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## Brad Yoder, Ben Ervin Present Weatherford Chamber Awards for 2024



Provided by Jessy Frizell Photography

Harold Wright was named the 2024 inductee into the Weatherford Chamber Hall of Fame. Presenting the award is Outgoing President Brad Yoder (left) and Incoming President Ben Ervin (right).



Provided by Jessy Frizell Photography

Ed Berrong was given the "Achievement Award for Excellence in Economic Development" to honor his decades of work developing Weatherford at the annual Weatherford Chamber of Commerce Banquet.



Provided by Jessy Frizell Photography

Decked out in "Speakeasy" attire, many other chamber members were recognized for their contributions to the city of Weatherford for 2024. Pictured, from left: "Young Professional" Kalie Kerth (Work Ready Weatherford); "Outstanding Service" recipient Jason Dibler (WPLS Manager); and "Roots and Wings" recipient Andy McPherson (Legacy Bank).

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### Joyce Carney

Marilyn Joyce Mabry Carney was born on May 27th, 1944 to Ernest and Mary Belle Mabry. She was their only “little chicken”. She was born in Hinton, Oklahoma where things did not go as planned. Mary Belle needed a C-section but



the doctor wouldn’t lift the scalpel until the money was in hand. Ernest left the hospital to head to the bank in Hydro to try to get a loan. Halfway there he met Bank of Hydro President Bill Glass on Old 66. Bill stopped Ernest and said “Go back Ernest! The money’s already there!” Though there was some trouble with the C-section, Joyce came into the world “a scrawny screaming thing”. When Ernest went to the bank later on to make arrangements to pay off the loan, he was handed some papers with a list of names and what they had contributed to Joyce’s birth and Ernest never had to pay them back. She was the child that Hydro bought.

She grew up with her parents and grandparents and many loving cousins in Hydro. She attended Hydro Public Schools the entirety of her schooling. She was a member of the first Hydro Public School Cheerleading squad.

Joyce attended the First Christian Church of Hydro and was Sunday School Superintendent for many years. She also led the youth group. Her life-long goal was leading people to the lord.

She then went on to Southwestern Oklahoma State University where, in her own words, she was a perpetual student and studied education, art and nursing. Though she attended college for 13 years, she never took a journalism class, but went on to make a career of it.

She started her Newspaper career at the Hydro Review setting hot led type. She also was a waitress at the Porter House in Weatherford. While working at the Review, she also wrote an article for the Farmwife News and Union Equity Magazine called “How Do You Keep ‘Em Down on the Farm”, where she detailed her life as a city girl turned farm wife.

She also worked at the Weatherford Daily News for a time as the society editor and wrote an Article called Around Town with Marilyn.

While she was working at the Weatherford Daily News, she caught back up with an old family friend Rusty Carney. Rusty and Joyce’s mothers, Mary Belle Mabry and Fern Carney were close friends. Rusty and Joyce began dating in late May of 1974 and 3 long months later they were married. They made a home on the Carney family farm, where Joyce helped with the day to day farm life and was even presented the gift of a new hoe by her father-in-law Russ Carney for her birthday. They raised 3 children.

In 1982, Rusty and Joyce started the Country Connection News with a \$4,000 loan and used equipment, alongside Brenda Howerton-Wilson, Pat Thiessen and Eric Cloninger. The Country Connection covered all of Northern Caddo County and had news from the area. Joyce lovingly referred to it as “chicken dinner news” as it was news that you would tell around the table. She also called it a “letter from home” and the many people who had moved away but still took the paper agreed.

Joyce wrote a column called Crossroads Comments that detailed the happenings of the local community and her own personal stories. She and Rusty kept the paper going for 43 years. During that time, the printing process evolved from led type, to type set, to digital. Both Joyce and Rusty were eager to learn the latest technology so as to continue to deliver the news in the best possible way. They attended Oklahoma Press Association conferences where they met numerous life-long friends. She was also quoted in the Wall Street Journal as saying “Behind every farmer, is a woman with a hitch-pen”. Hydro’s beloved George Meacham dubbed her “the poor man’s Barbara Walters”.

In addition to her career at the Country Connection, Joyce also volunteered at the Ghost Mound Boys Home as a mentor. She assisted the young men with their education and life skills. She stayed in touch with many of the boys and they called her Momma Joyce or Granny J. She also went on to develop the Child Advocacy Team for Caddo County where she helped dozens of children in need. They too referred to her as Granny J and many continued to stay in touch.

Joyce was always willing to help anyone in need. She was a true servant.

In 2023, she was inducted into OPA’s Half Century Club. Although she and Rusty retired from the Newspaper business in March of 2024, her work was not finished. She started the Hydro-Eakly All School Reunion page on Facebook, where she updated alumni on Hydro-Eakly news. She was also instrumental in keeping the All School Alumni Banquet going year after year. She was a founding member of the Hydro Tri-County Historical Society.

Joyce enjoyed traveling and took many trips to Montana, Tennessee, and New Mexico. In addition to journalism she was a talented artist and enjoyed painting with her friends. She loved Hydro, history, genealogy, art, her family and above all her Savior. She was “Hydro’s biggest cheerleader” to the end.

### Joyce Carney (cont.)

Joyce went to sleep on February 18th, 2025 at the age of 80 and woke up in the arms of Jesus. She is preceded in death by her Father Ernest Mabry and her mother Mary Belle Auxier Mabry, her babies, Hope Hicks and Johnny Hicks, and numerous aunts, uncles and cousins.

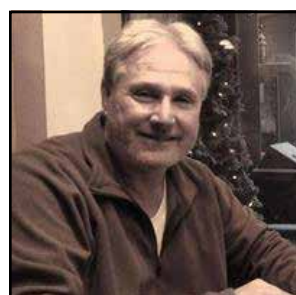
She is survived by the love of her life Rusty Carney, her son Steve Carney and wife Ida and their children Dusty Carney and wife Keshia, Lance Carney, Nicole Moon, Dustin McLemore and wife Lindsay, Thomas McLemore and wife Stephanie, Becca Burton and husband David, daughter Amanda Stockton and husband Jeremy and their children Wyatt and Lilly Kate, daughter Carrie Sivo and husband Christopher and 7 great-grandchildren – Micah Carney, Alexia Carney, Tucker Carney, Emma Carney, Elijah McLemore, Jack McLemore and Wyatt McLemore. Joyce was a pseudo mother and grandmother to countless others.

Joyce leaves behind a legacy of love and servanthood. Although our hearts are heavy we know she is in heaven rejoicing with the saints. And though there are tears and sadness now, as she so often said, “This too shall pass”, and we know we will see her again.

Memorial donations may be made to the Hydro Tri-County Historical Society at the Bank of Hydro (PO Box 7, Hydro, OK 73048).

### Aaron Sauer

Aaron Miles Sauer was born July 21, 1953 in Clinton, Oklahoma to Jack J. and Berdine L. (Conder) Sauer and went home to Jesus Friday, February 14, 2025 at home surrounded by loved ones in Weatherford, at the age of 71 years, 6 months and 23 days. Aaron spent his childhood in Weatherford, Fort Worth, Texas, and later in Mentor, Ohio as his family moved to support his father’s ministry work.



During his teenage years, he returned to Weatherford and spent summers with his Uncles Bob and Eldean Sauer plowing, cutting wheat, and learning a bit of electrical work. He graduated from Riverside High School in Painesville, Ohio in 1971.

He was drafted for Vietnam, and during the wait to deploy, returned to Weatherford and began working with his grandparents, CD and Pearl Conder in the Southwestern Auto Supply. Thankfully the war wound down, and he chose to stay in Weatherford. Soon after, he began working for Harry Leppke of Leppke Metal Buildings and then started his own construction company, Aaron’s Construction Company in 1973 when he was 19 years old. He began subcontracting for Leppke, building many metal buildings all over Western Oklahoma. Aaron was a perfectionist at heart, working on his projects with extra excellence. He had an idea for mini storages and with his grandmother Pearl guiding him, began building his 1st storage units, opening Mini-Maxi Storages in Clinton in 1974.

During the oil bust, he began developing ideas for sustainable business and decided that he would design, build and operate Tornado Spray Carwash in Clinton. He later built and operated Domino Car Wash in El Reno. Aaron didn’t ever retire, he just “slowed down” a little, continuing to operate his businesses until his passing.

Aaron was introduced to Melinda Koch by a dear friend on his birthday, and 2 short years later they were married in February of 1982. Aaron accepted Jesus as a young boy and was baptized in his father’s church in Hydro. In his later years he attended Emmanuel Baptist Church in Weatherford. He had a strong faith in God and an unwavering sense of right and wrong. Aaron believed in showing his faith by helping people around him however he could with a listening ear, and work opportunities.

Aaron loved spending time with his family, water skiing, snow skiing, hunting, fishing, and humoring his wife with travel. He was keen with computers, photography and photo editing, becoming the extended family photographer. None of these words capture his quick wit, stubborn as a mule attitude, his inherent naughtiness as family prankster, the special sparkle in his eyes, and his total devotion to family.

He was preceded in death by his parents, the Reverend Jack and Berdine (Conder) Sauer, his grandparents CD and Pearl Conder, grandparents Fred and Clara Sauer, his dear brother-in-law CB Graft, and his father-in-law Malvin Koch.

Aaron is survived by his wife of 42 years, Melinda Sauer of the home, one sister, Tricia Graft of Clinton, one brother JD Sauer and his wife Debbie of Royse City, TX, beloved nieces and nephews Brendon Graft wife Wannie of McKinney, TX, Channing Graft of Edmond, Aaron Graft and wife Kimberly of Dallas TX, Chaille (Graft) Walraven and husband Mark of Edmond, Jordan Graft and wife Brittany of Dallas, April (Sauer) Bryden and husband Iain of Rowlett TX, Brian Sauer of Dallas, many great nieces and nephews, and mother-in-law Dyann Koch of Weatherford.

### Bettie Bright

Bettie Louise (Hansen) Bright was born November 1, 1943, on the Dooley Farm SE of Hydro, Oklahoma, to Orville and Lucy (Millwee) Hansen. She went to be with her Heavenly Father on February 18, 2025 at the age of 81 years, 3 months and 17 days.



Bettie had one brother, Duane. At a young age, Bettie and her family moved to the Harris Farm South of Hydro, where her dad farmed until 1952. They then moved into town where her dad started an irrigation well drilling business and her mother started teaching again at Hydro Public Schools. Bettie attended Hydro Public Schools for 12 years from 1949-1961. While growing up, Bettie enjoyed playing basketball and going to Ft. Cobb Lake with her family for some swimming, water skiing, boating, and camping.

After high school graduation, Bettie went to SWOSU and completed two semesters. On January 19, 1962, she married Max Quinten Bright. Max already had two children, Karen Kay born in 1951, and Curtis Ray born in 1952. In October 1962, the couple welcomed a baby boy, Kent Quinten, to the family. Then, in 1965, Christine was born making them a family of six. Bettie helped Max in the custom harvesting business and was a stay-at-home mom. In 1966, the family moved to Goodland, Kansas where they lived and worked for 11 years before moving back to Hydro in 1977.

Bettie went back to college in 1979 to obtain her Bachelor’s degree. She then went to work in 1987 at the Department of Human Services as a Social Worker, where she worked for over 20 years. Max passed away on June 16, 1998. Since his passing, Bettie filled her life with many activities including teaching Sunday school at church, playing the piano and singing, family time and work. Bettie often remarked how amazed she was at God’s faithfulness through the good times and the bad. After retirement, Bettie enjoyed traveling, sewing, family time and watching basketball. She also enjoyed spending time with her friends at church, the Hopemakers Club and Rook Club. Frequent trips to Braum’s were a highlight of her day.

Bettie is preceded in death by her parents, husband, Max, one brother, Duane Hansen and two grandsons.

She is survived by four children: Karen Entz and husband, Bill of Hydro; Curt Bright and wife, Tammy of Hydro; Kent Bright and wife, Sandra of Weatherford; Christine Harper and husband, John of Weatherford; grandchildren: Darla Doyals and husband, Todd, Charlotte Wills and husband, Ty, Marcia Sauer and husband, Jason, Brooke Whitlow and husband, Zackri, Trevor Bright and wife, Gwen, Kevin Bright and wife, Katy, Kelton Bright, Nikki Perkins and husband, Blain, Courtney Harper, Tiffany Beiland and husband, Trevor; and great-grandchildren: Logan and Rachel Doyals, Hannah and Hunter Wills, William Sauer, Curtis and Blake Bright, Mary Bright and one on the way, Reed, Harper and Riggs Perkins, Tyson, Tymber, Tyler and Trace Beiland.

Special thanks to Enhabit Home Health and to Anna Mae and Esther for being volunteer caretakers. In lieu of flowers, a donation can be made to Hydro first responders.

### Sonny Lowry

Albert Clay "Sonny" Lowry Jr., 84, of Sayre, was born on May 24, 1940 in Dumas, TX, to Albert Clay Sr. and Gracie Lucille (Weightman) Lowry. He passed away February 18, 2025 at the Great Plains Regional Medical Center in Elk City, OK.



Sonny attended school in Sayre, Doxey, Ocina, and Delhi, graduating with the class of 1959. He married the love of his life, Patricia Joy Roberts, on May 20, 1959. They enjoyed over 65 years of marriage.

Sonny began his career with the ODOT in Elk City and Sayre. He became the supervisor over the Beckham County Yard in Sayre, where he was employed for over 38 years, and retired on June 1, 2002. Later, he operated an engine repair shop where he worked on lawnmowers and “Country Dumpsters,” a dumpster service.

Sonny had a deep personal relationship with God and enjoyed sharing His Word. He was a member of My Father’s House of Prayer, where he taught Sunday School.

Cherishing his memory is his beloved wife, Patricia Joy Lowry of Sayre; one son, Howard Lowry and his wife, Leslie of Sayre; two daughters, Kathy Stuart and her husband, Danny Sr. of Elk City; Sherry Ramsey and her husband, Dale of Woodward; daughter-in-law Maggie Thorsen of Sayre; 17 grandchildren; 44 great grandchildren; two great-great grandchildren; and sister, Anita Ezell and her husband, Mickey of Sayre.

Sonny is preceded in death by his parents; son Clayton DeWade Lowry; sister Gayle Thetford; brothers, Jerry and Lonnie Lowry; and great-granddaughter, Kaleigh Lowry.

<b>Cloudy/Windy</b>  H: 61° L: 34° <b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Sunny</b>  H: 67° L: 38° <b>Thursday</b>	<b>Mostly Sunny</b>  H: 75° L: 39° <b>Friday</b>	<b>Mostly Sunny</b>  H: 71° L: 40° <b>Saturday</b>	<b>PM Showers</b>  H: 68° L: 46° <b>Sunday</b>	<b>Partly Cloudy</b>  H: 70° L: 47° <b>Monday</b>	<b>AM Showers</b>  H: 61° L: 36° <b>Tuesday</b>
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## WOK Girl Scouts Raise \$480,000 at Luncheon



**Jacqueline Sit**  
Gooden Group Writer

The 21st Annual Juliette Low Leadership Society (JLLS) Luncheon raised more than \$480,000 and attracted a record crowd on February 20 at the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum in Oklahoma City. The event benefiting Girl Scouts Western Oklahoma brought together nearly 600 community leaders, advocates, and supporters to celebrate and empower the next generation of female leaders.

This year's luncheon featured Candace Nelson, nationally recognized for founding Sprinkles, the world's first cupcake bakery and Cupcake ATM. Nelson shared her inspiring story of entrepreneurship, perseverance, and the importance of empowering young women. With the leadership of event co-chairs Jill Trauschke and Christi Woodworth, the luncheon successfully raised over \$480,000 to support Girl Scout programming across Western Oklahoma.

"We are honored to lead this year's record-breaking luncheon and experience such overwhelming community support," said Woodworth. "The opportunities girls will experience thanks to today's luncheon will ignite their passions and build confidence to take bold steps toward their futures."

Trauschke echoed a similar sentiment, "The success of the Juliette Low Leadership Society Luncheon is a testament to the dedication of our donors and advocates. Together, we're making a meaningful difference in the lives of girls in Oklahoma, providing them with the skills and resources they need to achieve their dreams."

Nelson's message of courage, creativity, and vision was a highlight of the luncheon. The serial entrepreneur and bestselling author shared her recipe for sweet success to revolutionize the baking industry when she left a career in finance to start Sprinkles. Nelson followed with the launch of Pizzana, a growing chain of Michelin Bib Gourmand-awarded pizzerias leading the third wave of pizza in the US.

"Sharing my story and supporting the Girl Scouts mission was a true privilege," said Nelson. "The work being done here in Oklahoma is nothing short of extraordinary. My advice to the next generation of female leaders, especially to my younger self, is this: Dream big, chase those dreams unapologetically, and don't worry so much – everything has a way of working out exactly as it should."

The honorary chair for the 2025 luncheon was Ann-Clore Duncan, a dedicated supporter of Girl Scouts Western Oklahoma and a longtime member of JLLS whose community work also includes serving on boards for the Oklahoma Policy Institute and the Oklahoma City National Memorial & Museum.

In addition to the luncheon co-chairs, the following individuals served as committee chairs: Matilda Clements, Amy Crowley, Peter Farrell, Debbie McKinney, Kim Mosburg, Lee Ann Nordin, Rachel Phillippi, Myrta Pierson, Nancy Seely, and Mary Tidholm.

For more information about Girl Scouts Western Oklahoma or to learn how you can get involved, visit [gswestok.org/jlls](http://gswestok.org/jlls).

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## HIGHER GROUND

"When I Grow Up..."



Jim Morrison

How do people come to faith in Christ? We are unique in our background, our emotions, our desires and our level of understanding. That being said we don't respond to the good news of the love, grace, and forgiveness to be found in Christ in the same way.

In the past and even now to a large extent, we feel we must convince people that they are sinners in need of a Savior.

That is true but in this post-modern age that language may not communicate the truth we wish to impart. The word sin is so misunderstood that other words might better establish the truth that we begin our lives as little rebels. I've never met a two-year-old that wasn't selfish. We are born with a me-first attitude. We never completely outgrow that state of mind. The middle letter of the word sin is I. The middle letter of pride is I. That might tell us something.

Sin is essentially wanting to play God, or do our own thing without any need for God.

The average college student begins his studies with a desire to prepare himself to get a job that will produce income, allowing him to have the things that will provide comfort and good standing; to take care of his family and enjoy life. This is not wrong or necessarily violates the desire that God has for his life. But if that his final or complete plan for his life it becomes inherently selfish. He does not begin his day with the prayer of David in Psalm 25:4,5 "Show me your ways, O Lord, teach me your paths; guide me in your truth and teach me for you are God my Savior and my hope is in you all day long." Nor is Psalm 86:11 on his screen, "Teach me your way, O Lord, and I will walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name.

We have all seen many who have wealth and fame but who find life meaningless. They still find something lacking. It may produce gratification for a while, but in the still of the night the longings still persist. There must be something more.

Recently, I visited in a home that needed utility assistance. The home consisted of a lady separated from her husband, two adult children, each with a child born out-of-wedlock. Trying not to be judgmental, I asked her what she wanted the youngsters to be when they grew up. She said, "Whatever they want to be!"

Of course, that is true of most of us in the sense that we are not to make their decisions. I replied that I'm sure you don't want to become drug pushers and wind up in jail. What I was aiming at was character issues. What kind of attitudes, ambitions, or sense of responsibility should they have? Do you want them to have a compassionate- ethical lifestyle so they can be guide-stones? Do you want them to find meaning and purpose in life? The best way to find joy in life is to give yourself to something that is bigger than your puny plans; something that will live on after you are gone.

I could have said, "You all are a bunch of sinners and you need Jesus." While that was true, it wouldn't have opened the door for further communication. I wish I had had freedom and time to open my ear to hear their story, to feel their pain, and see their brokenness in light of Jesus love and forgiveness. I prayed for them, brought back a Bible and Bible story book the next day.

We need to be ready to listen to hurting people and try to find a way to show that Jesus loves them just the way they are and hungers to come alongside to show them that life and truth to is be found in a personal relationship with Him.

To comment: 580-302-1142, [jhm82@outlook.com](mailto:jhm82@outlook.com)

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# LOCAL AND AREA NEWS



**Mike Smith**  
News Director

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## Clinton Regional Hospital to Finalize RHS Deal



**Mike Smith**  
News Director

The future of Clinton Regional Hospital has been a major concern for residents since overwhelmingly voting to approve to sell the hospital to Rural Hospital Solutions, Inc. (RHS), with the measure passing 683 to 43. Now, progress is being made in finalizing the deal. In an interview with Wright Media, Mayor David Berrong says that an agreement is expected soon, with a contract currently in the works.

"There seems to be a great deal of optimism in the movement forward with [Rural] Hospital Solutions Group to sell the hospital and see us grow and move forward," said Berrong. "There was a 90-day "due diligence" period after the vote. There are just some structural things that are happening that indicate that we're headed toward an agreement."

The city of Clinton is facing a great deal of changes as it moves forward with the hospital's sale to RHS. One of those changes is the hiring of a new Chief Operational Officer (COO), with Jennifer Suthre recently stepping into that position.

Berrong says that Jennifer Suthre came to the area from Austin, TX, and that she will play a key role in the hospital's day-to-day operations. She'll also be making sure the transition runs as smoothly as possible.

"It's a good thing she's there, along with Lynn Lacefield." Said Berrong. "[Suthre] is very impressive and business-oriented. She understands the nuts and bolts of the finances of hospitals."

Berrong believes the finalized contract will be completed before the end of February 2025.

## SWOSU Basketball Punch Tickets to Postseason



Provided by Jared Steward / Sports Information Student Asst.

The SWOSU men and women's basketball teams secured their spots in the GAC Tournament with their wins over Southern Arkansas on Sunday, scoring 84-66 and 64-56, respectively. Both teams will travel to Fort Smith, Arkansas from March 6-9 following Senior Day on March 1.

**CUSTER OSU / BRYEN** - Custer County OSU Extension has a new Executive Director. Larry Bryen has assumed the duties. Bryen succeeds Jordan Nel as Executive Director of Custer County OSU Extension. "I was just the Ag educator, and I helped with 4H—I was 90% Ag and 10% 4H." Bryen explained prior to receiving this new position. "I'm excited about the growth that we have. We've had a lot of new activities and Jordan did a great job with these 4H kids. Now I'm [excited] to get someone in here to keep the tradition going that she had built."


**SALCIDO / CHILD PORN** - A Weatherford man has been arrested for distributing child pornography. The Custer County Sheriff's Office says 23-year-old Joel Salcido was recently apprehended after authorities conducted an investigation on a tip from the national center for Missing & Exploited Children in regard to the uploading of child pornography to the social media platform Kik Messenger. Authorities say during a search of Salcido's home, cell phones were collected as evidence and authorities discovered they contained obscene materials. Salcido is jailed in Custer County on a \$100,000 bond.

**SWOSU / PHARMACY DAY** - The SWOSU College of Pharmacy will be hosting a pharmacy day for high school students next month. The March 28th event will be held at the College of Pharmacy from 9:30 AM to 1:30 PM. The program will consist of hands-on, interactive lab activities conducted by faculty and students. The goal is to educate high school students about the pharmacy program at SWOSU and the many exciting opportunities available to graduates with a pharmacy degree.

**WEATHERFORD / GRANT PROGRAM** - Weatherford Economic Development Director Yolanda Creswell says there is a grant program through the Oklahoma Department of Commerce and the Oklahoma Finance which encourages businesses to apply for funds. "A lot of businesses have bought new equipment [and] expanded their business [with these funds]." Creswell says one business in Weatherford has applied for and received the grant each of the last two years. Applications for the expansion grant open March 31 and close April 11.

**OSBI / POWERS** - The cold case unit of the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation is seeking information regarding the suspected homicide of 49-year-old Janice Marie Powers. Powers' body was discovered in the backyard of her Carnegie residence in June of 1996. Her purse, keys, vehicle, and money were left at the scene. Contact the OSBI with additional information.

**ELK CITY / STRUCTURE FIRE** - Fire crews in Elk City fought a structure fire in the 200 block of Hayden Blvd. The home suffered heavy damage to the living room and smoke damage throughout the structure. The cause of the fire remains under investigation.



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**Happy Birthday Wishes for Feb. 26** - Van Cheadle, James Davis, Melissa Godwin, Sue Harper, Terry Harris, Lonnie Isch, Maria Jacobs, Danielle Shaw, Candace Slagell, Margaret Starr, Amber Whitt; **Feb. 27** - Eddie Berrong, Tonja Challis, Glenda Creech, Rylee Gossen, Peyton Johnston, Martha Miller, Shaylee Nailon, Margaret Reed, Wayne Reimer, Dale Rogers, Angie Schmidt, Jerri Schwartz, Gary Schwartz, Brooklyn Stewart, Laramie Taylor, Anita Woods; **Feb. 28** - Shelby Carpenter, Steve Corbin, Yasmine Garcia, Grady Gaunt, Carter Mackey, Mark Payne, Steven Shankles, Cheri Thomason, Rick Thompson, Lisa Turney; **March 1** - Jason Bengs, Jance Benson, Jeree Burnett, Lee Gregory, Brett Johnson, John Minnix, Tracy Mullins-Courtney, Tia Sauer, Mary Spencer, Callie Waldrop, Tommy Willis; **March 2** - Bob Balzer, Tiffany Bennett, Laramie Campbell, Virginia Cole, Jeremy Flaming, Tera Gosson, Riley Ingram, David Peterson, Brooks Pond, Marilyn Prophot, Ravin Ralston, Lee Rivera, Stacie Sawatsky, Michael Sewell, Chad Skinner, Tammy Wolsey; **March 3** - Keeli Cartwright, Douglas Cavanaugh, Roger Clonce, Kelly Earles, Logan Gemarchlich, Nova Long, James McKey, Lorri Menke, Michele McMullin Shannon Monson, Phil Parker, Laura Rhodes, Sharon Stehr, Thurman Stubbs, Russell Tsoodle, Miranda Unruh; **March 4** - Wayne Bentley, Bob Allen, Pam Callicoat, Quade Cummins, William Defehr, Ron Gates, Judy Hoffman, Jamie LoVecchio, Kim Silman, Rick Skinner, Brenda Sweeney, Mandi Vontungeln, Marilyn Williams.

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# Ashlyn Acosta and Libbi Zinn Grab the Latest Bulldogs of the Week



**Jon Chidester**  
SWOSU Media Relations

Ashlyn Acosta and Libbi Zinn have been named the latest Bulldogs of the Week, brought to you by Wright Media – the home for SWOSU athletic livestream events and radio broadcasts.

Acosta (Yukon, Okla.) carded the lowest round of any SWOSU women's golfer at the Southern Invitational last week when she fired a one-over par 72 in the tournament's closing round.

The senior ended up finishing tied for 12th overall at the event, representing her best finish so far this season.

Zinn (Anadarko, Okla.) gave two solid contributions off the bench last week in a pair of wins for SWOSU Women's Basketball.

She averaged 11 points per game, shooting 4-for-5 from the three-point line and 67% overall from the field. It was her best two-game scoring stretch of the season.

# Bartmann Named to Forbes' Top Women Wealth Advisors for 2025



Edward Jones Financial Advisor Bartmann Named to Forbes' Oklahoma Ranking of Top Women Wealth Advisors for 2025

Edward Jones Financial Advisor Katie Bartmann of Weatherford recently was named to the 2025 Top Women Wealth Advisors Best-in-State in Oklahoma ranking by Forbes and SHOOK® Research. She ranked No. 10 in Oklahoma.

"I'm overjoyed to be included in this important ranking by Forbes," Bartmann said. "I can't imagine any other profession could bring me as much joy as this one. Every day, I have the opportunity to enjoy the relationships I've built with clients and my team and I strive to make a positive difference in their lives."

To compile the 2025 list of women named to the America's Top Women Wealth Advisor ranking, SHOOK® Research analysts conducted individual interviews with nominees. Criteria that determined the final list included industry experience, best practices, compliance records and assets under care.



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# Oklahoma History - Early French Exploration of Present-Day Oklahoma



Provided by Jared Steward / Sports Information Student Asst.

**Jean-Baptiste Bénard de La Harpe (1683–1765) – French trader, explorer, and early documenter of Indigenous life in the Southern Plains. In 1719, he led an expedition deep into present-day Oklahoma, encountering and recording details about the Wichita people. His journey helped shape early French ambitions in the region, laying groundwork for trade and diplomacy.**

**Chase Wright**  
Staff Writer

Claude-Charles du Tisné was one of the first French explorers to push into the area, sent in 1719 to open trade routes and build alliances. Simple in theory. In reality? A mess of negotiations, cultural barriers, and calculated risks.

du Tisné started off in Kaskaskia, Illinois, moving west until he hit a Missouri village near modern Miami, Missouri. They didn't want him passing through, especially if it meant French guns might end up with their enemies. So, he pivoted on to his next stop, an Osage settlement in present-day Missouri.

Now, the Osage were formidable warriors who were wary of outsiders. But du Tisné convinced them to let him pass, barely. He had to leave firearms out of any trade deals. Still, it got him through to a Wichita village farther south, possibly near the Verdigris River in Oklahoma. This encounter set the stage for French-Wichita relations, though it wouldn't be the last time outsiders came through. His path was suggested by Oklahoma Historian Anna Lewis who later studied du Tisné's movements, using his reports to better understand early French diplomacy on the plains.

Around the same time, Jean-Baptiste Bénard de La Harpe was on his own path. A trader first, explorer second, he aimed to expand France's grip in the region. He set up a trading post on the Red River in 1718, right around Texarkana, Texas, then pushed deeper into the unknown. By 1719, he and his crew made it northwest, trekking across the Ouachita Mountains and into modern Oklahoma. It took 23 days before they reached what he described as a massive Wichita settlement, possibly near today's Tulsa.

Thousands lived there, La Harpe guessed between 6,000 and 7,000, mostly Tawakoni with other Wichita bands mixed in. Unlike du Tisné's cautious exchanges, La Harpe was welcomed with open arms. He observed their farming, their vast herds of horses, their hunting skills. He saw potential for trade, alliances, and a growing French presence. His journey left behind some of the best early descriptions of Indigenous life in the region, painting a clear picture of a society thriving long before outsiders arrived.

A little later, in 1739, two French-Canadian traders, Paul and Pierre Mallet, set out from Illinois with a different goal: Santa Fe.

No simple route, no guarantees of safe passage. They followed the Canadian River, cutting through Oklahoma's plains, crossing paths with various tribes. They weren't just to chart the land; they were there to do business. Despite the risks of running into Spanish patrols, they gathered intelligence, mapped terrain, and left behind a clearer understanding of the Southern Plains. Their expedition, while less known than others, proved the viability of the route for future trade.

By the latter half of the century, France's grip on the region had loosened, and Spain was stepping in. Enter Athanase de Mézières, a Frenchman working for Spain. His weapon wasn't force, it was language. He knew multiple Indigenous tongues and used diplomacy where others might have used guns. In the 1770s, he moved through the Red River region, negotiating treaties with the Kichai, Tawakoni, Taovaya, and Tonkawa. Spain needed stability, and Mézières was one to make it happen.

In 1778, while traveling to meet the Comanche, he was thrown from his horse. The injury never truly healed. By 1779, de Mézières passed away in San Antonio—a career cut short, though his negotiations lived on.



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## A Look at Regionals for Western Oklahoma



**Luke Clement**  
 WOK Contributor

Highschool basketball regionals came to a close last Monday for classes B, A and 2A, with the regional championships for classes 3A through 6A coming up later this week.

Over the weekend, the Hydro-Eakly Bobcats were in Alex. The Lady Bobcats had their season ended at the hands of the Navajo Lady Indians. It was a tight first half before Navajo pulled away for the 51-31 win. The Hydro girls end their season 16-12. The boys kept their season alive by blowing out the Hollis Tigers 81-41, Jase Pribble had 20 points. The Bobcats played in the consolation championship game against Caddo last Monday, February 24 at 2:30 pm. You can see the Bobcat boys play on-demand at [wright.media/five](http://wright.media/five).

The Thomas Terrier teams are both playing in the consolation championship today in the Union City regional. The Lady Terriers beat Binger-Oney 51-29 to stay alive and match up with Turner Monday at 1 pm. The boys team beat Verden 39-35 and will play Amber-Pocasset right after the girls. Watch the game on Terrier TV at [wright.media/three](http://wright.media/three).

In 2A, both of the Sayre teams had their season ended on Saturday. The Lady Eagles fell to Newkirk 36-30, finishing their season at 10-12. The boys team would come up short against Tonkawa losing 49-34.

The Watonga girls saw action on Saturday against Fairview and fell big 61-30. The Lady Eagles went 10-18 this season.

4A district got started over the weekend. The Weatherford teams both got big wins over Cache with the girls winning 48-17 and the boys 67-22. The Lady Eagles move on to play Elk City in regionals and the boys will see Woodward. You can see both games live at [wright.media/one](http://wright.media/one).

The Clinton Red Tornadoes hosted Kingfisher and fell in both games. The Lady Reds lost 61-22 and will try to stay alive against Cushing. The Reds took part in a close game but fell late 55-50. They move to the consolation bracket where they will play Mannford. Both games will be hosted live at [wright.media/two](http://wright.media/two).

The Elk City Elks hosted Woodward. The Elkettes got a close win 53-51 while the boys team fell 69-30. The Elks will play Cache on the consolation side. Regionals for 4A start Thursday.

## HS Wrestling Championships Begin February 27

  
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**Luke Clement**  
 WOK Contributor

Regional tournaments for highschool wrestling took place over the weekend and many local athletes have qualified for the state tournament. The championships will be held Thursday, Friday and Saturday (February 27, 28, and March 1) at the State Fairgrounds Arena in Oklahoma City.

In class 3A, Watonga had four Eagles qualify for the championships. Dakota Cox and Dayson Cash both finished third at 113 and 190 respectively. Brayson Gordon was fourth at 126 and Ayden Perez was fifth at 157.

Hinton wrestling sent six wrestlers to the state tournament. Kyle Harral was the Regional Champion at 175 and will compete in the finals.

Also from Hinton, Dakota Dahlenburg finished second at 157. Jagor Turner claimed third at 144. Jace Gill at 106, Brycen Rasnic at 120 and Derrick Pratt at 285 all finished fifth.

The Weatherford Eagles hosted a 4A regional with five Eagles going to state. Dylan Renna and Aiden Willard both won their division, Renna at 106 and Willard at 285. Ryker Smith finished fourth at 165 and Lukas Burd was 5th at 175. Kyler Thompson finished 6th at 120 and will go as an alternate.

Clinton will also send five to state. Marcus Wilson was the 215 pound regional champion. Marquis Martin and Malachi Lorne both finished second, Martin at 106 and Lorne at 190. Finishing fifth was Vincente Gutierrez at 138 and London Wilson at 165.

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