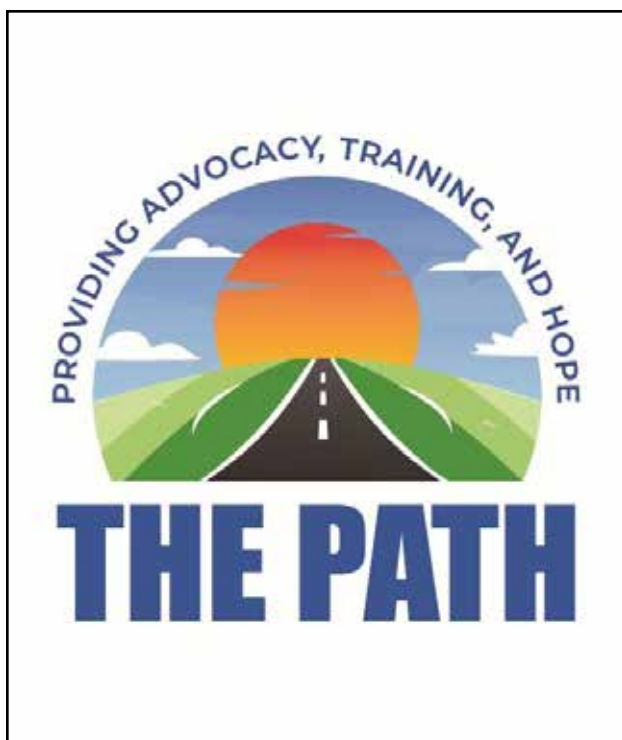


The PATH Children's Advocacy Center to Host Open House Saturday



The PATH Children's Advocacy Center is hosting an Open House at their new facility at 522 W. Rainey Ave in Weatherford on Friday, July 11th from 5pm to 8pm. The PATH CAC is a non-profit organization that provides forensic interviews for children that have open cases with either DHS or law enforcement agencies due to the child abuse or neglect. The organization hopes to share their important mission with the community at their Open House.

The Open House will include food trucks, a dunk tank, and a donut eating contest pitting Custer County law enforcement officers against Washita County law enforcement officers. Proceeds from the dunk tank and donations received at the event will help fund The PATH's overhead and other expenses.

"The main goal of the open house is to bring awareness to the people," said Jamey Banks, Executive Director of The PATH CAC. "We want Western Oklahoma to know that we're here, what we do and how we're helping the children in this area, because I think a lot of people don't really know that we exist, yet."

According to data compiled by the Child Welfare League of America, 13,546 Oklahoma children were victims of abuse and neglect in the year 2022. The PATH CAC operates to give a voice to those victims by conducting forensic interviews with children to unearth any potential criminal wrongdoing. The PATH has been providing forensic interviews for over 20 years, and has operated a mobile interview unit, affectionately called Joey for the past 10 years. This new brick and mortar location in Weatherford will certainly help amplify their efforts by providing a comforting and welcoming space for any suspected victims of abuse or neglect.

"We just really want people to know that we want to help kids find their voice and be able to tell their story, because we believe with all of our hearts that these kids carry a heavy load that they shouldn't have to," said Banks "and we want to see them get the help that they need and get the justice that they deserve."

For more information about THE PATH CAC, visit their website www.okinterviewingservices.com or you can find them on Facebook by searching for "The PATH CAC."

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Heartland Museum’s 3-Day Fourth of July Event

Molly Carson / WM

This Rt. 66 Porterhouse Diner, which used to sit on Weatherford's Main Street, is famous for being an establishment Elvis Presley used to eat at.

Molly Carson / WM

Mike Brown speaks with Val “The Gal” Yoder live at the Heartland Museum’s 4th of July celebrations on 95.5 The Coyote.

Scott Selsor / Selsor Construction

Progress has been made on the roundabout’s Route 66 monument, thanks to the contributions of Selsor Construction, Culver Electric, Kaiser Sign & Graphics, and Cox Metal Works.



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HIGHER GROUND Good News

Jim Morrison

In the midst of all the bad news we are bombarded with, allow me to share some good news. For reasons unknown to me I receive a quarterly copy of Outreach magazine, without my ever having subscribed to it. It provides an analysis of what is happening around the world in evangelical churches and shares ideas from various denominations.

An article entitled “A Quiet Revival” reveals some interesting news. In England, the land that produced, William Carey, John Wesley, and Charles Spurgeon, has been more recently been known for its secularism; great church buildings standing almost empty of people hungering and thirsting after righteousness. The author, Amy Orr-Ewing states that “People are waking up to their need for God. They are buying Bibles in such great numbers in such great numbers that it is making the news. There is a renaissance in belief in God.”

There has been a dramatic increase in church attendance, particular among young men. In 2014 only 4% of young men ages 20-24 stated that they attended church. In 2024 a sampling of the same age group had raised the figure to 21%. Orr-Ewing says “Young people and notably young men, are discovering the Christian faith and returning to church.” Ed Stetzer, the editor of Outreach magazine, states that “across age demographics over 2 million more people attend church in the U.K. than six years ago.” He further quotes the Wall Street Journal reporting a surge in Bible sales, especially among first-time buyers.

In the USA, we hear reports of thousands of college students gathering for religious services in colleges across the land in places like Auburn, Florida State, and Ohio State. Hundreds of baptisms resulted. “Fifty-nine percent of Gen Z said they are they are more open to the Gospel than before the pandemic.”

It is interesting that there is a widening gap in the returning to Faith between young men and women. It is true that young men are responding to the gospel in greater numbers than young women. It is not certain why this is true. Perhaps the desire for freedom in abortion and the discouraging of leadership roles for women plays a part. It has been found to be true that the more progressive you are compared to a conservative biblical approach leads to diminished church attendance.

Changing the course a bit but not completely, the summer is a time when young people across the land are going to church camps or involved in summer missions experiences. These events are so common place that we tend to lose site of the magnitude of the potential that these opportunities provide. It has been my experience in working with college students that many have changed the course of their lives through their involvement in summer events. That being so we should surround these young people in prayer. How often have you seen your church have a special time of prayer for those involved in these summer opportunities? It is often true that “familiarity brings contempt.” We take for granted these opportunities because “they happen every summer.” We don’t really expect God to act in a mighty way to produce devoted followers that will live sacrificial, obedient lives to advance the Kingdom.

We need not wait for someone else to spark such a movement. It might begin with two people who are willing to pay the price of diligent intercessory prayer for young people involved in various ministry events. The great Fulton Street Prayer revival in the mid-19th century began with one man with a passion. If you are not familiar with that movement, goggle it and you might be amazed.

To comment: jhm82@outlook.com, 580-302-1142

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Get Your Glow On at HOA’s Fun Run & Walk



A group of Weatherford High School students is reviving the schools pom and dance team and they’re hosting a glow-in-the-dark fun run and walk to raise funds to get the team started. The Glowmotion Fun Run and Walk is scheduled to take place on Saturday, July 10th at 9pm at Weatherford’s Sand Plum Trail in the Rader Park Complex. Event coordinators are calling on all interested participants to register.

“This is the first year that Weatherford High School is bringing back pom, so they're starting from ground zero,” said Heather Hummel, who’s helping coordinate the event through her family fitness business HOA Fitness. “They have camps that they have to pay for, uniforms, shoes or poms. You know, just essentials to get going,” added Hummel.

The Glowmotion fun run and walk will have two routes: a one mile route that will just include

the original Sand Plum Trail; and a two mile route that will include the path that loops around the Ol’ Fishin Hole.

Participants can register online for \$25 before July 9th. After July 9th registration fees online or at the event will cost \$35.

On the day of the race participants will receive a glow necklace, but everyone is encouraged to dress in their best glow-in-the-dark gear, and, of course, have fun.

“We want it to be fun. You can go out the walk, you can dress up. You can bring your dog if it's on a leash,” said Hummel, and this event is “just about getting out and about and moving your body for a good cause, added Hummel.

To register online you can visit www.tinyurl.com/y3u4hwtj and you can also find more information by searching Glowmotion Fun Run and Walk on Facebook.

WEST OK / PORTERHOUSE RESTAURANTS

The Porterhouse restaurants have been a beloved part of western Oklahoma history since the 1940's. In an interview with Wright Wradio, Bruce McGill, grandson of founder Marvin Porter, shares how these iconic diners got their start, including the struggles of paying for their establishments. “There was a little box at the end of the counter...(You) put a percentage of your sales in that box. About twice a month, somebody would come by and unlock a box and get the money out. And that's how you paid for the restaurant.” The legacy of the Porterhouse lives on today in places like Weatherford, where the spirit of Marvin Porter's original vision still welcomes diners with a taste of history.

CLINTON / NEW SUPERINTENDENT

July 1st marked the first official day on the job for new Clinton Schools Superintendent Nathan Meget. “I'm very proud to say that I am now a leader of Clinton Public Schools, but we do this work together,” expressed Marget toward Clinton Chamber member at their monthly luncheon. “I hope you know that you are (a driving force) in the stuff we do. We are in a place that sets kids up to be college- and career-ready.” Meget succeeds Tyler Bridges, who has assumed the duties of Superintendent for Stillwater Public Schools.

SWOSU / BEUTLER NOMINATION

Former Southwestern Oklahoma State University President Randy Beutler has been recognized as a finalist in family contemporary nonfiction by the Western Writers of America. His book, “Empresarios of the Rodeo Arena” chronicles the Beutler family's stock contracting legacy in professional rodeo from 1929 to today. Copies of the book are available at the Elk City Museum Complex.

WRH / SENATE BILL

The board of trustees at Weatherford Regional Hospital focused on concerns over the possible impact of funding cuts tied to President Donald Trump's signature legislation, his “Big Beautiful Bill” Act. “Three things happened a year ago that made this hospital suddenly move from the red into the green...Medicaid expansion, then shop payments (to healthcare providers), and with the directed payment program and benefits,” explained Hospital Chief Executive Officer Darren Farrell. “This hospital (brought in) about \$6 million a year; all of those things are now on the chopping block.” The bill passed in the Senate on Tuesday, July 1, and was passed by the House on Friday, July 4, following further consideration before moving to the President’s desk on Saturday, July 5.

CORDELL / FINANCIAL REPORT

Cordell Schools Superintendent Sam Belcher says the district’s finances are in good shape, with a fund balance of approximately \$2.325 million. After July’s payroll/remaining bills are covered, the district expects to begin the schoolyear with up to \$1.9 million following July payrolls for faculty members, which he describes as a respectable number for the district. Belcher adds that he’s optimistic about maintaining the district's strong financial footing in the years to come.

CLINTON / JOHNSTON NOMINATION

Clinton City Manager Robert Johnston has been nominated for the prestigious Gerald Wilkins Award by the city managers association of Oklahoma. Recipients of the award are credited with strengthening the city management form of government through their stable length of service, dedication to civic activities, and commitment to codes of ethics. “It says a lot (about) Robert and for the city of Clinton,” expressed Clinton Mayor David Berrong. Johnston was nominated alongside City Managers from Woodward, Chandler, Nichols Hills, Collinsville, and Glenpool. The award recipient will be announced later this month.

CUSTER CO / GALLOWAY

Custer County Emergency Management Director Mike Galloway attended his final county commissioner’s meeting. “I'm just wrapping up loose ends, turning in equipment for the last day...transfer some passwords ...take care of the drug testing and the clearing house stuff for CDL,” explained Galloway, who is retiring from his position after 23 years of service.

CONNECTIONS / FILL THE TRUCK

This year saw another successful “Fill the Truck” campaign for Connections Food & Resource Center. Executive Director Elizabeth Amen says the event raised over 200 pounds of food and enough in monetary donations to purchase 600-700 meals for the center’s 1500 monthly clients.

WEATHERFORD / HYDRO HOSPITAL

The board of trustees for the Weatherford Hospital Authority recently held their monthly meeting along with their quarterly meeting for Weatherford Regional Hospital, Inc. There, the board approved the purchase of a new building, located at 539 N Broadway in Hydro. Weatherford Regional Hospital will hold the title. “This was approved last month by our trustee board, but we also need approval from Regional Inc., because that’s how the title of the building (works),” said Chairman Cody Bell.

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Happy Birthday Wishes! **July 9th** – Carolyn Dibler, Jerry Hill, Frank Johnson, Glenda Jordan, Mark Lantz, Frances Moore, Caitlin Russel, Sheila Settles, Michael Webb; **July 10th** – Les Crall, Carolyn Curell, Leshia Jackson, Connie Lopez, Bobby Marsee, Rachel Smith, James Taylore II; **July 11th** – HESSIE ATTEBERY, Rebecca Blake, Paula Blake, Delores Davidson, David Matz, Lori Stewart, Sue Vermillion; **July 12th** – Atly Buckner, Jonathan Wesley Dale Hawthorn, Kelvin Hart, Saska Koch, Glenn Morris, Ray Murray, Kyla Scales, Emma Loe Shoonmaker, Rev. Earl Stephenson, Liam Turney; **July 13th** – Cezanne Barrios, Damon Basler, Sami Grove, Charlene Haronema, Jennifer Jacks, Deanna LeGrand, Danny Moore, Kelsey Nonast, Matthew Perez, Raegan Roof, Norma Thurman; **July 14th** – Caitlen Coxwell, Willie Galindo, Carissa Hewitt, Frieda Beck, Jamie Patton, Pauline Pennington, Debbie Smith; **July 15th** – Vanessa Baileys, Chris Guthrie, Alecia Lay, Layla Lowrance, Aleesha Lustfield, Shaylee Maddox, Jade Mahan, Lee Miller, David Morris, Alison Page Bieberich, Jason Rivera, Jessie Silver, Jessica Spencer, Carl Spradlin, Betty Sturn, Addison Weaver, Jami Weaver.

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| Duncan Hines Cake Mixes (All Varieties) | 2 for \$4.00 |
| Food Club Sugar, 4 lb. | \$3.49 |
| Whataburger Ketchup, 20oz. | \$2.99 |
| French's Mustard, 20oz. | \$2.99 |
| Malt-O-Meal Cereals, 30-36oz (Assorted Bags) | \$4.99 |
| Cheez Its Crackers (All Varieties) | \$3.99 |
| Ranch Style Beans, 15oz. (All Varieties) | 4 for \$5.00 |
| Betty Crocker Suddenly Salad (All Varieties) | 2 for \$5.00 |

Dairy

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|--|--------------|
| Red Diamond Tea, 128oz. (All Varieties) | 2 for \$6.00 |
| Pillsbury Grands Biscuits, 16.3oz. (All Varieties) | \$3.49 |
| Food Club Whipping Cream, 32oz. | \$5.99 |
| Daisy Dip, 16oz. (All Varieties) | 2 for \$7.00 |
| Food Club Shredded Cheese, 8oz. (All Varieties) | 2 for \$4.00 |
| Borden Cheese Melts (All Varieties) | 2 for \$6.00 |
| Food Club Orange Juice, 52oz. | \$4.39 |

Produce

| | |
|----------------------------------|--------------|
| Washington Red Cherries | \$1.99 lb. |
| Texas Cantaloupe | 2 for \$5.00 |
| Sweet Yellow Vidalia Onions | \$0.99 lb. |
| Red Seedless Grapes | \$1.99 lb. |
| Blueberries, pint | \$2.99 |
| Dole Classic Coleslaw Mix, 14oz. | \$0.99 |
| Sweet Corn | 3 for \$1.00 |

Frozen

| | |
|--|--------------|
| Cravn Hash Browns or Fries, 28-32oz. | 2 for \$6.00 |
| Blue Ribbon Ice Cream, 4qt. Pail (All Varieties) | \$5.99 |
| Food Club Waffles, 10 count (All Varieties) | \$2.39 |
| Smuckers Uncrustables (All Varieties) | 3 for \$6.00 |
| Food Club Lemonade or Limeade, 12oz. | 2 for \$4.00 |

Meat

| | |
|---|--------------|
| Eckrich Smoked Sausage, 14oz. (All Varieties) | \$3.69 |
| Bar S Hot Dogs, 12oz. | 3 for \$4.00 |
| Jalapeno Poppers, 9oz. | \$5.99 |
| J.C. Potter Sausage, 1 lb. roll | \$3.99 |
| Wrights Sliced Bacon | \$6.99 lb. |
| Country Style Pork Ribs | \$3.29 lb. |
| Boneless Rib Eye Steak | \$17.99 lb. |

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| | |
|---|--------------|
| Simply Done Red Plastic Cups, 50 count | \$3.98 |
| Solo Paper Plates, 22 count | 2 for \$7.00 |
| Simply Done Foil Pans (Asst. Varieties) | 2 for \$4.00 |



Courtesy Oklahoma History Society

A Fourth of July Parade, held in El Reno, Indian Territory, sometime in the early 1900s. A streetscape lined with spectators, flags, and horse-drawn floats.



Courtesy Oklahoma History Society

From the “Spirit of ‘76” collection depicting early celebration in rural Oklahoma showing a parade passing the Alfalfa County courthouse in Cherokee, OK, one year after statehood.

Chase Wright
Staff Writer

Oklahoma’s Independence Day celebrations began even before statehood. Just months after the 1889 Land Run opened central Oklahoma to settlers, the fledgling Oklahoma City organized a grand Fourth of July festival. A special committee secured reduced railroad fares to bring in visitors and laid out a fairground east of town (today’s Bricktown) for horse tracks and a baseball diamond. Over July 4–6, 1889, an estimated few thousand people (far shy of the 20,000 hoped for) gathered to enjoy horse races, frontier games, and exhibitions of “feats of horsemanship,” capped each day by a fiery pyrotechnic display. Dozens of Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Caddo tribal members traveled from the Darlington Agency under special U.S. government permission to perform “Indian war dances” for the crowds. Ironically, because federal agents had banned Native ceremonies in that era, many tribes seized the Fourth as an occasion to openly hold forbidden dances and honor rituals, often incorporating American flags into their regalia. The ambitious 1889 celebration was later dubbed “the Fall of Babylon” after a grandstand collapsed on opening day – yet newspapers still declared it a triumph for a community eager to prove itself in the territory.

Other frontier towns in Indian and Oklahoma Territories soon followed suit with patriotic festivities. At army posts like Fort Reno and in railroad towns springing up on the prairie, Independence Day meant day-long picnics, band music, and cannon salutes at sunrise. In Muskogee, Guthrie, and other early towns, citizens gathered for parades and readings of the Declaration of Independence, often under makeshift awnings in the summer heat. By July 4, 1907 – the last Independence Day before Oklahoma achieved statehood – Oklahoma City’s downtown Broadway Avenue hosted a bustling territorial parade.

After Oklahoma became the 46th state in November 1907, Independence Day took on new meaning. The very next summer, on July 4, 1908, the City of Philadelphia presented Oklahoma with a massive American flag bearing 46 stars – a gesture commemorating the young state’s first Fourth of July in the Union. (Embroidered on the flag’s corner was the inscription “Oklahoma July Fourth 1908,” marking the occasion.) That flag was unfurled amid celebrations in Guthrie, the first state capital, as Oklahomans rejoiced in joining the nation. Across the state, towns large and small began hosting “statehood Fourth” events with extra pomp: civic leaders gave patriotic speeches, schoolchildren sang newly adopted state songs, and fireworks lit up the prairie sky.

Tulsa, then a booming oil city, held some of those largest celebrations. Even before Tulsa had an official public park, the wooded grounds that became Owen Park drew thousands for Independence Day gatherings. As one account notes, in the years before 1909 (when Tulsa finally purchased Owen Park), “thousands of people were reported to have come [there] to enjoy band concerts, food and fireworks each July 4th.” By 1906–1909 Tulsa’s Fourth festivities included grand parades from downtown to the park, oratory by local dignitaries, foot races, and plenty of fireworks – setting a tradition of big municipal celebrations.

While city celebrations grew grand, Oklahoma’s small towns nurtured their own enduring Fourth of July traditions – some lasting over a century. Marlow, a farming town in the Chickasaw Nation area, boasts an Independence Day festival dating back to 1892. For well over 130 years, Marlow’s Fourth has begun with a quaint Main Street parade featuring horses, wagons, antique cars and home-made floats, followed by a day of old-fashioned fun in Redbud Park. Generations of Marlow families have picnicked under the trees, played bingo for a quarter a card, and enjoyed a community barbecue, all culminating in a free concert and fireworks finale at night. The continuity of Marlow’s celebration – through two World Wars and many social changes – is a point of local pride, a reminder that patriotism and neighborly fellowship never went out of style.

Many Oklahoma towns have developed unique Independence Day customs showcasing local culture and crops. Since the 1940s, the small town of McLoud (east of Oklahoma City) has been home to the annual Blackberry Festival, timed around the Fourth. What began as a modest community picnic to celebrate the blackberry harvest eventually merged with the town’s July 4th picnic to form a much larger festival. In 1949 McLoud’s berry growers famously shipped a crate of fresh blackberries to President Harry Truman for Independence Day; the president proclaimed them “the best he had ever tasted” and honored McLoud as the “Blackberry Capital of the World.” The tradition carries on today with pie-eating contests, the crowning of a “Blackberry Queen,” and a parade through downtown. It remains the longest running food-celebration in Oklahoma.

Down in Pauls Valley, a quirky Fourth of July attraction emerged in the post-war era: the Watermelon Seed Spittin’ World Championship. For more than 50 years, Pauls Valley has held this contest every Fourth, drawing competitors vying to break the world distance record (an astounding 66 feet!). Accompanied by watermelon slices for all, live music and a traditional fireworks show, this small-town spectacle earned mention in Ripley’s Believe It or Not! and even the Guinness Book of World Records. And in Pawnee, residents celebrate like it’s 1900, hosting an annual “July 4th Games” on the courthouse lawn. The event features old-time amusements – turtle races, sack races, tug-of-war, bubble-gum blowing contests – plus a noontime parade around the historic square.

Not to be outdone, many Oklahoma tribal communities also observe the Fourth in ways that blend patriotism with cultural tradition. The holiday weekend has become a popular time for tribal powwows, rodeos, and homecoming celebrations. The Pawnee Nation, for example, holds its annual Veteran’s Homecoming Powwow around the Fourth of July – an event honoring Pawnee military veterans alongside America’s birthday. The Kiowa Tribe likewise convenes its Gourd Dance Society each July 4th, as the date overlaps with the old Kiowa Sun Dance season; the Gourd Dance and ceremonial songs pay tribute to Kiowa warriors and veterans, with the US flag now prominent in the arena.

The mid-20th century saw Oklahoma’s Independence Day observances grow ever larger – especially after World War II, when the holiday became a joyful outlet for postwar optimism. In the summer of 1946, with wartime rations and blackouts now over, cities resumed full-scale fireworks displays and patriotic pageantry.

A new tradition was born that year on the shores of Grand Lake o’ the Cherokees in northeast Oklahoma: the Duck Creek Fourth of July Airshow and Fireworks. Started in 1946 by local boaters and returning veterans, the Duck Creek show has evolved into one of Oklahoma’s most famous Fourth of July spectacles. Each year since, thousands of spectators gather by boat and along the shoreline to watch dazzling fireworks reflected on the lake. In recent decades the event even added vintage Warbirds and Oklahoma

Air National Guard jets roaring overhead in salute. An 80-year tradition now, Duck Creek’s extravaganza is a shining example of how Oklahomans embrace Independence Day with distinctive flair.

America’s bicentennial in 1976 marked a high point of patriotic celebration across the state. Communities big and small organized elaborate events for the nation’s 200th birthday.

In Tulsa, the bicentennial spirit hit a fever pitch when none other than Elvis Presley came to town. On July 4, 1976, Elvis performed a sold-out afternoon concert at the Mabee Center, thrilling 11,000 fans with a set that fittingly included “An American Trilogy” and other patriotic tunes. (Tickets reportedly sold out in just hours, as seeing the King on the Fourth of July became a once-in-a-lifetime draw.)

Across the state in Seminole, local organizers staged a two-day Bicentennial festival on July 3–4, 1976, complete with historical pageants, beard-growing contests, and a fireworks display that residents still recall fondly. Oklahomans in Oklahoma City, Lawton, Enid and countless other places held bicentennial parades with floats depicting Revolutionary War scenes and colonial costumes. Many towns buried time capsules on that day, to be opened on America’s Tricentennial in 2076.

In the decades since, the Fourth of July has remained a beloved Oklahoma occasion, where tradition meets festivity. Some celebrations have even gained national recognition. Edmond’s “LibertyFest,” launched in the 1970s, now spans a week of events and has been hailed by CNN and USA Today as one of the top ten July Fourth festivals in the nation.

Its parade – featuring marching bands, cowboys, and floats – is billed as the state’s largest hometown 4th of July parade , drawing tens of thousands of spectators each year. In Oklahoma City, massive fireworks at the Bricktown canal and Scissortail Park carry on an urban tradition, while Tulsa’s riverfront FreedomFest draws families to the Arkansas River banks for music and one of the state’s biggest free fireworks displays. Happy Birthday, America – from the Sooner State, with pride.

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The Mother Road is turning 99 years old and the Weatherford Chamber of Commerce is throwing an “Out of This World” Birthday Bash at Centennial Park on the corner of Main and Broadway to celebrate. The event is slated for August 22, from 6pm - 8pm, and will feature live entertainment, bouncy houses, face painting, a photo booth, and free birthday cake.

The proper festivities will be preceded by a 2pm ribbon cutting for the long-awaited Astronaut statue, standing where the Centennial Gazebo was previously located. Oklahoma’s Lieutenant Governor Matt Pinnel, a longtime enthusiast for the statue’s unveiling, will also be in attendance.

In addition to the contests and live music, several local vendors and food truckswill be in attendance for folks looking to see what these skilled locals have to offer.

“We’ve got a lot of businesses behind us, so this will be a great time to hang out,” expressed Chamber


of Commerce Executive Director Kim Silman.


The fourth annual Ice Cream Contest, which returns as a fan favorite, will feature many contestants and their homemade ice cream creations. Register now until August 15 by visiting the Weatherford Chamber’s office at 210 W Main Street.

Interested guests can pay \$10 for a wristband that will allow them to taste test every ice cream at the event as well as give them a chance to vote for the competition’s winners.

The contest is broken into two categories: one for individuals and for-profit organizations; another for non-profit organizations. Winners in both categories will be awarded prizes, with the non-profit being awarded \$2,000 worth of local advertising.

For more information, call the Weatherford Chamber of Commerce at 580-772- 7744. Additionally you can find them on Facebook by searching “Weatherford Area Chamber of Commerce.”






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His brother, Mark Anthony Cruz, graduated with a Master of Music (MM) from Texas State University, where he has been professor of guitar for 18 years. As a composer, Cruz has been published by Shawnee Press, Soundboard Magazine, MelBay and Clear Note Publications while managing his own company, MAC Publications.

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SWOSU Volleyball Signs Six Freshmen for '25



Jon Chidester
SWOSU Media Relations

SWOSU Volleyball Coach Josh Collins has announced the addition of six incoming freshmen to the Bulldogs' roster for the 2025 season.

"I am thrilled to welcome this talented and dynamic group of freshmen to our program," said Collins. "Each of them brings a unique combination of experience, skill, and competitive drive that will undoubtedly elevate our team. With multiple state championships, district accolades, and a strong background in multi-sport athleticism, this class is poised to make an

immediate impact. I'm excited to have them join the Bulldog family and am ready to see them develop, grow, and thrive in our program's culture."

Fresh off of the first Great American Conference (GAC) championship in the program's history, SWOSU will look to continue its momentum by adding the six freshmen to a group of seven returners.

Collins, now a three-time GAC Coach of the Year, enters his 14th season as the head coach of SWOSU Volleyball in 2025.



Mackenzie Sims | Amarillo, TX (Bushland HS)

"Mackenzie comes to SWOSU following an extremely decorated high school career. As a three-time 3A State Champion and two time State MVP in Texas, we expected her to bring that experience to SWOSU and impact this program immediately. As a setter, she navigates the game at an extremely high level. We are excited for Mackenzie to become a DAWG!"



Claire Occkiegrosso | Arlington, TX (Grace Prep)

"Claire brings state championships experience to SWOSU. She has played in a very competitive 4A private school division in Texas. As a left-handed right side, she adds versatility to our offense. We expect Claire to come in and continue to build the culture of this team and program. We're excited for Claire to be here and be a DAWG."



Sydney Winfrey | Canyon, TX

"Sydney comes to SWOSU as a very dynamic athlete. Coming from a family that is heavily involved in college athletics, it is in Sydney's blood to be a competitor. She has had great success playing in numerous sports in high school and we cannot wait to add her competitive spirit to our program."



Kaylyn Christy | Fishers, IN (Hamilton HS)

"We are excited for KK to bring a high level of volleyball IQ to our program. She has competed on very competitive club and school teams and has won 2 state championships in Indiana. Her experience in many different positions and ability to impact all sides of the game will be a great addition to this program."



Preslee Alaniz | Friendswood, TX

"We are excited to add Preslee's length to our program. She is a decorated district blocker who reads the game very well. We know Preslee will not only come in and develop this program, but we expect her to excel in the culture as well."



Katja Blanchat | Lindsborg, KS (Smoky Valley HS)

"Katja is another multi-sport high school athlete that is very decorated. As a middle, she will be very dynamic for this program and we expect her to use her poise to make an impact quickly. We cannot wait for Kat to join the Bulldog family."



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