



John D. Montgomery The Purcell Register

Lined up

McClain County residents piled into the courthouse in Purcell and up to the third floor to pay the first half of their taxes Friday afternoon to County Treasurer Teresa Jones.



McClain PURSUIT ends in Maysville

Suspect apprehended and faces charges

John D. Montgomery The Purcell Register

A 25-year-old Oklahoma City man has been arrested in Garvin County where he faces charges after a pursuit that began in the wee hours of Christmas morning in McClain County.

Devin Chance Yandell was charged last week in Garvin County District Court on charges of attempting to elude an officer and aggravated trafficking of illegal drugs.

He was being held in the Garvin County Jail on a \$100,000 bond.



Devin Chance Yandell

Please see Pursuit, back page

Pauls Valley Opry to have final show February 3

Woodie and Becky Hill of the Pauls Valley Opry announced recently the monthly event will soon be coming to an end.

The event, bringing together so many talented musicians and singers for so long, will hold its final show February 3 after a stretch of 12 years.

The first show was on November 10, 2012 and it's been quite a ride! The Pauls Valley Opry was not only a venue for bringing Branson quality music to our area,

Please see Opry, back page

Deadline to request absentee ballot for February 13 election

Voters in McClain County who want absentee ballots mailed to them for the February 13 Board of Education Primary/Purcell Municipal Primary election should apply now, County Election Board Secretary Karen Haley said today.

Absentee ballots are available to all registered voters, provided they are eligible to vote in the election requested. No excuse is needed to vote by absentee ballot.

The deadline for requesting an absentee ballot is 5 p.m. Monday, January 29. Voters can submit a request using the OK Voter Portal at oklahoma.

Please see Absentee, back page

Setting it Straight

In last week's Purcell Register a reporter's error said Wadley's EMS transported Herndon to PMH.

It should have read Stanley was transported to the hospital. The newspaper regrets the error.



John D. Montgomery • The Purcell Register

Pelican invasion

The Purcell City Lake was invaded by a large flock of pelicans that were captured on camera by The Register last Tuesday morning.

National Guard deployment to Texas border paid for by disaster response funds

Keaton Ross Oklahoma Watch

Oklahoma spent more than \$544,000 for the state's National Guard to help secure the U.S. border with Mexico, money that came from a disaster fund typically used for National Guard response to tornadoes and other extreme weather events.

Republican Gov. Kevin

Stitt, heeding a call from Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, called up the National Guard for a 30-day state deployment in August. More than a dozen Republican governors, who have criticized President Joe Biden's border security policies, sent National Guard members to assist Abbott's Operation Lone Star.

The deployments drew



criticism from Democrats because border security historically is a federal responsibility and National Guard soldiers and airmen called up for that role had fewer enforcement powers than U.S. Border Patrol agents.

Stitt joined Abbott and Republican governors from Iowa, Nebraska and South Dakota at a press confer-

ence in Eagle Pass, Texas, on Aug. 21. Stitt said he was concerned about illegal drugs like fentanyl being smuggled across the border and people on terrorism watchlists evading authorities at border crossings.

"Every state is a border state," Stitt said at the press

Please see Guard, back page

The Purcell Register Deadlines Contact us News: 12 noon, Tuesday Display Ads: 12 noon, Tuesday Classifieds: 11 a.m., Tuesday Legal Notices: 2 p.m., Tuesday 405-527-2126 purcellregister@gmail.com

Inside

B-ball tourneys

See where Purcell, Lexington and Wayne are playing this weekend.



Tuesday Night Ticker

High school basketball

Boys: Bridge Creek 72 vs Purcell 57, Lexington 69 vs Wayne 44, Pauls Valley 49 vs Washington 44. Girls: Purcell 72 vs Bridge Creek 29, Lexington 59 vs Wayne 38, Washington 58 vs Pauls Valley 35.

Find it...

Opinion.....4A Society.....6A Sports.....8A Obituaries.....14A Classifieds.....10A



Recycle your Christmas tree into the landscape

Melinda Myers
For The Purcell Register

Don't drag that Christmas tree to the curb to be hauled away by the trash collectors. Give it a second, even third life, in your landscape. No live Christmas tree? Don't worry. I'm sure your friends

scape for a bit of added greenery. Secure it in a snow pile or use stakes and guy wires in milder climates where the soil is not frozen. The birds will enjoy the added shelter and you will enjoy watching these visitors to your landscape.

Then consider adding a bit of

to use in their landscapes.

Lake communities often sink the discarded trees to the bottom of lakes and ponds to provide habitat for the fish. Another great way to give your tree a second life.

And once you discover the value of this free resource you may find yourself collecting a few more from the neighborhood.

However, your family may ask that you wait until dark to drag your evergreen treasures back home.

Melinda Myers has written more than 20 gardening books, including the recently released *Midwest Gardener's Handbook, 2nd Edition* and *Small Space Gardening*.

She hosts The Great Courses "How to Grow Anything" instant video and DVD series and the nationally syndicated "Melinda's Garden Moment" TV and radio program.

Myers is a columnist and contributing editor for *Birds & Blooms* magazine and her website is www.MelindaMyers.com.



• Photo courtesy of MelindaMyers.com

Recycle your Christmas tree

Removing the branches from Christmas trees and layering them over bulbs and perennials keeps the soil consistently cold, reducing the risk of early sprouting and winter damage.

and neighbors will share theirs.

Move your locally grown Christmas tree outdoors after the holidays. Avoid trees imported from other states that may host invasive insects that can infest your landscape and nearby Christmas tree farms. Your local municipality or Department of Natural Resources has more information on any threats and disposal recommendations for your area.

Use your cut Christmas tree to protect evergreens in your landscape from winter winds and sun. They make excellent windbreaks while shading sensitive plants in your landscape.

Strategically place your discarded tree on the windward side of rhododendron, boxwood, and other broadleaf evergreens to reduce problems with winter burn. Place it on the south side of these plants to shade them from the drying winter sun.

Or remove the branches and use them as winter mulch over bulbs and perennials. Layer the boughs over the plants and soil to keep the soil consistently cold. This reduces the risk of early sprouting and winter damage that can occur during winter thaws.

Or set the tree in the land-

Decorate the trees with fruits, berries, and seeds the birds can enjoy.

Stringing cranberries and popcorn is a fun family activity and makes an attractive outdoor garland. Slices of oranges on colorful yarn and homemade bird ornaments can complete the adornments.

Sweep up the fallen needles that were under your tree indoors and use them as mulch in the garden. Place them directly on the soil or atop the snow. As the snow melts, the needles will be right where they belong. And don't worry, they will not make the soil too acidic. In fact, as they break down, they add organic matter to the soil.

As spring arrives, consider chipping and shredding your tree into mulch for trees and shrubs or pathways in the landscape. No chipper? You and your neighbors may want to rent a chipper to shred these and other prunings for use as mulch in your landscapes.

And, if this is not possible, check for recycling resources in your community. Many municipalities have special pickups for Christmas trees. These are chipped, shredded, and made available for citizens

Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed
50° 38°	48° 35°	49° 30°	56° 40°	55° 42°	40° 32°	47° 34°
Mostly Sunny	50% Rain	Partly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny	60% Rain	Partly Cloudy	Partly Cloudy

Rain chances follow chill

We have seen a chilly start to 2024, but temperatures will be taking a rollercoaster ride heading into the next seven days. On Thursday, we can expect mostly sunny skies as afternoon highs top out around 50 degrees. Some scattered rain chances

will appear into Friday, with temperatures slightly cooler in the upper 40s. Partly to mostly sunny skies will return for the weekend as temperatures climb back into the upper 40s to middle 50s. Rain chances return for the start of the next

work week as temperatures hold in the middle 50s for afternoon highs. Temperatures will fall into the 40s for Tuesday and Wednesday under a mix of clouds and sun.

— Hunter Brittingham

Registration deadline nears

January 19 for voters in February 13 election

January 19 is the last day to apply for voter registration in order to be eligible to vote in the February 13 Board of Education Primary/Purcell Municipal Primary election.

That's the word from McClain county election board Secretary Karen Haley.

Haley said that persons who are United States Citizens, resi-

dents of Oklahoma, and at least 17-1/2 years old are eligible to apply for voter registration. However, you must be at least 18 years old to vote.

Applications must be received by the county election board or postmarked no later than midnight January 19. Applications postmarked after that time will be accepted, but will

not be processed until after the February 13 election.

Applications may also be submitted to any motor vehicle agency that is also an official voter registration agency by the submission deadline.

Applicants will be notified in

Please see **Deadline**, page 3A

A look back at 2023



• Photo provided

Ground breaking

After a ground breaking in Goldsby early in 2023 a new First National Bank & Trust Co., is under construction. When completed it will be the 12th location of FNBT (rendition above). From left are builder and entrepreneur Scott Adkins, SVP Lender Brad Duvall, home designer, builder and FNBT Director Tina Adkins, Goldsby Mayor Glenn Berglan, Principal Architect Walter Henry, Board Chairman Pat Brooks, President and CEO John Gorton, EVP and Chief Financial Officer Kyle Abrahams, SWH Construction Operations Manager Justin Robertson, Town Administrator Adam Vossen, VP Lender Jamie Beard and Construction Administrator Danny Choate. The FDIC bank joins a variety of commercial and retail developments underway in Goldsby.

Getting to know the COURTHOUSE EMPLOYEES

Lynda Mauldin



How long have you worked for the McClain County Court Clerk's office? I have been with the Court Clerk's office since February 2022. Love it! This however, is not my first time with McClain County. I worked for the MCSO many years ago as a jailer/dispatcher in the old jail and watched them build the new extension to the courthouse. I am very proud and grateful for my time working for McClain County.

What are your duties? In the Court Clerk's office my duties began as the deputy traffic clerk. After the retirement of our special Amy Gray, I took her place as the deputy misdemeanor clerk. I am a firm believer in cross-training, so I am absorbing as much knowledge as I can in all areas. You never know when someone will be gone for vacations or other reasons.

Where is your hometown? This is a challenging question for me in some respects. I spent my last four years of high school and graduated from Velma. I spent the majority of my adult life and raised my sons right here in the Heart of Oklahoma ♥.

Tell us a little bit about your family? My greatest accomplishment are my three sons raised right here in Purcell. Kenny, having the first two of my perfect grandchildren (Brody & Embree) and his beautiful girlfriend Daria love them so well. Kenny has worked for the refinery for years. Peyton and his precious wife Nikki of many years having my second group of two perfect granddaughters (Gracelyn & Willow). Raising their family in Lindsay with Peyton working in the oil field industry for many years. Kolbi my youngest and his wife Reagan have given me my 3rd set of grandchildren (Sophia & Marshall). Currently living in Tomball, TX after the Marines but encouraging them to find their way to Oklahoma. My best friends, my sister Kim and sister from another mother Jona are definitely my ride-or-die. They know all of my secrets. I could not ask for a better group to spend 5 days a week in the trenches with than these ladies in this office. They are the best!

What do you enjoy doing outside of work? Outside of work I spend with family, friends and being creative in some way. If it's been an extra week I can easily spend it binge watching something great.



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NEWS In Brief

Auxiliary Luncheon

The American Legion Auxiliary Unit 301 bean luncheon will be Tuesday, January 9, starting at 11 a.m.

It is a variety of good food and desserts, all for only a \$6 donation. We appreciate everyone for supporting your community and having lunch with us. It is always a fun time to meet friends you have not seen for a while.

Donations are used for Unit programs.

Auxiliary membership is open to all spouses, widows, mothers, sisters, daughters, and granddaughters of veterans.

They meet at 5 p.m. on the second Monday of each month and invite all to join them.

The Legion Hall is located at 104 E. Broadway in Lexington, across the street from City Hall.

Lexington

Cemetery Board

The Lexington Cemetery Board has raised the lot rate from \$600 to \$700 effective Jan. 1, 2024.

To purchase a lot, or for more information, call Mike Donovan at 405-550-9562.

Rural Fire Vacancy

The Lexington Rural Fire Association has a vacancy on the Board of Directors.

If a member of the Association is interested in serving, please contact Dale Haynes at haynesfarm192@gmail.com or Stella Bledsoe at ronbledsoe1@yahoo.com.

New OK Election Board Website

The Oklahoma State Election Board has launched a new website making it easier to view candidate information.

Candidates running for county, state or federal office may be viewed on the new website.

Put the filing dates in like 12-04-23 to 12-06-23 and view a copy of the actual candidate declarations.

Go to <https://filings.okelection.us>.

Celebrate

Recovery

Celebrate Recovery will be held on Monday nights at Landmark Church, 1106 W. Grant, in Purcell.

Big group will meet from 6:30-7:30 p.m. followed by small group from 7:30-8:30 p.m.

Celebrate Recovery is a safe place to find community and freedom from the issues that are controlling your life.

For more information contact Niki Steadman at 405-595-1337 or Mark Rillema at 405-496-5954.

SafeCare

SafeCare, a program of Northcare, is a free, home based parenting support program with the goal of reducing stress for caregivers.

SafeCare provides education on parenting, health, safety and communication skills along with connecting families to community resources.

SafeCare services are provided to caregivers that have at least one child under the age of six and live in McClain or Cleveland counties.

For more information call 405-858-2725, email safecare referrals@northcare.com or online at www.northcare.com.

Senior Dance at Purcell

The Ole Troubadours are back at the Purcell Senior Citizens Center, 228 N. 2nd, every Friday from 7-9 p.m.

Join your friends for fun and dancing!

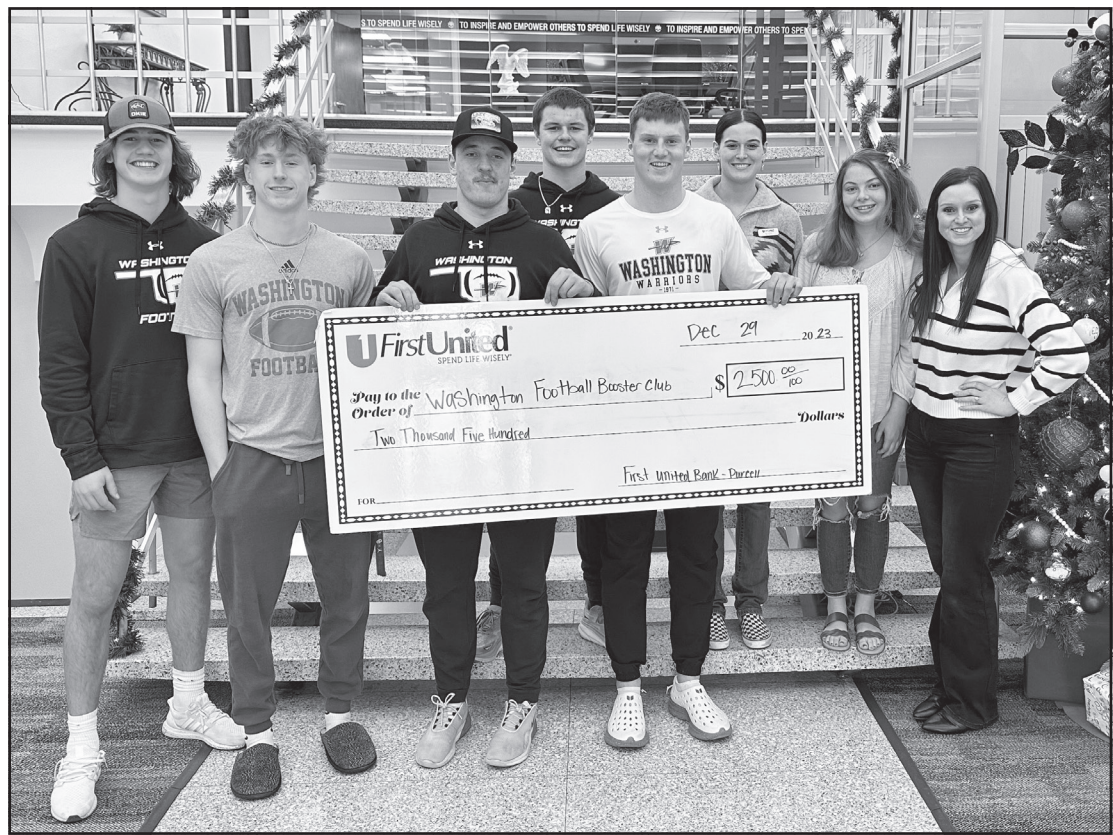
Admission is \$8 per person and refreshments will be available for purchase.

Proceeds will benefit the Purcell Senior Citizens Center.

Museum News

The McClain County Museum and Historical Society has undergone some changes and the museum is now open for tours.

To schedule a tour contact Jerry Hayes at 405-812-8379.



• Photo provided

Ring donation

First United Bank sponsored a football camp at Washington to help pay for the Warriors' 2023 State Championship rings. Pictured are, from left, Case Alexander, Max Wilson, Naithen Spaulding, Baylor Haynes, Cooper Alexander, Regan Inglis, Hannah Shea and Nichole Corley.



• Photo provided

Camp time

The Washington football team held a benefit football camp December 28 with funds going towards their 2023 championship rings. First United Bank sponsored the event.

From page 2A

Deadline:

writing when their application has been processed. Approved voters will receive a Voter Identification Card in the mail.

Some may receive a letter that explains the reason or reasons the application was not approved. Haley said those who do not receive a response within 30 days of submitting their application should contact the county election board office immediately.

The McClain County Election Board reminds voters that applications must be approved by the county election board

secretary in order to vote.

Registered voters who have moved to McClain County from a different county or state will need to complete a new voter registration application in order to be eligible for elections in McClain County.

If you have moved within the county and need to update your address, you may make changes online using the OK Voter Portal at oklahoma.gov/elections/ovp or complete a Voter Registration Application.

Voter Registration Applica-

tions can be downloaded from the state election board website at oklahoma.gov/elections. You may also complete a form at your county election board. Most post offices, tag agencies, and public libraries have applications available upon request.

The McClain County Election Board is located at 121 Second Avenue in Purcell and is open from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

For questions, please contact the Election Board at 405-527-3121 or mcclaincounty@elections.ok.gov.

Rural Development accepting REAP grant applications

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development Oklahoma State Director, Kenneth Corn announced that the Oklahoma State Office is now accepting Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) Grant Applications.

A REAP grant is designed to aid small businesses or farms in rural Oklahoma with energy efficiency improvements or renewable energy projects. Millions of dollars has been allocated to be utilized for rural Oklahoma businesses and agriculture producers to apply for up to 50 percent financial assistance on an energy efficient improvement or renewable energy project.

Past uses of the grant have included LED lighting, energy-efficient fans, improved refrigeration, solar power, and other energy efficient projects.

Applicants must submit their grant package to the Oklahoma State Office no later than March 31, 2024.

"Small business owners and ag producers in Oklahoma who have utilized this grant program have seen almost immediate returns for their business because of the real cost savings from energy these programs can provide," Corn said. "President Biden is committed to not only restarting our economy through these programs, but also working to improve our climate by reducing the demand on our energy grid."

To learn more about the REAP process visit: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/energy-programs/rural-energy-america-program-renewable-energy-systems-energy/ok>.

Stakeholders can also email the Oklahoma State Office for

more information at: okenergy@usda.gov.

"The Biden-Harris Administration continues to demonstrate that investing in clean energy is an economic winner for the State of Oklahoma," Corn said.

"I would encourage any small business owner or ag producer to contact our State Office."

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OSU EXTENSION News

Let's recycle that Styrofoam

Courtney DeKalb-Myers
Horticulture Educator

Got any packing Styrofoam from your holiday gifting?

Save it and bring it to the Styrofoam Recycling Event from 10 a.m. to noon on Saturday, February 24, at the First Baptist Church of Noble, 330 East Chestnut, in Noble.

The Foam Recycling Green Team will be there with their huge collection truck on location at the church parking lot for collecting and compacting Styrofoam.

Bring packing Styrofoam, take-out food packaging, to-go drink cups, any of your Styrofoam items and let us recycle in the densifier machine. Bring the kids, they will love to see this machine in action.

The Noble Friendship Okla-

homa Community & Home Education (OHCE) group of Cleveland County will be assisting the Foam Recycling Green Team as we work together to protect our community in this recycling project.

Organizers ask that you remove tape and paper labels; and that food serving items

have no remaining food, dirt or grease in them.

The foam, after it is densified, is shipped off and used to make patio furniture and other products.

Let's Recycle that Styrofoam, pick up the Styrofoam litter on the roads, and clean up our community.

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From page 4A

Roe:

I'm continuing to work on my bills and will share more details about them in a future column. I also want to take an opportunity to briefly remind readers of the best way to contact your elected officials. If you're uncertain who your state representative and state senator are, you can visit okhouse.gov and click on "Find your legislator" from the homepage. This will prompt you to enter your home address and identify your state legislators. Most elected officials, myself included, get hundreds if not thousands of emails every day, but I do my best to read every single one and respond to as many as possible. As your state representative, it's not just my job to represent your interest when voting at the State Capitol, but it's also

my job to assist you with any issues you may have with a state agency. In these situations, either myself or my legislative assistant, Monica, will reach out to the agency and try to get your issue resolved as quickly as possible. You can always contact me on the House website, but I strongly urge you to reach out directly via email or phone. It is much easier for me to respond that way! My email address is cynthia.roe@okhouse.gov, or you can call my office at 405-557-7365. Please let me know if there's anything I can help with. Thank you for the honor of representing you at the State Capitol! Rep. Cynthia Roe, a Republican, represents District 42 in the Oklahoma House of Representatives, which includes Garvin and McClain Counties.

From page 4A

Bowman:

Mom inched closer to the bed, unwilling to disturb what was happening, but yet wanting to hear what would be said. In her soft little girl voice, the child began whispering in the ear of her grandmother. "Meemie, this is Hope. I love you so much. Momma told me I've come to say goodbye, 'cuz you're going to Heaven. And we won't be talking anymore

for a long time. "But she said that I will see you again. And you'll be able to play with me like you used to. And then, you will have your Hope and God with you forever!" Never give up on Hope and your God. Sponsored by Cornerstone Baptist Church, Lexington, Okla.

AREA SCHOOL MENUS

- WAYNE SCHOOL MENU**
Week of January 8
MONDAY BREAKFAST
 Biscuit and gravy, cereal, fruit, juice, milk.
LUNCH
 Steak fingers, mashed potatoes with gravy, broccoli, roll, peaches, milk.
TUESDAY BREAKFAST
 Cereal, fruit, juice, milk.
LUNCH
 Chicken fajita, pinto beans, rice, pears, milk.
WEDNESDAY BREAKFAST
 Bagel topper, cereal, fruit, juice, milk.
LUNCH
 Hamburger, fries, pickles, lettuce, baked beans, mixed fruit, milk.
THURSDAY BREAKFAST
 Cereal, fruit, juice, milk.
LUNCH
 Casserole, chips, salsa, corn, cookie, milk.
FRIDAY BREAKFAST
 Pop tart, cereal, fruit, juice, milk.
LUNCH
 Hot dogs with chili, tots, spinach, orange, milk.

- PURCELL SCHOOL MENU**
Week of January 8
MONDAY BREAKFAST
 Pancakes with syrup or cereal and toast, fruit, juice, milk.
LUNCH
 Bacon ranch macaroni and cheese, green beans, cucumber slices, fruit, milk.
TUESDAY BREAKFAST
 Breakfast burrito or cereal and toast, fruit, juice, milk.
LUNCH
 Pizza pasta, Italian salad, baby carrots, breadstick, fruit, milk.
WEDNESDAY BREAKFAST
 Biscuit and sausage gravy or cereal and toast, fruit, juice, milk.
LUNCH
 Barbecue pulled pork, tater tots, dinner roll, coleslaw, fruit, milk.
THURSDAY BREAKFAST
 Muffin or cereal and toast, fruit, juice, milk.
LUNCH
 Chicken nuggets, mashed potatoes and gravy, baby carrots, dinner roll, fruit, milk.
FRIDAY BREAKFAST
 Waffles and syrup or cereal and toast, fruit, juice, milk.
LUNCH
 Taco soup, chili beans, Fritos, fruit, milk.



• Photo provided

Cagle honored

Mike Cagle, Population Coordinator, celebrated 35 years of service with the Oklahoma Department of Corrections. He was presented a certificate for 35 years of loyal and dedicated service by Travis Gray, Administrator of Classification & Population.

Turnover, scandals have some state lawmakers rethinking governor powers

Paul Monies Oklahoma Watch

After several scandals and turnover in agency leadership, some Oklahoma lawmakers are rethinking their efforts to give the governor direct appointment power over the largest state agencies. The state's Progressive-era constitution more than a century ago dispersed executive power across scores of agencies, boards and commissions. But lawmakers seeking more direct accountability for the governor upended that in 2018 and 2019 as they took agency director hiring authority away from six agency oversight boards and gave it to the governor. The changes, approved by a Republican-dominated Legislature and signed by Republican governors, were less about party and more about streamlining the governor's authority. In exchange, the Senate got confirmation power over agency directors. House and Senate leaders got to choose additional members of the boards, but not a majority. Law professor Andrew Spiropoulos, director of Oklahoma City University's Center for the Study of State Constitutional Law and Government, said numerous bipartisan studies over the years have shown the executive branch doesn't have enough power to run state government in Oklahoma. "We have so many separately elected officials who run separate departments, so the governor has no control over huge portions of Oklahoma government," Spiropoulos said. "It's very difficult to coordinate policy when you're dealing with people who are going to have their own agendas. But even the departments that don't have separately elected heads, the way we've run those departments is to have professional executive directors who answer to multi-member boards." Some, but not all, of the changes to gubernatorial power came after political scandals or legislative frustration with public policy or spending at a particular state agency. More notable examples include the Swadley's barbecue restaurant contract at state parks under the Department of Tourism and Recreation and missing funds at the Oklahoma State Department of Health in

2017. Republican Gov. Kevin Stitt, now in his second and final term, campaigned on expanded gubernatorial powers during his first run for governor in 2018. He touted his business experience as the founder of Gateway Mortgage Group and said he would run the state like a business, which meant the ability to hire and fire top managers at the biggest state agencies. A Republican-dominated Legislature gave him that ability during the honeymoon phase of his first term. Separate bills in 2019 changed the composition of governing boards at five agencies and gave the power to pick those agency directors to the governor. Similar changes were undertaken in 2018 at the Health Department. Voters in 2012 made the changes at the Department of Human Services when they approved State Question 765. However, voters in 2018 rejected a state question that would have expanded the governor's powers. State Question 798 had the governor and lieutenant governor run on the same ticket. Voters rejected it by a margin of 54 percent to 46 percent. "Buyer's remorse?" A handful of lawmakers now want to pull some authority away from the governor. Sen. Roger Thompson, R-Okemah, filed Senate Bill 4 in the 2023 session to restore the agency director hiring decision to an oversight board for the Tourism Department. The Senate approved the bill, but it didn't get a floor vote in the House. It is still available to consider in the 2024 session. That proposal would reverse the changes the Legislature approved in 2018 under House Bill 3603. The Tourism Department's Swadley's scandal led to Thompson's bill. But as the scandal fades from memory and the Tourism Department has a new executive director, Shelley Zumwalt, it's unclear if SB 4 will gain traction in the upcoming session.

Applications open for OMRF Fleming Scholar program

The Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation is accepting applications for its 2024 Sir Alexander Fleming Scholar Program. The deadline is February 1. The paid, eight-week summer biomedical research internship is open to high school seniors, college freshmen, sophomores and juniors. To be eligible, students must be 16 or older and an Oklahoma resident at the time of high school graduation. Participants earn \$5,000 and may also qualify for free housing. Applicants must complete an online application and submit their academic transcripts, two letters of recommendation and a personal statement. For Makayla Tillett, a junior at Oklahoma City University majoring in cell and molecular biology, serving as a Fleming Scholar last summer provided an introduction to a career in biomedical research. Tillett made proteins in the lab of OMRF scientist Umesh

Deshmukh, Ph.D., who investigates how viruses and bacteria can activate the immune system, leading to the development of an autoimmune condition called Sjögren's disease. "My original plan included medical school, but I learned that I really enjoy doing biomedical research, so now I plan to pursue a Ph.D. following my undergraduate studies," said Tillett, who returned to OMRF this fall to continue her work in Deshmukh's lab. Founded in 1956 and named for Sir Alexander Fleming, the Nobel Prize-winning scientist who discovered penicillin and in 1949 dedicated OMRF's first building, the program offers students a summer packed with hands-on biomedical research. Since its inception, more than 600 Oklahoma students have had the opportunity to work alongside world-class scientists at OMRF. more information or to apply, visit www.omrf.org/fleming.

The state's multicounty grand jury heard from witnesses about the Swadley's scandal in August, according to **The Oklahoman**. Andy Moore, founder of Let's Fix This, a nonprofit that educates Oklahomans on the political process and civic engagement, said the pandemic scrambled operations at many agencies, making it harder to determine if expanded governor powers over agencies were effective. He said some lawmakers also may have buyer's remorse about the changes. "In general, I think it's worked as the governor hoped it would," Moore said. "He's been able to appoint people who align with his plan or his desires. But there's been less checks and balances. Less accountability because the agency heads are going to do what he says. And in cases where they don't, they're out." Stitt's budget secretary, John Laws, sent a series of emails to state agencies in September reminding them of the governor's focus on cost-cutting as the agencies were putting together budget requests for fiscal year 2025, which starts July 1. The governor will submit his executive budget proposal to the Legislature when the session begins in February. "In his continued efforts to limit the growth of government, the Governor encourages you to analyze your submission to attempt to fund your incremental requests for FY-25 through the identification of efficiencies or other means without an increase to your request for state appropriations," Laws wrote to directors at agencies that included the Department of Human Services, Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services and the Tourism Department. **Management style** Spiropoulos said Stitt has prioritized appointing agency directors with extensive management experience ahead of agency operations expertise. Stitt, who had no prior government experience before becoming governor, pulled from his own business networks or recruited managers from the

oil and gas industry. That has sometimes caused friction between the new managers and existing agency staff, as well as lawmakers. "There's conflict there because the people in the Legislature are used to the way things have run in the past," Spiropoulos said. "That's the only thing they knew. So they were for change in the abstract, but once it became real and they saw how it actually played out, then you were going to have some pushback." Early in Stitt's first term, Joe Allbaugh resigned abruptly from his position leading the Oklahoma Department of Corrections. Allbaugh had clashed with a new board made up of a majority of Stitt appointees for the first time over funding needs for prisons. The board chairman at the time was Steven Harpe, a former Gateway Mortgage chief information officer who later led the Office of Management and Enterprise Services. Stitt selected Harpe to lead the Corrections Department in October 2022. Harpe is making \$275,000 a year as director at the Corrections Department. His predecessor, Scott Crow, who started at the department in 1996 and worked his way up to chief of operations before becoming director in December 2019, made \$185,000 a year. Moore said it's less common for agency directors to stay for extended periods of time helming state agencies. That's partly a function of both pay and job stress. State lawmakers, similarly, aren't staying to the end of their term limits, even in safe seats where they are unlikely to face challengers. "It's a hard job," Moore said. "I think by the end of eight years or whatever, most folks are ready to move on because it's a lot of stress." Stitt, for his part, has said he typically asks for two-year commitments from agency directors who have come from the private sector. "I'm proud of the people who we brought into state government because I'm trying to bring a fresh set of eyes, people from all walks of life, from the business world," Stitt told Oklahoma Watch in an interview last year as he ran

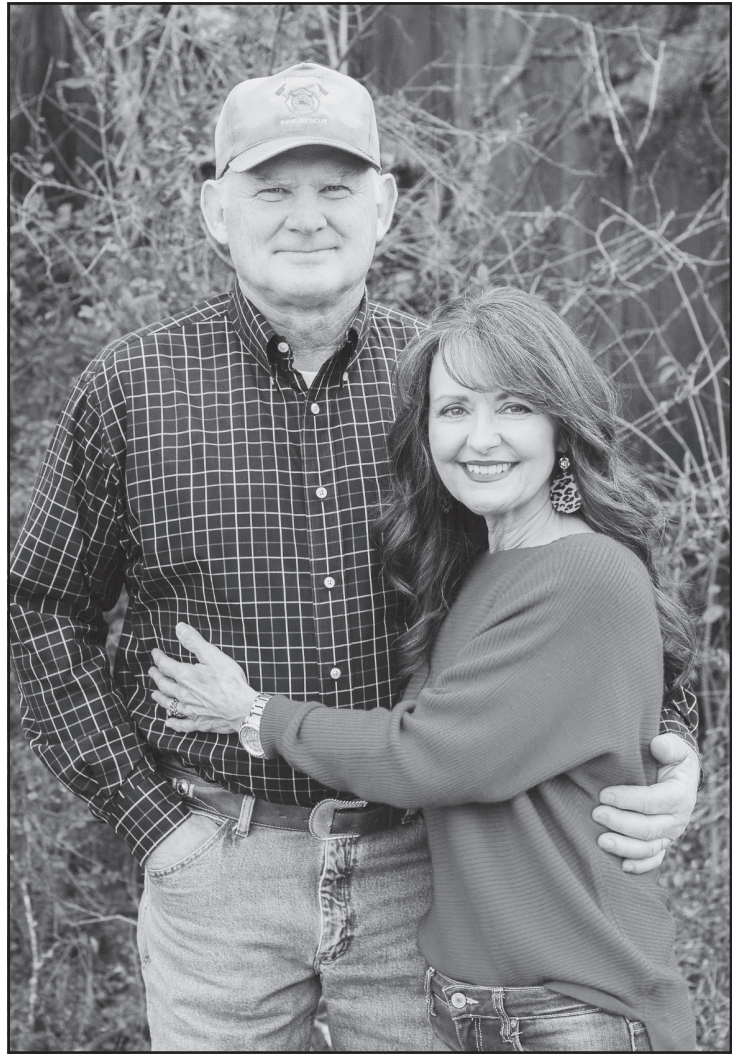


City of Purcell NEWS from the City of Purcell

It is the responsibility of the home owner and or renter to maintain your property, from the street to the middle of the alley. You are required to keep mowed any grass, weeds, or similar vegetation in that area between the property line and the street. And from the property line to the center of the alley way. This includes keeping trees trimmed. Vehicles, trailers, tractors etc. are not allowed to be parked in the alley. This is very important for emergency vehicles such as fire trucks, ambulances and police. Keeping the alleys clean and free and open also allow for the city's work trucks to have access to utility poles, water mains, sewer etc. In cases of emergencies these vehicles need to have quick and easy access for service and to save lives. If you have any questions, please feel free to call us at 405-527-6561 or 405-527-4656.

Society

Griders celebrate Golden Anniversary



Harry and Kathy Grider

Harry and Kathy Grider of Lexington are celebrating 50 years of marriage.

The Griders exchanged wedding vows Jan. 5, 1974 at the First Baptist Church of Lexington.

The couple has two children, Amber Purtell and her husband, Clinton, and Ashley Lacefield and her husband, Scott.

They also have five grandchildren who include Brooklyn, Jackie and Chip Purtell and Tegan and Jenny Lacefield.



It's a Small World

Gracie Montgomery

Happy birthday Debbie Quinn Bennett, Blake Western, Matt Croslin, Carolyn Harrison, Joyce Pennington, Matti (Allen) Carlile, Raul Caralampio, Jose Ortiz, Barbara Bruehl, Martin Montelongo, Leslie Arriaga, Eduardo Cruz, Carolyn Hall, Cristian Reyes, Thomas Belfiore and Barbara Gullion.

McClain County Treasurer Teresa Jones reminds property owners in the county that 2023 tax statements were due before January 1.

Property owners can print out their tax statements by going online to oktaxrolls.com.

For more information call 527-3261.

With school having resumed after the Christmas break, drivers should be especially vigilant for pedestrians before and after school hours.

Drivers need to watch out for children walking and biking to and from school which includes those getting out of cars in school parking lots which can be particularly dangerous.

We need to pay special attention to our greatest resource, our children!

If you haven't made your New Year's Resolutions yet, it's time!

Now that we're a few days into 2024, it's time to put them

into action!

Most people make the usual resolutions to eat a healthy diet, stop smoking, exercise more and save more.

Whatever yours are, try to stick with them. I've been told that it only takes 90 days to make a change in your life!

The Purcell Public Library will present "Eat Smart: Making Sourdough Bread" Tuesday, January 23, from 6-7 p.m.

Eating healthy can be easy and delicious. Join us to learn the art of healthy cooking and eating.

In this program we will learn how to make sourdough starter and bread. Come and explore a variety of healthy culinary techniques and skills through an interactive demonstration.

Participants will learn techniques of breadmaking, taste sourdough bread and take home a starter to make their own loaf of bread.

Discover how small daily actions and nutritional choices can help you eat better and maintain a healthy and sustainable lifestyle.

The program will be presented by Connie Wollenberg from the OSU Extension Office.

The program is designed for adults.

Registration is required and you can save your spot by calling 405-527-5546 or online at pioneerlibrarysystem.org.

Here's a great recipe you can make in your slow cooker and come home to a delicious meal.

Easy Taco Soup

- 1 pound ground beef
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 4-5 cloves garlic, minced
- 4 cups beef or chicken broth of stock
- 15 oz. can of corn, drained
- 15 oz. can black beans, rinsed and drained
- 15 oz. can chili beans in chili sauce
- 28 oz. can crushed tomatoes
- 4 oz. can chopped green chiles
- 1 TBL chili powder
- 2 tsps. cumin
- 1 tsp. dried oregano, onion powder and garlic powder
- Salt, pepper and cayenne pepper to taste

Place cooked ground beef in the bottom of the crockpot. Add in all other ingredients and stir together.

Cover with lid and cook on high 4-6 or low 8-10 hours.

Follow us on



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10% OFF

Any Dry Cleaning (up to 5 pieces)
Coupon good on any dry cleaning (up to 5 pieces).
Coupon must accompany incoming order. Charge customers must bring coupon in with item.
Expires: January 13, 2024

Stealey OHCE

Stealey OHCE held its monthly meeting December 4, 2023 for their annual Christmas celebration at the Happy Camper on Main Street in Purcell.

Members present were Janet Little, Jan Lenard, Bonita Brakefield, Peggy Christian, Charm Kelly, Pat Barrow, Betty Cormany, Deanna Lewis and Cindy Hensley and new member, Sharon McGee.

Members reviewed the upcoming schedule Operation Christmas volunteer times December 11 through 15.

Recycle Projects including used postage stamps for Wounded Warriors and greeting cards reports were turned in to Bonita Brakefield. Member volunteer hours reports for November were completed and turned in to Peggy Christian.

Follow us online at OHCE McClain County Stealey. Anyone interested is welcome to attend. The next monthly meeting will be held on Monday, January 8, at 1 p.m. in the education room at the McClain County Farm and Home Building.

Newsmakers

UCO announces graduates

The University of Central Oklahoma celebrated the achievements of approximately 921 graduates during the Fall 2023 Commencement Ceremonies December 15-16 in Central's Hamilton Field House.

Heart of Oklahoma undergraduates include **Ashton Robert Lippel**, Cum Laude, BAT, Audio Production, Lexington; **Mary Caitlynn Huff**, Magna Cum Laude, BSED, Early Childhood Education, and **Vivian Teresa Steiner**, Cum Laude, BS, Nursing, both of Purcell; and **Brady Thomas Rangel**, BS, Psychology, and **Garrett Wilson**, BBA, Management, both of Washington.

Receiving her graduate degree was **Kaitlyn LeAnne Mannis**, MA, History, of Purcell.

For more information about Central's graduation, visit www.uco.edu/commencement.

Dickerson named to Dean's List

Natalie Dickerson of Purcell qualified for Belmont University's Fall 2023 Dean's List. Approximately 52 percent of Belmont's 7,338 undergraduate students qualified.

Belmont is located in Nashville, Tenn.

Belmont Provost Dr. David Gregory said, "The Dean's List achievement reflects the hard work, perseverance and dedication to academic excellence of Belmont's outstanding students. It is my privilege to congratulate these individuals on their semester-long academic efforts. To our most recent graduates receiving this distinction, you are hope-inspiring examples to your peers and future colleagues. To the students returning next semester, may this achievement be a stepping stone towards even greater pursuits in your academic journey."

Dean's List eligibility is based on a minimum course load of 12 hours and a quality grade point average of 3.5 with no grade below a C.

Legal Notice

No. 1-January 4-2 Times
IN THE DISTRICT COURT
OF McCLAIN COUNTY
STATE OF OKLAHOMA
IN THE MATTER OF THE ESTATE OF ALFORD REX HYDE, DECEASED

Case No. PB-2023-69
NOTICE OF HEARING FINAL ACCOUNT, PETITION FOR DETERMINATION OF HEIRS, DISTRIBUTION AND DISCHARGE

NOTICE is hereby given that **KIMBERLY ANN MILLISER** and **ANDREA ELIZABETH VICKERS**, the Co-Personal Representatives of the ESTATE OF ALFORD REX HYDE, Deceased, having filed in this Court their Final Account of the Administration of said estate, and their Petition for Distribution of said estate and for Final Discharge of said Personal Representative, the hearing of the same has been fixed by the Judge of said Court for 9:30 o'clock a.m., on

the 25th day of January, 2024, before Judge Charles Gray in his chambers in the McClain County Courthouse in Purcell, Oklahoma, and all persons interested in said estate are notified then and there to appear and show cause, if any they have, why the said account should not be settled and allowed, the heirs of ALFORD REX HYDE, Deceased, determined, said estate distributed, and the Personal Representative discharged.

WITNESS MY HAND this 22nd day of December, 2023.

CHARLES GRAY
ASSOCIATE
DISTRICT JUDGE
Judge of the District Court
BILL C. LESTER (OBA #5389)
Attorney for Personal Representative
212 West Main - P.O. Box 1407
Purcell, OK 73080
(405) 527-5623
blester@lesterlawoffice.com

Make a **BIG** impression!
Call today to get your business name in front of our audience!

The Purcell Register
405-527-2126

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Dr. Steve Schultz

4217 28th Ave NW
Suite 111, Norman
Call 405-310-4211 to book appointment!

AWOL nominations close on January 5

Angie Steele
Washington Correspondent

Calling All Community Members AWOL 2024 Nominations Are Now Open!

AWOL (A Week of Love) is a district-wide fundraising drive sponsored by the WHS Student Council.

Do you know someone connected to our community who could use a helping hand during their challenging journey? Nominate them for AWOL 2024!

Whether it's a neighbor, a friend, or a family member, let's rally together and make a positive impact on their lives. To submit a nomination, fill out the nomination form on the Washington School website at https://www.wps-isd.com/296497_2.

Nominations will be accepted until January 5! Let's show our support and make a difference in the lives of those who need it most. Spread the word, share this post, and tag anyone who might be interested.

Together, we can create a stronger and more compassionate community. Let's make AWOL 2024 a resounding success!

Washington Senior Center

Did you know that you don't have to be a senior to eat lunch at the center? We welcome everyone to come in and eat. Plus, when you come in to eat, it helps us to keep meal deliveries going for our seniors who can't get out.

If you know of any seniors who could benefit with meal delivery in the Washington/Goldsby area give the center a call at 405-288-6404.

Menu for January 4-12:

Thursday, January 4—Fish sticks, coleslaw.

Friday, January 5—Beef roast, gravy, mashed potatoes, corn.

Monday, January 8—Baked potato bar, chili, broccoli.

Tuesday, January 9—Ham, sweet potatoes.

Wednesday, January 10—Beef tips/gravy/noodles, peas/carrots.

Thursday, January 11—Smoke sausage, baked beans, cabbage, applesauce.

Friday, January 12—Meatloaf, mashed potatoes, gravy, green beans.

Menu may change at the discretion of the cook and availability of food.

All meals are served with beverage, bread, dessert and salad bar.

Lunch is served from 11:30 a.m. to 12 noon, Monday through Friday.

Cost per meal: \$3 suggested donation for 60 years old and above and those disabled; \$6 for 59 years and below.

Friday Music Jams start at 10 a.m. until? Anyone is welcome to sit in and sing or play an instrument.

Washington School Board Meeting Schedule

All Washington School Board meetings will be held in the 4/5th Building Library at 6:30 p.m.

Meetings are scheduled for January 8, February 12, March 11, April 8, May 13, June 10, July 5, August 12, September 9, November 4 and December 9.

Washington Public Schools Calendar

January 4—7/8/9 BBK Comanche, Girls away, boys home, no 9th girls game; 5/6/7 9th boys at 5 p.m., 7th boys at 6 p.m., 8th boys at 7 p.m.

January 4—Boys Basketball Noble Tournament, 8:30 p.m.

January 5—Boys Basketball Noble Tournament.

January 6—Little League Basketball, McAlister, 10 a.m.-8 p.m.; Boys Basketball Noble Tournament.

January 8—Board Meeting.

January 9—HS BBK, Lindsay, home.

January 11—7/8/9 BBK Bridge Creek, Girls home, Boys

away, 5 p.m.

January 12—HS BBK at Marlow.

January 13—Little League Basketball, McAlister, 10 a.m.-8 p.m.

January 14—Little League Basketball, McAlister—2-6 p.m.

January 16—Lyric Theater - "Cinderella" & "Oklahoma" Production for elementary school.

Dale K. Graham Veterans Foundation

Today I wanted to write about some of the reasons that we are seeing an increased number of veterans who are filing their first claim for VA benefits.

Last week while interviewing a veteran who was 70 years old and had never filed a claim, I asked him why he had waited so long. His answer was that when he retired 15 years before he had a good retirement and could continue to live as he had when he was employed.

Today he said that all of his living expenses had increased significantly since retirement and he did not have enough money to pay the difference in the cost of their daily living expenses.

As my primary job is to triage veterans, to do this I start by reviewing their service medical records for any injuries that occurred or any conditions that were aggravated by their military service. An example could be a pre-existing knee condition that was re-injured during training.

After reviewing each veteran's medical records, a decision is made on which disabilities to ask the VA for service connection. Before we file the actual claim, we request that the veteran obtain medical evidence that supports their claim for benefits.

They can use their medical provider or one that we have listed to obtain a VA Disability Benefits Questionnaire (DBQ) that provides a diagnosis of their condition along with a Nexus linking their condition to an injury that occurred during their military service.

The VA sends veterans to contract medical providers for an evaluation of their condition using the DBQ. After the VA reviews the veteran's DBQ and the DBQ done by the VA, a decision is then made to either approve or deny the veteran's application for VA benefits.

For those of you who would like to file a new claim for benefits with VA, you can start our process by logging into dkgvf.org to fill out and scan your information into our Intake Q program. By using our digital system, veterans do not have to stand in line to receive our assistance with their VA claims and questions.

Some of the veterans we assist live in other states or countries. Using our digital system some of them will not need to visit us in person as we can triage them electronically or by phone. We encourage veterans or surviving spouses who we have previously assisted to register in our dkgvf.org system so we will be able to help their surviving spouse when the veteran passes on.

We accept the donation of cars and trucks that can be given to veterans or sold to raise funds to help more veterans and their families. As always, we appreciate all donations that can be used to make a difference in the lives of our men and women who have served in the military.

All of us at our Veterans Foundation are proud to do everything we can to assist the men and women who are serving or have served in the United States Military. We have been making a difference in the lives of veterans and their families for over 20 years. For those of you who would like to join our team, volunteer applications are



• Photo provided

Football camp

Washington Warriors football camp was a huge success. The Warriors appreciate all the participants and community support.



• Photo by Ron Ladlee

Runners-up

The Lady Warriors finished second to 5A Carl Albert in the Bertha Frank Teague Mid-America Classic tournament. The Lady Warriors were tournament runners-up and only lost by two points. Washington's Kelby Beller received MVP of the tournament joining Breanna Lindert on the tournament team.

available on our website.

We are a free service to all veterans and their families. We are open Monday through Friday starting at 9 a.m. Come visit us at 1233 West Lindsay Street in Norman.

We are a 501c-3 non-profit organization and there is never a charge for the services we provide to veterans and their families. We do accept financial contributions to be used to support veterans and this

organization.

We also accept donations of wheelchairs and other types of handicap equipment that can be given to other veterans or their families. Other items that we accept are cars, trucks, motorcycles, or items that can be given to veterans or sold to raise funds.

We are open to active clients Monday, Tuesday and Thursdays from 9 a.m. to noon.

To donate to our Founda-

tion, you can do so online at dalekgrahamveteransfoundation.org or mail a check to Dale K. Graham Veterans Foundation, 1233 West Lindsay, Norman, OK 73069. You can contact us on our website or by calling 405-550-8806.

Dale K. Graham,
Accredited Claims Agent
Dale K. Graham
Veterans Foundation
Washington Correspondent
Contact Information

I would love to share your personal or community news with our readers.

My contact information is angiesteele73@gmail.com or 405-413-2471 if you have any news to share, story ideas, or if you have someone you would like to see a feature article about. Send me birthday, anniversary, or personal news you would like to share with our community.

Angie Steele

Dibble Senior Citizens



• Photo provided

Christmas trio

Dale McAskill, Malachi Taylor and Santa, Roy Taylor, holding gifts presented to clients for Christmas.

Greetings from the Dibble Senior Citizens.

We hope everyone had a blessed Christmas and celebrated a Happy New Year.

We were so pleased to be able to give our clients a few surprise gifts for Christmas. We were able to have Santa here and it was a joy to see all the excited faces go through the line.

Our President Dale was given some fire extinguishers to pass out to those in need. We appreciate Gary Krupka with K&M Safety Solutions out of Verden for the donation of the fire extinguishers.

We have enjoyed a much-needed vacation but now we are ready to get the year started.

We would like to invite all to come by sometime for lunch, sit a spell and enjoy the fellowship on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays at 12 noon for a good home-cooked meal. Make sure to sign in and donations are welcome but not necessary.

All are welcome at the Dibble Senior Citizens Center located at 12314 State Hwy. 39 in Blanchard, phone 405-344-6789.

To donate to the pantry, mail your check or money order to PO Box 32, Dibble, OK 73031 or CashApp - \$dibblesrcitizens.

Until next year,
Dibble Senior Citizens
Crew

The Purcell Register Sports



Ron Ladlee • The Purcell Register

Headed for the bucket

Washington junior Breanna Lindert dribbles the basketball during the Bertha Frank Teague tournament. Washington finished second after losing to Carl Albert in the finals, 42-40. Lindert was selected to the All-Tournament team.

Warriors claim silver at Bertha Teague

John Denny Montgomery
The Purcell Register

Washington's Lady Warriors nabbed second place at the prestigious Bertha Frank Teague Mid-America Classic Basketball Tournament over the weekend.

They had wins over 2A No. 10 Hartshorne (64-57) and 5A McAlester (43-40) before losing to 5A Carl Albert in the finals (42-40).

Sophomore Kelby Beller was selected as the tournament's Most Valuable Player. Junior Breanna Lindert was also named to the All-Tournament team.

Head coach Kale Simon was proud of the way his team played defense during the tournament – especially in the finals and semi-finals.

"We haven't been defending very well early this season and Friday and Saturday we defended really well," he said.

Hartshorne

Lindert paced the Warriors in scoring in the Hartshorne game with 24.

Sophomore Jayden Wells scored 12 while Preslee Johnson's 11 and Beller's 10 rounded out the Warriors scoring in double figures.

McAlester

Beller led the team in scoring against the Buffaloes with 19 points. Lindert scored 13 in the win.

Carl Albert

Washington led a good part of the game but a few late mistakes down the stretch left them unable to close out the win.

"We had a few turnovers late

and missed a couple rebounds that kept us from winning it," Simon said. "But we have really good girls and we have all the pieces to be really good. We just have to do the little things every day and every possession. We need to do the ordinary things extraordinarily well."

Beller and Lindert were again both in double figures

with 14 and 10, respectively. Washington is now 9-1 on the season and ranked No. 1 in Class 3A.

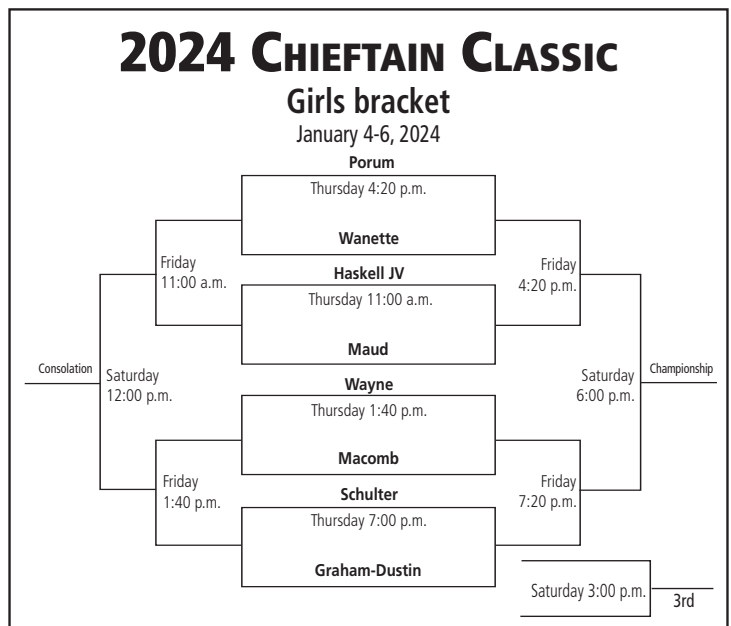
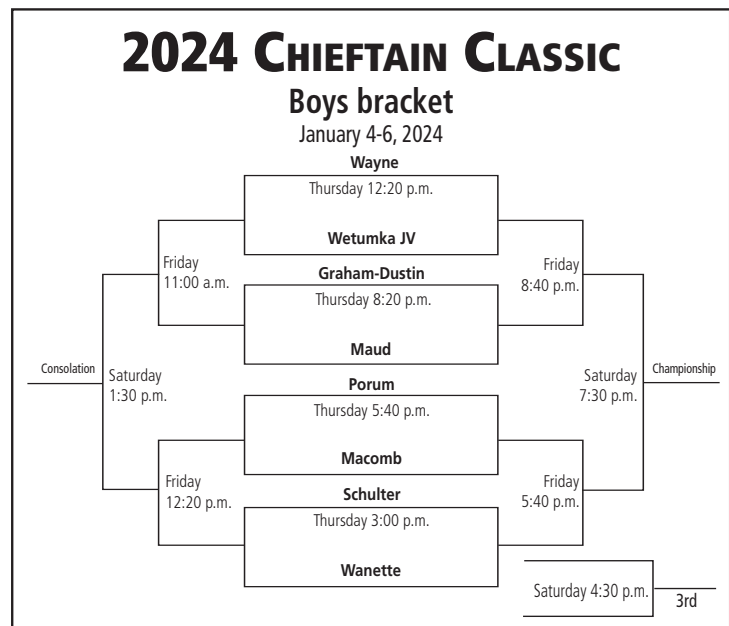
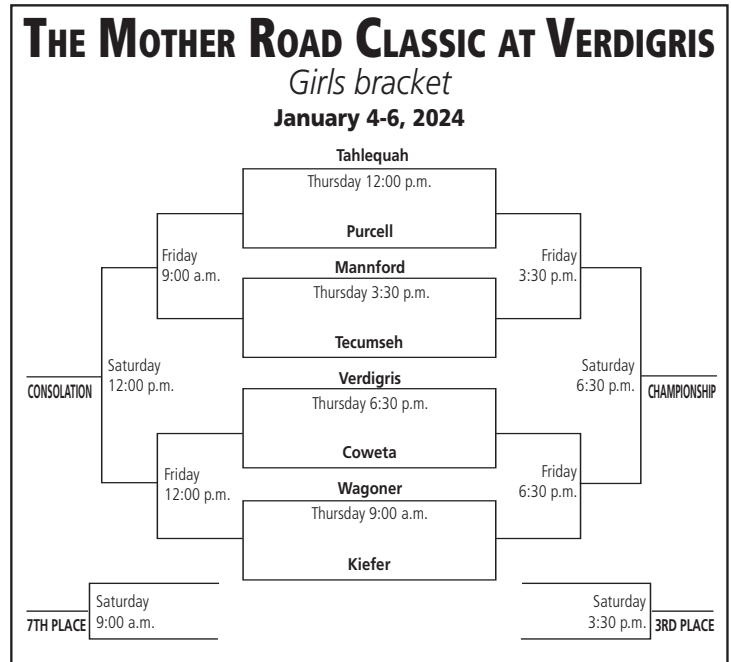
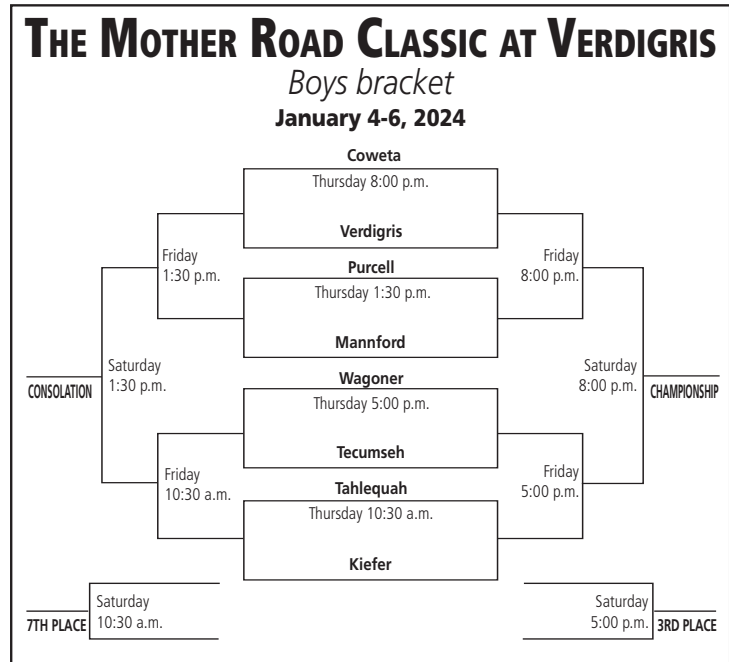
Tournament
box scores
Page 9A



Ron Ladlee • The Purcell Register

Runners-up

The Washington Warriors were runners-up in the Bertha Frank Teague Mid-America Basketball Tournament. They defeated Hartshorne and McAlester but fell to Carl Albert in the finals.



Sibling trio hot on mat

Cash and Coty Sessions and Jeremiah Harrison

A trio of siblings Cash Sessions, Coty Sessions and Jeremiah Harrison recently wrestled their way to stardom in the Blanchard Invitational wrestling tournament.

That event included out-of-state teams.

Cash defeated the Louisiana 6A State Champion in the finals to win his weight class.

Coty won first place and Jeremiah finished third.

In the recent Lexington

Tournament, Cash won first, Coty was crowned champion and Jeremiah finished third.

In the United States Junior Open Championship December 29-30, Coty won first place and was named the Outstanding Female wrestler over the field of 300 girls in all weight classes.

It was the third year in a row Coty has won that tournament.



• Photo provided

Trio

Coty Sessions, Jeremiah Harrison and Cash Sessions are sizzling on the wrestling mat this season.

After slow start, opioid settlement money expected to flow to cities and counties

Paul Monies
Oklahoma Watch

Money from legal settlements against opioid manufacturers, distributors and retailers will finally start to trickle out to Oklahoma cities and counties in 2024, almost four years after lawmakers set up a board to administer the funds.

More than 250 local governments told the Oklahoma Opioid Abatement Board they were interested in applying for the grants. The money is supposed to go toward treatment and recovery programs and opioid abuse education and prevention.

The Opioid Abatement Board has about \$27 million available for local communities, school districts and public trusts. The Legislature controls another \$37.6 million sitting in the Opioid Lawsuit Settlement Fund. Additional funds are expected in coming years since some settlements call for multi-year payouts.

Attorney General Gentner Drummond, who chairs the nine-member board, said he's been frustrated with the lack of action in getting money to local communities. Board turnover has also been a problem, with at least five members resigning at various times in the past year alone.

"I've been a large critic of the management of these funds from previous AGs, and there's just absolutely no excuse," Drummond said in an interview. "I'm glad that I have disciplined professionals that slow me down because I would like this money deployed immediately, but we need to be careful with these public funds and we need to be impactful."

More than 1,700 Oklahomans died as a result of prescription opioid overdose from 2016 to 2021, according to the Oklahoma Board of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs. Prescription opioid overdose deaths accounted for 33 percent

of all drug overdose deaths during that same period.

States, tribes, cities, and counties pursued the lawsuits to compensate for the large sums of money spent addressing the opioid crisis in health care and law enforcement. Most of the settlements stemmed from multistate actions.

As he campaigned for attorney general in both 2018 and 2022, Drummond criticized his predecessors for the large attorney fees awarded to outside counsel in the state's lawsuits against opioid-related compa-

ny. More than \$123 million went to private attorneys across various settlements. Almost half of those fees came from the state's \$270 million settlement with Purdue Pharma. Purdue later filed for bankruptcy reorganization, but that didn't affect Oklahoma's settlement with the company.

"I'm very frustrated with the liberality of friends and families of previous AGs," Drummond said. "We have enriched people that we shouldn't have, in excess of \$100 million. That's way more than should have been awarded."

The state is expected to have \$308 million in settlement funds from lawsuits related to three distributors—McKesson, AmerisourceBergen Corp. and Cardinal Health—accused of flooding the market with opioid painkillers. The state gets 75 percent of that money, with the remaining 25 percent allocated to cities and counties.

Jessica Hawkins, director of community and systems initiatives with Tulsa-based Healthy Minds Policy Initiative, told abatement board members Oklahoma is in the fourth wave of opioid addiction. Prescription opioids marked the first wave, which was followed by heroin, fentanyl and now methamphetamine. Many times, those illicit drugs are being combined with prescription opioids.

"We have a tremendous amount of co-use happening in Oklahoma, with concurrent use of opioids with stimulants, mainly methamphetamine," Hawkins said at a Dec. 6 board meeting. "This is a nuance that we want communities to understand and the abatement board to hear and think about."

Hawkins said the board should give local communities adequate time to develop their abatement plans under grant funding. She urged a "go slow to go fast" strategy that would put most of the work in the next few months for the first round of grant awards by summer 2024.

"You'll want to make sure they are selecting evidence-based strategies," Hawkins

said. "In the field of behavioral health and mental health, we do not need to burden local communities that they need to develop their own programs or come up with their own ideas. There are a plethora of best practices that are available out there for the choosing as long as you know what your community's problems are that need to be abated."

Board members discussed hiring Healthy Minds to help with the grant application process and provide educational outreach to local governments. The attorney general's office, which provides administrative support for the board, is interviewing candidates for a grant coordinator position.

Drummond said his office is working with lawmakers to earmark a percentage of settlement funds for the abatement board as it considers grant applications from local governments in the coming years.

Settlement frustrations

Oklahoma lawmakers set up the opioid abatement board in 2020 and seeded it with a \$10.22 million appropriation. They set up the board after being frustrated over settlement terms with Purdue negotiated in 2019 by former Attorney General Mike Hunter. Many lawmakers thought they should have had a say in how the Purdue settlement money was distributed.

Just five percent of the Purdue settlement will go to local governments for opioid abatement. Most of it went to Oklahoma State University's National Center for Wellness and Recovery, which was established in 2017.

The center received \$102.5 million from the Purdue settlement in a lump sum. Another \$75 million is being paid over three years, and it got \$20 million in the form of buprenorphine and naloxone, known under the brand name Suboxone.



John D. Montgomery • The Purcell Register

Tournament champions

The Purcell Dragons won the second grade basketball tournament at Dibble over the holiday weekend winning all four games they played. Pictured from left, back row, Nate Scrivner, Landry Perigo, Owen Page, Nick Smith, Brody Powell and Tyson Black. Front row - Thomas Montgomery and Karter Wilhoit.



Ron Ladlee • The Purcell Register

Handling pressure

Washington sophomore Jayden Wells handles the basketball during the Bertha Frank Teague tournament. Washington finished as runners-up after falling to Carl Albert in the finals, 42-40.

12/28 Girls
Washington 64
Hartshorne 57

Washington ..	17	15	13	19	—64
Hartshorne	21	6	19	11	—57

Player	Points
Breanna Lindert	24
Jayden Wells	12
Preslee Johnson	11
Kelby Beller	10
Shelbie Caveness	8

12/29 Girls
Washington 43
McAlester 40

McAlester	10	6	13	11	—40
Washington	11	7	16	9	—43

Player	Points
Kelby Beller	19
Breanna Lindert	13
Shelbie Caveness	6
Preslee Johnson	4
Laney Gay	1

12/30 Girls
Carl Albert 42
Washington 40

Carl Albert	8	10	11	13	—42
Washington	13	8	12	7	—40

Player	Points
Kelby Beller	14
Breanna Lindert	10
Shelbie Caveness	7
Jayden Wells	4
Preslee Johnson	3
Emersyn Massey	2

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Religion

Our Lady of Victory Catholic Church

By Stella Bledsoe

January 7, 2024 is the Feast of the Epiphany of the Lord. We are in liturgical year B, so most gospel readings are from Mark (A=Matthew, B=Mark, C=Luke).

However, whichever year we are in, the gospel reading for Epiphany is Matthew 2:1-12 because it is the only place the magi are mentioned.

We are not told the country or countries the wise men were from, but the scripture says they came from the east. It is believed they were from the region of Persia (modern day Iran).

The gifts they brought were not something you could pick up at Walmart.

Some speculate they were from three different countries

and the gifts, gold, frankincense and myrrh, were native to their countries.

They were educated men but not kings. Among other subjects, they studied astronomy and attached religious significance to the movement of the stars.

The astrological phenomenon of a spectacularly bright star made them believe something extremely important was happening where it shined.

The shepherds in the fields were told by an angel of Jesus' arrival. No angel came to the wise men, but they believed the star must be an announcement of a new king.

God sent Jesus to us, and He has been loved and adored by rich and poor alike.

He is the finest gift we ever have or ever will receive.

What gifts do we have to offer him?

Please join us in celebrating the love of Jesus at Our Lady of Victory parish.

Our Lady of Victory parish is located at 307 West Jefferson.

The church administrative office is located at 501 N. 4th, and it is open weekday mornings.

The office number is 405-527-3077.

Weekend mass services are Saturday, 5 p.m.; Sunday, 11 a.m.; and Sunday, 1 p.m. (Spanish).

Daily masses are Tuesday, 9 a.m.; Wednesday, 12 noon; Thursday, 7 p.m. (Spanish), and Friday, 9 a.m.

Lexington Westside Church of Christ

Front-Porch Gospel (Looking back with a blessing to the Lord!)

Good day to all of you. Welcome to the "front porch"!

By the time you read this, we will be into 2024, Lord willing. I am just glancing back just for a moment at 2023, just reminding myself of the blessings that we can think on as we roll into this new year.

Though it was more difficult than I would have thought, we finished our encore year of teaching high school English after having been out of the classroom 11 years.

But, still, to go back and remember what all you learned through the years and how much you loved teaching it to young people – well, that was a blessing.

And, of course, the greater blessing is being blessed to be around forty-some-odd seventeen-year-olds made us a little younger than before. I say "odd" – Not that they were odd, but they did keep me on my toes.

The other day one of the young ladies wrote me and told me how much she learned with all the writing and other things we covered; and that made

me thankful. I won't give her exact words, but it was one of the nicest things I have heard. It makes it worth giving kiddos everything you have for a year.

I'm thinking back now to our third annual Yellowstone trip and our second time to stand above the lower-falls of the Grand Canyon of Yellowstone with the foaming current splattering in your face as the water crashes down a hundred feet. It may be one of the most amazing scenes I have ever seen.

Yes, the heavens declare the glory of God, and the skies show His handiwork, as says the psalmist; but those waterfalls crashing down at your feet rival even the beauties of the heavens.

Even dabbling again in a little basketball coaching beginning in the Fall was another adventure. I guess 30 years just wasn't enough, and when the boys' high school coach asked us to come in part time and help and consult, I just couldn't turn that down.

You'll remember that basketball is something that made us what we are in many, many ways. Those stories will have to wait. But the reminder that you're hardly ever at home any

more than when you are out on the basketball court is a good thing – and, trust me on this – it reminds me abundantly of how much I owe the Lord.

Isay all of that, and we haven't gotten into the year writing our memoirs from the events that started in the summer of 1973 – words, sentences, paragraphs, and sentiments that, even without saying it directly, speak to God's great providential care these last 50 years.

So, today, with those unusual adventures on our minds and a hundred others, we open the year and begin our 2024 Front-Porch visits declaring with the psalmist of old: Bless the Lord, O my soul, all that is within me, bless His holy name!

And, you – you also can and do begin your year just the same, I know, because the Lord has blessed you equally.

So, here again, right here in this place, we do it together, just as we have so many times before.

God bless you in every way now and throughout 2024!

P.S. See you every week, Lord willing, right here ... on the Front Porch.
coachbowen1984@gmail.com

Green Avenue Church of Christ

Happy New Year! The first services of the year will be this coming Wednesday with our monthly examination of the songs we sing. We just finished up the book of Hebrews last week, and so in a couple of weeks we'll begin a different book of the Bible or perhaps take up a topic.

On Sunday of last week we finished up our general study of the modern issues, and so on the 31st we looked at the flurry of activity by Jesus in Mark 1-4 along with some history of the region of Galilee.

One of the points of interest in the region is the mountain which some hold as the one on which Jesus gave his famous Sermon on the Mount. It is located just outside of Capernaum; it is registered as one of the shortest qualifying mountains in the world and its top is still below sea level!

How interesting!

The morning sermon brought by Keith Shackelford a study of the four defenses Paul gave after his arrest in the temple. The texts came primarily from Acts 22, 23, 24 and 26.

In each case the same basic things were emphasized by Paul: the hope of Israel, and the resurrection of Christ. These were the true reasons he was vilified by his fellow Jews. As he defended himself from the various accusations, we learned he grasped the singular opportunity to preach the gospel and hopefully convert some.

Our Sunday evening sermon was presented by Steve Adams and he began with a reading of Romans 10:1-3. He noted that Paul was sorry the Jews were lost, being ignorant of God's righteousness while trying their own ways instead.

The lesson first focused on the idea of ignorance. Brother Adams gave three definitions of the word: (1) not knowing, 1 Timothy 1:12, 13; (2) not understanding or comprehending, Mark 9:30-32; (3) an error or sin made by mistake, Hebrews 5:1-3 and Numbers 15:22-24.

After discussing these definitions he asked, "Which definition applies to Romans 10?" After studying this portion of the passage, he finished up by looking at the righteousness of God, defining it, showing where to find it, and calling on us to adhere to it.

We invite you to meet with us for Bible study at 7 p.m. Wednesday night and 9:45 a.m. Sunday and our worship services on Sundays are 10:45 a.m. and 6:30 p.m.

Bible correspondence courses are available, call 405-527-4052.

Sunray Baptist Church

Debbie Clark and Donna Stillwell played an instrumental medley of hymns for the morning special.

Brother John Wylie used Romans 13:11-14 for his sermon. He said we relate to time changes as we go on.

Time passes at the same rate for all of us. It is fleeting. We can't stop the changing or passing of time. New Year's is a good time to ponder this.

God is still the same. He doesn't change. His goodness, mercy and grace stay the same.

The apostle Paul said we should "know the time" on God's clock.

It is limited and running out. We need to wake up to the things of God.

The day of the Lord is near. Every day is one step closer to the Lord's coming.

We are to cooperate with the Holy Spirit, taking on the likeness of Christ. We need to read the Word to be transformed by it. We shouldn't accommodate the flesh to satisfy its lust.

There was no evening service.

This coming Sunday at our evening service we will be observing the Lord's Supper at 5 p.m.

January 14, we will have

our quarterly business meeting, followed by snacks and fellowship.

On January 21, our youth will sponsor our annual Men's Chili Cook Off following morning worship. There will be no evening service that day.

We invite you to Sunday School, worship and all activities in this new year.

We will be celebrating the 77th anniversary of our founding in 2024.

John Wylie serves as pastor. Sunray is located at 2223 North 9th Street in Purcell.

For additional information call 405-527-6808.



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Evening - 6:00 p.m.
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Pastor John Wylie
527-6808
Sunday School: 9:45 a.m.
Morning Worship: 10:50 a.m.
Evening Worship: 5:00 p.m.

Obituaries

Naomi Ruth Faulkenberry

Naomi Ruth Faulkenberry died December 30, 2023, in Norman, Oklahoma, at the age of 79 years 1 month 2 days. Funeral Service are scheduled for 11 a.m. Thursday, January 4, 2024, at the Wadley's Funeral Chapel, entrusted to the care of Wadley's Funeral Service.

Naomi was born November 28, 1944, in Oakdale, Oklahoma, to Edward and Odie Mae (Cottrell) Bell. She was raised in the Oakdale community until she was 15, and then moved to just outside Purcell.

In the embrace of Purcell's charm, Naomi united her life with that of R.C. Faulkenberry on February 10, 1960. Together they created a haven of love and warmth within their home. As dedicated partners in life's journey, Naomi and R.C. worked on a dairy farm for many years.

With an unwavering commitment to care for others, Naomi pursued a career as a Certified Nurse Aide later in life. She showcased her compassion by serving in various nursing homes across the Oklahoma City area until her well-deserved retirement in 2008.

Beyond her professional path, Naomi enjoyed indulging in crossword puzzles and finding solace in doodling. The sight of blooming flowers filled her heart with joy, while moments spent watching wrestling matches and cooking shows provided her with a sense of entertainment.

Naomi was deeply fond of cats, but she cherished the company of her little dog, "Boomer". She relished baking delectable chocolate pies as a treat for all. Her true happiness emanated from spending cherished moments with her beloved family. Naomi's devotion to her loved ones was immeasurable and her role as a loving wife, mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother brought immense fulfillment to her life.

Her unwavering faith in God anchored her spirit, providing strength throughout every step of her journey.

Naomi was preceded in death by her parents, Edward and Odie Mae (Cottrell) Bell; her son, Richard Lee Faulkenberry; her son, Bryan Leon Faulkenberry; her brother, Troy Milton; her brother, Willis Bell; and her mother and father-in-law, Ruby and Robert Faulkenberry.

Survivors include her husband, R.C. Faulkenberry; her daughter, Rita Wiggins and husband, Rick; her daughter Melinda Ramsey; her nine grandchildren, Jammie Reiley and spouse, Clinton Wood, Dean Mitchell, Schelina Armstrong and husband, Dusty, Justin Faulkenberry, Bryant Faulkenberry, Erica Anglin, Tommy Anglin, Kody Faulkenberry and spouse, William Treadway, Jr. and Ricky Wiggins; her six great-grandchildren; her daughter-in-law, Shirley Faulkenberry; and numerous other relatives and friends.

Wadley's Funeral Service, Inc. 303 W. Washington • P.O. Box 903 • Purcell, OK • (405) 527-6687

Ricky Lee Trammell

A Celebration of Life Service for Ricky Lee Trammell, 77, of Washington, Oklahoma, was held Saturday, January 6, 2024 at the First Baptist Church in Washington, Oklahoma, with Pastor Mike Stewart officiating. Services were under the direction of the Wilson-Little Funeral Home in Purcell.



To view the livestream service, you can go to the Washington First Baptist Church Facebook page.

Mr. Trammell was born on July 26, 1946 in Holdenville, Oklahoma. His parents were the late Leroy Varance and Imogene Carlisle Trammell.

He was a graduate of Holdenville High School and after graduation attended Eastern State College in Wilburton, Oklahoma from 1964 to 1966, also playing on the basketball team. There he received an Associates Degree. He then attended East Central University located in Ada, Oklahoma, where he graduated in 1969 with a Bachelor of Science in Education.

He served our country in the United States Navy from 1969 to 1973 where he worked as an avionics electronics technician. Ricky retired from General Motors Corporation after working nearly 30 years. He was a Product Engineer and Vehicle Testing Coordinator.

Ricky was a very active member of First Baptist churches in Moore, Oklahoma, FBC Washington, Oklahoma, and FBC Bainbridge, Georgia. He enjoyed attending church, playing golf, OU sports, billiards and travelling with his wife Elaine, the love of his life, to whom he had been married for 50 plus years. Ricky was a selfless person and friend to many. There are not enough words to express the servant's heart and selfless person Ricky was to his family and friends.

Survivors include his wife, Evelyn Elaine Trammell of Washington, Oklahoma; children, Glenn Edward Trammell of Bainbridge, Ga., and Shelia Malaine Trammell Leverette of Washington, Oklahoma; six grandchildren, Laura Trammell of Apalachicola Fla., Cory Thomas and wife, Kate, of Tempe Ariz., Kyle Thomas and wife, Morgan, of Marietta, Georgia, Christa Bryant and husband, Brandon, of Columbiana, Alabama, Ashley Trammell of Montevallo, Alabama, and Derek Vance Trammell of Washington, Oklahoma; his sister, Charlotte Clements and husband, Mark, of Marana, Ariz.; five great-grandchildren and many nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by his son, Rocky Vance Trammell; his parents; brothers, Pete Trammell and Richard Trammell; his sister, Shirley Tonne; his maternal grandparents, Eugene and Mamie Carlisle; his paternal grandparents, John and Mary Trammell; nephew, Kirk Clements and niece, Vickie Hoover. Online condolences may be made at wilsonlittle.com.

Wilson-Little Funeral Home • 127 S. Canadian • Purcell • 527-6543

Terry Scott Stephens

Terry Scott Stephens died December 27, 2023, in Purcell, Oklahoma, at the age of 62 years 2 months 28 days. Funeral services were held Tuesday, January 2, 2024, at the Wadley's Funeral Chapel. Interment was at Hillside Cemetery, entrusted to the care of Wadley's Funeral Service.

Terry was born September 30, 1961, in Lindsay, Oklahoma, to Bill and Diane (Carruth) Stephens. He was raised in Shawnee until high school. He then moved to Spencer where he graduated from Star Spencer High School in 1979.

Terry was raised by his grandparents, Edith and Tom Carruth. During his lifetime, Terry held various jobs and gained experience in different fields. Notably, he worked as a machinist at Tinker.

Terry married Dana Suits, and spent three decades together, and they shared a son named Caleb who brought immeasurable joy into his life.

Terry had a passion for outdoor activities such as hunting and fishing. He possessed a remarkable skill in whittling and took delight in creating intricate wooden masterpieces. Terry enjoyed watching college and professional football and whenever possible, he indulged himself by listening to the engaging discussions on the Sports Animal radio.

Terry was preceded in death by his parents, Bill and Diane Stephens; his grandparents, Tom and Edith Carruth; and a brother, Ray Stephens.

Survivors include his son, Caleb Stephens; the mother of his son, Dana Stephens; his siblings, Anthony Stephens and wife, Judy, Gay Stephens, Erica Sullivan, David Ringer and Paul Ringer; his close nephew, Tyler Stephens-Jorski; and numerous nieces, nephews and other relatives and friends.

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From page 12A

FNBT:

ing attire and bring spirit to add to the celebration of earning their spot as one of Oklahoma's Top Workplaces. Showing up in classy black-tie attire with party horns and spinning lights, the FNBT banker spirit was contagious throughout the event and earned FNBT the final spot on stage for the night.

"It was an honor to be among the best of the best from around the state, but earning the Spirit Award

was the perfect way to end the night," Gorton said. "Our bankers work hard every day – and being able to celebrate their achievements and what they do for this company was really a humbling experience. Our people are what make FNBT one of Oklahoma's Top Workplaces. I couldn't be more proud or honored to work for this great company among some of the best bankers in Oklahoma."

A look back at 2023



John D. Montgomery • The Purcell Register

Pole setting

City of Purcell crews continued to set light poles for the Green Avenue Light Project.



John D. Montgomery • The Purcell Register

Honor guard

A combined honor guard from the McClain County Sheriff's Department and Purcell Police fired off a salute at the annual Memorial Day Ceremony at Hillside Cemetery in May. Taking part in the salute were Sheriff Deputy Justin Rowe, Det. Brayden Bulliver and officers Kyle Mobley, Jerry Pittman and Daniel Fumi.

OMRF scientists help identify cause of brain disorder

Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation scientists, and a lot of tiny fish, were instrumental in a worldwide effort to pinpoint the cause of a rare, severe neurodevelopmental disorder that shares some characteristics with Parkinson's disease. Their work could lead to greater insights into Parkinson's.

Following seven years of research, an international team determined that a specific genetic mutation was responsible for causing the disorder in 45 people, representing 28 families on several continents, including 11 people from six families in the U.S.

The unnamed disease begins early in life and progresses to significant motor and cognitive deterioration as the person reaches adulthood.

OMRF scientist Gaurav Varshney, Ph.D., and his team led by postdoctoral researcher Sheng-Jia Lin, Ph.D., helped determine the cause by matching patient symptoms with those of a paperclip-sized zebrafish model sharing the same genetic variant. They created the model at OMRF using gene-editing technology called CRISPR.

Varshney's lab studies human disease through zebrafish. More than 80 percent of human genes associated with disease have a counterpart gene in the species.

Varshney's collaborator in London, Reza Maroofian, Ph.D., identified three members from the same family who shared a mutation on the gene ACBD6 and exhibited similar neurological symptoms.

In 2020, as the search grew to identify other cases, the research team asked Varshney to test the effects of that mutation in a zebrafish model.

The ACBD6 gene is crucial in certain cellular and protein-modification processes. Research has shown that disruptions of these processes can cause degenerative brain diseases.

Varshney and Lin's zebrafish model confirmed suspicions about the cause of the human condition.

During three years of study, the team found the affected zebrafish exhibited the same clinical symptoms as their human counterparts.

The team's findings were published in the journal *Brain*.

"Zebrafish are the perfect model to study genetic diseases because the larvae are transplanted and grow externally," OMRF's Lin said. "This allows us to easily monitor their brain development and behavior."

Next, the international team will try to identify a way to block that genetic variant to prevent or treat the condition. Further studies may shed light on genetic causes and pathways leading to this and other neurodevelopmental diseases.

"With the knowledge gained by generating this zebrafish model, we hope to better understand how this genetic mutation relates to disease progression," Varshney said. "While this research involved a rare disorder, we may discover that our findings have applicability to the much more common and related disease of Parkinson's."

Gena Reese

Gena Reese, 58, of Wanette passed away on January 1, 2024. Gena Joyce (Moon) Reese was born on June 20, 1965 in Culver City, California, the youngest of three children born to Jackie Harvey Moon and Janice Marie (VanKeuren) Moon.



When Gena was just six weeks old, the Moon family made the move to Oklahoma. Gena was primarily raised in the Wanette area, where she attended school and graduated with the Tiger Class of 1983.

Her two greatest accomplishments after high school were her daughters, Dawnnie and Shyla. By chance, she later met a young man named, Neal Preston Reese, and the two quickly fell in love. Gena and Neal were married on April 10, 1995 and the two shared many years of marriage together.

She worked in a variety of industries, doing odd jobs and raising her girls until she decided to go back to school to further her education. Gena attended Oklahoma City Community College graduating with her Nursing Degree in 2007. Immediately after, she transferred to Southwestern Oklahoma State University to finish up her Bachelor's degree in Nursing. Gena worked in a variety of departments and settings as a nurse, including Encompass Home Health and Norman Regional for a combined total of 17 years.

She truly had a servant's heart, which is what fueled her love and passion for her career. Gena was also a devoted caregiver to her mother, Janice, for several years, and she did so lovingly and tenderly.

She was one of a kind, very stubborn and spunky, in all the best ways. More than anything, Gena was a family woman. She loved spending time with them, especially her children, grandchildren, and her two fur babies, Sugar and Jax. Gena was a beloved wife, mother, Gigi, sister, and a true friend. She will be dearly missed!

She was preceded in death by her father, Jackie Harvey Moon and infant baby, Preston Scott Reese.

Gena is survived by her husband, Neal Reese of Washington; daughters, Shyla Beason and Nick of Cole; Dawnnie Ross and husband, Jerry, of Lexington; son, Joshua Reese and wife, Connie, of Norman; mother, Janice Moon of Wanette; sister, Tina Lamascus of Okotoks-Alberta, Canada; brother, Scott Moon of Wanette; seven grandchildren, Charlie, Cooper, Ryker, Rayln, Rendyn, Claire and Ace; and a host of other family and friends.

Online condolences may be made at wilsonlittle.com.

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Visit us at:

purcellregister.com

Watch:

for re-election. Meanwhile, frustration with a Stitt-directed, \$5 billion plan for turnpike expansion led to a new state law taking away the governor's power to appoint all the members of the board for the Oklahoma Turnpike Authority. House Bill 2263, by Rep. Danny Sterling, R-Tecumseh, took effect November 1 after lawmakers overrode Stitt's veto. Because board members serve eight-year terms, it's unlikely to cause any immediate changes since current board members can serve the remainder of their existing terms. The new law splits appointments between the executive and legislative branches. Spiropoulos said outside of a full state constitutional convention, which is highly unlikely, lawmakers may continue to tinker statutorily with changes to Oklahoma's gubernatorial powers. He said it's doubtful they will pull back many of the changes from the last 10 to 15 years. "I think most of the big reforms will stay in place for the most important agencies," Spiropoulos said. "There may be a push and pull here and there on an agency or two when the Legislature sends a message to the governor: 'Don't go too far. We can pull back on this.' A new governor, whatever party they're from, is not going to want to give up this power.

And they always come in with a honeymoon period." Here's a look at the agencies where the governor gained powers to hire and fire agency directors in the last dozen years:

Oklahoma Department of Corrections
Fiscal Year 2024 appropriation: \$552.6 million
Current director: Steven Harpe
Number of directors since 2018: Three (Joe Allbaugh; Scott Crow; Harpe)
Board composition: Nine (five appointed by the governor; two by the Senate President Pro Tempore; two by the House Speaker)
Notes: Harpe previously served as the state's chief operating officer and director of the Office of Management and Enterprise Services. As director of the Corrections Department, Harpe's salary is the second-highest in the region, second only to Brian Collier, director of Texas' prison system, who makes \$287,657 per year.

Oklahoma Health Care Authority
Fiscal Year 2024 appropriation: \$1.49 billion
Current director: Ellen Buettner
Number of directors since 2018: Three (Rebecca Pasternik-Ikard; Kevin Corbett; Buettner)
Board composition: Nine (five appointed by the governor; two by the Senate President

Pro Tempore; two by the House Speaker)
Notes: Stitt named Buettner CEO in August. She faces Senate confirmation in the 2024 legislative session. Buettner was chief of staff under Corbett. The state's Medicaid program, SoonerCare, will transition from a fee-for-service payment model to a managed-care payment system in 2024.

Oklahoma Department of Transportation
Fiscal Year 2024 appropriation: \$791.4 million
Current director: Tim Gatz
Number of directors since 2018: Two (Mike Patterson; Gatz)
Board composition: Nine (five appointed by the governor; two by the Senate President Pro Tempore; two by the House Speaker)
Notes: Gatz is Transportation Secretary and executive director of the Oklahoma Turnpike Authority.

Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services
Fiscal Year 2024 appropriation: \$359 million
Current director: Vacant
Number of directors since 2018: Two (Terri White, Carrie Slotton-Hodges)
Board composition: Nine (five appointed by the governor; two by the Senate President Pro Tempore; two by the House Speaker); the commissioner is an ex officio board member and

only votes in case of ties
Notes: Slotton-Hodges resigned in November and took a job with the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors.

Oklahoma Office of Juvenile Affairs
Fiscal Year 2024 appropriation: \$100.9 million
Current director: Jeffrey Cartmell
Number of directors since 2018: Three (Steven Buck; Rachel Holt; Cartmell)
Board composition: Nine (five appointed by the governor; two by the Senate President Pro Tempore; two by the House Speaker)
Notes: Stitt appointed Cartmell in October and he will serve pending Senate confirmation in the 2024 legislative session.

Oklahoma State Department of Health
Fiscal Year 2024 appropriation: \$71.5 million
Current director: Keith Reed
Number of directors since 2018: Six (Preston Doerflinger (interim); Brian Downs (acting); Tom Bates (interim); Gary Cox; Dr. Lance Frye; Reed)
Board composition: Nine (advisory only; all appointed by the governor for nine-year terms)
Notes: Lawmakers changed the agency director qualifications in April 2022, allowing Reed to take the helm permanently after Senate confirmation. He had been serving on an interim basis since October 2021 and has worked for the department for more than 20 years.

Oklahoma Department of Human Services
Fiscal Year 2024 appropriation: \$766.7 million
Current director: Dr. Debo-

rah Shropshire
Number of directors since 2018: Three (Ed Lake; Justin Brown; Shropshire)
Board composition: No general oversight board; instead, there are four advisory panels of five members each for aging services, developmental disabilities services, children and family services and administration.
Notes: Voters in 2012 passed State Question 765, a constitutional amendment that put the appointment of the director under the governor, subject to Senate confirmation. Stitt appointed Shropshire in January, and the Senate confirmed her in May.

Oklahoma Department of Tourism and Recreation
Fiscal Year 2024 appropriation: \$24.1 million
Current director: Shelley

Zumwalt
Number of directors since 2018: Three (Dick Dutton; Jerry Winchester; Zumwalt)
Board composition: Nine (advisory only; all appointed by the governor with Senate confirmation, except the lieutenant governor)
Notes: Stitt appointed Zumwalt in October 2022. She previously led the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission and held various roles before that at the Office of Management and Enterprise Services, the Health Care Authority and the governor's office under Gov. Mary Fallin.

CONTRIBUTING: Staff Reporter Keaton Ross
Oklahoma Watch, at oklahomawatch.org, is a nonprofit, nonpartisan news organization that covers public-policy issues facing the state.

OMRF receives \$5.8 million for autoimmune disease research

The National Institutes of Health has awarded the Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation \$5.8 million to work toward easier diagnosis and better treatment options for Sjögren's disease, an autoimmune condition. In Sjögren's, immune cells attack moisture-producing glands, causing painful dry eyes and mouth. It can result in irreversible tissue damage, neurological problems, lung disease and cancer. There is no known cure, and current treatments address only the symptoms. OMRF scientists Joel Guthridge, Ph.D., Darise Faris, Ph.D., and Christopher Lessard, Ph.D., received a four-year grant through the Accelerating Medicines Partnership in Autoimmune and Immune-Mediated Diseases Program (AMP AIM). The team's goal is to develop less invasive clinical tools to diagnose patients more effectively and identify new targets

Please see **OMRF**, page 16A



• Paul Monies/Oklahoma Watch

Grant opportunities discussion

Oklahoma Attorney General Gentner Drummond discusses local grant opportunities during a meeting of the Opioid Abatement Board in Oklahoma City on Dec. 6, 2023.

Opioid:

lion
Endo Pharmaceuticals: \$8.75 million
Mallinckrodt: \$5.1 million
Missing from those totals is the \$465 million judgment against Johnson & Johnson that Hunter and outside attorneys won at trial in 2019. The Oklahoma Supreme Court overturned that on appeal in November 2021. Nationwide, more than \$52 billion will be paid to states over the next 18 years from settlements with opioid manufacturers, distributors and retailers." Oklahoma Watch, at oklahomawatch.org, is a nonprofit, nonpartisan news organization that covers public-policy issues facing the state.

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Opry:

but it allowed the public to be introduced to the best talent anywhere!

Guests have made their way to perform on the Pauls Valley Opry stage from Alabama, Texas, Kansas, Virginia, Louisiana, California, Massachusetts, Indiana and all over Oklahoma.

The Opry has drawn in over 34,000 people from 95 Oklahoma towns. Patrons have visited from 25 states (including Oklahoma) including Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Illinois, Kansas, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New York, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Texas, Washington, Wyoming, as well as other countries - Canada (Vancouver and British Columbia), London, England, and New Zealand.

The Pauls Valley Opry has been a huge success and tourist attraction, thanks to the patrons of the Pauls Valley Opry and to the wonderful folks who supported the Pauls Valley Opry through their advertising dollars.

The Opry would also like to express gratitude to the Pauls Valley Schools for giving us a home and support. The Pauls Valley Opry has done more with less than any other Opry type show in the state of this caliber and that again, speaks volumes of the local support. All or most of the other Opry's are subsidized by foundations, tribal nations, private benefactors, federal and/or state funds, but not the Pauls Valley Opry.

"It was your Pauls Valley Opry and you allowed us to guide the ship! Thank you!" Woodie Hill said.

Please join the fun on Saturday, February 3, for the last show of the Pauls Valley Opry. It's going to be a great time of reminiscing, awesome music, outstanding guests and fellowship.

The Pauls Valley Opry is located at the Pauls Valley Junior High School Auditorium at 302 North Willow Street in Pauls Valley. The doors open at 5:30 p.m. and the show will begin at 6:30 p.m.

Guests will include Mike Deviney, April Davis and Cathy Lake. There will also be featured songs from all of the talented and gifted Memory Makers Band members.

As always, we'll see you at the Opry!

Absentee:

gov/elections/ovp. Request forms are also available at oklahoma.gov/elections and at the County Election Board office located at 121 N Second Avenue in Purcell.

Haley reminds voters to allow time for an absentee ballot to be received, completed, and returned by mail to the county election board.

"With some exceptions, all absentee ballot affidavits must be notarized before being returned. Voters should give themselves plenty of time to make sure all steps have been followed and that the ballot is returned on time in order to be counted," Haley said.

Voters exempt from having an absentee ballot affidavit notarized include those who are physically incapacitated

and those who care for physically incapacitated individuals that cannot be left alone.

Voters who request a "physically incapacitated" ballot must have the signature on their absentee ballot affidavit witnessed by two people.

Military personnel and residents living overseas, along with their spouses and dependents are also eligible for certain allowances. Military personnel should contact the Voting Services Officer in their unit for an Absentee Ballot Application.

Residents living overseas may obtain Absentee Ballot Applications from any United States military installation or United States Embassy or Consulate.

Military personnel and

overseas citizens who are already registered voters in Oklahoma may apply for absentee ballots using the OK Voter Portal at oklahoma.gov/elections/ovp. Those who need to complete a new Voter Registration Application should apply through the Federal Voting Assistance Program at FVAP.gov.

All completed absentee ballots must be in the hands of the county election board no later than 7 p.m. on election day.

The McClain County Election Board is located at 121 N Second Avenue in Purcell and is open from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

For questions, please contact the election board at 405-527-3121 or mcclaincounty@elections.ok.gov.

OMRF:

for future treatments.

"This disease is notoriously difficult to diagnose," said Lessard, who's been studying Sjögren's at OMRF since 2007. "It shares features with many autoimmune diseases and lacks effective diagnostic markers, which makes studying it challenging. This grant provides us with technology to analyze the salivary glands of people with Sjögren's in a way that wasn't possible previously."

The researchers will use blood

and biopsy tissue samples donated to OMRF by people with Sjögren's to better understand different patient sub-groups' genetic and molecular characteristics.

"This knowledge should help clinicians diagnose the disease more easily and determine who may benefit from different potential therapies," Guthridge said.

Most studies of Sjögren's have fo AIM is a nationwide public-private partnership aimed at developing more effective treatments for autoimmune diseases.

The partnership involves the NIH, Foundation for the National Institutes of Health, nonprofit disease foundations, biopharmaceutical and life-science companies and 52 research institutions.

OMRF Executive Vice President & Chief Medical Officer Judith James, M.D., Ph.D., is chair of the more than \$60 million program.

For more information about ongoing Sjögren's research at OMRF, visit www.omrf.org/sjogrens.

Pursuit:

According to a report from the McClain County Sheriff's Department, a McClain County Deputy was responding to a prowler call in Goldsby just after 4 a.m. Christmas morning.

That's when the deputy observed a white van leaving the area and heading southbound on Interstate 35.

Garvin County officers were notified McClain County was in pursuit of the van which had exited off the interstate onto SH 74 headed toward Maysville.

The report said officers used

stop sticks to cut off the van on 74 near the Washita River.

However, the pursuit didn't end there.

Officers couldn't locate the suspect, who had fled into a wooded area along the river bottom on foot, despite the use of a K9 and drones.

Later, a resident on the north side of Maysville reported a man matching the suspect's description had asked for gasoline before heading south into town.

Although the resident noted the man was covered in mud

he was riding a red all-terrain vehicle that had no mud on it, which he found suspicious.

Turns out the all-terrain vehicle he was riding and the van were both stolen.

A Garvin County Deputy located Yandell exiting a convenience store at the intersection of SH 74 and SH 19. The all-terrain vehicle was also found at the Maysville convenience store.

Deputies reported finding about 30 grams of pills in the stolen van, suspected to be fentanyl.

Guard:

conference, echoing talking points from fellow Republican governors.

Lt. Col. LeeAnn Tumbson, a spokeswoman for the Oklahoma Air National Guard, said during the August mission a 50-person contingent of Oklahoma's National Guard helped with 969 detections that resulted in 23 apprehensions by law enforcement. They successfully turned back 1,183 migrants without incident, she said.

Costs for the deployment are complicated. The Oklahoma Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security typically pays for state active-duty National Guard deployments out of that agency's State Emergency Fund, said spokeswoman Keli Cain.

Because the Oklahoma deployment used equipment funded by the federal government, the state will have to turn around and reimburse the federal government for those costs, Tumbson said.

The deployment to Texas was under the governor's powers to deploy the Guard under



• Sgt. Reece Heck/Oklahoma National Guard

Troops deployed

Oklahoma Army National Guard Soldiers, Spc. Blake Morgan (left), member of the 45th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, and Sgt. Chance Minter (right), member of the 45th Field Artillery Brigade, perform border operations along the Rio Grande in El Paso, Texas, on Aug. 16, 2023.

state active duty status. Texas did not reimburse Oklahoma for the costs. Unlike federal deployments domestically or internationally, Guard members deploying under state active duty aren't eligible for federal Veterans Administration care if they get injured.

The influx of migrants at the country's southern border with Mexico stems partly from the expiration of a Trump-era Remain in Mexico policy that had asylum seekers wait in Mexico as their cases progressed through the U.S. immigration court system. A separate pandemic-related health emergency that limited migrant crossings expired in May, putting further pressure on immigration authorities at the southern border.

Abbott launched Operation Lone Star in the spring of 2021 with thousands of state Department of Public Safety troopers dispatched to the Texas border. They were followed by thousands more members of the Texas National Guard. To date, Texas has spent more than \$5 billion on the initiative, with some of the money diverted from its prison budget.

Abbott recently signed a Texas law that made illegal immigration a state crime, allowing police to arrest people they suspect crossed the Rio Grande between ports of entry. That law, which takes effect in March, likely sets up a legal challenge from the federal government.

Stitt's call up of the Oklahoma National Guard to help with Operation Lone Star included a provision to go back in 2024 with another 50 Guard members if the need arises, Tumbson said.

Stitt's office said there are no plans for a second deployment to the Texas-Mexico border.

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