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THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE *of the* POARCH CREEK INDIANS

creek corner



TRIBAL CHAIR NAMED 2024

Leading Lady

BY GIRL SCOUTS OF SOUTHERN ALABAMA

ADDRESSING HEALTH DISPARITIES IN NATIVE AMERICAN POPULATIONS
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TO VIEW THE DIGITAL COPY or download the PDF, please visit the Creek Corner page on PBCIRoundhouse.com.
FOR ALL OTHER INQUIRIES, please email Katie Mothershed at kmothershed@pci-nsn.gov.



KRISTIN HELLMICH
Interim Editor, Creek Corner

FROM THE EDITOR

"Welcome to the August edition of Creek Corner Magazine! As the lazy days of summer give way to the excitement of a new school year, we turn our focus to the theme of education and the importance of continuing to learn, no matter your age. We celebrate those starting their first day of school, embarking on a journey of learning, and those wrapping up the final months of their academic careers. We also celebrate continuous learners who are always seeking to expand their knowledge base.

Education provides an important cornerstone in our lives. Through education, we gain the tools necessary to navigate life's challenges, make informed decisions, and pursue our passions.

What's great about education is that it's not just found in a textbook or behind a school desk, but is something we can continue to incorporate into our everyday lives. Whether that is learning an important skill or trade, exploring a new hobby, or getting a family history lesson around the dining room table. The everyday experiences and lessons we encounter contribute to our ongoing education, enriching our lives in countless ways.

"The everyday experiences and lessons we encounter contribute to our ongoing education, ***enriching our lives in countless ways.***"

By blending elements of Poarch's heritage and progress in publications like Creek Corner, the Tribe shares its stories to ensure both current and future generations grow up with a strong sense of identity and purpose. The Tribe also invests in a variety of resources allowing one to explore Poarch's culture and traditions. The resources can be found by participating in an Education or Cultural Department activity or event. They can also be viewed through the Tribe's website or by walking through the Poarch Creek Museum. These resources offer invaluable insights into our heritage and traditions, reinforcing the importance of cultural continuity.

Providing these educational and cultural opportunities allows the Tribe to invest in the future of the community. Best of all, these diverse educational programs are available for a wide range of ages. There is no better time than the present to start your journey of learning.

Together, we can continue to support and uplift the Poarch Creek community through the power of education. We encourage you to share your stories with others and inspire one another as we embark on another year of learning and growth.

TRIBAL LEADERS

The mission of the Poarch Creek Indians is to protect our inherent rights as a sovereign American Indian Tribe, promote our culture and beliefs, to help our Tribal Citizens achieve their highest potential, maintain good relations with other Indian tribes and units of government, acquire, develop and conserve resources to achieve economic and social self-sufficiency, and ensure that our people live in peace and harmony among themselves and with others.

TOP ROW (LEFT TO RIGHT)
Stephanie Bryan, *Tribal Chair*
Robert McGhee, *Vice Chair*
Charlotte Meckel, *Secretary*
Amy Gantt, *Treasurer*

BOTTOM ROW (LEFT TO RIGHT)
At-Large Council Members:
Dewitt Carter
Sandy Hollinger
Keith Martin
Arthur Mothershed
Justin Stabler





FROM OUR LEADERS:

STEPHANIE A. BRYAN, TRIBAL CHAIR

By Megan Zamora

I had an opportunity to catch up with the Chairwoman, and one thing is abundantly clear: when she was first elected to Tribal Council, she never imagined she'd be walking the path she's on today. She expressed her gratitude for the opportunity to serve as Chair and CEO of the Poarch Creek Indians (PCI).

Additionally, she stated that it is an honor to work with the Tribal leadership and all employees of all entities, and that she is grateful to have built relationships on a state and national level.

It was evident that she was very exhausted. Her comments regarding the state gaming legislation revealed that it has been an extremely difficult year for her.

As soon as the state session ended, she was on her way to D.C. to seal hearings with both the Senate and House chambers and to work with federal legislators on our Parity Act.

Her ultimate goal and where she would like to be is at the heart of the Poarch Creek community for all Tribal Citizens. Despite the exhaustion she may experience from fighting so hard to protect what we've built, and to protect our sovereignty, her motivation is to improve the quality of life for our Tribal Citizens and to grow our economy. It is her hope that her legacy will be that she worked hard to provide people with the tools to succeed and then inspired them to achieve great things.

> *"For us to have a voice in the things that are impacting us, we must be at the table where the decisions are made.*
>
> **STEPHANIE A. BRYAN, TRIBAL CHAIR**

For us to have a voice in the things that are impacting us, we must be at the table where the decisions are made. Stephanie has strategically worked with the people around her to ensure this is happening for the Tribe. At her core, she is a tremendous advocate for the Poarch Creek Indians. While she might have started her journey as a shy girl who, upon being crowned Tribal Princess asked her sister Ruthie if she'd wear the crown instead, she now sits on several prestigious national and state boards. She spends her days sharing our PCI story, advancing the goals of the Tribe, and protecting our interests and well-being. While she may be in D.C. on Wednesday, she'll hop an early flight and make sure she's at the Tribal Council meeting on that Thursday by 4pm CST. She is committed, vocal, and an expert at networking with others for the benefit of PCI.

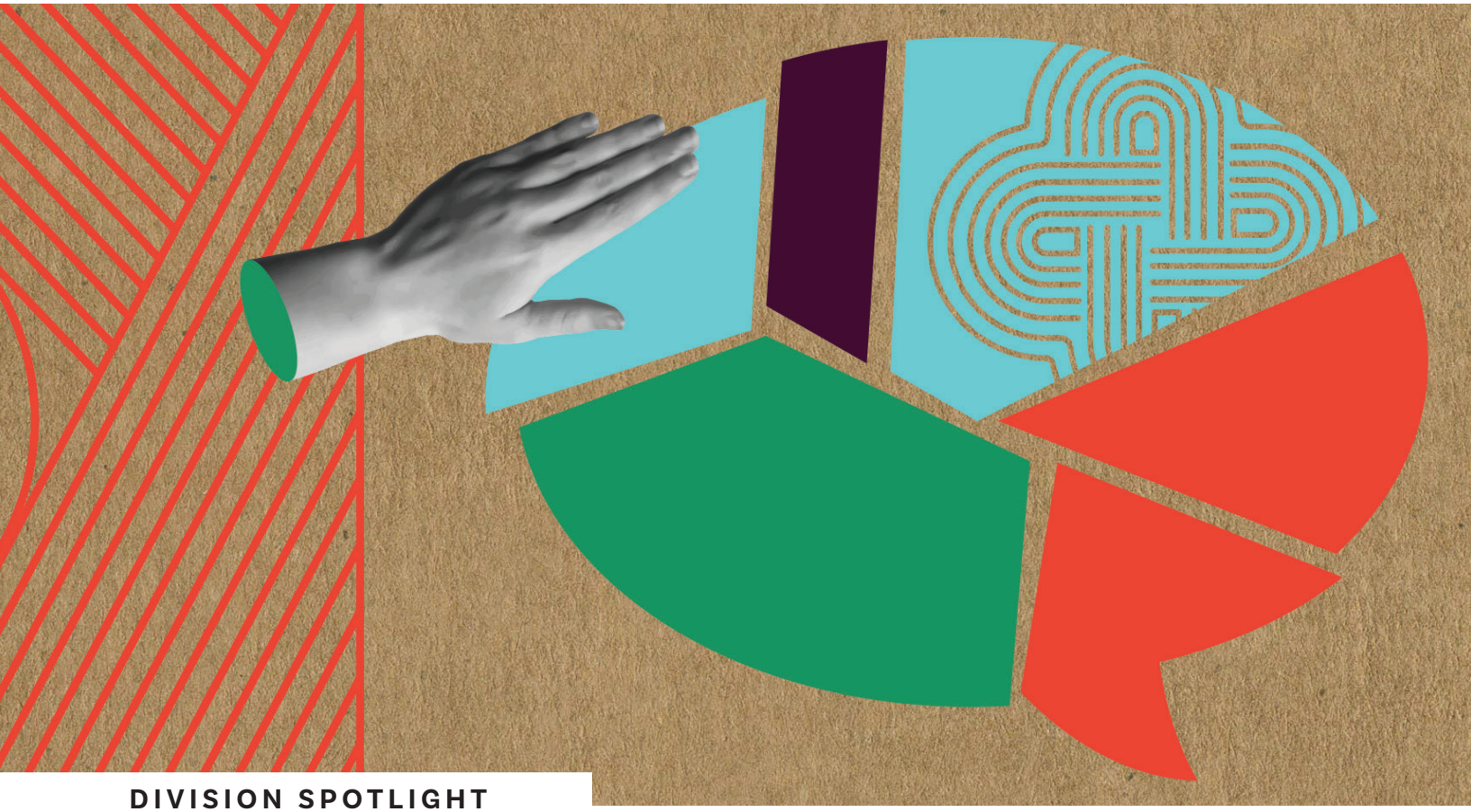
She takes her role seriously and understands how decisions made elsewhere can quickly hit home and, for better or worse, affect the lives of those she ultimately serves: PCI Tribal Citizens.

One such example is the infamous Carcieri ruling which, with just a few misguided words, created issues for multiple Tribes regarding their sovereignty. To combat this ill-informed ruling, PCI has worked nonstop to have its Poarch Band of Creek Indians Parity Act passed into law. However, the process is an extensive one with many tedious steps.

Miram Fry, Director-Government Relations, shared that, "Chairwoman Bryan was invited to testify before the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs and House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Indian and Insular Affairs on June 12th and June 26th, respectively. Witnesses testifying at a Hearing is an important step in the legislative process. This was also a milestone for Chairwoman Bryan and the Tribe in our advocacy efforts. After a bill is introduced in the U.S. Congress and Senate, a hearing is held by Committee members to examine the bill, hear from witnesses, and gather important information on the bill. Chairwoman Bryan testified on the Poarch Band of Creek Indians Parity Act. Introduced by Congressman Jerry Carl (AL-01) and Senator Katie Britt (R-AL), this bill applies the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 (IRA), to the Tribe, and it reaffirms the Tribe's existing trust land. This provides the Tribe with certainty needed to advance future projects and government services, take additional land into trust, and prevent frivolous lawsuits."

You can watch the hearings by scanning these QR codes.

Simply stated, our Chairwoman is a powerhouse with a servant's heart. From California to Washington D.C. to Montgomery, AL, and back here at home in Poarch, she is working hard for her people, the Poarch Creek Indians.



DIVISION SPOTLIGHT

CHIEF OF STAFF OFFICE

By Ashlee "Katie" Mothershed

The Chief of Staff Office plays a critical role in ensuring the smooth operation and effectiveness of Tribal Government. This office, led by Chief of Staff Terry Sweat, serves as the principal advisor to the Tribal Chair and oversees the implementation of the Chair's goals and objectives. Below are the key responsibilities of the Chief of Staff Office.

ADVISORY ROLE TO THE TRIBAL CHAIR

The Chief of Staff serves as an advisor to the Tribal Chair, providing strategic counsel on a wide range of issues. This includes political, social, and economic matters that affect the Tribe. The Chief of Staff ensures that the Chair is well-informed and prepared to make decisions that will benefit the Tribal community.

COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT ACTIVITIES

One of the primary responsibilities of the Chief of Staff Office is to coordinate the activities of various departments within Tribal Government. This involves ensuring that all departments are aligned with the Tribal Council's vision and goals, and that they work collaboratively towards common objectives.

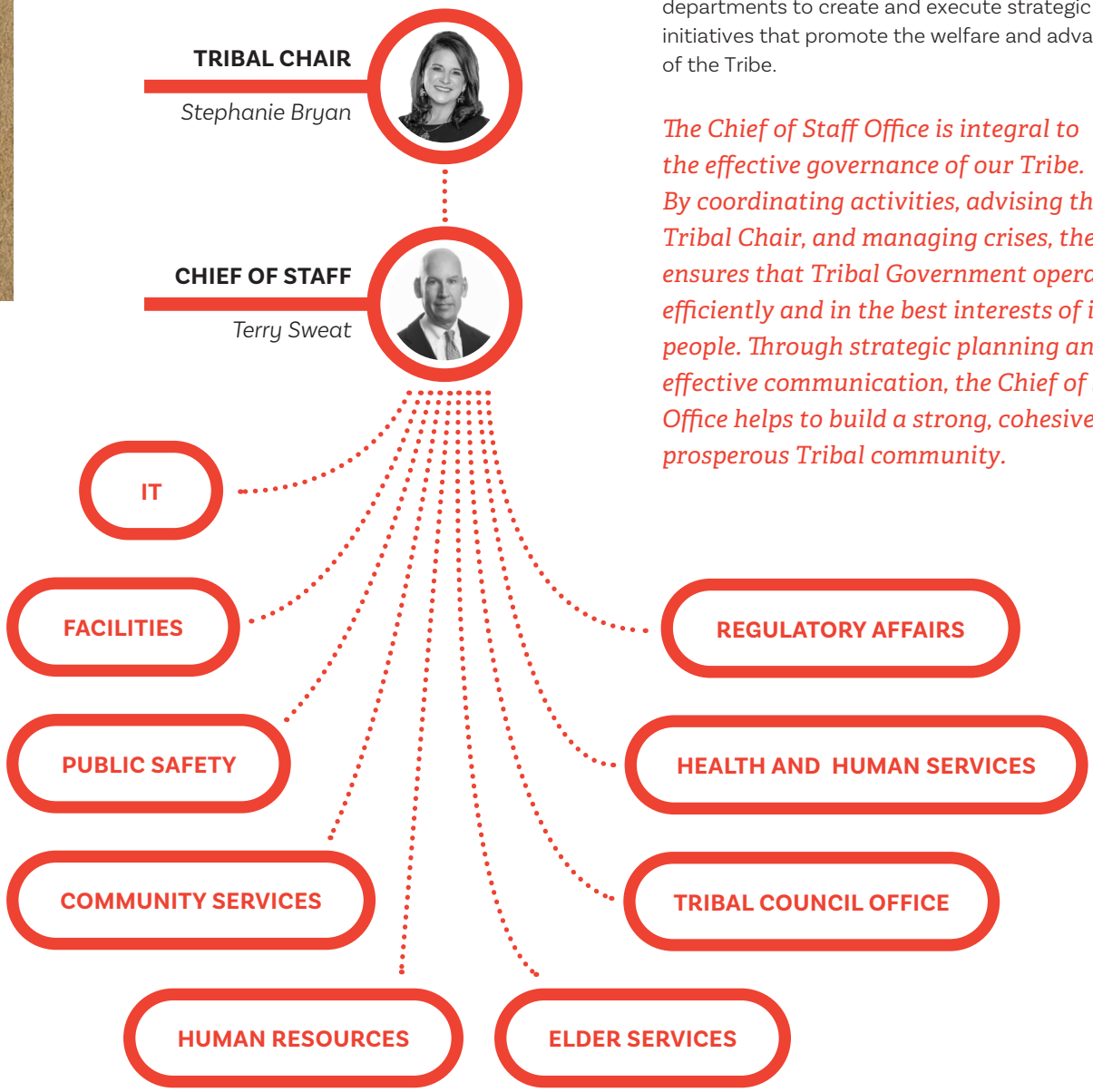
CRISIS MANAGEMENT

In times of crisis, the Chief of Staff Office plays a pivotal role in managing the situation. This includes coordinating emergency responses, communicating with the community, and working with other government agencies and organizations to address the crisis. The office ensures that Tribal Government responds swiftly and effectively to any challenges that arise.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Long-term strategic planning is a critical aspect of the Chief of Staff Office's responsibilities. This involves setting goals, developing plans to achieve them, and monitoring progress. The Chief of Staff works closely with the Tribal Council and other departments to create and execute strategic initiatives that promote the welfare and advancement of the Tribe.

The Chief of Staff Office is integral to the effective governance of our Tribe. By coordinating activities, advising the Tribal Chair, and managing crises, the office ensures that Tribal Government operates efficiently and in the best interests of its people. Through strategic planning and effective communication, the Chief of Staff Office helps to build a strong, cohesive, and prosperous Tribal community.



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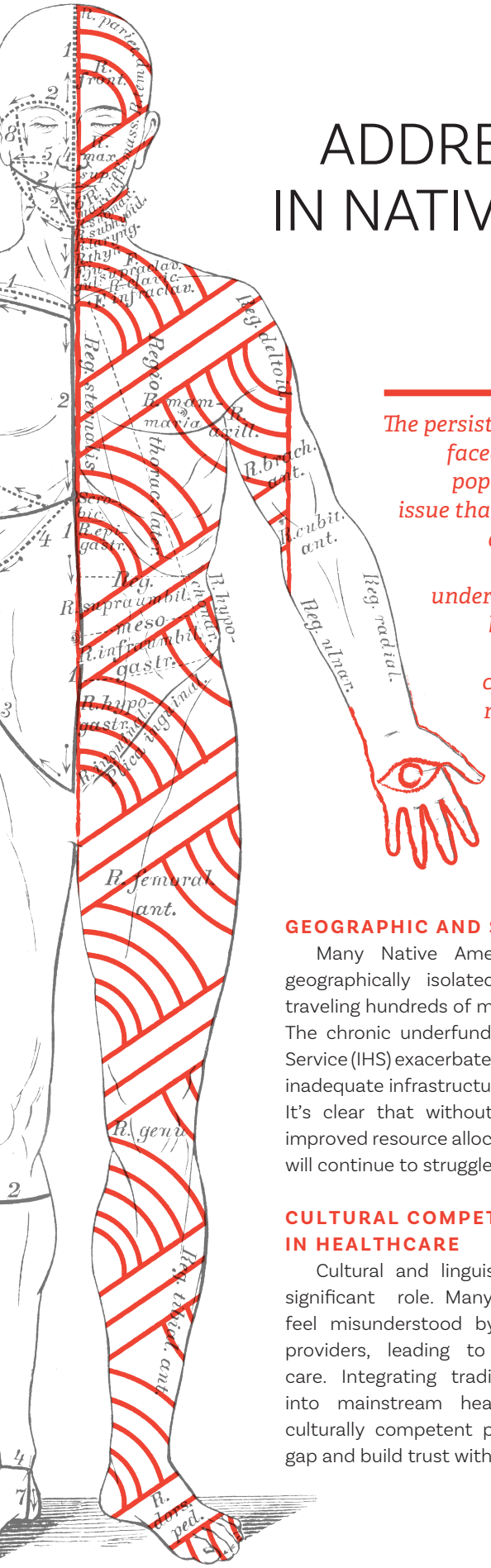
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Elizabeth Pickett, Au.D., CCC-A

Nicole Riis, Au.D., CCC-A, FAAA



ADDRESSING HEALTH DISPARITIES IN NATIVE AMERICAN POPULATIONS

By Ashlee "Katie" Mothershed

The persistent health disparities faced by Native American populations are a glaring issue that demands immediate attention. Geographic isolation, chronic underfunding, and cultural barriers severely limit access to healthcare, contributing to higher rates of mental health issues and chronic diseases.

GEOGRAPHIC AND SYSTEMIC BARRIERS

Many Native American communities are geographically isolated, with residents often traveling hundreds of miles to access healthcare. The chronic underfunding of the Indian Health Service (IHS) exacerbates this problem, resulting in inadequate infrastructure and staffing shortages. It's clear that without increased funding and improved resource allocation, these communities will continue to struggle.

CULTURAL COMPETENCY IN HEALTHCARE

Cultural and linguistic barriers also play a significant role. Many Native Americans may feel misunderstood by non-Native healthcare providers, leading to a reluctance to seek care. Integrating traditional healing practices into mainstream healthcare and employing culturally competent providers can bridge this gap and build trust within these communities.

MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

The mental health crisis among Native Americans is deeply rooted in historical trauma. High rates of depression, anxiety, and substance abuse are a direct result of centuries of colonization and cultural dislocation. Suicide rates, particularly among the youth, are alarmingly high. Expanding access to culturally sensitive mental health services and community-based support programs is crucial.

CHRONIC HEALTH CONDITIONS

Chronic health conditions like diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and obesity are prevalent among Native Americans. These conditions are exacerbated by poverty, limited access to nutritious food, and inadequate preventive care. Public health initiatives focusing on education, healthy lifestyles, and disease prevention are vital to combat these issues.

A MULTIFACETED APPROACH

Addressing these disparities requires a multifaceted approach. Increased funding for the IHS, improved cultural competency in healthcare, expanded mental health services, and targeted public health initiatives are essential steps. Collaboration between tribal governments, healthcare providers, and public health agencies is key to creating sustainable solutions.

In conclusion, the health disparities facing Native American populations are not just a public health issue but a matter of social justice. It's time for policymakers, healthcare providers, and the broader community to take decisive action to ensure health equity and improve the overall well-being of Native American individuals and families. Only through a committed, collaborative effort can we hope to make a meaningful difference.



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POARCH CREEK INDIANS

FEDERAL RECOGNITION TURNS FORTY

By Deidra Suwanee Dees, Ed.D.

"We acknowledge that the Poarch Creeks be acknowledged as an Indian tribe with a government-to-government relationship with the United States and be entitled to the same privileges and immunities available to other federally recognized tribes by virtue of their status as Indian tribes."

These powerful words marked the Federal Recognition of the Poarch Creek Indians by the Bureau of Indian Affairs which led to the Tribe's federal acknowledgment on August 11, 1984, forty years ago. After decades of relentless hard work by our Tribal leaders, the federal acknowledgment goal was finally achieved.

How did the Tribe obtain this valuable status? The United States Department of the Interior posted the federal acknowledgment process on their website which states that tribes, "Must demonstrate that they meet each of seven mandatory criteria".

1. demonstrate that it has been identified as an American Indian entity on a substantially continuous basis since 1900;

2. show that a predominant portion of the petitioning group comprises a distinct community and has existed as a community from historical times until the present;

3. demonstrate that it has maintained political influence or authority over its members as an autonomous entity from historical times until the present;

4. provide a copy of the group's present governing document including its membership criteria;

5. demonstrate that its membership consists of individuals who descend from a historical Indian tribe or from historical Indian tribes that combined and functioned as a single autonomous political entity, and provide a current membership list;

6. show that the membership of the petitioning group is composed principally of persons who are not members of any acknowledged North American Indian tribe; and

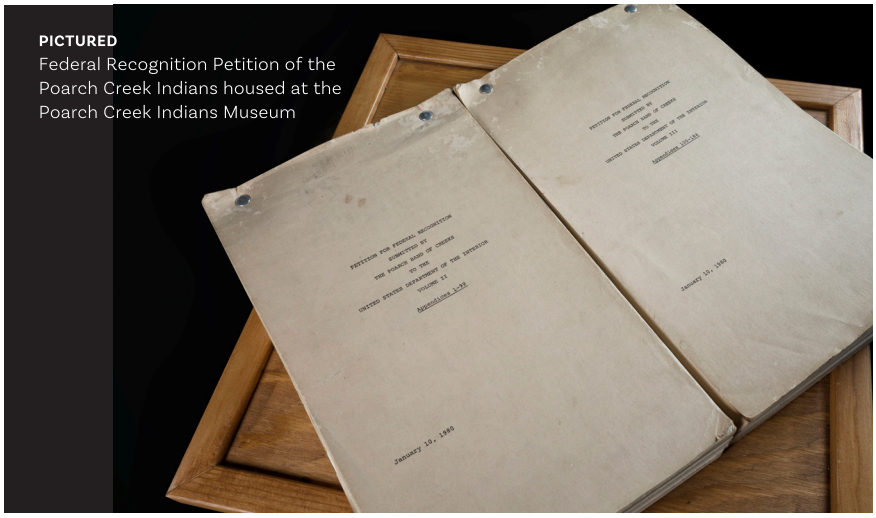
7. demonstrate that neither the petitioner nor its members are the subject of congressional legislation that has expressly terminated or forbidden the Federal relationship.



Our leaders demonstrated that we met each mandatory point of criteria by providing supporting evidence and compelling documentation. It was compiled into the document we call the "Federal Recognition Petition," a copy of which was donated to the Tribe by former Chairman Eddie L. Tullis in 2009. It is on display at the Kerretv en Cuko (building of learning) Poarch Creek Indians Museum.

To mark the fortieth anniversary, you can see this document, along with the new exhibit on Federal Recognition beginning on August 1, 2024 at the Museum.

In reflecting on Federal Recognition and the impact it has made for the Poarch Creek Indians, Chairwoman Stephanie A. Bryan reminisced by sharing, "As we celebrate the 40th anniversary of Federal Recognition for the Poarch Creek Indians, we reflect on our remarkable journey and remain steadfast in honoring our origins, which have shaped us into the resilient Tribe we are today. From our humble beginnings, where love and solidarity were our greatest treasures, to our ongoing fight to protect our sovereignty, we are grateful for the blessings we have received. Every day, I pray for the strength, wisdom, and courage to lead our people, and I am continually humbled by the guidance we receive from God above."



PICTURED
Federal Recognition Petition of the Poarch Creek Indians housed at the Poarch Creek Indians Museum

The Poarch Creek Indians is an example for other tribes because "we have a stable government, separated enterprises, and successful gaming," said Eddie L. Tullis to Dr. Deidra Suwanee Dees in an interview in his home on June 25, 2024. He served on the Tribal Council and led the way to Federal Recognition in 1984 which opened many doors that were previously closed.

One door that opened was "the establishment of the Education Scholarship Program to educate young people," Tullis said.

"It also opened the door for the Housing Program which improved the quality of life for an awful lot of Tribal Members," he said. "It continues to be an example for Tribal groups around the country. I am proud of our Housing Program that was started by Susan Wicker, a real testimony to her commitment. She and others gave of their time, and were not paid for it."

"We built the Bingo Hall before we were Federally Recognized and signed off on the trust property," he said. "Keith Martin was hired as a laborer to build the Bingo Hall. He is now in charge of our land."

Tullis said, "The first meeting on Federal Recognition was attended by John Author McGhee, Frank Flournoy, and me with the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in Boston, Massachusetts in February of 1971. It opened the opportunity for us to create procedures for Federal Recognition. Congressman Jack Edwards and others helped put pressure on the Bureau of Indian Affairs to adopt the procedures," the seven mandatory criteria, which finally came about in 1978.

Tullis said this led to hearings all over the country and he chaired one of the committees that met at Opryland in Nashville, Tennessee. Presidential candidate, Walter Mondale, was campaigning in the city at the same time, and was given a key to the city. Tullis said he was also given a key to the city for bringing together Native Americans from across America.

Federal Recognition opened the door for "the General Welfare Assistance, community development, and the infrastructure here," Tullis said. "We continue to provide services for every member of the Tribe."

"Forty years went by in a hurry," he added. "There is continuous development going on in advancements."

Catherine Sells served on the Tribal Council along with Tullis in 1984 when the Council was made up of eighteen members. She is pictured on the next page in the Tribal Council photograph which shows fifteen members. Perhaps readers can help us name the missing Council Members by

...continued on next page

calling us at (251) 446-4940. "We adopted our Constitution and then dropped down to nine Council Members," Tullis said.

"It was hard back then," Sells said to Dr. Deidra Suwanee Dees in an interview in her home on June 25, 2024. "We picked cotton all the time. No telephones. Eddie Tullis' mother, Florence Tullis, would pick us up on the back of the truck and we'd go pick cotton. She worked for farmers in Monroe County. When her own crops got ready, we'd pick cotton at her house in Nokomis. When daddy, Alton Jackson, was farming after he came out of the Navy, I did all this work—fed the hogs, chopped cotton, pulled weeds in the soy beans. Buford Rolin and I would pick cucumbers for his daddy, Tom Rolin. It's a wonder we didn't get snake bit," she said laughing.



PICTURED *First row left to right:* Eugene Madison, Buford L. Rolin, Cathy Carpenter, Billy Smith, Ronnie Smith; *Second row left to right:* John Arthur McGhee, Eddie L. Tullis, Susan Manac Wicker, Catherine Sells, Hubert Rackard. *Third row left to right:* Gene Rackard, Rayford Rolin, Mal McGhee, Kent McGhee, Dale Gehman. 1983-1984 Tribal Council at the time of Federal Recognition

She helped her granny, Margie Rolin McGhee, with hog killing by washing the chitlins, she said. "They called granny The Rock—strong. She worked hard. She sewed clothes for people. She was tough, outspoken. What came up came out! You didn't push her back."

Sells said they worked in different locations. "Mace McGhee would take teenagers to Uriah to pick up pecans on Saturdays. Daddy would run the potato shed in Summerdale. We'd stay for a whole week. I graded potatoes when they went down the shoot. The men and boys would sleep on the potato shed" while the girls slept in the farmhouse.

At the farmhouse, Sells said Gertrude Rolin was the cook for everyone, and the doctor too. "She would cook rice and tomato gravy, brown gravy with salmon and rice, biscuits. She was a good cook."

Sells remembered, "One night as I was sleeping, and a bug crawled in my ear and woke me up—it hurt so bad. I went downstairs and woke up Gertrude. She lit a cigarette, and blew the smoke in my ear, and the bug came out!"

Sells remembered that hard work paid off. "When the fair came to town, we would pick cotton to make our money. Daddy would take us to the fair."

Comparing then to now, Sells said, "If Granny could come back now, she would be smiling and laughing. She would be wanting to see everything. She wouldn't know what to think about our Health Clinic—got doctors and nurses, dental care and the Assisted Living Facility! We have the Boys and Girls Club—children get the opportunity to do things we didn't get to do a long time ago. We've got Housing. I have a picture of the ribbon-cutting at Rolin Hills. We get a check from the Tribe. They donate to the churches, schools, and other organizations. We are blessed."

Another Tribal Council Member from that era is Jack Allen McGhee who remembered the journey to Federal Recognition and relayed it to Dr. Dees on June 24, 2024. "I was fortunate enough to have served two years on the Tribal Council in the late 1980s. The Tribe had no money back then. We were paid only travel expenses."

"To see where our Tribe is now compared to back then is like daylight and dark," he emphasized.

"I am so proud of our Tribe and thankful for all the people who have played a part in getting us here, especially Chief Calvin McGhee, Eddie Tullis, Buford Rolin, Billy Smith, John Arthur McGhee, and the list goes on and on. I have seen our people go from poverty to middle class thanks to Federal Recognition, hard work, and dedication of our people," he said.

"We have something we can be proud of," McGhee added. "Let's keep it going."

You can access an electronic copy of the Federal Recognition Petition on our Online Archives at pbciarchives.org.

To celebrate the fortieth anniversary, we are hosting the annual History Conference about Federal Recognition on October 5 at Wind Creek in the Coosawada Ballroom from 9:00am-3:00pm. We hope you can join us for this momentous celebration.

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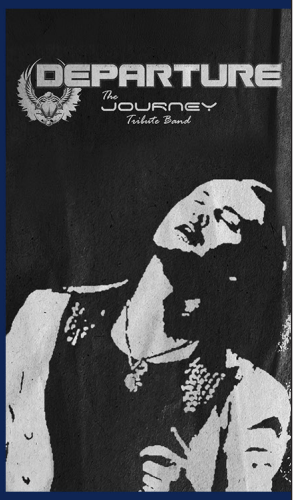
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LEADERSHIP SPOTLIGHT

JAY DORRIS AND PCI GAMING

By Jamie Sawyer

There probably aren't many architects running large casino operations. But for almost two decades, the Poarch Creek Indians have put their trust in a friend of the Tribe who has become an icon in the industry. Before Wind Creek Atmore was even built, the leaders of Creek Indian Economic Development Authority reached out to Jay Dorris for advice. Years earlier, he had helped the Mississippi Choctaw Tribe turn a fledgling casino into a destination resort. They were hoping he could bring insight to their own plans.

Prior to his time with Poarch, Jay spent a lot of time meeting other Tribal leaders around the country and contributing to organizations like USET, an inter-Tribal organization serving 33 federally recognized Tribal Nations. Over the years, he has become an authority on the challenges Tribes face as they grow gaming operations to secure financial stability.

He brought more than insight. He brought vision, leadership and a long-term commitment to a people who needed a leg up. It was 2006 and he was working for St. Joe Company, a publicly traded land development company in Florida. The Tribe was considering building its first casino and resort near the Reservation in Atmore, Alabama. They had been in talks with a large casino operator to finance the project. But the pace of those talks was slow-moving and filled with uncertainty.

After a lot of discussion and planning, the Tribe decided to go out on its own to develop two casino resorts, one in Atmore and one in Wetumpka. Dorris helped line up financing for the construction project. As we all remember, there was a recession looming that none of us could anticipate. In fact, as the team were in New York finalizing the details of the deal, news of the market crash hit. The financial markets seized up, leaving the deal in instant jeopardy. While he wouldn't say he was unphased, they quickly pivoted and structured a deal that allowed them to finish Wind Creek Atmore. The success of that project provided a means for all that followed.

This leap of faith paid off. By 2009, the doors of Wind Creek Atmore were open, and Jay Dorris was part of the team who would make it successful. In less than two years, the Tribe would recoup its investment and start expanding its operations. They reinvested to develop Wind Creek Wetumpka in 2013 and Wind Creek Montgomery in 2016. Their efforts guided these properties to profitability and they continued to expand.



Wind Creek is one of the fastest-growing resort brands in the nation and has become a model operation for Tribes around the country.

Ten years ago, the Tribal Council held a long-range planning session with Dorris and his team. They set out some lofty goals for growth and challenged Wind Creek Hospitality to become a leader in the industry. Today, Wind Creek is one of the fastest-growing resort brands in the nation and has become a model operation for Tribes around the country. They have exceeded their growth goals and continue to expand.

This growth has not come without challenges. One of these challenges has been running a fast-growing operation that faces legislative and regulatory hurdles. Wind Creek Hospitality has grown exponentially despite those limitations. While Alabama remains in limbo on any legislation that would expand gambling in the state, Wind Creek has acquired properties outside of the state and internationally, including locations in Pennsylvania, Miami, Aruba, and Curaçao. Wind Creek Chicago Southlands joins the fold in late 2024.

Another challenge Wind Creek faced, along with all of us, was the pandemic. In exemplary fashion, the leadership took care of their employees and their community. Even though the casino had to temporarily shut down all operations, employees remained on payroll without interruption. Without any revenue coming in, Wind Creek continued its support of community organizations, with a focus on groups helping people affected by the pandemic, like the Alabama Food Bank. In a way, this support was business as usual. Since its founding, Wind Creek Hospitality has donated tens of millions of dollars to organizations that help people.

According to Jay Dorris, this commitment to giving back and supporting employees is critical to the organization's success. As he puts it, "We just do things the right way. We're a principle-driven organization that develops team members and gives people opportunity to grow with the organization." It turns out the secret to success isn't a secret at all. You treat people right, make solid business decisions, give back to your community, and success takes care of itself.



JAY DORRIS
President/CEO, PCI Gaming



INDIGENOUS PODCAST *STOLEN* BACK FOR THIRD SEASON

By Jenna Kunze

Pulitzer Prize and Peabody Award-winning Indigenous podcast *Stolen* is back for a third season. Titled Trouble in Sweetwater, this season takes listeners to the Navajo Nation to investigate the cases of two missing women, which expands to a larger story about the search for justice in a place where interviewees say you can get away with murder.

Sweetwater, Arizona, is a remote corner within the Navajo Nation's 27,000-square-miles reservation where tribal police officers number in the 200s.

In October 2022, podcast host Connie Walker, a tribal citizen of the Okanese First Nation in Saskatchewan, began investigating the missing person report of Ella Mae Begay, a 62- year-old Navajo woman who was reported missing by her daughter a year and a half earlier. In the early morning of June 15, 2021, Ella Mae's daughter called police to report that a man had broken into her own home and stolen some drinks before wandering off. Before police could show up, she heard her mother's truck startup next door, and drive off. Ella Mae was never seen again.

In Indian Country, where disproportionately high levels of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls constitute a crisis, Begay's case stands out for the national attention it received. That's in part credited to her niece, Seraphine Warren, who walked over 2,000 miles from the Navajo Nation to Washington, D.C. to raise awareness about her missing aunt.

"I've reported on missing and murdered Indigenous people for years and Ella Mae has gotten the level of attention I almost never see," Walker, who spent nearly two decades as a reporter and host for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in Toronto, says in Episode 1, previewed by Native News Online. "The first time I saw her missing persons poster, I was immediately drawn in because of her age, her implicit vulnerability. I look at her and see the elders in my life who live alone in our communities. The thought of someone coming to their door in the middle of the night shook me."

Ella Mae's case remains unsolved more nearly three years later, despite a suspect—23-year-old Preston Tolth—allegedly telling police that he was with Ella Mae the night she went missing. Tolth told investigators that he "snapped" and hit Begay in the face four times before leaving her on the side of the road, "probably dead," Walker reports.

"I came here hoping to find out what happened to Ella May Begay," Walker says in episode 1. "But now I also want to know: what's happened with her case. Why did it take police so long to respond the night Ella Mae went missing? And why is her disappearance still unsolved with everything that Preston told investigators?"

Stolen's season three comes on the heels of the series' award-winning second season, Stolen: Surviving St. Michael's, where Walker investigates her own family's history of abuse—and intergenerational trauma—at an



Indian Residential School in Canada. Walker and her team exposed systemic abuse that permeated the St. Michael's Indian Residential School in Duck Lake, Saskatchewan for decades and preserved the testimonies of St. Michael's survivors through a modern-day oral history project. Over the course of ten months of reporting, the "Stolen" team uncovered more than 200 allegations of sexual abuse against priests, nuns, and staff members.

The series was awarded the 2023 Pulitzer Prize in the Audio Reporting category as well as a 2023 Peabody Award in the Podcast and Radio category. In Season 1: The Search For Jermain, Walker investigated an unsolved missing person's report for Jermain Charlo, a young Indigenous mother who went missing in Missoula, Montana in 2018.

The Tribe is committed to doing its part to further Native arts through books, media, movies, fashion, and similar artistic outlets. We'd love to include your recommendation in one of our future issues. Please feel free to share those with me. Mvto!

Share your recommendation
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PICTURED
PCI Tribal Chair Stephanie Bryan with Girl Scouts of Southern Alabama CEO Karlyn Edmonds and three girl scouts of Southern Alabama.

TRIBAL CHAIR NAMED 2024 LEADING LADY BY GIRL SCOUTS OF SOUTHERN ALABAMA

By Amelia Tognoli

Tribal Chair and CEO of the Poarch Creek Indians, Stephanie Bryan, was recently named Girl Scouts of Southern Alabama's 2024 Leading Lady.

The Leading Ladies Awards Brunch was hosted last month by the Girl Scouts of Southern Alabama —honoring women who have a respectable influence on their communities, careers, and hold exemplary positions as role models for young women in the community.

Cameron Murphy, Wind Creek Hospitality's Sponsorship and Events Supervisor and Truck Driver was excited to witness Bryan, a former Girl Scout, receive the award.

"Attending the Girl Scouts of Alabama Leading Lady's Brunch was nothing short of an honor. This event spotlighted some of Alabama's most accomplished women, and being in the room with them was empowering. Every nominee for the award was very deserving," Murphy said. "I'm proud that our Tribe/Wind Creek supports this organization that continues to provide funding and encouragement to young women across the state."

The Girl Scouts of Southern Alabama's ongoing mission is greatly enhanced by the support and encouragement of women leaders within various organizations, including the Poarch Creek Indians and Wind Creek Hospitality.

During the event, The Tribal Chair generously issued a donation-matching challenge-: meaning, all donations made before Friday, June 21, were matched up to $25,000!

> *"I'm proud that our Tribe/Wind Creek supports this organization that continues to provide funding and encouragement to young women across the state.*
>
> **CAMERON MURPHY, WIND CREEK HOSPITALITY'S SPONSORSHIP AND EVENTS SUPERVISOR**

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Are you interested in starting your own business?

The Poarch Band of Creek Indians TERO department has joined with the Alabama Small Business Development Center out of the University of Alabama to provide free quarterly seminars called *Building Your Business in '24*. The series will include seminars on planning, financing, starting, and marketing your business. Those wanting to move faster can receive no cost assistance from the ASBDC by registering at asbdc.org.

PLANNING
March 5, 2024 | 11:00am-1:00pm

FINANCING
May 7, 2024 | 11:00am-1:00pm

STARTING
August 20, 2024 | 11:00am-1:00pm

MARKETING
October 29, 2024 | 11:00am-1:00pm

TO REGISTER, email Jennifer Reynolds at jreynolds@pci-nsn.gov. All seminars will be held online and in-person at Building 200, First Floor Conference Room.

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POARCH CREEK INDIANS TERO Department

A Transformative Journey Towards Unity and Expansion

Creek Travel Plaza is set for an exciting transformation. With a deep appreciation for its rich tribal heritage and a commitment to serving the local community and interstate travelers, Creek Travel Plaza will begin a major remodeling and rebranding effort.

It will merge with Creek Convenience Stores in Atmore and Wetumpka, creating Creek Travel Stores - a more visible, cost-effective, and growth-ready brand. Director of Retail Operations Gerald Montalbano underlines that this rebranding is motivated by a commitment to community needs and broader appeal. The renovation will drive heighten consumer awareness while cultivating a space that embodies home and community.

Creek Travel Stores strives to serve all guests, including truckers, local tribal citizens, and beach-goers while becoming a must-stop for anyone traveling I-65. The remodel includes larger restrooms, wider aisles, brighter interiors, and interactive media experiences. Visitors can explore merchandise from local tribal artisans.



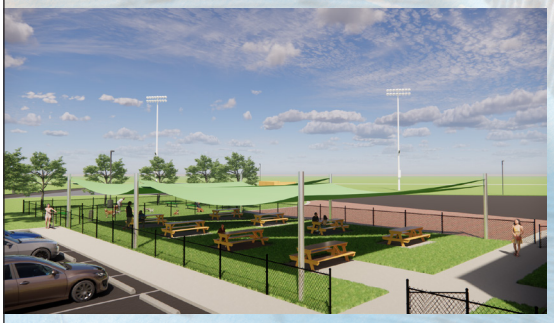
This rendering shows the new color scheme and updated furnishings in the remodeled Poarch Diner.

The food scene will undergo a major revamping, with Hanger 54 Pizza and Blue Taco gracing the grab-n-go hot bar. The existing Diner will be rechristened as the Front Poarch Diner, dishing out Southern comfort food.

Our renamed Sisters' Grill hot bar will serve delectable grab-and-go meals, including our much-loved fried chicken and fish. Prepare for effortless dinners as we begin offering rotisserie chicken, salads, and take-and-bake-at-home pizzas.

The Native Bean coffee and drink station boasts an array of liquid delicacies, from coffees and teas to milkshakes, smoothies, and slushies, and more. Here, you are sure to find something perfect to sip on anytime of the day or night.

For commercial drivers, Creek Travel Stores are improving our facilities with newly upgraded parking lots, better lighting to increase security, improved Wi-Fi, and luxurious showers. For road trippers, there will be improved access to our fuel stations, additional car parking, and improved facilities for buses and RVs. Other additions that are in the works include, a seven-space RV park, an outdoor dining area, a dog park, and EV charging stations.



The shaded al fresco open-air dining area.

The food scene will undergo a major revamp, with Hanger 54 Pizza and Blue Taco gracing the grab-n-go hot bar. The existing Diner will be rechristened as the Front
The rebranding of Creek Travel Stores is not just a business decision but a reflection of our deep-rooted commitment to our tribal heritage and the community. With our upgrades, Creek Travel Stores will symbolize Southern charm and hospitality, inviting everyone to experience our unique blend of tradition and modernity
.
Creek Convenience Stores in Atmore and Wetumpka will be performing a soft rebranding as welll, and a fresh new website, www.creektravelstores.com, in being developed to showcase the three stores as a singularly branded entity. We thank everyone for their patience during this renovation process, and we hope you are as excited as we are about all the exciting new additions and upgrades.

By: Jennifer Chism, CIEDA Marketing Manager



View of the dog park with the outdoor dining area shown in the background.





ENDING SUMMER AT OWA

By Catherine Hasty

Though summer might be drawing to a close, the excitement at OWA Parks & Resort continues in full swing this August! With a calendar bursting with activities, there's something for everyone in the family to enjoy!

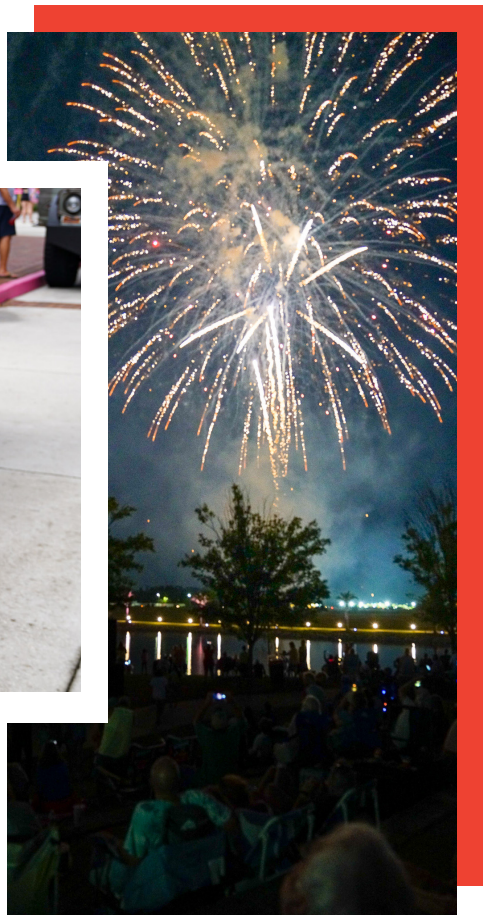
Hey music lovers, don't miss the last two Saturdays of our OWA Live Concert Series! On August 3rd, enjoy headliner Jake & Mikayla from 6:30-8:30pm, with Jack & Gin opening at 4:30pm. Then, on August 10th, catch Grits & Greens headlining from 6:30-8:30pm, with The Destinations opening at 4:30pm. Grab a cold beverage to go from your favorite spot and join us for the fun!

Join us for one final summer celebration on August 10th! As the season winds down and school bells begin to ring, we're hosting the ultimate End of Summer Bash to commemorate the memories we've created and the adventures we've enjoyed. Starting at 2:00pm, the property will feature inflatables, kids' activities, and lawn and carnival games. Be sure to watch for everyone's favorite colorful character, Tuki the Toucan!

Boys in the Band takes center stage at OWA Theater on August 16th to deliver the ultimate tribute to Alabama. Relive hits like "Tennessee River," "Mountain Music," and "Song of the South." Doors open at 6:00pm, with the show starting at 7:30pm. Don't miss this celebration of one of country music's greatest bands!

But that's not all happening at OWA Theater in August! Experience DEPARTURE, the nation's top Journey tribute band, live on August 31st. Rock to the timeless hits of the 80s supergroup. Doors open at 6:00pm, with the show starting at 7:30pm. Don't miss it!





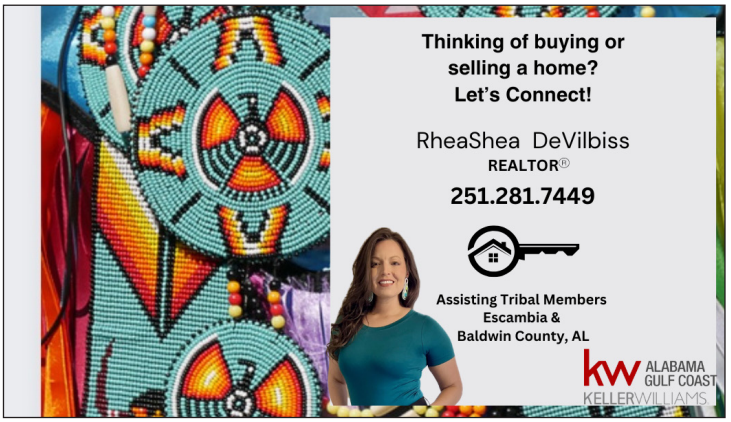
We're capping off the summer with our Labor Day Weekend Celebration on the 30th & 31st! Don't miss our statement fireworks show that evening at 8:45PM. Plus, our FBC Car Show is returning! There will be trophies from every single decade from 1929 to now, so be on the lookout for unique and classic cars that are all over the spectrum. There is going to be antiques, classics, customs, foreign, hot rods, rat rods, and modern autos!

With the summer heat in full swing, staying active while keeping cool can be a challenge. We are excited to announce that our state-of-the-art indoor pickleball courts offer the perfect solution! Whether you're a seasoned player or new to the sport, our indoor facilities provide a comfortable, climate-controlled environment where you can enjoy the game without worrying about the scorching temperatures outside.

Keep up with the latest news on events, entertainment, and activities via our website at VisitOWA.com or by following us on social media @VisitOWA.







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CREEK CORNER

AUGUST 2024 **IMPORTANT DATES**

8.1	**SUBMISSION DEADLINE** September Issue	
8.1	**TRIBAL COUNCIL MEETING** TC Chambers	**4:00 PM**
8.3	**RABIES CLINIC** Fire Station 1, Jack Springs Road	**8:00-11:00 AM**
8.5	**BOYS & GIRLS CLUB CLOSED**	
8.5-8.6	**MUSEUM CLOSED** Inventory	
8.6-8.7	**FRED L. MCGHEE EARLY LEARNING CENTER CLOSED TO STUDENTS**	
8.8	**FRED L. MCGHEE EARLY LEARNING CENTER FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL**	
8.15	**TRIBAL COUNCIL MEETING** TC Chambers	**4:00 PM**

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