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SCHOOL'S OUT

Della Wolfe retires after 16 years in the UKB's Education Department. EDUCATION, 6

GIDUWA CHEROKEE NEWS

YSG GWY A&P Official News Publication of the United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians in Oklahoma June 2022

UKB to submit trust land application

The request for the 2.63-acre Tahlequah tract will be submitted this summer, officials say.

BY BRITTNEY BENNETT
Editor

DENVER – The United Keetoowah Band will be allowed to submit a new land in trust application for its 2.63-acre parcel in Tahlequah for tribal gaming purposes after the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals on May 6 vacated a lower court's ruling denying the action as the original lawsuit became "moot."

The Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma and Cherokee Nation Entertainment, LLC originally filed a lawsuit against the U.S. Department of the Interior in 2012 after its Assistant Secretary agreed to take a 2.03-acre parcel of land in Tahlequah into trust for the UKB for tribal gaming purposes.

The Assistant Secretary's decision at that time was based upon the determination that the "former reservation" of the

Cherokee Nation was also the "former reservation" of the UKB and thus, met the provisions of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act.

CNO sued following the decision and the case was moved into the U.S. Northern District of Oklahoma Court in Tulsa, where Judge Gregory Frizzell ruled on March 24, 2020, that the DOI could not take the parcel into trust.

Frizzell's opinion stated he believed the Assistant Secretary "properly exercised his authority to define the term 'former reservation' to implement IGRA, but "contorted the applicable law when he

determined that the UKB tribe once had a reservation."

The DOI disagreed and appealed the ruling to the 10th Circuit.

It was during this process that changes in Oklahoma law occurred due to 2020's McGirt v. Oklahoma ruling, which stated that much of eastern Oklahoma was still reservation lands that had never been dissolved by Congress.

According to the 10th Circuit's May 6 ruling, Assistant Secretary Bryan Newland's recent judicial opinion is that the

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Election Board readies for 2nd cycle together

The UKB Tribal Council elections will take place Nov. 7.

BY BRITTNEY BENNETT
Editor

TAHLEQUAH – The 2022 UKB Election Board is putting plans in place for its second election cycle as a group while working to welcome Keetoowahs to the polls this November.

"Myself and the board, we are obligated to listen to our voters because it's their election," said Chairwoman Brenda Smith. "This cycle we've updated the Election Ordinance and we're looking for better voting sites, sites that are easier for people in that district. We will be changing a lot of these sites since the districts now have their own community buildings."

The 2022 UKB Tribal Council election will see all nine district representative seats up for election. The four officer positions will not be up for re-election until 2024.

Smith was previously sworn in on June 9, 2020, and helped conduct that year's election alongside fellow Vice-Chairwoman Marcella Foreman, Secretary Tanisa Foreman and Board Members Albert Shade and Wyanetta Springwater.

The UKB Election Board is an independent and autonomous agency of the United Keetoowah Band. It is comprised of five Keetoowah tribal members that are selected to uphold the integrity of the tribe and assure that candidates adhere to the 2022 UKB Election Ordinance.

The UKB Tribal Council, by resolution, approves three individuals to serve on the Election Board. The three approved members must then submit for Council approval the names of at least two additional individuals to serve alongside them.

The UKB Election Board is funded by the UKB Tribal Council each election year in an amount sufficient to fulfill its duties. It must conduct all elections in compliance with the 2022 Election Ordinance and in accordance with the constitution and by-laws of the UKB.

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Brenda Smith



Marcella Foreman



Tanisa Foreman



Albert Shade



Wyanetta Springwater



COMING TOGETHER

Leaders from the three federally recognized Cherokee tribes are shown with the royalty from the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians at the annual Kituwah Celebration at Kituwah in North Carolina on May 21. From left are Cherokee Nation Principal Chief Chuck Hoskin Jr., Miss Cherokee Tyra Maney, Teen Miss Cherokee Tsini McCoy, EBCI Vice Chief Alan B. Ensley, former EBCI Principal Chief Joyce Dugan, Little Miss Cherokee Trinnity Jack-son, Junior Miss Cherokee Makaula Lambert, United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians Principal Chief Joe Bunch and EBCI Principal Chief Richard G. Sneed. PHOTOS BY SCOTT MCKIE B.P./CHEROKEE ONE FEATHER

The three Cherokee tribes gather to celebrate Kituwah.

BY SCOTT MCKIE B.P.
Cherokee One Feather

KITUWAH - The sounds of people laughing, games being played, songs being sung, and the Cherokee language being spoken filled the valley at Kituwah on Saturday, May 21 as the three federally recognized Cherokee Tribes – the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI), the Cherokee Nation, and the United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians (UKB) – came together to celebrate the Mother Town being back under Cherokee control.

Kituwah, the Mother Town of the Cherokee, lo-

cated just outside of Cherokee near Bryson City, was placed into trust for the EBCI by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), U.S. Dept. of the Interior last fall. The property was purchased by the EBCI in 1996, and according to the Public Notice to Acquire Land into Trust, the site totals 307.03 acres.

Former EBCI Principal Chief Joyce Dugan was instrumental in getting Kituwah back for the Cherokee people. In 1996, she took a resolution to Tribal Council asking that they purchase the property, then known to most as Ferguson Fields, for \$2.1 million.

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United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians Principal Chief Joe Bunch makes remarks at the Kituwah Mound dedication ceremony on May 21 near Bryson City, North Carolina.



Shown is the ancient Kituwah Mound, the Cherokee Mother town of all three federally recognized Cherokee tribes. The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians bought the land in 1996 and in 2020 it was placed into trust for the EBCI.

Election Ordinance amended ahead of Nov. 7 elections

BY BRITTNEY BENNETT
Editor

TAHLEQUAH – For the first time in over a decade, the UKB Election Ordinance has been updated to reflect several changes for both voters and candidates alike ahead of this November's UKB Tribal Council General Election.

The changes were presented by the UKB Election Board during the UKB Tribal Council's regular monthly meeting on April 2, where Councilors voted unanimously to approve the suggested changes

to its 2012 Election Ordinance.

The ordinance will now be known as the United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians in Oklahoma Election Ordinance of 2022.

UKB Election Board Chairwoman Brenda Smith said the changes were "long overdue."

"The ordinance needed to be updated and it was long overdue. It's been a decade," she said. "The last election was the first time for all of us on this board and since the ordinance wasn't updated, we ran into a lot of challenges. It was con-

fusing. So these changes are not something we just did this year. It's something we talked about, we thought about, since the last election."

Voters have new requirements, including being required to reside within the territory known as the Old Cherokee Nation for their district for a period of six months prior to the election. This changes the previous language, which only required members to have lived in their district three months prior to the election.

In the event an eligible voter moves to

an address in a different district during the six months prior to the election, that voter shall not be entitled to vote in the new district until the next election.

Voters who need to provide corrections to their personal information such as their name, address or district affiliation must now do so to the tribal secretary by June 15 of the election year. The previous language required the changes to be made by July 15.

The secretary is also required to pro-

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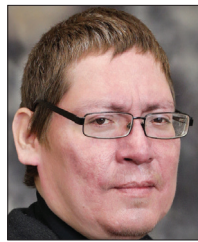
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Goingsnake Dist.
Willie Christie
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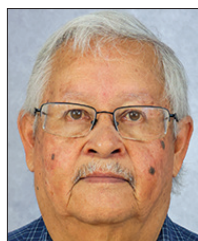
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Peggy Girty
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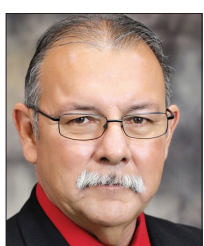


Sequoyah Dist.
Junior Catron
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Tahlequah Dist.
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Exercising the UKB's sovereignty



Chief's Corner

JOE BUNCH
Principal Chief
jbunch@ukb-nsn.gov

I congratulate all the area graduates for their accomplishments and moving forward.

This past month we celebrated 14 years of serving hot meals to our elders. Our efforts all started when UKB received a grant from Title VI Part A, Nutrition, by the Older Americans Act.

The purpose of the program is to serve one hot meal per day to UKB elders 55 and older, provide nutritional information, screen blood pressure and blood sugar and provide useful information for aging elders. The program also has a caregiver program (as funds are available) for those who need assistance caring for a family member or themselves.

Assistant Chief Archie Mouse initiated this program serving meals from the So-

cial Program Building and then in 2008, we dedicated the Jim Proctor Elder and Nutrition Center.

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic these past two years, we are proud to have continued to provide over 100 hot meals a day to elders via curb side service.

Thank you, Rebecca, Archie, Sue, Ronald and Roman for your service.

The Council also traveled to Cherokee, North Carolina, to visit with the Eastern Band and attend the dedication of the Keetoowah Mounds.

On my way, I was reminded of the Northern District Court Judge ruling in our 2.03-acre casino property case, where he ruled that the United Keetoowah Band had no former reservation.

When I read the 1828 Western Cherokee, or Old Settlers, treaty, it states the Old Settlers, known as the Western Cherokees and today the Keetoowahs, exchanged land in Arkansas for 7 million acres of land in present day Oklahoma.

The treaty guaranteed that we would be free of intruders and the land would be ours forever.

Then, the 1835 treaty Ridge Party came, followed by those forced on the

Trail of Tears in 1838-39.

The Federal Judge erred in making his ruling, stating we had no "former reservation." On May 6, 2022, his decision was rightfully dismissed.

We are practicing our sovereignty by applying for land in trust for the United Keetoowah Band for the purposes of tribal gaming.

I guess the treaty of 1846 doesn't mean anything. This land is for all Cherokees. Under the Treaty of 1866 article, the President of the United States can place other tribes in the Historic Cherokee Nation.

It is unfortunate just to say the land is in dispute due to a jurisdiction issue. It's not. There is no treaty that says "exclusive jurisdiction."

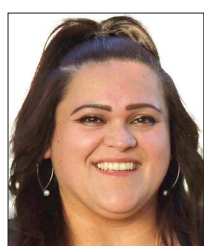
One can misstate and mislead tribal history when no one else speaks up for sovereignty. The Courts are now correcting them.

Justice is slow, but our time is coming. We are very grateful for these decisions.

We have an open-door policy. If you have any questions, call me or your tribal representative or any officers.

Wado, Nigada!
Until we see each other again.

Bennett bids farewell as GCN editor



Editor's Address

BRITNEY BENNETT
Editor
bbennett@ukb-nsn.gov

Siyo to all our readers!

By the time you have this newspaper in your hands, I will sadly no longer be the editor of the Giduwa Cherokee News.

You're probably asking yourself, "didn't she just come back?"

The answer is yes, and believe me, the decision to leave was not easy.

I gave it my best effort to make things work under the circumstances. It was just logistics. I currently live in Tulsa and my hour-long commute to and from the tribe is no longer as feasible as it once was only six months ago.

It's simply a case of the right job, wrong time.

For those who don't know, this is actually my second stint as the tribe's media specialist. I originally ran the department

from July 2018 to October 2020 and began my second round working with the tribe in December 2021.

For the majority of my time with the tribe, I have kept the department, and the tribe's communication outlets, going as a one-woman show.

The decision to leave now is especially bittersweet, as I'm just starting to see my vision of growth for the department take place.

But I am encouraged to know that growth is finally happening.

It's such an exciting time in the UKB Media Department. This year we were allotted a generous budget from the UKB Tribal Council, making it possible to do a variety of things that I had only dreamed of doing my first time in this position.

Since bringing the newspaper back to life, we now have three new staff members to help keep it going.

We've re-established our day-to-day communications with tribal members and helped secure better livestreaming equipment for our monthly Council meetings.

We're starting to look at advertising and how we can bring in our own revenue.

The department's equipment has been

updated to capture better photos and video. New newspaper racks have been purchased to help elevate the awareness of our tribal newspaper and the tribe as a whole.

While this is not the ending I wanted, I do think I have put in the work and laid a great foundation for the next media specialist. I am encouraged by where the department is going and hope it will continue to grow as it transitions under new leadership.

To the readers, I just want to relay how thankful I am that I was allowed to do this not only once, but twice. I've enjoyed serving the Keetoowah people, my people.

I've enjoyed hearing and sharing your stories, listening to our elders speak the language while out on assignment and capturing your photos for our tribal history.

Please continue to share yourselves, your talents and your accomplishments with the newspaper.

After all, I'll be depending on the next issue of the Giduwa Cherokee News to keep me informed and connected.

Donadagohvi.

LAND: The UKB seeks trust status for 2.63 acres.

FROM PAGE 1

case "changed the legal landscape of Oklahoma lands" and "undermine[d] the Department of the Interior's . . . decision regarding 'former reservation' status for these lands."

This change in the law prompted the DOI to withdraw its appeal, as the "former reservation" language no longer applies to the UKB's land in trust application.

While the DOI's withdrawal made the appeal "moot", CNO nevertheless asked the 10th Circuit to uphold the U.S. Northern District of Oklahoma Court's 2012 decision to deny land in trust for the UKB.

The 10th Circuit did not rule in CNO's favor, instead writing its ruling also "vacates the district court's judgment" and thus, opens the door for UKB to submit a new land in trust application as advised by the DOI.

The new application will ask the DOI to take 2.63-acres into trust for the UKB for the purposes of tribal gaming in Tahlequah, updating the size of the location from 2.03-acres after building usage changes on the property.

That application will be forthcoming sometime this summer, according to UKB Attorney General Clint Cowan.

"We have the ability to make a new land



The Keetoowah Cherokee Casino began operations on Feb. 14, 1986, on a 2.03-acre parcel in Tahlequah. The casino closed in August 2013 after the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma sued over the property. The UKB will submit a new land in trust application for the parcel with the hopes of making it eligible for tribal gaming once again. BRITNEY BENNETT/GIDUWA CHEROKEE NEWS

in trust application for our casino parcel based on the current reservation test, not the former reservation test, since there is no 'former' reservation," said Cowan. "We hope to have the application submitted in the next couple of months. We also hope that the DOI will review it on an expedited basis, because it has been at least 15 years since we first submitted this parcel on a trust application. The only outstanding issue we see now is whether we can game on it, which we feel confident about since we've already met requirements for

trust land before when we were granted our 76 acres by the 10th Circuit in 2019."

UKB Chief Joe Bunch said the tribe is reviewing all options tied to the decision and looks forward to the future.

"It is important to note that this decision hampers the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma's attempt in denying the United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians sovereignty and the ability to govern ourselves. We thank the Lord for the many blessings he has given us and look forward to our future," he said.

GIDUWA CHEROKEE NEWS

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Council approves land trust app, Health Board

Nominations to the Health Board will be reviewed by the UKB Corporate Board and final approval will be given by the Tribal Council.

BY BRITNEY BENNETT
Editor

TAHLEQUAH – The United Keetoowah Band Tribal Council approved the submission of a new land in trust application for its 2.63-acre parcel, approved the creation of a Health Board and lifted its mandatory mask requirement in all buildings during its regular monthly meeting on May 7.

Council unanimously voted to allow for the submission of a new land in trust application for its 2.63-acre parcel in Tahlequah for tribal gaming purposes.

The item comes after the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals on May 6 vacated a lower court's ruling that denied the U.S. Department of the Interior from approving the application and taking the land into trust for the UKB.

Instead, the DOI has now instructed the UKB to submit a new application, which will also update the size of the location, up from 2.03-acres after building usage changes on the property.

The submission of the application will come later this summer, according to Attorney General Klint Cowan.

Council also voted for the creation of a UKB Health Board to regulate the tribe's behavioral health services and allow the programs to apply for more grant funding.

"The point of this board is our health services are becoming so large, that as we start growing... it's almost required that there's a regulatory body for those services to make sure that we're in com-

pliance with all laws," said Caleb Grimm, Delaware District representative. "To me, this is very vital that we have this in place, so if anything goes wrong in general, we have our Health Board there to handle things properly and correctly."

UKB Attorney Victoria Holland clarified that the board would be a "subsidiary" of the UKB Corporate Board. She also clarified that anyone could make a

"This is very vital that we have this in place, so if anything goes wrong in general, we have our Health Board there to handle things properly and correctly."
Caleb Grimm, Delaware District representative

nomination, but the nominations must be selected by the Corporate Board and final approval must be given by Council.

Councilors also lifted the tribe's COVID-19 mandatory mask requirement in UKB buildings, instead making masks optional, but still asking visitors to have their temperatures checked upon arrival.

Also during the meeting, Council voted to approve an undisclosed monetary donation to the Grand Lake Family YMCA in Grove to establish a partnership with the organization.

Grimm made the request after discussing the action with his constituents and setting a longterm goal of one day getting a wellness center established in the Jay area.

"Some of them were for it, some of them were against it because of the idea

of how will it benefit our people directly," he said. "Unfortunately, there wouldn't be a direct service to our people as far as a free membership or a membership being reduced to the YMCA. The idea was possibly getting into a partnership with the YMCA to expand into our district in Delaware, in Jay."

Chief Joe Bunch also announced during the meeting that the tribe's chartering partner school, Bacone College, would be receiving 10 education grants and an additional \$490,000 from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to implement an agricultural class on campus.

The UKB Enrollment Department also

announced new membership cards are now available for Keetoowahs.

The cards will be laminated and have an impression of the UKB seal, as well as an expiration date. This will allow Keetoowahs to pick up pharmacy prescriptions in Oklahoma with their tribal cards, according to UKB Administration.

Keetoowahs who bring in their old membership cards can receive the new card for free. Those who have lost their card and need a replacement will be charged \$5 for a new card.

In other news, Council:

- Accepted the UKB Enrollment Report from Secretary Hawk with one tribal relinquishment;
- Approved the UKB Tax Commission report, with \$24,592.32 in revenue from the Kee-toowah Tag Agency from April 1

to April 30. Of that amount, 10 percent is allotted to the UKB Education Department under the Motor Fuels agreement;

- Secretary Sonja Gourd announced that the tribe's fiscal year 2021 audit would be beginning and covering the time period of March 2021 to March 2022. She also announced that a General Fund report was not available due to the tribe still expending from the account for "travel for the Kituwah Mound trip" and due to the discretionary funds for district representatives;

- Tabled the UKB Corporate Board Report until the June 2022 regular monthly council meeting;

- Approved a 41-acre land purchase west of the UKB Community Services Building;

- Announced it would not be completing a purchase of the Red Oak Apartments in Oaks;

- Approved and accepted eight new judicial codes for the UKB Tribal Court;

- Approved the Human Resources director to have the authority to investigate and make decisions regarding any employee grievances against the tribal administrator;

- Approved the UKB Media Department to open a bank account to begin collecting advertising revenue for the newspaper;

- and struck two items from the UKB Environmental Services Department at the request of the department director concerning partnerships with the Sequoyah National Wildlife Refuge and with U.S. Fish & Wildlife.

To view the meeting in its entirety, the public can visit the UKB Facebook Page and see the "Videos" tab.

The next regularly scheduled Tribal Council meeting is set for June 4 at 10 a.m. at the UKB Judicial Center.

MOUND: The mound and its land was put into trust in 2020.

FROM PAGE 1

Council passed the legislation unanimously.

"I think, looking back, it created a cultural renaissance because people began to learn about their culture," she told the crowd on Saturday. "If anything, the legacy that I left and the Tribal Council at that time left, was a renaissance of our culture, of our language, our customs for future generations. And, for the first time, our people began to say, 'our culture and our traditions are important'."

Chief Dugan went on to say, "Enjoy your day. Love each other. And think about what all went on down here on this piece of land. And listen to the sounds of those children, those mommas and daddies who lived here. I've been told that if you're real quiet down here in the evenings you can hear them. I don't doubt that."

EBCI Principal Chief Richard G. Sneed said getting Kituwah put into trust status was a priority of his since taking office.

"It is an historic day. As I mentioned earlier, we would not be here today if it were not for the vision and the leadership of Chief Dugan... Great leaders like Chief Dugan have several things in common and one is they have vision. If you're going to be in leadership, you're going to have to have vision for the generations of Cherokees that are coming after us."

He spoke of the importance of the Cherokee people getting Kituwah back and said it is time to look towards the future. "We have to stop thinking about just the 'right now' and instead the seven generations that are coming after us. That can't be empty rhetoric. It has to be how we think. It has to be how we believe. And, it has to be how we act."



Don Bradley, a member of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, jumps for a ball during an exhibition stickball game at the annual Kituwah Celebration held at Kituwah on, May 21. All three federally recognized Cherokee tribes came together to celebrate the land being put into trust by the federal government recently.

Chief Sneed added, "We are here today as one people. We are today as Cherokees...it is our time, and it is our responsibility now to do what is right for future generations of Cherokees."

EBCI Vice Chief Alan B. Ensley was in his first term as a Tribal Council representative when the property was purchased in 1996. "We were at the very beginning stages of becoming a gaming Tribe back then, and \$2 million seemed like \$100 million at that time."

He also praised Dugan for her vision and action. "Chief Dugan invigorated our culture at that time. We didn't know that much about our culture...I knew very little about our Cherokee history."

Saying it was a great day to be a Cher-

okee, Vice Chief Ensley noted, "When Chief Dugan brought this in, it reinvigorated our culture here in Cherokee, and it brought our culture, our language, and everything just catapulted once we bought the homeland back."

Cherokee Nation Principal Chief Chuck Hoskin Jr. said, "This is a special day for all Cherokee people. I want to express my deep appreciation on behalf of the Cherokee Nation for the work of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. We all celebrate this as our Mother Town. We all celebrate this area as our homeland. But the burdens, the opportunities to seize to preserve this, of course, falls squarely on the Eastern Band. It's just remarkable to see what the Eastern Band has done in

the area of historic preservation securing this land."

He said when he thinks about Kituwah having existed from "time immemorial", it helps him put things into perspective. "When we think about this site, it makes all the challenges that we might have in our governments or back home or in our economy or in our politics, it makes those seem much tamer as we think about how long this place has stood the test of time. When we think about how long this space has endured, it makes us realize that the tragedies that we have endured are not as great as all of our triumphs because so much of our triumphs are really embodied in this space."

UKB Principal Chief Joe Bunch commented, "Coming here to the mountains is coming home. To our tribe, the Keetoowahs, it's coming home and that's good medicine for each and every one of us. It's where we started, certainly not where we ended. But, with all the successes that we've had throughout, and some of the small defeats and so on, we are still here. We are still here."

He read a proclamation from the UKB which designated May 21, 2022 as "Kituwah Mound Day". The proclamation states, in part, "The Eastern Band, the United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians, and the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma together celebrate the return of our symbolic mother town and the union of our forefathers who gave the ultimate sacrifices in protecting the families and land and life as we knew it back then."

Chief Bunch concluded by saying, "Believe me, it is coming home. It is good medicine. No doubt about it. It is wonderful medicine. What a grand day it is to be Keetoowah."

ORDINANCE: This year's General Election is set for Nov. 7.

FROM PAGE 1

duce a preliminary version of the Voter List no later than June 1 of the election year, "which shall be open to public inspection during regular business hours."

If an individual's name is not on the list, an application to be added must be submitted no later than June 15. The secretary will render a determination on such applications by June 25. The final Voter List shall be presented by June 30.

Some of the most major changes to the ordinance concern the eligibility requirements for officer and district representative positions.

In addition to being required to be a resident of the Old Cherokee Nation for a period of no less than 12 months prior to filing, candidates for chief, assistant chief, treasurer, secretary and district representatives must also be exclusive UKB members for a period of not less than five years prior to filing.

All candidates must not have served as an elected official of another federally recognized Indian tribe and must possess

a valid driver's license, as well as possess a high school diploma or equivalent.

Treasurer candidates must also possess a minimum of five years of experience in the governmental accounting field.

"The only things we really added in were that candidates have to have a high school education and that candidates for treasurer had to have more qualifications," said Smith. "Those changes, for me, are motivation for our children. They're going to need their education anyway."

Other requirements state that candidates must not have a final felony conviction within the past 10 years and any tribal employee who registers as a candidate must take a leave of absence from their employment for the campaign's duration, except for elected officers.

As always, a Notice of Candidacy must be filed in person with the UKB Election Board no earlier than 9 a.m. on the first business day of August and no later than 6 p.m. on the 10th business day of August in the election year.

Candidates are also not allowed to

campaign on Keetoowah tribal property "excluding private residences" and "excluding the tribal newspaper." The ordinance states this is to prevent any Keetoowah tribal properties or resources being used "for campaign purposes."

Any tribal employee that campaigns while on the job can be found "punishable by removal of employment" and "removal from ballots for candidates and/or fines."

Poll workers and alternates are also now allowed to vote on the day of Poll Worker training, with Lighthouse charged with keeping "ballots secure and safe from tampering until the Election Board counts the Poll Worker ballots on the night of the election."

The ordinance now also allows for referendum elections, both from tribal members and from the Tribal Council.

Any tribal member may call for a referendum vote by filing a \$500 fee with the Election Board between Feb. 1 and July 30 of the general election year.

Once accepted, the petitioner has 30 days to collect the equivalent of 30

percent of eligible voter signatures from the last general election. Once those signatures are verified, the item will be allowed on the election ballot. If at least 50 percent, plus one vote, vote in favor, the vote shall become tribal law.

The Tribal Council may also refer any matter on which it wishes to have a referendum vote to the Election Board. Within 30 days of receiving the referendum resolution from Council, the Election Board shall schedule an election on the Referendum. Any Referendum passed by at least 50 percent, plus one vote, shall become the law of the Tribe.

Smith took the time to thank the UKB Attorney General Klint Cowan for his work on updating the ordinance.

"Klint has been a big asset to us changing this," she said. "We didn't actually move forward until he would tell us to. He would say, 'yeah, you can do that,' or 'no, you can't say that'. I appreciate him so much, because he's just been a phone call away."

The UKB Tribal Council General Election this year will be held on Nov.7.

UKB Media adds new staff, loses media specialist

UKB Media welcomes Travis Snell, Bronwyn Duncan and Lani Hansen.

BY STAFF REPORTS

TAHLEQUAH – The United Keetoowah Band Media Department is proud to announce three new hires to its staff including a graphics designer, an advertising sales specialist and a media reporter.

“We have been fortunate this year that our Council allotted a sizeable departmental budget to make these hirings possible,” said Brittney Bennett, UKB media specialist. “This budget has allowed us to seek out new talent, as well as hire experienced staff, to deliver more news and information to the Keetoowah people. It also allows our department the ability to start making its own revenue, which is an important part of keeping us operating.”

The staff additions are the first time the department has been allowed to hire in more than five years.

Travis Snell is a member of the Cherokee Nation and began working for UKB Media as its graphics designer in early April 2022.

He has more than two decades of experience in journalism, having previously spent much of his time with the Cherokee Phoenix as a reporter and later as an assistant editor. His résumé also includes time spent with the Delaware County Journal, Grove Sun Daily and Oklahoma Gazette.

“I am incredibly proud of each individual we have hired to help carry UKB Media forward and can’t wait to see what they accomplish together.”

Brittney Bennett, UKB Media Specialist



Travis Snell



Bronwyn Siefers



Lani Hansen

He has also won numerous awards with the Native American Journalists Association, including the “Best Design” category in 2014, 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2020. In addition to working for UKB Media, he also sits as the current vice president of the Mvskoke Media Editorial Board. He earned his bachelor’s degree in mass communications in 1999 from Oklahoma City University.

“I’m extremely excited to be working for the Giduwa Cherokee News, to be able to bring my 20-plus years of journalism experience to the news organization and help improve it any way I can,” said Snell. “I’m ecstatic that I can focus on design, which I have grown to love during my years in journalism.”

Bronwyn Siefers is a Keetoowah tribal member and began working for UKB Media as its advertising sales specialist in late April 2022.

She has nearly a decade of experience assisting clients with advertising and budget proposals from her time with the Tahlequah Daily Press.

She has also worked at Lancaster Publishing as an advertising sales consultant and as a manager for Habitat for Humanity.

“I’m really happy to be working for my tribe and I’m so excited to be working for the newspaper,” said Siefers. “I can see the future for the newspaper really growing within the next year.”

Lani Hansen is a member of the Cherokee Nation and began working for UKB Media as its media reporter in early May 2022.

She earned her associate degree in liberal arts from Haskell Indian Nations University in Kansas and her bachelor’s degree in media studies from Northeastern State University.

She comes to the Giduwa Cherokee News from Mvskoke Media, where she served as a senior reporter for the past three years.

“I was working with Muscogee (Creek) Nation before I came here and although I loved working with them, I was ready to come back home,” said Hansen. “As a Cherokee, I have always had this goal in mind to do something for my community. When I saw the reporter position open up with the United Keetoowah Band, I got so excited that I applied immediately.”

Hansen said she is looking forward to meeting with those both young and old in the Keetoowah communities.

“As a reporter, I am able to meet new people and hear so many stories. I enjoy sitting in a room listening to achievement stories from young children to hearing what the elders have to say,” she said.

While the hiring of new staff marks a period of growth for UKB Media, there is also a period of transition that will take place in the coming weeks as Keetoowah member and Media Specialist Brittney Bennett steps down from her position running the department.

“It is bittersweet for me, but I am incredibly proud of each individual we have hired to help carry UKB Media forward,” she said. “I can’t wait to see what they accomplish together.”

Still named to 2022 Native 40 Under 40

Dr. Corey Still was to be recognized along with other recipients at a reception on May 25 at the Cromwell Hotel in Las Vegas, Nevada.

BY LANI HANSEN
Reporter

TAHLEQUAH – The National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development recently announced its Native American 40 Under 40 award recipients for the class of 2022 and among those to receive the distinguished honor was United Keetoowah Band member Dr. Corey Still.

“I’m very honored and humbled to be named as a 2022 cohort member,” said Still. “I’m not completely sure, but I may be one of the first Keetoowahs to ever receive this award.”

According to NCAIED’s press release, the 40 Under 40 awards represent the best and brightest emerging Indian Country leaders. There are 40 American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian leaders under the age of 40 inducted in recognition of their leadership, initiative and dedication and for making significant contributions in their business and/or in their community.

Winners of the award include leaders working in numerous fields such as academia, government, non-profits, tourism,

nature conservation and technology.

Still will be traveling to Las Vegas, Nevada, on May 23 to accept the award, with the reception taking place on May 25 in Drai’s at the Cromwell Hotel.

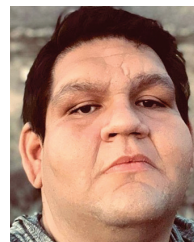
“I’m really excited, but I don’t take this award as recognition of ‘look what I’ve done,’ but I take it as ‘look what we’ve done,’” said Still. “The work that I do and how I approach it is that I’ve never done anything by myself. I’ve always done it in relation of community.”

Still is originally from Tahlequah, Oklahoma, and is a high school graduate from Tahlequah-Sequoyah.

Upon earning the Gates Millennium Scholarship, he went on to study at the University of Oklahoma, graduating with a bachelor’s degree in American Indian studies with an emphasis on Indian education.

While initially interested in pursuing a law degree, Still said his focus shifted towards higher education during his undergraduate studies.

“I’ve always been law driven, but as soon as I got out there working with different communities and the students, I



Corey Still

fell in love with education. I wanted to help other college students succeed in higher education,” he said.

Still went on to pursue his master’s degree in higher education leadership in education at Northeastern State University. While doing so, he also worked as an adjunct faculty member at Bacone College and as a graduate assistant at NSU working with Native students.

“I really focused my master’s thesis research around the experiences of Native students,” said Still. “My call was to be able to support my community and help Native students as they navigate their journey in higher education.”

After completing his master’s work, Still had no plans to return to school until some of his mentors, as he stated, “voluntold” him to go for his doctorate.

He would go on in 2019 to earn his doctorate’s degree in adult higher education with an emphasis in student affairs in higher education administration from OU, with his research focusing on Indigenous higher education.

“During that time, I was able to work with some amazing mentors and amazing communities,” he said. “I worked

with local community boards, regional boards, national boards on affecting and influencing Native policy, educational policy and looking at Indigenizing and reshaping how we work with Native communities.”

After completing his doctorate, Still accepted an appointment with the American Indian Graduate Center in Albuquerque, New Mexico, overseeing programing, research and scholarships as the director of Scholarships Operations.

Recently he was called back home to take an appointment at Bacone College in Muskogee as the new vice-president of academic affairs.

“My family has a history with Bacone. I’ve taught here for many years. I see the importance of the college and I decided to come back and take on that appointment,” he said.

Through his transition from AIGC to Bacone College, Still said some colleagues came up with the idea to nominate him for the Native 40 Under 40.

The UKB will pay for Still’s airfare and hotel expenses for the event. “I’m beyond grateful the tribe is willing to help me with travel expenses, because what I do is for my people, the Keetoowahs,” said Still. “To the administrative officers, Council, Education Department, staff and my family, I want to say thank you for the help and support.”

UKB LIHEAP now taking summer applications

BY BRITTNEY BENNETT
Editor

TAHLEQUAH – The Health and Human Services Department at the United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians is accepting applications for assistance with summer cooling costs through its Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program.

LIHEAP is a federal program designed to assist low-income families with relief from heating and cooling costs all year.

Summer LIHEAP is open until Sept. 20 and assists households with electric bills

and air conditioning window units.

Winter LIHEAP runs from Oct. 1 to March 31 and will pay costs towards the main heating source for a household.

Eligibility is based upon the 2022 Federal Poverty Guidelines and requires applicants to provide income verification from each member of the household. Aid is for the entire household and not separate individuals. Income guidelines are 60 percent of the state median income.

For households exceeding income guidelines, the tribe has American Relief Plan Act funds that may assist with costs.

HHS Director Ronny Livers said Summer LIHEAP funds will be used to help tribal members with electrical bills associated with cooling their homes.

The tribe will pay up to \$450 for an electrical bill in a six-month period for a household of one to three individuals. For households of four or more, LIHEAP funds can assist with up to \$500 towards electrical bills in a six-month period.

Tribal members are also required to notify the HHS at a minimum of three days before any service cutoff or risk a suspension in utilities due to late submission of

the application.

LIHEAP will also assist with providing a limited amount of air conditioning units to tribal members, with elders 55 and older served first. Members can get applications from their district representatives, directly through HHS or by at ukb-nsn.gov/human-services for a downloadable “Services Assistance” application.

Applications can be returned to the UKB Federal Programs Building, via email to rlivers@ukb-nsn.gov or fax at 918-414-4030.

BOARD: The board is charged with upholding election integrity.

FROM PAGE 1

For Smith, a member of the Goingsnake District, serving the people is what keeps her coming back to the Election board.

“The reason that I decided to do another election cycle is because I believe strongly in our tribe,” said Smith. “I see working on the Election Board as a challenge to do the best for the tribal members. Council, by extension, are the voices of our members.”

Smith previously worked at Walmart in the Traffic Office serving as a proxy for office annual manager elections.

“I had to do the data entry for tallying votes and distributing and collecting forms,” she said. “It gave me an idea on how to run an election. It gave me a guideline on what to do and how to do it.”

When not fulfilling her election duties, Smith can be found watching softball,

spending time with family and caring for her grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Vice-Chairwoman Marcella Foreman has lived most of her life in Oaks. She said she is thankful to be able to continue serving the tribe after being diagnosed with liposarcoma.

“It took a toll on me, but I pulled through,” she said. “As of today, there is no sign of cancer. God still has me here for a reason and he knows how much I love doing for others. It has always been my passion to be able to help others in any way, shape or form. I want to thank everyone for letting me serve as vice-chairwoman on the Election Board.”

When not working, Marcella spends her time making traditional crafts.

“It used to be my main way of life with my late husband Russell Vanbuskirk, who was chosen as a Tradition Keeper in 2008. Since his passing it has been a long road of recovery and being able to cope

on my own. But then I realized I wasn’t alone. I have my family and many good friends who have helped me along the way,” she said.

Treasurer Tanisa Foreman said she is grateful for the opportunity to serve on the Election Board.

“I would like to thank everyone for letting me serve on the Election Board,” she said. “I like working for my tribe and learning all that I can about our past and present.”

When not working, Tanisa likes to spend her time fishing, camping, spending time with family and friends and making crafts like her mother. She was even named a 2021 UKB Tradition Keeper.

“I was given the honor of being chosen the 2021 UKB Tradition Keeper for my baskets, which was taught to me by a long line of my elders that started from my great aunt Mary Foreman. She was also known as a Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma National Treasure for her bas-

kets,” she said.

Board Member Albert Shade was raised in Lost City and now resides in Tahlequah. He is a proud Keetoowah that has served in many capacities of tribal government.

“I take great pride in being a part of something that is working to move the tribe forward,” he said.

Shade is also a UKB Tradition Keeper and enjoys teaching the culture to others, ensuring that Keetoowah cultural practices are carried on to the next generation.

Board Member Wyanetta Springwater is a full-blood Keetoowah member from Tahlequah.

“It has been my honor to serve on the Keetoowah Election Board since 2020,” she said. “During my time as a board member, I have been able to step out of my comfort zone and put my knowledge and skills to work. I enjoy serving, as it gives me the opportunity to give back to the Keetoowah tribe.”

WALKED ON

Denise Darlene Drywater
Feb. 18, 1959 – May 13, 2022

Dorothy Jean (Downing) Ireland
Sept. 14, 1946 – April 7, 2022

Susanna Saez
March 12, 1947 – April 21, 2022

Ryan Keith Tiger
Aug. 30, 1971 – April 21, 2022

For a free Walked On listing, email the deceased United Keetoowah Band member's name, birth date and death date to Giduwa Cherokee News Graphic Designer Travis Snell at travissnell75@gmail.com.



UKB Lighthorse Tribal Police

An officer is always on-call if you are ever in need of emergency assistance or assistance with a civil or criminal matter.

Call 918-207-9955



LUNCH MENU

The United Keetoowah Band's Title VI Lunch Menu for June 2022 at Jim Proctor Community Center located at 555 Fake St. in Tahlequah, Oklahoma. For information, call 918-871-2860.

June 1
Lasagna
Italian Green Beans
Salad, Garlic Toast
Dessert

June 2
Stuffed Peppers
Rice Pilaf
Mixed Veggies, Roll
Dessert

June 3
Biscuits & Gravy
Sausage, Hash Browns
Scrambled Eggs
Fresh Fruit

June 6
Ham/Cheese on Wheat
3-Bean Salad
Potato Salad
Dessert

June 7
Chicken Fried Steak
Mash Potato/Gravy
Green Beans, Hot Roll
Dessert

June 8
BBQ Smokies
Macaroni Tomato
Baked Beans
Toast, Dessert

June 9
Indian Taco w/Fixings
Mexican Corn
Strawberry Shortcake

June 10
Sloppy Joe on Bun
Tater Tots, Coleslaw
Pickle Spear
Fruit Salad

June 13
Tuna on Wheat
Potato Chips
Potato Salad
Fresh Fruit

June 14
Chicken Fajita, Salsa
Spanish Rice
Salad
Dessert

June 15
Hamburger Steak
Mashed Potato/Gray
Carrots
Hot Roll, Dessert

June 16
Philly Cheese Steak
Onion Rings
Salad
Dessert

June 17
Chicken Wings w/Sauce
Carrots/Celery Sticks
Macaroni Salad, Bread
Watermelon

June 20
Spaghetti w/Meat Sauce
Italian Green Beans
Salad, Garlic Twist Bread
Dessert

June 21
Baked Chicken
Potato w/Green Beans
Garden Salad
Bread, Dessert

June 22
Baked Potato w/Fixings
Garden Salad
Garlic Toast
Dessert

June 23
White Beans w/Ham
Fried Potatoes
Spinach
Cornbread, Dessert



June 24
Kitchen Closed
Clean Day

June 27
Veggie-Hamburger Stew
Hominy
Cornbread
Dessert

June 28
Taco Salad w/Fritos
Spanish Rice
Pinto Beans
Pineapple Dessert

June 29
Chicken Strips/Gravy
Steak Fries
Hot Roll
Dessert

June 30
Hamburger w/Fixings
Potato Chips
Birthday Cake
Ice Cream

Currently the dining room is closed to the public and will remain so until further notice. Park in the drive-thru area for your meal delivery. Meals are free to Keetoowahs 55 and older, as well as their spouses. Members of other tribes and their spouses must show their CDIB card and contribute to the cost of a meal. Guest meals are \$5, while meals for children 0-17 are \$3. If you feel sick, stay home. Wash your hands and practice social distancing to help avoid the spread of COVID-19 and its variants. Wado for your understanding.

RECIPES

My Aunt's Fry Bread

Self-rising flour (good flour)
Buttermilk in warm water.
Enough to mix it together but not runny. Cover and let it set for 30 minutes, 15 minutes at minimum, then knead to a smooth texture and pinch off about the size of golf ball, then pat it out and put it into hot grease. Grease should be hot enough to fry but not too fast.

Turkey Stew or Minestrone Soup

2 pounds of ground dark turkey meat

3 cloves of crushed and minced garlic
2 tablespoons of Italian seasoning
3 carrots, thinly sliced
1 large chopped onion
1 small head of chopped cabbage
2 14-ounce cans diced tomatoes
1 14-ounce can of kidney beans
1 14-ounce can of great northern beans
1 32-35 ounce container of chicken broth
Brown meat in a heavy pot on high heat, stirring constantly. Add garlic,

To submit a recipe, email it to travissnell75@gmail.com or mail it to Giduwa Cherokee News, P.O. Box 746, Tahlequah, OK 74465.

Italian seasoning, carrots and onions. Stir until vegetables start to soften. Add tomatoes, beans and broth. Bring to a boil, lower heat and let simmer for 10-15 minutes. Serve.

Grape Dumplings

1/2 gallon unsweetened grape juice
2 cups sugar
2 tablespoons shortening, melted
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 cup water
Flour

Bring grape juice to a boil with the sugar. Mix water, shortening and baking powder. Add enough flour to make stiff dough. Roll out thin on a floured board and cut into pieces. Drop each of these one at a time into the boiling juice. Cook over high heat about 5 minutes. Then simmer for about 10 minutes with cover on before serving. May be served with cream or plain.

DISTRICT MEETINGS

JUNE 11, 2022/2-4 PM KENWOOD SCHOOL GYM

SALINE DISTRICT 8625 S 502 RD, SALINA, OK 74365

Contact: District Rep Charles Smoke 918-457-7071

JUNE 25, 2022/12-4 PM EUCHA COMMUNITY CENTER

DELAWARE DISTRICT EAST 432 RD, Eucha, OK 74342

Contact: District Rep Caleb Grimmatt 918-791-8107

TALKING CIRCLE – HOG FRY – TRADITIONAL ARTS – GAMES – DOOR PRIZES

An ANA grant project funded by the American Rescue Plan for preserving Traditional Lifeways and Talking Circle Event for bringing our youth and elders together for the purposes of teaching, sharing, and encouraging members to focus on heritage, culture, language, and family.

For more information contact JHCCM at 918-871-2866



Wolfe retires after nearly 18-year tribal career

Della Wolfe said she looks forward to improving her health and spending more time with her family as she enters retirement.

BY BRITNEY BENNETT
Editor

TAHLEQUAH – Regardless of whether her job title was listed as clerk, intake specialist, receptionist, counselor or interim director, there has never been any doubt that Della Wolfe has been the backbone of the UKB Education Department for nearly 16 years.

But two months shy of her 18-year anniversary with the tribe, Wolfe is finally saying a fond farewell as she enters retirement.

“I have really enjoyed being in the Education Department for that many years. I got to know so many people, students. I have really, really enjoyed every bit, every moment that I worked under Education,” said Wolfe. “I’ll miss everybody at work, all my friends. I wish I had gotten to know the new staff that has come in, but due to COVID and health reasons I had to retire.”

Wolfe has worked in education most of her life, first at Maryetta Schools as support personnel before moving on to Locust Grove Schools and teaching fifth through eighth graders in her own classroom.

After the unfortunate passing of her father and husband in 2003, Wolfe resigned from Locust Grove to pursue opportunities closer to her home in Stilwell.

“I started looking for a job closer to where I lived and when I was out looking, putting applications in, I was blessed to get hired by my tribe. I hadn’t even resigned that long from Locust before I was working for my tribe. I actually started out working in Indian Child Welfare,” she said.

It wasn’t until two years later when the UKB Education Department had an opening that Wolfe saw her opportunity to get back into the field of academia.

“I got hired in the Education Department in 2005,” she said. “During that time, I got to meet with students and work with different staff and was able to do a little education outreach. I got to know the students we served very well and when they came, they knew that I knew them by name. Serving others has been my fondest memory.”

Wolfe said she is proud of her work and how many students she assisted.

“I feel proud knowing that when I was there, the funding was spent in the best way for students to get a better education, whether it was \$500 or \$1,500 or \$2,000. Whatever was available, always went to the students. Nobody was hardly ever denied,” she said.

During her time in the department, Wolfe was also allowed to teach her language to others and participate in the Keetoowah Language Consortium.

“I have always enjoyed teaching my language,” she said. “I love it when people desire to learn the language that God had blessed me with. I didn’t know English until I started school. In kindergarten I began to learn to speak two languages. At the consortium, I enjoyed listening to everybody speak and being able to teach it to whomever wanted to learn, even little kids. I tried to develop some material, some booklets. I really enjoyed that part too.”

Since starting her career in the UKB Education Department, Wolfe has outlasted five education directors. The sixth, Dr. Leslie Hannah, will instead be the first to bid her farewell.

“It makes me sad because I didn’t get to work with Dr. Hannah, but I enjoy the new staff coming in,” said Wolfe. “My heart felt so good to have this new director that I feel truly belongs there. He wants to help our UKB students to have a better education. I know that he’s working hard and will continue to work hard. He has a good staff and I pray and wish them all the best in every educational endeavor that they pursue.”

Wolfe also has high hopes not just for the department, but for future UKB students.

“My hope is that there will be more

“My hope is that there will be more Keetoowah students to come in for assistance to have a better education, wanting to have a better life. I’ve always wanted our Keetoowahs to have the best and be able to serve them and to help them get somewhere.”

Della Wolfe



Della Wolfe has worked in the UKB Education Department since 2005 and is retiring after 16 years in the department. ARCHIVE

Keetoowah students to come in for assistance to have a better education, wanting to have a better life. I hope they take it seriously,” she said. “We have choices. I’ve always wanted our Keetoowahs to have the best and be able to serve them and to help them get somewhere.”

Wolfe said she is thankful for several individuals at the tribe who have helped or been friends to her throughout her career.

“I would like to thank Mary Nordwall. She really was a friend who helped me a lot. I would also say thanks to Tim Goodvoice. They believed in me. I also appreciated Sonja Gour, Sara Thompson and

Jennifer Cole-Robinson. Mary Girty and Georgia Mauldin, I can also call them good friends.”

As she enters retirement, Wolfe said she is looking forward to improving her health and spending more time with her family.

“I hope to get better and look forward to playing with my grandkids, teaching them things and doing things with them. Maybe if possible, travel to go see my friends. I want to go visit my aunt more, my Aunt Liz. She’s 96. I think about her and pray for her all the time,” she said.

As a tribal member, Wolfe said she will also continue to pray for the UKB.

“We should keep one another in our prayers and the tribe, so our tribe can be strong. The way our world is, it’s really crazy and we’re going to need each other a lot more as the years come. Our tribe is doing their best to help us stand on our own feet, so we can help someone else stand on their own, too. I know our tribe is always willing to help and I hope that it will always continue.”

UKB Driller’s Night celebrates education, engages students

The UKB Education Department invites 20 students to enjoy the game and meet with Bacone College recruitment reps.

BY LANI HANSEN
Reporter

TULSA – To celebrate the end of another successful school year, the UKB Education Department invited a select group of students to enjoy an evening of baseball with the Tulsa Drillers as they hosted the Frisco Rough Riders on May 13 at ONEOK Field.

The night was the result of several months of planning and, in addition to celebrating academic achievements, was intended to get students thinking about education long term, according to organizer and UKB Education Director Dr. Leslie Hannah.

“We wanted to do something for the students to show our appreciation for their academic achievements. From there it developed into a marriage of getting students together with higher education people,” Hannah said.

Altogether the UKB Education Department invited 20 students to join in on the night as its special guests, with 16 students from Bell Schools and four students from Epic Charter Schools.

Bell Schools is located in Adair County and serves mostly Native students in



UKB Chief Joe Bunch throws out the first pitch at a Tulsa Drillers game to Hornsby while Miss Keetoowah Kitana Foreman joins him on the pitcher’s mound on May 13 in Tulsa. BRITNEY BENNETT/ GIDUWA CHEROKEE NEWS

K-8th grade, while Epic Charter Schools are the largest Native-serving high school in the state and have the highest UKB student population, said Hannah.

Teachers and representatives from Bacone College were invited to attend and meet the students due to the UKB’s chartering partnership with the historically Native American college.

Hannah and his staff members Jacqueline Watson and Travis Wolfe brain-

stormed the idea of having the students meet with Bacone at Driller’s Night.

“We wanted to get them in a non-traditional meeting place, like a baseball game,” Hannah said. “We wanted them to have a place where the college representative can make small talk and build a relationship with the student.”

During the sixth inning some of the students were even allowed to participate in the “Running with the Bull,” where



The UKB Education Department hosts 20 students at ONEOK Field. Here they take a photo with Hornsby. COURTESY/DR. LESLIE HANNAH

they ran with Hornsby from right field to left field, which Hannah said he enjoyed.

The night also helped to elevate the awareness of the tribe to a larger audience in the state.

As part of the pre-game activities, visitors got to witness UKB Chief Joe Bunch throw out the first pitch before the game to Hornsby, the Driller’s mascot, while Miss Keetoowah Kitana Foreman looked on from the pitcher’s mound.

“It was neat to see chief get out there and hear them announce ‘now here’s Chief Joe Bunch of the United Keetoowah Band’. He lined everything up and then threw the baseball into the dirt and bounced it up to Hornsby,” Hannah laughed.

The tickets for the game included a pre-game buffet for students, Bacone representatives and a small group of UKB staff members.

Hannah said he and his UKB Education Department staff have plans for similar activities in the future. For a list of upcoming events, call 918-871-2796.



VOLUNTEERS @ BACONE COLLEGE

On May 13, some kindhearted UKB staff volunteered to help spruce up the grounds of Bacone College before the Spring 2022 commencement ceremonies the next day. Wado to fellow Keetoowah and Bacone Vice President of Academic Affairs Dr. Corey Still for providing lunch for our group.

UKB Tribal Administrator Jennifer Cole-Robinson said the group was happy to help and

thanked all who volunteered.

LEFT PHOTO: In the front row are UKB Tribal Administrator Jennifer Cole-Robinson, Realty Director Felicia Russell, Accounts Payable Amber Dry and volunteer Tessa Stroud. The back row contains Corey Still, volunteer Kendall Scott and Realty Clerk Summer Nofire.

PHOTOS BY LANI HANSEN/
GIDUWA CHEROKEE NEWS



Stilwell Suboffice beneficial to UKB members

BY LANI HANSEN
Reporter

STILWELL – Tribal governments across the United States were forced to shut down many of their services in 2019 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but by 2020, COVID-19 federal relief funds actually began opening several doors of opportunity for tribes.

The United Keetoowah Band was no exception, with the tribe using some of its relief funds to open an office in Stilwell to assist its members.

The Stilwell Suboffice first opened in October 2020 and two years later, continues to leave its doors open to UKB members for information and services amid the ongoing pandemic.

Except for tag services, it provides information on childcare, transit, human services, housing, education, enrollment, burial assistance and other services, as well as provides members with service applications.

Part-time Office Coordinator Marlene Ballard was hired in December 2021 to help manage the site, which is open 25 hours a week.

“I work 25 hours a week, taking applications for any of the services offered



Office Coordinator Marlene Ballard and Grant Writer Marquana Fourkiller are the friendly faces of the Stilwell Suboffice. PHOTOS BY LANI HANSEN/GIDUWA CHEROKEE NEWS



Office Coordinator Marlene Ballard, right, helps a woman with a service application at the UKB Stilwell Suboffice that opened in October 2020.

The Stilwell Suboffice was originally opened with COVID-19 relief funds and provides service information and applications to Keetoowahs.

at the main Keetoowah offices,” Ballard said. “I take the applications and send them to our main offices. As long as you’re UKB, you can utilize whatever we have here because it’s for all members.”

The office is convenient to those living in the Stilwell area and beyond, as they do not have to travel all the way to Tah-

lequah for information or applications.

Elders in the area especially find the office more accessible, as they do not have to be in the heat with masks while waiting to be assisted.

The location also comes with the added benefit of Ballard being a fluent Keetoowah speaker, according to Grant

Writer Marquana Fourkiller.

“It’s convenient and personal. Some people get excited knowing Marlene speaks Cherokee,” Fourkiller said. “People will now come in with confidence knowing they can voice their wants and needs in their language. It’s neat to see that and a lot of our elders in the Stilwell area are fluent.”

Ballard and Fourkiller said they hope to see the doors of the office remain open in Stilwell, as well as possibly see the office grow from the small space the tribe is renting to having their own building in the future.

Fourkiller credits Tribal Secretary Joyce Fourkiller on getting the Stilwell Suboffice started and having it authorized by Council for operations.

“She wanted to utilize that COVID-19 relief fund money to prevent the spread of COVID as best we could among members,” Fourkiller said of Joyce.

The Stilwell Suboffice is at 471332 HWY 51 Suite A, Stilwell, OK 74960 and can be reached at 918-871-2814.

Its hours of operation are Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. to 5 p.m., with hours varying occasionally on Fridays.



From left are UKB Delaware District Rep. Caleb Grimm, Housing Director Nancy McCause, Dustin Black, Amanda Black and Assistant Housing Director Charles Deason as UKB officials hand over the keys to the Black’s new home. PHOTOS BY BRITTNEY BENNETT/GIDUWA CHEROKEE NEWS

UKB Housing helps family from Jay with new home

Amanda and Dustin Black are new homeowners thanks to the UKB Housing Department’s Lease to Own Purchase Program.

BY LANI HANSEN
Reporter

JAY – After years of waiting for a place to call “home”, Amanda and Dustin Black’s dreams have finally come true with the help of United Keetoowah Band Housing Department’s Lease to Own Purchase Program.

According to Assistant Housing Director Charles Deason, the Lease to Own Program assists UKB members with finding safe, sanitary and secure housing. The department also makes sure the homeowner’s families and support systems are still close by relocating homeowners in the same area as their previous dwelling.

To be eligible for the program, applicants must be low-income, a UKB member, live within the nine districts and must be a first-time homeowner or not have a house with UKB in the past.

The program operates on a point-based system, with elders, veterans and the disabled given first preference. Length of time on the list also earns points.

For the Black family, it was over 12 years ago when they were first told to fill out paperwork to be placed on the list for the program.

As the years went by, the couple’s three kids grew up and moved out. Soon, grandchildren followed. Then the couple found themselves living in a trailer passed down after Dustin’s grandmother received her own Indian home. The COVID-19 pandemic then forced the couple to stay in the location.

It wasn’t until early May 2022 that the Blacks finally received the phone call they had been waiting to hear for more than a decade.

“We met all the criteria and it’s been a long wait, but we made it,” said Dustin. “For a while I thought it was just going to be one of them things where it probably won’t happen, then it happened. We can’t thank Housing enough.”

Dustin gives all the credit to his wife Amanda for keeping their information updated with the Housing Department and said it’s the biggest piece of advice he could give to those still on the list.

Deason said the Housing Department was “proud” to finally be able to secure a home for the Black family.

“When we called them and notified them of being next on the list, they were so thankful and excited

we found a home. We had called them and had them come look at it and immediately they said they would take it,” he said. “Mrs. Black said it was something they had been praying for and we were able to help them reach their goal of owning a home. So, we were super excited and proud to be a part of that.”

Those interested in being added to the Lease to Own Purchase Program or with questions can call Housing Occupancy Specialist Amanda Mink at 918-871-2803.



Nearly the entire UKB Housing Department traveled to celebrate with the Black family as they received the keys to their new home on May 9 in Jay, Oklahoma.



The Black’s new home is located in Jay, Oklahoma, and comes with a stove and refrigerator.

Title VI Program celebrates 14-year milestone

Despite the pandemic, the Title VI staff has continued to serve elders via a drive-thru at the Jim Proctor and Nutrition Center.

BY BRITTNEY BENNETT
Editor

TAHLEQUAH – In May the UKB Title VI Elder Nutrition Program celebrated its 14-year anniversary of operations within the Jim Proctor Elder and Nutrition Center building.

The Title VI Nutrition Program was originally funded in April 2002 through the Older Americans Act. It would begin operating the following month out of the UKB Community Services building, under the direction of then Assistant Chief Stephen “Archie” Mouse.

The purpose of the program was to serve one hot meal a day to tribal members 55 years and older, while also providing educational materials on proper nutrition.

At the time, the program was feeding an average of 35 eligible participants per day. By November 2022, a total of 508 meals had been served to an average of 30 participants per day.

As popularity grew, so did the daily participation. Special meals were also added to the program, including a Thanksgiving and Christmas dinner that fed approximately 100 tribal members at each event.

By May 2008, the program was moved to the newly built Jim Proctor Elder and Nutrition Center.

In addition to meals, other activities for elders were added including Music Mondays, weekly Bingo, blood pressure and blood sugar checks on the first and third weeks of the month, Fishing Days at the Old River Bridge, a traditional food day and birthday celebrations. Dominos also became popular with Keetoowah elders.

The AmeriCorps VISTA program has also helped expand and assist with the program, with workers building a garden, taking elders on field trips and helping elders construct recipe books.

Holidays have been celebrated in the building as well, including Valentine’s Day, Mother Day, Father’s Day, Veterans’ Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas.

The monthly meal count has now grown to include 2,324 meals with an average of 111 daily.

The Title VI program has also expanded beyond elder nutrition services to also include a Caregiver Program.

A caregiver is anyone who provides physical, emotional or financial assistance for an individual who, for reasons of illness or frailty, cannot manage independently alone.

Grandparents also raising their grandchildren can receive assistance from the program, as it enables caregivers to hire a respite worker for relief.

Respite can be paid for a 12-week period and is currently contingent upon funding availability.

The COVID-19 pandemic in 2019 forced the Title VI program to pivot.

The UKB Tribal Administration shut down the program on March 16, 2020, due to health and safety concerns for the elders, which were one of the most vulnerable populations affected by the virus.

Regardless, the program has continued to serve elders hot meals through its drive thru each day from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

When elders are eventually allowed to gather once more inside the building, they will find the dining hall equipped with new tables and a dedicated staff ready to serve including Director Rebecca Dreadfulwater, Kitchen Manager Archie Vance, Assistant Cook Sue Soldier, Kitchen Assistant Ronald Holden and Clerk Romany Jay Ridge.

“We have missed all our elders and can’t wait for us to be open,” said Chief Joe Bunch. “Thank you to Rebecca, Archie, Sue, Ronald and Roman for your service to our most vulnerable population.”

For more information, call 918-871-2800 or visit ukb-nsn.gov/title-vi.



Keetoowah elder and fluent Cherokee speaker Hominy Littledave is pictured as his friend Ah-nee Vangen interviews him for the Preserving Iyadvneldasdi project at the John Hair Cultural Center and Museum in Tahlequah. PHOTOS BY BRITTNEY BENNETT/GIDUWA CHEROKEE NEWS



Keetoowah elder and fluent Cherokee speaker John Chewey was interviewed for the project by his brother William Chewey at their home in Jay.

Museum grant seeks to uphold lifeways

It will utilize Talking Circles events and 12 oral interviews of Keetoowah elders to help preservation efforts.

BY BRITTNEY BENNETT
Editor

TAHLEQUAH – New efforts are being made by the John Hair Cultural Center and Museum to preserve the Keetoowah language, history and culture amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic thanks to an Administration for Native Americans grant from by the American Rescue Plan.

“These grants are extremely competitive and it’s a big deal,” said Ernestine Berry, JHCCM director. “This project is something I have wanted to do for a long time, record the oral history of our elders. I started thinking about this probably 20 years ago, but I couldn’t find the money to do it back in those days. When this opportunity came up for this grant, we had to seize it.”

The grant project is titled Preserving Iyadvneldasdi (Traditional Lifeways): Intergenerational Engagement for Documenting and Preserving Keetoowah Language, History, and Culture.

Its purpose is “dedicated to re-acculturation efforts to inspire, integrate and strengthen the teaching of Iyadvneldasdi long after project funding has ended.”

The first component of the project involves selecting five Keetoowah culture

bearers, or elders, for an Honored Circle. These individuals will then act as advisors throughout the project, helping build strategies and methodologies for identifying, inspiring, and recruiting other Cherokee speaking elders throughout rural Keetoowah communities to take part.

Elder advisors and several Keetoowah youth speakers will then come together for a Talking Circles event, which will facilitate the sharing of stories within the group concerning the lifeways of the Keetoowahs.

Former UKB Chief Jim Henson will be the main facilitator of each Talking Circles event.

“He will be talking with the group about the Keetoowah culture, the history and the language,” said Berry. “He’ll work to get them to talk and ask things about who they are. He’ll also see how much the participants know and teach them a few things as well, as there will also be younger people in that circle.”

A total of five Talking Circles events will take place in five different communities by the end of the project. A video recording of one of these events will take place, allowing the discussion to be preserved for future generations.

The second component of the proj-

ect will also ask 12 Keetoowah youth language learners to select an elder, first language Cherokee speaker from their family to come together to complete an oral history interview.

Each interviewer will be trained in tribal etiquette and receive language coaching before the interview, which will be conducted in as much Cherokee as possible. A project community coordinator fluent in the language will also be present at each interview to help facilitate the conversation.

“We came up with a list of general questions to get the speaker started, so they can tell their own story,” said Berry. “The future of the tribe depends on people wanting to learn about these individual people. That’s what makes it so interesting, is the individual experiences that you see and hear. We’re also hoping that this would give the ones who aren’t fluent a little spark to want to learn the language.”

Each interview will be video recorded and transcribed for teaching and JHCCM purposes.

“The individual members participating are just so happy to do it. They’re glad the tribe is asking about them and their experiences. It’s a win-win for everyone, especially since we get to preserve their words in our archive forever,” said Berry.

The lifeways and language project is important now more than ever amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, according to UKB Chief Joe Bunch.

“Due to COVID-19, the Keetoowah heritage and language is now more endangered than ever before given the loss of our elder, fluent speakers. Additionally, few Keetoowahs under the age of 60 speak the language. This grant will enable the UKB to advance its initiative to maintain and preserve our lifeways and language, which are essential for our tribal identity, prosperity and survival,” he said.

Berry agrees, noting how delicate the situation is for Keetoowahs as a whole.

“The colonized culture, they wanted to do away with the Indian. Now it has come down to a government that wanted to do away with our language and our culture, they’re providing money for us to bring it back. We’ve gone a full circle,” said Berry. “But this time, there aren’t so many to help bring it back. As a kid, I had Cherokee speakers all around me. I didn’t appreciate it then. I had no idea that one day it would now be in danger of being totally gone.”

However, the grant project gives Berry hope. “With this grant, we just want to try and infuse into our young people who they are and pass on what knowledge we know as elders. Our people have been so helpful in getting on board with this project. I’ve also had a lot of help from our Assistant Director Barbara Foster. She and her husband Kenneth been very helpful. This will be documented for our future generations and I really would like to keep this going.”

The project described was supported by Grant Number 90XN0059 from Administration for Native Americans. Disclaimer: Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors (United Keetoowah Cherokee Council) and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Administration for Children and Families, Administration for Native Americans, or HHS.

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Chief Joe Bunch



AmeriCorps VISTA Service Opportunity



UKB members, especially college students, are encouraged to join AmeriCorps VISTA program, providing service to help strengthen our community. John Hair Cultural Center and Museum VISTA will help develop, implement, and document a plan for community volunteer recruitment, training, and retention program at the Museum. VISTA will also help staff plan projects, create meaningful volunteer opportunities for youth and elders, and help develop a strategic plan to sustain museum programs. To learn more about the benefits of serving, go to: americorps.gov.

To apply for this position visit: My AmeriCorps - Home Page or contact Barbara Foster at 918-871-2794. Position closes June 20, 2022.



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