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THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE of the POARCH CREEK INDIANS

# creek corner

## THE *Mental Health Crisis* AMONG NATIVE YOUTH

**EMPOWERING THE NEXT GENERATION: CLOSE UP 2025  
PROGRAM PREPARES TRIBAL YOUTH FOR LEADERSHIP**

Page 16

**PCI Federal  
Expands Presence  
in Washington,  
DC Region**

More info on page 22

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**MEGAN ZAMORA**  
Editor, Creek Corner

*“Stay true to who and what you are. Your education, your career, and your experiences will take you places, but they do not have to take you away from your identity.”*

## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

“

M

ay is a season of transition, a time of celebration and anticipation. Across the country, students are crossing the stage, shaking hands, and stepping forward into the next chapter of their lives. Whether heading to a new school, a new career, a new location, or a new opportunity, this milestone represents more than just an achievement—it marks a transformation.

For Poarch Creek Indian graduates, this transition comes with a responsibility: to walk with one foot in both worlds. Native and non-Native. Traditional and modern. Stay true to who and what you are. Your education, your career, and your experiences will take you places, but they do not have to take you away from your identity. Embrace your diversity even when you find yourself in the minority. Remember where you come from, and wherever life leads you, bring Poarch with you.

This month also brings with it Mother’s Day and Mental Health Awareness Month—two deeply personal topics for me. As a mother of two small children, I know the joy and weight that comes with nurturing little hearts and minds while also trying to care for your own. I’ve learned that mental health isn’t a luxury—it’s a necessity. And like so many others, I’ve come to understand that taking care of myself mentally and emotionally is one of the most important ways I can care for my family.

I’m grateful to say that PCI’s Behavioral Health Department is filled with compassionate, skilled professionals who are doing powerful, often unseen work to support our community. If you or someone you love needs help, reach out. Take the step. Break the stigma.

Let’s keep the conversation going—about identity, about health, about healing. Because honoring who we are means caring for our minds and spirits, just as much as we care for our future.



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# 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*  
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Charlotte Meckel, *Secretary*  
Amy Gantt, *Treasurer*

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*At-Large Council Members:*  
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# Native Youth Are Facing a Mental Health Crisis

HERE'S HOW WE CAN HELP RIGHT NOW

By Ashlee "Katie" Mothershed

**N**ative American youth are living through a mental health crisis that's happening right now - and it's time we treated it with the importance it deserves.

Suicide remains alarmingly high among Native youth. Depression, anxiety, and substance abuse continue to affect our communities at disproportionate rates. But this isn't just about statistics - it's about the daily pain, pressures, and disconnection that too many Native youth feel today.

*The impacts of historical trauma are still very present, but today's crisis is also fueled by ongoing realities:*

- Many Native youth grow up in rural or reservation communities where mental health services are underfunded or hours away.
- They're navigating cultural disconnection, identity challenges, and social media pressures.
- They often see little representation in schools, media, or politics - and even fewer culturally competent professionals to turn to when struggling.

The good news is Native communities are stepping up. Change is already happening on the ground, led by Indigenous people who understand what's at stake. And anyone - Native or non-Native - can play a role in supporting Native youth.

---

## HERE'S HOW COMMUNITIES CAN HELP RIGHT NOW

### *Support and Fund Community-Based Programs*

Local Native-led organizations are creating safe spaces for youth - programs that center culture, language, and identity. Whether it's traditional arts, language classes, or sports, these programs are healing in motion. Funding and amplifying these efforts matter.

### *Normalize Mental Health Conversations*

Families, schools, and community leaders can create environments where mental health is openly discussed and not shamed. Invite mental health professionals into schools. Promote Indigenous wellness models. Talk about feelings in the home.

### *Elevate Youth Voices*

Let Native youth lead. Their insight into their own mental health needs is invaluable. Youth advisory councils, storytelling projects, and peer mentorship programs are powerful tools. Don't just include them - center them.

### *Highlight Culturally Rooted Campaigns Like PCI's "Still Standing Because I Am A Warrior"*

The Poarch Creek Indians (PCI) is leading with compassion and strength through their "Still Standing Because I Am A Warrior" campaign. This initiative is creating powerful marketing materials and short-form videos that share personal stories of how mental health impacts individuals, families and entire tribal communities.

By blending culturally resonant messaging with real stories and critical resources, PCI is making it easier to talk about mental health—and to reach out for support. This campaign is more than media—it's medicine. It helps shift the narrative from stigma to strength.

**You can view the first video by scanning the QR code below.**



#### **Train and Hire Native Mental Health Workers**

Representation matters. We need more Native counselors, therapists, and social workers who understand the cultural landscape and lived experience of Indigenous youth. Support scholarship programs and pipelines that get Native youth into these careers.

#### **THERE ARE REAL TOOLS AVAILABLE—THOUGH ACCESS STILL NEEDS TO IMPROVE**

##### **We R Native**

A multimedia health resource created by Native youth, for Native youth. Offers content on mental health, identity, relationships, and more: [www.wernative.org](http://www.wernative.org)

##### **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline**

Native individuals can now press 4 after dialing 988 to connect with Native crisis counselors.

##### **StrongHearts Native Helpline**

Culturally appropriate support for Native people experiencing relationship violence, anxiety, and more: 1-844-762-8483

##### **National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA)**

Offers mental health toolkits, youth engagement guides, and training resources.

##### **PCI's Still Standing Campaign**

Watch and share personal videos and culturally grounded resources through tribal platforms and social media to keep the conversation alive. Call the PCI Behavioral Health department at (251) 368-9136.

#### **IT TAKES ALL OF US**

This crisis is not just a Native issue—it's a human issue. The future of Native nations depends on the health and happiness of their youth. They deserve to be seen, heard, and supported with the resources that every young person should have access to.

It's time to move beyond awareness and into action—because Native youth aren't statistics. They are artists, leaders, caretakers, protectors. They are sacred. And they need us now.

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# MAY IS NATIONAL Speech-Language-Hearing Month

**DURING THIS MONTH**, the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association encourages people to seek treatment for hearing loss, a common health condition.

Hearing loss isn't something most people are born with. Instead, it develops over time due to aging, loud noise exposure or some combination of the two.

## Did You Know?

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your appointment with  
confidence that you  
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*-Google Review*

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Questions regarding your Poarch Creek hearing aid benefit?  
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Elizabeth Pickett, Au.D., CCC-A

Nicole Riis, Au.D., CCC-A



# POLITICAL CONTENT GOT YOU FEELING OVERWHELMED?

By Sharon Delmar from interview with Kim Snow

**I**n today's always-on media environment, it's easy to become overwhelmed or overstimulated by constant political news. While staying informed is important, it's equally crucial to recognize when exposure is impacting your mental and physical health. Here are some signs and practical tips to help you navigate political content in a healthier way:

## RECOGNIZE THE SIGNS OF OVERWHELM

Pay attention to what your body and mind are telling you. You might be overwhelmed if you notice:

- An increase in blood pressure
- Changes in weight (gain or loss)
- Heightened anxiety or feelings of worry
- Mood swings or irritability
- Difficulty sleeping
- Increased reliance on substances like caffeine, sugar, alcohol, nicotine, or cannabis

Be especially mindful of how you share political opinions around others—friends, coworkers, or children—who may also be affected. Sometimes the best thing to do is **step away** from a heated conversation or turn off a triggering news feed.

## CHECK IN WITH YOURSELF

Ask: *How is this content making me feel?* Social media and news platforms are designed to capture and hold your attention. If you find yourself feeling anxious or angry after consuming political content, it might be time to self-assess. Have you ever:

- Rehearsed imaginary political arguments in your head?
- Fought with family or strangers about politics, leading to damaged relationships?
- Spent hours doomscrolling or imagining worst-case scenarios?
- Got caught in social media debates, replaying or planning the perfect comeback?

If so, you're not alone—but these habits can take a toll.

## SHIFT HOW YOU RELATE TO POLITICS

Political issues tap into our values and identities, so it's hard to ignore them. But we can change how we interact with them and each other:

**Set boundaries with media.** Ask to change the channel if political news is playing in a public space like a waiting room. Departments may consider avoiding 24/7 news feeds in lobbies.

**Practice mindfulness.** It's more than a buzzword. Be present, breathe, and take time away from digital noise. Apps like *Waking Up*, *Calm*, *Insight Timer*, and *Headspace* can help.

**Focus on what's in your control.** Channel your energy into things that reflect your values: volunteer, be a mentor, join local initiatives like the opioid committee, or support your community in tangible ways.

## CULTIVATE COMPASSIONATE COMMUNICATION

It's tempting to debate when we disagree—especially on issues we care deeply about—but facts alone rarely change minds. Instead, try listening with curiosity. Ask thoughtful questions. Remember that people need to feel emotionally safe to consider other perspectives. Social media is not the place for deep, meaningful conversations.

Before engaging, ask yourself: *Is this conversation helpful to my mental health?*

## FOR NATIVE COMMUNITIES AND IMMIGRATION CONCERNS

There have been reports of Native people facing harassment by immigration officials. While a federal law (8 U.S.C. § 1401(b)) guarantees citizenship to children born in the U.S. to Tribal Citizens—meaning no executive order can override it—concerns remain. It's advised to carry a state ID or CIB card and use hotlines if needed.

If you're feeling overwhelmed or worried, Behavioral Health is here to help. We now have a full-time counselor available, and we're working on adding another. You can usually get support the same day or within two days.

### Contact us

251-368-9136 ext. 2384 or 2309  
ksnow@pci-nsn.gov





# YOU ARE NOT ALONE.

*If you or someone you know is struggling or in crisis, help is available. By reaching out for help, we can avoid devastating outcomes.*

## GENERAL PUBLIC

For Crisis Intervention, call the  
**NATIVE & STRONG LIFELINE**  
at 1-844-7NATIVE or text NATIVE to 741741

## POARCH CREEK INDIAN TRIBAL CITIZENS

For Crisis Intervention, call the  
**PCI BEHAVIORAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT** at 251-368-9136 ext. 2384

*still standing because*  
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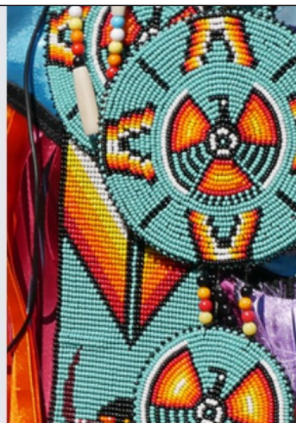
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**23-25**

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**24**

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POARCH 101:

# A Message To Our Graduates

THE STRENGTH OF IDENTITY  
IN NEW BEGINNINGS

By Megan Zamora


*Mvto to Breiah Adams for sharing this story idea with me.*

**G**raduation is more than a ceremony; it is a bridge between where we have been and where we are going. For many young Tribal Citizens, this moment is filled with both excitement and uncertainty. Moving into new spaces—whether in education, employment, or relocation—often means stepping into environments where Native representation is scarce. This shift can be both empowering and challenging, but it is also an opportunity.

Throughout history, the Poarch Creek people have adapted while maintaining the core of who we are. From massive land theft and unlawful acquisitions that stripped us of vast portions of our traditional homelands to the fight for federal recognition, our ancestors endured countless changes, yet they remained steadfast in their identity. Today, our graduates carry that same strength forward.

As you embark on this next journey, take with you the teachings of your family, the values of your Tribe, and the responsibility to educate those around you. When people ask about your heritage, share it proudly. When faced with adversity, stand firm in who you are. You are not just representing yourself; you are a reflection of those who came before you and those who will follow in your footsteps.

This new chapter is yours to write, but let it be written with the knowledge that your foundation is strong. You are Poarch Creek, and that is a source of power, no matter where life takes you.



***"You are not just representing yourself; you are a reflection of those who came before you and those who will follow in your footsteps."***



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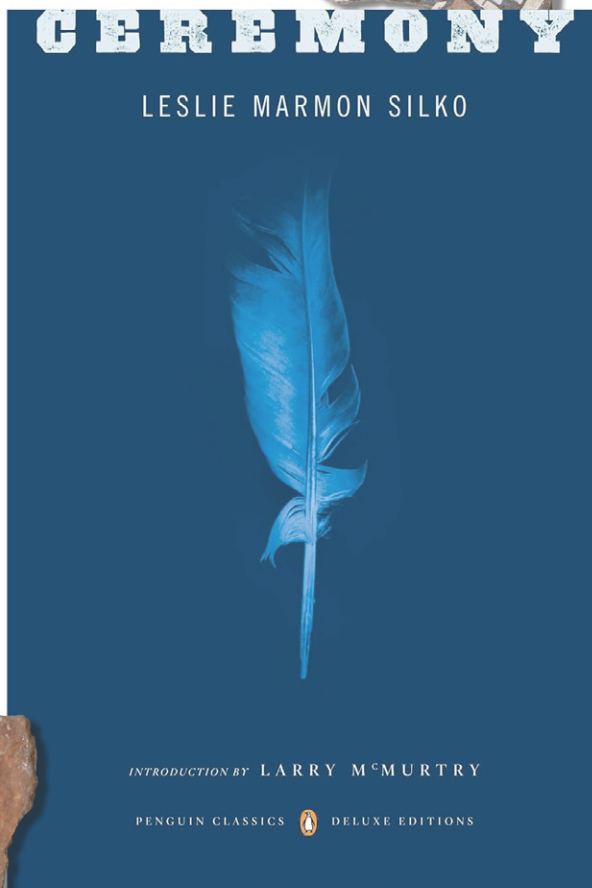
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# CEREMONY

BY LESLIE MARMON SILKO

By Ashlee "Katie" Mothershed

**C**eremony by Leslie Marmon Silko is a groundbreaking novel in Native American literature that follows Tayo, a mixed-race Laguna Pueblo WWII veteran, as he returns home and struggles to heal from deep psychological wounds. Through a blend of Western narrative and Pueblo storytelling traditions, Silko explores themes of trauma, cultural identity, and spiritual restoration. As Tayo reconnects with his roots, he discovers that healing lies not in separation, but in embracing the traditions, land, and stories of his people. Powerful, poetic, and deeply moving, *Ceremony* is a profound meditation on survival and the importance of cultural continuity.

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**  
with Katie Mothershed at  
[kmothershed@pci-nsn.gov](mailto:kmothershed@pci-nsn.gov).





# Empowering the Next Generation

## CLOSE UP 2025 PROGRAM PREPARES TRIBAL YOUTH FOR LEADERSHIP

By Sharon Delmar from interview with Magen Weaver

**E**ach year, the Close Up Program offers a transformative experience for Native American youth, equipping them with knowledge, skills, and inspiration to become future leaders and advocates for their communities. For the Poarch Creek Indian students, the 2025 Close Up Program (March 8–14) promises another enriching journey in Washington, DC, connecting them with peers from across Indian Country and offering invaluable exposure to civic engagement, Tribal sovereignty, and U.S. government relations.

---

### A PROGRAM DESIGNED WITH PURPOSE

In collaboration with the United South and Eastern Tribes (USET) and the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), the Close Up Native American Program offers Tribal youth a unique opportunity to explore the intersection between Tribal governance and federal policy. According to Magen Weaver, Senior Manager of Education for the Poarch Creek Indians, “Students gain a deeper understanding of the connection between Tribal Nations and the U.S. government, as well as USET’s important role in advocating for Native Americans.”

Throughout the program, participants are encouraged to identify key issues in their communities, build advocacy skills, and become proactive in shaping a better future for Indian Country.

---

### BUILDING SKILLS THAT LAST A LIFETIME

The Close Up Program emphasizes the development of real-world skills—critical thinking, communication, public speaking, and civic engagement. Weaver shared that preparation begins well before the trip. “Our students met several times to collaboratively prepare their Tribal Action Initiative,” she said. “These sessions prompted meaningful discussions, allowing them to hear and appreciate diverse perspectives—even during heated debates.”

While in Washington, students engage in workshops, debates, and meetings that refine their public speaking and networking skills. Witnessing Tribal youth confidently speak on issues that matter to them left a lasting impression on Weaver: “They truly stepped up as leaders, and it was inspiring to watch.”





### DEEPENING UNDERSTANDING OF GOVERNANCE

Through immersive, interactive learning, students gain insight into the relationship between Tribal Nations and the U.S. government. “The program includes study visits to historic sites and culturally rich neighborhoods, as well as small-group workshops where students make powerful connections between their own tribal governments and the federal system,” said Weaver.

USET plays a central role in these efforts, launching the program with a symbolic flag ceremony and engaging students in mid-week discussions on sovereignty and policy. “Students collaborate on impactful Tribal sovereignty statements and present them to USET leaders at the week’s end,” she noted. “Their words offer a powerful glimpse into the future of Tribal leadership.”

### FRIENDSHIP, CULTURE, AND COLLABORATION

From day one, students are immersed in a vibrant network of Tribal youth from across the country. While many start the week reserved, bonds quickly form. “By the end of the program, students are laughing together, supporting one another, and creating a community that extends beyond Close Up,” Weaver said.

Activities like the Tribal Government Project help foster cross-cultural understanding. Each Tribe presents their governance structure and cultural practices, allowing students to compare systems and discuss how laws are created and enforced within their communities.

### ENGAGING WITH LEADERS AND SHAPING THE FUTURE

Students also have opportunities to interact with policymakers, Tribal Council members, and experts in Indian law and policy. “These panel discussions offer our youth a chance to ask questions and hear directly from those working to support Tribal rights,” said Weaver.

### *The feedback from students underscores the program’s impact:*

Alyssa Love described it as **“both educational and fun,”** emphasizing the value of learning about Tribal sovereignty and making lifelong friendships.

Raelynn Manac called the experience **“eye-opening,”** especially the chance to meet other Tribal youth and discuss shared challenges. **“It was awesome to be surrounded by Native youth who shared the same passion for our communities,”** she said.

### A LONG-TERM INVESTMENT IN TRIBAL LEADERSHIP

Close Up not only empowers students in the moment—it lays the foundation for a lifetime of leadership. “Many of our current leaders are proud alumni of Close Up,” Weaver shared. “It’s a testament to how this program helps shape confident, capable advocates.”

Support from the Poarch Creek Tribe plays a critical role in the program’s success. The Tribe fully funds participation, covering all costs except personal souvenirs. Before departure, students attend preparatory meetings, language and sewing classes, and team discussions to ensure they’re ready for the experience ahead.

### LOOKING AHEAD

As Weaver reflects on the program’s goals, her hope is clear: “I want students to feel empowered to advocate for their ideas and to maintain the connections they’ve made. I want them to continue researching and contributing to the protection of Tribal sovereignty.”

Exposure to government advocacy and the history of Tribal sovereignty, she believes, is essential at this stage of a student’s life. “It may open doors to careers they hadn’t considered and spark a passion for change. By investing in our youth now, we are ensuring that the next generation of Tribal leaders is informed, inspired, and ready.”

# 2025 SENIOR TRIPS

Seniors Can Attend Both Trips



SAIL CENTER

## TRIP 1



**JUNE 9-14, 2025**

### **Wind Creek Chicago** | Chicago, IL

We will visit Wind Creek Chicago and stay at the resort. Full itinerary will go out a few weeks before the trip.

**TRIP COST:**

- Tribal Members 55+: \$200
- Non-Tribal Spouse: \$300
- Caregiver (licensed agency): \$500

**REGISTRATION DATES:** April 7th-May 2nd

## TRIP 2



**SEPT 26-OCT 5, 2025**

### **NICOA Conference** | Durant, OK

National Indian Counseling on Aging Conference. Elders will be expected to attend the full conference. Conference dates are September 29–October 3.

**TRIP COST:**

- Tribal Members 55+: \$200
- Non-Tribal Spouse: \$300
- Caregiver (licensed agency): \$500

**REGISTRATION DATES:** April 7th-June 7th

## Things to Know:

- Both trips will be transported via bus.  
Trips will be on a first come, first serve bases.  
Once our room block capacity is full, we will then begin a waiting list.
- Trips are NON-REFUNDABLE! Unless you have a true medical related emergency.
- Payment is due in FULL upon registration.
- Required Information to complete registration:  
Tribal ID, Driver's License, & Medical Insurance Card.  
If registering online, you will be required to upload these documents.

## QUESTIONS?

If you have any questions, please contact  
Jeremy DeWise, Charity Haveard, or Cyndi Wright.

Jeremy DeWise **ext** 2289  
Charity Haveard **ext** 2518  
Cyndi Wright **ext** 2617

## Registration Begins April 7th

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### **ONLINE REGISTRATION**

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**Forms of payment:**

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## POARCH CREEK INDIANS TRIBAL NATION PARTNERED WITH MEDSTAR TO LAUNCH DEDICATED AMBULANCE SERVICE

By Megan Zamora

**T**he Poarch Creek Indians is proud to announce the launch of a dedicated ambulance service for the Poarch community in partnership with MedStar. This initiative reflects the Tribe's ongoing commitment to enhancing healthcare access and ensuring the safety and well-being of its citizens.

"This new ambulance service is a significant milestone in our mission to provide exceptional care and support for our community," said April Sells, Director of Tribal Emergency Services for the Poarch Creek Indians. "With this service, we are reinforcing our promise to prioritize the health and safety of our citizens."

The partnership with MedStar ensures that the Poarch community will have access to a dedicated ambulance, providing a timely response and a greater sense of security. MedStar, a respected provider in the region, will work closely with the Tribe to deliver emergency services tailored to the community's needs.

"Growing up at Poarch, I saw firsthand what having limited medical services did to our Tribal families," shared Stephanie Bryan, Tribal Chair and CEO of the Poarch Creek Indians. "It

has been one of my priorities to continually improve the quality of and access to healthcare. Having a dedicated ambulance service that can be there when every minute counts will have a tremendous impact on our community and our quality of life for generations to come."

"MedStar is honored to partner with the Poarch Creek Indians to bring high-quality emergency services to this vibrant community," said Brad Jernigan, Operations Manager for MedStar. "Together, we're ensuring that timely, reliable care is always within reach."

To celebrate this achievement and introduce the service, the Tribe will host a community event in the coming months. Residents will have the opportunity to tour the new ambulance, meet the emergency response team, and learn more about the expanded services available.

The Poarch Creek Indians continues to look toward the future with plans to grow their healthcare capabilities and further enhance services for the community. The partnership with MedStar is an important step in that journey, reinforcing the Tribe's dedication to progress and innovation in community care.

***"Together, we're ensuring that timely, reliable care is always within reach."***

**BRAD JERNIGAN, OPERATIONS  
MANAGER FOR MEDSTAR**





# SPRING INTO FUN THIS MAY AT OWA PARKS & RESORT

By Catherine Hasty

C

Celebrate the start of summer with fun and entertainment for everyone! From the Gulf Coast Hot Air Balloon Festival to our annual Memorial Day Weekend celebration, OWA is the place to take summer excitement to new heights!

## **GULF COAST HOT AIR BALLOON FESTIVAL**

**May 1-3 | Time varies depending on the daily schedule**

Celebrate the month of May at OWA as we soar into fun at the Gulf Coast Hot Air Balloon Festival! Immerse yourself in the excitement of this annual event with hot air balloon activities, live musical performances, food, arts and crafts, and children's activities. The festival opens Thursday, May 1 at and runs through Saturday, May 3. Admission is free to this one-of-a-kind experience! For more information and a full listing of events and times visit [gulfcoastballoonfestival.com/schedule](http://gulfcoastballoonfestival.com/schedule).

## **BIG FISH RUN**

**May 10 | 9:00 a.m.**

Get ready to lace up your running shoes and run for recovery at the second annual Big Fish 5K & 1-Mile Fun Run on Saturday, May 10. Whether you are a competitive runner or just looking for a fun way to spend the morning, this event is for all ages and fitness levels. Enjoy a scenic course around OWA at the 5K race or 1-mile fun run. Registration is \$35 and includes a commemorative t-shirt. All proceeds support the life-changing work of Big Fish Ministries who provide faith-based addiction recovery services for men and women. [bigfishministries.org/5k-fun-run/](http://bigfishministries.org/5k-fun-run/)

## **MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND CELEBRATION AND FIREWORKS SHOW**

**May 23-25**

Celebrate Memorial Day and get the season started right with OWA's Memorial Day Weekend Celebration. Join us for a three-day event honoring our heroes and kicking off summer in style! The festivities begin on Friday, May 23rd and continue until Sunday, May 25th. Don't miss this unforgettable weekend of honor, celebration, and family fun! Check out our website for a full listing of events and activities at [visitowa.com/](http://visitowa.com/)





Also this month, be sure to check out all the great live performances scheduled at the **OWA THEATER**.

#### **WHITE TIE ROCK ENSEMBLE: AMERICANA ROCK**

**May 9-10 | 7:30 p.m.**

Get ready for a powerful night of americana rock reimagined! White Tie Rock Ensemble: Americana Rock takes over OWA Theater. This one-of-a-kind show blends the legendary sounds of Bob Seger, John Mellencamp, Steve Miller, Tom Petty, and The Eagles with the power of symphony. Don't miss this chance to hear your favorite Americana rock classics like never before.

#### **TUESDAY'S GONE: THE ULTIMATE LYNYRD SKYNYRD TRIBUTE**

**May 24 | 7:30 p.m.**

Tuesday's Gone brings their love and talent for Lynyrd Skynyrd back to OWA Theater for one night only this Memorial Day Weekend! Sing along to all your favorites like, Sweet Home Alabama, Simple Man, Free Bird, and of course, Tuesday's Gone. Born in Raleigh, North Carolina in 2005, Tuesday's Gone has been performing around the country showcasing their impeccable impersonations of the unforgettable Lynyrd Skynyrd. Don't miss your chance to witness this spectacular show right here in Sweet Home Alabama!

---

#### **BRANDON STYLES THEATER**

##### **LIGHTS! CAMERA! MURDER!-MURDER MYSTERY DINNER SHOW**

**May 23**

This show revolves around the set of the new Max Moon film, TORNADO (a B - level science fiction film reminiscent of Sharknado or any SciFi channel movie of the week). The audience are "extras" on the set of the film and they meet and watch fellow actors Maya Styles- a Hollywood diva, and Demetri Karkaroff - a snobby NYC actor constantly squabble over who is more talented etc. Keeping these actors in check is Penelope Smalls - the shy, ineffective production coordinator of the film and of course the director - Max Moon. The film is in financial straits, mainly because of Max's overspending, and his sister and producer of the film Ida Money eventually shows up to find out exactly what's going on. When bad things happen, as they inevitably do... enter ICMT's very own Detective Gunn who will help YOU solve the murder. If you like cheesy sci-fi-you'll LOVE this show!

##### **STOKED COMEDY HYPNOSIS SHOW**

**May 30**

Join legendary hypnotist Terry Stokes for 60 minutes of hilarious antics and unbelievable hypnotism at the Stoked Comedy Hypnosis Show for all-ages. One of the few shows where the audience is the "stars" of the show, this unforgettable show is your opportunity to see or be seen! The kids will love watching parents and grandparents on the stage!

And be sure to check out the Brandon Styles Variety Show, every Tuesday and Saturday at 7 p.m. and the Brandon Styles Magic Show, select Wednesdays at 7 p.m. Visit their website for a full listing of shows at [visitowa.com/entertainment/brandon-styles/](http://visitowa.com/entertainment/brandon-styles/)

*Keep up with the latest news on events, entertainment, and activities via our website at [VisitOWA.com](http://VisitOWA.com) or by following us on social media @VisitOWA.*





## PCI FEDERAL EXPANDS PRESENCE IN WASHINGTON, DC REGION **OPENS NEW OFFICE IN RESTON, VIRGINIA, FOCUSED ON FEDERAL CLIENTS**

By Lauren Giddeons & Karen Rodriguez

**P**CI Federal, the 8(a) Federal Government contracting enterprise owned by the Poarch Creek Indians (PCI), recently opened its new National Capital Region office in Reston, Virginia, with an official ribbon-cutting celebration at its building on Sunrise Valley Drive. The expansion marks a significant milestone for PCI Federal as it continues to provide services defined by innovation and collaboration that support the federal government, including the Department of Defense.

“This new office will allow us opportunities to more closely collaborate with our federal clients and other leaders in sophisticated industries that support our government,” noted Stephanie Bryan, Poarch Creek Indian Tribal Chair and CEO. “We are honored to be part of a business community here in the National Capitol region that makes a real difference in the lives of so many Americans and the security of our country.”

PCI Federal’s new Washington-area Chief Executive Officer is Nick Dunn, and its Executive Vice President is Mark Henderson. Both men bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to their respective positions. PCI Federal’s new Washington office currently supports over 350 employees and houses nine of its contracting enterprises, which include both wholly owned and joint venture operations.

“

*This new office will allow us opportunities to more closely collaborate with our federal clients and other leaders in sophisticated industries that support our government.*

**STEPHANIE A. BRYAN,  
POARCH CREEK INDIANS  
TRIBAL CHAIR & CEO**



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## OWA PARKS AND RESORTS' DIRECTOR OF REVENUE RECEIVES PRESTIGIOUS "WOMEN WHO SHAPE THE STATE" AWARD

*By Lauren Giddeons & Karen Rodriguez*

C

andice Frazier, who serves as the Executive Director of Revenue for OWA Parks and Resorts, was among 25 women recently honored at This Is Alabama's 12th annual Women Who Shape the State event.

The Women Who Shape the State award honors those who exemplify leadership, the spirit of innovation, resilience and compassion, while demonstrating persistence and fearlessness. The 2025 class of Women Who Shape the State hail from across the state of Alabama and include CEOs, civic leaders, educators, entrepreneurs, and other notable women who have made their communities a better place to work and live.

"We are honored to have someone of Candice's caliber working alongside us at OWA, said Cody Williamson, President/CEO of Creek Indian Enterprises Development Authority. "She is a seasoned executive leader with vast experience in strategic planning, revenue management, and community engagement. Her commitment to OWA and her community is shown daily, and we are thrilled to have her represented as part of this remarkable group of women from across our state," said Williamson.

With nearly two decades of experience Frazier currently oversees multiple revenue-generating departments at OWA Parks and Resorts in Foley. She has managed annual budgets

exceeding \$7.5 million, spearheaded successful business turnarounds, and developed strategic partnerships that bridge the gap between corporate success and community impact.

A Pensacola native, Frazier was instilled with a strong work ethic from an early age. With a passion for music, she became the first African American graduate of the University of South Alabama with a degree in Music Business. She is dedicated to bringing music education to underserved schools in our community and mentoring young musicians through organizations like the Mobile Symphony Youth Orchestra. Her passion for service is also seen through her dedication to non-profit work. She currently serves as a Board Member for Ronald McDonald House Charities of Mobile.

Frazier remains committed to bridging business success with meaningful social impact, ensuring her work leaves a lasting difference. Her accomplishments serve as a reminder of the vital role women play in driving economic growth, fostering social change, and building stronger communities throughout Alabama, proving that success and service can go hand in hand.

Women Who Shape the State is hosted by This is Alabama and the Alabama Media Group. The honorees were celebrated during a luncheon on March 6 at The Club in Birmingham. Visit [thisisalabama.org](http://thisisalabama.org) for the full list of 2025 Women Who Shape the State winners.



# PCI COMPLETES PURCHASE OF BIRMINGHAM RACECOURSE

By Lauren Giddeons & Karen Rodriguez

*Investment will create premier entertainment venue and have positive economic impact on City and Region.*

**T**he Poarch Creek Indians and the McGregor Family announced that Wind Creek Hospitality, the Tribe's gaming and hotel business, has purchased the Birmingham Racecourse. This significant financial investment on the part of the Tribe signals its long-term commitment to developing a world-class destination resort in Birmingham that will create good jobs, spur economic growth, and bring significant long-term benefits to the city and the region. The initial agreement between PCI and the McGregor Family was announced on Nov. 18, 2024.

Wind Creek Hospitality, which is based in Atmore, Alabama, where the Tribe's reservation is located, owns and operates three 4-Diamond properties in the state. It also owns deluxe hotel and casino properties in Florida, Pennsylvania, and Illinois, as well as resorts in the Caribbean. In each locale, Wind Creek Hospitality has brought the Tribe's commitment to offering a deluxe entertainment experience for its customers and to improving the quality of life for citizens in the community.

"We are excited to finalize this acquisition and begin a new chapter for the Birmingham Racecourse," said Jay Dorris, President and CEO of PCI Gaming Authority. "Our vision is to build upon the strong foundation that is already in place while enhancing the facility to create a first-class

entertainment destination that benefits the Birmingham community and the region."

The facility will continue to offer the parimutuel and historical horse racing games currently in operation. Wind Creek leaders will be working closely with local elected and racing officials as expansion plans are developed.

The Poarch Creek Indians Tribal Chair and CEO Stephanie Bryan emphasized the Tribe's dedication to investment in the Birmingham community.

"As a Tribal people, we are committed to being good neighbors and to being a force for economic growth and positive change. We are very excited to have this wonderful opportunity in Birmingham, and we look forward to creating a top-tier entertainment venue that will bring a boost to the local economy, provide good jobs, and attract tourists from all over the country to one of America's most dynamic cities."

Lewis Benefield, President of VictoryLand and former President of the Birmingham Racecourse, said he is excited about the future of the property under PCI's leadership.

"This property has been a key asset for the Birmingham area for years, and today's announcement marks a commitment to elevating the Birmingham Race Course to new heights," he said. "The McGregor family is proud to have operated this property over the past three decades, and





“

*As a Tribal people, we are committed to being good neighbors and to being a force for economic growth and positive change.*

STEPHANIE A. BRYAN,  
POARCH CREEK INDIANS TRIBAL  
CHAIR & CEO

Photo via yagonet.com

we are confident that it will be in great hands under the leadership of Wind Creek Hospitality.”

Birmingham Mayor Randall L. Woodfin said he welcomes the investment and the positive impact it will have on the city.

“More and more, Birmingham has a growing reputation as a destination for entertainment and sporting events, and this investment from the Poarch Creek Indians is a testament to the potential and vibrancy of our community,” he said. “The redevelopment of the Birmingham Race Course will create jobs, drive tourism, and further establish our city as a key player in the entertainment and hospitality industry.”

During 2025, the Poarch Creek Indians expect to finalize the transfer of operations, survey the region to better understand customer demands, and solidify plans to expand facilities and operations in the future.

## Attention Indigenous Creators!

# Call For Digital Photo Submissions

StrongHearts Native Helpline is seeking submissions of digital photos representing American Indian and Alaska Native people and culture.



STRONGHEARTS  
Native Helpline

We invite Indigenous Creators to delve into Indigenous storytelling through photos!

These photos will be used to develop media materials including advertising, PowerPoint presentations, brochures, and posters to promote StrongHearts Native Helpline and the relatives we serve.

## Submission Criteria

Compensation is based on content and quality as described below.

- Photos must honor Native American and Alaska Native people and culture.
- Quality should include a resolution of 300 dots per inch (DPI) or 300 pixels per inch (PPI).

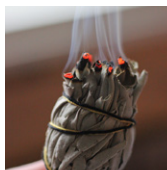
Selections will be made at the end of each month. Compensation will be processed during the following month.

Note: Payees must provide a social security number or tax identification number issued in the United States.

## Indigenous Story Telling Themes: Native-centered, Trauma Informed and Empowerment Based Advocacy.



**Indigenous** (everyday life) means authentic traditional and contemporary Native Americans at home.



**Indigenous Places** (scenic) means places where Indigenous people live or visit whether it's a traditional home or Pipe Stone National Monument. Photos can include animals significant to indigenous culture.

**Indigenous Healing** (cultural practices) represents a cultural event that is a known healing practice such as burning of tobacco or sage, or activities harvesting natural food sources.

**Domestic, Dating and Sexual violence** such as emotional, physical, sexual, financial, digital and cultural abuse; activism and/or protest against social or racial injustice.

**Earn up to \$250 for each digital photo selected! Submit your photos via email to [submissions@strongheartshelpline.org](mailto:submissions@strongheartshelpline.org)**

This project was supported by Grant No. 15JOVW-23-GG-02829-CSSP awarded by the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this publication/program/exhibition are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Department of Justice.

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# WIND CREEK ATMORE PARTNERS WITH FEEDING THE GULF COAST, WKRG TO LAUNCH FOOD DRIVE

By Amelia Tognoli

**W**ind Creek Atmore has partnered with WKRG, a local news station, and Feeding the Gulf Coast to launch 2025's Stock the Pantry food drive, which aims to address local hunger insecurities and feed children in the area.

Feeding the Gulf Coast is a food bank and hunger-relief organization that serves the central Gulf Coast area, which includes the Florida Panhandle, south Alabama, and south Mississippi.

"The goal is to uplift individuals, create bonds, show acts of kindness, provide comfort, and impact the lives of others through giving back to our communities," said Tiffany Bryan, Wind Creek Hospitality Sponsorship & Events Supervisor. "It's an honor to work alongside WKRG and Feeding the Gulf Coast for the Stock the Pantry food drive. We hope to impact children and their families this summer by serving as a drop-off location for this essential food drive for the Gulf Coast."

In 2024, Wind Creek Guests and Team Members donated 492 pounds of non-perishable food to the Stock the Pantry food drive. All 2024 donations helped raise over 10,000 pounds of food to feed children across the Gulf Coast.

"With rising gas and grocery costs, this is an excellent way to join together, donate, and help struggling families and children get the food they need to thrive this summer," said Trina Rackard, Wind Creek Hospitality's Director of Sponsorship & Events.

“

*The goal is to uplift individuals, create bonds, show acts of kindness, provide comfort, and impact the lives of others through giving back to our communities.*

TIFFANY BRYAN,  
WIND CREEK HOSPITALITY  
SPONSORSHIP & EVENTS  
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# POARCH CREEK INDIANS' PCI FEDERAL ACQUIRES SUPRTEK

**EXPANDING INNOVATIVE IT CAPABILITIES  
IN THE GOVERNMENT CONTRACTING SECTOR**

*By Lauren Giddeons & Karen Rodriguez*

P

CI Federal, the 8(a) Federal Government contracting enterprise owned by the Poarch Creek Indians (PCI), is pleased to announce the acquisition of Superlative Technologies, Inc. (SuprTEK), a leading information technology (IT) services provider with a 28-year track record of excellence.

SuprTEK specializes in cyber security solutions, software factories/DevSecOps, digital modernization, big data analytics, health IT, and enterprise integrated services for U.S. Federal Agencies, the Department of Defense (DoD), and the Intelligence Community. The company is ISO 9001:2015, ISO 20000-1:2018, and ISO 27001:2022 certified, CMMI Level 3 appraised, and adheres to industry best practices including the Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL). SuprTEK's exceptional performance has been recognized in the U.S. Congressional Record Volume 153, and through the President's SAVE Award (Securing Americans Value and Efficiency), and as a Federal Health Innovation Finalist.

"This acquisition of SuprTek will allow us opportunities to provide more technological expertise for our federal clients and other leaders in sophisticated industries that support our government," noted Stephanie Bryan, Poarch Creek Indian Tribal Chair and CEO. "We are honored to be part of a business community that makes a real difference in the lives of so many Americans and the security of our country."

Brandon Park, CEO, and TK Gil, President, will continue to lead SuprTEK as it integrates into the PCI Federal Washington Business Office (WBO) in Reston, Virginia, which is managed by Nick Dunn, CEO, and Mark Henderson, Executive Vice President. The WBO oversees multiple Professional Services LLCs and Joint Venture LLCs providing support to the federal government.

"I believe the acquisition of SuprTEK by PCI Federal will further strengthen the Tribe's campaign to grow its role in critical missions across the U.S. Federal Agencies and the DoD. We are proud to become an entity that will support growth for years to come," said Park.

SuprTEK joins PCI Federal, a tribally owned 8(a) enterprise based in Alabama with 1200 employees (CONUS and OCONUS) and \$220 million in revenues. The addition of SuprTEK strengthens PCI Federal's expanding government contracting portfolio, reinforcing its reputation as a fast-growing, well-diversified leader in the federal services sector.

**“  
...the acquisition of SuprTEK  
by PCI Federal will further  
strengthen the Tribe's  
campaign to grow its role in  
critical missions across the U.S.  
Federal Agencies and the DoD.**

**BRANDON PARK, SUPRTEK CEO**



# SOPHIA ELIZABETH HOWELL

## TO GRADUATE WITH HONORS

The family of Sophia Elizabeth Howell proudly announces her graduation with honors from Helena High School in Helena, Alabama, on May 19, 2025. She is the beloved daughter of Sherry McGhee Howell and Ken Howell.

This Fall, Sophia will attend Auburn University, where she will pursue a degree in biochemistry. As a First Generation Tribal Descendant, she has been blessed with continuous support from Tribal programs throughout her academic journey. These programs have provided essential resources, including educational supplies, leadership opportunities, extracurricular support, and computer reimbursements.

Sophia is the last grandchild of the late John Arthur McGhee and Bernice Tripp McGhee to graduate from high school. Her family is incredibly proud of her accomplishments and deeply grateful for the unwavering support she has received from the Tribe.

***Congratulations, Sophia, on  
this remarkable achievement!***



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# CREEK CORNER

MAY 2025 IMPORTANT DATES

- |              |   |                     |
|--------------|---|---------------------|
| <b>5.1</b>   | <b>SUBMISSION DEADLINE</b> June Issue     |                     |
| <b>5.1</b>   | <b>TRIBAL COUNCIL MEETING</b> TC Chambers | <b>4:00 PM</b>      |
| <b>5.5-6</b> | <b>MUSEUM GIFT SHOP CLOSED</b> Inventory  |                     |
| <b>5.6</b>   | <b>TRIBAL COURT</b> Tribal Courtroom      |                     |
| <b>5.9</b>   | <b>FAMILY COURT</b> Tribal Courtroom      |                     |
| <b>5.15</b>  | <b>TRIBAL COUNCIL MEETING</b> TC Chambers | <b>4:00 PM</b>      |
| <b>5.20</b>  | <b>TRIBAL COURT</b> Tribal Courtroom      |                     |
| <b>5.22</b>  | <b>FLMELC 4K GRADUATION</b> PCCC          | <b>6:00-7:00 PM</b> |
| <b>5.23</b>  | <b>FAMILY COURT</b> Tribal Courtroom      |                     |