

The Oklahoma Eagle

"WE MAKE AMERICA BETTER, WHEN WE AID OUR PEOPLE." - E. L. GOODWIN (PUBLISHER, 1936-1978)

SERVING GREATER TULSA SINCE 1921

LEGACY

5,374

Weeks, since the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre and a denial of justice.

NATION

To Help Black Teachers Thrive, Remove Outside Barriers | A13

By AZIAH SIDDI, WORD IN BLACK

NATION

Nearly 1 in 4 Adults Dumped From Medicaid Are Now Uninsured | A13

By PHIL GALEWITZ, WORD IN BLACK

SOCIAL

THE OK EAGLE.COM
#THE OK EAGLE
#OKEAGLEPAPER

\$1.00

VOL. 103 NO. 15

APRIL 12, 2024 - APRIL 18, 2024

their

Minutes after the Oklahoma Medical Examiner's summary report was shared, regarding Nex Benedict's death, by the Owasso Police Department on Facebook, X (formerly Twitter) Libs of TikTok account followers began to demand an apology from local and national media, LGBTQ advocacy groups and Oklahomans who attributed the violence and hatred experienced by Nex to their rhetoric.

BY ROSS D. JOHNSON

Libs of TikTok
Twitter

"This Nex girl was bullying some girls in school. They fought back and she then intentionally overdosed on Prozac and Benadryl because her parents abused her."

Libs of TikTok
Twitter

"It is nice to be vindicated."

Libs of TikTok
Twitter

"I hope the left stops villainizing you over this, although I realize that's a tall order. You're owed countless apologies."



INSIDE

A Spotlight On Oklahoma's 2SLGBTQ Community

Kimberly Marsh, The Oklahoma Eagle, A3

Court Decision: 2010 federal ruling, Osage Reservation disestablished

Tristan Loveless, NonDoc, A6

Homeless in Oklahoma: Sacrificing healthcare for daily survival

Matt Patterson, NonDoc, A8

Uncontested: Nearly Half of Legislative Races Have Already Been Decided

Keaton Ross, Oklahoma Watch, A7

Talk of Greenwood: Celebrating The Lives of Tulsans Every Week

Dr. Jerry Goodwin, The Oklahoma Eagle, A18

Last Week's Headlines

Just in case you missed it. A4

Boley

Historic OK All-Black Town. A4

Jobs & Classifieds

Discover career opportunities. A17

Faith In Tulsa

The Eagle Church Directory. A16



**A SPOTLIGHT ON OKLAHOMA'S
2SLGBTQ COMMUNITY | A3**

**COURT DECISION BACKS
2010 FED OSAGE RULING | A6**

**OKLA. HOMELESS: SACRIFICING
HEALTHCARE FOR DAILY SURVIVAL | A8**



PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

A culture of hate

“From the beginning of this investigation, Owasso Police observed many indications that this death was the result of **SUICIDE.”**

Ross D. Johnson
The Oklahoma Eagle

The Oklahoma Medical Examiner’s summary report, published on March 13, revealed what many Oklahomans both suspected and feared, that Nex Benedict did not find sufficient hope from the genuine and profound support of their family and community, that the promise of tomorrow was inspiring enough to rise once again, or that they could continue to stand against a culture of hatred championed by fellow Owasso High School students, state officials, and conservative political ideologues. *Cont. A3*



PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

2SLGBTQ

A Spotlight On Oklahoma's 2SLGBTQ Community

Kimberly Marsh
The Oklahoma Eagle

When *The Oklahoma Eagle* spoke with Tulsa 2Spirit therapist Marca Cassity (they/them), Cassity shared how they were exhausted following the vigils and work done within the 2SLGBTQ community following the death of Nex Benedict in early February 2024. Benedict's cause of death was still in question at that time. Since our interview, the Oklahoma State Medical Examiner has declared the cause of death as suicide by an overdose of two subscription medications normally taken to treat depression and allergies. Conversations continue regarding bullying on public school properties in Oklahoma, where the negative political rhetoric against the 2SLGBTQ communities is escalating.

Bullying is a problem in every school district. Oklahoma anti-bullying laws require districts to implement policies as part of violence prevention efforts. In Benedict's case, the community also questioned whether the school district followed the effective protocols in reporting and ensuring the people involved received medical treatment. See recent coverage of the issue in *The Oklahoma Eagle* here: <https://theokeagle.com/2024/03/08/following-the-passing-of-nex-benedict-serious-questions-linger/>

Regardless of the cause of death, Benedict's

According to the Trevor Project 2023 Report on the Mental Health and Well-being of Indigenous LGBTQ Young People, just over a quarter reported that they identify as Two-Spirit.

story of being repeatedly bullied, along with their friends, remains a major focus of community members, justice organizations, teachers, students and parents in Oklahoma. This state has a strong right of center political stronghold and has been embroiled in conservative, fundamentalist politics. Highlights in recent months include provocative statements from the office of Ryan Walter's, Oklahoma Superintendent for Public Instruction, and from groups such as Libs of Tik Tok, the handle for far-right and anti-LGBTQ accounts operated by Chaya Raichik. Superintendent Walters recently appointed Raichik to the Oklahoma Library Media Advisory Committee, a state volunteer-committee tasked with leading the efforts on book bans and library content censorship across Oklahoma public schools and public charter schools. Since that time, more than 350 organizations have called for his removal from the Superintendent's office.

The Oklahoma Eagle talked with Cassity about the Two Spirit Community, as Benedict was from a Choctaw family. "Two-Spirit" is a contemporary term that refers to Native American and Canadian Indigenous people who have both a masculine and feminine spirit. It is an umbrella term used by some Indigenous peoples to describe their gender, gender expression, gender identity and sexual orientation. Prior to colonization of the Americas, many tribal members were gender fluid and considered two-

spirited.

According to the Trevor Project 2023 Report on the Mental Health and Well-being of Indigenous LGBTQ Young People (For the full report, see: <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/research-briefs/the-mental-health-and-well-being-of-indigenous-lgbtq-young-people/>), just over a quarter reported that they identify as Two-Spirit. Two-thirds of Indigenous LGBTQ young people self-identified as transgender or nonbinary. Three-quarters identified as multiracial Indigenous, while the remainder identified as exclusively Indigenous.

Indigenous LGBTQ young people report higher rates of mental health challenges compared to other LGBTQ young people. Over three quarters of Indigenous LGBTQ young people (77%) reported recent symptoms of anxiety and 66% reported recent symptoms of depression. Over half of Indigenous LGBTQ young people (54%) reported seriously considering suicide in the past year, compared to 41% in the broader sample of LGBTQ young people. Nearly a quarter of Indigenous LGBTQ young people (23%) reported attempting suicide in the past year, compared to 14% among the overall sample of LGBTQ young people.

The following is Q&A with Cassity about the Two-Spirit community and the challenges that face its members in Oklahoma.

Cont. A12

A culture of hate

A false vindication and demands for an apology, undeserved

How right-wing ideologues used the death of Nex Benedict to advance a hate-inspired agenda

From A2

The summary report is also a haunting reminder for many Oklahoma parents and guardians of the state's suicide statistical rating. According to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, suicide is the second leading cause of death of Oklahomans between the ages of 10-34. Nationally, Oklahoma has the 13th highest rate of suicide amongst all states. From 2013-2017, more than 3,700 Oklahomans died from suicide, exceeding deaths by motor vehicle crashes, highlighted in reporting provided by the Oklahoma State Department of Health. Further, OSDH reporting highlights that suicides outpace homicides almost 3 to 1.

For parents, families and friends, a new journey begins as a life ends, an often-lifelong discovery for what weighed so heavily upon the spirit and soul of their son, daughter, niece, nephew, and friend.

What they learn, at least, and consistently, is that the person for whom so much love was

shared, endured years of bullying, torment, public ridicule, state-backed efforts to restrict their narratives from being shared, fear mongering, and a general culture of hate.

"But I didn't pull the trigger"

The facts, unfortunately, haven't given rise to a state political or community movement committed to stemming the tide of youth suicides. Instead, far-right conservatives throughout Oklahoma have rallied around a call to shame those who refuse to embrace their traditional beliefs, weaponize religious orthodoxy and give themselves grace to demean and slander. The outcome of what may be objectively regarded as hate, is too often a state medical examiner's report revealing yet another cause of death as suicide.

Nex, the 16-year-old Owasso High School student who died one day after being beaten by other students in the school's bathroom, briefly hospitalized and released, now posthumously serves as another stark reminder of how the

weight of hateful rhetoric, political policies, and failed leadership impact the lives of young Oklahomans whose sin against the state is innocently 'being themselves.'

The wage of such sin is ridicule, torment, harassment, bullying, state legislative efforts to ban discussions about identity, and hate-filled public discourse encouraged on social media.

Should our children grow weary of the assault against their identity, their persons, find no respite or lasting hope for a civil existence, and leave us by way of suicide, they will be blamed for their own destruction.

Minutes after the Oklahoma Medical Examiner's summary report was shared by the Owasso Police Department on Facebook, X (formerly Twitter) Libs of Tik Tok account followers began to demand an apology from local and national media, LGBTQ+ advocacy groups, and Oklahomans who attributed the violence and hatred experienced by Nex to the social media handle's rhetoric.

"This Nex girl was bullying some girls

in school. They fought back and she then intentionally overdosed on Prozac and Benadryl because her parents abused her."

"It is nice to be vindicated."

"I hope the left stops villainizing you over this, although I realize that's a tall order. You're owed countless apologies."

"It wasn't the fight with others, it was the fight with self."

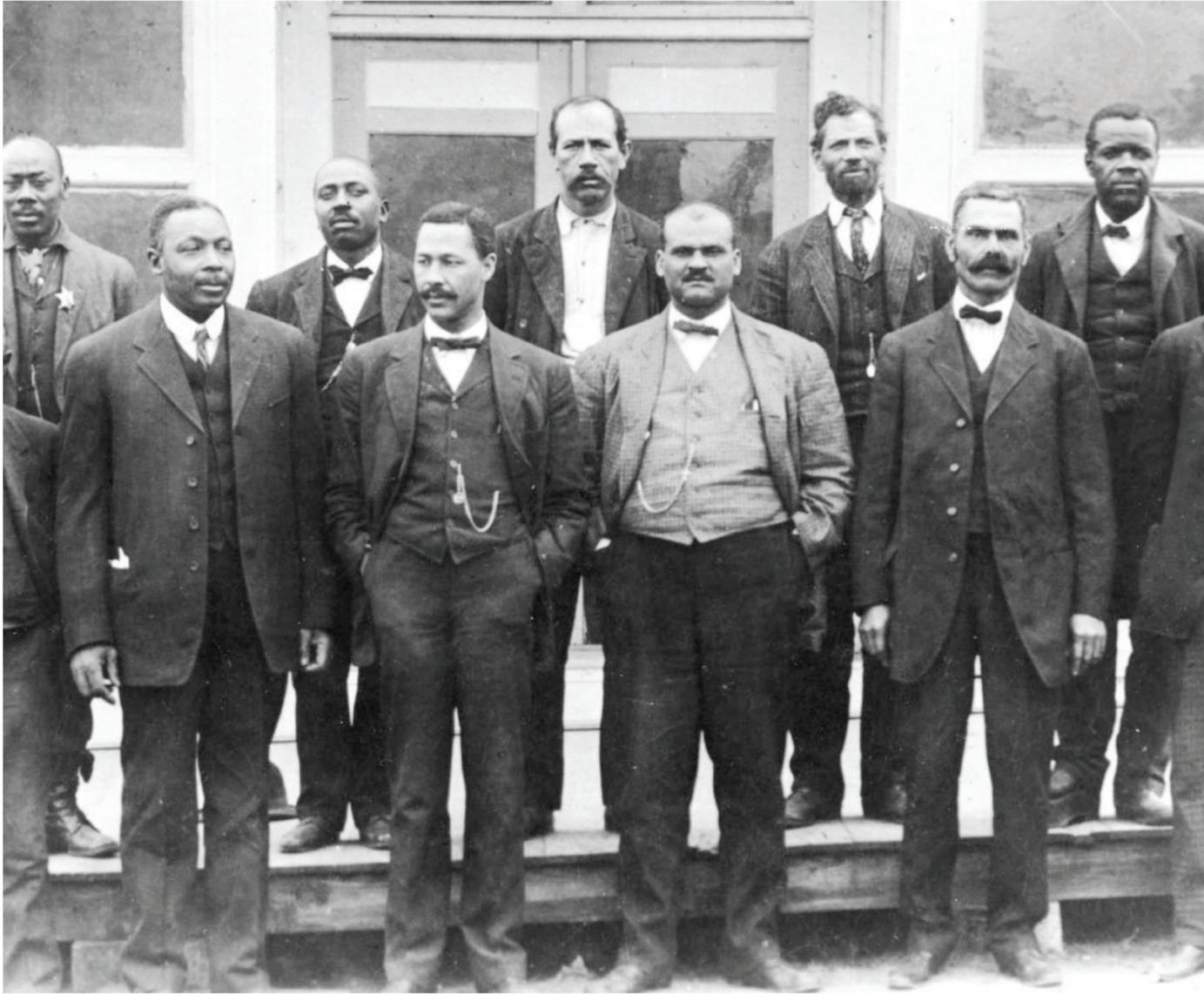
Chaya Raichik, a recent appointee to the Oklahoma Library Media Advisory Committee by Ryan Walters, the Oklahoma Superintendent of Public Instruction, is the creator of Libs of Tik Tok, a social media community that features anti-trans posts and often shares poorly contextualized clips of educators intended to boost accusations of a 'Woke Agenda' being imposed upon children.

Last August, Libs of Tik Tok featured an edited video of Union Public Schools librarian Kirby Mackenzie with a caption overlay "POV: Teachers in your state are dropping like flies but you are still just not quite finished

Cont. A5

Boley: An Historic Oklahoma All-Black Town

By LARRY O'DELL, THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF OKLAHOMA HISTORY AND CULTURE



Boley is the largest and most well-known of the more than fifty All-Black towns of Oklahoma and one of only thirteen still existing.

Located halfway between Paden and Castle in Okfuskee County, Boley is the largest and most well-known of the more than fifty All-Black towns of Oklahoma and one of only thirteen still existing. The town, established on land allotted to Creek freedman James Barnett's daughter Abigail, was named after J. B. Boley, a railroad official of the Fort Smith and Western Railway. Founded in 1903 and incorporated in 1905, Boley and the African Americans living in the area prospered for many years. The Boley Progress, a weekly newspaper, began in 1905. The paper and various advertising campaigns circulated through the South and lured many former slaves to the new town. At 1907 statehood Boley sheltered 824 individuals.

By 1911 Boley boasted more than four thousand citizens and many businesses, including two banks and three cotton gins. Booker T. Washington, founder of the National Negro Business League and the Tuskegee Institute, in Alabama, visited the town in 1905 and proclaimed it "the most enterprising and in many ways the most interesting of the Negro towns in the United States." The town supported two colleges: Creek-Seminole College and Methodist Episcopal College. Boley also had its own electrical generating plant, water system, and ice plant. The Masonic Grand Lodge completed a majestic Masonic Temple around 1912. At the time, it was said to be the tallest building between Okmulgee and Oklahoma City.

Like many rural towns, Boley suffered through hard times in the 1920s and 1930s, its population dropping to 1,154 in 1920 and 874 in 1930. By World War II the population stood at 942, and it declined to 573 in 1960 and to 423 in 1980. At the dawn of the twenty-first century, with a population of 1,126, the town was experiencing economic rejuvenation. The number of residents was 1,184 in 2010. Boley still hosts the nation's oldest African American community-based rodeo every Memorial Day weekend. The downtown business district is listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NR 75001568) and has been designated a National Historic Landmark by the National Park Service.

THE OKLAHOMA HISTORICAL SOCIETY is an agency of the government of Oklahoma dedicated to promotion and preservation of Oklahoma's history and its people by collecting, interpreting, and disseminating knowledge and artifacts of Oklahoma.

BOLEY TOWN COUNCIL, (3377.D.2, Oklahoma Historical Society Photograph Collection, OHS).

Featured Last Week



The Story of Greenwood Will Survive Any Court Decision



Two New Members Elected To Tulsa Public Schools Board



NABJ Regional Conference, Tulsa, April 12-13

The Oklahoma Eagle

Founded in 1921

- James O. Goodwin**
Publisher 1980-Present
- Robert K. Goodwin**
Publisher 1972-1980
- Edward L. Goodwin, Jr.**
Co-Publisher 1980-2014
- Edward L. Goodwin, Sr.**
Publisher 1936-1972
- Theodore B. Baughman**
Publisher 1921-1936

Business

- Jerry Goodwin**
Principal
- M. David Goodwin**
Principal
- Ross D. Johnson**
Principal
- David W. Cole**
General Council
- Marsh Media**
Advertising

News

- Gary Lee**
Managing Editor
- Ray Pearcey**
Sr. Contributor
- Russell LaCour**
Contributor
- Victor Luckerson**
Contributor
- John Neal**
Contributor

Photography

- Cory Young**
Photographer

Print

- Sam Levrault**
Production Director

Circulation

- Kirstein Lynn**
Subscription Manager

Digital

- Web**
TheOKEagle.com
- Facebook**
TheOKEagle
- Twitter**
OKEaglePaper

Contact

- Letters to the Editor**
editor@theokeagle.com

- Advertise**
advertise@theokeagle.com

- Circulation**
publishers@theokeagle.com

- Subscribe**
theokeagle.com/subscribe

The Oklahoma Eagle
Enjoy articles, events and featured content online



Online

WEB: www.theokeagle.com
FACEBOOK: #TheOKEagle
TWITTER: #OKEaglePaper

Delivery

For questions about deliver, billing and our membership program, please contact us at +1 (918) 582-7124, ext. 241.

Submissions

Submitted content may be edited for space, clarity and for considerations of liability. All submissions become the sole property of The Oklahoma Eagle, which reserves the right to run all or part of any submissions due to timeliness or newsworthiness.

Letters to the Editor

Want to write a letter to be published in the paper and online? Email us online to submit.

Advertising

For print and online advertising information, go to theokeagle.com/media-kit/ or call +1 (918) 582-7124.

The Newsroom

Know something important we should cover? Send an inquiry to theokeagle.com/subscribe.

The Oklahoma Eagle | Founded in 1921 | Vol. CII No. 15

THE OKLAHOMA EAGLE is published weekly on Fridays by The Oklahoma Eagle, LLC, P.O. Box 3267, Tulsa, OK 74101. General office is 624 E. Archer St., Tulsa, OK 74120. Periodical Postage (WSPS 406-580) is paid at Tulsa, OK. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to the above address. Delivery subscription rates: (Continental United States, Hawaii, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands). All subscriptions may include Premium Edition issues throughout the year.

Mail Subscriber Rates: Single copy \$1 | Yearly \$52 | 2 Years \$100

©2024 The Oklahoma Eagle, LLC. All rights reserved. No portions of this periodical may be reproduced with expressed written consent.

A culture of hate

How Woke became weaponized

From A3

pushing your Woke Agenda at the public school.” The edited video compelled the social media community’s members to call for her termination and posted memes suggesting that educators are promoting an anti-white agenda and claims eventual pedophilia.

Chris Payne, spokesman for Union Public Schools, noted that “Libs of TikTok omitted a really key thing that Raichik said that was kind of a wink meant to be an ironic comment, and by omitting it, it really affected how people perceived the video.”

The comment was, “My woke agenda is teaching kids to love books and be kind,” Payne said. “So that’s a pretty big omission.” The comment was, “My woke agenda is teaching kids to love books and be kind.” Payne said. “So that’s a pretty big omission.”

Walters contributed to the false claim, and the fervor of far-right activists, by reposting the edited video with the comment “Democrats say it doesn’t exist. The liberal media denies the issue. Even some Republicans hide from it. Woke ideology is real and I am here to stop it.”

Walters and Raichik, lacking any apparent concern for the safety of the Union Public Schools teacher or students, promoted the false narrative of a ‘Woke Agenda’ intended to disparage white Oklahomans.

In the days that followed, Ellen Ochoa Elementary School received emailed bomb threats, referencing the educator, Mackenzie, maligned by Walters and Raichik.

“The innocence of children is sacred, that is a fact that has been known for the entirety of human history and the end of civilizations such as in ancient Rome are often marked by normalization pedophilia and child abuse. I’m not going to stand by as you b*****s continue to indoctrinate and prey upon our children. This is why we placed a bomb in the school. You will evacuate the building so nobody dies,” said ‘Made John,’ the anonymous sender.

The email also called out Ellen Ochoa Elementary librarian Mackenzie and said her house would be “blown up” as well.

Walters’ staff defended the superintendent’s actions with a statement that read, in part, “The issue here is the employee’s actions, that’s why Supt. Walters commented on it. Supt. Walters will continue to do what voters elected him to do — hold schools and their employees accountable for educating young Oklahomans.”

Neither apology nor explanation were offered by Oklahoma Gov. Kevin Stitt, Walters or Raichik to the school district’s families and students.

Sue Benedict, Nex’s mother, would also find no comfort from apologies or expressions of sympathy from the governor or his representatives.

Raichik would continue to gain audience engagement with Libs of TikTok, as many of its members embraced the medical examiner’s report as a “vindication” of their behavior, against claims of nurturing a culture of hate. Libs of TikTok members immediately distanced the social media community’s rhetoric from the death of Benedict and the harassment endured by Oklahoma’s SPLGBTQ+ community.

The members’ (Libs of TikTok) “but I didn’t pull

“

Should our children grow weary of the assault against their identity, their persons, find no respite or lasting hope for a civil existence, and leave us by way of suicide, they will be blamed for their own destruction.

SB 1677

The Department of Human Services shall not: (1) Require, as a condition for eligibility to foster or adopt, any current or prospective adoptive or foster parent to affirm, accept, or support any government policy regarding sexual orientation or gender identity that conflicts with the parent’s sincerely held religious or moral beliefs.

HB 3120

It shall be the policy of every public school or charter school that is provided or authorized by the Oklahoma Constitution and state laws that a person’s sex is an immutable biological trait and that it is false to ascribe to a person a pronoun that does not correspond to the person’s sex.

This Nex girl was bullying some girls in school.

They fought back and she then intentionally overdosed on Prozac and Benadryl because her parents abused her.

Libs of TikTok
Twitter

“It is nice to be vindicated.”

Libs of TikTok, Twitter

I hope the left stops villainizing you over this,

although I realize that's a tall order. You're owed countless apologies.

Libs of TikTok
Twitter

NORMAN, OKLAHOMA RESIDENT
Norman City Council Meeting

Recruiting children into these lifestyles will be very easy with this kind of open format.

September 28, 2010

Superintendent Ryan Walters
@RyanWaltersSupt

**Democrats say it doesn’t exist.
The liberal media denies the issue.
Even some Republicans hide from it.
Woke ideology is real and I am here to stop it.**

Libs of TikTok
Twitter

the trigger” trope was quickly advanced in defense of their behavior. Apologies from news media and community activists were soon in order, and the weight of their past sentiments forgotten.

Benedict’s trauma and death are not without precedent in Oklahoma.

Broken Heart Land, an Outcast Films production (Reading, Pa.), explores the life of Zachary Harrington, a gay Norman, Okla., teen who committed suicide in 2010. Harrington’s suicide followed an hours-long and contentious Norman City Council Meeting the week prior (Sept. 28, 2010), where members of the community candidly debated both support for and opposition against a proposed LGBTQ History Month.

Harrington’s family and friends don’t singularly attribute Zachary’s suicide to the sentiments shared during the fall meeting. Van Harrington, Zachary’s father, recalls that his son, then living in Arkansas, drove back to his hometown in support of the proposed month-long recognition, certainly prepared by his experiences for many years.

In “Broken Heart Land,” the documentary unearths “the searing pain of prejudice and misinformation” experienced by Zachary and how the toxic culture within Norman “led their son to hide his HIV positive status and forgo treatment.”

Zachary, like Nex, experienced a ‘toxic’ blend of unrestrained ridicule and threats within the walls of Oklahoma’s public schools. The incidents were fueled by, certainly, a lacking accountability employed by educators and school administrators. Zachary’s circumstance was made far more perilous as his refusal to seek treatment for HIV meant that he would awaken each morning fully aware of the fact that his fear of being further ostracized would dictate the remaining moments shared with his family.

Stephen Brower, a 17-year-old openly gay Tulsa,

Okla., high school student, would later share both his sorrow and empathy about the suicide of Harrington in “A Letter to Zach Harrington,” published by This Land Press in December 2010. Brower’s written voice echoed many of the same experiences endured by Oklahoma LGBTQ youth. Of significance, was the characterization of Oklahoma’s “toxic” culture.

The moralists’ obsession with sexual identity

The conditions fermented by the hate-filled rhetoric of Oklahoma’s governing officials and far-right constituency is too often a burden deemed unbearable by young Oklahomans. The Trevor Project, a national nonprofit organization and the leading suicide prevention organization for LGBTQ young people, found that 48% of LGBTQ youth in Oklahoma seriously considered suicide in the past year. Highlighted in the organization’s annual reporting, the 2022 National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health Oklahoma, are critical insights into the suicide risks faced by LGBTQ young people, top barriers to mental health care, the prevalence of anti-LGBTQ victimization, and the negative impacts of recent politics.

Challenges faced by LGBTQ youth in Oklahoma are not simply the public rhetoric shared across common media and microaggressions. They are the extensions of such behavior, represented by threats of violence, bullying, overt discrimination and state legislative actions drafted to fight against the false narratives of grooming and indoctrination.

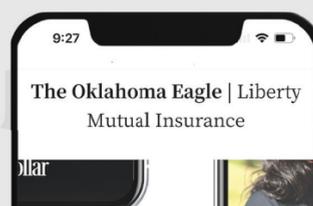
State officials, including Walters, risk giving credence to such irrational fears by promoting misinformation about Oklahoma educators and casting LGBTQ youth as persons who intend to disrupt the order of class instruction and demand

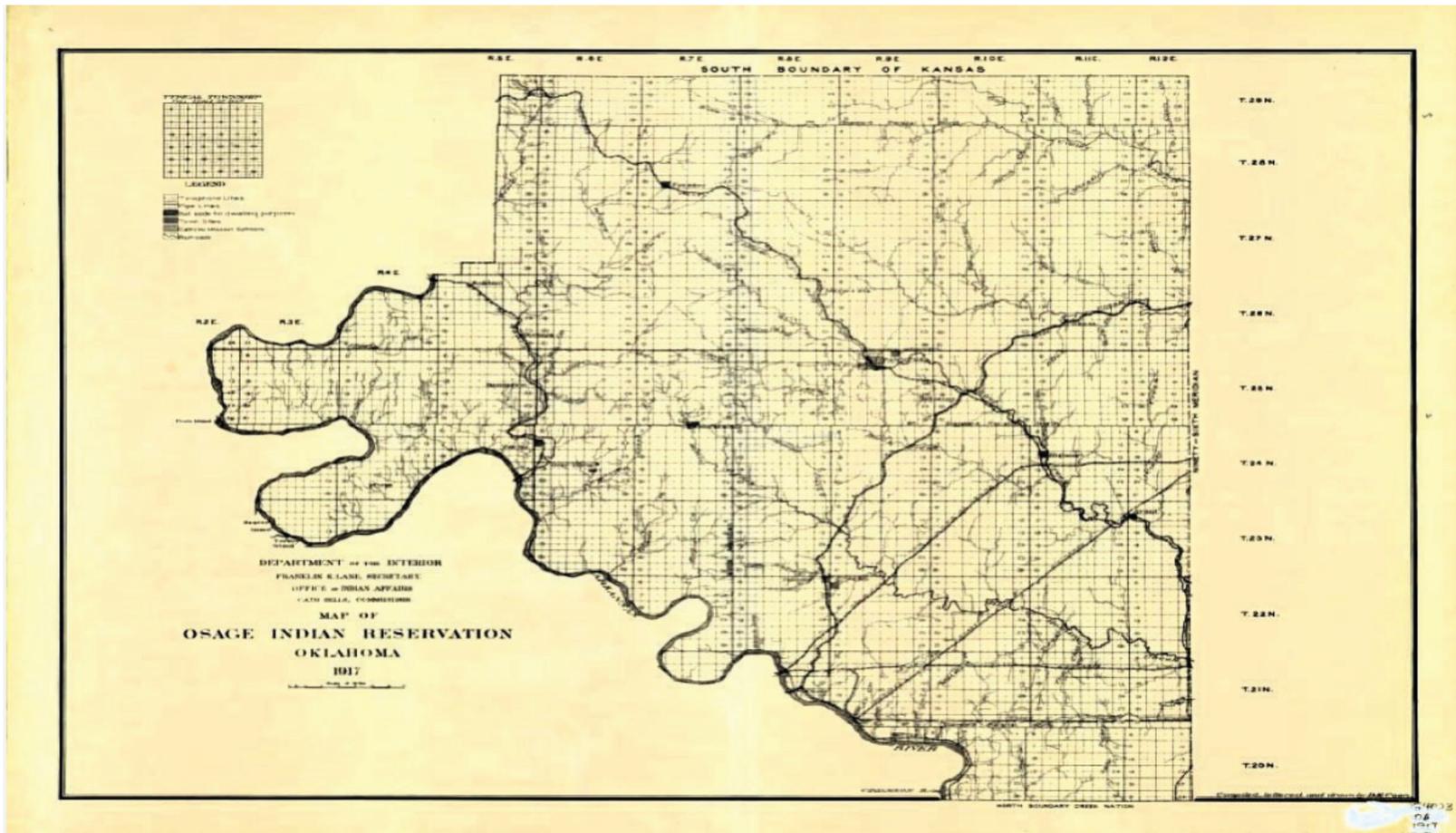
Cont. A12

The Oklahoma Eagle

Our Mission

To amplify our core value of equity, through journalism and editorial, is the cornerstone of our continued success.





THE OSAGE NATION encompasses all of Osage County, the largest of Oklahoma's 77 counties. PHOTO: BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS

Osage Reservation

Court of Criminal Appeals *decision backs* 2010 federal ruling that Osage Reservation disestablished

Tristan Loveless
NonDoc

The Osage Reservation was disestablished and the state of Oklahoma retains criminal jurisdiction over crimes committed by tribal citizens in Osage County, the Oklahoma Court of Criminal Appeals ruled today.

The state court decision references and aligns with the 2010 U.S. 10th Circuit Court of Appeals decision in *Osage Nation v. Irby*, which determined that the tribe's reservation was disestablished despite Congress not taking specific action to do so. Complicating public understanding of the situation, the Osage Nation retains mineral rights within its territory and is often colloquially referred to as having an underground reservation.

Thursday's 32-page decision in *McCauley v. State* comes on the heels of national media attention brought by Martin Scorsese's film *Killers of the Flower Moon*. The film depicts the most infamous of the 20th century Osage murders, many of which remain unsolved.

Relying on federal court's decision in *Osage Nation v. Irby*, Oklahoma's highest criminal court declined to issue a ruling incongruent with the 10th Circuit.

"The 10th Circuit's decision in *Osage Nation* applies here because of its preclusive effect," wrote Vice Presiding Judge Robert Hudson for a unanimous court. "Appellant's claim is entirely derivative of the Osage Nation's original claim, and as such cannot be relitigated here by appellant."

The decision keeps federal and state law consistent on their approach to the Osage Reservation. In 2010 *Osage Nation v. Irby*, the U.S. 10th Circuit Court of Appeals found that the Osage Reservation had been implicitly disestablished.

However, the *Irby* decision came before the U.S. Supreme Court found the Muscogee Nation Reservation was never disestablished in the historic 2020 *McGirt v. Oklahoma* decision, which functionally affirmed the eastern half of Oklahoma as a series of Indian Country reservations. The *Irby* decision also used a 1984 legal test for determining whether a reservation had been disestablished. The U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *McGirt* relied on a different standard and only focused on whether Congress had disestablished the Muscogee Reservation.

Prior to the *McGirt* decision, courts would look to the 1984 *Solem v. Bartlett* decision to determine when a reservation was disestablished. Under a *Solem* analysis, courts looked at acts of Congress, the circumstance around the passage of acts relating to a tribe, and subsequent events after the passage of the act.

The *Solem* test made it easier for courts to declare reservations disestablished because it allowed them to consider factors such as demographic changes within a historic reservation when determining disestablishment. *McGirt* narrowed the *Solem* test to a textual inquiry that only examines the words passed through Congress.

Notably, the 10th Circuit in *Irby* found "the operative language of the statute does not unambiguously suggest diminishment or disestablishment of the Osage Reservation" before ruling the latter two *Solem* factors weighed in favor of disestablishment. Simply put, *Irby*'s analysis and holding appear incompatible with the *McGirt* decision.

In a specially concurring opinion in the new *McCauley* decision, Court of Criminal Appeals Presiding Judge Scott Rowland defended the applicability of the *Solem* test by pointing out that the *McGirt* decision never explicitly

overruled *Solem* and that it's not a state court's place to overturn federal precedent.

"The majority opinion (in *McGirt v. Oklahoma*) mentions or cites approvingly the *Solem* case about a dozen times, and nowhere indicates its abrogation, deprecation or overruling," Rowland wrote. "If *McCauley* is correct that *McGirt* does violence to the *Solem* analysis that cases such as *Osage Nation (v. Irby)* should no longer be followed, that pronouncement must come from the federal courts."

Thursday's decision from the Court of Criminal Appeals forecloses efforts for the Osage Nation to seek recognition of its reservation through state courts. If the nation continues to push for the recognition of its reservation, it would have to support a case in federal court and see if the 10th Circuit will reverse *Irby* in light of *McGirt*.

Dakota Aaron McCauley was convicted in October 2021 by an Osage County jury of heat of passion manslaughter and sentenced to 22 years in state prison. McCauley was convicted of killing Frankie Cotto in May 2018 in McCauley's kitchen after Cotto had an affair with his partner.

McCauley's attorneys challenged his conviction on more grounds than simply the Osage Reservation claim.

During jury deliberations, which are supposed to remain secret, a few court employees watched jurors in the courtroom on a security camera. A similar incident in Rogers County 2022 left assistant district attorneys Isaac Shields and George Gibbs facing disciplinary actions that are still pending before the Oklahoma Supreme Court.

Unlike the Rogers County case, prosecutors only briefly viewed the footage with Assistant District Attorney Brett Mize admitting that he "glanced at it for 30 seconds" on his way to the restroom.

Cont. A7



THE OKLAHOMA EAGLE

People. Narratives. News.

Get 52 weeks for only \$1 per week

Visit theokeagle.com/subscribe-advertise

The Oklahoma Eagle

www.theokeagle.com



A DELEGATION FROM THE OSAGE NATION visits Washington, D.C. in 1909. PHOTO WIKICOMMONS

Osage Reservation

McCauley challenges failed to demonstrate a violation of constitutional rights

From A6

However, the appellate court was ultimately unconvinced by McCauley's argument and found the error did not constitute a violation of McCauley's constitutional rights.

"There is no indication in the record that the jury was aware of the camera's presence in the courtroom at the time of their deliberations, and thus its presence could not have 'exerted a chilling effect on the jurors,'" wrote Hudson. "Our review of the security video confirms that it provided no useful knowledge about the deliberations to a viewer, particularly because of the lack of audio."

However, the court noted that viewing ongoing jury deliberations is still a criminal offense in Oklahoma.

Another jury issue presented by McCauley's attorneys on appeal involved a juror taking a short phone call before jury deliberations. According to court documents, one juror talked on their phone with an unknown party before deliberations began, and two others texted before deliberations.

Jurors are not supposed to communicate with outside parties during jury deliberations in order to prevent outside influence from swaying the jury's opinion.

The Court of Criminal Appeals rejected

“

There was thus no error, plain or otherwise, from the segment of the security footage which shows the jurors on a short break, before the commencement of their deliberations, while the courtroom was being cleared.

ROBERT HUDSON,
Vice Presiding Judge,
Oklahoma Court of
Criminal Appeals

this claim because defense counsel failed to object to the jury's "short break" on the record during trial.

"No objection was made when the jurors were allowed to separate, and no admonishment was requested," wrote Hudson. "There was thus no error, plain or otherwise, from the segment of the security footage which shows the jurors on a short break, before the commencement of their deliberations, while the courtroom was being cleared."

McCauley's attorneys also argued that Associate District Judge Burl Estes briefly talking with a juror as he walked through the courtroom with papers and a cup of coffee interfered with the jury deliberations. The Court of Criminal Appeals found the judge's conduct was not an appealable error.

"The video shows that the judge's communications with the jurors were made in passing, lasted a few seconds and occurred while he was clearing out of the courtroom prior to the commencement of deliberations," Hudson wrote. "There was thus no actual or obvious error from the trial court's brief communications with the juror during the break, prior to the commencement of jury deliberations."

Previously centered around present-day Missouri, but including parts of present-day Oklahoma, Kansas, and Arkansas, the Osage

Nation was historically one of the dominant powers in the Plains region around the time of the founding of the United States. Before the United States expanded west, the French and Spanish were the dominant colonial powers in the region, and Jesuit missionaries heavily influenced the nation.

As the United States expanded west, the Osage people were removed to Kansas and then were removed again to their present-day territory in what is now Osage County after the Civil War. The current Osage Nation was carved out of the Cherokee Nation Reservation, which was previously Osage territory before Cherokee removal.

The Osage Nation was part of Indian Territory until the creation of Oklahoma Territory in 1890. Osage County, the largest county in Oklahoma, was required to include the entire Osage Nation when Oklahoma became a state in 1907.

At the end of the 19th century, the discovery of oil brought an economic boom to Osage County that lasted until the Great Depression and spurred the immigration of settlers, an increase in crime and a substantial rise in the wealth of the Osage people. The era, sometimes known as the Reign of Terror, is depicted in Killers of the Flower Moon as well as in the work of Osage writer John Joseph Mathews, especially his 1934 novel Sundown.

TRISTAN LOVELESS is a NonDoc Media reporter covering legal matters and other civic issues in the Tulsa area. A citizen of the Cherokee Nation who grew up in Turley and Skiatook, he graduated from the University of Tulsa College of Law in 2023. Before that, he taught for the Tulsa Debate League in Tulsa Public Schools.

Uncontested Legislative Races

Uncontested: Nearly Half of Legislative Races Have Already Been Decided

Keaton Ross
Oklahoma Watch

For the third consecutive general election cycle, most Oklahoma voters won't elect their state lawmakers in November.

Fifty of the 127 State and House seats up for re-election were decided at 5 p.m. Friday, April 5, when just one candidate filed for office. Thirty-five races will be settled in the June 18 primary or Aug. 27 runoff election. The Oklahoma Democratic Party has opened its 2024 primaries to independents while the Republican and Libertarian parties will hold closed contests.

Former Rep. Avery Frix, who vacated his House seat in 2022 to run for Congress, won the Senate District 9 election outright when no one filed to run against him. Outgoing Sen. Dewayne Pemberton, who announced in February he would not seek reelection, faced a Democratic challenger in both his 2016 and 2020 campaigns.

After a record number of candidates filed for office during the 2018 teacher walkout, party leaders blamed the COVID-19 pandemic on a lackluster showing in 2020. When nearly 70% of races did not appear on the November ballot in 2022, with several Republicans winning previously competitive districts outright, Democratic party officials blamed the Republican-dominated Legislature for making

districts less competitive during redistricting.

Uncompetitive races can cause voters to become apathetic and less interested in the democratic process, studies have found. A 2011 Georgetown University study found state legislators who run unopposed tend to be less effective and engaged with constituents.

Brett Sharp, a political science professor at the University of Central Oklahoma, said the increasing nationalization of local politics and the rising political spending has made it more difficult for Democrats to be competitive in rural areas. Running a competitive campaign in a House district with about 39,000 residents can cost tens of thousands of dollars.

Voter apathy and increased odds of political corruption are among the top consequences of uncompetitive races, Sharp said, referencing political scandals in the early 1990s when Democrats controlled the state.

"Part of democracy is participating and feeling like you have a say," Sharp said. "When it gets down to one party dominating race by race and people aren't even showing up on the ballot and are automatically placed into office, it has an effect on us as citizens."

Lawmakers and voter advocates have floated several changes, including retention ballots and open primaries, as solutions to make elected officials more accountable to voters.

House Bill 1917 by Rep. Andy Fugate, D-Del Cty, would place unopposed legislative candidates on a retention ballot each general

election cycle and automatically call a special election if they do not receive at least 51% of votes. The measure, which was introduced last session, did not receive a hearing in the House Rules Committee and is effectively dead.

Supporters of an effort to establish open primaries in Oklahoma, which would place candidates of all parties on the June primary election ballot with the top two advancing to the general election, say they are making progress towards collecting signatures for an initiative petition. If the system was in place this year, more than 60% of legislative races would be decided in November.

Supporters of open primaries argue the method gives more power to independents, who account for about 20% of Oklahoma voters, and moderates campaigns.

"I think the most vital aspect of it is that everyone votes, so you're incentivized whether you have an R, a D or nothing behind your name to build a coalition with people beyond parties," said Oklahoma City Mayor David Holt, who served as a Republican state senator in Senate District 30 from 2010 to 2018, at a November panel on repealing closed primaries.

Critics, including members of Gov. Kevin Stitt's Election and Campaign Finance Task Force, contend open primaries too often result in two candidates with similar views advancing to the general election.

"Such a primary system can have the effect of reducing options for voters despite its intent,

and any unintended consequences should therefore be cautiously contemplated before it is instituted in Oklahoma," the report reads.

U.S. House Seats, Corporation Commission Opening Draw Dozens of Candidates

All five members of Oklahoma's congressional delegation filed for reelection, with four drawing a challenger from an opposing party.

Registered Republicans will decide Oklahoma's Third Congressional District race, where two Republicans filed to run against incumbent Rep. Frank Lucas. In 2021, Oklahoma lawmakers expanded the mostly rural district to include portions of urban Oklahoma City.

Three Republicans, Democrat Harold Spradling and Libertarian Chad Williams filed to succeed longtime Corporation Commissioner Bob Anthony, who faces a term limit. Former Secretary of State and Senate President Brian Bingman, former journalist Russell Ray and welder Justin Hornback will face off on June 18 for the Republican party's nomination.

KEATON ROSS covers democracy and criminal justice for Oklahoma Watch. Contact him at (405) 831-9753 or Kross@Oklahomawatch.org. Follow him on Twitter at [_KeatonRoss](https://twitter.com/_KeatonRoss).



PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

Oklahoma Homelessness

Homeless in Oklahoma: Sacrificing healthcare for daily survival

Heather Wartick
Oklahoma Watch

Shay Swindall lives in a tent, under a busy Oklahoma City overpass, in a sprawling homeless encampment. When she needed a new albuterol inhaler recently, she tried to ration the last few puffs she had left.

Her health had been fairly good before last winter, though, even at age 64, health care was not something she prioritized. There were times she was taken to emergency rooms for problems that could have been managed at health clinics, she said. But finding a ride to providers can be a real challenge.

Last winter, she became desperately sick with double pneumonia and a supervirus. She lay in her tent for at least three days, wet and freezing, burning with fever.

"It was no cold, no simple virus that a few days' rest would cure."

"It was so bad," she said. "I was so, so sick. So sick."

Falling in and out of consciousness, she needed help badly but she was too ill to go find it. Finally, someone noticed her condition and called for help.

"I don't remember getting on the gurney and I don't remember getting in the ambulance," she said.

She does remember fighting off the techs who were trying to insert a device down her trachea. She had no idea what was happening to her.

"It was horrible," she said, tears spilling down her cheeks.

Swindall's experience isn't

In 2023, in Tulsa and Oklahoma Counties alone, more than 2,500 Oklahomans lived unsheltered or in homeless shelters.

OKC POINT IN TIME 2023 | SNAPSHOT OF HOMELESSNESS, City of Oklahoma City, the Coalition to End Poverty, and the Homeless Alliance

unusual for people experiencing homelessness, data shows. The stories are individual; some involve COVID-19, HIV, uncontrolled diabetes or high blood pressure. Some people succumb to the ravages of winter with severe frostbite, leaving them without their fingers or toes. Some get too hot under Oklahoma's blazing summer sun and die.

Without reliable and consistent health care and transportation to appointments, every day is a struggle for people like Swindall. Despite hundreds of health clinics and centers that offer free, or nearly-free services, when people experiencing homelessness get sick, they often suffer until they have no other option than going to an emergency room.

When they are dying, services are even more difficult to obtain.

"When you're in survival mode, your healthcare is not important to you, because first you're wanting to make sure you have something to eat, and you have to secure yourself a place to sleep that night," said Tim Chandler, a licensed practical nurse who heads the Community Health and Wellness Street Medicine program of Mental Health Alliance of Oklahoma.

A trip to a free clinic means a missed meal at a charity. Being away from camp too long can mean returning to find belongings stolen. A cough or stuffy nose, painful back or headache take a backseat to sustenance and safety.

In 2023, in Tulsa and Oklahoma Counties alone, more than 2,500

Oklahomans lived unsheltered or in homeless shelters, according to that year's Point in Time counts.

Statewide, a few street outreach teams such as the Street Medicine program, as well as onsite clinics at shelters cater, to the basic health needs of those Oklahomans.

The Homeless Alliance offers onsite clinics through their partnership with Healing Hands, a program of Community Health Charities. They offer transportation to Healing Hands on off days.

City Care's Mobile Outreach and Engagement program, known as MOE, offers daily rides along a route of nonprofit agencies. Other groups offer similar services.

Still, access to transportation can be a constant obstacle for people experiencing homelessness if they proactively seek healthcare.

"For the most part, when somebody takes suddenly ill in the day shelter or the winter shelter, or is seriously injured, (their option is) EMSA and the closest emergency room," said Dan Straughan in an email to Oklahoma Watch.

Newly-retired, Straughan is the founder and previous executive director of The Homeless Alliance.

Once a person is stabilized in an ER, most often, they are discharged back to the streets.

According to data that tracked 3,229 cases of hospital discharges of Oklahomans experiencing homelessness in 2022, 172 patients were discharged to a psychiatric hospital, 98 were discharged to a nursing facility and 74

were discharged to an inpatient rehabilitation facility.

A vast majority, 2301, were discharged to home or self-care. Another 331 left against medical advice. That data, provided by the Oklahoma State Department of Health, only includes state-licensed hospitals, and excludes tribal, military and VA hospitals.

We Do What We Can

Nearly every day, Chandler loads up a cargo van with supplies; acetaminophen for pain, saline and triple antibiotic ointment for wounds, blood pressure cuffs, blood sugar tests, bandages, gauze and other over-the-counter medications his clients may need.

Chandler and Chris Allen, a case manager for Mental Health Association Oklahoma, spend their days going anywhere people experiencing homelessness set up camp, to find out how they can help.

The day the Street Medicine team met Swindall, they also met Robert Hairell. At 54, Hairell was recently released from the Jess Dunn Correctional Center. He was more fortunate than some parolees; he had a case manager that set him up with Medicaid coverage, known as Soonercare in Oklahoma.

Hairell was diagnosed with high blood pressure while in prison. Chandler checked his blood pressure, which was 180 over 120; heart-attack territory. Chandler urged him to get treatment that day, but Hairell said he

Cont. A9

Oklahoma Homelessness

“When you’re in survival mode, your healthcare is not important to you”

From A8

didn’t want to go to an emergency room. He did accept an appointment at Healing Hands.

“It’s an ongoing thing with me,” Hairell said. “It runs in my family. It really doesn’t bother me.”

He hadn’t taken blood pressure meds in months.

About 10 tents were staked under the highway, with 15 to 20 people and several pet dogs living there.

“It’s rough out here,” Hairell said. “We work diligently trying to help each other out, but it’s really hard when you get sick. We need consistency.”

From time to time a church group or other charity-minded people pops in to offer food or clothing, he said, but their energy comes in short bursts. He said people living unsheltered need to build trust with outsiders such as Chandler and Allen.

The two social workers try hard to establish that trust.

Chandler promised he’d be back to take Hairell and Swindall to see a provider at Healing Hands. Allen visited with several people he had been working with to establish Medicaid coverage, obtain replacement identification cards and connect to other resources. Then it was off to the next camp.

Many conditions that send people to ERs can be controlled with medications, diet and lifestyle changes, said Jeanean Yanish Jones, executive director of the Health Alliance for the Uninsured. The nonprofit connects uninsured individuals with primary care doctors, specialists and affordable medication. Jones works to divert people from emergency rooms and help people find the care they need elsewhere.

About 80% of the people Jones serves at HAU are diabetic, she said. Type 2 diabetes is more common among people living homeless than in the general population and it often goes untreated. Without refrigeration, people can’t keep insulin fresh, even if they could afford it. Some clinics opt for insulin in pill form, but the medication is still prohibitively expensive.

Free clinics can be good sources of care for individuals experiencing homelessness. But, Jones said, they are often staffed by volunteers and getting appointments can take time.

Many free clinics and community health centers require ID or social security numbers; for people experiencing homelessness, that can be a problem.

After the ER

After Swindall was discharged from the hospital for her double pneumonia, she recuperated at Cardinal Community House, a respite care facility in downtown Oklahoma City.

Exclusively for those experiencing housing insecurity and physical illness or injury, Executive Director Kelli Ude sees the aftermath of many of people’s unmanaged conditions. One of the only charitable respite facilities in the state, Cardinal House offers a safe place to heal after people with housing instability leave hospitals.

Not all the clients there are homeless, but all have a need for a place to recover. Cardinal House has 40 private rooms that are funded by various hospital foundations and several by Oklahoma County.

Clients recuperating at Cardinal House must be mostly independent in taking care of their personal needs. The respite care facility provides rides to and from treatments such as dialysis and physical therapy, but doesn’t provide medical treatment in-house. Ude is working to break that barrier by expanding Cardinal House’s services.

More than a few people recuperating at



TIM CHANDLER, a licensed practical nurse who works with the Mental Health Association Oklahoma Street Medicine Outreach team checks Robert Hairell’s blood pressure during a visit to a large homeless encampment in Oklahoma City. PHOTO HEATHER WARLICK/OKLAHOMA WATCH

“Some hospices, thank God, will take non-funded patients, but they’re not required to.”

SISTER MARIE, Gospel of Life Disciples + Dwellings, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Cardinal House on March 28 were recovering from having a foot or lower leg amputated, the result of untreated foot wounds from diabetes.

End of Life on the Streets

When health issues become terminal, there are very few places for people without homes to find end-of-life care in Oklahoma.

People who are homeless and dying might be able to stay in a shelter, but if they can’t take care of themselves because they’re too sick, most shelters aren’t equipped to care for them, Straughan said.

They can go to Gospel of Life Disciples + Dwellings, Oklahoma City’s only completely charitable end-of-life care facility, if there is room. The home has beds for about 5 people but founder Sister Maria Faulkner of the Trinity often makes space for more when she hears about someone in need.

“Some hospices, thank God, will take non-funded patients, but they’re not required to,” Sister Maria said.

Generally, hospice, or end-of-life care is received in a person’s home.

“Those people that don’t have a home to live in can’t receive home hospice,” she said.

When a patient with Medicaid is admitted to a skilled nursing facility for patients with complicated medical needs, or a nursing home, they must stay at least a month or the facility doesn’t get paid. When the outside beckons,

people used to living unsheltered may wander off and die, which can be a liability to the nursing facility.

Ultimately, many end up back in emergency rooms.

At the end of life, Chandler said, it’s possible he can help people who are dying find a hospital room if one is available, but if they can’t pay or don’t have insurance, those stays are usually short.

With such limited end-of-life care options for people experiencing homelessness, sometimes Chandler feels deep frustration.

“Where do you go?” Chandler said. “That’s one of my dilemmas here. When you’re unsheltered and have no place to go and you’re at the end of life. Where do you go?”

HEATHER WARLICK is a reporter covering evictions, housing and homelessness. Contact her at (405) 226-1915 or hwarlick@oklahomawatch.org.



THE OKLAHOMA EAGLE

People. Narratives. News.

Get 52 weeks for only \$1 per week

Visit theokeagle.com/subscribe-advertise

The Oklahoma Eagle

www.theokeagle.com



THE BOARDWALK AT BRICKTOWN development is proposed as a three-building project featuring a hotel and more than 900 residential housing units at the current site of a parking lot just east of the railroad tracks on the south side of Reno Avenue in downtown Oklahoma City. PHOTO TRES SAVAGE

OKC Legends Tower, Jail Site

OKC Planning Commission

Advances Massive Legends Tower, Proposed Jail Site

Matt Patterson
NonDoc

The Oklahoma City Planning Commission this afternoon approved part of a plan to construct the largest tower in the United States, while also approving controversial plans for a new Oklahoma County Jail to be located near the city's southeast boundary with Del City.

Since Matteson Capital's January announcement that its Boardwalk at Bricktown project would be expanded from its original proposals to include a 1,907-foot skyscraper, the public has been alternately bemused and captivated by the idea. The building, called Legends Tower, would be the tallest in the country and one of the tallest in the world if it is built.

But the project remains complicated and includes other towers that must be built and leased before construction would begin on Legends

Tower. While the OKC Planning Commission voted 7-2 to advance the project Thursday for consideration by the City Council in six weeks, the commission did not vote on proposed electronic signage that would almost completely cover every side of the building and be viewable from miles away. Developers will need to complete a separate process for that part of the project, including later Planning Commission and City Council approval.

Mark Zitzow, an urban planner for Johnson and Associates, said the permit request considered Thursday is much like that of other downtown projects.

"This SPUD is identical to one approved several years ago, except for building height and signage," Zitzow told commissioners. "It's not different than any other downtown properties which have no cap on height."

The project would

include three towers, architect Rob Budetti of A.O. told commissioners. The Boardwalk project proposes hotels, retail space, restaurants and apartments. Many of the rental units would be luxurious in nature, although the project's prior iteration that was proposed for approval of a TIF district promised some residential floors would be dedicated to transitional housing for those trying to escape homelessness. The project would also include above-ground parking and a three-level underground parking garage.

Planning Commission Chairman Camal Pennington asked Budetti how the tallest part of the project would stand up against the potential threat of severe storms, such as tornadoes. Budetti said those issues are taken into account during the design phase.

"The way it works with these super-tall towers, which you have seen all over the world

in high wind and earthquake zones, is there are several firms that specialize in analyzing the forces that are imposed by a tornado or any wind event and they are able to calculate those forces the same we calculate forces from seismic activity," Budetti said.

Budetti said the project will also help fill in a gap of needed hotel room inventory in OKC.

"I believe when the project started there was a study done from a hotel standpoint, and it said you guys were short 3,500 rooms in OKC," Budetti said. "And on the residential side, as they start leasing the first two towers, the third tower comes in. We have seen demand. There is a little bit of a 'build it and they will come' (philosophy)."

Budetti said the smaller towers would take about 24 to 30 months to build, with the Legends Tower taking an additional 12 to 18 months beyond that point. But many observers feel uncertainty about whether Legends Tower will ever be built.

"I think the timing of the tall tower is still to be determined, whether it is built at the same time or as a phased approach," Budetti said. "That will come from financing conditions."

Pennington expressed concern about the project's massive video signage component, which would include massive video displays around all sides of the building, according to renderings. The look of those renderings could conjure images of Times Square in New York or the Las Vegas Strip.

"I think it's really important when we talk about investment

Architecture. Design. Relationships.

Founded in 1974, AO is a full service Architectural, Master Planning and Design firm specializing in Retail, Residential and Mixed-Use projects. We have 50 years of experience in architecture and in the building industry working with America's premier Multifamily, Retail, Commercial, Mixed-Use real estate developers. The firm is one of Southern California's most respected and sought-after Architectural and Planning firms and is widely recognized as an industry leader in the design of high quality projects.

of this scale in our city, we have the extra effort so that we end up with a good product," Pennington told fellow commissioners. "At the end of the day, even if we approved this with the existing language, there are no signs unless it comes back to us or unless the City Council makes a decision, which they have a right to do even with this language. They may be OK with this. I'm not. I'll tell you right now, what I see on signage right now, I can't vote for. I think that's probably shared by most of us at this point, but I'm willing to give the applicant the opportunity to come back with something."

Plans for the project were announced last year and initially included an Arizona nonprofit providing job training and financial counseling to low-income residents. It's unclear if that portion is still part of the development and whether the nonprofit will be involved.

New Oklahoma County Jail site plan moves forward

After two votes, the first of which failed to reach the required five affirmative vote threshold, the OKC Planning Commission recommended City Council approval of a special use permit for the proposed Oklahoma County Jail site at 1901 E. Grand Blvd., just feet away from the Del City city limits.

The final votes came after the commission spent considerable time discussing issues that are not typically within their purview, including when and where detainees at the jail could be released and where they could be held until that release time. Those issues are almost exclusively the realm of Oklahoma County commissioners, Oklahoma County judges and jail staff.

The first vote closed 4-3, resulting in the special permit request falling



A PROPERTY AT 1901 E. GRAND BLVD in southeast Oklahoma City — across the street from the western border of Del City — has been selected as the location for Oklahoma County's new jail. PHOTO SCREENSHOT

OKC Legends Tower, Jail Site

Legend's Tower: *Tallest* in the country and one of the tallest in the world if it is built

From A10

short of the required five-vote threshold. However, after technical evaluations were added to construct a 12-foot barbed wire chain link fence, limitations on releasing detainees directly from the site, and prohibiting outdoor loudspeaker use on the jail site, the special permit recommendation to the City Council passed 5-2. It will now head to the OKC City Council in six weeks for final approval and possible amendments.

Attorney David Box, who presented the jail project on behalf of developer Garrett and Company Resources, said earlier in the meeting the proposed jail site is ideal.

"The site is already zoned," Box told commissioners. "In fact, it's zoned I-3. I-3 represents the most intense zoning district that we as a city have. I-3 is defined as a district intended to provide locations for uses that may generate relatively high levels of noise, vibration, smoke, dust, odor or light. We don't anticipate those issues with this facility. The point is the city has created a zoning district to locate uses that are otherwise difficult to place anywhere else within the city."

Box also pointed out the current jail in downtown OKC is less than 1,400 feet from John Rex Elementary School. Opponents from the Crooked Oak School District have said the new jail site is too close to their school. Box said the proposed jail site would be about 2,700 feet from Crooked Oak High School, further away than the current arrangement.

That did little to assuage the fears of Del City residents and officials who have been vocal in their opposition to the proposed site since late last year. Del City Mayor Floyd Eason said the jail plans don't take into account surrounding areas.

"I look at all these diagrams, and I just can't keep my mouth shut," Eason said. "All of their drawings end at Bryant Avenue. The world doesn't end at Bryant. Across from Bryant, there are a thousand homes within a mile of this jail location. The developers end their world at Bryant, but that's where our world begins. We're looking out for the citizens that live in that area. That's all we're trying to do."

During the public comments portion of the meeting, Del City native and municipal Judge Blaine Nice said the comparisons to John Rex Elementary are irrelevant.

"Mr. Box as always does a fine job making a presentation," Nice said. "The zoning presentation he makes he is exactly right. The zoning may fit this, but this isn't about zoning. It is about special use. He talks about, 'Well, we have housing down by the current jail and we have a school down there,' but it came to that of its own volition. The people of Del City don't have that choice. They're already there, and it's coming to them."

Criminal justice reform advocate Jess Eddy also spoke out against the proposed jail site. Eddy previously lobbied county commissioners to locate the jail on its current site in downtown Oklahoma City. Eddy said the proposed site would not offer the same proximity to services recently released detainees may need.

"Removing incarcerated people, some of the most vulnerable people in our community, from the center of our community in close proximity to all of those services is frankly a bad decision, and it is a decision that has not been accompanied with the appropriate levels of process, consideration and community involvement," Eddy said.

Pennington said he opposes the special use permit for many of the same reasons. He voted against the recommendation twice Thursday.

"I'm against this special permit because I'm for putting the public first," he said. "I think a more robust and transparent public process should have been done and a great collaboration between our city and county leaders should have been done prior to this application."

But fellow commissioner Rusty LaForge said his initial concerns about the site had been satisfied.

"The experts have looked, and they have found this is the highest-rated spot," LaForge said. "Nobody wants it anywhere. OKC is in the center of the county, and this is roughly in the center of the city. There is going to be pros and cons and negatives, but the fact is this came out as the highest-rated spot, and we have to get moving. We have to build a new



RENDERING OF THE PROPOSED BOARDWALK AT BRICKTOWN PROJECT shows Legends Tower dwarfing the rest of the Oklahoma City skyline. PHOTO PROVIDED

“

All of their drawings end at Bryant Avenue. The world doesn't end at Bryant. Across from Bryant, there are a thousand homes within a mile of this jail location.

FLOYD EASON, Mayor, Del City, Oklahoma

county jail.”

County officials are under a deadline crunch because of the use of American Rescue Plan Act funds for the new jail's construction. Under federal law, those ARPA funds must be encumbered by the end of 2024 and spent by the end of 2026.

The City of Del City said earlier this year that it would sue Oklahoma County to block the jail from being located near its city limits. However, with the proposed site not even located in Del City, it is unclear if that effort will move forward.

Alley's End project set for public hearing

Alley's End, a proposed \$57 million affordable housing project in downtown OKC, will be discussed and voted on during the OKC City Council's April 23 meeting.

The project is funded through ARPA, private financing and \$2 million in community development incentives through the city.

The project would be built at Northeast Fourth Street and Gaylord Boulevard and would include 214 affordable housing units. The effort is part of growing attention toward the city and state's growing affordable housing problem.

The project would include studio apartments with rents starting at \$450 and going up to \$850. It would also include one-, two- and three-bedroom units with the top-line rent for a three-bedroom apartment set at \$1,400 per month.

Ward 6 Councilwoman JoBeth Hamon said during the OKC City Council's meeting Tuesday that she hopes the project will serve those most in need.

"I spoke with a woman last week who is elderly and who works at Taco Bell for about 20 hours a week, and she doesn't have any family that she's living with," Hamon told fellow city councilors. "She's on her own. So, the ability to find things in an affordable and attainable range that are in good shape and are acceptable is very rare, so I am excited to see this opportunity for folks and happy to see something happen on this lot."

Ward 2 Councilman James Cooper said Oklahoma's reputation as a low cost-of-living state has faded in recent years, making the need for affordable housing more acute.

"All of my life for all of those 42 years until just about the last 10, the narrative has been we are a low cost-of-living state, but it has devolved into myth," he said. "It is no longer true. We have a housing crisis. And that is hard for a lot of people to hear."

Sunset amphitheater project rejected by council Tuesday

A proposed \$70 million, 12,000-seat amphitheater development near Interstate 40 and the Kilpatrick Turnpike will not be built there after the OKC City Council denied the developer's application for the project with a 7-2 vote. Only Ward 1 Councilman Bradley Carter

and Ward 8 Councilman Mark Stonecipher voted for the project.

The proposal was brought forward by Notes Live, an entertainment event company headquartered in Colorado Springs. The company was recently approved for a similar project in Broken Arrow.

The OKC proposal failed in large part owing to vocal and organized opposition from homeowners in the surrounding area, which borders Yukon. Many came to speak at Tuesday's council meeting.

Phillip Cox, 36, said he first moved into his current neighborhood near the proposed project when he was 6 years old.

"After going to college, I came back to the area," he said. "Putting in this amphitheater jeopardizes everything we've built."

Don Bryson has lived in his home for 20 years and said he feared the development would create hardship.

"One day, I may want to sell my house, and because of the negativity brought to the area by the amphitheater, my home might sell for less than fair market value, and that is unacceptable," he said.

Lt. Gov. Matt Pinnell had also promoted the project, which developers said would now seek a different location.

MATT PATTERSON has spent 20 years in Oklahoma journalism covering a variety of topics for The Oklahoman, The Edmond Sun and Lawton Constitution. He joined NonDoc in 2019. Email story tips and ideas to matt@nondoc.com.

A culture of hate

Okla. Legislature Advances Anti-LGBTQ Bills

From A5

accommodations not afforded to others. Oklahoma's civic leaders, by intent or a willful ignorance, give legitimacy to the hate and fear stoked by misinformation. It is this hate and fear that creates and nurtures a state culture of "us versus them," as evidenced by state-based reporting. According to The Trevor Project, 47% of Oklahoma's LGBTQ youth experienced threat or harm based on sexual orientation or gender identity. Of those surveyed, 82% shared that they experienced discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

The Oklahoma state legislator, working in earnest of Stitt's and Walters' agenda, has quietly advanced legislation targeting LGBTQ and diverse communities. According to reporting published by the American Civil Liberties Union, an American nonprofit human rights advocacy organization, as of March 2024, more than 50 bills being considered by the Oklahoma legislature seek to regulate parental authority regarding gender medical treatments, limit the scope of sex education school curriculum, redefine gender, and censure private acts.

By any objective measure Oklahoma state legislators regard Benedict, Harrington, Browers and the LGBTQ community as a threat to the state's and country's moral foundation.

Senate Bill 1677, sponsored by Republican Sen. Julie Daniels, would subordinate the universally recognized "Best Interest of the Child" legal standard, elevating the religious beliefs of foster parents being considered by the state of Oklahoma.

In text, SB 1677 would prevent the Oklahoma Department of Human Services from requiring that "any current or prospective adoptive or foster parent to affirm, accept, or support any government policy regarding sexual orientation or gender identity that conflicts with the parent's sincerely held religious or moral beliefs."

In practice, SB 1677 restricts OKDHS

from mandating that potential foster or adoptive care parents affirm or accept any government policy ("Best Interest of the Child) regarding gender identity or sexual orientation if it conflicts with their sincerely held moral or religious beliefs.

Josh Payton, an attorney and co-founder of Oklahoma Equality Law Center, challenged Republican legislators' motives with the direct observation and question, "The argument from [the legislators] is that the best interest of the child remains the standard, [so] how can this be so when this new standard would provide a legal support for the placement of kids in unsupportive homes?"

Oklahoma's political hostile environment extends well beyond adoptive care. House Bill 3120, explicitly prohibits "Classroom instruction by school personnel or third

parties in schools and charter schools on sexual orientation or gender identity shall not occur in prekindergarten through grade twelve."

The proposed legislation (HB 3120) sponsor, Republican Rep. Danny Williams, has now positioned the state as the arbiter of sexual identity and orientation.

"It shall be the policy of every public school or charter school that is provided or authorized by the Oklahoma Constitution and state laws that a person's sex is an immutable biological trait and that it is false to ascribe to a person a pronoun that does not correspond to the person's sex," the bill notes.

The Oklahoma legislature's efforts have also yielded a host of other bills that further restrict objective discussions of topics that it regards as a threat to the moral fabric of

the state, at the expense of communities that seek nothing greater than to live without state-backed prejudice and the hate-filled rhetoric nurtured by fear and ignorance.

For the LGBTQ community, no respite may be found in the state of Oklahoma.

"Their" lives will continue to be subject to the whims of those who turn a blind eye away from "their" suffering.

"Their" sovereign right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness will be ignored.

"Their" agency dismissed. "Their" deaths used as fodder for the justification of hate.

ROSS D. JOHNSON, creative director and The Oklahoma Eagle contributor, is impassioned by the written and visual narratives of Black communities. A lifetime East Coaster driving beneath the Oklahoma sky.

ACLU 2024 Anti-LGBTQ Bills

In the last few years states have advanced a record number of bills that attack LGBTQ rights, especially transgender youth. The ACLU is tracking these attacks and working with our national network of affiliates to support LGBTQ people everywhere.

Bill	Issue	Status
S.B.1677	Religious Exemptions	Advancing Second read and referred to committee, 02/06/2024
H.B.3217	Other Expression Restrictions	Advancing Second read and referred to committee, 02/06/2024
H.B.3214	Religious Exemptions	Advancing Second read and referred to committee, 02/06/2024
H.B.3219	Barriers To Accurate IDs	Advancing Second read and referred to committee, 02/06/2024
H.B.3022	Other Anti-LGBTQ Bills	Advancing Passed favorably by committee as substituted, 02/21/2024
H.B.3120	Curriculum Censorship Forced Outing In Schools Other School Restrictions	Advancing Reported favorably as amended by committee substitute, 02/22/2024
S.B.1530	Re-Definition Of Sex	Advancing Reported favorably by committee; CR filed, 02/29/2024

Source, Mapping Attacks on LGBTQ Rights in U.S. State Legislatures in 2024, American Civil Liberties Union

2SLGBTQ

A national awareness, born of tragedy

From A3

The Oklahoma Eagle: You lived in Oklahoma but left at the age of 30. What was your journey in Oklahoma?

Cassity: I lived in California for a long time. I left Oklahoma in 1997 when I was 30. When I was in Oklahoma, at OU (University of Oklahoma), I came out (as queer) during the AIDS crisis.

I was a nurse and a singer songwriter. It was so challenging to witness so many people die in our community, and have so much hatred coming at us at the same time. I left, I traveled and ended up becoming a therapist. I trained at Native American Health Center of San Francisco. I came home last year (2023) as a Tulsa remoter (Tulsa Remote program) in hopes of making a difference in my 50s. And even for me, as a therapist and as a person who has plenty of resources and family support, I am really wobbling by all of this, to see what's going on in Oklahoma now.

The Oklahoma Eagle: Nex was non-binary and from a Choctaw family. What did you see in response to their death? Did it spark reaction from within the 2Spirit Communities?

Cassity: I think Nex's death brought a lot of national visibility, and the fact that they were mixed race with indigenous descendency and a teen in school, they were in a state as you know, with a superintendent of schools who has declared civil war (against members of the LGBTQ+ community) in the New York Times. That we are in a civil war in Oklahoma, for the soul of Oklahoma. This is our superintendent of schools. And then Oklahoma State Senator Tom Woods in Tahlequah, the seat of the Cherokee Nation, stated that all LGBTQ+ people are filth.

These folks are adding fuel to the fire and it's dysregulating. It instills outrage and fear, but also a lot of hope, which is why I'm talking to you today, which is why all of us who stand in the light and try to bring visibility do this because we feel like we don't have any other choice. If we don't do this, what's going to happen? More people are gonna die.

The Oklahoma Eagle: What kind of impact do you see all of this fallout having on young 2SLGBTQ+ individuals and their families?

Cassity: There's a new statistic out, from the Trevor Project, that nationwide a third of young people who identify as LGBTQ+ say they don't believe they will live past the age of 35. The hope is there will be allyship, more conversation, more visibility. It's important that we have adults who validate young people's experiences and identities. And, you know, when we start to talk about the impact, think of that statistic and the ones who are fearing they won't live to the age of 35. That's showing us that they have disrupted-thinking about their futures, based on what they're living in. And what they see is the violence and the hatred from elected officials and so it's important for our elected officials, our family members, our community members, our allies to support folks. Some people ask, well, how do I do that? I like to tell people you know, as a Two Spirit person, this thing called gender diversity is nothing new. It's in fact very old. We have words in our Native nations that point to gender diversity, or same-sex relationships, what we call queer people, or transgender or LGBTQ+ people. All these new ways of expressing this very old thing. In Osage, we have a word "mixoge," which means a man guided by the moon, and that is a word is stayed alive through colonization and genocide.

The Oklahoma Eagle: What are some of the unique challenges and stressors faced by 2Spirit/LGBTQ+ youth that may contribute to higher rates of bullying, violence, and mental health issues?

Cassity: In 2020, thirty-three percent of LGBTQ+ Native American youth between the ages of 13 and 24 attempted suicide. It's the highest demographic. Of Black LGBTQ+ youth, we have a very concerning 24% who attempted suicide in 2020. So for the Indigenous kids, you know that lit up for me as a person from Oklahoma, who's an enrolled Osage. But Nex's death is also a spark for a lot of things - there is further hatred, further vitriol, but also further conversation, a kind of a highlighting of these kinds of statistics.

The Oklahoma Eagle: What do you see in your own practice and communities that the rest of us should be aware of at this time?

Cassity: Anything that validates, gives a sense of security and attachment and belonging, and then if people feel that they belong, (then) they're more able to focus in school, they're more able to keep open communication. I would say to adults or people for whom the pronouns are new, and you're learning, that's okay. If you learn to listen to your teens, even if you maybe don't understand or you don't necessarily agree, to listen and stay in kindness and empathy is vital. My hope also is that the media pay attention more to missing and murdered indigenous women and Two Spirits. Native women, native folks are more likely to have violence perpetrated on them. Also our black trans folks, adults and elders, not just the kids, are more vulnerable.

The Oklahoma Eagle: How can friends, families, and allies of 2Spirit/LGBTQ+ youth better advocate for their safety and well-being in schools and communities?

Cassity: Donating to supportive organizations, educating oneself through books and resources, joining groups like PFLAG and Free Mom Hugs for support, speaking up through voting and legislation, and openly supporting LGBTQ+ people while understanding it is not their job to educate you.

The Oklahoma Eagle: What are your thoughts on the overall 2SLGBTQ+ discussion in North America in particular? Do you think it sparks change and a greater understanding?

Cassity: The national response is to the 450 anti-LGBTQ+ bills, including the 54 in Oklahoma, now we have more than 350 LGBTQ+ rights groups. We had the vigil that the Trans Advocacy Coalition of Oklahoma put on at Guthrie Green. It was full and there were national organizations here - GLAAD, HRC, GLSEN, all here within days. My hope is that we'll have a movement of Native nations coming forth. It is vital that Nation governments create safe spaces and make declarations of support for their 2SLGBTQ+ citizens.

The Oklahoma Eagle: Is there one place that families or individuals can go for more information?

Cassity: I would just start with 988. It is the national crisis hotline, and if you go to their website, 988lifeline.org, they have specific (support) for LBGQT+.

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

NEARLY 1 IN 4 ADULTS DUMPED FROM
MEDICAID ARE NOW UNINSURED | A13

CIVIL RIGHTS GROUPS URGE RENAMING
COLLAPSED BRIDGE: SLAVE OWNER'S LEGACY | A14

To Help Black Teachers Thrive, *Remove Outside Barriers*



PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

Black Teachers

The non-profit Educate ME

*is providing
aspiring teachers
with financial
assistance and
mentorship to
increase the
Black teacher
pipeline.*

Fulfilling the legacy of Black Educators

Aziah Siid
Word In Black

In the Black community, from the time of enslaved ancestors to the founding of HBCUs, it's a truism: Black teachers have been beacons of education, hope, and freedom.

Yet Black educators as a whole make up just 7% of the nation's teaching workforce, with Black men taking up fewer than 2% of the space.

To address the lack of diversity among teachers — and fulfill the legacy of Black educators — Blake Nathan, a former teacher, created the ME Foundation, a nonprofit set up specifically to train, support, and increase the number of Black teachers in classrooms.

Headquartered in Indianapolis, Indiana, Educate Me is helping to create educational equity through removing financial barriers for prospective Black educators. It helps them pay for college through scholarships, gives entry-level teachers assistance with housing, and provides classroom grants to help teachers pay for materials, and more.

Nathan, the organization's CEO, was inspired by his own lived experience. When he started out in 2013 as a middle school teacher in the Midwest, he was the only Black male teacher in his entire school for almost

two years. During that time, Nathan said he realized he was paying "the invisible Black teacher tax" — witnessing Black students get funneled into special education and the lack of representation for the students he was teaching.

Someone, the Georgia native believed, needed to create a system to address these shortcomings. So he decided to do it himself.

"Educate ME was birthed in 2014, during my second year in the classroom, because I was kind of eager to figure out a solution to not only recruit more Black talent, but to retain and potentially develop Black talent," Nathan says.

Nathan knew it would be many years before the students he was teaching at the time would be off to college, so Educate ME was created as a means to help Black teachers who'd already begun their service get the help they needed.

Supporting Teachers Outside the Classroom

A crucial part of the foundation is the Black Residency Program, described as a pathway for aspiring teachers to receive 1-on-1 mentorship, peer support, and financial assistance. In partnership with Marian University's Klipsch Educators College in

Cont. A14

Medicaid

Nearly 1 in 4 Adults Dumped From Medicaid *Are Now Uninsured*

*A new survey details how millions of
Americans struggle to keep coverage in
the government insurance program for
low-income people.*

Phil Galewitz
Word In Black

Nearly a quarter of adults disenrolled from Medicaid in the past year say they are now uninsured, according to a survey released Friday that details how tens of millions of Americans struggled to retain coverage in the government insurance program for low-income people after pandemic-era protections began expiring last spring.

The first national survey of adults whose Medicaid eligibility was reviewed during the unwinding found nearly half of people who lost their government coverage signed back up weeks or months later — suggesting they should never have been dropped in the first place.

Cont. A14

Black Teachers

A Community of Educators



PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

From A13

Indianapolis, Educate ME candidates have the opportunity to earn a Master of Art in Teaching degree while working full-time at a K-12 partner school.

Now in their second year of the residency program, there are 25 residents, who will receive free counseling sessions with local community partners under Educate ME's Black Teacher Fund Initiative.

There are 100 teachers enrolled overall in the Educate ME organization, taking advantage of different parts of the foundation. In addition to the residency program, teachers also have the opportunity to receive assistance on the cost of teacher licensing, test prep, child care, and housing, all through the funding initiative.

"If I'm a part of an organization, like Educate ME, or the Center for Black Teacher Development, I'm now in an ecosystem of Black educators. So now we can kind of talk through what are you experiencing? What are you going through? What do you need to overcome?" Nathan tells Word In Black. "We're supporting 25 teachers with housing support, and then we're supporting 31 parents total with child care tuition assistance. This year, we're going to support another 120 teachers for test prep."

Last year, they supported over 55 teachers in getting their licenses to become fully licensed in the state of Indiana, and this year's goal is the same. □

Bridge Renaming

Civil Rights Groups Urge Renaming Collapsed Bridge Due to Slave Owner's Legacy



NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD (NTSB) DRONE IMAGE OF FRANCIS SCOTT KEY BRIDGE and Cargo Ship Dali. PHOTO WIKICOMMONS

A unanimous vote was made to petition the Maryland state government to rename the Francis Scott Key Bridge after Rep. Parren J. Mitchell, the first Black Marylander elected to the U.S. House in 1970

Reasla Teague
Word In Black

A coalition of civil rights groups has unanimously voted last week to petition the Maryland state government to rename the Francis Scott Key Bridge, which was destroyed last month after a cargo ship collision. Their objection stems from Key's status as a slave owner, despite being the author of "The Star-Spangled Banner."

The Caucus of African American Leaders, comprising organizations like the NAACP and National Coalition of 100 Black Women, is urging Democratic Governor Wes Moore and the General Assembly to reconsider the bridge's name. They suggest renaming it after Rep. Parren J. Mitchell, the first Black Marylander elected to the U.S. House in 1970.

"He spent a life, his entire life, creating a bridge between the African American community and literally the larger society," said Carl O. Snowden of the caucus, describing Mitchell who died in 2007.

The Baltimore bridge collapsed on March 26

after being struck by a cargo ship. With over 11 million vehicles crossing it annually, federal and state officials are discussing rebuilding plans.

The caucus also recommends renaming the Sen. Frederick Mallus Memorial Bridge after Gloria Richardson, a pioneering leader of grassroots civil rights efforts.

Snowden said they will share these recommendations with Gov. Moore this week and discuss further at their quarterly meeting. Additionally, they urge creating a memorial for the six Latino workers killed in the bridge collapse.

While Key wrote the national anthem after witnessing the British defeat in 1814's Battle of Baltimore, he was a slave owner who viewed Black people as "inherently inferior." As a lawyer, he helped some Black Americans sue for freedom but later regretted it, advocating they be sent to Liberia instead.

Snowden expressed optimism given Maryland's past actions, like removing a statue of Key's brother-in-law Roger Taney, who authored the infamous Dred Scott decision, from the state house in 2017 after the caucus petitioned. □

Medicaid

Enrollment in Medicaid and CHIP grew to a record of nearly 94.5 million in April



PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

From A13

While 23% reported being uninsured, an additional 28% found other coverage — through an employer, Medicare, the Affordable Care Act's insurance marketplace, or health care for members of the military, the survey by KFF found.

"Twenty-three percent is a striking number, especially when you think about the number of people who lost Medicaid coverage," said Chima Ndumele, an associate professor of health policy at the Yale University School of Public Health.

Going without insurance, even for a short period of time, can lead people to delay seeking care and leave them at financial risk when they do.

Seven in 10 adults who were disenrolled during the unwinding process say they became uninsured at least temporarily when they lost their Medicaid coverage.

Adrienne Hamar, 49, of Plymouth Meeting, Pennsylvania, said she struggled to enroll in

an Affordable Care Act marketplace plan this winter after the state informed her that she and her two children no longer qualified for Medicaid. They had been enrolled since 2020. She said phone lines were busy at the state's marketplace, and she couldn't complete the process online.

Hamar, who works as a home health aide, and her children were uninsured in March. But since April 1, they've been enrolled in a marketplace plan that, with the help of government subsidies, costs \$50 a month for the family.

"I was very relieved," she said. Unsure of their insurance status, Hamar said, her 23-year-old daughter delayed getting a dental checkup.

Hamar's struggles were common, the survey found.

Of adults enrolled in Medicaid before the unwinding, about 35% who tried to renew their coverage described the process as difficult, and about 48% said it was at least somewhat stressful.

About 56% of those disenrolled say they skipped or delayed care or prescriptions while attempting to renew their Medicaid coverage.

"People's current insurance status is likely to be very much in flux, and we would expect at least some of the people who say they are currently uninsured to reenroll in Medicaid — many say they are still trying — or enroll in other coverage within a short period of time," said Jennifer Tolbert, a co-author of the KFF report and the director of KFF's State Health Reform and Data Program.

The survey didn't include children, and the KFF researchers said their findings, therefore, couldn't be extrapolated to determine how the Medicaid unwinding has affected the overall U.S. uninsured rate, which hit a record low of 7.7% in early 2023. Nearly half of enrollees in Medicaid and the related Children's Health Insurance Program are children.

The unwinding, in which states are reassessing eligibility for Medicaid among millions of Americans who enrolled before or during the pandemic and dropping those who no longer qualify or did not complete the renewal process, won't be completed until later this year. Enrollment in Medicaid and CHIP grew to a record of nearly 94.5 million in April of last year, three years after the federal government prohibited states from cutting people from their rolls during the COVID-19 public health emergency.

Nationally, states have disenrolled about 20 million people from Medicaid in the past year, most of them for procedural reasons such as failure to submit required paperwork. That number is expected to grow, as states have a few more months to redetermine enrollees' eligibility.

Among adults who had Medicaid prior to the start of the unwinding, 83% retained their coverage or reenrolled, while 8% found other insurance and 8% were uninsured. The share left uninsured was larger in states that have not expanded Medicaid under the ACA (17%) than in states that have (6%). Forty states have expanded Medicaid to cover everyone with an income under 138% of the federal poverty rate,

or \$31,200 for a family of four this year.

The KFF survey found that nearly 1 in 3 disenrolled adults discovered only when they sought health care — such as going to a doctor or a pharmacy — that they had been dropped from Medicaid.

Indira Navas of Miami found out that her 6-year-old son, Andres, had been disenrolled from Florida's Medicaid program when she took him to a doctor appointment in March. She had scheduled Andres' appointment months in advance and is frustrated that he remains uninsured and his therapy for anxiety and hyperactivity has been disrupted.

Navas said the state could not explain why her 12-year-old daughter, Camila, remained covered by Medicaid even though the children live in the same household with their parents.

"It doesn't make sense that they would cover one of my children and not the other," she said.

Kate McEvoy, executive director of the National Association of Medicaid Directors, said the sheer volume of millions of people being redetermined for eligibility has overwhelmed some state call centers trying to support enrollees.

She said states have tried many ways to communicate with enrollees, including through public outreach campaigns, text, email, and apps. "Until the moment your coverage is at stake, it's hard to penetrate people's busy lives," she said.

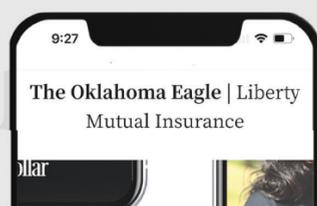
The KFF survey, of 1,227 adults who had Medicaid coverage in early 2023 prior to the start of the unwinding on April 1, 2023, was conducted between Feb. 15, 2024, and March 11, 2024. The margin of sampling error was plus or minus 4 percentage points.

KFF Health News correspondent Daniel Chang contributed to this article. □

The Oklahoma Eagle

Our Mission

To amplify our core value of equity, through journalism and editorial is the cornerstone of our continued success.





THE OKLAHOMA EAGLE CHURCH DIRECTORY

The Oklahoma Eagle publishes news and announcements for churches currently listed in The Oklahoma Eagle's Church Directory. For information, please call our office at (918) 582-7124

Church Of The Living God

1559 E Reading St. Tulsa OK
(918) 584-3206

Minister RJ Smith

Sunday school - 9:30am
Sunday Worship - 10:45am
Monday Worship - 6:00pm
Wednesday Bible Study - 5:00pm

CAPERNAUM MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH

1962 N. Sheridan Rd.
(918) 834-4747

Pastor Ruthie I. Howard



Sunday School 10:00 a.m.
Morning Worship 11:00 a.m.
Bible Study & Prayer Wednesday 7:00 p.m.
For Transportation (918) 402-6027

Words of Wisdom Ministries FC

Temporarily meeting at the Courtyard Marriot 3340 S 79th E Ave Tulsa OK
(918) 230-3022

Pastors Wesley & Alfie Gray would like to invite you to come and experience the Word of God in action this Sunday! God has a word for you, He Guarantee's it!! You'll be glad you did!!!

The Oklahoma Eagle Church Directory

List your church in one of the largest church directories in Oklahoma.

Participation in the directory allows free church announcements/church news.

Post events and celebrations. Priority over non-listed churches for news.



Gospel Tabernacle Outreach Ministries, Inc.
Traveling Outreach Ministries

609 E. Zion Street
Tulsa, Oklahoma
Elder Julius W. Bland
Sr., Pastor
918-810-3882

ALL ARE WELCOME



MOHAWK FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

3329 E. 30th St. North • 834-0391

Sunday School 9:30 a.m.

Sunday Morning Worship 11 a.m.

Bible Study Wednesday 7 p.m.



Rev. Emanuel L. Collier, Sr. Pastor

Gethsemane Baptist Church

727 East 56th St. North
(918) 425-6613

Dr. W. T. Lauderdale

Sunday School 9:00 a.m.

Church Services 11:00 a.m.

Zoe' Life Church of Tulsa

Rudisill Regional Library
1520 N Hartford Ave.
Tulsa OK 74106
(918) 409-4899

Pastor Richard and Cher Lyons

Sunday Worship: 1pm
Wed- Healing School: 6:30p - 8p

"The Righteous Are As Bold As A Lion." - Prov.28:1a

SOLID ROCK 7th DAY BAPTIST CHURCH

123 E. 59th St. North
Ph: (918) 425-2077

Pastor Rick Bruner

Sabbath School (Saturday) 9:30-10:45 a.m.

Praise & Worship 11:00 a.m.

Choir Rehearsal Wednesday 6:00 p.m.

"The Seventh Day Is Still God's Sabbath"

Northside Christ Gospel Church

3101 N. M.L King Jr. Blvd.
Tulsa OK
(918) 625-2374

Sunday School - 10 am

Sunday Morning Worship - 10:45

Sunday Evening Prayer - 7 pm

Sunday Worship - 7:30 pm

Wednesday Prayer - 7:30 pm

Wednesday worship - 8pm

Rev. John W. Anderson

VERNON AME CHURCH

307-311 N. Greenwood Ave.
P: 918-587-1428
F: 918-587-0642
vernonamechurch@sbcglobal.net

Sunday Church School 8:30 am

Worship Service 10:00 am

Wednesday Bible Study 6:00 pm

Rev. Dr. Robert R. Allen Turner

"Where Peaceful Waters Flow"

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH NORTH TULSA

THE CHURCH WHERE THE HOLY SPIRIT LEADS US



Pastor Anthony L. & Mrs. Kelly Scott

Sunday School - 9:30 a.m.
Morning Worship - 11:00 a.m.

1414 N. Greenwood Ave.
Tulsa, OK 74103
918-582-5129
www.fbcnt.org

Teaching Minds Changing Hearts Touching the World

Place your church directory with us today! Advertising your church in The Oklahoma Eagle will get you results! Call (918) 582-7124

The Oklahoma Eagle Church Directory

Participation in the Directory allows free church announcements and church news. Post events and celebrations. Priority over non-listed churches for news.

BOSTON AVENUE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

1301 S. Boston
(918) 583-5181
Rev. David Wiggs
Senior Minister

Sunday Worship 8:30 and 11:00 a.m.

Sunday School 9:40 a.m.

Sunday TV Worship 11:00 a.m.

KTUL Channel 8

TIMOTHY BAPTIST CHURCH

821 E. 46th St. N. • 425-8021
REV. TWAN T. JONES

Sunday School 9:45 a.m.

Sunday Morning Worship 11:00 a.m.

"We've come this far by faith"

NORTH PEORIA CHURCH OF CHRIST

2247 N. Peoria
Tulsa, Okla. 74106
(918) 425-1071

Warren Blakney, Minister

Sunday Bible School.....9:00 a.m.
Sunday Morning Worship.....10:00 a.m.
Sunday Evening Worship.....6:00 p.m.

There's no place, like this place, anywhere near this place.

Pettie Chapel CME

19364 S. S. Mingo Road.
Bixby, 74008
Phone: (918) 366-8870

Rev. Robert Givens

Sunday School 9:30 a.m.

Morning Worship 11:00 a.m.

"Where Peaceful Waters Flow"

Church In Power

732 E. 31st North
Tulsa, OK 74106 - (918) 835-1525

Service times: 9am Sundays, 7pm Wed, and Special Supernatural Breakthrough Services every last Friday and Saturday of every month at 7pm and Sunday at 9am

Wednesday Bible Study - 6:30 p.m.

Church Ministries: Children's Church, CIP Praise Dancers, and CIP Praise Tem.



Pastor Bukky and Wunmi Alabi

For Further Information call (918) 835-1525.

"Have Faith In God." Mark 11:22

List Your Church Today!

The Oklahoma Eagle Church Directory

Participate in The Oklahoma Eagle's weekly church directory. List in one of the largest church directories in Oklahoma.

- Participation in the Church Directory allows free Church announcements and Church news. Post your church events and celebrations.
- Priority over non-listed churches for news.

Two service styles to meet your spiritual & community-building needs.
2952 S. Peoria Ave. Tulsa, OK | allsoulschurch.org



10 am Worship & 11:30 am Humanist Hour
allsoulschurch.org



Zion Mount Baptist Church

419 N Elgin Tulsa, Oklahoma

Office: 918-584-0510
Fax: 918-584-1958
Prayer Line: 918-584-PRAY
Sunday School 9:30 a.m.
Morning Worship 10:45
Wednesday Bible Study Noon and 7:00



In The Spirit Christian Church

"Come And Experience The Spirit"

1020 South Garnett
Tulsa, Okla., 74128
Phone: (918) 836-6823
Fax: (918) 836-6833



Rev. Sharyn Cosby-Willis,

Eclectic Praise, Extraordinary Worship, And Spirited Preaching.
Wednesday Services 10:00 a.m. Spirit Seniors 5:30 p.m. Support Groups 6:30 p.m. Community Dinner 7:00 p.m. Bible Study
Sunday Worship Church School 9:45 a.m. Worship 11:00 a.m.

Ministries: Administration, Children's Church, Children's Choir, Spirited Kids, Guest Services, Intercessors, Men's Fellowship, Outreach and much more...



SMILING HEARTS

The NICK BLAKELY Foundation

Our vision is to turn every potential tragedy of Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA) into a story of survival.

www.nickblakelyfoundation.org



THE OKLAHOMA EAGLE
People. Narratives. News.

Get 52 weeks for only \$1 per week

Visit theokeagle.com/subscribe-advertise

The Oklahoma Eagle
www.theokeagle.com

CLASSIFIEDS

2024
OKLAHOMA CITY MEMORIAL MARATHON
RUN TO REMEMBER
APRIL 26-28
Run To Remember!
SIGN UP NOW!
OKCMARATHON.COM
PROCEEDS BENEFIT THE OKLAHOMA CITY NATIONAL MEMORIAL & MUSEUM

REAL ESTATE AUCTION

OKLAHOMA TURNPIKE AUTHORITY PROPERTIES
THURS., MAY 2ND AT 10:00 AM
AUCTION HELD AT
DAKIL AUCTIONEERS, INC.
200 NW 114TH ST, OKLA. CITY, OK
(W. Side Service Rd of the Bdwy Ext. between 122nd & Hefner)
Approx. 29 Parcels of Land being Sold in 7 Counties across Oklahoma including Oklahoma, Pawnee, Creek, Tulsa, Wagoner, Grady & Craig.
See website for detailed listing & maps.
TERMS: 5% down, 30 days to close. Closing cost and title insurance split 50/50. 10% Buyers Premium.
Dakil REAL ESTATE
405-751-6179
www.dakil.com

"PREPARE TO BE ECSTATICALLY BLOWN AWAY!"
THE DAILY BEAST
Tina
THE TINA TURNER MUSICAL
TICKETS NOW ON SALE
May 14-19
Tulsa Performing Arts Center
CelebrityAttractions.com
918.596.7111
Presented by
Tulsa World
CelebrityAttractions
6
Photos: Pari Dukovic

The Oklahoma Eagle
**Arts
Culture
History
Education
Business
Sports
Faith**

CLASSIFIEDS

OKLAHOMA CLASSIFIED AD NETWORK
FOR MORE INFO CALL
1-888-815-2672
WANT TO BUY
OLD GUITARS WANTED! LARRY BRINGS CASH for vintage USA guitars, tube amps, banjos, mandolins, etc. Fender, Gibson, Martin, Gretsch, others. Call or text 918-288-2222. www.stringswest.com
ONLINE AUCTION 4/25
ONLINE AUCTION 4/25: Winnebago | Horse Trlr | ATV's | Tractors | Combines | Grain Trucks | Pickups | Livestock Trlr & Equip. | Implements & Attachments | Welders | Fabric Bldg. & More! WigginsAuctioneers.com | 580.233.3066
ADVERTISE STATEWIDE
Put your message where it matters most - IN OKLAHOMA NEWSPAPERS. We can place your ad in 144 newspapers. For more information or to place an ad, contact Landon Cobb at (405) 499-0022 or toll-free in OK at 1-888-815-2672.

Family is everything,
and so is your home.

Your Home. Your Dream. Your Family.

Commerce Bank is here to help you build the life you imagined. We'll walk you through the homeownership lending process, because we know your family and your home mean everything.



844-340-2574
commercebank.com/neighborhoodbanking
©2024 Commerce Bancshares, Inc.
NMLS# 411948

Commerce Bank
Member FDIC
Challenge Accepted.

Since
1921
Our Mission

To amplify
our core
value of
equity,
through
journalism
and
editorial



PASTOR BEVERLY BAUL (l) presented Show Me A Hero Award to Pennie Harnish-Ontieveros during the 20th anniversary of Alzheimer's Diversity Outreach Services. PHOTO PROVIDED (RIGHT) MARCIA BRUNO-TODD, executive director of Leadership Tulsa, received the Her Story Angel Award during Women's History Month. PHOTO PROVIDED

Her Story Angel Award
March 2024

Marcia Bruno-Todd
LEADERSHIP TULSA

Honoring Women Whose
Commitment To Service &
Community Are Unwavering.

www.alzoutreach.org

Alzheimer's Diversity Outreach Services recognizes 20th anniversary

Dr. Jerry Goodwin
The Oklahoma Eagle

Alzheimer's Diversity Outreach Services celebrated its 20th anniversary in February. A sold-out audience paid tribute to an organization that has been providing services to Alzheimer's patients and their families for two decades. The event was held at the Hyatt Regency Hotel Downtown.

"I am grateful ... to our community, pastors, leaders, and organizations that have helped us to support caregivers and their families..." said Pastor Beverly Baul, executive director of the Alzheimer's Diversity Outreach Services.

The dinner program, Out of Africa Healthy Brain Strategies, encourages attendees to wear African attire. The organization presented awards to more than a dozen recipients for their contributions to AlzOutreach and its services. Those individuals represented researchers, physicians, patients, caregivers, and families.

The following individuals were recognized by AlzOutreach:

Show Me A Hero Award

Ascension St. John Hospital – Dr. Janel Pasley, community health equity program officer at Ascension St. John Hospital, accepted on behalf of Ascension. She is an advocate for community programs in partnership with non-profits regarding health equity issues.

Michael Bethany – Mr. Bethany is gospel singer and has been a frequent entertainer at the yearly

event. As a supporter over the years, he has brought in gospel artists to perform at the annual event.

Gail Jackson-Cowan (Posthumously) – Ms. Jackson-Cowan, who is from Bristow, passed away in Oct. 2023. She was a caregiver for both of her parents who had Alzheimer's. Her daughter, Monique, accepted the award on her behalf. Ms. Jackson-Cowan had been a supporter of the organization for 19 years until her passing.

Mary Ann Duncan – Ms. Duncan is the former program director of Alzheimer's Association of Oklahoma and Arkansas.

Sylvia Nichols – Ms. Nichols is a personal caregiver for others afflicted with Alzheimer's.

Pennie Harnish-Ontieveros – Ms. Harnish-Ontieveros was a caregiver for her mother.

Judi VerHoef – Ms. VerHoef is the former CEO of Alzheimer's Association of Oklahoma and Arkansas.

Bryann Brown – Ms. Brown, a senior at Central High School, helped to take care of her grandmothers, one who passed away of Alzheimer's, and the other grandmother had cancer. Because of her service to her family, she wants to pursue a career in nursing.

HomeTown Hero Award

Frances Jordan-Rakestraw – Ms. Jordan-Rakestraw is executive director of the Greenwood Cultural Center. For many years, AlzOutreach has been hosting its events at GCC. The award is sponsored by the Modern Woodmen of America, who has been a major sponsor of the program's success.

Others recognized for their contributions to research and medical accomplishments were Vence Bohman Jr., Dr. James William Dean, Dr. Fayron Epps, and Dr. Pranay Kathuria. Bohman is acting director of the National Human Genome Research Institute of the U. S. National Institutes of Health. He will be attending an AlzOutreach program in September.

"We are known outside of the state for our work (and from the support of those we recognized) ... People are talking about what we are doing here in Tulsa... I am receiving calls from all over... I received a call from Portland, Ore. For one year, we have been providing them with caregiver information once a month (i.e., "Can you help me?" and "How can I help caregivers?" were questions that we were responding to them)," said Baul.

In March, AlzOutreach hosted Her Story Angel Award luncheon program during National Women's History Month. It was the third annual program honoring women in the community. The event was held at the Greenwood Cultural Center.

Honorees

Pastor Layla Caldwell, AGAPE Ministries

Dr. Sarah Land, Central State Research

Dr. Marshan Oliver-Marick, consultant with Health Integrated Solutions Consulting

Dr. Janel Pasley, community health equity program officer at Ascension St. John Hospital

Pastor Barbara Shannon, co-pastor for New Heights Christian Center

Marcia Bruno Todd, executive director, Leadership Tulsa

Dr. Nicole Washington, psychiatrist and founder of Elocin Psychiatric Services LLC

Wendy Williams, president of Eastern Oklahoma Chapter Black Nurses Association

The next program for AlzOutreach is a health care conference at Langston University-Tulsa on Sept. 28.

For more information, visit <https://www.alzoutreach.org/> or contact beverly@alzoutreach.org.

EPA Awards PSO With Highest Honor

PSO recognized as an advocate for 'unwavering commitment to saving energy and protecting the environment'



MICHAEL S. REGAN is the administrator of the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency and the former Secretary of the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality. He is the first Black man to serve as the head of the EPA. PHOTO PROVIDED

Dr. Jerry Goodwin
The Oklahoma Eagle

The U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) selected Tulsa-based Public Service Company of Oklahoma (PSO) as an ENERGY STAR Partner of the Year for Sustained Excellence. Recipients of this award demonstrate "an unwavering commitment to saving energy and protecting the environment year over year," according to PSO.

"I congratulate this year's ENERGY STAR award winners for their innovation and leadership, in delivering cost-effective energy efficient solutions that create jobs, address climate change, and contribute to a healthier environment for all," said EPA Administrator Michael S. Regan.

The EPA recognizes the ENERGY STAR Partner of the Year Award – Sustained

Excellence as its highest award honor. Award winners are businesses and organizations that have demonstrated superior leadership and commitment for energy efficiency while helping protect the environment.

"The 2024 ENERGY STAR award reflects the long-lasting value and success of PSO's energy efficiency programs for our customers and communities," said Jeff Brown, manager for PSO's Energy Efficiency and Consumer Programs. "Our PSO energy efficiency staff and partners are honored to be recognized for helping customers save energy and money, while improving the comfort of their homes and businesses."

Winners are selected from a network of thousands of ENERGY STAR partners. For a complete list of 2024 winners and more information about ENERGY STAR's award program, visit energystar.gov/awardwinners.

About PSO

Public Service Company of Oklahoma (PSO), a unit of American Electric Power (Nasdaq: AEP), is an electric utility company serving more than 572,000 customer accounts in eastern and southwestern Oklahoma, powering a cleaner, brighter energy future for its customers and 232 communities. Based in Tulsa, PSO has approximately 3,800 megawatts of diverse generating capacity that primarily includes wind and natural gas. It maintains and operates more than 24,000 miles of distribution lines and 3,700 miles of transmission lines and is one of the largest distributors of wind energy in the state. Find news releases and other information at www.PSOoklahoma.com. Connect with PSO on Facebook, Twitter, NextDoor, and Instagram @PSOoklahoma.

Events

April 2024

Apr. 12-13

National Association of Black Journalists Region III conference, Tulsa, Okla. Eleven states, including Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas, will be represented. For more information, contact Eva Coleman, Region III director, at evacolemannabj@gmail.com.

Apr. 18

Greenwood Cultural Center hosts its Legacy Award Dinner at the GCC, 322 N. Greenwood Ave., 6:30 p.m., reception; 7 p.m., dinner. The program will honor Geoffrey M. Standing Bear, principal chief of the Osage Nation, and the Osage Nation. Alfre Woodard will serve as the honorary chair. For more information, call (918) 596-1020 or visit www.greenwoodculturalcenter.com.

Apr. 26

100 Black Men of Tulsa Annual Gala – 30th Anniversary is planned for the Greenwood Cultural Center, 322 N. Greenwood Ave., 7 p.m. For more information or tickets, see Eventbrite.

Apr. 27

Sisserou's Restaurant celebrates its 10th anniversary with an event at Guthrie Green, 111 Reconciliation Way. The "Caribbean Carnival on The Green" is scheduled for 5 p.m. – 10 p.m. The event will be "bringing all the island vibes with authentic live music, art, dancing, shimmering costumes, and the finest Caribbean refreshments. Dive into the vibrant cultures of the West Indies" according to the organizers. A portion of the proceeds will be donated to A Pocket Full of Hope. For more information, contact (918) 576-6800.

Apr. 29-30

Phillips Theological Seminary, 901 N. Mingo Rd., will be hosting "Halim Flowers – Something New, Black Birds (2121)" exhibition on April 29 at 5:30 p.m. Flowers' art features paintings exclusively created for this event. It is a collection of 21 original paintings inspired by the painter's research of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre. On April 30 at 6:30 p.m., a reception will be held at Greenwood Rising followed by a discussion with Flowers. The exhibit will be available for the public to see through July 14 at Phillips. For more information, see Art Exhibitions at Phillips Theological Seminary or call (918) 610-8303.

May 2024

May 4

Tulsa Symphony is hosting the Flint Family Foundation Concert Series. It is a series of concerts around town, including St. Aidan's Episcopal Church, 4045 N. Cincinnati Ave., at 11 a.m. The concert series is related to music from recognizable movies. The movie-themed selections for the "Winds" instrument performances will be from "Colors of the Wind" ("Pocahontas"), "How Far I'll Go" ("Moana"), "Neverland" ("The Story of Peter Pan" in poetry and music (with narration)), "Peter and the Wolf" (with narration), and "Under the Sea" ("The Little Mermaid"). For more information, visit <https://www.tulsasymphony.org/flint/>

May 7

Author Hannibal B. Johnson will present his newest book, "10 Ways We Can Advance Social Justice: Without Destroying Each Other" at the Greenwood Cultural Center, 322 N. Greenwood Ave., at 7 p.m. For more information, visit <https://www.hannibalbjohnson.com/>

May 9

Tulsa Council for Holocaust Education, the Jewish Federation of Tulsa, and the Tulsa City-County Library present 26th Annual Yom HaShoah: An Interfaith Holocaust Commemoration at Congregation B'nai Emonah, 1719 S. Owasso Ave., at 7 p.m. The featured speaker will be scientist, education designer, and fiction writer Danny M. Cohen, Ph.D. Additional sponsors are the Sherwin Miller Museum of Jewish Art and Temple Israel. Registration is required. For more information, visit jewishtulsa.org/yomhashoah2024

May 16-18

Black Wall Street Rally and Festival will feature speakers, live entertainment, history tours, vendors, and much more in the Greenwood Business District. For more information, contact www.blackwallstreetrally.com.