8546 or (918) 850-3875. For more information, contact [ntedi.north@gmail.com](mailto:ntedi.north@gmail.com)

# Theater

CELEBRITY ATTRACTIONS: BRINGING BROADWAY AND MORE TO YOU!

## 'MJ - The Musical' Among Celebrity Attractions Tops Shows of Tulsa's 2024/2025 Broadway Season

Kimberly Marsh  
The Oklahoma Eagle

Tulsa's Celebrity Attractions' 41st Broadway Season is packed with energy, featuring seven shows running for 10 weeks. The lineup includes new and classic productions. Among the biggest productions are "MJ - The Musical" (which opened in New York in February 2022; and Les Miserables, which opened in Paris in 1980.

The season will also feature "Moulin Rouge! The Musical," the French love story set in a cabaret theater; the hilarious stunt that defines "Mrs. Doubtfire" based on the movie of the same name starring comedian Robin Williams in the iconic title role.

"MJ - The Musical" features the unmatched and off-copied artistry of Michael Jackson; the ultimate whodunit sensation taken from the popular board game and Broadway play, "Clue."

"Les Miserables," hailed as the world's most popular musical; the new musical version of the 1980s cinematic classic "Back to the Future - The Musical" and the return of "Wicked," the musical story of the Land of Oz as told through the eyes and verses of Glinda, the Good Witch of the South.

New season tickets will be available for purchase in May, with a particular priority window of time available first to registered email members. Individuals interested in more information on season tickets are invited to register their email at CelebrityAttractions.com/Tulsa and follow Celebrity Attractions on their social channels listed at the bottom of this release.

Here is the complete roster of shows with more information provided by Celebrity Attractions and the show run dates:

### Moulin Rouge! The Musical

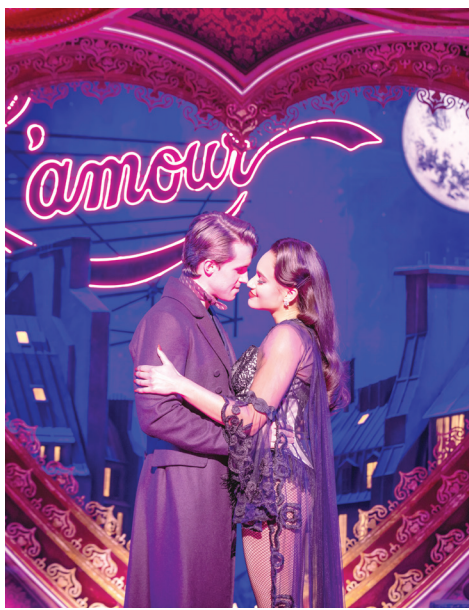
Aug. 6 - 18, 2024  
"Moulin Rouge! The Musical" is the winner of 10 Tony Awards®, including Best Musical. Enter a world where Bohemians and aristocrats rub elbows and revel in electrifying enchantment. Baz Luhrmann's revolutionary film comes to life onstage, remixed in a new musical mash-up extravaganza. Directed by Tony Award®-winner Alex Timbers, "Moulin Rouge! The Musical" is a theatrical celebration of truth, beauty, freedom, and love. With a book by Tony Award®-winner John Logan; music supervision, orchestrations, and arrangements by Tony Award®-winner Justin Levine; and choreography by Tony Award®-winner Sonya Tayeh, "Moulin Rouge!" is more than a musical — it is a state of mind.

### MJ - The Musical

Oct. 15 - 20, 2024  
One of the world's greatest entertainers, Michael Jackson, is the center of this new musical featuring his unique and unparalleled artistry. The multi-Tony Award®-winning new musical centered around the making of the 1992 Dangerous World Tour begins a tour of its own. Created by Tony Award®-winning director/choreographer Christopher Wheeldon and two-time Pulitzer Prize winner Lynn Nottage, "MJ - The Musical" goes beyond the singular moves and signature sound of the star, offering a rare look at the creative mind and collaborative spirit that catapulted Michael Jackson into legendary status.

### Mrs. Doubtfire

Nov. 12 - 17, 2024  
Everyone's favorite Scottish nanny stars in this comedy about what we do to stay together. In this internationally acclaimed hit musical, Rob McClure will reprise his Tony-nominated Broadway performance on tour alongside co-



MOULIN ROUGE! THE MUSICAL. PHOTO CELEBRITY ATTRACTIONS



MRS. DOUBTFIRE PHOTO CELEBRITY ATTRACTIONS



CLUE PHOTO CELEBRITY ATTRACTIONS

star and real wife, Maggie Lakis. Based on the beloved film and directed by four-time Tony Award®-winner Jerry Zaks, "Mrs. Doubtfire" tells the hysterical and heartfelt story of an out-of-work actor who will do anything for his kids. It is "the lovable, big-hearted musical comedy we need right now," raves the Chicago Tribune — one that proves we're better together.

### Les Misérables'

Jan. 21 - 26, 2025  
The play's, "Les Misérables," brilliant staging has taken the world by storm and hailed as "Les Mis for the 21st Century" (Huffington Post). Cameron Mackintosh presents an acclaimed production set against the backdrop of 19th-century France. "Les Misérables" tells an enthralling story of broken dreams and unrequited love, passion, sacrifice, and



'MJ - THE MUSICAL' PHOTO CELEBRITY ATTRACTIONS



LES MISÉRABLES' PHOTO CELEBRITY ATTRACTIONS



BACK TO THE FUTURE - THE MUSICAL. PHOTO CELEBRITY ATTRACTIONS

redemption — a timeless testament to the survival of the human spirit. This epic and uplifting story has become one of the most celebrated musicals in theatrical history.

The magnificent score of "Les Misérables" includes the songs "I Dreamed a Dream," "On My Own," "Bring Him Home," "One Day More," "Master of the House," and many more. Seen by over 130 million people worldwide in 53 countries, 438 cities, and 22 languages, "Les Misérables" is undisputedly one of the world's most popular musicals.

### Clue

Feb. 11 - 16, 2025  
Murder and blackmail are on the menu when six mysterious guests assemble at Boddy Manor for a night they will never forget! Was it Mrs. Peacock in the study with the knife?



WICKED PHOTO CELEBRITY ATTRACTIONS

Or was it Colonel Mustard in the library with the wrench? Based on the fan-favorite 1985 Paramount Pictures movie and inspired by the classic Hasbro board game, Clue is the ultimate whodunit that will leave you dying of laughter and keep you guessing until the final twist.

### Back to the Future - The Musical

April 15 - 20, 2025  
When Marty McFly is transported back to 1955 in a time machine built by the eccentric scientist Doc Brown, he accidentally changes the course of history. Now, he is in a race against time to fix the present, escape the past, and send himself... back to the future. When "Back to the Future - The Musical" hits 88 mph, it will change musical theater history forever.

Winner of the 2022 Olivier Award for Best New Musical, four WhatsOnStage Awards, including Best New Musical, and the Broadway World Award for Best New Musical, "Back to the Future" is adapted for the stage by the iconic film's creators Bob Gale ("Back to the Future" trilogy) and Robert Zemeckis ("Forrest Gump") and directed by the Tony Award®-winner John Rando with original music by multi-Grammy®-winners Alan Silvestri ("Avengers: Endgame") and Glen Ballard (Michael Jackson's "Man in the Mirror"), alongside hit songs from the movie including "The Power of Love," "Johnny B. Goode," "Earth Angel," and "Back in Time."

### Wicked

May 28 - June 15, 2025  
So much happened before Dorothy dropped in, and "Wicked," the Broadway sensation, tells the story of the Land of Oz from a different angle. Long before Dorothy arrives, another young woman is born with emerald-green skin—bright, fiery, misunderstood, and possessing an extraordinary talent. When she meets a bubbly blonde who is exceptionally popular, their initial rivalry turns into the unlikely of friendships...until the world decides to call one "good" and the other one "wicked."

From the first electrifying note to the final breathtaking moment, "Wicked" — the untold true story of the Witches of Oz — transfixed audiences with its wildly inventive story. "If every musical had the brains, heart, and courage of "Wicked," Broadway really would be a magical place" (Time Magazine).

### Tickets and More information

Season subscribers will be able to renew beginning in March. Season subscriber benefits include many advantages: the best seats at the lowest prices, the same great seats for every show, the ability to buy additional tickets to individual shows before the public, the option to exchange show tickets for another performance before the public on sale, and the opportunity to purchase tickets to any special add-on productions before the general public.

Ticket buyers are reminded that for Celebrity Attractions' productions, the Tulsa PAC Ticket Office and Celebrity Attractions are the only official retail ticket outlets and the only way to guarantee that you are paying face value for legitimate tickets for all performances at the Tulsa Performing Arts Center. Ticket buyers who purchase tickets from a ticket broker or any third party should also be aware that the Tulsa PAC Ticket Office and Celebrity Attractions are unable to reprint or replace lost or stolen tickets and are unable to contact patrons with information regarding time changes or other pertinent updates regarding the performance.

For more information, see Facebook.com/BwayTULSA, Twitter.com/BwayTULSA, and Instagram.com/BwayTULSA.



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Sealed bids, in the form of Online Bidding only, will be received by the Capital Assets Management, Construction and Properties (CAP) up to 96 hours prior to the time and date indicated below. The bids will be opened and read aloud after the time indicated. Copies of the plans and bid documents may be obtained from the CAP's Online Plan Room accessed from: <https://omes.ok.gov/services/construction-and-properties>. Copies of the bid documents are on file at the Construction and Properties office and are available for public inspection.

CAP Project Number: CAP24-0146

Project Name: DHS Maintenance Shop - Tulsa

Project Location: 7318 E Pine St. Tulsa, OK 74115

Using Agency: Oklahoma Department of Human Services

Bid Documents Available: Friday, February 23, 2024, Fee to Submit Online Bid: See Website

Pre-Bid Conference: Mandatory, Refer to "Instructions to Bidders" in Project Manual. In case of adverse weather conditions, please call 405-521-2112 prior to Pre-bid Conference.

Date and Time: Thursday, January 11, 2024 at 11am

Location: 7318 E Pine St. Tulsa, OK 74115

Bid Opening Date: Tuesday, March 19, 2024

Location: Online Bids Only

Bid Opening Time: 2:00 PM

Contact Person: OMES PM: Druey Hall - [druey.hall@omes.ok.gov](mailto:druey.hall@omes.ok.gov)

If the bid exceeds \$100,000, a cashier's check, a certified check or surety bid bond in the amount of five percent (5%) of the total bid shall accompany the sealed bid of each bidder. Security checks will be returned to all but the three lowest bidders after the bid opening. The three lowest bid securities will be retained until the contract is awarded.

By: Druey Hall  
Project Manager, Construction & Properties Department

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# Music

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## *Eaton Out* Inaugural Concert

Stalwart Tulsa musician and northside personality Bobby Eaton Jr. is launching a new band. The funk group, called Eaton Out, will be staging its inaugural concert on Saturday April 6 at 7 pm at the 36th Street North Event Center. Everybody who loves Tulsa music needs to jump on this! Advanced Tickets are \$20 and can be purchased at KBOB 89.9 FM studios (N. Lansing) or online at [918funk.eventbrite.com](https://918funk.eventbrite.com)