

# The Oklahoma Eagle

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SERVING GREATER TULSA SINCE 1921

## LEGACY

### 5,394

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

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By ANISSA DURHAM, WORD IN BLACK

## NATION

### Give Our Children the Right to Read | A16

By ZENOBIA JUDD-WILLIAMS, WORD IN BLACK

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AUGUST 30, 2024 - SEPTEMBER 5, 2024

## TULSA ELECTIONS, AUG. 2024

\* \* \*

### Monroe Nichols and Karen Keith Advance in Mayoral Primary

*Monroe Nichols edged ahead of Tulsa mayoral candidates Karen Keith and Brent VanNorman on August 27, earning more votes than each competitor, but falling short of the 50 percent plus one needed to secure victory. The forced runoff between Nichols and Keith will be settled by Tulsa County voters during the November 5 general election.*

By Kimberly Marsh and Sam Levrault, The Oklahoma Eagle, A2



PHOTO BASIL CHILDERS

Okla. State Rep. Monroe Nichols (D-72), Tulsa mayoral candidate, speaking as election results are published during a watch party on Aug. 27.

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Karen Keith, Tulsa mayoral candidate, speaking to supporters as election results are published during a watch party on Aug. 27.

PHOTO SAM LEVRAULT MEDIA, THE OKLAHOMA EAGLE

## Tulsa Mayoral Race

# Tulsa Mayoral Runoff on Nov. 5 will reveal the fates of candidates

From Cover

**Tuesday night's results showed that Nichols' bid to become Tulsa's first Black mayor has gained remarkable momentum in recent weeks.** Nichols won with 18,729 votes or 33.10 percent. Keith followed with 18,457 votes or 32.62 percent of the total votes tally. VanNorman, a relative newcomer to Tulsa, tallied 18,019 votes for 31.84 percent of the total votes.

Cont. A3, Tulsa Mayoral Race





PHOTO BASIL CHILDERS, THE OKLAHOMA EAGLE

Okla. State Rep. Monroe Nichols (D-72), Tulsa mayoral candidate, speaking to supporters as election results are published during a watch party on Aug. 27.

## Tulsa Mayoral Race

# THE CAMPAIGNS *for a more business-friendly, safer and thriving* Tulsa continue

From A2

As the reporting of results came to a close, Nichols rallied his volunteers to continue their efforts through Nov. 5.

"I hope that you are ready to get up tomorrow, and you're ready to fight, you're ready to knock, and ready to call," he told a high-spirited watch party at The Fulton Street Bookstore in the Greenwood District of north Tulsa. "November will be here before you know it. And November is all about making history."

In an interview with The Oklahoma Eagle, Nichols said he was not surprised by the election results, and over the next two months, his campaign will continue to do more of the same because it's working.

"I think we did well tonight because we've talked about the future. We've talked about how we get there," he said. "We've engaged people all across the city."

I have been out front on issues facing the community since the day I first got elected. That's not going to change — my commitment to improving student outcomes, my commitment to advancing economic opportunity, my commitment to making sure this is the safest big city in the country. I think it's going to uplift the community in ways it just hadn't been uplifted."

“

**I hope that you are ready to get up tomorrow, and you're ready to fight, you're ready to knock, and ready to call.**

Monroe Nichols, Okla. State Rep. (D-72), Tulsa mayoral candidate

The final tallies in Tuesday's balloting showed candidate Casey Bradford as the next closest with just 1.45 percent. Kaleb Hoosier, John Jolley, and Paul Tay earned less than one percent of the votes.

Nichols's supporters pointed to his strategies for addressing homelessness, tribal relations, and education as their primary motivations.

Former Mayor Kathy Taylor endorsed Nichols, a former employee at the City of Tulsa. Taylor also came to the watch party to show her support.

"Monroe is the best leader for the future of the city of Tulsa. He's got a plan. He has the courage. He's going to lead this city and the generations to come into the future," she said in an interview with The Oklahoma Eagle. "He's got to let all the citizens of the city of Tulsa know that he's a mayor for everyone. He's going to bring our city to the next level."

During the watch party, other Nichols supporters gave their testimonials.

Lisa Robertson's daughter worked with Nichols as an intern at the City of Tulsa, leaving a lasting impression and deep appreciation for Nichols.

"We're for Monroe because he has a plan for the homeless and education," said Robertson in an interview with The Oklahoma Eagle. "He's the only one talking about education."

Roselly Frater moved to Tulsa with her husband and baby to seek venture capital opportunities. She

believes Monroe Nichols is the key to this success. Frater is excited about Nichols' clear vision for addressing homelessness, an issue close to her heart, and improving the education system, which is vital for her young child.

About 10 miles away at the Stokely Event Center, Keith, surrounded by neon lights, encouraged her volunteers to "keep on keeping on."

"We've spent the past months traveling across the city. We've been hearing your concerns, your hopes, and your dreams for Tulsa, and what I've heard loud and clear is that Tulsans want leadership that will bring people together. We built a campaign focused on creating a safer, stronger, and more prosperous Tulsa, from investing in public safety and supporting our schools to addressing homelessness and cutting the red tape that slows down progress. We have laid out a very clear vision for the future, and now we have the opportunity to take that vision to the finish line in November."

### **Other issues on the Ballot** **Proposition No. 1, 2024 Proposed City Charter Amendment — City Councilors' Salaries**

Voters approved Proposition 1, an amendment to the Charter of the City of Tulsa, to increase city councilor salaries from \$24,000 to \$32,000 and

Cont. A6, Tulsa Mayoral Race



# Inman Edward Page: First President of CANU

By CURRIE BALLARD, THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF OKLAHOMA HISTORY AND CULTURE



The first president of the Colored Agricultural and Normal University (CANU), later Langston University, and an influential Oklahoma educator, Inman Page was born into slavery on December 29, 1853, in Warrenton, Virginia. During the Civil War his family fled Virginia and later moved to Washington, D.C. Page attended Howard University for two years and then enrolled at Brown University. He was among the first African Americans to be admitted to the prestigious Providence, Rhode Island, college. In 1877 Page and George Washington Milford became the first blacks to graduate from Brown, with Page selected as class orator for the commencement. He took a teaching position at Natchez Seminary in Mississippi. In 1878 he married Zelia R. Ball, and the couple had two children, Zelia N. and Mary. After one year he left Natchez for Lincoln Institute in Jefferson City, Missouri, and he became the school's president in 1888.

In 1898 the Colored Agricultural and Normal

University at the All-Black town of Langston chose Page to be its first president. In his seventeen-year tenure at CANU he increased the school's enrollment from an initial forty to more than six hundred, and its faculty from four to thirty-five. He traveled the state recruiting students, expanded the agricultural and industrial courses, established the college department, and supervised the construction of numerous university buildings. Within a few years partisan politics emerged. By 1915 controversy swirled around the direction of the college's mission from industrial and agricultural education to liberal arts. After scandalous allegations were reported in the Oklahoma Tribune, an Oklahoma City African American newspaper, Page resigned his position and sued. A Logan County jury found the Tribune editor, Melvin Chisum, guilty of libel and one of his employees guilty of extortion against Page. Although the educator was vindicated, the change in administration sent the university into chaos. Enrollment dropped from 639 to 184 for the

summer semester and to 322 in the regular term.

Page left the state for a time. He moved back to Missouri as the president of Western College and Industrial Institute at Macon and by 1918 was president of Roger Williams University in Nashville, Tennessee. In 1920 he returned to Oklahoma due to ill health. When recuperated, in 1922 he accepted a position as principal at Oklahoma City's Douglass High School. He soon became the supervising principal of the city's separate school system. Inman Page died on December 21, 1935, at the home of his daughter, Zelia Breaux, in Oklahoma City.

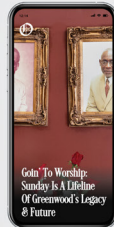
Roscoe Dunjee called Page "the grand old man of education." The city named a park and a school in his honor. Brown University's African American graduates named their association the Inman Page Black Alumni Council. Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Missouri, named the Inman Page Library for him. Langston University commemorated his leadership in Page Hall.

INMAN PAGE, (5400, Frederick S. Barde Collection, OHS).

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.

The Oklahoma Eagle

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**Sam Levrault**

Production Director

## Circulation

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## Contact

**Letters to the Editor**

[editor@theokeagle.com](mailto:editor@theokeagle.com)

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[advertise@theokeagle.com](mailto:advertise@theokeagle.com)

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# TULSA COUNTY, Election Results, Aug 27

## OKLA. ST. SENATE



PHOTO CAMPAIGN WEBSITE

### Christi Gillespie

District 33, State Senator  
Defeated Shelley Gwartney,  
**55.46%** vs. 44.54%

## OKLA. ST. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



PHOTO CAMPAIGN WEBSITE

### Gabe Woolley

District 98, State Rep  
Defeated Dean Davis,  
**52.20%** vs. 47.80%

## TULSA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS



PHOTO CAMPAIGN WEBSITE

### Lonnie Sims

District 2, Cty. Comm'r  
Defeated Melissa Myers,  
**54.65%** vs. 45.35%

## TULSA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS



PHOTO CAMPAIGN WEBSITE

### Sarah E. Gray

District 2, Cty. Comm'r  
Defeated Maria V. Barnes,  
**59.05%** vs. 40.95%

## TULSA CITY COUNCIL



PHOTO CAMPAIGN WEBSITE

### Vanessa H. Harper

District 1, City Council  
Defeated Angela K. Chambers,  
**66.31%** vs. 33.69%

## TULSA CITY COUNCIL



PHOTO CAMPAIGN WEBSITE

### Jackie Dutton

District 3, City Council  
Defeated Susan Frederick,  
**53.87%** vs. 46.13%

## TULSA CITY COUNCIL



PHOTO CAMPAIGN WEBSITE

### Laura Bellis

District 4, City Council  
Defeated Aaron Griffith,  
**76.62%** vs. 23.38%

## TULSA CITY COUNCIL



PHOTO CAMPAIGN WEBSITE

### Karen Gilbert

District 5, City Council  
Defeated Alicia Andrews,  
**64.33%** vs. 35.67%

## TULSA CITY COUNCIL



PHOTO CAMPAIGN WEBSITE

### Christian Bengel

District 6, City Council  
Defeated Uriah I. Davis,  
**69.86%** vs. 30.14%

## TULSA CITY COUNCIL



PHOTO CAMPAIGN WEBSITE

### Phil Lakin

District 8, City Council  
Defeated Chris Cone,  
**68.91%** vs. 31.09%

## PROPOSITIONS

### City of Sand Springs

#### Proposition

The purpose of this election is to consider the renewal of a franchise agreement with Public Service Company of Oklahoma (PSO) for a period of twenty-five (25) years. A franchise agreement is the ordinance between PSO and the City of Sand Springs, required by Oklahoma state law to be approved by voters. This agreement, previously passed by the Sand Springs City Council earlier this year, allows PSO to efficiently access the public right of ways, alleys, and streets in order to operate the electric grid that serves the citizens of Sand Springs.

**For, 72.12%** vs. Against, 27.88%

### City of Tulsa

#### Proposition No. 1, 2024 Proposed City Charter Amendment – City Councilors' Salaries

Voters approved Proposition 1, an amendment to the Charter of the City of Tulsa to increase city councilor salaries from \$24,000 to \$32,000 and provide for consumer price index adjustments.

**For, 63.35%** vs. Against, 36.65%

#### Proposition No. 2, 2024 Proposed City Charter Amendment – City Auditor's Salary

A charter amendment to increase the City auditor's salary from the equivalent of 70 percent of the Mayor's salary to 75 percent. The City Councilors passed an ordinance in April raising the Mayor's salary from \$105,000 to \$190,000, effective Dec. 2

**For, 57.09%** vs. Against, 42.91%

### Collinsville Public Schools, Independent School District No. 006

#### Proposition No. 1

Shall Independent School District Number 6 of Tulsa County, Oklahoma, incur an indebtedness by issuing its bonds in the sum of Ninety Three Million Seventy Thousand Dollars (\$93,070,000) to provide funds to be issued in series for the purpose of constructing, equipping, repairing and remodeling school buildings, acquiring school furniture, fixtures and equipment and acquiring and improving school sites and levy and collect an annual tax, in addition to all other taxes, upon all the taxable property in such District sufficient to pay the interest on such bonds as it falls due and also to constitute a sinking fund for the payment of the principal thereof when due, said bonds to bear interest not to exceed the rate of ten (10%) percentum per annum, payable semi-annually and to become due serially within ten (10) years from their date?

**For, 76.09%** vs. Against, 23.91%

#### Proposition No. 2

Shall Independent School District Number 6 of Tulsa County, Oklahoma, incur an indebtedness by issuing its bonds in the sum of Two Million Dollars (\$2,000,000) to provide funds to be issued in series for the purpose of purchasing transportation equipment and levy and collect an annual tax, in addition to all other taxes, upon all the taxable property in such District sufficient to pay the interest on such bonds as it falls due and also to constitute a sinking fund for the payment of the principal thereof when due, said bonds to bear interest not to exceed the rate of ten (10%) percentum per annum, payable semi-annually and to become due serially within five (5) years from their date?

**For, 77.19%** vs. Against, 22.81%



Tulsa Mayoral Race

# Propositions for salary increases approved by voters

From A3

provide for consumer price index adjustments.

**Proposition No. 2, 2024 Proposed City Charter Amendment – City Auditor’s Salary**

Voters also approved a charter amendment to increase the City auditor’s salary from the equivalent of 70 percent of the Mayor’s salary to 75 percent. The City Councilors passed an ordinance in April raising the Mayor’s salary from \$105,000 to \$190,000, effective Dec. 2.

Nathan Pickard, who ran uncontested, will succeed retiring City Auditor Cathy Carter. He will assume the office on Dec. 2 with a new \$142,500 salary, up from \$73,000.

Pickard is the founder of 9b, a certified B Corporation that provides data and analytics solutions, and the co-founder of ThirdLine, an analytics software for government auditors and financial management to find risk, stop fraud, create quick audit reports, decrease waste, and discover cost savings. He has 18 years of internal auditing and data analytics experience and has been a national speaker for the Association of Local Government Auditors (ALGA) and the Institute of Internal Auditors.

**How did the two top candidates distinguish themselves?**

Keith is a collaborator, a navigator, a listener who would help people find solutions, a visionary, and a former mayoral aide instrumental in launching the Vision 2025 capital improvement series. As a county commissioner, Keith has worked to address infrastructure issues, such as securing funding to rebuild the levees that protect property from flooded Arkansas River waters, as experienced in 2019.

Nichols, a state legislator and planner who said he puts his plans into print to promise accountability, is a policymaker who also says he has introduced house bills that would help North Tulsa residents. Nichols worked in public education and career tech before co-founding a cradle-to-career educational collective, Impact Tulsa, created to convert data into systemic change.

In early August, The Oklahoma Eagle posed questions to candidates regarding safety in the Black community and their experience in representing issues important to north Tulsa, such as affordable housing. The following is a synopsis of their responses.

Keith said she has immersed herself in the history of Black Wall Street, reading at least six historical accounts, including the most recent “Built From Fire,” by Victor Luckerson, featured in The Oklahoma Eagle.

“I have been very engaged as we work to commemorate what happened in ‘21. I care deeply about...making sure we don’t forget, and we, as a city, cannot forget what happened.

Oklahoma Evictions

# In Oklahoma Eviction Court, it’s Women with Children First

Heather Wartick  
Oklahoma Watch

Sandra Gathron sat on a bench chatting on the phone and snuggling her one-year-old granddaughter, Alaysha, near the elevators that lead to eviction court at the Oklahoma County District Courthouse on August 22. Two other women sat alongside Gathron; one entertained Alaysha with a game of peek-a-boo.

Around the corner in the main hall outside the eviction courtrooms, Adonika Fuller waited quietly with her neighbor Jerry Jones for information. Fuller was there for her eviction hearing. Jones came as moral support for Fuller and their fellow neighbor Jennifer Esquivel, who was discussing her eviction case with a Legal Aid attorney.

Next to Fuller and Esquivel, three other women waited for legal assistance. Across from them, one man in his senior years sat at the end of a bench next to five more women.

“Look around,” Fuller said. “What do you see? What do you see? How many women are here?”

Women represent about six in 10 eviction filings in Oklahoma County, according to Shelterwell, an Oklahoma City-based housing stability organization. The narrow demographic of Black women tenants with children, however, represents 28% of eviction filings nationally.

Legal Aid Services Oklahoma attorneys said the national trend of Black mothers facing the most evictions is evident in Oklahoma.

It’s generally clear which people at eviction court are tenants and who are landlords, mediators and attorneys. On this day, like most others, it was obvious that women of color outweighed any other tenant demographic.

Coincidence didn’t stack the day’s docket with cases against women of color.

Male tenants were also present and many people had already come and gone, but the majority of defendants present were women, mostly Black, several with their children.

According to Shelterwell, of tenants surveyed while facing eviction in Oklahoma County court, 63% were women, 70% were non-white, 61% were households with children and 92% said they were behind on their rent.

safe.”

Addressing stray dogs in Tulsa neighborhoods, especially around walkways to schools, is also a top priority on the ACTION Tulsa agenda. ACTION Tulsa represents 36 organizations around Tulsa and compiles its agenda by listening to what residents want.

**How do you plan to tackle affordable housing?**

“This is my number one issue. We have developers who will no longer work within the city limits of Tulsa because our permitting and inspection processes are very difficult.”

Keith explained that the process for developers is arduous, despite years of repeated attempts over 20 years of mayoral efforts to address the problem. By the time the developers emerge from the permitting process, building homes that are affordable to lower and middle-income buyers is no longer achievable, Keith said.

She said she is identifying the secret sauce.

“I have identified the most talented people that I can find to help me fix some of these issues.

I have got all the development community behind me and they are helping me to understand what they need to be successful.”

In her additional comment, Keith reiterated the importance of the Greenwood District and told Tulsans to be familiar with the site’s 1921 Black Wall Street Massacre history.

Concerning addressing issues important to Black Tulsans, Nichols immediately pointed to his

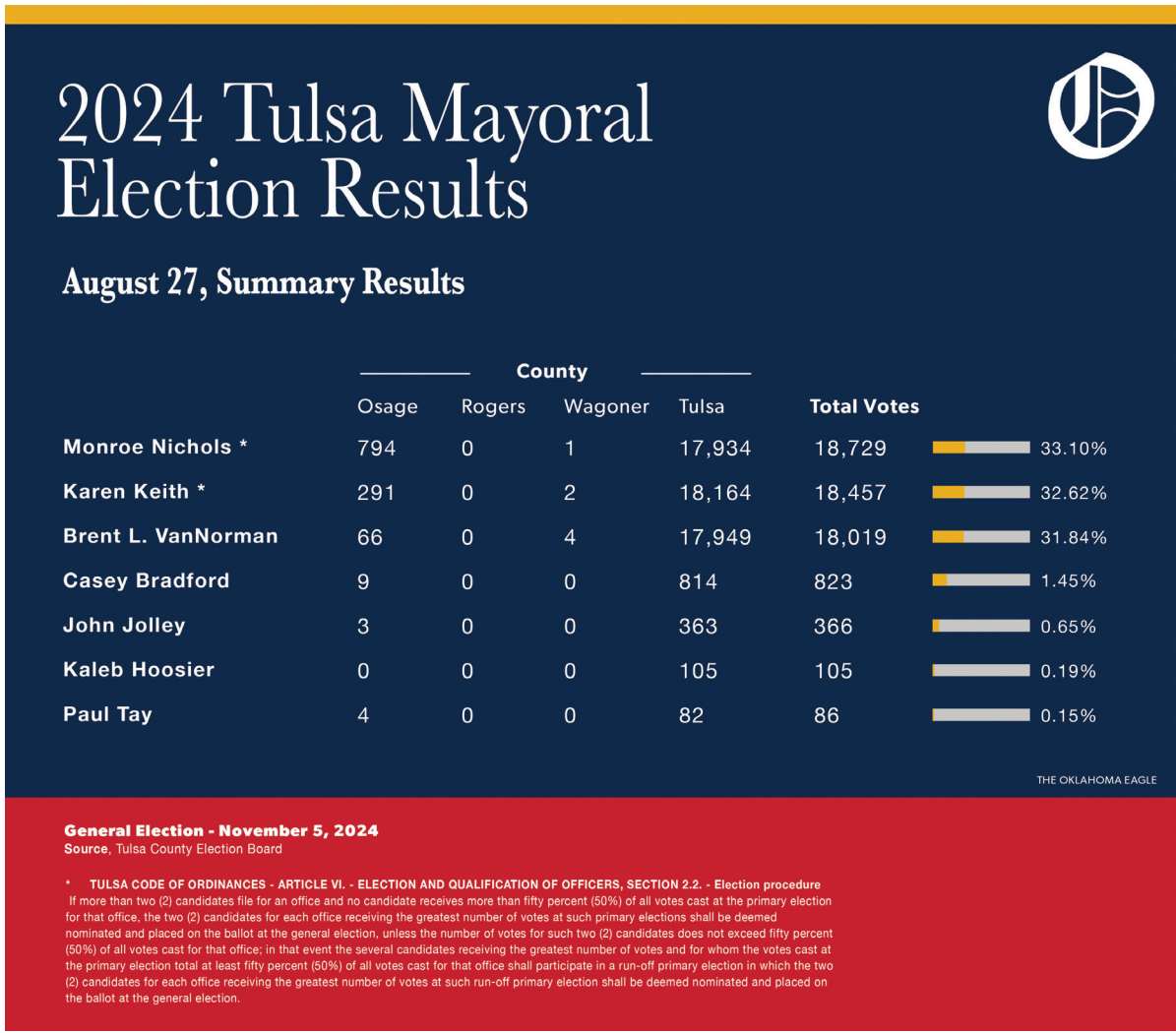
experience serving as the chair of the Oklahoma Legislative Black Caucus, where he said he has led every issue from equity funding for Langston to Representative Daniel Goldman’s work to try to get scholarships for Descendants of the race massacre.

He said he has worked his entire political career on the issues around the country that now impact Tulsa, including affordable housing and education and narrowing the life expectancy gap between white citizens and people of color in Tulsa. He cited work on the Wayman Tisdale Center and school-based medical clinics created in public schools. A Texas native who moved to Tulsa to attend the University of Tulsa Nichols said, “north Tulsa has always not only been near and dear to me, but it’s also the home of a good part of my constituents. So I’m really proud about that.”

Nichols said he plans to end homelessness by 2030 and re-envision/reimagine how the City approaches education by redefining the mayor’s role to keep the best teachers in the classrooms, especially in North Tulsa. (The Tulsa Public Schools Superintendent has worked to restructure staff, including pulling some of the best administrators to north Tulsa schools.)

From an economic development standpoint, he said. “I am directly addressing two issues: business ownership in north Tulsa and the unemployment rates are double that of the rest of the city.”

Nichols said that to create a safer city, “number one is the City of Tulsa has to show that we care.” To



illustrate his previous career as a city employee working with former Mayor Kathy Taylor, Nichols said it was his primary job to reduce juvenile crime in particular, which was attempted by creating 18 after-school programs to work on crime prevention.

“So it’s community-based solutions to reducing crime,” he said. “I think the other thing is when it comes to how we police our communities, making sure we do a much better job of making sure there’s a strong relationship between police in the community so folks not only feel safe, but officers know where to go when something happens—trusted voices in the community to support public safety.

But I think at the end of the day, it is listening to people in neighborhoods, understanding the pain points, getting the lights turned on, getting the stray dogs off the street, and making sure we’re doing everything we can from a prevention standpoint, (and) a re-entry standpoint because we know there’s a lot of folks in our community that are in prison right now.

On the issue of affordable housing, Nichols again pointed to his published plan on Monroeformayor.com.

“I’m beginning to address the affordable housing crisis we have here. One thing I’ve already done in the legislation is expand access to affordable housing tax credit, and I did that back in 2018. I think as it relates to what we can do on a go-forward basis is, we’ve got to make sure that we reduce the cost of business. It means speeding up permitting and making sure that folks who are developing affordable housing have priority when it comes to getting permits. So we can ensure they can keep those structures affordable.”

“And you know, we’re gonna take a very strong look at not only...a pathway to get 2000 affordable units every year, but also working to reduce evictions.

In his additional comment, Nichols acknowledged the political gridlock in Washington DC and Oklahoma politics driven by the Republican Party.

“But the real solutions on how you move the community forward are gonna happen here in the city. So if there was a race that was most important, that anybody’s gonna vote on, it’s gonna be this race for mayor, and I encourage people to exercise their right to vote to do so.”

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

**SAM LEVRAULT** is a digital storyteller based in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Growing up across the Midwest, she has found a love in exploring the communities she finds herself in. A professional background in Digital Media and experience as a reporter and member of the production team (digital & print) contribute to her passion of storytelling.





PHOTOS ADOBE IMAGES



**Mental Health Settlement**

# Contrary to AG's recommendation, Stitt, McCall oppose mental health lawsuit settlement

**Michael McNutt**  
NonDoc

Gov. Kevin Stitt and House Speaker Charles McCall, at odds with Attorney General Gentner Drummond on his proposal to settle a class-action lawsuit dealing with Oklahoma's competency restoration system for those accused of crimes while afflicted with severe mental illness, voted Wednesday to table the matter and not take action regarding a proposed consent decree carrying an undefined price tag for reforming state services.

"Before any agreement of this magnitude is finalized, we need to ensure that this is a good deal for all 4 million Oklahomans," Stitt said. "We can and we must care for those in our justice system who are struggling with mental health conditions and also protect Oklahoma taxpayers."

Allie Friesen, commissioner for the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, said she told Drummond she could not support the proposed consent decree, which was announced in June.

"Across multiple occasions, in person, over the phone, and documents across several emails, I made it very clear that there were two non-negotiables for me, and I cannot and will not agree to the consent decree as it's drafted," she said.

Drummond said Wednesday's meeting

of the Contingency Review Board, which consists of the governor, the House speaker, the Senate president pro tempore and the executive director of the Office of Management and Enterprise Services, was "a sham," according to a press release his office issued ahead of it. Drummond said he was concerned the board would reject the settlement that "would save the state many millions of dollars."

Although invited to attend the meeting, Drummond did not appear. Neither did anyone from his office, which was placed on the agenda for "presentation and discussion" of the proposed consent decree. Instead, Drummond issued a press release.

"The governor appears bound and determined to force Oklahomans to ultimately pay untold millions of dollars and ignore a years-long failure of the state Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services," he said. "Rather than seizing an opportunity to deliver justice and save taxpayer dollars, Gov. Stitt would rather stage political theater. This is disappointing, if not entirely surprising."

Also absent was Senate President Pro Tempore Greg Treat (R-OKC), who was called away for a family medical emergency, according to his spokesman. Attorney Rick Rose, whom Stitt named Wednesday as the new executive director of OMES, was present. Changing roles after years as McCall's chief of staff, Rose becomes a non-voting member of the CRB as OMES

director.

Drummond, in emails to the governor earlier this week, told Stitt the consent decree is not ready for review because the federal judge handling the class-action litigation has yet to approve several of its key terms. On Aug. 15, Frizzell presided over a hearing where he asked Drummond and plaintiffs attorneys for additional briefing about whether proposed new community-based competency restoration programs are legal under Oklahoma law.

In an email Monday, Drummond told Stitt that the CRB meeting was premature, and he recommended that it be rescheduled until Judge Gregory Frizzell gives preliminary approval to the settlement and consent decree.

"Our view is that we need preliminary approval from the court before we can/should discuss the consent decree ("CD") with the CRB," Drummond wrote. "To date, Judge Frizzell has not approved the proposed CD, and it is likely that the proposed decree may require some modification. To this end, if you convene the CRB, you do not have any CD that has achieved preliminary approval by the judge."

Stitt, who chairs the CRB, responded the next day by saying the CRB would meet anyway.

"At the least, the meeting will allow members an opportunity to learn more about the consent decree and context surrounding it," he wrote.

Drummond responded that "there is no

consent decree to approve."

"We are awaiting the court's decision on certain key terms, so what we have previously circulated to you is subject to change," Drummond wrote. "Therefore, any discussion about terms or any action to decline or approve would be meaningless on a substantive basis. Your zeal to proceed out of order strikes me as more political theater than clear-eyed leadership."

"My objective is to support victims of crime, not to provide cover for a state agency that has failed to do its job for the last six years."

**Letter to be sent to judge noting opposition to proposal**

After the meeting, McCall (R-Atoka) said he opposes approving the consent decree, at least as proposed. He said he told Drummond of his opposition when the attorney general told him about the offer in May.

"It puts the state of Oklahoma in a perpetual plan that I don't believe will ever be met, because there will be third-party outsiders and attorneys that will make the decision whether or not the state has complied with the decree," McCall said.

McCall said he will encourage Friesen to ask legislators for additional funding when agencies submit budget requests for the next fiscal year. Agency budget requests are due in October.

Stitt said his office would send a letter



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LEGAL NOTICE

IN THE DISTRICT COURT  
IN AND FOR TULSA COUNTY  
STATE OF OKLAHOMA

IN THE MATTER OF  
THE ESTATE OF:

RICHARD JOSEPH MCGRANE,  
Deceased.  
CASE NO. PB-2020-251

JUDGE KURT G. GLASSCO

NOTICE OF HEARING FIRST AND  
FINAL ACCOUNTING,  
PETITION FOR DECREE OF  
DISTRIBUTION, APPROVAL  
OF ATTORNEY FEES,  
COSTS AND EXPENSES,  
AND DISCHARGE OF PERSONAL  
REPRESENTATIVES

NOTICE is hereby given that JOHN P. TOLENTINO and MARGARET COONFIELD, the duly appointed and qualified Personal Representatives of the Estate of RICHARD JOSEPH MCGRANE, Deceased, have filed the First and Final Accounting, Petition for Decree of Distribution, Approval of Attorney Fees, Costs and Expenses, and Discharge of Personal Representatives. A hearing has been fixed by the Judge of the Court for the 25th day of September 2024, at 10:00 o'clock A.M. in Courtroom 701, of the Tulsa County Courthouse, 500 South Denver Ave., Tulsa, Oklahoma, and all persons interested in the Estate of RICHARD JOSEPH MCGRANE are notified to appear and show cause, if any they have, why the First and Final Accounting, Petition for Decree of Distribution, Approval of Attorney Fees, Costs and Expenses, and Discharge of Personal Representatives should not be settled and allowed, the Estate distributed, the attorney fees, costs, and expenses approved, and the Personal Representatives discharged.

DATED this 29th day of July 2024.

By: /S/ KURT G. GLASSCO  
JUDGE OF DISTRICT COURT

Prepared by:

James O. Goodwin, OBA 3458  
Attorney for Petitioners  
GOODWIN & GOODWIN  
P.O. Box 3267  
Tulsa, OK 74101-3267  
Telephone: (918) 582-9181  
Cell: (918) 625-7196  
Fax: (918) 599-0250  
Email: jgoodwin@theoklahomaeagle.net



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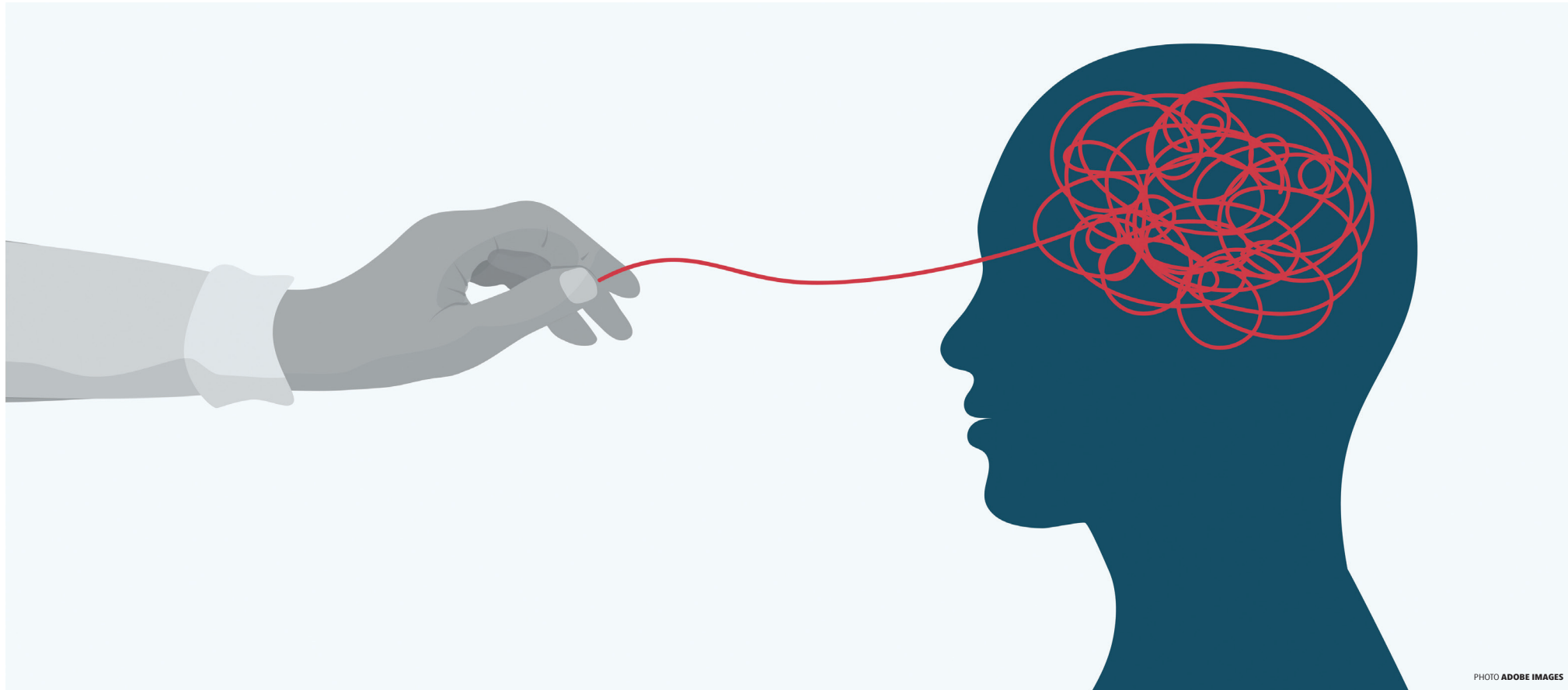
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Mental Health Settlement

# Drummond to Stitt, “There is no consent decree to approve.”

From A8

to Frizzell summarizing Wednesday’s meeting and stating his and McCall’s opposition to the proposed consent decree.

No date for another CRB meeting has been scheduled. The Contingency Review Board is rarely used. Its primary purpose is to consider settlement agreements of more than \$250,000 when the Legislature is not in session.

McCall and Treat are term limited, with their extensive years of service expiring Nov. 19. Their designated successors cannot take any official action until legislators formally organize, which will be Jan. 7, he said.

Through their class-action complaint filed March 1, 2023, in U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Oklahoma, attorneys Leslie Briggs, Evan Watson and Henry Meyer have alleged violations of due-process rights for pre-trial defendants in state court who had been declared incompetent to stand trial and who were awaiting competency restoration treatment.

The attorneys filed their claim as the “next friends” of affected Oklahomans, and they allege the state’s failures force those deemed incompetent to endure lengthy wait times beyond what is “constitutionally permissible” for treatment at the Oklahoma Forensic Center in Vinita.

Drummond’s office called the lawsuit “indefensible” in a memo provided to lawmakers during this year’s regular session.

As approved by the Legislature in May, the state budget for this fiscal year includes \$4.1 million appropriated to the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services to “be reserved for implementation of potential consent decrees entered during the 2024 calendar year.” But the specified improvement plan could obligate Oklahoma to provide future mental health funding many times more than the \$4.1 million figure designated for Fiscal Year 2025.

“So, as it’s written today, a conservative estimate would place a burden of approximately \$96 million over five years,” Friesen, who was appointed mental health commissioner by Stitt in January, said during Wednesday’s meeting. “So, there are lots of variables that go into that cost.”

The estimate does not include additional requirements from consultants and plaintiffs, she said.

“The plaintiffs have remained a decision-maker over the clinical decisions in conjunction with the consultants,” Friesen said. “So, this will likely not include the additional requests (...) to add additional funds and beds.”

Friesen said the money would have to be added to additional funding through appropriations from the Legislature, but she emphasized her belief

**Through their class-action complaint filed March 1, 2023, in U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Oklahoma, attorneys... alleged violations of due-process rights for pre-trial defendants in state court who had been declared incompetent to stand trial and who were awaiting competency restoration treatment.**

**Leslie Briggs, Evan Watson and Henry Meyer, attorneys representing class-action complainants.**

that attorneys should have no place at the table when it comes to making clinical decisions and how to apply clinical practices. Under the proposal, a trio of expert “consultants” would be paid \$450 per hour for their work over the five — at a minimum — years of the decree.

The proposal would require ODMHSAS to cease existing jail-based competency restoration programs around the state, but pilot programs for new jail-based programs would be created in Tulsa County and a county to be named later.

As initially drafted, the proposed consent decree also would create community-based competency restoration pilot programs, a somewhat controversial concept that has gained traction nationally in recent years.

“Within 90 days after the court enters this consent decree, defendants, in consultation with class counsel and the consultants, shall develop and begin to implement a plan, to be approved by the consultants, for a pilot community-based restoration treatment program in Tulsa County, Oklahoma County, McIntosh County and Muskogee County,” the proposed decree states on Page 23.

With none of the proposed community or jail-based restoration programs based in western or southern Oklahoma communities, some rural legislators have expressed an interest to learn more about how their areas would be served, especially since the proposal would require ODMHSAS to shut down its existing “in-jail competency restoration” program statewide, which launched in early 2023.

The Oklahoma Forensic Center in Vinita has 216 beds and is the only hospital operated by ODMHSAS that provides secure inpatient competency restoration services. The facility is also home to criminal defendants found not guilty by reason of insanity or mental illness until such a time that they are released from custody. Plaintiffs in the lawsuit have alleged that Vinita’s capacity issues have created unconstitutional and harmful treatment delays for criminal defendants in need of competency restoration services, which typically involves the administration and monitoring of anti-psychotic medications.

Plaintiffs have alleged that ODMHSAS’ failure to serve Oklahomans in a timely manner at the Vinita facility has left hundreds of mentally ill individuals in county jails, placing them in peril and complicating their pathways to restored mental health competency.

Friesen said work is underway to add 84 additional beds at the Vinita hospital, which she said should be available in June.

**Pinnacle Plan 2.0?**

The last time the Contingency Review Board was used to decide a large settlement came in January 2012, before legislators returned to session in February. The CRB members approved settlement of a federal lawsuit — D.G. v. Yarbrough — which alleged systemic problems with how the Oklahoma Department of Human Services handled children in the foster care system. Allegations involved the allowance of abuse, improper placement of children — even newborns — in overcrowded and under-staffed emergency shelters, and failure to provide secure long-term placements.

The Oklahoma Supreme Court declined to hear a lawsuit challenging the CRB’s 2012 action.

With Frizzell also presiding over that case, a 2012 compromise and settlement agreement — a remedial prescription differing slightly from a court-ordered consent decree — established the Pinnacle Plan, which required annual reporting about foster-care-system improvements and mandated monitoring from “co-neutrals” over the next decade.

In March 2023, the co-neutrals determined in their 19th report that substantial good-faith progress toward corrective goals had been made, and DHS was released from its monitoring obligation.

Stitt said research by his office showed that DHS has spent more than \$400 million on the Pinnacle Plan to date, with \$18 million of that going to pay the co-neutrals, who held a similar role to the proposed consultants for the consent decree under consideration now.

McCall, who was elected in 2012, said legislators appropriated additional money to DHS to meet the obligations of the Pinnacle Plan because “the goalposts seem to get moved in that plan.”

“Is this decree — in your opinion, is it a Pinnacle Plan 2.0?” McCall asked Friesen during Wednesday’s meeting.

Friesen answered in the affirmative.

“Sadly, it’s very, very similar to the Pinnacle Plan,” she said. “It is also the similar structure with the consultants having the say in conjunction with the plaintiff’s counsel. It also has a similar impossibility of exiting the agreement over a reasonable time frame. And that has been one of the biggest catching points is, will we ever get to a point where we can satisfy, in the definition of a consultant, a reasonable compliance?”

**MICHAEL MCNUTT** became NonDoc’s managing editor in January 2023. He has been a journalist for nearly 40 years, working at The Oklahoman for 30 years, heading up its Enid bureau and serving as night city editor, assistant news editor and State Capitol reporter. An inductee of the Oklahoma Journalism Hall of Fame, he served as communications director for former Gov. Mary Fallin and then for the Office of Juvenile Affairs. Send tips and story ideas to mcnuttt@nondoc.com.

Parental Tax Credit

# Anything Goes: Parental Tax Credit Program Has No Standards for Accreditation

**Ruby Topalian and Jennifer Palmer**  
Oklahoma Watch

Only accredited private schools qualify for the state’s Parental Choice Tax Credit program, a voucher-like state subsidy for parents to use toward tuition.

But schools need only report the name of their accreditor. There is no verification beyond that, and any accreditor goes.

Among the schools approved are Goodland Academy, a middle school in Hugo that shuttered for two years but maintained accreditation and

reopened in February with five students, all of whom received a tax credit.

A preschool at the Oklahoma City Zoo also received state approval, listing accreditation from the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, which evaluated the zoo on standards primarily focused on animal welfare and veterinary care.

Candice Rennels, a spokeswoman for the Oklahoma City Zoo, said accreditation through the Association of Zoos and Aquariums is rigorous and includes an education component. Tuition is \$345 per week — about \$14,000 per year.

As of Aug. 8, state regulators had approved

175 private schools for the Parental Choice Tax Credit program. Families of all incomes whose children attend those schools can claim \$5,000 to \$7,500 per student per year, but priority is given to those earning \$150,000 or less. Combined, those schools obtained accreditation from 19 different organizations, each with different standards and little oversight.

“Not all accreditors are created equal,” said Chris Belyeu, executive director of the Oklahoma Private School Accrediting Council.

Since 1995, the Oklahoma Board of Education has partnered with the Oklahoma Private School Accrediting Council to vet

private school accrediting agencies. Schools that accept students in the Lindsey Nicole Henry Scholarship program, a voucher program for students with disabilities, must be accredited by the Board of Education or another of the 15 organizations approved by the council.

To gain approval from the council, members review standards and attend site visits with accreditors.

But schools in the Parental Choice Tax Credit program aren’t limited to the list of vetted accreditors, opening the door to less-rigorous accreditation or pay-to-play schemes — what Belyeu calls fly-by-night accreditors.

Cont. A11, Parental Tax Credit





Elementary school children eating lunches prepared by their families and provided via state-funded school lunch programs.

PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

## State Funding, Families

# State Walks Away from Tens of Millions Meant for Needy Families

Paul Monies  
Oklahoma Watch

State leaders have a complicated relationship with federal grant money.

They love federal cash. Just don't tell them what to do with it or how to do it. That's caused the state to walk away from tens of millions of dollars meant to help Oklahomans in need.

Oklahoma's federal lawsuit over family planning grants and Republican Gov. Kevin Stitt's decision not to participate in a summer food program for a second year are just the latest examples in the state's love-hate relationship with federal money.

To be sure, such conflicts are nothing new in American history. No matter which party is in office, states — particularly Oklahoma — have chafed at what they perceive as interfering bureaucrats from the federal government in Washington, D.C.

The feds see the relationship mostly as rosy-sounding cooperative federalism, where different levels of government live in perfect harmony. The states at times see it as coercive federalism. But when relations really sour, they call it punitive federalism.

The Oklahoma State Department of Health's latest annual report notes a change in emphasis when it comes to federal funds. The agency gets more than half of its total budget from federal grants and pass-through funds. Annual state appropriations make up just 15% of its budget.

"Many of our programs receive federal grant funding, which comes with requirements," reads the report. "However, our focus remains leading Oklahoma to prosperity through health. To do so, we recognize we must put them above federal grant requirements. Therefore, we have adjusted organizational procedures to meet the needs of Oklahomans rather than satisfy federal

**We want the funding," said agency spokeswoman Erica Rankin. "We need the funding, so it's not that. A lot of times, the funding is siloed, and we spend it in silos, which is not effective.**

ERICA RANKIN, agency spokeswoman,  
Oklahoma State Department of Health

grant requirements."

Health department officials said federal funds remain important to the agency's public health mission. But they want to make sure the money is aligned with other state programs or can be leveraged with programs run by outside partners that also provide public health services.

"We want the funding," said agency spokeswoman Erica Rankin. "We need the funding, so it's not that. A lot of times, the funding is siloed, and we spend it in silos, which is not effective."

Oklahoma challenged the federal government over the loss of \$4.5 million in family planning grants that ended when the state refused to publicize an abortion-referral hotline. The grants cover pregnancy testing, cancer screenings, contraceptives, reproductive health counseling and other services.

The state initially told the federal Department of Health and Human Services it would include the hotline during a grant review in March 2023. But Oklahoma changed course a month later when it determined the hotline could violate the state's prohibition on abortion in the wake of the U.S. Supreme Court's Dobbs decision. The federal government terminated Oklahoma's Title X grant in June 2023.

Oklahoma earlier joined a coalition of Republican states suing over the abortion referral hotline in Title X funds when the Biden administration issued a new federal rule in 2021. The state launched its own lawsuit earlier this year after the federal government pulled Oklahoma's Title X grant.

Tom Hillis, an attorney representing the state, said the federal government was stooping to score-settling with its decision to pull federal funds for family planning. The money helps 25,000 Oklahomans per year and is especially important at county health departments in rural areas, state health department officials said in court documents.

"It's, 'State of Oklahoma, you're going to bow to our wishes,'" Hillis said at a March hearing in federal court in Oklahoma City. "Not that (it) materially helps anybody, because anyone with Google and an iPhone can just Google abortion providers. They're denying \$4.5 million in funding to Oklahoma just because we won't hand out a card to give the authority of the state to say, 'Here's your abortion provider.'"

The state lost at both the federal district court level and a federal appellate court for a temporary injunction in the case. It's now before Justice Neil Gorsuch for an emergency injunction or a stay at the U.S. Supreme Court. Those types of emergency applications typically go before just one Supreme Court justice responsible for a particular geographic area. Gorsuch is expected to rule in the next few weeks.

U.S. District Judge Joe Heaton told Oklahoma officials they were overreacting when they said the referral hotline would open up state employees to criminal prosecution under Oklahoma's abortion law.

"For a department of health worker to say to the client sitting across the table, once they request information on abortion and they say, 'Well, it's not legal in Oklahoma, but if you want to look at other options, call this number,' I cannot believe that any serious prosecutor would think that warranted prosecution under the statute," Heaton said in the March hearing, according to a court transcript. "So I do think that it seems to me that the posture that Oklahoma finds itself in here is at least, in part, it's a circumstance of its own choosing."

Oklahoma continues to provide family planning services at county health departments, but it's using appropriated money from the Legislature as a temporary patch. Separately, Oklahoma lawmakers put \$18 million into

Cont. A11, State Funding, Families



## State Funding, Families

# A battle over the need for federal funding, and control

From A10

the state's Choosing Childbirth program, which provides money to mostly religious nonprofit crisis pregnancy centers that counsel against abortion.

### State Declines Summer Food Help

As the family planning issue makes its way through the courts, Stitt, for a second year, declined to participate in a federal summer food program for low-income children. The program offers \$40 per child each month in an electronic benefit transfer card to help their caregivers provide food during summer months. The program is meant as a stop-gap during the summer when children can't access the federally funded free-and-reduced school lunch programs. The summer EBT initiative started as a pilot program but was made permanent in a bipartisan federal budget deal in 2022.

Stitt said the federal assistance wasn't needed since Oklahoma just eliminated its share of the grocery sales tax and other food programs would remain available for hungry children during the summer.

A coalition of nonprofits that help with food insecurity across the state rejected those arguments. They said federal programs like summer EBT are designed to work in tandem with state and local initiatives. The summer EBT program would provide an extra \$48 million in federal funding for more than 400,000 children in Oklahoma, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

"While existing summer meals programs do provide meaningful relief for some low-income families working to provide consistent, adequate nutrition for their children, it is not a one-size-fits-all solution, especially for working families and families in rural Oklahoma," said an open letter to Stitt from the organizations this month.

Oklahoma tribes filled in some gaps in the summer EBT program this year after Oklahoma rejected funding last year. All told, more than 200,000 children were covered by tribal nations participating in the summer EBT program.

Chris Bernard, president and CEO of Hunger-Free Oklahoma, said it was puzzling why the state would leave federal money on the table to combat food insecurity. He said last year's rejection at least made some sense because the federal government expected states to administer a new program in just a short period. Bernard said the state is OK with taking federal money for roads, bridges and broadband internet coverage.

"It's the nature of the system we've built," Bernard said. "The federal government has the ability to pool a ton of resources to solve big, systemic problems. When you use federal resources, you have to meet some guidance. Just like when the state of Oklahoma runs a program, they talk about fiduciary duty, accountability and making sure tax dollars are spent the way they're supposed to be; it's the same principle."

Bernard said for the most part, children who qualify for summer EBT would also qualify for SNAP benefits, which aren't taxed. He said that eliminating the state's sales tax on groceries would have made little difference to families getting those benefits.

"You cannot solve this problem with charity," Bernard said of food insecurity in Oklahoma. "Charity is a really important piece, especially in a crisis. But to actually address the issue, you need federal dollars because the scale is so big. It is bad business to leave that money on the table. If you don't agree with that program, you



PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

“

**You cannot solve this problem with charity... to actually address the issue, you need federal dollars because the scale is so big.**

Chris Bernard, president and CEO of Hunger-Free Oklahoma

fight that at the federal level. But once the feds have made that money available, you should draw it down or you're doing a disservice to your state and your people."

### Oklahoma's Balance of Payments

Oklahoma ranked ninth among the states in 2022 for the proportion of federal money it receives compared to the tax revenue it sends to the federal government, according to the Rockefeller Institute of Government. Oklahoma received almost \$17,500 per person in federal funds, compared to federal tax revenue per person of \$9,220.

Nationally, federal grants account for about a third of state government funding. They provide more than half of state government funding for health care and public assistance. Federal funds to address the COVID-19 pandemic swelled state government coffers, too, at least temporarily.

Apart from pandemic spending, federal funding to the states has continued to grow in both Republican and Democratic presidential administrations. Since the Reagan administration, some Republicans have tried unsuccessfully to convert many federal

programs to block grants, which would give states more flexibility in how to deploy the funds and serve as a check on federal spending growth. But they've encountered pushback from their constituents.

A report for the Congressional Research Service in 2019 said apart from a blip in the early 1980s, federal grant funding, the number of federal grants and federal mandates have increased under both Democratic and Republican Congresses and presidents.

"As long as this continues to be the case, and the public continues to express support for specific government programs — even if they generally oppose 'big' government as a whole — there is little evidence to suggest that the general historical trends of increasing numbers of federal grants to state and local governments, increasing outlays for those grants, an emphasis on categorical grants, and continued enactment of federal mandates, both funded and unfunded, are likely to change," the report said.

PAUL MONIES has been a reporter with Oklahoma Watch since 2017 and covers state agencies and public health. Contact him at (571) 319-3289 or pmonies@oklahomawatch.org. Follow him on Twitter @pmonies.

## Parental Tax Credit

# Parental Choice challenged by state oversight

**"A private school in Oklahoma is not required to be accredited by the state and can seek accreditation from any accrediting association."**

Yes Every Kid, representative.

From A9

### How We Got Here

Legislators approved the Parental Choice Tax Credit in 2023, capping a major push to expand the state's school choice programs. The program is set to cost \$150 million this year and expand to \$250 million by 2026.

In writing rules for the program, the Oklahoma Tax Commission proposed requiring schools to be accredited by the Board of Education or an association approved by the board. But the proposal faced pushback.

One response, from a national organization called Yes Every Kid, said requiring board approval was too limiting.

"A private school in Oklahoma is not required to be accredited by the state and can seek accreditation from any accrediting association," they wrote.

Relying on the board's list would unnecessarily narrow a law written to apply

broadly to private schools to which parents choose to send their children, the organization said in an email. Yes Every Kid advocates for state policies that send public money to private schools and is funded by billionaire industrialist Charles Koch.

"I see the OTC and Dept. of Education taking away parents' choice by limiting eligible private accredited schools only to the state board of education entities," a parent wrote in another comment. "This defeats the purpose of this bill, is sneaky and tyrannical."

EdChoice, an organization that lobbies for charter schools and voucher programs, wanted at least a minimum level of vetting. They suggested that the rules be amended to include accreditors recognized by a state, regional or national accrediting body.

Ultimately, the Tax Commission reverted to the language in the bill, accepting accreditation from any organization. Emily Haxton, a spokeswoman for the commission, said they don't determine whether a private school has

met the accreditation standards.

### Other States

Vetting of accreditors in school choice programs varies nationwide.

Some states, such as Iowa and West Virginia, have lists of 5 to 10 approved accreditors. Cognia and the Association of Christian Schools International consistently appear on those lists.

Others include more accreditors. Arkansas, for example, approves 22 for its school choice program, comparable to the Oklahoma Private School Accrediting Council list used for Oklahoma's Lindsey Nicole Henry scholarship.

Conversely, North Carolina's Department of Non-Public Education has no control over accreditors. The department's only role is to keep record of the registered private and home schools in the state.

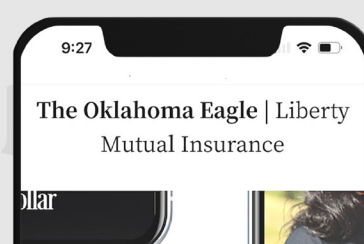
Utah and Arizona don't require accreditation at all.

Cont. A12, Parental Tax Credit

The Oklahoma Eagle

## Our Mission

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







Cristo Rey Catholic High School students study theology on May 20, 2024.

PHOTO TED STREUL/OKLAHOMA WATCH

Parental Tax Credit

# Accredited v. “Accredited,”

From All

## Accreditation A Low Bar

The Oklahoma tax credit created a rush of private schools seeking accreditation, and some were completed in a shorter-than-typical timeframe. For some, that meant quick improvements, such as adopting a curriculum or extending school calendars to meet accreditors’ standards.

Accreditation generally means a school has demonstrated educational quality and adheres to state regulations. Private accreditors tend to focus on educational quality. Religiously affiliated accreditors also check that schools follow certain religious teachings or values.

The Oklahoma Department of Education mainly checks for compliance with state regulations.

Some private schools pursue accreditation both from the state and another entity for that reason. One example is Cristo Rey Oklahoma City Catholic High School, which is accredited by the Oklahoma Department of Education and Cognia.

Cognia completed its review of Cristo Rey last year. It’s a four- to five-year

process, with two formal site visits, and a \$1,200 annual fee. The Department of Education review lasted less than a year, included two meetings with a regional accreditation officer, and cost nothing.

Kelsey Herman, Cristo Rey’s principal, said the key difference was Cognia’s emphasis on continuous improvement.

Cognia is the largest education accreditor in the world, with 40,000 public and private schools across the globe. Cognia also runs three of six regional accrediting agencies in the U.S.

Having regional standards makes the transition to a different high school seamless for students who move to another state, helps students qualify for some college scholarships and is the only route for students going to the military after high school, said Mark Elgart, president and chief executive officer of Cognia.

“There are schools that use that term (accredited) very loosely,” Elgart said. “I would advise parents to verify it and to do any research to make sure that accreditation actually looks at, on a regular basis, the quality of the school.”

Signs that an accreditation is not high quality include an ability to fast-track the

process, webcam reviews instead of on-site visits, and renewal periods of more than five to seven years, industry experts said.

Josh Cowen, a professor of education policy at Michigan State University who authored a book on tax-funded school choice programs, said lack of accreditation would almost certainly guarantee a poor-quality school, but accreditation itself doesn’t guarantee a high-quality school.

“Accreditation is a very low bar for these private schools to pass,” he said.

For that reason, Jim Johnson, president of the Lawton Academy of Arts and Science, said when seeking out a rigorous accreditation, they chose Cognia.

He said it took six months to obtain accreditation that included months of gathering data, getting it ready, then “a week of hell” for the accreditation visit. The school posts its entire accreditation report and testing data online, which is rare for private schools.

“You can be the best thing in the world, but until somebody else tells somebody else you’re the best thing in the world, nobody knows it,” Johnson said.

Ron Titus, head of SNU Lab School, said accreditation is becoming easier as

more accreditation agencies are popping up to expedite the process for programs like Oklahoma’s parental Choice Tax Credit. SNU Lab School has been accredited by the Department of Education for 51 years and just earned accreditation through the Association of Christian Schools International.

He suggested that parents do a bit more digging if a school touts its accreditation; parents should be asking schools how long they have been accredited, he said.

Belyeu, of the Oklahoma Private School Accrediting Council, said school choice programs such as the tax credit give parents options, but also a lot of responsibility.

“Any school can say they’re doing a great job,” he said. “I would look at their external validation, and primarily, that’s going to be accreditation.”

**RUBY TOPALIAN** is a 2024 summer intern at Oklahoma Watch covering general assignments. Contact her at rtopalian@oklahomawatch.org.

**JENNIFER PALMER** has been a reporter with Oklahoma Watch since 2016 and covers education. Contact her at (405) 761-0093 or jpalmer@oklahomawatch.org. Follow her on Twitter @jpalmerOKC.

Oklahoma Evictions

# Black women with children, largest group filed against

From A6

loan production office for Black and Hispanic residents.

Bennett’s House District 92 encompasses a swath of Oklahoma City including the downtown area, much of southeast Oklahoma City and part of NW Oklahoma City. Bennett is part of a project tracking the damage redlining practices have caused to Oklahoma City neighborhoods since they were ostensibly outlawed.

A drive through Oklahoma City neighborhoods gave Bennett a snapshot of areas once redlined on maps. Midtown was once such a district, though modern development has masked its history and rehabilitated its value, Bennett said.

Historic homes with intentionally planted mature trees and streets with sidewalks were usually built in blue or green areas and were owned and occupied by white Oklahomans. Neighborhoods in the urban core lacking sidewalks and landscaping are likely to have been redlined on maps.

“You could have a Black couple and a white couple that were making the same amount, but a white couple’s ability to get a nice single-family home in a nice neighborhood necessarily meant that they were able to start building generational wealth,” Bennett said. “While a Black couple who may not have access to buying a home was continuing to rent, not building equity in a property and not having that as leverage later on when they needed it.”

A direct line exists from past racist housing policies that have not been fully corrected to today’s crisis of evictions among minorities, said Sabine Brown, housing senior policy analyst at the Oklahoma Policy Institute.

“Because Black families were largely prevented from purchasing single-family homes, you had Black families that were largely in the urban core, in multifamily housing,” Brown said.

Today, 96% of Oklahoma City’s residential areas and 81% in Tulsa are zoned for single-family dwellings only. Multifamily housing is limited to specific areas; many zip codes with

the highest numbers of evictions are areas that were formerly shaded red on city maps.

## Ongoing Racism, Gender Discrepancies Affect Eviction Rates

Nationally, Black Americans make up just 18.6% of all renters but they account for half of all eviction filings. In Oklahoma, Black tenants make up closer to 60% of eviction defendants.

Black women with children are the largest group filed against, comprising 28.3% of all eviction filings.

In Oklahoma, 61% of households facing evictions include children. That aligns with national statistics that indicate that when age groups are combined, children under 19 comprise more than 40% of people directly affected by the effects of evictions. Moving, changing schools, missing days of school, making new friends and other abrupt life changes can deeply affect children of all ages.

Women make up two-thirds of the state’s lowest-wage workers, according to data from the U.S. Department of Labor. And a Black worker is 50% more likely, and a Hispanic worker 40% more likely, than a white worker to make minimum wage or less.

A wage of \$19.91 per hour is needed to sustain a moderate two-bedroom domicile in Oklahoma.

Fuller, one of those low-wage workers at age 47, had an appointment after her court hearing for a drug screening to start working a new second job. Though her four kids are grown and live independently, Fuller said she will work about 100 hours per week to make ends meet.

## Eviction Looms Large Among Undervalued Gender

Eviction Lab founder Matthew Desmond, said evictions are to Black women what incarceration is to Black men.

In his 2016 book, “Evicted,” Desmond wrote, “Poor Black men may be locked up, but poor Black women are locked out.” That statement still holds, said Jacob Haas, a research specialist at Eviction Lab at Princeton University, which

Desmond helped establish.

“Black men continue to be locked up and Black women continue to be locked out,” Haas said.

Brown said that when men are incarcerated, women are left behind to support themselves and their children.

## Trying to Keep What They Have

In 2022, full-time salaried Oklahoma women had a median weekly pay of \$769, or 80.8% of the \$952 median weekly pay of their male counterparts, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Oklahoma hasn’t raised its \$7.25 minimum wage since 2009.

“Nowadays, it’s just trying to keep what we have,” Fuller said.

Fuller and Esquivel’s residence, Brickell Apartments, owned by Sand Hills to Brickell Apts LLC, wanted their rent immediately, or the women were out. Neither had the money to pay in full.

Esquivel, a 26-year-old single mother receiving no child support, left the courthouse feigning positivity but resigned to moving, though her three children, ages 4, 5 and 6, just started school.

“We’ll find something,” she said.

She said the costs of getting back to school caused her to be late on rent in the first place.

Now, her kids might face another first day at a new school.

Fuller left the courthouse on a quest to come up with \$793 for this month’s rent and late fees plus \$93 attorney fees so she could stay until her lease ends in October. She was angry. She said this was her first time ever being late on rent. Court records confirm she’s never been evicted. She hoped for some grace.

Even if she does find the money to stay, the eviction filing will always be on her public court record and could make future leases difficult to negotiate. Fuller said she does not receive any government subsidies for her rent.

Jones was frustrated because he wanted to offer Fuller or Esquivel a place to stay at his apartment until they could find a place, but knew having additional residents in his unit

could get him evicted.

For people with Section 8 housing vouchers, an eviction can mean losing that benefit altogether.

## Legislators Fail to Act

Oklahoma is one of only six states without laws providing tenant protections against retaliatory evictions. Such a bill, HB 3095, lost legislative interest this year and died in committee.

About 14 other bills relating to evictions were passed up this session. In 2023, a plain language bill passed the legislature, requiring eviction documents to be written in clear and understandable language to those receiving them.

Point-in-Time counts in Oklahoma City and Tulsa identified evictions and housing insecurity as forces causing about one in four people to become homeless and a recent Legal Aid Services Oklahoma study found that 27% of the clients they queried had been homeless due to an eviction.

“If you’re a single person faced with eviction, you might be able to find a friend to couch surf or double up,” Brown said. “That becomes a lot harder if you’re a mom with children. We may not see so many of these women on the streets because they do have children, so they’re more likely to find shelter situations.”

Greg Beben, an attorney at Legal Aid Services Oklahoma, said he sees the flow of women, particularly Black women, through eviction court daily.

“This is what created the need for the Fair Housing Act in the first place,” Beben said.

“When people are boxed in by redlining, or boxed out of other neighborhoods by zoning, there are a lot of negative consequences you can still feel decades later.”

He said he considers the inequities seen in eviction court a result of decades of civil injustices and centuries of discrimination.

“This is just an unfortunate final consequence, but these discrepancies exist,” he said.

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



# THE OKLAHOMA EAGLE CHURCH DIRECTORY



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## 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.  
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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

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## 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.

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## 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  
vernnamechurch@sbcglobal.net

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Wednesday Bible Study 6:00 pm

Rev. Dr. Robert R. Allen Turner

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Sunday TV Worship 11:00 a.m.

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Sunday Morning Worship 11:00 a.m.

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Sunday Morning Worship.....10:00 a.m.

Sunday Evening Worship.....6:00 p.m.

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Morning Worship 11:00 a.m.

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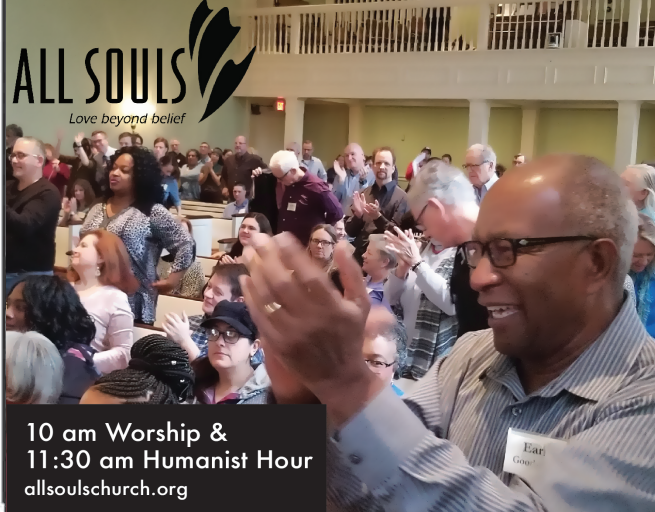
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Fax: 918-584-1958  
Prayer Line: 918-584-PRAY  
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Morning Worship 10:45  
Wednesday Bible Study Noon and 7:00



## In The Spirit Christian Church

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1020 South Garnett  
Tulsa, Okla., 74128  
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**GIVE OUR CHILDREN THE  
RIGHT TO READ | A16**

Zenobia Judd-Williams, executive director of Reading Partners Baltimore, says “A well-orchestrated campaign to ban specific books in schools has the potential to undermine the reading development of Black children.”

# Stigma, Stereotypes, and the HIV Crisis in the South



PHOTO BARRY LEWIS/INPICTURES VIA GETTY IMAGES

Pink Lincoln Limousine parked by the roadside on 5th March 2020 in Alford, Alabama, United States of America.

## HIV Crisis

**Despite medical breakthroughs — stigma, misinformation, and cultural barriers keep HIV rates high in Black and Brown communities.**

## The South, a critical battleground

Anissa Durham  
Word In Black

Shadawn McCants, of Houston, was diagnosed with HIV at 17-years-old. Now 46, she says back in 1995 when she was diagnosed, it was a death sentence, and there was a lot of fear surrounding her prognosis.

“I tell people I gave birth to triplets: shame, fear, and guilt,” she says. “I was very unsure of what this really meant for me. I had dreams at that time, but because my life changed, I had to take a different path.”

Despite the internal and external shame and stigma she faced, McCants still went on to finish high school, get her undergraduate degree, and later her master’s degree. Now, she’s a licensed therapist and an advocate for HIV awareness.

The days of HIV being a death sentence are long over. With advancements in medicine and prevention efforts, contracting the virus doesn’t mean your life will end. But stigma, misinformation, and shame continue to burden Black and Brown folks who are overwhelmingly vulnerable to the virus.

### What’s Going on in the South?

In 2022, Southern states accounted for nearly 50% of new HIV infections, according to the

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. African Americans made up 37% of the estimated 31,800 HIV infections in that year, higher than other racial and ethnic groups.

But what is it about the South that puts Black people at higher risk of contracting the preventable disease?

“The South is really a critical battleground in the fight against HIV, with some unique challenges,” Randevyn Pierre says. The Atlanta resident serves as the director of the external affairs community liaison team at ViiV Healthcare and is on the board of directors of the Southern AIDS Coalition.

Many of the states with the highest rates of poverty in the U.S. are in the South, with more than 20% of poverty occurring in rural areas. Pierre says transportation is spread out in these rural Southern areas, which adds to the disparities and difficulties folks have in accessing HIV care.

One of the most exacerbating factors to the rates of HIV infection is: stigma. HIV stigma and discrimination continue to affect the mental state of those living with the disease, according to the CDC. And it can lead people to delay getting tested and treated for the virus.

“The stigma tends to be different in the South,” Pierre says. “We’re living in the Bible Belt, where people tend to think more

Cont. A16, HIV Crisis

## Fighting Cancer

## Meet the Black Teenager Fighting Cancer — *With Soap He Invented*

*Fascinated with chemistry since childhood, Heman Bekele’s invention won him a \$25,000 youth science prize and TIME Magazine’s 2024 Kid of the Year.*

Jennifer Porter Gore  
Word In Black

Before he was old enough to start kindergarten, Heman Bekele began using dishwashing liquid and other household chemicals to see what concoctions he could whip up.

At age 7, Heman’s parents gave him a chemistry set for his birthday — and things got a bit more serious. He’d already started learning about chemical reactions online, so he got inventive and mixed the kit’s sodium hydroxide with aluminum to produce heat.

“I thought that this could be a solution to energy, to making an unlimited supply,” he told TIME magazine.

His curiosity and desire to make the world a better place through chemistry resulted in a first-place finish in the 3M Company’s 2023 Young Scientist Challenge — and made him the winner of TIME magazine’s 2024 Kid of the Year. The rising 10th grader created a compound-based soap to treat skin cancer.

The magazine said Heman’s “ambition” and “selflessness” earned him the recognition.

“I’m really passionate about skin-cancer research,” Heman told TIME. “It’s absolutely incredible to think that one day my bar of soap will be able to make a direct impact on somebody else’s life.”

Born in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Heman and his family emigrated to the U.S. when he was 4 years old. Even at that young age, the budding scientist remembers seeing laborers working in the hot African sun without skin protection.

In the U.S., Heman began hearing about the dangers of the sun’s ultraviolet rays and the damage it can cause — including skin cancer. It is the most common cancer in the United States, but the disease is treatable, especially if it’s caught early.

A few years ago, Heman read about imiquimod — a multi-use drug approved to treat one type of skin cancer — and wondered if it could be an effective, simple treatment for early-stage patients. His logic was simple: “Almost everyone uses soap and water.”

Cont. A16, Fighting Cancer



Photo of Shadawn McCants.

PHOTO COURTESY OF VIV HEALTHCARE





HIV Crisis

# GRASSROOTS Solutions Required

From A15

traditionally about family, identity, partnership, and sexual orientation.”

To alleviate those challenges, he suggests creating policies that increase health care access for communities that are most at risk and pushing to remove barriers to prescription medications that treat the disease. But Pierre says there needs to be more attention on Black women who are heavily impacted by HIV and “have carried our community for so long.”

While data shows that men who have sex with men account for the highest percentage of new HIV infections, infection rates also disproportionately affect Black women. In 2022, Black American women accounted for 50% of new HIV diagnoses, a little more than two times the rate for white women and two and a half times the rate for Hispanic women.

### Taking Care of HIV and Mental Health

As a teen, McCants admits she coped the best way she knew how, by putting her head down and masking the pain with substances and partying. And prior to her diagnosis, she had already experienced abuse, neglect, and sexual assault.

“I was already a young adult that was needing mental health treatment and support, but I didn’t receive it,” she says. “Even at the time of my diagnosis, I was seen as a strong Black woman.”

The Strong Black Woman stereotype is systemically endorsed as Black women who can overcome all obstacles, remain strong through any trial, and sacrifice themselves for others. For McCants, she was left with little to no mental health care services, in large part because she was expected to be a strong resilient Black woman — even as a teen.

It’s not just stereotypical tropes that reinforce stigma and barriers to HIV care.

“The Bible Belt is a big barrier when we talk about HIV. Because we’re in the Deep South, the conversation is abstinence. What they tell you is, don’t bring a baby home. But don’t bring a baby home means that you’re still having sex,” McCants says. “It’s unfortunate because there are women who are sitting in those pews, living with a diagnosis and don’t know where to go. You tell me to pray — however, you’re telling me (Jesus’) looking at me with a mark.”

In recent years, churches across the South have increased initiatives to reduce HIV stigma among Black men and congregation wide testing. Since 2017, the National Faith HIV/AIDS



**The Bible Belt is a big barrier when we talk about HIV. Because we’re in the Deep South, the conversation is abstinence.**

Awareness Day is celebrated every August 29. And individual churches connect folks with HIV health care and counseling services.

### Saving Lives With Grassroots Solutions

“Initially, all I wanted to do was pass out sandwiches,” says DeWayne Crowder, executive director of A Vision 4 Hope, a service-based organization in Atlanta that offers health care services to underserved communities. Part of its work includes offering HIV testing to those who are positive or may be impacted by the virus, initiation of health care services, and connecting folks to housing. With a background in social work and health care, Crowder quickly realized there was a lot of need in the community.

“I wanted to create something that was instant gratification for the community I serve. Sometimes, within the LGBTQ community, a referral doesn’t necessarily lead to (services).

**National Faith HIV/AIDS Awareness Day** (NFHAAD). NFHAAD is a day to engage faith communities to work together to promote HIV/AIDS education, prevention, treatment, care, and support, and to reduce stigma and discrimination towards this vulnerable population.

Cont. A17, HIV Crisis



PHOTOS: ADOBE IMAGES

Fighting Cancer

# Tomorrow’s journey, building a nonprofit organization to support communities in need

From A15

So, he got to work, developing an imiquimod soap, winning the 3M Young Scientist Challenge (and a \$25,000 prize) in the process.

This summer Heman worked part-time in a lab at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in Baltimore to refine the product. Over the next five years, he hopes to create a nonprofit organization that can distribute the soap to communities in need.

Deboarh Isabelle, a 3M engineer and Heman’s mentor during the Young Scientist Challenge competition, said the TIME Kid of the Year honor was well deserved.

“Heman is an incredibly charismatic, curious, intelligent, articulate young man,” Isabelle said. “But more than that, he’s compassionate and has a heart for people. He’s created an invention that has the potential to make the world better for so many people.”

PHOTO: TIME MAGAZINE  
**A lifelong science aficionado** at just 14, Heman Bukele won TIME Magazine’s Kid of the Year for developing a promising treatment for skin cancer.



Reading

# Give Our Children the Right to Read

*Zenobia Judd-Williams, executive director of Reading Partners Baltimore, says “A well-orchestrated campaign to ban specific books in schools has the potential to undermine the reading development of Black children.”*

**Zenobia Judd-Williams**  
Word In Black

Frederick Douglass famously said, “Once you learn to read, you will be forever free.”

Unfortunately, some Americans don’t want everyone to read. While the tactics may have changed since the 19th Century, there are still well-organized efforts to take away the fundamental right of literacy from Black children.

A well-orchestrated campaign to ban specific books in schools has the potential to undermine the reading development of Black children. If this effort is successful, it will deprive our students of valuable knowledge and undermine their interest in learning to read. Far too often, those proposing book bans target books by Black authors and about the Black experience.

As the leader of the Baltimore region of a national literacy organization, our model encourages tutors to pick books relevant to

Cont. A17, Reading



HIV Crisis

## More than 40% of Americans *who are living with HIV are enrolled in Medicaid.*

From A16

I wanted to make something impactful for the community to eradicate HIV," he says.

While these grassroots efforts are needed and important, Crowder recognizes the gaps in HIV prevention and barriers to access in other Southern states. For example, he says more effort needs to be made to create status neutral programs for transgender individuals — where treatment goes hand in hand with prevention.

### Another challenge? Medicaid.

More than 40% of Americans who are living with HIV are enrolled in Medicaid. The expansion of this health insurance can significantly improve health outcomes, according to a Kaiser Family Foundation report. And prevention efforts continue to show improvements in HIV infection rates, with a year over year decline from 2018 to 2022, according to the CDC.

The type of care someone gets in a health care setting can also impact their health outcomes, studies continue to show. Everyone deserves to have access to culturally competent care, Crowder says — but especially Black and Brown communities.

"It's something that's needed to eradicate HIV, to put an end to it, to make sure everyone is aware of their sexual health status," he says. "It's important we create these resources of linkage for those who lack access."

### On a Mission to Shift the Narrative

“

**Babygirl, Babyboy, that's not who you are. You're not HIV.**

SHADAWN MCCANTS,  
mental health therapist

In the last 28 years that McCants has lived with HIV, she's heard every adjective you can imagine. Those living with the virus are often called nasty, disgusting, dirty, dark, and ugly, she says. And this type of harmful language can cause individuals to internalize negativity and feel as though they are HIV instead of living with HIV.

Part of McCants advocacy work involves shifting the language and narrative of how people talk about HIV. And as a mental health therapist, she knows folks who internalize this language are more likely to experience loneliness, depression, and anxiety.

"Babygirl, Babyboy, that's not who you are. You're not HIV," she says. "HIV is just a part of your story."

From a clinical perspective, McCants says it's important that we as a community work towards healing. Part of that healing process

is recognizing that the letter H in HIV stands for human. And she encourages folks to educate themselves about the virus, because misinformation and a lack of information fuels ignorance in these spaces.

The onus isn't just on those who are vulnerable to HIV. Friends and family can do a lot, McCants says it can be the difference between life and death.

"People are dying because of the stigma, because of the shame," she says. "They're dying because they didn't feel like they have anyone to love or support them. What family can do, is love them beyond the diagnosis."

And McCants tells anyone who is living with HIV to remember these words: "You are inherently valuable. You are love. You are light. You are one amazing, pretty damn dope individual. I see you as worthy. I see you as loveable. I see you as enough. You are not this virus."

ANISSA DURHAM is the health data journalist for Word In Black. She reports on healthcare inequities and mental health in the Black community.



Reading

## Outlawing Censorship, A Step in the Right Direction

*PEN/Faulkner is dedicated to the idea that fiction creates empathy within and among communities and advances civil discourse. American culture thrives when stories from diverse perspectives enrich our lives. To further these ideals, we cultivate a vibrant landscape for writers and readers of fiction both locally and nationally.*

From A16

children's lives. When students read about characters and experiences they identify with, they relate to the story and take away life lessons. They're also more engaged when books reflect their cultures and tell their ancestors' stories.

The PEN/Faulkner Foundation has documented that 30 percent of books that are censored include characters of color and themes of race and racism — a number that is disproportionate given the far-lower percentage of published children's books overall that include primary characters of color.

Other organizations, such as the American Library Associations and the Southern Poverty

Law Center, have identified books about Black history, such as picture books about the 1619 Project and The Tulsa Race Massacre, as common targets. The novels of Alice Walker and Toni Morrison are also often vilified as books to be banned.

When asked about how students respond to culturally relevant materials, one Reading Partners tutor said, "I especially enjoyed seeing my student so amazed to see his heritage represented in the books that I found for him.... He wanted to know all about the author as well as wanting to read it over and over again. Representation really matters."

The state legislature passed the Maryland Right to Read Act this spring. Outlawing censorship in public libraries is a step in

the right direction and a beacon of hope for Maryland's communities. But the next step is to ensure our students have the right to read great works by Black authors and about great Black artists, inventors, and leaders like Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman.

Our community has to stand guard. The book banners want to put up roadblocks to the reading development of our children and keep censoring the history and art of the Black experience in America.

We must be prepared to stop an organized effort to block books about Black experiences, which would rob our children of the opportunity to engage with books that would make them enthusiastic about reading and give them a rightful sense of belonging.



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PHOTO PROVIDED

Lori Campbell has been named vice president of Community Integration and Engagement at Family and Children's Services. FCS is a Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) offering services to adults, children, and families in the Tulsa Metro area.

## Campbell Joins Family and Children's Services

Dr. Jerry Goodwin  
The Oklahoma Eagle

To Serve As Vice President of Community Integration And Engagement

Family and Children's Services has announced the appointment of Lori A. Campbell as its new vice president of Community Integration and Engagement. Campbell is a native of New Orleans, La.

In her new role, Campbell will lead a division within FCS's marketing communications department, driving strategies to advocate for FCS programs, amplify its visibility, and cultivate impactful relationships with community leaders, stakeholders, organizations, and partners.

An accomplished, retired United States Navy officer and veteran, Campbell has multidisciplinary expertise with over 25 years of active-duty military service in healthcare, organizational leadership, community integration, engagement, and outreach. She has extensive training, implementation experience, and a record of leading change with top initiatives in DEI.

"Lori's character and integrity will be essential in building new community relationships and maintaining existing ones with stakeholders. She agrees with FCS's philosophy to operate

under an inclusive intellectual umbrella by defining the organization's value and connecting communities with the education and resources needed to bridge gaps," said Adam Andreassen, president/CEO of FCS.

She is an alumnus of the Yale University School of Management Global Executive Leadership Program (YGELP). She earned a Public Leadership Certificate from Harvard Kennedy School of Government Executive Education and holds a master's degree of science in nursing as a Family Nurse Practitioner from Hampton University. She is also a Ph.D. candidate in organizational psychology.

Campbell has worked closely with African American, Asian American, Hispanic American, Native American, and Pacific Islander communities, leaving no one behind in the relationships that she has developed.

"My goal will be to elevate FCS's presence and deepen the community's understanding of our services. I will begin by identifying educational needs within our community and strategically

Cont. A1, Campbell

## Events

### August - October

#### Aug. 30 - Oct. 26

The Original Black Wall Street Merchant Marketplace is open in the Greenwood Business District, 122 N. Greenwood Ave., on Saturdays from 11 a.m. - 4 p.m. In addition to vendors, live music, line dancing classes, yoga classes, sound body and soul meditation and sound bath sessions, and free health care screenings will be offered. For more information, visit [www.theoriginalbwsmarketplace.com](http://www.theoriginalbwsmarketplace.com) or send an email to [hello@tulsacountyliving.com](mailto:hello@tulsacountyliving.com).

#### Aug. 30 - 31

Anadarko Community Library, 215 W. Broadway St., will be hosting "Voices and Votes: Democracy in America" exhibition. From the Smithsonian's Museum on Main Street, the exhibition explores the complex history of the nation, including The Revolution, Civil Rights, Suffrage, Elections, Protests, and the Rights and Responsibilities of Citizens. The project is touring the state. For more information, visit [www.okhumanities.org](http://www.okhumanities.org) or call (405) 247-7351.

#### Aug. 30

Chase Bank is sponsoring "Black Biz Bash" during Small Business Month at Fulton Street Books and Coffee, 21 N. Greenwood Ave., 6 p.m. - 8 p.m. The program will highlight local Black entrepreneurs and business owners featuring their business products and services. A panel discussion will include small business owners. Also, a business owner who makes the best business pitch will be awarded \$2,500. Space is limited. For more information, call (918) 293-4300.

#### Sep. 7 - Oct. 19

Cheyenne-Roger Mills County Chamber of Commerce and Tourism, 101 S. L. L. Males Ave., will be hosting "Voices and Votes: Democracy in America" exhibition. From the Smithsonian's Museum on Main Street, the exhibition explores the complex history of the nation, including The Revolution, Civil Rights, Suffrage, Elections, Protests, and the Rights and Responsibilities of Citizens. The project is touring the state. For more information, visit [www.okhumanities.org](http://www.okhumanities.org) or call (580) 497-3318.

## John Hope Franklin Symposium To Host Part 4: History of Hope - Tell the Story



PHOTO STEPHANIE MILLER

Dr. Tiya Miles, Michael Garvey Professor of History and Radcliffe Alumnae Professor at Harvard University, will be keynote speaker on the topic of "Afro-Indigenous Intersections, Past and Present: Through the Lens of Women" at the University of Tulsa Lorton Performance Center on Sept. 12.

Dr. Jerry Goodwin  
The Oklahoma Eagle

The John Hope Franklin Center for Reconciliation has announced its last lecture in a four-part series. The Part 4 - "Afro-Indigenous Intersections, Past and Present: Through the Lens of Women" program will feature Dr. Tiya Miles of Harvard University at the University of Tulsa Lorton Performance Center, 550 S. Gary, on Sept. 12.

Miles is the Michael Garvey Professor of

History and Radcliffe Alumnae Professor at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University.

She is the author of New York Times bestseller "All That She Carried: The Journey of Ashley's Sack, a Black Family Keepsake." The book is the recipient of 11 awards, including the National Book Award for Nonfiction.

The former professor at the University of Michigan, where she served as chair of the Department of Afroamerican and African

Cont. A1, John Hope Franklin



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## John Hope Franklin



PHOTO: JHFCENTER.ORG

The John Hope Franklin Reconciliation Park, 321 N. Detroit Ave., in the Greenwood District in Tulsa, was dedicated on Oct. 27, 2010.

## JHF Symposium Features New York Times bestselling author, historian and creative writer

From A2

Studies, is also a public and academic historian, a creative writer, and a museum and historic site consultant. A recipient of many awards, including the American Historical Association Equity Award in 2022, the Cincinnati, Ohio, native's research has primarily explored the intersections of African American, Native American, and women's histories in the context of place.

Miles offers courses on slavery and public history, women's history and literature, interrelated Black and Indigenous histories, and environmental humanities. She has become increasingly focused on ecological questions,

environmental storytelling, and ways of articulating and enlivening African American environmental consciousness.

The event at the University of Tulsa will highlight the launch of the university's new academic program, Historical Trauma and Transformation.

The event is co-sponsored by the University of Tulsa Institute for Trauma, Adversity, and Injustice, National Endowment for the Humanities, and the John Hope Center for Reconciliation.

The program is free and open to the public. For more information, visit <https://www.jhfnationalsymposium.org/>.

## Campbell

### Campbell To Increase F&CS Outreach Into The Community

From A2

leveraging the organization's experts to develop initiatives that effectively address those needs," said Campbell.

She served as the president of the New Orleans Police Department Police Community Advisory Board 4th District and chair of the NOPD Training Academy, Training Advisory Committee.

"We are excited about the wealth of experience and passion Lori brings to our team, and we look forward to the positive impact she will have on our community integration and engagement efforts. Together, we will continue to strengthen our mission and make a lasting difference in the

lives of those we serve," said Andreassen.

For more information, contact Campbell at [lori.campbell@fcsok.org](mailto:lori.campbell@fcsok.org).

#### Family and Children's Services

For over a century, Family & Children's Services (FCS) has been dedicated to delivering quality services to adults, children, and families in the Tulsa Metro area.

As a Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC), FCS offers a comprehensive range of whole-person care, addressing various factors influencing an individual's mental health, overall well-being, and recovery. This includes a distinctive combination of mental health care, substance use disorder treatment, crisis

prevention and intervention, physical health coordination, and social services.

FCS restores children's well-being, heals victims of abuse and trauma, strengthens individuals and families, provides recovery support for adults suffering from mental illness and addictions, and diverts individuals from the criminal legal system.

Services in over 72 programs are accessible at 85 locations throughout Tulsa via a network of 11 FCS Tulsa office locations, eight school districts and 25 co-located sites throughout the greater Tulsa metropolitan area.

For more information, call (918) 587-9471 or visit <https://www.fcsok.org/>.

## Events

### September - October

#### Sep. 7

A Taste of Nigeria Festival will be held at the Historic Big10 Ballroom, 1624 E. Apache St., 12 p.m. – 6 p.m. Tickets can be purchased at <https://atontulsa2024.eventbrite.com/>.

#### Sep. 7

Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity and the Kappa Tau Sigma alumni chapter are hosting the Annual Scholarship Gala at the Okapi Event Center, 2550 W. Edison St., 7 p.m. – 12 a.m. For ticket information, visit [Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity Inc. and Kappa Tau Sigma Scholarship Gala](https://www.pbbsigmafraternity.com/).

#### Sep. 12

John Hope Franklin Center for Reconciliation 15th Annual National Symposium to host Part 4 – Afro-Indigenous Intersections, Past and Present: Through the Lens of Women at the University of Tulsa – Lorton Performance Center, 550 S. Gary Pl., Reception, 5:15 p.m.; Program, 6 p.m. – 8 p.m. Guest speaker will be Dr. Tiya Miles, Michael Garvey Professor of History and Radcliffe Alumnae Professor at Harvard University. To register, visit <https://www.jhfnationalsymposium.org/>. The event is free and open to the public.

#### Sep. 15 - 22

Párlá Citywide Creative Festival sponsored by the J'Parlé Artist Group, Inc.

#### Sep. 21

Tulsa Catholic Women's Conference will feature speakers, fellowship, and prayer. The conference will be held at the Cox Convention Center. The Diocese of Tulsa and Eastern Oklahoma are sponsors of the program. For more information, visit [www.tulsacatholicwomen.com](http://www.tulsacatholicwomen.com).

#### Sep. 21

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 focus of the program features brass instruments. For more information, visit <https://www.tulsasymphony.org/flint/>.

#### Sep. 25 - 27

"Life Stages – Mental Health Across a Lifetime" will be the theme for the Zarrow Mental Health Symposium, which will be celebrating its 30th anniversary. For more information, visit <https://www.zarrow Symposium.org/>.

#### Sep. 28

Alzheimer's Diversity Outreach Services welcomes Vence L. Bonham Jr., acting deputy director of the National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI) and is director of the Health Disparities Unit in NHGRI's Social and Behavioral Research Branch at Langston University-Tulsa, 914 N. Greenwood Ave. For more information, visit [www.alzoutreach.org](http://www.alzoutreach.org).



Chase Bank employees distributed 400 backpacks to students across the Tulsa area. Participating in the back-to-school program are (l-r) Anna Shephard, Partner Business Travel advisor; Terra Howard, Partner Business Travel advisor; Grace McNac, Travel Escalation Desk advisor; Tacovia Johnson, Cruise and Tour Travel advisor; Ashley Townsend, vice president, community manager; and Wantara Tomlin, Chase Travel advisor.

PHOTO PROVIDED

## Chase Bank Hosts Back-To-School Backpack and School Supplies Giveaway

### Dr. Jerry Goodwin

The Oklahoma Eagle

Chase Bank sponsored back-to-school backpack giveaways at various locations in Tulsa. Employees gave away 400 backpacks and school supplies to students prior to the beginning of the new school year.

The bank branch at 6140 S. Lewis Ave. joined other branches in the city and across the country to support 60,000 students and families with school supplies and financial health workshops.

"Chase wants to make sure Tulsa kids have what they need to return to the

classroom," said Ashley Townsend, vice president, community manager at Chase in Tulsa.

In addition to the backpack giveaway, the bank hosted a financial health workshop for those attending the event.

"At Chase, we understand back-to-school is an important financial moment for students and families. This is a great opportunity to talk about money habits for all, including credit and good personal and business financial health habits," said Townsend.

For more information, visit [chase.com/student](http://chase.com/student).



# Pärlá Festival 2024, Showcases Black Artists

## PÄRLÄ

The 1921 Black Wall Street Race Massacre Centennial Commemoration created an unprecedented opportunity for artists of color in Tulsa. Philanthropists donated millions of dollars for collaborations and individual projects. A veritable art boom ensued.

As Pärlá Citywide Creative Festival Director, Jerica Wortham is trying to keep the momentum of that era going. Her efforts are centered around the Pärlá festival, an eight-day event where BIPOC Tulsa artists showcase their creations — everything from culinary arts to dance and theater. The festival opens on Sept. 15. (See the schedule of events below.)

During the centennial commemoration, Wortham was the project director of the Greenwood Art Project (GAP), funded by the Bloomberg Foundation and George Kaiser Family Foundation (GKFF). Her intention at the time was to continue the momentum and create opportunities for Black artists through a new project that would pick up where GAP left off, led by a grassroots effort.

Wortham, who is grateful and praised past support and current financial giving, nonetheless faces a challenge as she gears up for the Pärlá Festival with less attention than in the past. While the artists who emerged during the centennial period continue to produce brilliant work, the resources for art projects have become far scarcer.

In an interview with The Oklahoma Eagle, Wortham described the contrast between the flood of funding and activity to support artists back then and the quiet that has followed.

“During our project, it was like, ‘yes, you all are great. We’re so happy to have you,’” she said. “But then, once that centennial moment passed, it was just crickets. But these people (artists) are just as dope as they were then.”

Now in its third year, the Pärlá Festival is funded by the artists’ dollars and money raised through the Artist Creative Fund. As Wortham noted, artists and entrepreneurs of color organically create art, groups, and events. However, their efforts are no longer amplified by the publicity that happened around the centennial, which created buzz nationwide. Wortham is on a mission to change that. A visionary and founder, she received the grant award and partnered with JParle Artists Group (JAG). She is the lead artist for the festival.

The Pärlá Festival programs will center around Tulsa’s 918 celebrations. They feature a diverse spectrum of creative art forms: culinary arts, fashion, visual arts, dance, theater, poetry, film, and wellness. Wortham believes it is not just about providing opportunities to fill the gap in the representation of the BIPOC artist community. She sees it as about creating more spaces and value through collaborations to gain attention and enhance opportunities for individual and collective successes.

As such, Wortham named the festival to reflect the meaning of Pärlá (verb): to transform into something more significant or valuable.

“We just need to continue to provide them an opportunity,” she said, referring to the artists who will participate in the festival. “If not, we’re going to lose them, point blank, period. They’re going to go where the opportunities are because they are good enough to do that,” Wortham said. “So, let’s make sure that we are being inclusive, that we’re being intentional in providing these spaces.”

Much of the festival is free. Anyone interested can register on the website. Ticket sales for paid events and a weekly VIP pass for premium seating may be purchased online, where all the details and schedules will be updated online at jagtulsa.org/parla-creative-festival.

### Schedule

Pre-festival activities will kick off on Sept. 6, with an art crawl featuring JAG artists at AHHA, 101 E. Archer St.

The official festival launch will be on Sept. 15 with a community cookout at B.S. Roberts Park, 901 N. Greenwood Ave. It will include free food for a limited number of people. Afterwards, individuals will be able to purchase meals from the food trucks. It will be a family day featuring community games and intramural sports. This event will set the stage for all the following events of the week.

Sept. 16, 6:30 pm to 9:30: Wellness Day at AHHA to nurture both body and mind with various activities designed to promote wellness within our community. Grow Daily community walks, yoga, and sound bowl meditations.

Sept. 17, 6:30 pm: Night of Dance for experiencing the vibrant cultures of Tulsa through movement held at the Tulsa Performing Arts Center. This is a ticketed event.

Sept. 18, 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm: BIPOC Forum entitled “State of BIPOC Tulsa.” This thought leadership event will explore the state of BIPOC creativity and the experiences of being a BIPOC citizen in Tulsa with meaningful discussions, involving local leaders and creatives at the Tulsa Central Library, Pochontas Room.

Sept. 19, 3 pm to 5 pm: Film Workshop at Circle Cinema led by award-winning filmmaker Deborah Riley Draper. The evening evolves into a red-carpet event and a screening of films created by BIPOC creatives from Tulsa and beyond.

Sept. 19, 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm: Film Festival at Circle Cinema

Sept. 20, 6:30 pm to 9:30 pm: Theater night at Maya Angelou Theater, Central High School, featuring the debut of Black Broadway Tulsa’s production of “A Raisin in the Sun.”

Sept. 21, 6:30 pm to 8 pm: Fashion Show on Greenwood Avenue showcases Tulsa’s BIPOC designers pushing the boundaries of fashion, from streetwear to bridal couture and the full spectrum of style and creativity. VIP tickets are available for this event.

Sept. 22, 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm: Soiree on Greenwood is a ticketed event featuring a private, invite-only dinner celebrating BIPOC creatives in an intimate gathering of artists, thought leaders, and community members for an evening of reflection, connection, and celebration.

J.A.G.

ARTISTS CREATIVE FUND

JERICA WORTHAM

6:30 PM @ B.S. ROBERTS PARK  
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 15  
GREENWOOD AVE, TULSA, OK 74106  
STAY UP TO DATE AT JAGTULSA.ORG

J.A.G. ARTISTS CREATIVE FUND

## NIGHT OF DANCE

THIS PROJECT WAS SUPPORTED BY THE ARTISTS CREATIVE FUND. LEAD ARTIST: JERICA WORTHAM

6:30 PM @ TULSA PAC  
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17  
110 E 2ND ST S, TULSA, OK 74103  
STAY UP TO DATE AT JAGTULSA.ORG

J.A.G. ARTISTS CREATIVE FUND Final Draft Coverfly

## FESTIVAL

THIS PROJECT WAS SUPPORTED BY THE ARTISTS CREATIVE FUND. LEAD ARTIST: JERICA WORTHAM

6:30 PM @ CIRCLE CINEMA  
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 19  
10 S LEWIS AVE, TULSA, OK 74104  
STAY UP TO DATE AT JAGTULSA.ORG

J.A.G. ARTISTS CREATIVE FUND

## FASHION SHOW

THIS PROJECT WAS SUPPORTED BY THE ARTISTS CREATIVE FUND. LEAD ARTIST: JERICA WORTHAM

6:30 PM ON GREENWOOD  
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 21  
GREENWOOD TULSA, OK 74106  
STAY UP TO DATE AT JAGTULSA.ORG

J.A.G.

ARTISTS CREATIVE FUND

## SOIRÉE EN GREENWOOD CHAMPIONING CULINARY ARTS

THIS IS AN INVITE ONLY EVENT FOR TULSA BIPOC CREATIVES.  
STAY ON THE LOOKOUT FOR CHANCES TO RECEIVE AN INVITE!