

Atoka County Times under new ownership

The Atoka County Times is under new ownership.

Jeff and Jack Mayo, brothers and third generation owners of Cookson Hills Publishers, Inc., purchased the weekly newspaper from Louise Cain. Cain is retiring after publishing the Atoka County Times for more than 50 years.

In addition to the newly acquired Atoka County Times, the Mayo family also owns the Sequoyah County Times, Vian Tenkiller News, McIntosh County Democrat, The Eufaula Indian Journal, Eastern Times-Register, Okmulgee Times and Henryetta Free-Lance.

"I love community newspapers and I think Atoka is a great place to provide compel-

ling community journalism to our readers," said Jeff Mayo. "I want to inform and promote our communities and help provide readers with information about what is going on in their local government and schools."

The new owners are third-generation newspaper publishers of the Sequoyah County Times in Sallisaw, but their experience in the industry goes back even further.

Jeff and Jack Mayo are the fifth of six generations in printing and publishing. Their great-great-great-grandfather was the first printer in Indian Territory and later started the first newspaper in Fort Smith, Arkansas.

Their grandparents, the



New Owners: Jeff & Beth Mayo

late Wheeler and Florence Mayo, started the Sequoyah County Times in 1932. Their father, the late Jim Mayo, was publisher from the early 1970s until he became publisher emeritus in 2016. Jeff Mayo's wife, Beth, serves as business manager of the company, just as his late mother, Becky, had until her retirement in 2020.

Jeff received a degree in community journalism from the University of Kansas in 1994. He continued his education at the University of Minnesota Law School where he received his juris doctor in May 1997.

He married Beth in October 1999 and the couple moved back to Oklahoma in 2003 to work at the family newspaper in Sallisaw.

Jeff and Jack bought the Vian and Roland newspapers in 2005, Eufaula and Checotah in 2008 and Henryetta and Okmulgee in 2014.

Jack Mayo retired after a 25-year career at Microsoft and now serves as CTO of Cookson Hills Publishers, Inc.

Are you ready? January 21 is the deadline for all mailers to electronically submit postage statements and mailing documentation.



The Oklahoma Press Association recently surveyed legal newspaper members to see if they are uploading their documents. **Of the 153 surveys emailed, 95 newspapers responded as follows:**

70 have accounts on the Business Customer Gateway
59 of those upload their documents to the BCG

For more information on how to set up an account on the BCG and/or how to upload, reach out to the OKC, Tulsa or Jonesboro BMEUs:

OKC: 405-815-2333, Carla or Jake
Tulsa: 918-270-7533, Terri or Sidney
Jonesboro, AR: 870-931-5910, Jessica

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From the President

By Sheila Gay

Publisher of the Woodward News • OPA President 2023-2024



As we all wrap up National Newspaper Week, I hope our community took pause and reflected about what our industry brings to the community.

I could never eloquently write the words that OPA Executive Vice President Mark Thomas penned in his column, “Value of a hometown newspaper,” and the powerful impact those words had on us.

Along with Mark’s column, we added our editor, Johnny McMahan’s personal rendition of how newspapers have impacted his career. We also centered in on several of our local “celebrities” for their viewpoints of newspapers. You know, the ones that our town has come to respect and receive inspiration from.

Most of you may not read the Woodward News, but I thought I would share some of the quotes we received from the pillars of our community. I hope they inspire and energize you to continue showing up, telling the stories and reminding ourselves why we do this.

- **Mayor:** “It’s the lifeblood of the community. It’s difficult for a town to stay in existence if they don’t have a newspaper.”
- **Tourism Director:** “Local papers are still investing in a profession that is one of the four cornerstones of freedom....with conviction that the right thing to do is to provide well documented truths to readers.”
- **Chamber President:** “The newspaper and their staff are also members of the local community, which makes it even more credible.”
- **High Plains Technology Marketing Coordinator:** “The local newspaper plays a crucial role in connecting HPTC with the community.”
- **High School Principal:** “Local newspapers are important because they can help to strengthen communities.”
- **City Manager:** “Today, we want to reach as many as we can and having a local newspaper is one of those key tools.”
- **McDonald’s owner:** “Our paper is often the only source of local news and events, past and future. I read nearly every single issue and it’s a critical part of the fabric of our community.”
- **Financial institutions:** “Having access to a local paper still remains an important asset to all communities. You can’t be informed if you don’t know what’s going on, and the newspaper is a good way to do that. It serves a valuable purpose in our area from school activities to local government meetings and numerous other events and meetings that we need to be aware of.”

These words bring what we do into perspective and I hope you had similar instances of gratitude for what we do.

My greatest hope in my season as your OPA President is that we remain steadfast in our quest to improve awareness of the vitality of our papers.

All we need to do is make a difference and impact our community.

As Mark so wonderfully said, “It’s about people.” And who cares about them? We do!

If no one has told you lately, you are doing a great job and you’ve got this!

OPA CALENDAR OF EVENTS

For more information
on upcoming events, visit
okpress.com/events

OPEN MEETING & OPEN RECORDS REGIONAL SEMINARS

- **OCT. 30 – ENID**
Autry Technology Center,
Room 201, 1201 W. Willow
Rd., Enid, OK 73703
- **NOV. 13 – McALESTER**
Eastern Oklahoma State
College, Clark Bass Building
Auditorium, Room 215, 1802
E. College Ave., McAlester, OK
74501
- **DEC. 11 – OKC**
Metro Tech, Business
Conference Center Auditorium,
1900 Springlake Drive,
Oklahoma City, OK 73111

Mon., January 15, 2024 ONF HOST NEWSPAPER INTERNSHIP APPLICA- TION DEADLINE

Applications for the 2023 paid summer internship program are now available. The deadline for host newspaper applications is Jan. 15 and student applications are due Feb. 15. The program is made possible by a grant from the Inasmuch Foundation.

Thur., February 8, 2024 LEGISLATIVE SUMMIT AT STATE CAPITOL

Publishers and editors are encouraged to join us at the State Capitol on February 8 for the annual Legislative Summit.

Learn the best practices for Public Notices at
okpress.com/public-notice-training

The Oklahoma Press Association offers three videos that describe and illustrate the standards and best practices for publication of notices along with downloadable material.

Goucher pleads guilty to negligence and open meeting act violations

Monte Wayne Goucher, the former executive director of Circuit Engineering District 7 (CED 7), pleaded guilty on Sept. 27 to two misdemeanor charges of a public official neglecting duty and Open Meeting Act violations.

Goucher was indicted in March last year on felony charges of embezzlement and conspiracy for his involvement in the alleged embezzlement of funds from both CED 7 and the State of Oklahoma. He pleaded guilty after the felony counts were reduced to the two misdemeanor charges.

District Judge Donna L. Dirickson sentenced Goucher

to 45 days of jail time in the Custer County Jail, along with a \$10,000 restitution. In addition, Goucher is barred from ever again serving in government and will be on probation until Sept. 25, 2026.

Goucher and three other men – Tim Bingham, former Kiowa County Commissioner and president of CED 7 board; Joe Don Dickey, former Tillman County Commissioner; and Jerry Lynn Dean, who provided consulting services to CED 7 – were accused of embezzling more than \$2 million from CED and the State of Oklahoma after a 2020 investigative state audit

found CED 7 took out a loan of \$2.35 million to open an asphalt emulsion plant in Clinton to manufacture and market a proprietary formula of road repair and maintenance product.

After the felony charges of embezzlement and conspiracy were dismissed, Bingham, Dean and Dickey pleaded “no contest” on March 6, 2023, to reduced charges of public official neglecting duty and Open Meeting Act violation.

According to court records, each of the three defendants were ordered to pay \$1,000 in restitution and received a four-year deferred sentence.

Ashley Torres joins Poteau Daily News

Ashley Torres has joined the staff of the Poteau Daily News as a reporter.

Torres grew up in DeQueen, Ark., and. Now lives in Fort Smith.

For the last few years she has worked as a web content writer.

“I am so appreciative to have the opportunity to pivot and work in news,” Torres

said. “Informative and factual news is something I have always valued, and I am so glad that I get to be a part of that now.”

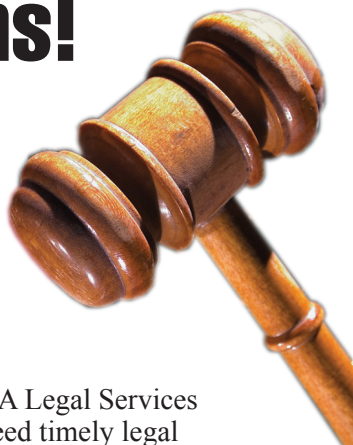
You've Got Questions!

- Can I photograph minors without consent?
- Can police deny access to records by issuing a press release?
- Should I alter my archives when a person demands it?
- Can I report inaccurate testimony given in open court?
- What are the laws about liquor advertising?

These are questions answered by the attorneys for the OPA Legal Services Plan members in recent months. OPA members always need timely legal advice on issues related to publishing.

You should join OPA's LEGAL SERVICES PLAN!

See www.OkPress.com/LSP or contact Mark Thomas at (405) 499-0033 or toll-free in Oklahoma 1-888-815-2672 today!



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OG&E[®] PHOTO CONTEST



Leah Whidden keeps paddling as daughter Layla bails water from the Lovely Ladybugs boat in the waters of Medicine Creek during the 2nd Annual Medicine Park Cardboard Box Regatta.

Photo by SCOTT RAINS, *The Lawton Constitution*, August 27, 2023



The WWII Airborne Demonstration Team recently hosted Summer Jump School 2023. Pictured is the Team's WWII era C-47, Boogie Baby. The team utilizes "chase" planes for media and photography purposes and this photo was shot through the window of their chase plane, the T-6 Texan, built in 1949. Hanging out the door checking wind speeds and other pertinent information is Henry Viswat.

Photo by KATHLEEN GUILL, *Frederick Press-Leader*, August 4, 2023

AUGUST 2023
DAILY, SEMI- AND
TRI-WEEKLY WINNER:
SCOTT RAINS

The Lawton Constitution

AUGUST 2023
WEEKLY WINNER:
**KATHLEEN
GUILL**

Frederick Press-Leader

*The OGE Photo Contest
was judged by a member of the
Oklahoma Journalism
Hall of Fame.*

View all winning photos
and contest rules at
**OkPress.com/
OGE-Photo-Contest**

**Enter and Win
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For more information
about the photo contest,
visit [okpress.com/
oqe-photo-contest](http://okpress.com/oqe-photo-contest)



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OPA Board meets to discuss finances, membership

The Oklahoma Press Association Board of Directors met by video conference call on September 21, 2023.

Officers attending were President Sheila Gay, Woodward News, and Vice President Shauna Belyeu, The Eufaula Indian Journal.

Directors attending were Past President Zonelle Rainbolt, Wesner Publications; Suzie Campbell, Countywide & Sun; Erin Dyer Thompson, El Reno Tribune; Ed Choate, Muskogee Phoenix; and Brett Wesner, Wesner Publications.

Staff members present were Executive Vice President/Secretary Mark Thomas and Member Services Director Lisa Sutliff. Guests attending were Jake Winkler, Partner, Arledge & Associates, P.C.; Jeannie Freeman, OPA Accounting Manager; and Rod Serfoss, OPA Business Consultant. Treasurer David Stringer was absent.

After calling the meeting to order, Gay asked the board to review minutes of the July 20, 2023, meeting. The minutes were approved as presented.

In the financial review, auditor Winkler said the audit of OPA and LSP for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2023, fairly represent the position of OPA and LSP. Arledge noted the association should implement and review control policy regarding depreciation on fixed asset activities. The board acknowledged receipt of the OPA audit and OPA/OPS combined audit. Board members also reviewed and acknowledged receipt of the OPA and LSP financial statements and investment reports as of August 31, 2023.

MEMBERSHIP

After reviewing the Individual Professional membership definition, board

members agreed the board should update the definition to specifically address who is eligible for individual professional membership. In addition, the board agreed that individual persons working in public relations or working for organizations qualified to be OPA members should apply under that organization and not as individual professional members.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

The Awards Committee made three recommendations, which were accepted by the Board.

The recommendations are to clarify requirements for personal columns, allow print and online projects to qualify for Sales Promotion Category, and to require the magazine contest be submitted in physical copy form.

Campbell said the Awards Committee discussed ways to boost participation in the Small and Large Ad categories of the Better Newspaper Contest, including email to ad directors with examples of winning ads and a reminder to log their best ads for easier access during the contest season. The committee also agreed to include one or more Better Newspaper Contest categories that highlight digital storytelling and will review possible language at its next meeting.

Thompson said the Education Committee discussed preliminary plans for the 2024 annual convention, which will be held June 7-8, 2024, at the Sheraton Hotel in downtown Oklahoma City. Due to low participation from congressional members in recent years, the committee plans to instead hold a Q&A session with state legislative leaders.

The committee also requested 2025 convention

site proposals from the Grand Casino in Shawnee, the Delta Hotel and Reed Conference Center in Midwest City, the Edmond Convention Center and Hilton Garden Inn, and the Norman Embassy Suites.

Wesner said the Government Relations Committee added an additional meeting on Oct. 26 to discuss and plan future legislative proposals. Thomas said Ted Streuli of Oklahoma Watch will speak to legislators on Sept. 25 during an interim study meeting about the importance of mug shot access. Thomas also said five free Open Meeting and Open Records seminars are scheduled with the Attorney General's office this fall.

Choate said the LSP Committee had three recommendations for the board's consideration including approval of the LSP legal counsel letter of engagement for Doerner, Saunders, Daniel, and Anderson for 2023-2024, create a poster or notification with procedures for members to follow if law enforcement demands seizure of electronic devices and information, and to create a document for unpaid contributors to determine and establish copyright ownership and legal responsibilities for contributors submitting copyrighted material for publication. The board accepted the recommendations.

The LSP committee also reviewed the LSP quarterly report, announced that the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press (RCFP) hired Denver Nicks to serve as its new attorney for the Oklahoma Local Legal Initiative; the DSDA legal staff will analyze the UPEPA (Uniform Public Expression Protection Act); and the intention to draft LSP plan language amending the existing Criminal Defense

Reimbursement provision of Plan B benefits.

Gay said the Revenue and Promotion Committee is working on a package of general content that members may publish during Oklahoma Newspaper Week, which will run in conjunction with National Newspaper Week on October 1-7, 2023. The committee also discussed the idea of a traveling sales consultant that could assist OPA member advertising staff and commended the collection of revenue ideas being shared quarterly.

Rod Serfoss began working as OPA's business consultant last year to provide advice and recommendations to members on different issues. Since January, he has visited about 70 newspaper offices across the state where he has assisted with printing issues, business questions, USPS frustrations and records access.

OTHER BUSINESS

In other business, board vacancies were discussed.

The board appointed Connor Choate of the Marietta Monitor to fill a three-year term ending June 30, 2026, and Shaun Witt of Oklahoma Watch to complete an unfilled term until June 30, 2024.

The board also accepted the new engagement agreement for the legal services of Doerner, Saunders, Daniel, and Anderson to OPA, OPS and LSP in FY 2023-24.

Board members reviewed a summary of the Directors & Officers liability insurance for the term of March 31, 2023, to March 31, 2024.

Thomas reviewed the Conflict of Interest Statement and asked new board members to sign the statement and send it to OPA.

Continued on Page 6

OPA Board Meeting

Continued from Page 5

Thomas asked the board to make a 2024 legislative request and spend approximately \$1,400, if approved, to pay for memorial bridge signage honoring Dr. Harry Heath on State Highway 51 in Stillwater. Heath died in 1996 at the age of 77. He was a longtime director of the Oklahoma State University School of Journalism and Broadcasting and wrote "Heath's Critique" for The Oklahoma Publisher for 30 years. Board members approved the request.

OPS BOARD MEETING

Board members approved minutes of the July 20, 2023, meeting as presented.

The Oklahoma Press Service Inc. audit was reviewed by the board. Winkler, a partner at Arledge & Associates, P.C., said OPS is in a good cash position and the financial statements represent fairly the financial position of OPS on June 30, 2023. The board acknowledged receipt of the OPS audit.

Board members also reviewed the OPS profit and loss statement.

Thomas said advertising sales have exceeded budget, but classified network revenue is lower than expected.

The board acknowledged receipt of the OPS profit and loss statement for the period ending August 31, 2023.

Michael Bush returns to Mangum Star-News

Michael Bush recently returned to the Mangum Star-News as managing editor.

Bush previously served as publisher and editor from 1988 to 1999 when the newspaper was sold to the Paxton family. The Mangum Star-News is now owned by Wesner Media.

Since leaving Mangum, Bush has worked for the Vernon Daily Record and the Altus Times as an editor, and for the last six years he worked at KWHW/KH-106 radio as news director.

"I am very excited to be a part of the Mangum community again," said Bush. "My family and I love the friends

we made during the time we lived and worked in Mangum before and look forward to reconnecting with those we made special connections with, both personally and professionally.

"Mangum is a great community and I hope to serve them in my role at the Mangum Star-News even better than before."

While living in Mangum, Bush was named Person of the Year by the Greer County Chamber of Commerce. He also was a member of the Masonic Lodge #61 and was a founding member of the Mangum Jaycees.



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chickasaw.net

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Appleby retires from TW

Mark Appleby, the Tulsa World's audience growth and distribution director, recently retired after almost 46 years with the company.

Appleby said loyal subscribers and the people he's worked with are the reasons he stayed so long at the World.

"People are just passionate about their Tulsa World," he said. "For so many still, the print edition is the only way they are going to read the news. They trust us and care about what's going on."

Appleby was 19 when he began his career at the Tulsa World. When he started, there were 1,500 carriers working two shifts, tossing papers in the morning for the Tulsa World and in the afternoon for the Tulsa Tribune.

He moved up to circulation manager in 2001 and then in 2013 took on his current role.

Appleby said it's hard to

deliver newspapers to thousands of houses and hundreds of businesses by 6 a.m. each day.

"But the journalism is important, and we do such a good job at that," he said. "We have to get it there, and we have so many dedicated to doing that each day."

In addition to the Tulsa World, the carriers deliver the New York Times, Wall Street Journal and USA Today each day. They also deliver the weekly newspapers owned by Lee Enterprises, the Tulsa World's parent company: the Sand Springs Leader, Owasso Reporter, Skiatook Journal and Wagoner County American-Tribune.

"The Tulsa World has been one of the best places to work because every department has had great people for many, many years," Appleby said. "We produce a great newspaper that people want in their home each morning."

Worth Mentioning

CLINTON DAILY NEWS READERS SHOW OFF PETS

Hill's Pet Nutrition Clinton is asking readers of the Clinton Daily News to show off their pets.



Got A Cool Pet?

Show It Off!

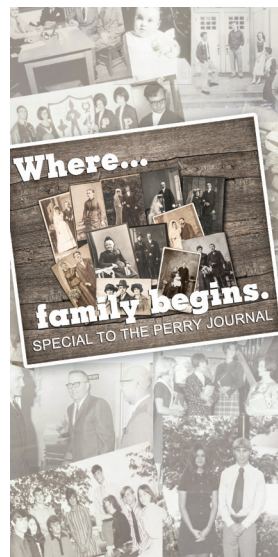
Clinton Daily News readers may submit photos of their dogs and cats to show just how cute they are!

Photos will be accepted via email by the newspaper and the finalists will be featured on a full-color, full-page special. Readers will then be encouraged to vote for their top three dogs or cats and the top three vote getters will receive fantastic prizes courtesy of Hill's Pet Nutrition! Hurry! Voting ends Oct. 19!

Send your pet photos to:
photos@clintondailynews.com
 Be sure to include pet's name and contact info.

Contest results will be published and the grand prize winner – owner and animals – will have their picture featured on the front page of the Clinton Daily News.

PERRY DAILY JOURNAL PUTS THE FOCUS ON FAMILY



The Perry Daily Journal focused on "Where Family Begins" as the theme for their annual special edition.

The edition included 32 pages full of stories about area families as well as articles from previous Perry publications in the Sept. 6 issue.

"This is a year-long project that the whole staff works on," said Lori Battles, general manager of the PDJ.

A new special edition with a new theme is produced annually and coincides with the land run of Perry.

Battles said the edition sells around \$8,000 to \$10,000 in advertising.

"We offer the customer a BOGO," said Battles. "They can purchase one size

ad. With that ad they can either have a story about their business (that we write or they submit) that equals that same size or they can have two ads the same size. Or they can make one large ad."

WEATHERFORD DAILY NEWS SUBSCRIPTION DRIVE

The Weatherford Daily News recently presented a \$1,155 check to the Agape Medical Clinic. The funds were collected during the newspaper's summer subscription drive. "It's not just the WDN, Publisher Phillip Reid said. "It's all the subscribers who pitched in the extra \$5." Agape Medical Clinic provides medical services for free or low-cost to all individuals.

TULSA WORLD SERIES FEATURES PHOTOGRAPHERS

"Moments in Tulsa" is a photo series by Tulsa World photographers. The idea behind the photo series was simple, said Mike Simons, a photojournalist at the World.

"Instead of 'roaming for wild art,' we started publishing all the interesting photos that we take that don't really have a home," Simons said.

Simons said that in the past photos that didn't fit into the traditional "wild art" definitions usually existed on the photographer's social media channels.

"In the past, some of the most engagement I'd get on my social media was for photos that didn't really have a home in the paper," Simons said. "Now they do!"

Simons said it's also a great way to publish photos from assignments that don't make the edit.

"A lot of times we make interesting photos on assignments that have nothing to do with the story we are there to photograph," he said. "Our Moments feature is a great place for those photos."

Subscribers can view Moments in Tulsa photos at tinyurl.com/4syue5mr.



Above: Construction crews work on scaffolding surrounding the steeple of Trinity Episcopal Church in downtown Tulsa. The team hopes to finish the steeple by the time the church is reopened. The team will be working on the scaffolding around the church, having to move all of their extra equipment in the early afternoon, which isn't the best time of the day.
 — Daniel Bledsoe, staff photographer

Right: Dan Brown with Oxygenia Spinal cleans the windows on the first National Bank building in Pawlana. Brown is using a pump water cleaning system that will allow him to get high.
 — Mike Simons, staff photographer

THREE COOKSON HILLS PUBLISHERS NEWSPAPERS ENCOURAGE READERS TO 'THINK PINK' IN OCTOBER

The Okmulgee Times, Henryetta Free-Lance and McIntosh County Democrat in conjunction with Luv Ford of Henryetta are encouraging the community to "Think Pink" during October, which is Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

The three newspapers, all part of the Cookson Hills Publishers family, will have their publications and websites turned Pink this month and give readers a chance to win a \$100 gas card at the end of the October.

To win, readers will visit the newspaper's websites and click on the Luv Ford pink ad where they will fill out a form in order to be entered in the drawing. Three winners – one from each market area – will be selected to win a gas card.



FREE SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR CHEROKEE NATION CITIZENS

The Cherokee Nation and the Cherokee Phoenix are continuing their partnership in providing free subscriptions for Cherokee Nation citizens to the newspaper through 2024. The Free Phoenix for All program, now entering its third year, has provided nearly 80,000 households with a free newspaper subscription in 2023.

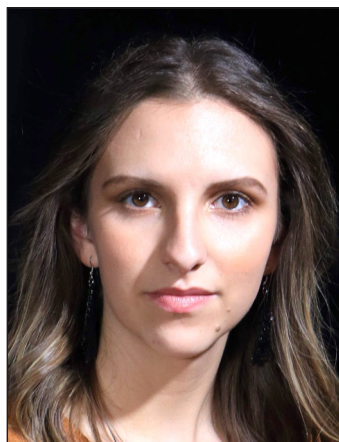
Meet the 2023 Summer Interns



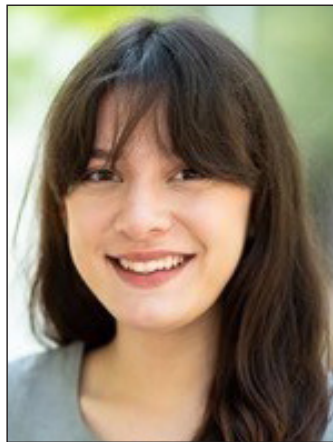
Thanks to a grant from the Inasmuch Foundation, 17 college students received paid internships at various newspapers and online news organizations across the state.

This month, the final five interns share their experiences.

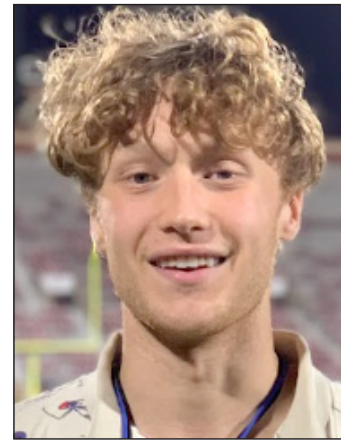
The internship program, now in its 16th year, is facilitated by the Oklahoma Newspaper Foundation.



Alyssa Dalley-Schofield



Ainsley Martinez



Sam Kozlowski



Annabella Potts



Khai Tran

BY ALYSSA DALLEY-SCHOFIELD, *Midwest City Beacon* — Oklahoma City Community College

I interned at the Midwest City Beacon, which covers the Midwest City and Del City areas. I am from the Oklahoma City and Moore areas and when I started this internship, I was very unfamiliar with Midwest City. However, I have thoroughly enjoyed being able to experience working in the journalism field.

I have interviewed numerous people, taken photos at events,

““ *My favorite aspect of this internship has been the opportunities presented to me.*

written a lot of stories and learned more about journalism than I thought I could. Gathering information from people I never knew in a city I was not familiar with

was a challenging yet wonderful experience.

My favorite aspect of this internship has been the opportunities presented to me. For

example, one of my favorite projects was covering the Tinker Air Show and the Blue Angels. Being able to photograph the arrival of the Blue Angels alongside news stations such as News 9, KFOR

and Fox 25 was an unbelievable experience. Not only that but interviewing the flight leader himself was incredible. After that, I had the opportunity to photograph the Tinker Air Show.

This internship has been an experience I will take with me moving forward in my journalism career.

BY AINSLEY MARTINEZ, *Oklahoma Watch* — University of Central Oklahoma

This summer, I interned at a nonprofit for the first time — but my experience at the organization started a year earlier at a previous internship.

Last summer at The Oklahoman, I covered a different story every day, but I had the same routine. I drove from my humble rental home in Edmond to bustling downtown Oklahoma City. When I arrived at Century Center's parking garage entrance, I rolled down my window to scan my card and waited for the striped barrier gates to open — a feat for someone with short arms and a disabled left hand. Some days, I would spend five minutes searching for my parking card, scrambling as I saw a line of annoyed drivers waiting behind me in my rearview mirror. Although my routine stayed the same, that parking card changed locations daily: moving from my wallet to my car's seat cushions to some other obscure place in my vehicle.

When I finally made it up the elevator to the second floor, I walked past other news organizations, all with transparent windows. I treated my walk to the end of the hall like a trip to a museum, as if the various newsrooms were showcased in glass houses. While most companies carried similar corporate news ambiances, one organization distinctly stood out. Through the glass windows, I saw a mannequin standing in the

office's lobby sporting a T-shirt that read, "Oklahoma Watch: Real Journalists, Real News."

For us at The Oklahoman, it was comical and slightly absurd: a joke full of many unknown origins. Every day, when I matched eyes with the mannequin, who I now

after weeks of edits on a singular story, but my dad reminded me of the Watch's structural differences. As an investigative nonprofit, editors can take their time and fully flesh out stories. This was artisanal journalism: small batch, high quality.

“ *The staff supported my ideas on covering people with disabilities and allowed me to explore the under-represented issues of accessibility.*

know as Maeve, I always wondered what lay inside Oklahoma Watch and what made it different.

This year I had the opportunity to find out.

When I entered Oklahoma Watch in June, I noticed the workplace matched the fun environment. Weekly staff meetings felt like a familial gathering, but within professional parameters. The reporters and editors had many different perspectives on journalism and news coverage, but no one seemed hesitant to vocalize their opinions or defend their approaches.

The staff supported my ideas on covering people with disabilities and allowed me to explore the underrepresented issues of accessibility. This opportunity solidified my desire to focus on disability coverage.

At times, I felt incompetent

the staff for hours and, on many occasions, I did.

I'm grateful to have completed the journey with fellow interns Yasmeen Saadi and Jazz Wolfe. It wouldn't have been the same without them.

Shaun Witt brings great energy and life to the office. Though not an editor or reporter, in many ways he is the glue of the newsroom: making sure the staff stays connected.

There are some people that you would love to read a whole biography about and, for me, everyone at Oklahoma Watch is one of those people.

This summer, I had the same routine, but a different experience. I still drove from my same rental home in Edmond to the same parking garage in Oklahoma City. But this time, my card stopped its daily commute and stayed in my purse. No longer did I feel rushed at the barrier gates. I could take time scanning my card, just like I could take time developing a story. The fast-paced work at daily newspapers is necessary for the community, and vital to my education, but the investigative work at Oklahoma Watch feels more my speed (granted, I could still learn to move a little faster). But if it takes longer to open my professional barrier gates than I anticipated, I should still enjoy the ride as a student.

[Former] Executive Editor Mike Sherman and Executive Director Ted Streuli gave the kind of feedback any serious journalist would crave, examining each line of the story and not settling for merely adequate material. Despite my clear need to improve, they fostered my potential rather than punishing me for my faults.

I enjoyed working with Paul Monies and I'm honored to have him as a mentor. He maintains a humble and kind demeanor, but carries the skills and resume of the sometimes cynical and egotistical veteran reporter.

I learned so much from reporters Whitney Bryen, Keaton Ross and Jennifer Palmer. They are hardworking, fast on their feet and will drop everything to help a fellow reporter. I had fun chatting and bouncing ideas off reporter Lionel Ramos. I could talk to

BY SAM KOZLOWSKI, *Guthrie News Leader* — University of Central Oklahoma

Writing stories at the Guthrie News Leader has taught me so much about myself and invigorated my love for storytelling.

Throughout my time in Guthrie, countless stories unfolded within the tight-knit community. I got to know and befriend many people

within the community, including brilliant artists, Super Bowl champions and war heroes.

The Leader staff provided me with strong reporting knowledge and trusted in my abilities. Between breaking news, sports and feature stories, the internship

gave me excellent practice in various forms of print.

I'm incredibly thankful for the creative freedom I was given and the smiling faces who welcomed me in. I consider my coworkers family, so thank you Jennifer Tennyson, Rochelle Stidham, Erin Stevens and Chris Mallow.

“ *The Leader staff provided me with strong reporting knowledge and trusted in my abilities.*

2023 SUMMER INTERNS

BY ANNABELLA POTTS, *OKC Friday* — University of Oklahoma

When I first started my internship at OKC Friday, I was a little nervous about covering events in a city I didn't know much about. I

I was also given the opportunity to interview an older woman in the community who gave me outstanding advice on navigating

with this internship, I had plenty of time to dive deep into stories.

Our Young Professionals series was exciting to work on, because I love to find all the details about what makes someone special.

I am extremely grateful to Rose Lane for providing me with the opportunity to secure this internship. Her confidence in my ability to take on stories and problem-solve always left me feeling excited to take on new projects. I also look up to her strength and leadership as she juggles many different responsibilities while always having a wonderful attitude.

My female coworkers at OKC Friday brought joy and light to

every day at the office, and I can only hope that one day I am as accomplished and knowledgeable as they are.

My internship at OKC Friday was a wonderful experience that will lead to my future endeavors in journalism and writing. I'm proud of the stories I've written throughout the summer, and I am excited to continue working toward my dream of having a writing career.

I also would like to thank the Oklahoma Newspaper Foundation and the Inasmuch Foundation for providing me with the funding and opportunity to pursue my dreams before graduating.

“ *... I love to find all the details about what makes someone special.* ”

wanted to be thrown into the mix and start working on projects as quickly as possible, and I was given ample opportunities to do so.

One of my favorite experiences was when I visited a dog shelter for our “Dog of the Week” feature. Playing with all the dogs while writing something in hopes they get adopted made me feel empowered in my writing.

life as a woman. I'm confident that our conversation will stick with me forever.

I always enjoy writing outside of the classroom, so when I was able to sit at my own desk and write for hours, it felt like a dream come true. I'm used to cramming in my writing time at night after I've spent hours in classes, but

BY KHAI TRAN, *Weatherford Daily News* — Southwestern Oklahoma State University

As I recount my internship at the Weatherford Daily News, I didn't realize how transformative this opportunity would prove to be. It opened the doors to the world of professional, traditional journalism and led me on an eye-opening journey of learning and growth. The invaluable lessons I gained during this experience have left a lasting impression on both my professional and personal development.

My time at the Daily News began as a graphic designer, a role I was familiar with and confident in, but it soon evolved as I took on an assignment completely new to me — pagination. This experience not only allowed me to break out of my comfort zone and diversify my skill set, but also offered hands-on exposure to the industry, allowing me to work with real businesses and clients.

As a paginator, I had the opportunity to collaborate closely with the editorial team, learning the process of creating articles and assembling them into a well-organized publication. One

of the most important lessons I've learned is how to be wise with the space I was given. Working within the constraints of a 6-column layout, I learned to transform every story, every piece of news or advertising, into a visually captivating and comprehensive experience, while adhering to the established style guidelines and maintaining a consistent aesthetic. It was undoubtedly a challenge, as I encountered my fair share of mistakes along the way. Fortunately, I had the invaluable guidance and support of the team, as they provided me with valuable feedback and assistance to help me improve in subsequent issues.

The advertising aspect of my internship exposed me to the power of visual marketing. Crafting interesting and compelling marketing materials requires me to grasp the audience's needs and desires, a skill that I believe will be invaluable in any creative field. Advertising in the fast-paced world of journalism also taught me to adapt to tight deadlines

and make quick decisions without compromising quality.

The team's cohesiveness and collaborative attitude never failed to surprise me during my internship. I saw how professionals from many departments collaborated smoothly to create a unified newspaper for the community. This

enhance my skills and rectify any errors I made. I not only developed my skills in publishing and journalism but also learned invaluable lessons in professionalism, respect for traditions and embracing innovations.

My internship was a life-changing experience that

“ *I saw how professionals from many departments collaborated smoothly to create a unified newspaper for the community.* ”

experience emphasized the value of teamwork, efficient communication, and valuing each other's skills in any workplace.

I am deeply grateful for the unwavering support and guidance of Publisher Phillip Reid, who has been the most influential and endearing mentor throughout this incredible journey. Phillip welcomed me and gave me countless opportunities. He provided me with constructive feedback, highlighting areas where I could

fueled my enthusiasm for journalism and design. I finished the internship with a deep understanding of the art of storytelling, the power of visuals and the importance of collaboration. I am confident in my abilities and eager to contribute meaningfully to media and design in my career. I will treasure the lessons I learned throughout my internship and will be eternally grateful for the opportunity to work with the great team at the Weatherford Daily News.

OK-SPJ announces 2023 contest award winners

The Oklahoma Society of Professional Journalists recently announced winners of its 2023 annual contest.

Individual winners were Ed Kelley, Bruce Willingham and Dr. Mark Hanebutt.

Kelley, who recently retired as dean of the Gaylord College of Journalism and Mass Communications, received the Lifetime Achievement Award.

Kelley worked at the Oklahoma Publishing Company from 1974 to 2011, beginning as a state roving reporter and working his way up to editor of The Oklahoman.

After working as editor of The Washington Times and in Salt Lake City, he returned to his alma mater, working in Gaylord College.

The Oklahoma SPJ Carter Bradley Award went to Bruce Willingham, publisher of the McCurtain Gazette. Willingham placed a recording device in the county commissioners office to document suspicions of illegal meetings. But what the recording captured was threats, racism and more.

The coverage by Willingham and his son, Chris, gained national attention. State officials, including Governor Kevin Stitt, called for the resignation of the local officials.

In July, Paige Williams wrote an article about the incident for The New Yorker.

Dr. Mark Hanebutt from the University of Central Oklahoma was the recipient of the Teacher of the Year award. Af-

ter earning a bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Evansville (Indiana), Hanebutt moved to Oklahoma and pursued a master's degree from the University of Central Oklahoma. He also received a juris doctor degree in law from the Oklahoma City University School of Law.

As a professor in the Mass Communications Department at UCO, Hanebutt teaches

courses in news reporting and media law.

The Cherokee Phoenix took first place for Print Outstanding Newspaper. Second place went to the Southwest Ledger; third to Citizen Potawatomi Nation; and honorable mention to The Frontier.

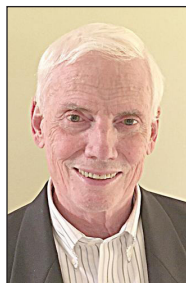
For a complete list of winners in all categories, see okspj.com/awards.

Bill Ketter honored with Wells Memorial Key award

Bill Ketter, CNHI's senior vice president of news, was the recipient of the Society of Professional Journalists Wells Memorial Key award.

The award recognizes Ketter's distinguished career and contributions to the journalism community.

Ketter has been a member of SPJ for 62 years and served in various leadership roles.



He is the recipient of numerous journalism awards. While he was editor of the Lawrence (Massachusetts) Eagle-Tribune, the paper won the 2003 Pulitzer Prize for breaking news.

Ketter received the award at the SPJ 2023 Journalism Conference at the Planet Hollywood Resort in Las Vegas.

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Average: 0; Single Issue: 0
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Average: 0; Single Issue: 0
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Average: 0; Single Issue: 0
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Get more mileage out of customer testimonials

By JOHN FOUST
Greensboro, NC

Back in my ad agency days, I worked with a real estate client on a series of customer testimonials. We started with one, then added another and another. The final count was more than a dozen, which kept the campaign fresh and gave us a lot of flexibility.

The plan was to run smaller ads with one testimonial, and then to place three small testimonials at the top of weekly, full-page ads which featured descriptions of houses for sale. The ads attracted attention from prospective buyers and sellers and the company's agents. One testimonial photo and quote featured a South Korean couple who had relocated to the area, when one spouse's high tech employer moved a number of executives to North Carolina from that country. The quote appeared in Korean, which appealed to others who were relocating with the same company, in addition to attracting a lot of attention on the page.

This strategy gave us more mileage than a campaign with two or three testimonials, because there were so many different combinations. If you'd like to try something similar, here are the steps to take:

1. Select the right testimonial subjects. Your advertiser can make the choices. Go for variety: some individuals, some couples, and some international customers, if possible. In the case of real estate, balance testimonials between home buyers and sellers.

2. Get the right testimonial quotes. You can coach your advertiser on how to do this. Keep the quotes brief, with a target of 10 to 20 words. Quotes can be obtained by

phone or email, or even in person. Make sure the subjects understand that their comments may be edited slightly for brevity.

3. Be specific. A testimonial ad is a way to convey selling points about the advertiser. As a result, it's important to ask questions to direct answers in the right direction – and to create a variety of statements. "XYZ's service team responds quickly to calls. I can always count on them" is more informative than "The XYZ Company is great. I really like them." The next quote can focus on something other than service.

4. Photos are a must. Taking photographs has gotten simpler with each year. It's okay to use your phone. Headshots are best. Clean, uncluttered backgrounds provide better ad reproduction.

5. Get signed releases. Depending on the laws in your area, make sure you have the proper permission to use each testimonial. Release forms can be found online.

6. Establish a rotation. Be flexible. The more testimonials you have, the greater the possibilities.

7. Thank (but do not pay) your testimonial subjects. Unpaid testimonials from real customers have the ring of authenticity. Your advertiser should send a nice letter, along with their photo and a copy of an ad in which they appeared. It's another chance for your advertiser to strengthen their relationships with clients.

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Okmulgee Times is more than just a front page



Looking Them Over

by Rod Serfoss
rserfoss@okpress.com

Six local stories and three pictures on a typical front page of the *Okmulgee Times* regularly entices readers to buy a copy to find out what is going on in the area.

But like so many good newspapers, the front page is only the tip of the iceberg.

As you dive into the inside pages, there are dozens of local stories and numerous great pictures. Thanks to good press work, both color and black and white photos stand out in the printed edition.

In a recent 22-page issue of the *Times*, there were 20 locally written news stories complemented by 15 pictures. On the sports side, there were six local stories and 20 pictures covering everything from football and fall baseball to track and softball. Because of the excellent sports coverage, well over 100 names were listed in the sports section.

This is a great example of how to get and keep newspaper readers.

It was good to see many newspapers promoting the Delinquent Tax legal notice on the front page.

The *Sequoyah County Times*, *Sapulpa Herald*, *Garvin County News Star*, *Rush Springs Gazette*, *Clinton Daily News*, *Purcell Register*, *Nowata Star*, *The Paper (Pryor)*, *McIntosh County Democrat* and *Eufaula Indian Journal* were just a few of the many newspapers that made

sure readers knew the list of property that could be sold in the county for the back taxes was being published.

And by promoting it on the front page, newspapers like *The Clinton Daily News* said they saw a significant increase in single copy sales on the days it was published.

There are many other legals that could also be promoted on the front page.

Those could include notices for rezoning property, condemnations, new ordinances, increased fees and other government rate increases, and new laws that are taking effect. How about something on the front page each month that reads, "See Where the County Spends Your Money – Commissioners Proceedings Inside."

Plaudits to all the newspapers that call special attention to the legal notices. Remember, legal notices are extremely important to citizens – and to newspapers.

Some may wonder how the

Country Connection News publishes a newspaper in the western Oklahoma community of Eakly – population 312.

What makes the CCN thrive is it covers a much bigger region than Eakly.

The *Country Connection News* exemplifies what a regional newspaper is. Each week it covers more than a half dozen schools and communities in the wide open and sparsely populated area of the state.

On a regular basis it has news stories from the communities of the Binger (pop. 447), Fort Cobb (pop. 549), Hydro (pop. 947), Gracemont (pop. 331) and other even smaller communities in the region. When you add it all together, the

Country Connection News has a much larger reach than many newspapers in communities 30 times the size of its home in Eakly.

Its coverage has the reputation of promoting the people and communities it serves. But just as important, it is also known for holding cities, counties and school systems accountable for the decisions they make and the tax dollars that are spent.

A recent column written by CCN Publisher Joyce Carney did a good job emphasizing the importance for citizens to be informed about what is taking place in local government. Included in it she wrote:

"Without reading these articles, people miss what's happening in their schools and communities.

"Newspapers are 'the

Watchdogs of the People.' That is our job.

"If you care, please read what is going on in your community.

"Don't wait until there is a crisis to find out what problems need to be addressed.

"Your newspaper is the best way to keep in touch."

Located between Hugo and Idabel in far southeast Oklahoma, *The Valliant Leader* is a very newsy paper, in a town of just over 800 people.

In one September issue, readers are drawn to stories such as a pedestrian that was struck by a vehicle in the parking lot of a local store. Readers learned "She dusted herself off and continued shopping." Another was a detailed story about a woman that woke up to find an uninvited guest in her house.

The *Leader* is to be commended for the job they do reporting real news in a small town!

TOP FIVE HEADLINES:

5. **Police: Florists hold intruder at bay**
– Broken Bow News
4. **God's Pit Crew, Moffett School host bucket assembly**
– Eastern Times-Register
3. **Brother conned mother until the end**
– Woodward News
2. **'Wild West' fight**
– Enid News & Eagle
1. **"I had to pee ..."**
Indecent Exposure
– Atoka County Times

Rod Serfoss, OPA Business Consultant, looks over OPA member publications for a monthly column, "Looking Them Over." To contact Serfoss, email rserfoss@okpress.com.



New features and problems with Sonoma OSX 14.0



Computer Notes

from the road

by Wilma Newby

wnewby@okpress.com

Apple released Sonoma 14.0 to the public on Sept. 26. In addition to new features and better security, this current version of the operating system also brings problems.

You will notice the difference from the moment your Mac starts up in Sonoma. Apple has redesigned the login screen so users now enter their password at the bottom of the screen rather than the middle.

Widgets can now be dragged to the desktop to act as part of the desktop design. They fade into the background when not actually being used. You'll also find new, beautiful background patterns to download.

System settings have kept the list mode but many things have been rearranged within this menu. Some things are becoming harder to find, but thankfully there is a search bar at the top.

One great feature I found is the firewall setting. Incoming connections can be shut down when the computer is logged into a remote network. This is a good thing to teach employees that are using company laptops.

To access this feature, search for firewall in System settings, then click on the right where it says **Firewall >**

Options. A large window comes up showing what is and is not allowed. There is a switch to enable stealth mode. Click it on when you're using an unfamiliar WiFi network.

Another option is to click the **Block all incoming connections** button. That stops all services except for basic internet.

Apple also added higher encryption for family accounts sharing passwords and files.

With Sonoma you can make websites in Safari into a Web App. A Web App is like a shortcut back to websites you use a lot. To make one open the web page in Safari and choose **File > Add to Dock**. You'll now see shortcut in the dock as an icon. When you click on it a separate page opens with an app-like appearance for that web page. The page opens outside of Safari for faster access with a simplified toolbar for easier browsing.

Something that may affect you is the new blue arrow that shows up each time the caps key is on. It is directly under the flashing "I" beam. It's a new visual reminder that you're typing in all caps. It seems like an improvement.

You can also expect improved searching in the Messages app, and the ability to refine your search as you go.

There will also be warnings about potentially sensitive

videos and photos before you open them.

More improvements are coming with each minor update of 14.0, such as 14.1 (already in public beta) or 14.2. While it's important to keep up with updates, it pays to hang back a while and let others see what it breaks.

We've already learned that **Postage Saver** will not work with Sonoma for now. Do not update to Sonoma until you receive an all clear email. If you've already updated, a rollback may be necessary in order to run Postage Saver on Apple computers.

There are also reports of QuarkXPress 2023 not working as well on Sonoma.

Affinity Publisher is also having problems but the public beta of OSX 14.1 seems to have fixed that problem.

INDESIGN ANNOYANCES

Some people find the little circle in the center of photos in InDesign very annoying.

There is a way to turn it off. Go to **View menu > Extra > Hide Content Grabber** to get rid of it. If it's off, the contents of a photo can be moved with the white **Direct Selection** tool in the toolbar.

While we're on the subject of annoyances, how about those little green lines that show up when moving copy in InDesign? You can easily

turn them off by pressing **Command + U**.

InDesign and Illustrator users have reported that commands randomly stop working. If restarting the program doesn't bring them back, try holding these keys down while restarting InDesign: **Windows: Shift+Ctrl+Alt, Mac OS: Shift+Control+Option+Command**. A window should come up and ask to delete InDesign Preferences; click yes. That deletes the InDesign Saved Data and InDesign Defaults. If commands still don't work after that, uninstall then reinstall InDesign from the Creative Cloud app.

When Creative Cloud apps start misbehaving, this is the procedure that returns them to normal. You might even have to revert back to a previous version of the program.

Always restart the computer and the programs before applying these fixes.

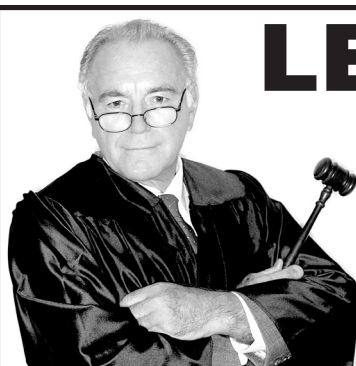
There are no longer preferences that can be uninstalled from the **User Library > Adobe InDesign folder**. That was the easiest way to do it with older versions of InDesign.

FREE UPDATES END

Microsoft says it has closed an installation path that allowed Windows 7 and 8 owners to upgrade to Windows 10 and 11 for free. The offer officially ended on July 29, 2016, but there was a workaround. But on Sept. 20, 2023, this grace period finally came to an end.

It seems that if the update is already set up in the update Window of the computer, then they do not charge for it.

OPA Computer Consultant Wilma Newby's column is brought to you by the Oklahoma Advertising Network (OAN). For more information on the OAN program, contact Oklahoma Press Service at (405) 499-0020.



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for their recent donation to
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Andy & Karen Rieger

**Remembering our friends
& colleagues who died
the previous year.**

Cynthia (Cindy) Lee Byrd
September 13, 2022

David Leo Crouch
September 29, 2022

William Ray Puckett,
October 1, 2022

Nina Gay Flanagan Ferguson
October 14, 2022

Patricia Verne (Norris) Carmack,
October 23, 2022

DEATHS

DARLENE HOWARD, who worked for the Spiro Graphic for 30 years, died July 19, 2023. She was 74.

Howard was born October 25, 1948, in Seminole.

She worked at the Spiro Graphic as the bookkeeper and often put out special sections.

Howard worked at the Spiro Graphic until last March when her health forced her to step down.

She is survived by daughter Sunnye Gilliam; son Shawn Howard; six grandchildren; three great-grandchildren; and two brothers, Darrell Barnham Jr. and Richard Barham.

JOE L. CONNER, Ph.D., publisher of The Fairfax Chief, died September 12, 2023. He was 74.

Conner was born May 3, 1949, in Shidler.

He met his wife, Carol Nice, while attending Northwestern State College in Alva. Within months of meeting, they were married.

Conner earned his Masters and Doctorate degrees at Oklahoma State University. He was the first American Indian to complete a doctoral degree in both clinical and experimental psychology.

He began his career at the Pawnee Indian Hospital as a clinical psychologist, later transferring to the Seattle Veterans Affairs Hospital where he was appointed Deputy Director of the Psychology Service.

When the Conners returned to Grainola, Oklahoma, they began a health research business, Paradox.

The Conners took over publication of The Fairfax Chief in November 2015 following the death of then owner and publisher Ida Roberts, who was Joe's sister.

Conner was proud of his Osage heritage and worked to educate people about tribal and Osage history. For many years, he was the chief advocate and worker trying to restore the TallChief Theatre in Fairfax. He created an exhibit, now seen by thousands from around the world, about the events leading up to the murders of Osages in the 1920s.

Conner is survived by his wife, Carol; in-laws Luella and Monte Nabors, and Ray and Rose Nice; his nieces, nephews and cousins.

LORI ANN YOST NELSON,

who worked as the Public Information Officer for the Oklahoma Department of Transportation for 10 years, died September 8, 2023. She was 60.

Nelson was born January 5, 1963. She attended the University of Oklahoma, earning a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism

in 1985. She earned a Master's in Journalism from OU in 2003.

After working for ODOT for 10 years, she then became Director of Public Relations at the Oklahoma Tourism and Recreation Department from 2000-2002. From 2005-2012 she served as director of public relations for Mid-America Christian University. She also

taught public relations writing as an adjunct professor at the OU Gaylord College of Journalism from 2004-2007 and at Mid-America Christian University.

She is survived by her husband, Norman Jason Nelson; son Benjamin Jacob David Nelson and daughter Grace Ann Nelson.

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Editorial: **DEE ANN PATTERSON**, *The Lawton Constitution*

AUGUST EDITORIAL WINNER

DEE ANN PATTERSON, *The Lawton Constitution*

Just where did trolley idea originate?

The right hand doesn't seem to know what the left hand is doing at City Hall.

A presentation last week on a proposed trolley system for downtown Lawton took at least one City Council member by surprise. Ward 4 Council member George Gill questioned where the idea had originated, saying it had not come up at any meeting he attended.

Before the presentation began, it was announced that the idea had been reported in the newspaper. Yes, we reported that a trolley system was being considered.

Where did we get that information? From a press release disseminated from City Hall. That press release quoted another City Council member as saying a new trolley system would be one of the new features of the indoor mass transfer center.

That was news to us, too. A trolley system had not been mentioned at any meeting we had been at either.

So far no one has taken credit for coming up with the idea except to say that the idea is in the very early stages of discussion. Apparently it is so early in the discussion that most people are still in the dark.

This is not to say that a trolley system is a good or bad idea, although Gill made it plain that the idea does not have his support. What is not clear is whether Gill does not support it because he thinks it is a bad idea or because he was not informed of the idea beforehand.

But it is an idea worth talking about, in open session, so that everyone is dealing with the same information.

AUGUST COLUMN WINNER

CLARICE DOYLE, *The Claremore Daily Progress*

'Turnpikes aren't for everyone'

A recent Supreme Court ruling gives the Oklahoma Turnpike Authority the go-ahead to sell more revenue bonds to fund its new 15-year turnpike expansion and improvement plan. Six-laning the Claremore to Tulsa portion of the Will Rogers Turnpike is part of that plan.

Representative Terry O'Donnell's recent statement that "turnpikes aren't for everyone" underlines how transportation continues to have a stranglehold on the pocketbooks of everyday working Oklahomans. In our case – our friends case and in the cases of our neighbors and relatives living in more rural reaches of our county and region – time and travel are money.

Anyone who lives in rural Rogers County who commutes and works in the metro Tulsa area or beyond on a regular basis – and that's about 59 percent of us – understand the huge financial hit gas and turnpike fees can have on a working person's take-home pay.

In one month, one commuter from east Claremore to south Tulsa (in an attempt to minimize travel time and traffic stress) will have paid out between \$40

and \$60 in turnpike fees (with a Turnpike Pass) and purchased between \$300 and \$400 in gasoline (give or take a few dollars) and spent between 20-25 hours commuting. That could be a week's pay for some.

These dollars spent, to ride the turnpike and commute to Tulsa, are sales tax dollars that will never be spent in the City of Claremore, will never be used to buy local groceries, local housing, local goods and services or local entertainment. There is no retribution plan to reinvest any of the revenue from OTA into Claremore City streets, parks, electric, water or county roadways.

We need to make sure there is always a good, quality toll-free access road to all jobs. Access that does not require turnpike fees and tanks of gasoline every week.

The math and the logic is simple. Toll roads = more toll roads to generate more money for upkeep and building of more toll roads.

The final summation is correct, "Turnpikes aren't for everyone."



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