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A publication of the  
Okmulgee Times &  
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Published Feb. 26, 2021

Okmulgee  
**TIMES**

Henryetta  
**Free - Lance**

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## ABOUT THE COVER

The cover for this year's Focus Magazine was taken by Henryetta Free-Lance Reporter Scott Delk. The photo features one of many motocross racers competing in the annual T & S Racing Vintage Nationals. Each November, Vintage Nationals is held at Historic Nichols Park, located two miles south of Henryetta on Lake Road.



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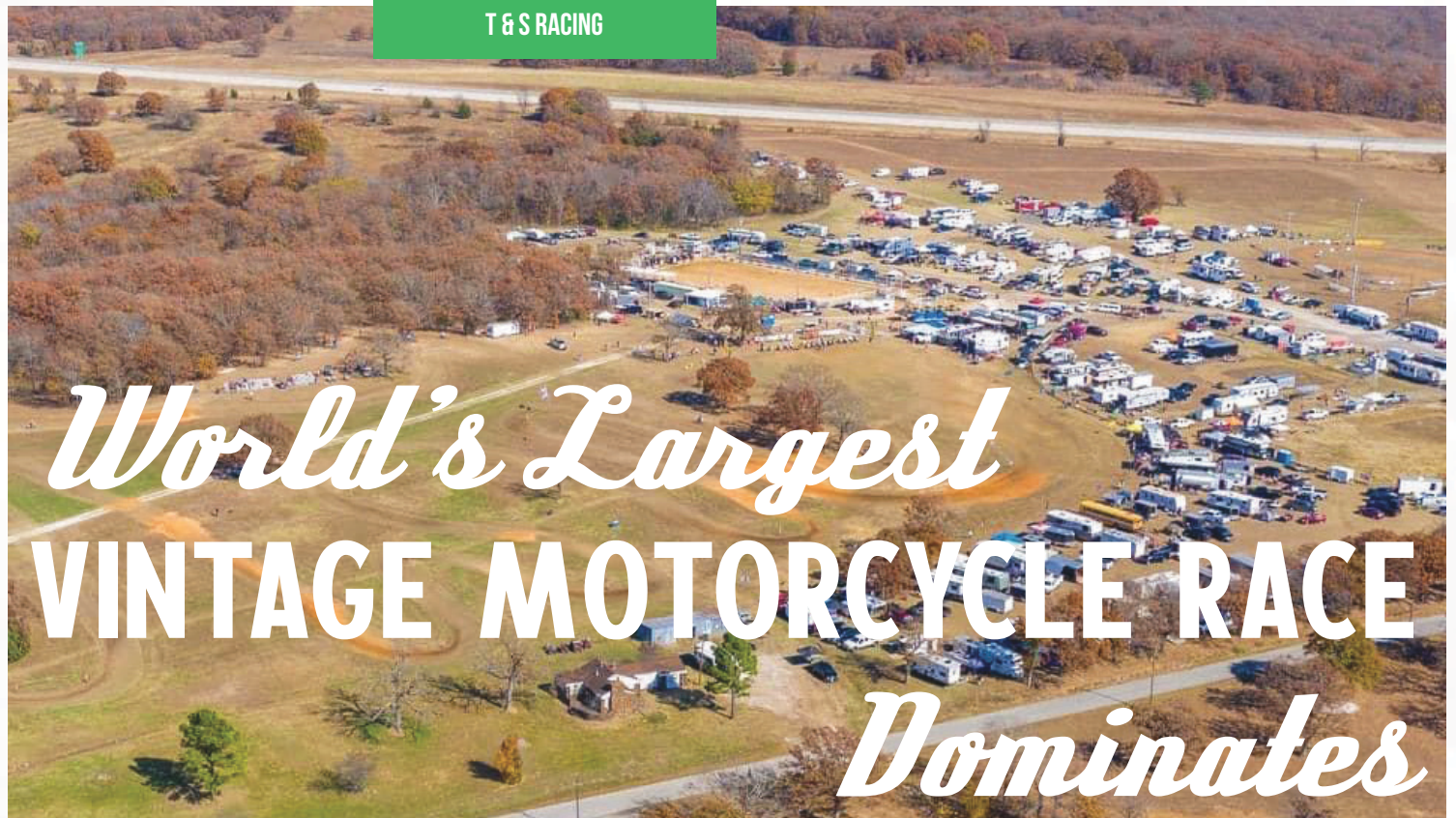
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## COMMUNITY IMPACT

### T & S RACING



by **TRACY GOZA**  
Henryetta Free-Lance

Since the age of seven, Trampas Parker has raced motorcycles, winning many amateur titles.

In 1985, he turned professional, winning two world championships.

After 24 years in the sport, Trampas was inducted into the American Motorcycle Association (AMA) Hall of Fame in 2009.

"After retiring from professional racing," his wife Sherri said, "he carried his love for the sport over to train other riders all over the world."

Often dreaming of promoting his own races and with Sherri's help, they started T & S Racing.

In 2016, the Parkers brought vintage national motocross racing to Okmulgee County.

"We had a love for vintage motorcycle racing," Sherri said, "and American Historical Racing Motorcycle Association (AHRMA) gave us our chance to host an event."

Vintage motorcycles range from the late 1950's to the mid-1980's.

Racers range from age 16 to over 80.

After the first year, Trampas and Sherri knew they needed

a better location to allow for growth.

"We needed something that was spectator-friendly with natural terrain for the old motorcycles and easy access for big motorhomes and racing trailers," Sherri said.

Having been raised in Henryetta, Sherri considered utilizing Nichols Park as a venue.

The idea was then presented to the Henryetta City Council, who also saw a vision for the town in 2016.

"That has been the home of the vintage nationals ever since," Trampas said.

They decided to keep the perception of the events about

Oklahoma so participants and visitors can see how great the state is.

During vintage nationals, there is a cowboy church service and an Okie Wild West Shootout.

Trophies are made out of Oklahoma license plates and favorite state food items are served at concession.

"The race has grown from over 200 entries in 2016 to over 700 in 2020," Sherri said. "People came from over 27 states and several countries, making it the largest vintage motorcycle race in the world in 2020. It was quite an accomplishment during COVID."

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After the major success of hosting the event at Nichols Park, T & S Racing was chosen to host the year-end racing finals and awards banquet in 2020 and again in 2021.

"Our goal is to make this race grow to well over 1,000 entries," Trampas said. "Nichols Park is a great place for families to enjoy while watching great racing."

T & S Racing would like to give special appreciation to Nancy Wadley and Shoney's Restaurant for decorating the park and always being an event sponsor.

"We want to thank the Henryetta mayor and City Council for being behind us since the beginning," Sherri said.

After each racing event every year, T & S Racing donates a portion of money from the race back to the city for improvements to Nich-



Trampas and Sherri Parker of T & S Racing brought the largest vintage motorcycle race in the world to Okmulgee County in 2020.

ols Park.

T & S Racing will host the 2021 AHRMA Vintage Nationals at Nichols Park November 5

through November 7.

Ages 15 years and under will be admitted for free. Adult admission is \$10 per person, per day.

For more information about T & S Racing Vintage Nationals, call 918-652-1600, email: parkers.mxs@yahoo.com

or visit T & S Racing on Facebook.



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## COMMUNITY IMPACT

### OKMULGEE IMPROVEMENTS

PHOTO: ANTHONY NIETO



by **PATRICK FORD**  
Okmulgee Times

The City of Okmulgee completed a major project during 2020 that impacted downtown traffic.

The over \$1.2 million project installed new 12" water lines from Alabama Street east to Delaware, for a total of 2,907 feet.

The work required closure of one block at a time, with traffic reduced to one lane.

The water line replacement project began in May, right in front of the Creek Council House. After the lines were re-

placed, the roadway in that city block received stamped concrete with the look and color of real bricks.

The remainder of the seven blocks included in the project were completely overlaid with asphalt once the new water lines were installed.

To slow down traffic on the main thoroughfare, small speed 'humps' were included every other block.

The project, along with the COVID-19 pandemic, caused several events to be cancelled. Those included the annual Okmulgee Invitational Rodeo Parade and the

Creek Festival Parade.

The replacement project was completed in early December, just in time for the annual Festival of Lights Parade.

During the water line replacement project, crews uncovered bricks bearing the name "Okmulgee."

Those uncovered bricks were set aside as the construction crews worked in front of the Creek Council House.

A citizen, Lynn Thornley, contacted Main Street Director Heather Sumner about making use of the bricks. Thornley then talked to City Manager Tom Giuliani, who spoke to the contractor.

Giuliani then delivered some good news to Sumner.

"We are excited to announce that Okmulgee Main Street has been given permission to collect the original Okmulgee bricks along 6th Street that were covered up for decades," Sumner said at the time.

As workers removed the bricks, those in good shape were moved to the side, and in the evening, Sumner and volunteers collected and cleaned the bricks.

"We used this as a fundraiser for our small businesses that have been negatively affected by COVID-19," Sumner said.

According to Sumner, all the money went to helping businesses in Okmulgee.

"Every penny raised went towards our Main Street COVID-19 Relief Program," she said.

Businesses were able to apply for \$500



PHOTO: ANTHONY NIETO

Crews work on the stamped 'brick' concrete in front of the Creek Council House.



grants to help with rent, mortgage, or utilities until funds were depleted.

Another project which started last year and is nearing completion is the new one million gallon water tower on North Highway 75. This one will complement the existing water tower located by the Elks Lodge that services the east side of town, giving Okmulgee a two million gallon water supply for plenty of water and water pressure for the entire town.

At a cost of over \$2 million dollars, the need for the new tower was seen several years ago by the late Roger Ballenger, who served as city manager. Ballenger felt the upgrades, though costly, were necessary for future growth in the northern part of the city.

The tower, after a delay in late 2020, is expected to be completed in early spring.

Drivers coming into or leaving town can see the Okmulgee name on both the north and south sides of the tower. On the east side, Oklahoma State University Institute of Technology

(OSUIT) has its brand.

Another project underway is the improvement of the water treatment system.

In March 2020, the Okmulgee Municipal Authority (Authority) received approval for a \$700,000 loan from the Oklahoma Water Resources Board (OWRB).

Construction upgrades and improvements are being financed by a 100 percent principal forgiveness loan through the Oklahoma Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) along with \$323,499 in local funds. The DWSRF loan will be secured with a springing lien on the revenues of the Authority's water, sewer, and sanitation systems and a two cent sales tax.

Improvements planned include a new liquid ammonium sulfate (LAS) storage and feed building, LAS feed pumps, LAS injection point, phosphate storage, phosphate feed pumps, phosphate injection point, clearwell effluent flow meter and meter vault.



PHOTO: PATRICK FORD

Public Works crews install a new tornado siren warning system.

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# THE MUSCOGEE (CREEK) NATION

## TRIBE'S PROJECTS BENEFIT CITIZENS, COMMUNITY

by **PATRICK FORD**  
Okmulgee Times

Okmulgee is the home to the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, the fourth largest tribe in the United States, with over 86,000 citizens.

Under the leadership of Principal Chief David Hill, the nation works along with city and county governments to provide services not only for native citizens, but for the community as a whole.

Despite a tumultuous 2020, the nation undertook several projects, that when completed, will benefit everyone.

Three MCN projects are nearing completion. All of these are funded by the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act which provided economic assistance

for workers, businesses and tribes.

### PPE Storage

The 36,000 square foot concrete building will allow proper storage of the nation's PPE (Personal Protective Equipment). A portion of the space will be used by the MCN Health Department for their emergency management equipment.

Steve Emerson, Director of Tribal Construction Services, stated there will also be a 2,500 square foot completely secure data center located at the building. There will be two generators for redundancy.

"Walls are already put into place," Emerson said. "We are expecting the project to be completed in February."

### Safe Space Facility

The Safe Space Facility, located near the Mvskoke Dome at the Omniplex, will be utilized exclusively by MCN employees.

"Due to COVID-19, many employees had to work from home, and there was really no safe environment," Emerson said.

The new building will allow social distancing and be adequate for most of the employees to work in a safe environment.

Coming in at almost 21,000 square feet, the facility will also have a safe room that can be used in case of tornadoes or other dangerous weather.

Thompson Construction is constructing that facility, with plans to be completed in February.

### Looped Squared Meat Processing Facility

The third MCN project is the meat processing facility just south of the Duck Creek Casino on north Highway 75.

"The 25,000 square foot facility will serve both the local community and the Tulsa area," Emerson said.

The plant will be called the Looped Square Meat Co., and the building will cost about \$10 million.

With CARES Act money being used for the project, this is part of MCN's vision to promote long term stability in food sovereignty and security.

The facility will offer meat processing and retail meats to both the tribe

PHOTOS: ANTHONY NIETO



The new PPE Storage Facility.



New roads are in place leading to the MCN PPE Storage Facility.





and the general public, and will employ up to 25 people. There will be both a retail space for selling items such as smokers and local products and the wildlife wing will allow customers to bring in animals, such as deer, for processing.

Besides having fresh beef and pork, there will also be a dry-aging room and large smoking capability for items such as brisket, pork shoulder, ham and jerky.

“This building may be complete by the

end of February, but due to the immense amount of equipment that must be installed, it will hopefully be ready for operation in the spring,” Emerson said.

The Muscogee Nation also added Electric Vehicle Charging Stations for public use, which began operating at the first of the year.

The charging stations were purchased through the historic Volkswagen Settlement to reduce Nitrogen Oxide (NOx)

emissions and improve ambient air quality throughout the Reservation. The chargers in Bay #1 and Bay #3 can be used for charging vehicles now.

The charging station is located on the north side of the Creek Complex.

The manufacturers will set the remaining bays soon, according to the Muscogee Nation.



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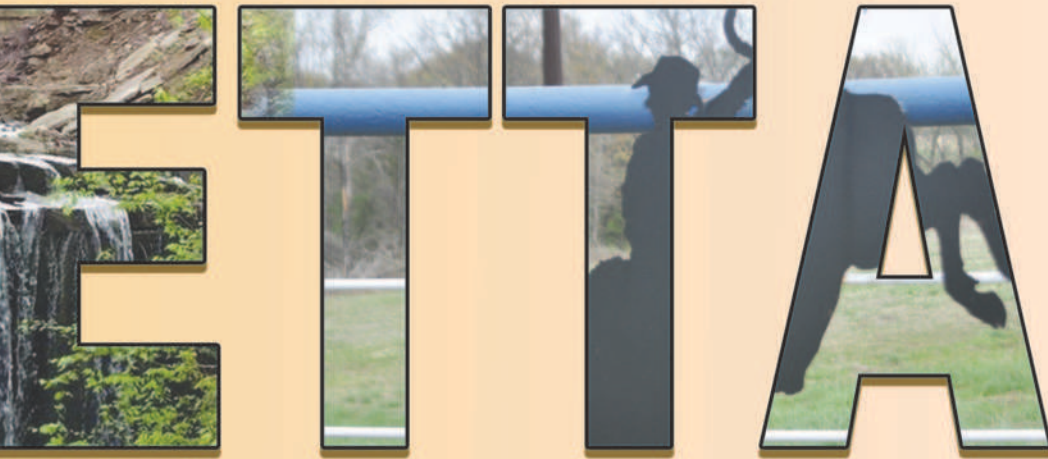


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## COMMUNITY IMPACT

### ODWC GUN RANGE

PHOTOS: ANTHONY NIETO



# ODWC Gun Range

## Facility undergoes remodeling, reopens to public

by **MELISSA HEMINOVER**  
Okmulgee Times

The area's newest attraction for local outdoorsmen is the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation Gun Range near Okmulgee Lake. The facility received a facelift last year and reopened to the public in November 2020.

Area Manager Jay Rouk said the renovation brought in a new five stand, trap style shotgun range as well as a short distance range.

"We now have a pavilion and four shooting tables in the short distance area," Rouk said. "There's also a new long range area."

There is a pavilion with five shooting tables now in the long range shooting area.

The short distance shooting range is 50 yards and long distance range 200 yards. Target frames have been added as well.

The entrance to the shooting range has been updated with a gravel parking area that includes handicapped parking access and sidewalks for visitors' safety.

"The range is open sunrise to sunset daily," Rouk added. "The range is free to use, but a hunting license or proof of exemption is required for each shooter."

Rouk stated that social distancing and face masks are encouraged but with the range being open air there's plenty of

room to socially distance while using the range.

The gun range situated on the Okmulgee Wildlife Management Area just off of Highway 56 approximately eight miles west of Okmulgee at Entrance #1 of the Wildlife Area. The entire OWM area covers just over 9,400 acres of Okmulgee County.

Along with the shooting range, visitors can also take advantage of a camping area located near the Public Hunting Area as well as public fishing sites at several ponds along with access to the Deep Fork River known for flathead catfish, famous in the area.



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by **MELISSA HEMINOVER**  
Okmulgee Times

The Okmulgee County YMCA offers a full size gym, group fitness studio, racquetball court, spin studio, cardio and weight studio, locker rooms, and saunas.

The Okmulgee County YMCA also owns and operates the Okmulgee Aquatics Park.

Dolph Hayden serves as the Executive Director for the Okmulgee YMCA.

He shared the vision of the Y, and what it does for the community.

"We know that lasting personal and social change comes about when we all work together," Hayden said. "That's why, at the Y, strengthening the community is our cause. Every day, we work side-by-side with our neighbors to make sure that everyone, regardless of age, income or background, has the opportunity to learn, grow and thrive."

The Y is a nonprofit organization in 10,000 neighborhoods across the nation.

"We have the presence and partnerships to not just promise, but deliver, positive change," Hayden said.

For more than 40 years, the Y has been listening and responding to communities throughout Okmulgee County. It brings people together and connects people of all ages and backgrounds to bridge gaps in the community.

The YMCA strives to nur-

ture potential and believes that everyone should have the opportunity to learn, grow and thrive, he said.

It has local presence as well as global reach in order to mobilize local communities to effect lasting, meaningful change.

"With a mission to put Christian values into practice through programs that build a healthy spirit, mind and body for all," Hayden said. "Our impact is felt when an individual makes a healthy choice, when a mentor inspires a child and when a community comes together for the common good."

The Y offers a variety of membership rate packages to meet the needs of individuals and families. Membership for all is their scholarship program, created to ensure YMCA services are accessible to all members of the community, and no one is excluded because of inability to pay full membership rates.

"If any of the prices of our membership packages create a hardship for you or your family, please request more information about our scholarships when you visit our Y," he said.

The Okmulgee County Family YMCA prides itself on offering a variety of adult and youth wellness/sports activities. Some of the most popular are youth soccer, basketball, tumbling, cheer, weightlifting, Senior Adult Fitness, group fitness, swim lessons, and Adult Basketball League.



# IMPACT

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## BUSINESS

### BAGBY'S BODY SHOP



# Bagby opens shop with community kindness

by **TRACY GOZA**  
Henryetta Free-Lance

Ralph Bagby found his calling as a bricklayer in his younger years when he laid bricks for

a church.

Bricklaying came natural to him as he decided to make a career of it, traveling all over Oklahoma and other states through the years.

"One day, I just up and decided to quit bricklaying," Bagby said.

After he left his bricklaying career, he decided to acquire broken down vehicles from salvages, towing them home and working on them.

Bagby said he has always been mechanically-inclined, able to quickly repair vehicles and get them running smooth.

He wanted to learn how to do body work on cars and hired Charles Cross to teach him.

Bagby picked up the skill quickly and also learned how to paint vehicles.

He recalled, at the age of six, watching someone do paint and body work on cars and was fascinated by it.

"I remember after Charles finished the body work on a car," Bagby said, "I finished the paint job on it. It was flawless!"

After a while of working on cars out of his garage, he opened a shop in Okmulgee.

Not long after, he accepted a mechanic job working independently at Henryetta Ford.

While there, he met and became friends with a lot of Henryettans and other customers.

Just a few months ago, Bagby decided to open a shop in Henryetta called Bagby's Body Shop.

The shop offers a variety of

mechanical repairs as well as body work.

Business hours are Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturday from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. The shop phone number is 918-605-6001.

"The kindness of the people brought me to Henryetta," he said. "Everyone has been so welcoming and shown such support and appreciation."

Bagby credits growing up in a family with strong values, teaching him to work and be responsible, for his success.

He grew up in Preston with 10 siblings and the most humble and loving parents, always working together.

The family became well-known in rodeos for their performances as the "Small Town Drifters." Today, Bagby's sons have taken over the reigns for rodeos, performing under the name "The Wild Bunch."

He has eight children of which his youngest, Orlando, is a student at Preston High School who enjoys playing basketball.

Bagby has always believed in giving back and doing for others.

"This will be the last move I make," Bagby said. "I really love Henryetta and will retire here."

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**BUSINESS**  
**RANDY'S FOODS**

PHOTOS: ANTHONY NIETO



Ready to serve at Randy's Foods are Tamara Laughlin, Clinton Laughlin and Mable Fleming.

# Randy's Foods and Randy's Grab & Go

## Business prides itself on customer service

by **PATRICK FORD**  
 Okmulgee Times

Randy's Foods has been in business since 1967.

Open to the public, Randy's is a food service distributor, wholesale and supply store and grocery store - all in one.

Their motto is "If we don't have it, we can get it!"

Randy's Foods is family-owned by Mark and Mable Fleming, Tamara and Frederick Laughlin and Clinton Laughlin.

Employees are Kevin Hudson, Issac Grisom, Jarrod Keller, Jeffrey Allen, Tommy Jimenez, Billy Knuckles and Keenan Curtis.

As a distributor Randy's serves 'mom and pop' businesses, such as restaurants and convenience stores. However, their distribution is not just confined to Okmulgee County.

"We go from from Kiowa all the way to the Kansas state line," Tamara said. "We are an intrastate business, so we have to stay in Oklahoma, but we pride ourselves on our customer service."

Though a long-time part of the Okmulgee community, the small business finds they are sometimes overlooked when it comes to needed food items.

"So many people don't think of us, and



we're right in their backyard," the owners said. "You don't have to go to Tulsa to get those things."

Randy's has over 600 items in their inventory. Besides frozen meats, they have to-go containers, cups, lids, straws, toilet paper, vegetables and fruits in gallon cans, french fries and potatoes, appetizers, seasonings, breads and dessert items.

In 2020, Randy's Foods underwent a major remodel of the business located at 705 W. 6th Street. The new entrance is now on the north side facing 4th Street. A new spacious lobby allows for more customers to be assisted. A concrete ramp was also installed which allows those who are physically unable to walk up the stairs be able to enter.

Due to COVID-19, customers may call in their orders and employees will deliver items to their vehicles.

Something new will be coming in the next few months.

A separate business, Randy's Grab and Go, will be a retail business that will allow customers to walk in and pick out their items in the various display cases.

The owners saw the need to bring this service due to the lack of grocery stores on the west side of Okmulgee.

"There is lots of walking traffic and a lot of people don't have cars," Tamara said.

This will allow customers to get healthy foods instead of fast food.

Work is nearing completion on the space used for the grocery store. Once open, the owners will be able to apply so customers can use SNAP if they wish.


Randy's also accepts most major credit cards.

The owners are also excited about the launch of their website, which will allow customers to place orders online.

Throughout the recent difficult times, Randy's owners and staff continue to ensure their clients are cared for.

Each week, the business gives away \$100 worth of groceries to one lucky customer, and they have plans to continue it this year.





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# The Flower Shop Plus open for budness

by **SCOTT DELK**

Henryetta Free-Lance

When you first hear the name, “The Flower Shop Plus” you think of roses, carnations or daisies but this is not that kind of flower shop.

These flowers are designed to tantalize your senses, heal your soul, assist in meditation and relieve countless symptoms of diseases for millions of people.

What kind of flowers are these you ask? Cannabis Sativa.

The Flower Shop Plus is the newest of three medical cannabis dispensaries to open in Henryetta.

Located at 204 E. Main Street, this dispensary has a welcoming atmosphere.

Staff offers services right away, Blake Frost, co-owner said.

Frost gave a tour of the shop, sharing his story of 13 years on the police force in Okmulgee County, which led to symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Looking back, he chuckles at how his doctor suggested he try medical marijuana for his symptoms.

Frost, who had never been exposed to marijuana before and was an officer of the law, was hesitant at first.

“The first time I tried marijuana, I knew my life would be better,” he said. “After receiving a recommendation from my doctor, I used cannabis to treat my symptoms for the first time.”

Frost said that since his wife is a nurse who loves helping people, the couple decided to open a shop and help as many as



The Flower Shop Plus is the newest medical marijuana business to open in Henryetta. Pictured from left are Budtenders Eli Blanchard, Misty Brown and Alexis Chavez. Located at 204 East Main Street, The Flower Shop Plus provides professional and friendly service to customers.

they could.

“We opened The Flower Shop Plus and the rest is history,” he said.

The Flower Shop Plus offers a variety of medical cannabis strains for smoking or vaping.

Edibles are also on the menu as well as pre-rolled cannabis for easy use.

You must be registered with the Oklahoma Medical Marijuana Authority to be

able to purchase anything from the shop.

Frost said patient drives are held periodically and provide an on-site doctor and special discounts.

Happy Hour is daily from 12 to 4:20 p.m.

Regular hours are Monday through Saturday from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m.

For more information about The Flower Shop Plus, call 918-650-9613 or visit: [theflowershopplus.com](http://theflowershopplus.com).

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## BUSINESS

### BEGGS GENERAL STORE

PHOTOS: ANTHONY NIETO



# Beggs General Store

## Country Living at Its Best

by **MELISSA HEMINOVER**  
Okmulgee Times

The Beggs General Store has been a staple to the Beggs community since it opened its doors in 1960. Owned and operated by the Smith family, Beggs General Store, located at 103 N Broadway, has always been a “one stop shopping mall.” Customers are able to purchase groceries as well as farm and ranch feed.

In recent years, after being purchased by Henry Smith in 1999, Beggs General Store has added Simple Simons Pizza to their store.

“We offer anything from fresh pecans to selling feed,” Smith said. “We have prided

ourselves on being a small supermarket our customers can always count on to have what they need.”

Smith says if there’s something you need that you don’t see in the store, they can get it for you.

With the recent pandemic, Beggs General Store has been thankful for their customers.

“We feel like our customers have continued to come to us, even with the pandemic going on,” he said.

The Store recently allowed a film crew to take over their establishment in order to film for a TV series that will soon be airing. The Smith family says they received news that the show has been picked up

by a network and will be airing a pilot episode along with 7 other episodes this season.

Henry says the store is operated with the help of 13 employees including his daughter, the store manager, Angela Smith-Carman.

The General Store offers a fresh meat counter and has a cutter on site if customers have a special order.

If customers do not feel comfortable coming in to do their shopping, they can call to place their order and have it brought out to their vehicle.

“We feel like we are filling a need for customers in a 15-20



mile area,” Smith said.

The communities that take advantage of the General Store include Twin Hills, Preston, Nuyaka and Mounds.

The Beggs General Store tries to stay active in Beggs community events and is a member of the Beggs Chamber of Commerce.

Customer’s can stop by seven days a week with hours being Monday – Saturday 8 a.m. – 9 p.m. and Sunday 12 – 9 p.m.

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# Deep Fork Community Action Foundation, Inc.

## Deep Fork Community Action Foundation, Inc.

Our mission is *"to improve the quality of life for those in need and strengthen communities by providing an opportunity for growth for the future."*

- COVID-19 Assistance (CSBG COVID)
- Social Services
- Rx For Oklahoma
- Homeless Prevention & Assistance (ESG/ESG COVID)
- Self-Help Housing
- Emergency Assistance (SAF)
- Child & Adult Care Food Program
- Low Income Housing (SFAR, MFAR, NHTF, LIHTC)
- Vita Income Tax Preparation (online @ [www.deepforkcommunityaction.org](http://www.deepforkcommunityaction.org))
- Fingerprinting

Due to a number of unforeseen events, individuals and families are forced into homelessness or are close to homelessness by emergencies and other events. This year, many of us have been affected by the **COVID-19** virus. We have been able to assist clients with grants specifically designed for those affected by the pandemic. All of the grants here at **Deep Fork** have allowed us to assist clients emerge from homelessness or near homelessness in a few months with some assistance.

Per our grants here at **Deep Fork Community Action Foundation, Inc.**, if applicable, we are able to assist with the following:

- Short Term Rental Assistance
- Short Term Utility Assistance
- Rental Arrearage
- Utility Arrearage
- Move-in Costs: Utility & Rental Deposits

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Rx for Oklahoma Prescription Assistance Program is a free service provided by Deep Fork Community Action Foundation, Inc. that helps McIntosh, Hughes, Okfuskee, Muskogee and Okmulgee County residents with long-term prescription medication costs by accessing assistance programs provided by pharmaceutical companies.

Residents, regardless of age, who are uninsured or low income (at or below federal poverty limits) are encouraged to apply. Medicare Part D and Medicaid beneficiaries with unique circumstances may qualify.

The Rx for Oklahoma staff will gather your information and use it to assist you with forms and documentation needed. The entire process may take up to 30 days, so only long-term medications qualify. When you call or visit please be ready to provide proof of age, residential address, gross annual household income, list of medications, physician's information and insurance coverage (if applicable).

For more information contact your local Rx for Oklahoma representative today by phone, email or visitation, or view us on Facebook at Rx for Oklahoma in Hughes Okmulgee McIntosh Muskogee & Okfuskee Counties!

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Deep Fork Community Action's Self-Help Housing program serves 13 counties, now including Haskell, Pittsburg, LeFlore & Latimer Counties. Deep Fork has built over 650 homes in Okmulgee, Creek, Wagoner, Muskogee, McIntosh, Okfuskee, Hughes, Pottawatomie and Seminole Counties in the last 30 years. This unique housing program helps eligible income-based applicants obtain mortgages to build high quality brick single-story, energy efficient homes.

The Self-Help Housing program is funded by USDA Rural Development and is an Equal Housing Opportunity program. Deep Fork helps people make applications for loans to build homes that average 1,100 to 1,400 square feet living area, 3 or 4 bedroom and 2 baths. These also may include a 1-2 car garage. The amount of loan that the applicant qualifies for determines the size of the home built. It generally takes 5 to 7 months from closing on the loan to complete the construction and receive the front door key as a new home owner.

Qualified applicants obtain a suitable building site which must be approved by the USDA/RD. Then they must help build their own new homes and the homes of other families in their construction group. Some applicants already have land when they make their application. This program can be used to tear down a sub-standard home and build a new one on the same site. There is no down payment requirement because each qualified family provides "sweat equity" that helps keep the construction costs of their new home as low as possible.



Contact the Deep Fork Self-Help Housing office in Okmulgee at 914 S. Wood Drive, 888-641-2444 or visit us at [self-helphousing.com](http://self-helphousing.com)



**BUSINESS**  
 CITY OF MORRIS

PHOTOS: ANTHONY NIETO



# City of Morris Business Spotlight

by **MELISSA HEMINOVER**  
 Okmulgee Times

Morris has several small businesses providing needed services and specialty goods.

Here are just a few of them:

## **Hometown Treasures & The Coffee Vault**

Located at 511 West Ozark, Hometown Treasures is a flower and gift shop with lots of extras. There is an Amish Market inside the shop with a variety of cheeses and salsas. The store also carries Tyler Candles, according to owner Susan Bratt. Hometown Treasures carries lots of unique, one-of-a-kind gifts and jewelry.

Hometown Treasures opened in 2015, but moved into their new location at the former Morris State Bank in September.

In late October, The Coffee Vault was added to the business.

The Coffee Vault, managed by Robyn Staudt and William Staudt, features a variety of hot and cold coffees expertly served by experienced baristas. They also sell donuts, scones, cake pops, Mrs. Lau-



Robyn Staudt and Susan Bratt.

ra's cupcakes and cookies.

There is also a drive-thru available for those who wish to remain in their vehicles. Customers may also order in advance on the app "Ordeko" so their coffees will be ready upon arrival.

The Coffee Vault is open Monday through Friday from 6:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.



Lots of unique gifts are on hand at Hometown Treasures.

and 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday.

## **Villa's Tire Shop**

Villa's Tire Shop opened in November 2020, serving the Morris community with all their tire needs.

The shop is located at 619 W. Ozark. The shop not only has tires of all kinds, Villa's



also provides repairs.

Villa's Tire Shop is open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday and 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturday.

Services include flats fixed, tires for ATVs, tractors, and lawnmowers, trailer tires up to 14 ply, inner tubes, and mount, dismounting and balancing.

Villas also has both new and used tires. For new tires, Villa's can obtain any size and brand of tire the customer wishes.

Las Vegas Tires in Checotah is also under the same ownership as Villa's Tires Shop.

### The Rodeo Tex Mex

The Rodeo Tex Mex Restaurant is located at 308 South Hughes Ave. in Morris. Owner Eldon Day opened the restaurant Feb. 2, which serves both Mexican and American food.

### Eagles Corner

Eagles Corner is a convenience store and restaurant located at 18795 Old Morris Highway, just outside the city limits.

Owned by Billy and Sarah Winsett, the gas station side provides an ATM, 24 hour gas pumps, a food hot box and a beer cave.

In the restaurant, patrons can take advantage of breakfast served all day. Other menu items include hand-breaded pickles, mushrooms and onion rings, a chick-



Diners enjoy delicious food at Eagles Corner.



The Rodeo is now open at 308 S. Hughes.



Tires of all kinds and brands are available at Villa's Tire Shop.

en fried steak as big as a dinner plate and barbecue. For those with a sweet tooth, the restaurant offers milkshakes and homemade desserts.

Eagles Corner opens at 6 a.m. weekdays; 7 a.m. on weekends and food service ends at 8 p.m.

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**BUSINESS**  
**HENRYETTA NUTRITION**


# Henryetta Nutrition shakes for success

by **TRACY GOZA**  
 Henryetta Free-Lance

A new business, Henryetta Nutrition, officially opened their doors on May 13, 2020, with a warm welcome from the community.

Owners Kelli Ogle and Hayley Thomason had been hard at work with building upgrades in the months leading up to opening day.

"I was ready to start a change and live healthier myself and set an example for my kids," Thomason said. "What better way to do it than to take

part in something that can be life-changing for everyone!"

Henryetta Nutrition provides healthy and nutritional protein-based meal replacement shakes, energizing and metabolism-boosting teas, fat-burning shots and hydrating drinks, all in a large variety of flavors.

Snickers, chocolate-covered strawberries, Fruitie Pebble, red velvet cake and PayDay are among some of the choices of protein-rich shakes.

"These can be a great breakfast alternative," Thomason said.

Raspberry lemonade is one of the popular tea flavors available.

Providing healthy choices for meal replacement, Henryetta Nutrition is thrilled to be among other Main Street businesses.

"You all have been so supportive, encouraging and patient," Ogle and Thomas said of their regular customers. "We are so excited to be open and able to serve you!"

Ogle lives in Shawnee with her husband Dee and two children. She is a real estate agent and was previously a teacher at

Graham-Dustin Public Schools and Wes Watkins Technology Center.

Thomason has been a resident of Henryetta most of her life where she resides with her husband Waylon and two children.

Henryetta Nutrition is located at 320 W. Main Street and their business hours are 7 a.m. to 2 p.m.

If you would like more information about Henryetta Nutrition, visit their Facebook page, call 918-650-2988 or email: henryettanutrition@gmail.com.

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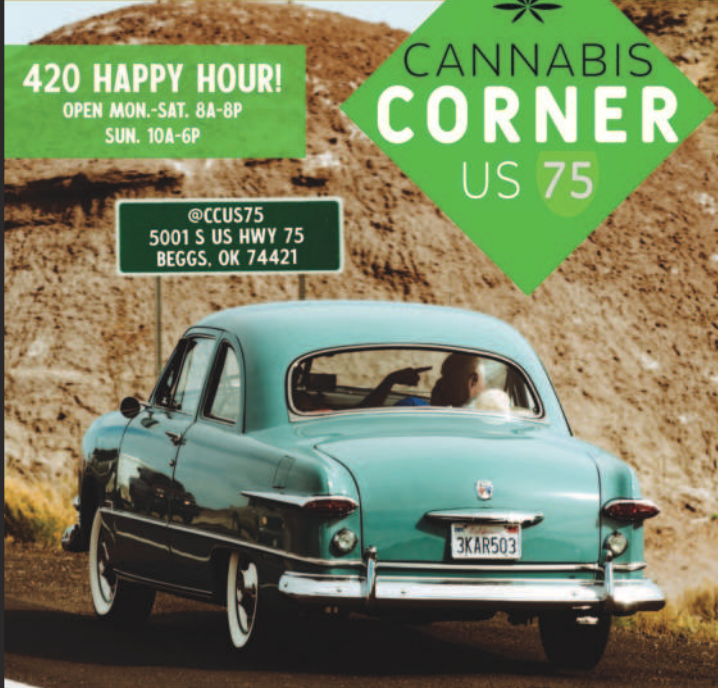


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# WILSON ROBOTICS

## IS "SPORTS FOR THE MIND"

by **TRACY GOZA**

Henryetta Free-Lance

Wilson Public Schools adult coaches and mentors inspire students in the Robotics program by engaging them in teamwork, problem solving and accountability while building their science and technology skills and instilling self-confidence, leadership and communication.

The program, created in 2010 by former teacher Susan Hill, has been going strong for a decade.

Coach and mentors of the Wilson Robotics team, Roarbots, are Build and Drive Coach Darrick Lehmkuhl and Renae Lehmkuhl and Amy Slone are mentors.

Wilson Robotics includes students in kindergarten through 12th grades as follows:

- Kindergarten through 2nd grade - Junior Legos
- 3rd through 8th grades - Legos
- 9th through 12th grades - FIRST Robotics Competition (FRC) Team

"Our goal is to put the students in real world engineering and design situations," Slone said.

Wilson Robotics is funded through various fundraisers held throughout the year.

In addition, every year, Boe-ing and Tinker join together to cover a \$5,000 entry fee into the FRC Regional Competition.

Each January, there is a reveal that officially kicks off the Robotics season for students.

During a non-pandemic year, the team would travel to OSU in Stillwater. This year, the reveal was done virtually due to COVID-19, mentors said.

Theme for this year is "Infinite Recharge."

Participating teams are provided with a list of challenges and guidelines to follow for the FRC Regional Competition.

At this time, the competition is pending as the decision will be made whether the event will be held virtually or in-person.

Wilson's high school Roarbots shared what they enjoy most about Robotics.

"Being around my team and working together," Michael McKinney said.

Logan Moore responded with, "My favorite part is pro-



The Wilson High School Robotics team, The Roarbots, await an upcoming regional competition as they continue to learn about science and technology. Team members pictured (from left) are Michael McKinney, Scout Hawkings, Marah Shanks and Logan Moore.

gramming."

"It shows you how to work as a team," Scout Hawkings added.

Marah Shanks said she "enjoys the Legos."

The value of hard work, dedication, ingenuity and teamwork is something that Wilson Robotics has in abundance.

"I would describe Robotics

as 'Sports for the mind,'" Renae Lehmkuhl said.

Of course, the program wouldn't be possible without the strong support and dedication of the coach and mentors.

If you would like to help support Wilson Robotics through donations or another way, please contact Wilson Public Schools at 918-652-3374.



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# EDUCATION

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PHOTOS: PATRICK FORD

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Pankey Field House

by **PATRICK FORD**  
Okmulgee Times

Okmulgee Public Schools completed several capital improvement projects during 2020.

The vision set forth by Superintendent Renee Dove and the board of education was to encompass branding, being able to recognize an Okmulgee Public Schools facility.

"These projects are a revitalization of the visual aesthetics of our buildings throughout the district," Assistant Superintendent Jeremy Ramsey

said.

The first undertaking was a complete painting of buildings and roof repairs at historic Harmon Field.

For a cohesive look, the official branding colors for Okmulgee facilities are called Adagio Gray & Showstopper Red.

"We will use these colors in our future capital improvement projects," Ramsey said.

The press box, field house, visiting team building and storage building were painted to match the colors of the Pankey Track Fieldhouse, which was completed in 2014.

The next project was a complete remodel of the Agriculture/FFA campus on North Central Street.

With the restart of the program in 2018, improvements were a must and welcome by staff and students.

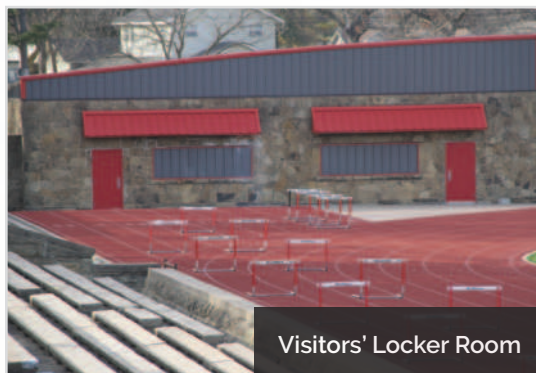
The facilities underwent roof repairs, window replacements and painting of all buildings to match the color scheme of the district.

Additional upgrades are planned in the future.

"Keep a look out for these projects," Ramsey said. "Bulldog Rising!"



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# Love of Track leads to high achievement

## Okmulgee Coach inducted into Coaches Hall of Fame

by **PATRICK FORD**  
*Okmulgee Times*

A longtime Okmulgee coach received a distinguished honor highlighting a career spanning 44 years.

Dwight Pankey was one of six people who were inducted into the Oklahoma Track Coaches Hall of Fame on Jan. 15, in Midwest City.

Pankey came to Okmulgee 44 years ago. The Sapulpa native was determined to put his stamp on the local track program.

"This was a dream job right here, because I had heard about Okmulgee when I was in high school and college," Pankey said.

Pankey was hired during the 1977-78 school year and began working at Westside School with Mr. Harmon for just one semester before Superintendent Rippetoe asked him to move to Okmulgee Middle School.

"I coached football, basketball and track," Pankey said. "I loved football, because I played football in high school, but I got tired of that. I went over to what I enjoyed most which was cross country and track."

Since taking over the program, the trajectory has been nothing but up.

"Once they selected me to be the Okmulgee track coach, everything else was pretty much history," he said in a previous interview. "It's been a good run, and I am proud of what



Coach Dwight Pankey, pictured with a former student, was recently inducted into the Oklahoma Track Coaches Hall of Fame.

we have accomplished over the years."

Coach Pankey has guided the Bulldogs and Lady Bulldogs to incredible success over the years. He has been at the helm of back to back state track championships in 1992 and 1993. Okmulgee has also been a runner-up or serious title contender many other times.

"Hard work pays off and that was the basis for our program," Pankey said.

Pankey's incredible knowledge of the sport, along with great help from assistant

coaches now and throughout the years, has yielded many outstanding athletes.

He mentioned four-time state champion LaVeshia Martin; Jim Bates, who came to Okmulgee from Catoosa; David Thompson and Tony Samuels.

"We have had so many kids come through the program," Pankey said. "I keep going because I love to see those kids excel. When I see those kids graduate and get a scholarship to go to school somewhere, it makes me proud because all the hard work has really paid off."

Pankey gives lots of thanks to coaches such as Gary Robbins, Randy Jackson, Rochelle Pearson and others who have helped him with the program that draws a large number of students. He is also looking to work with another one of his former team members and now an Okmulgee teacher, Buffy Daniels, who is coming aboard for the outdoor track season.

"One thing about Okmulgee, we went to where the competition was," Pankey said. "We never shied away from it."

Right now, Pankey and his assistants are in the off-season, but working with athletes to prepare for the indoor season that begins in March.

About four years ago, Pankey had started retirement paperwork with the school district to get out of the classroom and just coach track.

"I actually didn't retire," Pankey said. "My initial thing was I was just gonna coach."

But Superintendent Renee Dove had another idea in mind.

"She asked me if I would be interested in a new position as a truant officer," he said. "She said 'you would be a great fit, because you know everybody here and around Okmulgee County,' and I told her that wouldn't be a problem."

"Most of the parents see me coming, and I pull up in a school vehicle, they open up the door and say 'come on in,'" Pankey said.

The coach shows no signs of





Coach Pankey gives instructions during a cross country meet.

slowing down after 44 years in teaching and coaching.

"I keep saying I'm going to go for one more year, but everybody tells me 'you've been saying that for 44 years,'" Pankey said. "I could probably go five more years if I needed to.

I've reached every goal I've set when I took this job. I don't think there is nothing else I can do, but I still love competing, and I still love winning championships... I keep going because I love to see these kids excel."

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# Okmulgee Summer Multi-Cultural Enrichment Program

## 24 years of helping area children

by **PATRICK FORD**  
*Okmulgee Times*

For 24 years, area children have participated in the Okmulgee Summer Multi-Cultural Enrichment Program (OS-MCEP).

During June and July, OS-MCEP welcomed children ages 4-18 to participate in various activities with the goal of teaching basic social skills and responsible behavior.

With the backing of Okmulgee schools, businesses, donors and volunteers, OSMCEP brought children together, not just for fun, but to improve their reading, math and cultural awareness.

The woman behind the free program is Rae Ann Wilson. With support from her husband Johnny, she served as program director until 2020 when Ivorie Okonoboh stepped into the role.

The summer program came into existence to fill a void for Okmulgee children.

"It was my last year of work-



Rae Ann Wilson

ing at the college, in 1996, and my work study, who was Gail Devonshire, and I were talking about the kids not having something to do during the summer," Wilson said.

So Devonshire, who was youth director at Conversion Ministry Church, and Wilson, youth director at Cleaves Memorial, arranged a two-week program for the children of their two churches.

In January 1997, Wilson was invited to a Community Uni-

ty Committee meeting led by the Okmulgee Chamber. The group was collecting input on activities for local children during the summer months.

She listened and then shared what their churches did the previous year.

"So the Chamber kind of adopted the program," Wilson said.

The following summer, the program began with the session being held at the YMCA.

"We had over 500 children. We were not prepared, and it was chaos," Wilson said.

But, the vision was alive, and so over the next 23 years, the program continued with some sessions drawing over 200 children.

OSMCEP moved to various churches and schools in the community including First United Methodist, First Presbyterian, Episcopal Church of the Redeemer, then on to Attucks School and Head Start Building. Many years were spent at the Banneker Building, followed by Okmulgee

Middle School, the former Eastside Elementary School, and last year, due to COVID-19, from Wilson's garage.

"It was truly multi-cultural," Wilson said. "There were kids from all over, even some who were only visiting for the summer."

She stated the program took all measures to help children experience as much as possible.

"Over the years, these kids have played every board game, and participated in every outdoor activity, including shooting bows and arrows," Wilson said. "At Banneker, there were pool tables, so the kids learned to shoot pool."

Volunteer Deborah Tuggle assisted students one summer in putting on a performance of The Wizard of Oz.

"We exposed them to everything we could with our funding that was available," she said. "We were creative enough and the creativity of the volunteers was almost more valuable to me than the funding."

Funding is an important part



of a successful program, and she thanked the Viersen Foundation for their assistance.

"The Viersen Foundation was our strongest financial supporter," she said.

She thanked First National Bank and Trust of Okmulgee, Mabrey Bank, the City of Okmulgee, Okmulgee Public Schools and the contributions of volunteers and parents.

Program participants were able to visit the Oklahoma City Bombing Memorial; get hands-on assistance from student nurses, dentists, exercise and fitness instructors, artists such as Robbie McMurtry, and members of the Creek Nation, sharing their culture and language.

"Oh, they loved to dance, oh how they loved to dance," Wilson said. "We celebrated birthdays. We made a big deal of celebrating birthdays. It was a joint party, but we made it as personal as possible."

Going through keepsakes from 24 years of programs, Wilson never throws anything away. She has received many letters and notes of thanks



Students in the Summer Multi-Cultural Enrichment Program play the bells during a visit from the Baptist Village Bell Ringers.

from students that participated at OSMCEP.

"I even have notes of apology, when they acted out they had to write out a note of apology and they are so precious," she said.

Wilson thanked the many outstanding teachers and volunteers who assisted students. "We honor them with giving them the attention they need,"

Johnny and Bobbie Powell

have been with the program for the entire run, though there are others who have been constant figures over the years including Deborah Tuggle and Pearlle Daniels - really, too many to list here.

Three years ago, Wilson decided to step away and leave it into someone else's capable hands.

But, things didn't go as planned, so she continued with

the program.

Last summer, Ivorie Okonoboh took over as program director. But as everyone knows, the COVID-19 pandemic changed life drastically for everyone.

"Even in those extraordinary times, we refused to disappoint children," Wilson said.

"It took a great deal of consideration and creative thinking to make the program feasible due to COVID-19," Okonoboh said.

Creative thinking and planning was used to make the 24th session a success, but still keep everyone safe. Students picked up their academic, social, and cultural enrichment materials once a week. Food and snacks were still provided for all children participating.

Last year may have been the last summer program. Wilson has decided to retire, but is hoping someone else will step in to continue serving the children of Okmulgee.

"They are empty vessels, and we've got to fill them up somehow," Wilson said.

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# GCTC Cosmetology Program off to exciting start

by **MELISSA HEMINOVER**  
Okmulgee Times

One of the newest programs at Green Country Technology Center is the Cosmetology Program that launched in August 2020 for its first semester of training.

The program, taught by Morris High School alumni Crystal Noble, is a two year program offered to high school juniors and seniors. There is also an adult version of the program that takes just under one year to complete. There are currently 29 students enrolled in the program for the Spring 2021 semester.

All students taking the course will be able to test for their Oklahoma State Cosmetology license upon completion.

"The program is going really well," Julie Roberds, Marketing and Communications Director for GCTC, said. "The students are almost ready to start taking clients."

Roberds mentioned that since this is a brand new program, it will take the students at least a semester to work on



their craft in order to be ready to have clients.

"The students have been practicing on some of the staff here doing simple hair cuts and facials and have been doing a great job," Roberds said.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the program had to push back their grand opening as well as their ability to open up to the public for in-person appointments.

"We are hoping to wait until we no longer have to quarantine before we begin taking

clients," Noble said. "We do not want to begin taking appointments and have to reschedule due to COVID-19."

Once the students are ready to take clients, the public will be able to schedule appointments by calling in for hair cuts, colors, perms, manicures, pedicures, facials, acrylics as well as lash services.

"We are looking forward to inviting the public in to see our new facility and allow the students to continue improving their skills," Noble said.

"High school students have the option to purchase a stylist kit upon graduating that will help them as they enter the cosmetology field."

Noble said she is proud of the amount of business training the program gives the students that isn't taught at some schools.

"We help them learn how to work their books when scheduling appointments and how to grow their business," she said. "Our adult students are as prepared for the business aspect as most stylists that have been in the business for five years."

A grand opening is scheduled for late March complete with a Chamber of Commerce ribbon cutting and small demonstration stations set up.

"We are enrolling for the fall semester which can be done by going to our website," Noble said. "Our students are excited for the education they're receiving and looking forward to getting started in the industry."

"Be a part of the best," Noble said, "so you can be your best here at Green Country Technology Center."

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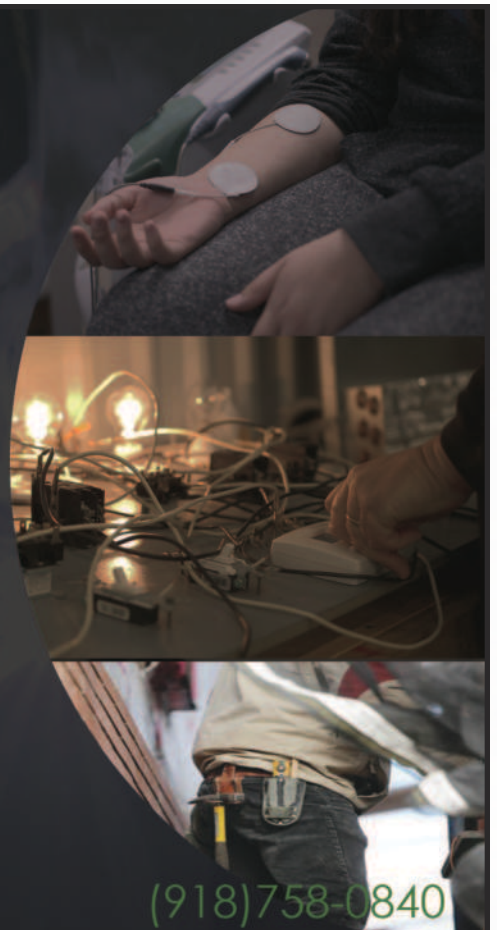
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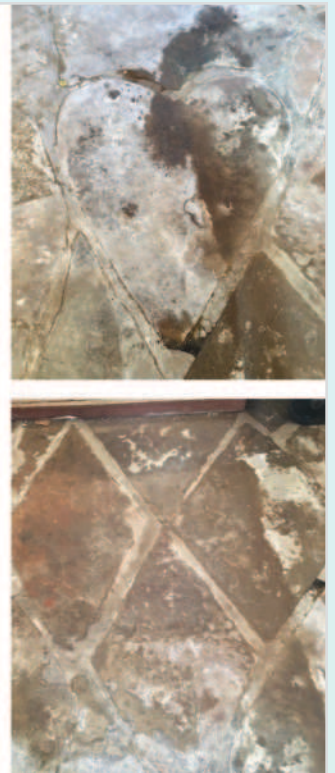
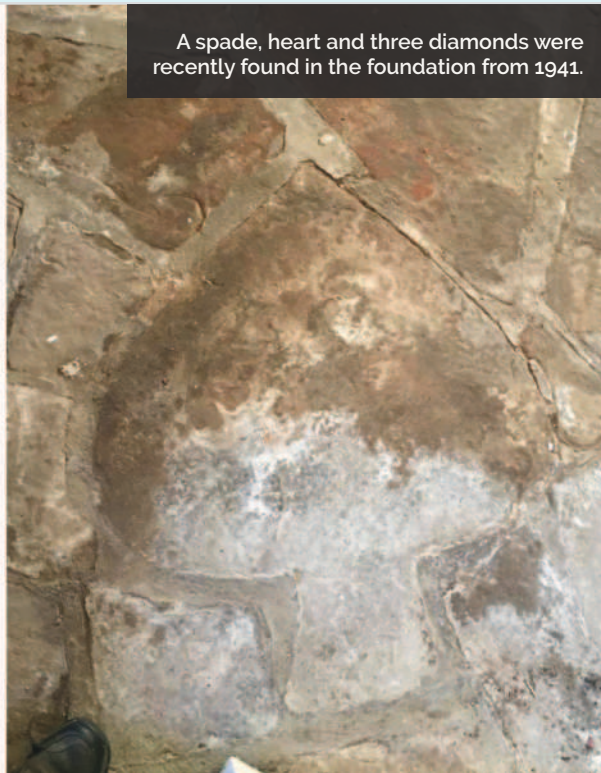
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The original fireplace inside the Caretaker's House.

A spade, heart and three diamonds were recently found in the foundation from 1941.



# Historic house worth saving

by **TRACY GOZA**  
Henryetta Free-Lance

An article published in the Aug. 24, 1941, issue of The Daily Oklahoman, titled "Beautiful Jungle," describes how 136 men and boys of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) came together to clear a once-abandoned lake bed, turning it into one of the state's show places, then known as Jack Nichols Park.

In October 1938, CCC constructed several buildings as well as culverts, picnic tables, water faucets and fire pits within the park from design plans provided by the National Park Service (NPS).

Among those buildings that remain today is the Caretaker's House, now in a dilapidated state, at what is now known as "Historic Nichols Park."

Last year, a local citizen donated \$6,000 to the City of Henryetta in order to demolish the building or funds could be used as City Council members saw fit.

Plans were then being made to demolish the piece of histo-

ry, but one man wanted to save it.

Henryetta resident Steve Sanford, along with other supporters and volunteers, attended city council meetings with hopes that demolition plans could be changed.

Sanford explained that one of his family member's was a past caretaker. He wanted the opportunity to oversee cleanup and restoration efforts.

"I have a sentimental attachment," Sanford said, "and believe it's worth saving."

City Council members voted to approve allowing Sanford and volunteers six months to assess what work the house needed to make it habitable.

Throughout the final months of 2020 into early 2021, Sanford and volunteers have cleaned out piles of trash, pulled sheetrock from the ceiling and removed 1970's paneling, revealing the original CCC stone work and the original breezeway.

After rotted wood flooring, or what was left of it, was pulled up by Sanford, he discovered three diamonds, one



Nichols Park Caretaker's House during Summer 2020.



Caretaker's House in 2006 before it was abandoned.



heart and a spade shape in the cement foundation.

"I haven't been able to find a club, yet," Sanford said.

Many volunteers have come forward to aid Sanford in preserving a piece of Henryetta history.

Sanford is hopeful that warmer weather will move through the state in coming months, allowing renovations to be completed.

In a 2006 registration form to have Nichols Park listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), it was noted that limited change has occurred in the park.

Prepared by Cynthia Savage, Architectural Historian with Architectural Resources and Community Heritage Consulting in Pocasset, the 50-plus page form explained that the Caretaker's House has been "modified sufficiently, particularly by infill of the breezeway," causing its historic integrity to be compromised.

Further notes report the house, completed by CCC in 1941, "has an asphalt-covered,

cross-gabled roof and stone foundation.

"The gable ends have been clad with white composite board. The windows are non-original, two-over-two, metal, hung and the centrally-located wood doors are paneled.

"There is a massive stone gable wall chimney on the south side and an interior, stone slope chimney on the east side."

Due to the changes made, the Caretaker's House fell short of being named along side the Beach House and other CCC-constructed buildings at Nichols Park on the NRHP.

Though the Department of the Interior National Park Service doesn't recognize the Caretaker's House as historic, Sanford and both current and former residents all agree it is a large piece of history worth saving.

If you would like to follow updates on this city treasure, visit the Nichols Park Caretaker's House Renovation page on Facebook.



1970's paneling was removed from a wall to expose the original stone work by CCC.



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# Henryetta VFW celebrates 100 years

## Efforts continue to assist veterans

by **TRACY GOZA**  
Henryetta Free-Lance

A special centennial awards ceremony was held for Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Post 539 Henryetta at the American Legion on Nov. 7, 2020.

Hosted by the VFW Department of Oklahoma, the event recognized the post for 100 years of service to local veterans and their families.

Post 539 was presented with a Centennial Diamond Anniversary Award.

Accepting the award on behalf of the Henryetta post were VFW members Post 539 Commander Bill Goodner, Post 539 Vice Commander Hugh "Rooster" Jackson, Jerry Car-

son, Tricia Bear, Donnie McKay and Lloyd Snow.

VFW Post 539's inception was Oct. 29, 1920.

"I send my sincere thanks and appreciation to the members of these VFW posts for their outstanding record of service to the community, veterans and to the nation over the past 100 years," Hal Roesch II, U.S. VFW National Commander-in-Chief, said.

Following the establishment of VFW Post 539, the 1920's saw a collapse of the stock market, the Great Depression and other paramount events in history.

None of the events have prevented the VFW and Auxiliary from aiding veterans and the community throughout the past century.

In 1923, Post 539 as well as the local American Legion, veterans and enlisted personnel joined to raise funds to purchase a "Spirit of the American Doughboy" statue.

The statue was to be a memorial to local enlisted who died in World War I.

With just over \$1,400 raised, a bronze statute was ordered.

Originally scheduled to arrive in Henryetta for the Armistice celebration on Nov. 11, 1923, the statue did not arrive



The VFW Doughboy statue, erected November of 1923.



The original VFW Charter on October 29, 1920.

until Nov. 26.

The memorial statue was placed in the middle of 4th and Main Streets with a grand unveiling.

In 1969, the Henryetta City Council approved moving the statue to 6th and Main, where it still stands today.

Mission of the VFW is to assist veterans in the transition from military to civilian life and to assist needy veterans and their families.

Post 539 works with the Disabled American Veterans providing food baskets as well as providing needed medical equipment including wheelchairs, walkers, canes, seats and hospital beds to local veterans.

Memorial Day services have always been held at Westlawn Cemetery, with the exception of 2020 due to COVID.

Well over 2,000 American flags are placed on veterans graves at six area cemeteries prior to Memorial Day.

Post 539 has long-participated in Labor Day and Christmas parades in Henryetta and various other parades in neighboring towns.

The group has installed and maintains 36 American flags along Main Street, starting at

Hwy. 75 through 13th Street.

"We intend to fly the flags year-round," Post 539 Commander Bill Goodner said.

Currently, VFW Post 539 is located in the former Okmulgee County Health Department building, adjacent to Cameron Field.

"Our source of income consists of about \$400 as our share of membership dues, about \$1,200 raised by the Buddy Poppy Program each year and by donations of members, business owners and the community," Goodner said.

"The help goes a long way toward us staying in operation."

VFW member Donnie McKay took over organization of a local Feed the Vet program, a drive-thru food distribution event held every three months.

During each Feed the Vet, over 125 veterans and their families receive food boxes.

No matter what has happened over the past century, VFW Post 539 remains vigilant with their continued and unwavering service to our local veterans, their families and the community.

For more information about VFW Post 539 and services offered, contact Post Commander Bill Goodner at 918-652-7103.

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The OCHS Thrift Store is owned and operated by the Okmulgee County Homeless Shelter and is funded by donations through the Okmulgee community. Proceeds from the thrift store assist the shelter in its daily operations cost. The store employs 3 full-time and 4 part-time employees. Come and see what treasures you might find!

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## HISTORY YE OLDE LAMP POST

# Ye Olde Lamp Post Antiques

## 40-year tradition is a must see

by **MELISSA HEMINOVER**  
Okmulgee Times

Anyone that comes to Okmulgee looking for this small town's one-of-a-kind hidden treasure will have to make their way to Okmulgee's own Ye Olde Lamp Post Antiques located on the east side of the square in downtown.

Ye Olde Lamp Post Antiques

was established Nov. 17, 1980, as the vision of Okmulgeean Glenda Chastain and her mother, Barbara Pollard.

Upon entering, customers are greeted by the uniqueness that has come from over 40 years of collecting and helping customers find one-of-a-kind pieces.

Pollard, who is often found talking with visitors about

what they are hoping to find or pointing them in the direction of the stores more unique items, stated they opened per the advise of Glenda's father who knew of Glenda's passion for antiques.

"Since opening, we have studied books and books about antiques and collectibles," Pollard said. "We often have customers call asking if we have a certain piece or needing help finding a certain item."

Over the years, the ladies have acquired many repeat customers as well as those who bring in family and friends to help educate them on the art of collecting and antiques.

Pollard said it's surprising to her when a customer comes in that isn't a collector.

"We have learned over the years that if you have three of the same particular item, you're considered a collector," she said.

The ladies have seen a lot of interesting furniture over the years including a large cabinet

all the way from a church in England, but you won't find a price tag on special pieces like that.

"I can't say that we have had one particularly popular item," Pollard said. "Everyone is so unique themselves that what they collect is just as unique."

Years ago, depression glass was a big item and now the younger generation seems to be interested in pyrex dishes, Pollard noted.

"I have had some come in with photos of designs I've never seen before," she said.

Glenda and Barbara say they are very appreciative of all of the local customers that continue to support them over the years.

The two would love to see more new businesses come in to the downtown Okmulgee area in order to help the community continue to grow.

Ye Olde Lamp Post Antiques is located at 113 S. Grand Ave in Okmulgee and can be reached by calling 918-756-4539.

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PHOTO: ANTHONY NIETO



## HISTORY

### CORNERSTONE FOURSQUARE

Cornerstone Foursquare is located at 617 N. Oklahoma in Okmulgee. Rev. Mickey Baldwin is the lead pastor.



COURTESY PHOTOS

# Cornerstone Foursquare

## Where people are 'living stories'

by **PATRICK FORD**  
Okmulgee Times

Okmulgee County is home to many churches. Some have memberships in the thousands, whereas others may only have a handful.

But each strives to fulfill their mission - being a place where people feel love, accepted and forgiven.

Cornerstone Foursquare (CF) in Okmulgee is one such place. The church is located at 617 N. Oklahoma Ave. Established in Dec. 1933, CF has operated for 88 years.

Life in Okmulgee has changed, but Cornerstone wants to be a place where people feel love, accepted and forgiven. Rev. Baldwin shares a brief history of the church:

Cornerstone was first planted here as Okmulgee Foursquare and was the first Foursquare Gospel Church in Oklahoma. A local congregation known as Faith Tabernacle Church (which was owned by separate individuals) was located on North Okmulgee Ave. They hosted Aimee Sem-

pel McPherson, founder of Foursquare International, to preach after she finished preaching in Parsons, Kansas. This game-changing revival began on a cold snowy day Dec. 3, 1933. Sister Aimee immediately fell in love with Okmulgee.

She called the revival very successful with a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit, writing in her personal diary, "What a day! I have preached four times today ... We have had to struggle our way into the church. Hundreds blocked each doorway. Multitudes stood outside. Scores climbed the roofs of neighboring garages, houses, tops of autos, fences and hoped to at least get a 'look in.' The power fell all day long..."

The Foursquare Church, as a denomination, has a unique history that stems from missions and evangelism. It began as an evangelistic movement and spread throughout the nations to become the global family it is today with over 14,000 churches and more than 9,000 licensed ministers in the Unit-

ed States.

The first pastor was Rev. Wesley Goodwin, followed by almost 30 other men and women who have moved ministry forward over the years.

Rev. Ray Shiflett and his two sons also pastored over the life of the Okmulgee church which will celebrate 90 years of ministry in 2023.

Tina Dagley, a local member, held an important place in the church as the administrator while a new minister was being recruited to serve in Okmulgee.

"Under her direction, the church prospered and ran smoothly," Baldwin said.

Many of the ministers have continued pastoring or serving worldwide, thus fulfilling Foursquare's motto found on the cornerstone of the Angelus Temple at Echo Park in Los Angeles, stating, 'Dedicated unto the cause of inter-denominational and worldwide evangelism.'

Rev. Jim Shiflett and wife Cathy are serving in Hong Kong at this time, while Reverends Jim and C'cie Birch served

the Okmulgee church from 2006 to 2014. They are serving as Foursquare Missionaries to Peru and have had their boots on the ground for almost five years.

"We have been in relationship with the church of Peru for over 20 years ... we are witness to Foursquare Peru growing from three churches to ten with six additional outreach locations," Rev. Birch said. "It has been great to see Foursquare Peru move from being missionary led to recently having their first Peruvian Foursquare National leader."

A slogan name 'Cornerstone Foursquare' for the Okmulgee Foursquare Church was facilitated by Rev. Don Stiltner in the early 2000s.

"The people of HOPE believe today we are a Lighthouse for our community here on the north side of Okmulgee in spite of some huge setbacks," Rev. Baldwin said. The wood frame church building that was located on the corner of Trent and Oklahoma Ave. was later the home for the local church.

In 1980, it caught fire ear-



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<p><b>2021 OKMULGEE COUNTY CALENDAR OF EVENTS</b></p> <p><small>*EVENTS ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE THROUGHOUT THE YEAR</small></p>	<p><b>MARCH 27</b></p> <p><b>SPRING FLING</b></p> <p><i>OKMULGEE</i></p>	<p><b>APRIL 24</b></p> <p><b>GOLF TOURNAMENT</b></p> <p><i>OKMULGEE</i></p>	<p><b>JUNE 5</b></p> <p><b>JUNK IN YOUR TRUNK</b></p> <p><i>OKMULGEE</i></p>
	<p><b>JUNE 10-12</b></p> <p><b>PECAN FESTIVAL</b></p> <p><i>OKMULGEE</i></p>	<p><b>SEPTEMBER 6</b></p> <p><b>LABOR DAY PARADE &amp; FESTIVITIES</b></p> <p><i>HENRYETTA</i></p>	<p><b>OCTOBER TBA</b></p> <p><b>HARVEST SPOON CHILI FESTIVAL</b></p> <p><i>OKMULGEE</i></p>
<p><b>OCTOBER 29</b></p> <p><b>SCARE ON THE SQUARE</b></p> <p><i>OKMULGEE</i></p>	<p><b>NOVEMBER 5-7</b></p> <p><b>AHRMA VINTAGE NATIONALS</b></p> <p><i>HENRYETTA</i></p>	<p><b>DECEMBER 9</b></p> <p><b>FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS PARADE</b></p> <p><i>OKMULGEE</i></p>	<p><b>DECEMBER 16</b></p> <p><b>SPARKLE SPREE DRAWINGS</b></p> <p><i>OKMULGEE</i></p>



ly one morning and burned down. With the help of many volunteers and local Okmulgee citizens (many from other churches), a new auditorium was built.

An educational wing was built to the south and was dedicated in 1983 as Pastor Ron Isam had a vision for education.

Current lead pastor Rev. Mickey Baldwin and his wife Marcie reflect on these times saying, "What a vision they had in the 80s to provide education and tutoring class. When we first came to Okmulgee in 2014, we met so many people who knew Cornerstone for it's school and Indian Taco Fund-raisers."

Mrs. Sue Lee was the school's administrator and Margret Maghe was the principal. Maghe served until her retirement, and then the school closed.

"It was like group homeschooling," Lee said. "Everyone chipped in and the children's learning just took off. We did science projects in the kitchen while Mrs. Maghe taught the little guys, and Pastor taught



Rev. Mickey and Marcie Baldwin and girls, Alivia Grace and Audrey Kaye.

the older students."

Cornerstone still has a Kid's program led by Gladys Espinoza.

Due to COVID-19, there have been some changes. Many churches, including CF, have

used social media to hold their services.

The after-school program called Kids University has been postponed this year.

"Thanks to social media, we have been able to contin-

ue serving our community and have actually increased our footprint with often more than 150 views on most Sundays," Rev. Baldwin said. "Our on-campus numbers range between 20 to 25 and allow us to observe social guideline practices as many are staying home and connecting via social media."

Working through the daily changes surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, CF has been involved to meet the needs of others through what Pastor Baldwin calls, "Porch Ministry."

"This will probably not go away because in all actuality this is our DNA as Foursquare - to go where people are," he said. "Our brick and mortar building is just a building, but the people are truly the Living Stones."

CF is open every Sunday at 10 a.m. for the 10:30 a.m. service and then closed for the Wednesday service. This mid week service is currently streamed live at 6:30 p.m. on Facebook.

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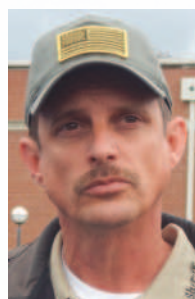
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