



YSG GWY A&P | April 2022

# GIDUWA CHEROKEE NEWS

Official News Publication of the United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians in Oklahoma

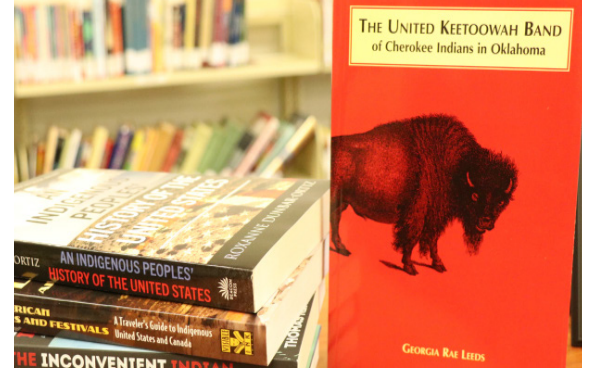
Canadian Coowescoowee Delaware Flint Goingsnake Illinois Saline Sequoyah Tahlequah



**GCN seeks Spring graduate submissions**  
The Giduwa Cherokee News is seeking feature submissions from all spring 2022 UKB graduates. See page 3



**UKB Education Seed Program opens**  
Keetoowah children in fifth and sixth grades are encouraged to participate in the education fund savings plan. See page 5



**Too Fond of Books helps revitalize library**  
The UKB Education Library has worked with local bookstore Too Fond of Books to make the library more "Native-centric." See page 4

## ICW marks Child Abuse, Prevention Awareness Month

BY BRITTNEY BENNETT

**TAHLEQUAH** – For the second year in a row, the Indian Child Welfare Department at the United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians is officially marking the month of April as Child Abuse Prevention and Awareness Month.

Legislation honoring the cause was officially passed via unanimous consent of the UKB Tribal Council in April 2021, with UKB ICW holding its first Child Abuse Prevention and Awareness Day on April 9, 2021.

“When we asked the Council to pass the resolution, we just wanted to remind everyone that we’re here and we do have an Indian Child Welfare Department that is looking out for our children,” said Roxana Wilden, UKB ICW director. “Their decision to pass that resolution just shows that Council stands behind what we do.”

For more than two decades, UKB ICW has been working on behalf of Keetoowah children and their families in cases involving abuse, neglect and

adoption in accordance with the Indian Child Welfare Act.

ICWA is a federal law enacted in 1978 that works to protect tribal children in custody cases from being separated from their families and tribal communities and placed into non-Indian homes. It does so by setting minimum standards between tribes and the state about the handling of such cases, including a first preference for willing and capable tribal relatives.

The UKB ICW program and its social workers advocate for children within the 14 counties and nationwide, answering inquiries, working with state workers and courts to secure safe and healthy homes. This is done either by reuniting children with their parents or by finding Keetoowah foster and adoptive homes.

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## Council re-opens services lobby, approves property purchases in Tahlequah

BY BRITTNEY BENNETT

**TAHLEQUAH** – The United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians Tribal Council unanimously voted to reopen the Federal Programs lobby to the public and purchased two properties during its regular monthly meeting on March 5.

Councilors unanimously voted to reopen the Federal Programs Building beginning March 8.

The reopening outlined several stipulations including that a mask mandate would remain in place, there would be a maximum limit of four individuals in the lobby at a time and temperature checks would be conducted.

Councilors also agreed to allow visitors to enter individual departmental offices when receiving services.

The UKB Tribal Council also agreed to submit bids on two properties in the Tahlequah area.

While bid amounts were not

**See Council, Page 3**

## UKB Tribal Court continues to expand, exercise sovereignty

BY BRITTNEY BENNETT

**TAHLEQUAH** – From hearing divorce cases to addressing guardianship concerns and issuing protective orders, the United Keetoowah Band Tribal Court continues to expand its offered services to tribal members while also transitioning into a new building.

“We’re the Judicial Branch of the tribe and we follow and enforce the law,” said Kristie Bradley, UKB Tribal Court administrator and court clerk. “We want our members to know that as a sovereign nation and federally recognized tribe, we’re able to help them by providing an impartial jury of their peers in legal matters.”

The UKB Tribal Court meets

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The UKB Tribal Court is located in the UKB Judicial Center. From L-R: Deputy Court Clerk Sara Winger, District Judge Douglas Dry, Attorney General Klint Cowan and Tribal Court Administrator and Court Clerk Kristie Bradley. PHOTO GCN/BRITTNEY BENNETT



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Flint  
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Goingsnake  
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Charles Smoke  
918-457-7071



Sequoyah  
Junior Catron  
918-315-0970



Tahlequah  
Alvin Hicks  
918-931-1462



Chief Joe Bunch  
jbunch@ukb-nsn.gov

Siyo, nigada!

I hope everyone is doing well. We shut down operations one day for winter weather the past month, but are now putting the winter months behind us.

We are now moving into the severe weather season, with March, April and May being the most prolific months of the year for severe weather and tornadoes.

Spring is bringing new life. April brings wild onions and gardening. I have heard some employees are taking their kids to softball and baseball practice. Welcome the kids of summer.

Thank you, UKB CCDF, HLDCDC, Education Department and our other departments for sponsoring Eggstravaganza 2022. On April 9th, 2022, we will have a Community Egg Hunt on the UKB Celebration Grounds. There will be 4 age groups and registration begins at 9 a.m. Check advertisements for specific age groups and times.

COVID-19 Pandemic numbers are going down. Oklahoma statistical pandemic information posted once a week, as of this writing, showed there were 16 active cases in Cherokee County, Adair County had 7 cases per week and in Delaware

## Spring brings growth and reasons to celebrate



County, an average of 12 cases per week. The CDC has relaxed many of the precautionary steps in avoiding the viruses, but use your judgement in relaxing these practices. Please continue washing your hands and mask up in large crowds.

Last month the council voted to open up the lobby area to tribal members, with the precaution of wearing a mask and checking temperatures. We welcome you back to the public service buildings and thank you council for discussing, working together and planning for our future on this matter.

In March, we gave elder stipends. You should have received yours by now if we have your correct mailing address. The checks were sent on March 25, 2022. Call accounting or let your councilor know if you have not received your stipend.

Presently, we are investing for the future of our tribe. We have purchased three properties, including Red Bud Apartments, a 24-unit single-bedroom apartments complex in Oaks, Okla. We look forward to having apartments for our elders.

We have recently pur-

chased the former Elks Lodge, named The Venue. This is on W. Willis Road and will serve as a meeting place for the Keetoowah's, as well as rental property to the public. Plans are to return to an activity center with a family atmosphere.

Another property we purchased is Marilyn's Optical building on W. Keetoowah Road, due to Echota Behavioral Health needing more room. This purchase opens the door for new health possibilities and will make a positive impact on our portfolio of services for tribal members and the public.

In May, we are headed to Cherokee, North Carolina for the dedication and celebration of the Eastern Band of Cherokee's purchase of the historic Keetoowah Mound in Bryson City, North Carolina, also known as the Mother town of Keetoowahs.

It served as a language, cultural and event center for all Cherokees. We look forward to this historic dedication, as it preserves our history.

In closing, God Bless the Keetoowahs and bless all the people of the world.

Until we see each other again,  
Chief Joe Bunch

## Editor's Address



Brittney Bennett, Editor  
bbennett@ukb-nsn.gov  
918-871-2843

Siyo, Keetoowahs!

I'm excited for this issue of the Giduwa Cherokee News! This issue is packed with stories and information that I hope will both entertain and assist my fellow members.

With the COVID-19 pandemic, I think we could all use a little help from time to time. I encourage you to use the resources featured in this edition and don't be afraid to ask for help when you need it.

Also as we get deeper into Spring, I'm hoping some of our Keetoowahs would be willing to assist me with some stories.

I would love to feature stories that focus on some of our traditional foods. That said,

I'm hoping to find someone who would be willing to do a story on foraging for and preparing either wild onion or mushrooms. If that's you, please reach out!

I also want to put a call out for any Keetoowah-owned businesses. I would love to feature our business savvy Keetoowahs in the newspaper. Depending on the business, we could also look at completing a video feature for our social media pages.

The Giduwa Cherokee News is also adding advertising to the newspaper! Keetoowah business owners are encouraged to reach out if they would like to advertise their business with us.

We have special prices just for Keetoowahs and would be happy to help you expand to your fellow tribal members! We can even design your advertisement if needed. To place an ad, please use my information on this page.

Lastly, I hope that our Keetoowah graduates at all levels will reach out with their information before the deadline so we can honor their accomplishments in the newspaper. All the details are on the opposite page.

Wado,  
Brittney Bennett

Giduwa Cherokee News  
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P.O. Box 746  
Tahlequah, OK 74465

The Giduwa Cherokee News is mailed free to Keetoowah registered voters, governments, other offices and upon request, to other citizens.

Mail subscription requests and address changes to Giduwa Cherokee News, P.O. Box 746, Tahlequah, OK 74465.

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For advertising rates and media inquiries, including permissions to reprint stories within this publication, please email [bbennett@ukb-nsn.gov](mailto:bbennett@ukb-nsn.gov).

## Council, cont. from page 1

disclosed, councilors unanimously agreed to bid on the Tahlequah Elk's Lodge property The Venue, located at 109 W. Willis Road. The property has previously been used as a bar and concert venue and features a dance floor, stage, restaurant area and upstairs balcony.

The second property approved by councilors was the Tahlequah Family Vision Clinic located at 1640 W. Keetoowah St. Councilors had previously taken a vote via email to agree to purchase the property from Kate Miller and ratified the vote via legislation during the meeting.

It was indicated an earnest check was issued for the property on March 4, though the purchase amount was not disclosed publicly.

Councilors also initially voted to purchase additional property adjacent to the UKB, but the motion was rescinded after further clarification that the property was

two separate land tracts of 30 and 40 acres, not one property ranging from 30 to 40 acres.

Upon clarification, Cooweescoowee District Representative Clifford Wofford made a motion to purchase both properties with a second by Canadian District Representative Eddie Sacks, but the motion was defeated.

An additional motion to only purchase the 30-acre tract was not eligible for a vote due to lack of a second.

During his address, Chief Joe Bunch also informed councilors and the public that the tribe is nearly caught up on its previously passed due audits.

"We have a lot of blessings to be thankful for. Sometimes you can't see the workings of the council as well as the administration and the staff, but I'm here to announce that it is a pleasure and an honor to say the last three years of

audits are caught up," he said. "We did have some findings. Those at this time have been taken care of, or mitigated, so we're moving forward. The final audit for 2021 is, if we do it before June 30, we're caught up. What I'm trying to say is what we did in 14 months, we couldn't do in four years before that. Congratulations Accounting Department, treasurer and all the staff involved with that."

In other news, Council:

- Approved the monthly financial report from the Keetoowah Tag Agency, which outlined \$13,317.43 in revenue, according to Secretary Joyce Hawk;
- Approved the tribal financial report from Treasurer Sonja Gourd, which stated the tribe had approximately \$355,000 in general funds before the March 25 Elder Disbursement and that the UKB Corporate Board rental fees

- were \$21,367.08 per month;
- Approved allocating an additional \$1 million to the Housing Department from American Rescue Plan funding;
- Approved Cooweescoowee District Representative Clifford Wofford to negotiate on a bid for a possible property for purchase in his district;
- Approved the submission of an application to the State Small Business Credit Initiative to apply for small business loan grant money for tribal members;
- and tabled the acceptance of the UKB Corporate Board report until April.

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 was set for April 2 at 10 a.m. at the UKB Judicial Center (formerly the UKB Wellness Center).

## Council calls for members to serve on Budget Committee

BY BRITTNEY BENNETT

**TAHLEQUAH** - The United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians Tribal Council is seeking five exclusive Keetoowah members to serve on its newly created Budget Committee.

Keetoowahs interested in applying should have an existing financial background, specifically in budgets or governmental fund accounting.

The UKB Tribal Council will conduct all applicant interviews and those selected will serve a two-year term.

The need for the committee stems from attempting to create more internal controls for the tribe's Accounting Department, according to Tribal Treasurer Sonja Gourd.

"On many of our audits, we have been penalized for not having enough internal controls," she said. "This committee will change that. They're going to be the beginning of the process. They look at how the money should move. Once they do their job, it shifts to Accounting and we load the budgets. To keep in compliance with the federal government, this is something that needs to happen."

Gourd said the council will

be looking for certain characteristics in the Keetoowahs selected.

"I prefer someone with governmental funding accounting experience due to our large volume of grants. The way our grants are written mean they have to be spent in certain ways. We want someone with experience who knows that we can't put an expense to just any line item. The other main thing I look at is ethics. If you don't have ethics, you don't have anything. It opens the door for misappropriation. Knowledge and ethics have to work hand in hand."

Once selected, committee

members will be required to meet once a month during the normal course of the tribe's fiscal year.

They will also be required to meet as needed in August and September when the tribe reviews and approves budgets.

Those selected to serve will be eligible for a tribal stipend for their services, with specific details to be discussed during the interview process.

Keetoowahs interested in applying should send a resume as soon as possible to Human Resources Director Sara Thompson via email at [sthompson@ukb-nsn.gov](mailto:sthompson@ukb-nsn.gov).

## Giduwa News calls for Spring 2022 graduate submissions

STORY/PHOTO BY BRITTNEY BENNETT

The Giduwa Cherokee News invites all Spring 2022 graduates to submit a photograph and short biography of their accomplishments for the May 2022 edition of the newspaper before April 15.

Recognizing the achievements of Keetoowah students is a top priority for the newspaper, according to Editor Brittney Bennett.

"It's important to celebrate our Keetoowah students," said Bennett. "Speaking from experience, I know what it's like to work really hard towards obtaining a degree. It can sometimes be a long road filled with just as many obstacles as there are accomplishments. That's why taking the time to celebrate the final step of the journey is incredibly important. We want to spotlight our graduates in the newspaper so that they know without a doubt how much their hard work is seen and appreciated."

Submissions are due no later than April 15. They should be approximately 350 words or less and detail the graduate's accomplishment, whether it is graduation from kindergarten,

an Oklahoma Rural Elementary School, high school, vocational school or college.

Graduates should include any academic or sports accolades in their submission.

Vocational and college graduates should also include their field of study, name of their academic degree and any academic distinctions including cum laude, magna cum laude or summa cum laude status, if applicable.

Any graduates who will be continuing their education elsewhere or that already have a job lined up in their career field are also welcome to include that information.

Photographs should be either in a JPEG or PNG file extension format, with highest quality possible. Please include credits to the original photographer if sending in a professional photograph.

All information and photographs should be emailed to Giduwa Cherokee News Editor Brittney Bennett at [bbennett@ukb-nsn.gov](mailto:bbennett@ukb-nsn.gov) no later than April 15 at 5 p.m.



## Keetoowah Grads!

Order your cords and stoles by May 1st! Visit [www.ukb-nsn.gov/education](http://www.ukb-nsn.gov/education) to fill out the form. Return in person or via email to [jwatson@ukb-nsn.gov](mailto:jwatson@ukb-nsn.gov)

## Education, Too Fond of Books partner to revitalize Education Library



Too Fond of Books Director Daniel Tye poses in front of the bookstore's mural in Tahlequah. GCN/BRITTNEY BENNETT

BY BRITTNEY BENNETT

**TAHLEQUAH** – Information on Keetoowah and Native American legends, cultural practices, and historical events are just a few of the latest offerings to grace the shelves of the newly reimagined UKB Education Library.

Instead of books depicting a teenager's love story with a vampire or children falling into another world in the back of a wardrobe, the Education Library is slowly rebranding itself to be more "native-centric" due to the vision of Education Director Dr. Leslie Hannah.

"When I first got here there were several books, but mainly only the mainstream books that you can get down at the public library. They weren't necessarily Native books," said Hannah. "I want books about Natives and historical books and books that people can use to do research about the Keetoowahs in a Keetoowah atmosphere."

It wasn't until Hannah

drove by Too Fond of Books in downtown Tahlequah that he saw the perfect solution.

"I just drove past a bookstore and had one of those bookstore moments," he said. "I went in, we started talking and before you know it, we had a partnership going where they took some of our mainstream collections they could sell. In turn, they gave us a huge discount on the books that we needed to find."

Too Fond of Books Director Daniel Tye spearheaded the project, visiting the Education Library and taking pictures of its shelves while also having discussions with Hannah.

"Dr. Hannah was very insistent that all the books were Native-based or written and created by Natives," said Tye. "We wanted to make sure that we respected those wishes and not just take a list off of a website. There's books with real talk on assimilation, on cultural appropriation. It took about 80 man hours, about two weeks of research, and then mak-

ing sure we were in budget."

Tye said he began searching for books on Keetoowahs before widening his search.

"I made sure to appreciate the beauty of Keetoowah culture before I added a lot of Cherokee authors in general," he said. "We found hundreds of books on Cherokees, but tried to ask what's really appropriate and authentic. It was making sure we had a lot of documentation related to Cherokee history. Then we looked at what's important to the Native community as a whole. That's the rubric we used for the collection."

Tye also used the book service Ingram in conjunction with peer reviewed, scholarly articles to vet each book title.

"We have access to Ingram and we have a book list that other people have, so it's sort of like checking a book on Goodreads and seeing what people are saying," he said. "If it was a newer book, it had to have pretty good reviews and some peer reviewed sources. There's a lot of historical documentation in some of those books. You just research and you make sure you have a credible book from a credible source."

Once selected, it took two months for the nearly 100 books to be compiled together in Tahlequah, with some books even coming from overseas.

"The United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians' book by Georgia Rae Leeds was super hard to find. They literally couldn't find it anywhere in the United States. It actually had to

come from Germany," said Hannah. "It's such a special book and to go through that journey to get it here, it just means something. It's priceless. This is a priceless book about Keetoowahs."

Tye said he enjoyed working with the tribe.

"It was a cool opportunity. We like opportunities to network throughout our community and the Keetoowahs are an important part of our community," he said. "I hope we can work together in the future. It was really fulfilling. I added books to my list that I had never read before, like Native poets. I actually started reading a lot of Native poetry after completing that list. It was fun working with Dr. Hannah and his assistant Jacqueline."

For Hannah, the feeling is mutual.

"One of my goals in this position is I want the Keetoowahs to be recognized as being a critical component of this community, so anytime I can do business with a local entity, I'm going to do business with a local entity. We loved having this partnership and are open to more work together in the future," he said.

The books are slowly being catalogued and are not yet available for checkout.

Keetoowahs and the public are invited to view the revitalized collection at the UKB Education Library anytime during regular business hours, Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. at 4547 S. Whitmore Lane in Tahlequah.

## UKB Education named SHARP Grant awardee

BY BRITTNEY BENNETT

**OKLAHOMA CITY** - It was announced on March 1 that the United Keetoowah Band Education Department was one of 84 native cultural institutions nationwide to be awarded the Sustaining the Humanities through the American Recovery Plan grant from the Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries and Museums.

The announcement was a welcome surprise, according to UKB Education Director Dr. Leslie Hannah.

"Our Grant Writer Marquana Fourkiller initially found the grant and filled in some of the information, while I wrote the narrative and submitted it. Honestly, I forgot about it after that. I've been working on other stuff, so when it was announced, I was pleasantly surprised. The excitement kicked in that now we will be able to do something in our building rather than just rearrange the furniture," he said.

The SHARP grant is administered through ATALM with funds from the National Endowment for the Humanities as part of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 passed by the U.S. Congress.

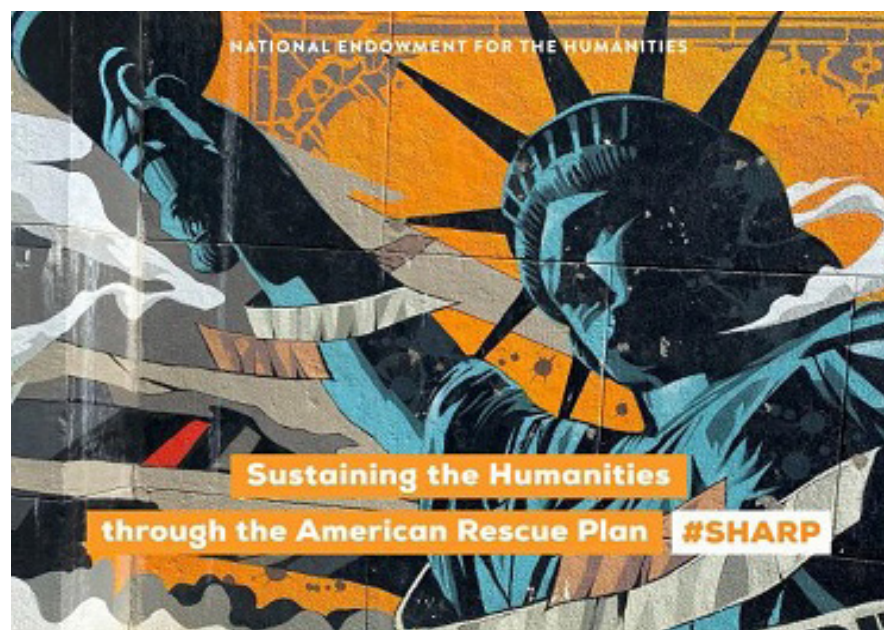
To date, ATALM has awarded \$3.26 million in fund-

ing to help Native Cultural Institutions recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and provide humanities programming to their communities.

"COVID-19 hit Tribal communities particularly hard

and cultural life of Native communities."

As a SHARP awardee, the Education Department received \$49,473 in funds towards its planned project, Advancing Keetoowah Traditional Knowl-



The pandemic is not only responsible for the loss of culture keepers, Native language speakers, elders, and government leaders, but also the closure of cultural institutions, furloughed staff, and reduced programming," said ATALM President Susan Feller. "This opportunity will provide much-needed financial support and create humanities-based programs that bring cultural practitioners and the public together in a dialogue that embraces the civic

edge through the Digital Humanities.

Funds will be used to create "a digital outreach program designed to connect tribal citizens and public audiences with new opportunities to participate in humanities-based educational programs online." Other activities listed as part of the grant include the creation of a virtual classroom that will offer digital presentations to tribal members, school districts and the public.

"We've got the vision," said Hannah. "We want this building to be something that all Keetoowahs can be proud of when come in and we want them to view our building as the center of Keetoowah learning."

While an exact guideline for allowable purchases has not yet been made available, the department hopes to be able to purchase a smartboard to assist in making their computer lab a multifunctional classroom and research space.

"We want to revamp the library and maybe digitize some stuff. We want to get some of our cultural information out there and make it more accessible to the public," said Hannah. "There's no reason our library can't also be a legitimate historical and genealogical research space. We had a wish list and now we're finally going to get to buy from it. It's exciting."

SHARP grantees were selected by an independent Peer Review Committee and include Tribal governments and Native nonprofit organizations, as well as higher education institutions and non-native nonprofit organizations working in partnership with state or federally recognized tribal entities.

A full list of grantees is available at [www.atalm.org](http://www.atalm.org).

## Seed Program becomes official, welcomes Keetoowah students

BY BRITTNEY BENNETT

TAHLEQUAH – UKB officials and Tahlequah's BancFirst came together on March 2 to sign account paperwork that officially opened the UKB Education Department's Seed Program, an opportunity that will give young Keetoowah students a jumpstart on an education savings fund.

BancFirst Customer Service Officer Chris Paul met with Tribal Treasurer Sonja Gourd and Education Director Dr. Leslie Hannah to sign for the accounts. Joining them for the occasion were Education Generalist Jacqueline Watson and Tahlequah District Representative Alvin Hicks.

With the paperwork complete, Hannah said the Seed Program is now accepting applicants and has already enrolled seven Keetoowah children in the savings plan.

Under the program, the Education Department will create and deposit \$100 into an education savings account with BancFirst. The student will then be able to contribute money to their account through activities set by the department.

Funds from the account will then be released to the student upon graduating high school and enrolling in college or a trade program. If a student chooses not to further their education after graduating high school, they will be allowed to access the funds when they turn 21.

The idea for the program came from Hannah and will target enrolling fifth-and-sixth grade Keetoowah students.

"This is intended to give our students a jumpstart, if you will, when they're still young.

When they come out of high school, they will already have a little bit of a nest egg built up from the program. It may or may not be enough to get them through their entire education program, but they're not coming in completely cold with nothing," said Hannah.

Students can earn money by completing a variety of tasks including getting good grades in school, reading and completing community service. Once a task is complete, the student must turn in a form to Hannah for documentation.

"Whoever they worked with that day will sign off on their form. I'll keep a tally of that time and once every semester, so twice a year, I'll go through and tally up the hours. Those hours get multiplied by whatever the rate is we set. For example, they get paid for grades. Getting As are worth \$20. Bs are worth \$10. Anything less gets nothing. I'm not paying for mediocrity. I'm paying for excellence," said Hannah.

Students also have the opportunity to complete "life skills" courses through the Education Department for money, including how to change a flat tire, doing laundry and more.

To remain eligible throughout the program, Keetoowah students must obtain their high school diploma and cannot be convicted of a crime.

"The account still belongs to the tribe until we release it. If the student drops out of school or gets into trouble, it's over. The money reverts to the tribe," said Hannah. "But as long as you're making good decisions and doing what is being asked of you,



From L-R: Treasurer Sonja Gourd, BancFirst CSO Chris Paul, Education Director Dr. Leslie Hannah, Education Generalist Jacqueline Watson and Tahlequah District Representative Alvin Hicks. PHOTO/TRAVIS WOLFE

we're going to keep feeding that Seed account."

The program was specifically created for the Keetoowahs after Hannah reached out to his cousin Jay Hannah, Executive Vice President of Financial Services at BancFirst in Oklahoma City.

"I called Jay with my idea and asked if he had any programs like this. He said, 'If I don't have them, I'll create one for you.' It was perfect. In early December we got together with Tahlequah President Rob Headley, Chief Joe Bunch and Assistant Chief Jeff Wacoche and worked out the details. BancFirst rolled up their sleeves and went to work on designing this for us. Nobody else gets this," said Hannah.

Participating Keetoowah children and their parents can visit any BancFirst location in Oklahoma to periodically see how the account is growing and even add to it themselves.

"In every district, there's a branch somewhere. They're all over the state of Oklahoma, not just here in Cherokee County. They can add their own money to it when they visit the bank. It will be deposits only though, no withdrawals until college or they're 21," said Hannah.

Keetoowah children also do not have to reside in the tribe's jurisdictional area to participate in the program.

"Those that are out of state can do it too," said Hannah. "However, they will have to come here first or make some arrangements with us, either by fax or mail. They also have to understand that it will not be at the bank of their choice since BancFirst is our partner on this."

Hannah is also hoping to expand The Seed Program to newborns in the future.

"Ultimately once we get this on track, I would like to start it at birth, where a Keetoowah child is born, they get their tribal membership and we set up the account. This is such a great opportunity and we hope to one day be able to offer it to all our children."

To enroll in the program, Keetoowahs must complete a W-9 request form and write their child's name and date of birth at the top of the page.

To receive a W-9, contact the UKB Education Department at 918-871-2796, email Education Director Hannah at lhanah@ukb-nsn.gov or visit the "documents" section at www.ukb-nsn.gov/education.

## Bacone College no longer on Higher Learning Commission probation

BY BRITTNEY BENNETT

MUSKOGEE – Bacone College officials announced on March 4 that the educational institution was no longer on accreditation probation by the Higher Learning Commission. The decision brings the institution one step closer to achieving tribal college status.

"This was a nonstop Herculean effort of a succession of administrators and faculty through the last two years," said interim President Dr. Nicky Michael. "We want to acknowledge everyone's prayers and efforts to assist us as we navigated through obstacles, challenges, and denials."

The United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians were the first tribe to agree to charter Bacone College after a unanimous and historic vote on April 6, 2019. The decision was officially announced on April 18, 2019 at Benjamin Wacoche Hall.

A year prior to the UKB's decision to charter Bacone, founded in 1880 as a private, Christian-Baptist affiliated college, the institution nearly closed



its doors due to mounting financial struggles.

It was subsequently placed on accreditation probation by the HLC in February 2019, but has since returned to full accreditation status effective February 25, 2022.

United Keetoowah Band Chief Joe Bunch, chair of the Bacone College Board of Trustees,

said he is thankful to those who have worked diligently toward the accomplishment.

"We are blessed to have an enormous obstacle removed from our path in becoming a tribal college," Bunch said. "On behalf of the Bacone College Board of Trustees, I thank the faculty, staff and students for their involvement in making this

moment come true. Go Bacone Warriors!"

UKB Education Director Dr. Leslie Hannah also congratulated Bacone officials on its success.

"Their status of no longer being on probation, that opens lots of doors for them," Hannah said. "It opens up new revenue streams, students can have certain scholarships that could not be used at institutions on probation, recruiting improves. It opens up a lot of doors that were locked shut for years. I'm happy for them. From sitting in this chair, it makes me more eager to send students to Bacone."

Bacone College continues to work toward becoming a public tribal college with the American Indian Higher Education Consortium as part of its plan for success, according to Michael.

"We continue to appeal to the Bureau of Indian Education for recognition of tribal college status," he said. "Regardless, we are well on our way to a more healthy, healing, and educated future."

## UKB HHS taking LIHEAP applications beginning April 1

BY BRITTNEY BENNETT

**TAHLEQUAH** – Beginning April 1 the Health and Human Services Department at the United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians will be accepting applications for assistance with summer cooling costs through its Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, or LIHEAP.

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

Summer LIHEAP runs April 1 through Sept. 20 and assist 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, whether it is natural gas, electric, propane or wood.

Program eligibility is based upon the 2022 Federal Poverty Guidelines and requires applicants to provide income verification from each member of their household. Assistance is for the entire household and not separate individuals.

Income guidelines are 60 percent of the state median income.

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

HHS Director Ronny Liv-

ers 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.

Per UKB resolution 18-UKB-101, tribal members are required to notify the HHS department 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.

The units must be picked up from the UKB tribal offices unless members make arrangements with their district representative for another method of delivery.

Tribal members can acquire applications from their district representative, directly through HHS or by visiting [www.ukb-nsn.gov/human-services](http://www.ukb-nsn.gov/human-services) for a downloadable "Services Assistance" application.

The application can be returned to the UKB Federal Programs Building, via email to [rlivers@ukb-nsn.gov](mailto:rlivers@ukb-nsn.gov) or via fax to 918-414-4030.

## HHS continues to provide services amid COVID-19 pandemic



BY BRITTNEY BENNETT

**TAHLEQUAH** - The United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians Health and Human Services Department has continued to serve tribal members amid the COVID-19 pandemic, offering several programs to assist Keetoowahs that may have fallen on hard times.

For some specific programs and how they can assist tribal members, read below.

### Emergency Rental Assistance

The Emergency Rental Assistance program works to prevent homelessness by assisting households that are unable to pay rent due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Examples of ERA program services include paying impending or past due rent or paying for a hotel stay to avoid homelessness.

To be an eligible household, an individual must either qualify for unemployment or has experienced a reduction in household income or experienced other financial hardships due to COVID-19 or demonstrates a risk of experiencing homelessness or housing instability. Additionally, the household income must be at or below 80 percent of the area median.

The ERA program prioritizes households where an in-

dividual who has been unemployed for 90 days prior to application for assistance and households with income at or below 50 percent of the area median income.

Assistance is limited to exclusive Keetoowahs unless

a member of another tribe can show proof of denial from their enrolled tribe.

The dwelling must be a rental property with a landlord, as funds do not assist with rent or lease to own properties or business properties.

If approved, households can be provided rental assistance for up to three months at a time, with up to 12 months of assistance available. An additional three months can be provided if needed to ensure housing stability, dependent on funding availability.

In addition to paying monthly rental costs, the program can also help families with security deposits when transitioning to a rental property.

Households on the brink of homelessness also have the option to be placed in a hotel temporarily until housing is secured. Requirements for this part of the program include providing HHS with proof of at least three job searches a week, to be turned in one day before checkout in order to secure an additional hotel stay.

To apply, members must complete an application and provide a Certificate of Degree of Indian Blood, social security cards and driver's licenses for all individuals in the household, their UKB tribal card or other tribal card for those outside UKB membership, income verification documents, a completed indi-

vidual self-sufficiency plan, the landlord's W-9 and a copy of the rental lease agreement.

To receive an application or for additional questions, contact Health and Human Services Advocate Robert Downing via email at [rdowning@ukb-nsn.gov](mailto:rdowning@ukb-nsn.gov), or call the main UKB line at 918-871-2800.

Keetoowahs interested in receiving assistance with rent or lease to own properties should contact the UKB Housing Department at 918-871-2773.

### Burial Assistance

The United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians works with families as a source of comfort during a difficult time by assisting with burial or cremation costs up to \$3,000.

The program is income based. For the family to receive assistance, the deceased must have either been a Keetoowah or other member of a federally recognized tribe, have lived within the tribe's jurisdictional area and have possessed no bank assets, life insurance or burial insurance.

Health and Human Services carries a list of approved funeral home vendors.

For more information about the programs or to receive the list of our vendors, please call the main UKB line at 918-871-2800.

### General Assistance

General Assistance is a gap program that provides \$180 per month towards basic needs for individuals that are between jobs or those unable to work and in the process of applying for Social Security Disability Insurance or Supplemental Security Income.

The program requires recipients that are able to work to develop and agree to an Individual Self-Sufficiency Plan, which

outlines specific steps the individual will take to reach the goal of employment.

Recipients are also asked to participate in a job search activities and requires a job search form to be submitted to the social services advocate for the next assistance check to be submitted.

Those that cannot work and are pursuing SSDI or SSI are not required to participate in job search activities, but must provide updates from Social Security on the status of their application.

Applicants must also concurrently apply for financial assistance from other state, tribal, county, local, or other federal agency programs. It is situated as a last chance program and requires applicants to apply to other sources of assistance, including Temporary Assistance for Needy Families funding for households with dependent children.

For more information on the program and additional program requirements, please call the UKB main line at 918-871-2800 and ask to speak with Health and Human Services Advocate Kaleb Proctor.

### Work Related Cost Assistance

The United Keetoowah Band has also created a separate fund with American Rescue Plan Funds to assist members with work related costs that would otherwise create a barrier towards going back to work.

These costs can include assisting members with paying for new work uniforms and shoes, purchasing gas to allow the member to get to and from work until their first paycheck and minor car repairs.

To apply for funding, contact the UKB main line at 918-871-2800 and ask to speak with the Health and Human Services Department.

## ICW, continued from page 1

“All the work we do is because we want our Keetoowah kids to be loved and to be safe,” said Wilden. “Sometimes the unfortunate part of this job is checking on children where there are reports of abuse or neglect. When someone calls us to report those things, we call the Oklahoma Child Abuse Hotline so we can get the referral from the state. Once that happens, then we can start working.”

The UKB ICW Department currently operates with a staff of five and also has an attorney and prosecutor for child abuse cases.

“We do talk with the kids before placing them and we educate them about their rights,” said Wilden. “We also offer counseling for them at Echota Behavioral Health, because sometimes abuse isn’t always physical, but mental. A lot of times these kids don’t want

to talk to us because we’re their caseworker. Some will, but it’s like they’re suspicious of what we’re going to do with the information. So it’s better for them to go talk to somebody else where they can establish that trust beforehand.”

The services at Echota Behavioral Health are also not limited to children alone.

“The kids are going to be my priority, but those kids need their parents. Sometimes in order to help a child, you have to help the whole family,” said Wilden. “We have partnered with the tribe’s Echota Behavioral Health Center and sent parents to parenting classes, anger management, rehab or to just general counseling, just so they can get the extra help.”

Several UKB departments have also stepped in to assist UKB ICW including Health and Human Ser-

vices, the Henry Lee Doublehead Childcare Development Center, Lighthouse, UKB Housing and Environmental Services.

“It’s nice because the whole tribe is behind us,” said Wilden. “On the birthday or Christmas presents we give to our kids, we always write, ‘love from your UKB family.’ I want these kids, whenever they leave the system, I want them to know and to feel without a doubt that we love them. We don’t have a history without our elders, but we don’t have a future without our kids.”

Those interested in fostering are encouraged to reach out to the department.

“We’re always looking for Keetoowah foster homes. Keetoowahs have their own traditions, their own culture. We want that handed on to our children, so I think it’s more beneficial for

them to be in Keetoowah homes. You don’t have to be married to foster or adopt. You can be single, you can be gay. I don’t care as long as the child is safe and loved.”

Wilden also asked potential foster and adoptive homes to consider kids of all ages.

“Sometimes people just want babies and that’s good, raising a baby from the very beginning. But at the same time, we have so many teenagers that just need some guidance. I know that sometimes they get into trouble, but at the same time, they have a lot of goodness inside them. It just takes somebody to want to find it and bring it out.”

The UKB ICW Department will next play host to the 14th Annual Completing the Circle Event, an Indigenous cultural awareness event for foster families. It will take place on Saturday, May 21 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the UKB Celebration Grounds located at 18300 W. Keetoowah Circle in Tahlequah.

Registration will begin at 8:30 a.m., with the opening ceremony following at 9:30 a.m. Those who attend are eligible for six hours of training credits and travel can be paid for Department of Human Services foster families.

For additional questions about the event, please contact Kelly Tannehill at [Kelly.Tannehill@okdhs.org](mailto:Kelly.Tannehill@okdhs.org), via phone at 918-232-8289 or contact Shawn Shirley at [Shawn.Shirley@okdhs.org](mailto:Shawn.Shirley@okdhs.org), or via phone at 580-761-5731.

If you suspect abuse or neglect, call the Oklahoma Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-522-3511 or the UKB ICW office at 918-871-2809.



(LEFT) L-R: UKB ICW Director Roxana Wilden, Specialist Rolanda Aimerson and Clerk Rylee Grimm at Child Abuse and Prevention Awareness Day in 2021. (RIGHT): UKB ICW Clerk Rylee Grimm hands out stuffed bears to children as part of the program’s outreach. COURTESY

## UKB Tribal Court, continued from page 1

every third Friday of each month beginning at 11 a.m.

It operates under the UKB tribal constitution that was adopted and ratified on October 3, 1950, while the court itself was established through the 1990 Courts Act, according to Bradley.

The court first received an assessment from the Bureau of Indian Affairs in 2017 and began hearing cases in 2019. However, it wasn’t until November 2020 that the court was able to experience significant growth.

In October 2021, the UKB Tribal Council approved the court’s move into the new UKB Judicial Center, formerly known as the UKB Wellness Center.

Tribal Court staff officially transitioned to the new building in January 2022 along with staff from the Indian Child Welfare Department.

“We currently have two District Court judges, three Supreme Court justices and a prosecutor. We also have a public defender for criminal cases only,” said Bradley. “The District Court hears civil, criminal, and juvenile matters, while the Supreme Court hears cases of appeals and other matters as may be conferred by statute.”

Some legal remedies or

grievances that can be taken to UKB Tribal Court include petitions for divorces, petitions for paternity and petitions for name changes. Keetoowahs can also seek protective orders, ask for hearings in guardianship and juvenile cases, request trials for criminal cases and receive judgments in civil and small claims cases.

For those interested in low cost or free legal representation services, Bradley stressed that the UKB Tribal Court does not currently give legal advice.

“We do not give out legal advice, but follow and enforce the law only. However, we do partner with Oklahoma Indian Legal Services and that’s where we recommend our tribal members if they need legal representation.”

Bradley said the court’s services will continue to expand in other areas in the wake of *McGirt v. Oklahoma* in 2010, which established that the Muscogee Creek Nation reservation had never been dissolved. The ruling has since opened the door for the argument that other Native reservations in Oklahoma had also never been dissolved, including that of the Cherokee.

“Since *McGirt*, we have more authority in our jurisdic-

tion. We have had other counties contact us when one of our tribal members has been arrested. They contact us and then our Lighthouse Police takes over the investigation and writes up a report for our prosecutor. The prosecutor will then either pick it up and file charges or decline to press charges in criminal cases. We’re just trying to give our people a fair day in court.”

Bradley said the court also has plans to utilize already existing UKB resources for certain outcomes in cases when appropriate.

“Say someone gets a public intoxication ticket. Obviously they have an alcohol problem, but instead of just racking up fines from the state, we can send their case to our court and assign them projects that give back to our tribal community,” she said. “We are also working on a partnership with tribe’s Echota Behavioral Health Center, whether it be sending members for rehab, anger management, any behavioral health problems and it stays within our tribe.”

In September 2021 the UKB Tribal Court was also awarded permission to participate in the Tribal Access Program for National Crime Infor-

mation program.

It provides tribal governments with means to access, enter and exchange data with national crime information systems, including those maintained by the FBI Criminal Justice Information Services Division and the states.

“We will start doing fingerprinting this summer and background checks soon. TAP is important because it allows our ICW, Housing and Human Resources departments to conduct their own background investigations. Instead of paying a third party, we will be able to pull our own checks. We’re growing and it’s because we’re able to exercise our sovereign rights through our tribal government.”

To learn more about the UKB Tribal Court or to download court petition or affidavit forms, please visit [www.ukbnsn.gov/ukbtribalcourt](http://www.ukbnsn.gov/ukbtribalcourt).

All cases must be paid for when filing. A fee schedule is available from the Court Clerks by contacting Deputy Court Clerk Sara Wininger at 918-871-2769.

To learn more about Oklahoma Indian Legal Services, please visit [www.oilsonline.org/](http://www.oilsonline.org/).

## Wiley E. "Gator" Hicks

Wiley E. "Gator" Hicks was born in Tahlequah, OK, the son of Tom and Ellen (Ballew) Hicks.

Wiley, or Gator to his family and friends, grew up in the Burnt Cabin area and graduated from Tahlequah High School. Early in life, he came to appreciate and was proud to be a member of the United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians.

In 1973, he married Mary J. (Hair) Wynos, but sadly, they were to divorce many years later. This union was blessed with two children, one son, Jammie "Bubba" Hicks and one daughter, Naomi K. Sanders.

Wiley attended the truck driving program at Bill Willis Vocational Center, and began his career as a long haul trucker, traveling all over the country. He worked this profession for over

20 plus years, working for several different trucking companies, Kaywood trucking, Stilwell Foods, and Tyson Foods to name a few. He took great pride in being a trucker, to provide for his family.

He enjoyed taking family out on the road with him, and enjoyed taking his children and grandson for rides in his big truck, and the best part was they got to pull the horn.

Wiley retired in 2015 to enjoy the simple life and do the things he wanted to do, before his health began to fail him.

He liked trips to the library to get books to read, watching movies, watching videos on Youtube, listening to music, going on the occasional drive, hunting and his absolute favorite, doing a little fishing. He had lived in

Idaho for over 20 years and had returned to Oklahoma, he loved hunting in the mountains.

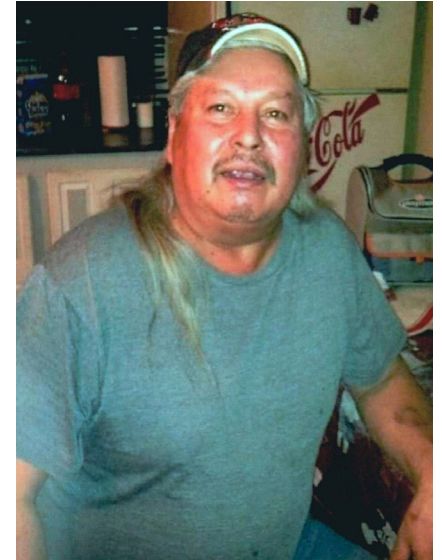
He loved time spent with his children, son-in-law and his grandson, often cooking a meal for them. He also enjoyed visiting with extended family and friends. Wiley was truly loved and will be dearly missed.

He is preceded in death by his mother and father, Tom and Ellen Hicks, one brother, Tommy Hicks, sisters, Jody Espinoza, Lena Christie, and Sally Adcock, and one grandbaby, Baby Sanders.

He leaves behind a very loving family, his son, Bubba Hicks of Stilwell, OK, his daughter, Naomi K. Sanders and husband Frankie of the home, grandson Tyrin "Little Fox" Sanders and companion Tina

Butler, two brothers, Leroy Hicks and wife Patricia of Burnt Cabin, Alvin Hicks and wife Donna of Tahlequah, Ok, as well as many nieces, nephews, cousins and a host of friends and loved ones too numerous to mention.

Until we meet again, rest in peace Daddy. We Love You.



# Eggstravaganza

## Community Egg Hunt

### Saturday, April 9

### UKB Celebration Grounds

Sponsored by UKB CCDF Program and Henry Lee Doublehead CDC! Registration starts at 9 a.m.

We will have hunts for four age groups with thousands of eggs, as well as pictures with the Easter Bunny, bounce houses, hot dogs, sno-cones and more! FREE and open to the public! For more info, call: 918-871-2799.

Age Groups are as follows:

1-3 year-olds @ 10 a.m. | 4-6 year-olds @ 10:20 am  
7-9 year-olds @ 10:40 am | 10-12 year-olds @ 11 a.m.



## Title VI Lunch Menu - April

Please see the menu below for lunch served through our Title VI program.

Currently our dining room is still closed to the public and will remain closed until further notice.

Please park outside in the drive-thru area where a staff member will greet you and deliver your meal.

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.

Please be considerate of our staff. If you feel sick, please stay home. Wash your hands and practice social distancing to help avoid the spread of COVID-19 and its variants. Wado for your understanding!

April 2022						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<b>Jim Proctor Elder Community Center</b> 918-871-2860			<b>April Diamond</b> 		<b>1 April Fools Day</b> "Breakfast for Lunch" Biscuits/Gravy, Eggs, Sausage, Hashbrowns Cinnamon Roll	<b>2 UKB Regular Council Meeting</b> 10 AM Wellness Center World Autism Awareness Day
<b>3 Find a Rainbow Day</b> 	<b>4 Tell a Lie Day</b> Hobo Stew Rice Pilaf Cornbread Dessert	<b>5 Nat. Deep Dish Pizza Day</b> Chicken Fried Steak on Bun, Onion Rings, Garden Salad Dessert	<b>6 National Walking Day</b> BBQ Chicken on Bun Baked Beans Potato Salad, Pickle Texas Toast, Dessert	<b>7 World Health Day</b> Cattfish w/Tatar Sauce Fried Potatoes Black-Eyes Peas Hushpuppies, Dessert	<b>8 Day of Silence</b> Wild Wings w/Dipping Sauce, Carrot/Celery Sticks, 3 Bean Salad Cookie & Dessert	<b>9 Name Yourself Day</b> UKB CCDF Program & HLDCDC - Easter Egg Hunt - Celebration Grounds 9 am-11 am
<b>10 Nat. Hug Your Dog Day</b> 	<b>11 National Pet Day</b> Club Sandwich Broccoli-Mac Salad Chips Dessert	<b>12 Nat. Grilled Sandwich Day</b> Grilled Cheese Tomato Soup Mac N Cheese Dessert	<b>13 Nat. Peach Cobbler Day</b> Salisbury Steak Mashed Potatos/Gravy Brussel Sprouts Hot Roll, Peach Cobbler	<b>14 Nat Gardening Day</b> Tuna Sandwich BBQ Chips Potato Salad Rice Krispy Square	<b>15 Good Friday</b> UKB Tribal Offices Closed 	<b>16 Husband Appreciation Day</b> 
<b>17 "Easter"</b> 	<b>18 Animal Crackers Day</b> Goulash Fried Potato's Garlic Toast, Salad Dessert	<b>19 National Garlic Day</b> Beef Soft Taco's Mexican Rice Ranch Beans Sopapilla w/Honey	<b>20 Look Alike Day</b> Baked Chicken Mashed Potato's w/ Gravy, Green Beans Hot Roll, Dessert	<b>21 Bulldogs are Beautiful Day</b> BBQ Bologna Potato Chips Pork N Beans, Pickle Texas Toast, Dessert	<b>22 Earth Day</b> Grilled Chicken Salad Twice Baked Potato Bread Stick Dessert	<b>23 Nat. Lover's Day</b> Inclement Weather Policy- When Tahlequah Schools Are Closed - Nutrition Center May Be Closed Due to Weather
<b>24 Pigs in A Blanket Day</b> PLEASE CHECK ON YOUR ELDERS AND NEIGHBORS WA-DO	<b>25 National DNA Day</b> Veggie-Hamburger Stew Hominy Cornbread Dessert	<b>26 National Pretzel Day</b> Chicken Strips Mashed Potato/Gravy Peas & Carrots Dessert	<b>27 Nat. Prime Rib Day</b> Spaghetti w/Meat Sauce Mixed Veggies Garlic Toast, Dessert	<b>28 Superhero Day</b> Hamburgers w/Fixing's Tatar Tots Cake Ice Cream	<b>29 National Arbor Day</b> KITCHEN CLOSED CLEANING DAY	<b>30 Nat. Honesty Day</b> Inclement Weather Policy: If weather is bad there will be no home delivered meals due to safety of our driver.