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Weatherford Rotary's 4th of July Event Returns



Rotary
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Along with our Patriot-Level Sponsors presents:
Annual Fourth of July Celebration
Rotary Centennial Park @ Rader Park
6 p.m. - 11 p.m.



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Rotary Centennial Park @ Radar Park
6 p.m. - 11 p.m.
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The Rotary Club of Weatherford is excited to announce its annual Fourth of July celebration, promising a family-friendly evening filled with fun, food, and fireworks.

This event will take place at the local Rader Park in Weatherford, with activities and entertainment lined up for all ages.

Concessions and Food

Starting at 6:00 PM, attendees can enjoy a variety of classic American treats at family-friendly prices. For just \$20, a family of four can feast on chili dogs, hamburgers, chips, Frito chili pies, nachos, and more. It's a perfect way to enjoy the evening.

Sweet Treats

Throughout the event, the OKE Ice Cream truck will be on site, offering delicious ice cream treats to help everyone stay cool!

Fireworks Show

At 9:45 PM, Jeff Berrong will take the stage with a special patriotic lead, followed by a moving presentation by the local Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, who will host the colors and lead the National Anthem.

After the anthem, around 10:00 PM, the night sky will light up with a spectacular fireworks display, a highlight of the evening that promises to delight attendees of all ages.

This celebration would not be possible without the generous support of our sponsors:

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- WestOK Weekly
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Bertha Miller

Bertha Ellen Miller was born on June 27, 1938, to Jonas and Elizabeth Beachy in Garnett, Kansas. Bertha passed away Monday, June 23, 2025, in her home east of Thomas, OK.



Bertha was baptized and joined the Amish church in Garnett at the age of 14. She remained a faithful servant for the rest of her life.

Bertha married Amos D. Miller on January 29, 1957. They were married for over 42 years before Amos passed away in 1999, and had 6 children: Gary (Anna) Miller of Goshen, IN, Perry Miller of Weatherford, OK, David (Martha) Miller of Thomas, OK, Glenda (Nelson) Miller of Fay, OK, Robert Miller of Fay, OK and Mark Miller; 14 grandchildren: Heidi (Terry) Lovely of Granger, IN, Carrie (Jamel) Dumas of Goshen, IN, Dustin (Jennifer) Miller of Howe, IN, Kaitlyn (Jake) Sweigart of Edmond, OK, Kassie Miller of Weatherford, OK, Sonja Osborn of Elk City, OK, Becky (Anthony) Peachy of Thomas, OK, Monica Miller of Thomas, OK, Jason (Brittney) Miller of Thomas, OK, Justin (Jayme) Miller of Fort Gibson, OK, Jordan (Heidi) Miller of Thomas, OK, Brooke (Gage) Crane of Claremore, OK, Dakota Miller of Thomas, OK, Summer (Jadan) Busenitz of Potwin, KS; and 20 great-grandchildren.

Bertha worked extremely hard milking cows, doing chores, butchering hundreds of chickens, working in her flower beds, canning a lot of produce from her large garden, cooking, baking, making their local Miller's Gas and Grub store succeed, and making breakfast there for many years. Hard work was often her "therapy" when stressed! She went with Amos on many Soil Conservation trips and then took his spot on the board of directors after he passed and remained on the board for 20 years. She treasured the friendships she found there. Garage sales and thrift stores were a favorite pastime as she loved finding those "bargains". She always loved flowers and in the later years had more flowers than vegetables. Bertha also loved fishing and especially enjoyed having her sister, Esther, come join her for a week to do just that! She was very protective of her fishing spot and once when asked (by a cop) where she had caught THE BIG ONE she replied, "In the mouth!"

Bertha is survived by one sister, Esther Yoder, of Garnett, KS.

She was preceded in death by her parents, her husband Amos D. Miller, one son Mark Lynn Miller, four brothers - Simon, Alvin, Mahlon, and Lloyd, and three sisters - Barbara, Minnie, and Anna.

Patsy Brock

Patsy Ruth (Tune) Brock of Mustang, OK passed peacefully from her earthly home and entered the gates of Heaven on June 20, 2025.



Patsy was born on November 11, 1938, in Shattuck, OK to Russell and Cena (Bailey) Tune.

She was raised in the Fargo and Fort Supply area and was a member of Fairview Baptist Church, located north of Fargo. Patsy graduated as Valedictorian from Fort Supply High School with the Class of 1957.

Following graduation, she attended nursing school at the University of Oklahoma in Norman. On January 27, 1959, she was united in marriage to Robert Clear. Together they welcomed four children: Rusty, Gayla, Carrie, and Kelly. Patsy was employed with Leeway Motor Freight and later spent 15 dedicated years working for Courtesy Insurance Agency. She was known for her strong work ethic, kind spirit, and devotion to family.

Patsy's legacy of love, faith, and family will live on in the hearts of all who knew her.

She was preceded in death by her husbands Bob Clear in 1963 and Bobby Brock in 2002, her son, Rusty Clear; her parents, Russell and Cena Tune; and her brothers, Tommie Curtis Tune Sr. and Jerry Wayne Tune Sr.

Left to cherish her memory are her daughters: Gayla Dawn White of Oklahoma City, Carrie Lynn Clear of Mustang, OK and Kelly Jeanne Clear of Mustang OK; her grandchildren: Tiffani White of Oklahoma City, Hollie (AnnMarie) and Mitch McFarland of Norman, OK, and Rusty Wayne Clear of Lawton, OK; Great Grandsons Ronan and Corvan McFarland of Norman, OK. Brothers Bill and Marie Tune of Fort Supply, and Scott and Connie Tune of Ashland, KS; sister: Cindy and Kent Bentley of Shattuck; along with 15 nieces & nephews, 38 great nieces & nephews, and 49 great-great nieces & nephews, countless extended family, and dear friends.

Memorial donations may be made to Hope Pregnancy Center - Oklahoma Baptist Homes for Children or Canadian County CASA.

Irene Busler

Irene Iona Busler was born on Saturday, September 2, 1933, to Floyd Eldra Busler and Ida (Humphreys) Busler. She was born on the Oklahoma Jones Place, east of Fay, in Blaine County, Oklahoma. She passed away Tuesday, June 17, 2025, at her home in Eagle City, at the age of 91 years.



Irene was the first daughter of five joining brother Delmer Humphreys and Vernie Busler. Siblings Reba, Alsina, Helen, Asa and Filma joined the family later.

She moved with the family in late 1937, to Eagle City, then Oakwood, and back to Eagle City. Irene began her schooling at Eagle City with about six weeks at Oakwood and graduated as valedictorian from Eagle City on May 23, 1951.

Irene started college in 1952 at Southwestern State College in Weatherford, Oklahoma, earning a Bachelor's degree in Education in 1956 and a Master of Teaching degree in 1962. She paved the way for her siblings for their future education.

Irene worked in the Registrar's Office at the college before beginning her teaching career at Rolla, Kansas, then Taloga, Oklahoma, Sterling, Oklahoma, Manitou, Oklahoma and retiring in 1986 after 29 years. She spent the last 22 years at Butler, Oklahoma.

Irene was baptized on July 8, 1977, in the Church of the First Born, in Fay, Oklahoma.

Irene had several interests and hobbies. She loved flowers, especially perennials and often shared plants with others. She had a garden and shared fruits and vegetables. She also had a strong passion for genealogy and enjoyed researching her family history.

Irene inherited the stubbornness of the Scotch - Irish, along with their persistence. She was a courageous, patient and caring person who helped others in times of sickness and need with visits, money, food, clothing, and even meals. She was especially giving with her family as family meant much to her.

Cherishing her memories, Irene leaves behind her sisters; Helen Leonard, Filma Schimmels and husband, Fred. Irene is also survived by many nieces, nephews, and both grand and great grandnieces and nephews.

Those having gone before are her parents, Floyd and Ida Busler; brothers Delmer Humphreys, Asa Busler, and Vernie Busler; sisters Reba Arthaud and Alsina Plummer; sisters-in-law Betty Humphreys and Etta Busler; and brother-in-law Garland Leonard.

Nedra Forsythe

Nedra Mae Forsythe, aged 76, of Weatherford, OK, was born on April 13, 1949, to Cecil and Mary (Turner) Dacus in Sentinel, OK. She peacefully departed this life on June 21, 2025, at Oxford Springs Assisted Living in Weatherford.



Nedra graduated from Clinton High School in 1967. In May of that same year, she married Donnel Forsythe at her parents' home south of Clinton. Together, they raised two sons, Michael and Gregory.

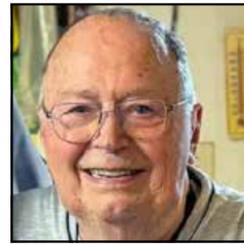
Throughout her career, Nedra was a dedicated professional, working as a bookkeeper at Oklahoma National Bank and on the production line at Kellwood Inc. Nedra also served as a telephone operator for Southwestern Bell and held the position of secretary for Forsythe Insurance Agency as well as secretary and purchasing clerk for the City of Weatherford.

Nedra was preceded in death by her husband Donnel; her parents, Cecil and Mary Dacus; brothers, Cecil, Harlynn, Donald, Marlyn, and Zeak Dacus; and niece Debrah Dacus; sister-in-law, Bonnie Dacus and nephew-in-law, Jack.

She is survived by her son Gregory and wife Melanie of Suffolk, VA; grand-daughter, Kasey and husband Ricard; nieces, Jeanne of Cordell, OK, and Shirley of Yukon, OK; her nephew Clifton and his wife Melinda of Yukon, OK; great-niece Jennifer Logan of Yukon, OK; and great-nephews Dustin Dacus and Tyler Dacus, along with great-great nieces Maddison Dacus and Amberly Logan and great-nephew McCellen Logan.

Neal Perkey

Neal Perkey, 80, of Elk City, Oklahoma was born on August 10, 1944, in Sentinel, Oklahoma to Bill and Loveta (Bright) Perkey. Neal looked upon the face of his Lord and Savior on Wednesday, June 25, 2025, at Baptist Village, Elk City, Oklahoma surrounded by his loving family.



Neal attended school and graduated from Burns Flat High School, Burns Flat, Oklahoma and continued his education at Oklahoma University, Norman, Oklahoma where he received his degree in finance and accounting.

Neal married his best-friend and sweetheart, Carol Dudley on October 14, 1967, at Burns Flat, Oklahoma. Together they raised their family and spent many wonderful years of marriage together.

Neal proudly served his country in the United States Air Force and was honorably discharged as First Lieutenant; he also served with ROTC at Oklahoma University.

Neal was employed with Crown-Zellerbach "paper packaging" from 1970 to 1986. He moved from an accountant in the office to the Chief Financial Officer of Stationers Distributions, Inc. from 1986 to 1992. Finally, Neal was part of a six-member private investment firm from 1992 to 1998.

Neal was a contributor to many causes and was very involved in community work. He cherished spending his time volunteering and looking for ways to help those in need. He was a big contributor to Mission Arlington, a program that was close to his heart. Every Christmas Neal purchased all the bicycles he could fit into his truck and gave them to children, a cause that brought him great joy.

He enjoyed working in the yard and loved to "tinker in the wood", with his scroll saw he used to make figures for people. He made a box full of wooden Christmas ornaments and sent to Hope Valley Church, a "Seed" Mission Baptist Church in Salt Lake City, Utah. Neal had a deep personal relationship with God, whenever he met someone new, he always asked them where they stood with God. Neal treasured his family and friends and will be deeply missed and greatly remembered by all who knew and loved him.

Cherishing his memory is his loving wife, Carol Perkey of Elk City, Oklahoma; numerous cousins and their families; and a very special friend, Dick Gromel of Arlington, Texas.

Neal is preceded in death by his parents, Bill and Loveta Perkey.

A special thank you to Baptist Village, Elk City, Oklahoma, and all the staff that gave Neil excellent care and love.

Memorials can be made to Comforting Hands Hospice, the Gideon Foundation or Adams Foundation in care of Martin-Dugger Funeral Home and Cremation Services, P.O. Box 707, Elk City, Oklahoma 73648. Your contribution will honor Neal's memory and continue his legacy of faith and compassion.

John Robinson

John Kyle Robinson, 79, of Santa Fe, New Mexico was born on June 10, 1946 in Hammond, Louisiana to John Everet and LaCreta (Hutachinson) Robinson. John looked upon the face of his Lord and Savior on Monday, June 21, 2025 at his residence in Santa Fe, New Mexico



John was a skilled sketch artist, painter, and author of memoirs about his Louisiana upbringing. Embracing a free-spirited lifestyle, he appreciated visiting museums, attending art festivals, and savored fine wine and dining. He enjoyed many hobbies including, geology, photography and traveling. John treasured spending time with his family and friends, he will be deeply missed and greatly remembered by all who knew and loved him.

Cherishing his memory, John is survived by one niece, Lecie Margaret McNeas Langille of Orlando, Florida; one brother-in-law, James McNeas of Santa Fe, New Mexico; as well as many other extended relatives and friends.

John was preceded in death by his parents, John Everet and La Creta Robinson; and one sister, Carolane R. McNeas.



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Thunder Reigns: An Oklahoma History Special



Krystal Blackwell / WM

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander (2) lifts the Larry O'Brien Championship Trophy after OKC won game seven of the 2025 NBA Finals against the Indiana Pacers at Paycom Center.

Chase Wright
Staff Writer

On June 22, the OKC Thunder completed a remarkable climb to the NBA mountaintop by winning Game 7 of the Finals 103–91 over the Indiana Pacers. Gilgeous-Alexander, the newly crowned Finals MVP, walked off the court and embraced coach Mark Daigneault amid a deafening home crowd, tears in his eyes and a smile of triumph. Gilgeous-Alexander remarked, “It doesn’t feel real. So many hours... moments... emotions. So many nights of disbelief...of belief.” The Finals MVP continued, “it’s crazy to know that we’re all here, but this group worked for it. [We] put in the hours and we deserve this.”

The 26-year-old star was still in awe of what they achieved. For OKC, this victory was the culmination of a story decades in the making – a story of relocation, superstar rises and departures, heartbreak, resilience, and ultimate redemption. The franchise’s journey began far from the plains of Oklahoma. Once known as the Seattle SuperSonics, the team captured an NBA title in 1979 before fortunes waned. In 2008, after 41 years in Seattle, the Sonics were uprooted and moved to OKC amid controversy and heartbreak in the Northwest.

Rebranded as the Thunder, the team started anew in a city eager to prove itself in the basketball world. Early on, success was hard-earned – the Thunder won just 23 games in their inaugural 2008–09 season.

But the pieces of a contender were already falling into place. 19-year-old forward Kevin Durant, drafted in 2007, blossomed into a scoring prodigy and the face of the young franchise. In 2008, GM Sam Presti added explosive guard Russell Westbrook via the draft, and in 2009 he snagged crafty sixth man James Harden. Remarkably, in three straight drafts from 2007 to 2009, OKC selected three players who would each go on to win the NBA’s Most Valuable Player award in their careers.

With this homegrown trio of future superstars, the Thunder’s rise was meteoric. By 2010 the team made its first playoff appearance, and by 2012 – just four years after arriving in Oklahoma – the Thunder were in the NBA Finals. That 2011–12 Thunder squad captivated fans with its youth and talent. At just 23 years old, Durant led the league in scoring and Westbrook and Harden each averaged over 16 points per game.

In the 2012 Finals, they squared off against LeBron James’s Miami Heat. OKC seized Game 1, igniting hopes of a championship, but ultimately fell in five games. The defeat was bittersweet; a title slipped away, yet a bond between team and city grew stronger than ever. When the Thunder players returned home after the Finals loss, thousands of Oklahomans gathered at the airport to give them a heroes’ welcome.

(See THUNDER, page 6)

2025 BULLDOG JUNIOR

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AGES 7-11

JULY 7-9



AGES 12-18

JULY 14-16

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HIGHER GROUND

Praying for Strangers



Prayer is one of the great mysteries of the religious community. Almost all religions have some sort of activity which calls for interaction with their understanding of a Higher Being. I would say that only Christianity has such a strong understanding of prayer that it has been studied, written about, and acted upon in such a manner that it can really be called an interaction with God. The prayers of most other religions are incantations or repetitions that could not be called a personal conversation with a God that hears, loves, and acts in accordance with their requests.

There are a lot of things that we don’t understand about prayer. But our primary understanding is that the Bible commands us to pray, gives examples of powerful prayer, and teaches us that God hears and answers our prayers. My church lists a missionary couple to pray for each month. Most of the time we may not know the individuals personally. The question may arise, “How can I pray for someone I don’t know?” Maybe an example from one of the Apostle Paul’s prayers will help. In his letter to the Colossian church written from a prison in Rome, he responds to some concerns in the church, a church he has never visited.

Epaphras, a member of that church has visited Paul and he has learned of their faithfulness and love which has brought great fruit in changed lives. He says “...since the day we heard about you we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.” Col. 1:9-12

A thoughtful examination of this prayer gives us insight into the primary things that are on the heart of Paul. I will list a few that stand out. He asks that they have spiritual wisdom and understanding that will lead to a knowledge of God and result in a life that pleases God; that their good works would bring fruitful results. Then he prays that they be strengthened with all power that comes from a mighty God. Then he admonishes them to be thankful for the inheritance that is theirs through Jesus’ obedience to the Father by his death on the cross.

These prayer thoughts would be appropriate for any believer or certainly for praying for a missionary on the field. Prayers for people in general when you may not know of their spiritual condition; a clerk at Wal Mark, a neighbor on the block, a person on a plane, etc. would take on a different complexion. You might pray that their hearts would be softened to grasp how much God loves them, that they would be recognize the depth of their need for forgiveness and repentance, that they would hunger for the Truth of God, and that their hearts would be softened so as to be teachable, barriers resolved, and faith to believe.

A personal note: My book has been published on Amazon containing 75 previous articles available: “Higher Ground: Fresh Vision for Every Step of the Journey”

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LOCAL AND AREA NEWS



Mike Smith
News Director



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Foss's Christmas in July Features New Schedule



Mike Smith
News Director

Western Oklahoma is less than two weeks away (as of this paper's publication) from another Christmas in July celebration at Foss State Park, slated for July 11th and 12th. Barry Hardaway with the State Department of Parks and Recreation recently revealed that a few things are changing for this year's event.

"We please ask that all veterans in the area come out and participate," expressed Hardaway. "We want to thank you for your service you've given for us and this country."

Friday's opening ceremony has been moved back to 7:30 PM from its typical 6:00 PM timeslot. The opening ceremony will feature an unnamed guest speaker, the first flag retirement ceremony in many years, as well as an honoring of Oklahoma's veterans.

Vendors will be located outside of Foss State Park prior to the opening ceremony. Hardaway added that vendors are still being sought for this year's event.

Saturday, July 12th, will feature a 5K "Fun Run," a disk golf tournament, a kayak trail ride, and a duct tape boat race. Musical entertainment will precede Saturday's fireworks show, which will begin at around 9:40 PM.

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CORDELL / NEW SUPERINTENDENT - The Cordell School Board of Education recently selected a new superintendent. Sam Belcher will officially take over the role on July 1st, but he has already been working with the board since late May to ensure a smooth transition. "I just want to keep growing the district," Belcher shared in a statement to Wright Wradio. "You look at the facilities, they've done a really good job of adding things. I'd like to continue that trend where it's needed and where the community sees fit." Belcher will succeed former Superintendent Travis Victory, who stepped down at the end of the 2024-2025 school year. "My goals are to improve test scores. That's what we're here for and I think we have the staff to do that," expressed Belcher. "[Cordell] already has teachers doing professional development and volunteering their time to get better. They're just pushing the same direction as what I'm looking at and it's just been a great response from the staff that I've met so far."

SWOSU / ENROLLMENT - It looks as if Fall enrollment is on the increase at Southwestern Oklahoma State University (SWOSU). "The most exciting thing is our freshman enrollment is up (by a lot)," said Provost Dr. Joel Kendall. Hopefully, those students are going to be around for a long time." Dr. Kendall added these numbers were gleaned from the turnout at the four student orientation events held this year.

CLINTON / MIDDLE SCHOOL UPDATE Clinton Public Schools Superintendent Tyler Bridges gave an update at a recent Board of Education meeting regarding progress on the new middle school. According to Bridges, the school's exterior is finished, and all that's left is some interior polish. Tile work, flooring, sheetrock, and climate control remain the most noteworthy tasks nearing completion. Bridges stated that students should be able to move into the new building shortly after winter break this school year.

WEATHERFORD / AREA PROJECTS - Weatherford Mayor Mike Brown provides an update on various projects in the city surrounding the Stafford Air & Space Museum and Route 66. Stafford's Shooting Star Park and its 12,000 square foot STEM facility will hopefully be done by the end of the year. with the Route 66 projects expected to wrap up in September. Some of the Route 66 projects surround signage and the large astronaut display that will be located in downtown Weatherford.

CUSTER COUNTY / AUDITORS REPORT Custer County Clerk Melissa Graham recently told commissioners that state auditors have wrapped up their work with "no reportable findings." District 2 Commissioner Bruce Walker praised the effort behind the clean audit and highlighted the clerk's dedication. "We strive for perfection, and I think we're as close as it could be. We handle thousands of pieces of paper, and we strive to follow state statutes on everything. A lot of times, auditors increase those requirements and a lot of it's just good practices. Melissa does an excellent job keeping us out of trouble." The clean audit report coupled with the support from commissioners serves as a nod of appreciation to the work being done behind the scenes in the clerk's office.

CLINTON / SPEEDBOWL - After being in disrepair for some time, work is progressing to get the Clinton Speedbowl back in operation. "We're looking to have a couple of practices in July and then we're looking for a season opener to be July 25th and 26th," said spokesperson Rod Fauver during a Clinton Chamber luncheon.

THOMAS / SIDEWALK PROJECTS - Thomas Mayor Jeff Gose revealed that the city has two sidewalk projects underway. One will be located on North Missouri Street, with the other on North Oklahoma Street. Their purpose will be to supply students with safe routes when walking to and from school. Both projects are expected to be completed within the next one to two years.

THOMAS / HUD APARTMENT PROJECT Thomas Mayor Jeff Gose says the city is moving forward with plans for an apartment project supported by U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). "We're going to be building three apartments above our historic downtown building," explained Gose. "We're working with an architect that graduated from Thomas and is now professor at OU, Andrew Stone." More details are expected to be released as the apartment project progresses.

WEEKLY SHOUTOUTS!

Happy Day TO YOU!
 Have a birthday, anniversary, or other special event? Email us at sales@westokweekly.com to announce it here for FREE!

Alcohol causing problems? Alcoholics Anonymous meets daily at 928 W. Main, Weatherford. Call (580) 819-0727 for more information.
Christian Free Store - Donations of school supplies, clothes, shoes, etc. are needed or if you are in need. Please call (580) 637-2345 or (580) 291-3875. **Alfalfa, OK, Community Center** "Bible Study," Every Monday Night from 7:00 to 8:00 Hwy 58. Five miles South of Hwy 152. For more information contact (405) 643-9211. Free and Open to the Public. **OK Parkinson's Alliance**, monthly support group meeting the second Thursday of each month, excluding December, at 5:30 p.m. at Weatherford's Pioneer Center, 1000 Gartrell Place. Patients, caregivers, family or friends are welcome. Questions? Contact OK Parkinson's Alliance (405) 810-0695 or info@OKpa.org.
Iron Sharpens Iron is a Christ-centered adult support group every Tuesday night at 7pm. 233 E Main in Hydro, First Christian Church.
Happy Birthday Wishes for July 2 - Leticia Contreras, Jaqueatta Cummings, Taylor Exinia, Lois Griffin, Lois Heinrichs, Rachel Lundstrom, Mary Beth Mendez, Michael Perez, Myron Webb; **July 3** - Ellen Arnold, Taylor Carder, Cameron Hines, Ryan Merrill; **July 4** - Alicia Allen, Cheryl Bell, Riley Bryson, D'Arshi Chritensen, DeWayne Crawley, Anita Fransen, Mary Lou Kaiser, Jenna Maddox, Haley Merrill, Kristine Moreno, Danny Rhodes; **July 5** - Alecia DePasa, Renae McGregor, Milburn Outhier, Dana VanHuss; **July 5** - Alecia DePasa, Renae McGregor, Milburn Outhier, Dana VanHuss; **July 6** - Jenifer Edler, Jenn Gemaehtlich, Allison Gossen, Trey Graybill, Eugene Hunnicutt, Campbell Jacobsma, Kadie Lucas, Ashley Oliver, Leslie Panana, Tiffany Parrish, Alicia Wingo, Scott Woodall; **July 7** - Clausia Estala, Francisco Estala, Lylah-Ann Hanson, Ruth Kidd, Hollis Lee, Pat Pope, Allison Richardson, Daniel Rodriguez, Mike Roulet, Philip Smith, Brendon Stain, Doyle Taylor, Alex Tompkins, Dennis Vermillion; **July 8** - Jeanine Berrong, Bradley Blackwell, Lou Hamilton, Jr., Billy Karlin, Robin Karlin, Terry MaGill, David Miller, Jim Rodemeyer, Terry Thomson, Julie Tisdal

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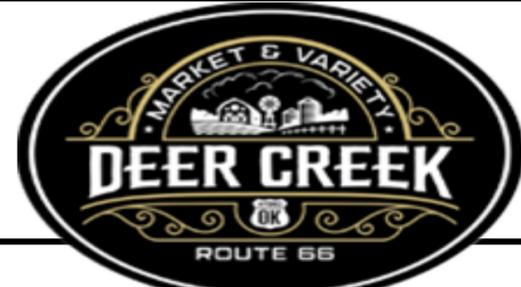
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THUNDER

Continued from Page 3

“I don’t think any other NBA team has the support that we have, and it means a lot to us,” James Harden told the adoring crowd, thanking fans for believing in them. In just a few years, the Thunder had transformed OKC into a basketball town, and the young team vowed this was just the beginning.

The following years saw the Thunder solidify their place as a powerhouse. Kevin Durant cemented himself as an elite scorer, capturing four scoring titles between 2010 and 2014 and earning the NBA’s MVP award in 2014. His emotional MVP speech that year – where he memorably called his mother “the real MVP” – became part of NBA lore. Westbrook, the ferociously athletic point guard, also emerged as a perennial All-Star and record-breaker. In the 2016–17 season, Westbrook accomplished a feat unseen in over half a century: he averaged a triple-double for the entire season, breaking Oscar Robertson’s 55-year-old record with 42 triple-doubles. That jaw-dropping campaign earned Westbrook the 2017 MVP and affirmed him as the heartbeat of the franchise.

With Durant and Westbrook both at the peak of their powers – and both MVPs – the Thunder seemed destined for a championship. They came agonizingly close in 2016, reaching the Western Conference Finals once again. OKC held a 3–1 series lead over the 73-win Golden State Warriors, only to suffer a collapse that would haunt the team. In the fallout that summer, Durant stunned the basketball world and devastated OKC fans by departing for Golden State as a free agent. The move ended an era; the Thunder’s homegrown superstar was gone, and left Westbrook as the lone superstar in OKC. If Durant’s exit was a gut punch to the city, Russell Westbrook responded by giving the Thunder faithful everything he had. Defiantly loyal, Westbrook signed an extension and embraced the mantle of franchise leader. His 2016–17 MVP season was a testament to sheer will: he piled up 31.6 points, 10.7 rebounds and 10.4 assists per game, willing a reshuffled Thunder squad to the playoffs. In one unforgettable April game, Westbrook clinched his 42nd triple-double with a 36-foot buzzer-beater, passing Robertson’s long-held mark in storybook fashion.

Moments like that endeared him forever to OKC. “I’m just thankful...for all the fans, for my family for believing in me,” Westbrook said that night, after a standing ovation even from opposing Denver Nuggets fans. He was OKC’s superstar – fiery, passionate, and unyieldingly competitive – and the city embraced him in return.

Despite Westbrook’s heroics, the team couldn’t recapture that magic from the Durant years. They retooled by trading for All-Star Paul George in 2017, and for a time Westbrook and George formed a formidable duo (with Westbrook even leading the league in assists twice). Yet playoff disappointments mounted, and after the 2019 season the franchise made a difficult decision: it was time to rebuild and look to the future.

In July 2019, the Thunder traded Paul George to the Los Angeles Clippers in exchange for a record haul of draft picks and a rising young point guard named Shai Gilgeous-Alexander. Not long after, Westbrook – having given 11 seasons to OKC – was traded as well, marking the end of the Thunder’s first era. The departure of beloved stars was painful for the fanbase.

But GM Sam Presti had replenished the cupboard with draft assets and one potential cornerstone in Gilgeous-Alexander. That potential soon blossomed into something special. Shai Gilgeous-Alexander, a wiry Canadian playmaker, arrived in OKC as a relatively unheralded 20-year-old. Under coach Daigneault’s guidance, “SGA” rapidly grew into the franchise player. By 2023, he was averaging over 30 points per game and earned First Team All-NBA honors, signaling that OKC had its next superstar. The Thunder’s youthful roster – bolstered by lottery picks like Josh Giddey, Luguentz Dort, and Jalen Williams – began to gel. Even as the team endured a few losing seasons to develop, the passionate OKC fans stayed loyal, knowing brighter days lay ahead.

Gilgeous-Alexander emerged not only as an elite scorer but as a poised leader beyond his years, often crediting the supportive community for fueling him. “This is a win for the fans – the best fans in the world,” SGA said of the team’s success, reflecting the deep connection between the Thunder and their city. That connection would reach its pinnacle in the 2024–25 season.

Everything came together in 2025. The Thunder, once again stockpiled with talent and armed with lessons from the past, took the league by storm. They won a record 68 games in the regular season, the best record in the NBA, powered by Gilgeous-Alexander’s sensational play.

Shai led the entire league in scoring at 32.7 points per game, while also dishing out 6.4 assists on efficient shooting – numbers reminiscent of a prime Michael Jordan or Kobe Bryant. His brilliant all-around season earned Gilgeous-Alexander the 2025 NBA MVP award, making him the third Thunder player (after Durant and Westbrook) to win the honor. Fittingly, coach Mark Daigneault was recognized as Coach of the Year for molding the league’s youngest roster into a juggernaut.

With the top seed in the West, OKC rolled through the playoffs, defeating the Memphis Grizzlies, defending champion Denver Nuggets, and Minnesota Timberwolves to reach the NBA Finals. Each series showcased the Thunder’s exuberant, unselfish style – a team full of players in their early 20s playing beyond their years. “They behave like champions. They compete like champions... They are an uncommon team and now they’re champions,” Coach Daigneault said of his squad’s tight-knit ethos.

In the Finals, the Thunder met a battle-tested Indiana Pacers team in a matchup of two franchises seeking their first title since the late 1970s. The series was a thriller, swinging back and forth through seven games. There were moments of adversity: OKC dropped a heartbreaker in Game 1 on a last-second shot, and Indiana’s resilience pushed the Thunder to the brink. But these young Thunder showed veteran poise. In a pivotal Game 5 at home, 21-year-old forward Jalen Williams erupted for a playoff-career-high 40 points, while Gilgeous-Alexander added 31 points and 10 assists, to give OKC a 3-2 series lead. Indiana refused to fold, forcing a Game 7 in OKC, a scenario Thunder fans had dreamed about for years.

On June 22, 2025, under the bright lights of Paycom Center, the Thunder delivered a performance for the ages. Gilgeous-Alexander was masterful, gliding to 29 points and 12 assists in the deciding game. Rookie center Chet Holmgren patrolled the paint with 5 blocked shots, and the Thunder’s depth and energy wore down the Pacers.

The home crowd, notorious for its ear-splitting enthusiasm, roared as the Thunder pulled away in the second half. When the final buzzer sounded on a 103–91 victory, OKC was finally the NBA champion.

Among the heroes on the floor that night, sharpshooter Alex Caruso stood out, not just for his hustle, but for his veteran leadership. The former Lakers champion had blended seamlessly into this young core, delivering 20-point outings off the bench in Games 2 and 4, while anchoring OKC’s perimeter defense. In postgame remarks, Caruso emphasized the squad’s journey, calling this title “a real one”, a clear shoutout to the authenticity of the win and the city’s hard-fought path to the top “The climb is complete. The rebuild is done. The OKC Thunder are champions,” proclaimed one broadcaster, capturing the catharsis of the moment. As Gilgeous-Alexander hoisted the Finals MVP trophy and then the Larry O’Brien Championship Trophy, he joined an exclusive pantheon of players to win scoring title, regular-season MVP, and Finals MVP in one year (the first since Shaquille O’Neal in 2000). More importantly to him, he brought a championship to a city that had given its heart to this team. It was the Thunder franchise’s second title overall but the first since moving to OKC – there will finally be a banner hanging in OKC, the one that fans have waited for since 2008.

In the celebratory aftermath, long-time Oklahomans reflected on the journey. They remembered the early days when the team’s arrival signaled hope, the exhilarating Finals run in 2012 that fell just short, the MVP seasons of Durant and Westbrook that put OKC on the NBA map, and the years of rebuilding through draft picks and player development. Now all those chapters have come together in a championship climax. “At long last, OKC has its first championship,” one local report declared, encapsulating the city’s pride. The streets of Bricktown filled with joyous fans in Thunder blue, embracing strangers, honking car horns, and chanting “OKC! OKC!” deep into the warm summer night. What once was a one-sport college football town had fully transformed into Thunder Territory.

For the NBA, the Thunder’s triumph is a feel-good tale of a small-market team built the right way – through savvy drafting, patient rebuilding, and unwavering community support – rising to the pinnacle. OKC’s championship also cements the Thunder’s legacy as one of the most significant franchises of the past decade and a half. In that span, they’ve produced three MVPs, two scoring champions, and now a championship team that may only be at the beginning of its glory. Incredibly, the 2025 Thunder are one of the youngest title teams in league history, suggesting that this could be the dawn of a new dynasty on the prairie. As Coach Daigneault noted, “So many of us can still get better...We have a lot of room to grow...and I’m excited for the future of this team”. The future indeed looks bright in OKC, but for now, the Thunder and their fans are savoring every moment of this long-awaited championship. From Seattle to OKC, from Durant to Westbrook to SGA, the journey has been epic. And at last, the Larry O’Brien Trophy resides in Oklahoma – a testament to the Thunder’s enduring spirit and a victory that belongs to the entire state of Oklahoma. The echoes of this triumph will ring for generations, a new proud chapter in NBA history written in the heartland.

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STEP UP / Facebook

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STEP UP / Facebook

Pictured from left: Sanguine Foreman Roger Blake; STEP UP Executive Director Nicole Morgan; and Sanguine CEO Randy Nelson.



STEP UP / Facebook

Pictured, from left: Sanguine Foreman Roger Blake; his wife Bobbi Blake; and STEP UP Executive Director Nicole Morgan



STEP UP / Facebook

Members of the STEP UP board who attended Sanguine's 2025 Golf Tournament. Pictured, from left: Vice President Amy Martin, Erin Adams, Rachel Hensley, Executive Director Nicole Morgan, and President Dr. Amy Barnett.

Nicole Morgan
STEP UP Executive Director

Sanguine Gas Exploration continues to demonstrate its deep commitment to community impact, raising \$32,000 at its annual charity golf tournament to benefit Step Up Transitional Living Program. This marks the second year Sanguine has hosted the event, with total contributions to Step Up now exceeding \$64,000.

Earlier this week, Sanguine's President and CEO Randy Nelson and CFO Tim Cargile presented the check to Step Up Executive Director Nicole Morgan. Also present was Roger Blake, a longtime Sanguine employee and the key liaison who first introduced Step Up to the company. Roger and his wife, Bobbi, have been passionate advocates for the organization and were instrumental in helping secure Sanguine's support.

"We are so grateful to Roger and Bobbi Blake," said Morgan. "Roger not only brought Step Up to Sanguine's attention, but he and Bobbi have continued to champion our mission behind the scenes. Their belief in our work helped lay the foundation for what has become an incredibly meaningful partnership."

During the meeting, Morgan shared a slideshow presentation outlining Step Up's vision for the future, including plans to develop a tiny home village to support young adults transitioning out of homelessness. The Sanguine leadership team expressed strong enthusiasm for the initiative and reaffirmed their commitment to supporting Step Up's continued growth.

"Sanguine's partnership is more than generous—it's personal," Morgan said. "They believe in Western Oklahoma's youth and are walking alongside us to build something lasting."

Founded in 1977 and headquartered in Tulsa, Sanguine is a family-run, independent oil and gas company with deep operational roots across Oklahoma and Texas.

Under the leadership of Randy Nelson, the company has consistently balanced technical excellence with a deep sense of community responsibility.

"The team at Sanguine Gas Exploration is honored to support Step Up as an outstanding service provider for young adults as they transition out of foster care in Western Oklahoma. It is important for us to give back to the communities in which we operate."

Step Up Transitional Living Program provides scattered-site housing, life skills development, mental health support, and community engagement for youth ages 18-24. With support from dedicated partners like Sanguine—and advocates like Roger and Bobbi Blake—Step Up is working toward a future where every young person in Western Oklahoma has a safe place to land and a path forward.

To learn more about Step Up or how to get involved, visit stepuptransitional.org

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SWOSU Athletics Department to Begin Search for New Softball Coach



Jon Chidester
SWOSU Media Relations

Southwestern Oklahoma State University Athletic Director Todd Helton announced today that head softball coach Jessica Boone has resigned to pursue other coaching opportunities.

"I'd like to extend my thanks to Coach Boone for the hard work she dedicated to our softball program," Helton said. "We at SWOSU wish her all the best as she continues to progress her coaching career."

Boone recently finished her third season as the head coach at SWOSU this spring after she took over the program in the summer of 2022. During her three-year stint in Weatherford, she made win improvements in each season, culminated by a 22-25 finish this spring to secure a spot in the Great American Conference Championship for the first time since 2019.

Further information related to the search concerning the new head softball coach is forthcoming.



Rumble the Bison's touring van led the OKC Thunder parade following their NBA Championship game against the Indiana Pacer.



The OKC Thunder touring bus drove through Oklahoma City carrying a handful of fans and players, including Chet Holmgren (7).

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