



OKLAHOMA
Commission on the
Status of Women

Annual Impact Report

FY2023 (July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023)

Submitted September 2023 to:

Governor J. Kevin Stitt

Senate President Pro Tempore Greg Treat

Speaker of the House Charles McCall

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OKLAHOMA
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Status of Women

September 2023

Governor of Oklahoma J. Kevin Stitt
Oklahoma Senate President Pro Tempore Greg Treat
Oklahoma Speaker of the House Charles McCall

Thank you for the privilege to present findings by the Oklahoma Commission on the Status of Women respecting the many issues and challenges that impact women's quality of life and economic opportunities. This Annual Impact Report is submitted to you under Section 665 of Title 74 of the Oklahoma Statutes.

The Commission experienced its most productive and impactful year in history, including providing the most policy and legislative recommendations to the executive and legislative branches in one year. These recommendations are based on the Commission's tireless efforts visiting numerous non-profits and tribal nations in one year. We listened to women from all walks of life whose voices should be heard at the State Capitol.

FY23 began with "The Journey" to focus on how Oklahoma became the top state to incarcerate women due to the high rate of drug offenders, domestic violence, addiction, and mental health. Many policy and legislative actions can address these issues early and provide appropriate resources to decrease the state's high incarceration rate of women.

The Commission appreciates the allocation of \$150,000 by the Oklahoma Senate to launch the state's first program to educate Oklahomans on the early signs of human trafficking. The Commission believes the best approach to defeat this crime is to recognize and identify the early signs of sex trafficking, labor trafficking, and drug trafficking. In the fall 2022, the Commission launched the *Not Me, Stop Human Trafficking* educational initiative and reached out to universities, colleges, and high schools with a panel of law enforcement, non-profit, and narcotics experts. The Commission provides the schools and communities with information, tools, and resources to continue the educational process.

In FY24, the Commission will continue its "Journey" by presenting its findings to state agencies and will meet with agency program directors to collaborate on our research findings and promote the Commission as a resource for them.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to us with any questions or comments about the Commission's Annual Report and the important work we perform. Thank you for your continued support for the Commission and our efforts to improve the status of women in Oklahoma.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brenda Jones Barwick".

Brenda Jones Barwick, APR
State Chair
Oklahoma Commission on the Status of Women
Mobile: 405-831-5548
Email: ocsadmin@omes.ok.gov

Oklahoma Commission on the Status of Women

The Commission comprises of 30 Commissioners who are appointed by the Governor, Senate President Pro Tempore and Speaker of the House. Each appointing authority has ten appointments for five-year terms each.

FY23 Executive Officers:

Brenda Jones Barwick, Chair
Carol Hefner, Vice Chair
Jill Shero, Finance Chair
Julie Dermody, Secretary
Dr. Nyla Khan, Advisory Council Chair
Victoria Woods, Immediate Past Chair

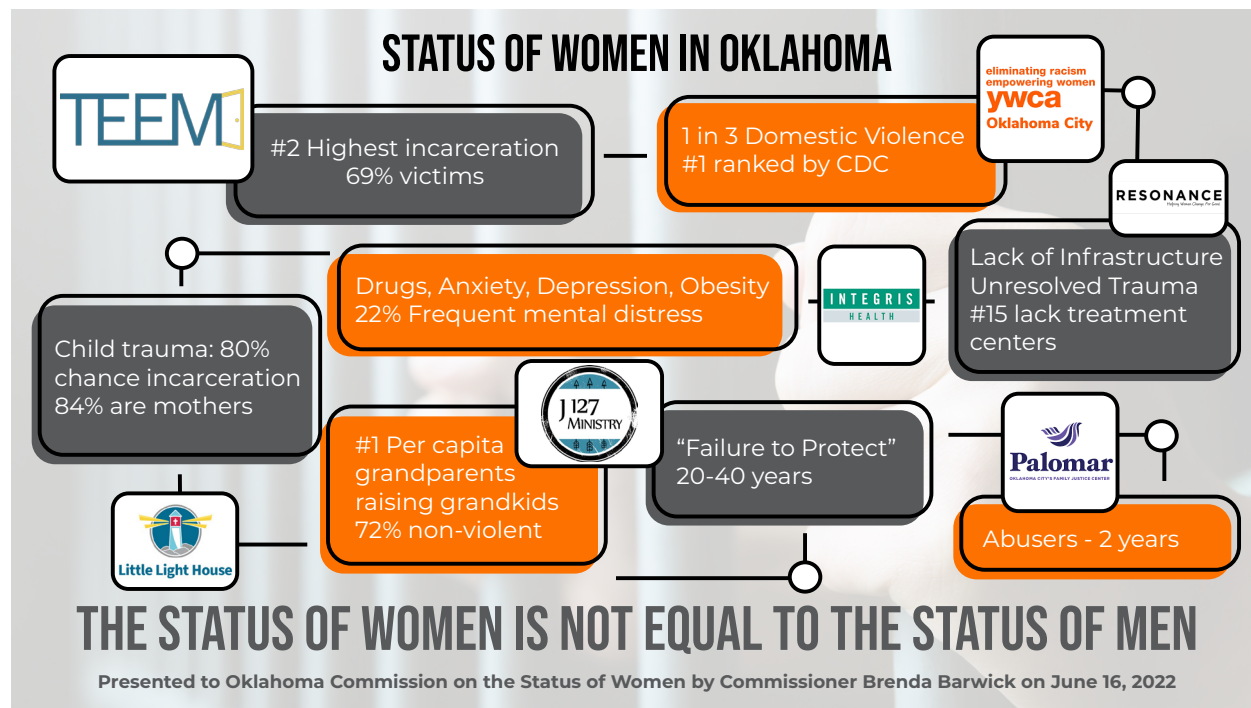
Kitti Asberry, Executive Director

FY23 Commissioners:

Representative Rhonda Baker
Brenda Jones Barwick, APR
Emmalee Barresi
Marcy Bond
Pat Carr
Denise Castelli
Emily Crouch
Director Lee Denney
Julie Dermody
Director Janie Dillard
Jana Gridley
Joy Hammons
Linda Haneborg
Carol Hefner
Estela Hernandez
Dr. Nyla Khan
Jean Lehr
Shiny Matthew
Shondra McCage
Representative Cyndi Munson
Shauna Peters
Briana Ramos
Dr. Delores Runnels
Jill Shero
Senator Brenda Stanley
Ollie Starr
Representative Tammy West
Victoria Woods

The Journey

The Oklahoma Commission on the Status of Women serves in an advisory role to the executive and legislative branches on economic, education, healthcare, pay equity, workforce, and societal issues that impact women. In our role as advisers, the Commission embarked on an eight-month Journey to listen to women talk about their life stories. The Commission visited eight non-profit organizations to learn more about the interconnections of many societal issues and their root causes. The graph below summarizes the Commission’s journey between September 2022 and May 2023.



Statewide Accomplishments

- 15 Community Conversations statewide with non-profits and colleges on incarceration, diversionary programs, domestic violence, education, substance abuse, trauma, and human trafficking
- 8 Rural and urban locations: Tulsa, Oklahoma City, Seminole, Okemah, Durant, Weatherford, Alva, and Lawton.
- 8 statewide non-profit collaborations: TEEM, YWCA, Little Light House, Resonance Center for Women, J16 Ministry, Palomar Family Justice Center, INTEGRIS Arcadia Trails Center for Addiction Recovery, and ASIS International Oklahoma Chapter.
- 10 state agency collaborations: Department of Corrections, Department of Career and Technology Education, Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, Attorney General’s Office, Seminole State College, Oklahoma City Community College, and Bureau of Narcotics, Southwestern Oklahoma State University, Northwestern Oklahoma State University, and Great Plains Technology Center.
- 7 Tribal nation collaborations: Apache, Choctaw, Cheyenne-Arapaho, Chickasaw, Cherokee, Comanche, and Seminole.
- Performed 1 focus group research on human trafficking with college and high school students
- Conducted 5 human trafficking pre-event and post-event surveys
- Allocated 3 grants to human trafficking non-profits certified by the Attorney General’s office to educate young women and increase their awareness level concerning human trafficking.
- Entered a partnership with Oklahoma City Community College to present an Economic and Workforce Summit on October 24, 2023. Topics of discussion will include solutions and recommendations to assist women in advancing their financial independence and economic growth opportunities.

Legislative and Policy Recommendations

Based on the Commission's conversations with dozens of Oklahoma women from the non-profits we visited, the Commission brings forth these policy and legislative recommendations for consideration.

- 1.** When released from prison for a felony and completing a re-entry program or certain number of years of no parole violations, women should no longer have to check the "F-Felon" box on housing, jobs, and loan applications. This would give them equity when compared to other applicants for housing, loans, and jobs. Many women have children, who are attempting to establish a stable home life for her family and stop the cycle of incarceration. She should not have to carry the Scarlett Letter F for the remainder of her entire life.
- 2.** Opt for a new approach of decreasing female incarceration by allowing mothers to enter a "how to be a good mother" program or class before taking her children away. The current approach is feeding a generational cycle of incarceration, and Oklahoma may never see a decrease in female incarceration without a new approach.
- 3.** Develop a partnership with Career Techs, community colleges and universities that will assist domestic violence survivors who are exploited economically by helping her earn a degree or learn a trade to strive for economic independence. Studies show that a pilot project can result in a 60% success rate.
- 4.** Studies show Oklahoma would benefit from accepting accreditation by the National Association of Private Schools to help children put money into a College Savings 529 account and allow children with an incarcerated parent to qualify for the Nicole Henry Scholarship.
- 5.** Promote and give more funding to diversionary programs and transitional homes to give hope to young women, especially in rural areas that could help her get out of situations before escalating to prison. Many rural young women are not aware of diversionary programs and transitional homes due to lack of marketing and promoting of these programs in rural areas. A rural awareness initiative could be a "Get Out of Situation" card and save them from going to prison.
- 6.** Currently, there is a lack of resources and assistance for women who age out of foster care, which is accelerating many women into the path of incarceration. It would be beneficial for the state to re-evaluate how to provide women a path for success between the ages of 18-25 who were in foster care. Three pathway recommendations are:
 - a. Partner with career techs, community colleges and universities to learn a wage-paying trade, profession, or skill, combined with a scholarship program
 - b. Partner with companies for jobs so she can earn a salary with insurance and other benefits, not minimum wage jobs. By making a living wage, it discourages her from going back to old ways and old friends, and thus become a productive citizen.
 - c. Partner with non-profits, hotels or apartment owners to provide her with a safe, secure housing until she reaches age 25
- 7.** Look at ways to reduce or eliminate compounding punishment. If a woman enters a post-incarceration work program, drop reinstatement fees for driver's licenses and additional drug testing, which are needed to re-enter society.

Commission FY23 Impact Report

The following is the Commission’s Impact Activity report from September 2022 – May 2023.

September 2022

The Education and Employment Ministry (TEEM). The Community Conversation was facilitated by former Speaker of the House and TEEM Executive Director Kris Steele, and we heard from women who shared their experience with Oklahoma’s criminal legal system. The leading factors to incarceration for women are listed below in ranking order, and #1-#4 are often inter-related, so the women are dealing with multiple issues:

1. Domestic violence -- may have been forced by the abuser to commit a crime
2. Unresolved trauma -- a child whose mother is sent to prison may never resolve this trauma, which may lead to mental health issues and eventually incarceration
3. Mental Health -- can lead to self-medicating or addiction
4. Addiction
5. Poverty
6. Lack of education
7. Self-esteem - how she sees herself in society



TEEM Executive Director addresses the Commission on incarceration leading factors.

October 2022

At the YWCA (Oklahoma City), we heard from three survivors and learned about the top 100 Barriers to Leaving Abusive Partners. The top 5 barriers are words (threats) from the abusive partner:

1. I will kill you
2. I will kill the children
3. I will kill myself
4. I will kill your family
5. I will call Child Welfare

Meet YWCA OKC! 3-Minute Video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NzJOzCFdOCw>



YWCA leadership team meets with Commission on domestic violence issues.

November 2022

Little Light House (Oklahoma City), a school for children whose parents are incarcerated was founded by Robin Khoury. A study by OU Professor Dr. Susan Sharp found that the minute a child’s mother is taken away, life problems begin for the child. Child trauma changes the chemistry in a child’s brain, as it is in an early development phase. One pregnant girl said, “I don’t know anyone who is married. I’ve never been to a wedding. I don’t know what marriage looks like.” Generational incarceration is fed by generational poverty. An After-School Program that brings people to meet and engage with the kids would be very helpful to the kids to see what is a marriage and a stable family and home life, which could open ideas and pathways to aspire toward rather than incarceration.

December 2022

Partnered with Southwestern Oklahoma State University, Weatherford Chamber of Commerce and Cheyenne-Arapaho to host a focus group and an initial Community Conversation on the human trafficking educational initiative. The focus group included college and high school students. A full report is attached and key findings were;

1. More education on what is human trafficking. No one knew it extended beyond sex trafficking.
2. Need for a website to access educational materials and phone number if they suspect trafficking. Need to promote the national human trafficking hotline number.
3. Need education about situations and early signs that indicate someone is being targeted.

January 2023

Resonance Center for Women (Tulsa) is a transition home for women coming out of incarceration, domestic violence, substance abuse, human trafficking or any traumatic situations. Resonance partners with several Tulsa companies (AON, BAMA, WEBCO) that offer the women an opportunity to work. The non-profit also owns Take 2 Café in downtown Tulsa and is another work option for the women. We heard from a domestic violence survivor who is 27 years old, has a 9-year old daughter, and now has three savings accounts, a 401k, and going to college. She was proud to say that her family is proud of her.



Commission launches *Not Me, Stop Human Trafficking* educational initiative at Seminole State College.

Partnered with Seminole State College and Seminole Chamber of Commerce to officially launch the *Not Me, Stop Human Trafficking* educational initiative. Senator Roger Thompson officially announced the kickoff for the educational initiative. The first event was attended by more than 250 students from colleges and high schools, plus community and business leaders. Serving on the Community Conversation panel were representatives from the Oklahoma Bureau of Narcotics, The Dragonfly Home and Missing Murdered Indigenous Women. The Commission presented a \$2,000 grant to the college and President Lana Reynolds plans to name a room on campus after the Commission where students can come for assistance. Begin coordinating with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to end human trafficking, “#WearBlueDay” (January 11) and utilizing toolkits for schools and communities as part of the *Not Me* effort.



Senator Roger Thompson (Okemah) addresses students at Seminole State College to launch *Not Me, Stop Human Trafficking* education effort.

February 2023

Palomar Family Justice Center (Oklahoma City) works with numerous community agencies to provide wraparound services to victims of domestic violence, child abuse, sexual assault and human trafficking.

Partnered with the Choctaw Nation to host a Community Conversation on *Not Me, Stop Human Trafficking*. Nearly 350 college and high school students attended, included Choctaw Chief Gary Batton. One attendee immediately consulted with her School Counselor and the County Sheriff about her situation. The panelists included representatives from The Spring – Shelter for Domestic Violence and Human Trafficking Survivors, and the Oklahoma Bureau of Narcotics.



Commission State Chair Brenda Barwick and Vice Chair Carol Hefner present the Community Partner certificate to Palomar Family Justice Center CEO Hillary Burkholder



Choctaw Nation Chief Gary Batton addresses the *Not Me* Community Conversation in Durant.

March 2023

J127 Ministry (Durant) is a transition home for women who have aged out of the foster care system to gain life skills and critical foundations for their futures. Based on James 1:27 scripture (“Take care of your orphans”), J127 has housing for 10 young women and programming includes learning life skills, such as budgeting, bank accounts, car maintenance, sewing, interest rates, education and how to break the poverty cycle. Many of these women have been through 12 foster homes, so they deal with a lot of trauma. J127 creates stable relationship experiences for them, such as inviting local leaders to bring a prepared meal and dine with the women, and taking the women to a restaurant to show how to read and order from a menu.

Partnered again with Southwestern Oklahoma State University to host a Community Conversation on the *Not Me, Stop Human Trafficking* initiative. The panelists included representatives from The Red Cord, a Southwest Oklahoma anti-human trafficking organization, and the Oklahoma Bureau of Narcotics.



Commission visits J127 Ministry to learn about issues facing women after aging out of the foster care system.

April 2023

Partnered with Great Plains Technology Center in Lawton for a Community Conversation on *Not Me, Stop Human Trafficking*. Panel representatives include The Red Cord and Oklahoma Bureau of Narcotics.

Partnered with Northwestern Oklahoma State University in Alva for a Community Conversation on *Not Me, Stop Human Trafficking* with Oklahoma Bureau of Narcotics.



Oklahoma Bureau of Narcotics Mike Snowden addresses students at Northwestern Oklahoma State University in Alva at a *Not Me* Community Conversation.

Presented the Guardian Award to Senator Roger Thompson (Okemah) for his significant role in launching the educational initiative to end human trafficking and to Representative Cyndi Munson (Oklahoma City) for her legislative successes to provide equal pay for equal work and to strengthen the rights of survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault Lana Reynolds, Seminole State College President, was presented the Kate Barnard Award for hosting the first *Not Me, Stop Human Trafficking* Community Conversation. These awards were presented at the Oklahoma Women’s Hall of Fame that included induction of 8 women who have made enduring contributions to Oklahoma and beyond.

May 2023

Hosted the monthly meeting at INTEGRIS Health Arcadia Trails Center for Addiction Recovery (Edmond). The Commission learned about the programs provided to individuals facing substance abuse and disorder functions. The facility provides a full continuum of care services with state-of-the-art drug and alcohol treatment program.



CHRONOLOGY OF IMPACT ACHIEVEMENTS SINCE 2004

The following chronology details significant accomplishments per year and illustrates the requirement for multiple years to adequately study an issue.

2023 – Focus on multiple issues

- Collaborated with 10 state agencies: Corrections, Career & Technology Education, Mental Health and Substance Abuse, Attorney General, Bureau of Narcotics, Seminole State College, OKC Community College, Southwestern Oklahoma State University, Northwestern Oklahoma State University, Great Plains Technology Center
- Conducted 15 Community Conversations on incarceration, diversionary programs, domestic violence, education, substance abuse, trauma and human trafficking, reaching urban and rural: OKC, Tulsa, Seminole, Okemah, Durant, Weatherford and Lawton
- Collaborated with 8 non-profits statewide and heard from 10 survivors of different situations
- Collaborated with 7 nations: Apache, Choctaw, Cheyenne-Arapaho, Chickasaw, Cherokee, Comanche, and Seminole
- Conducted a focus group with college and high school students in Weatherford on messaging for a human trafficking educational initiative.
- Launched the state's first human trafficking educational effort, **Not Me**, to focus on early signs of human trafficking
- Conducted 5 human trafficking pre-event and post-event surveys. Data attached.
- Legislation included the Commission's seven recommendations from its 2021 Human Trafficking Report for the Attorney General's Human Trafficking Task Force.
- Issued statement supporting Governor Stitt's Women's Bill of Rights executive order that defines "woman" and protects safe spaces for women.

2022-2021 – Focus on Human Trafficking

- Conducted focus group research on human trafficking in Weatherford at Southwestern Oklahoma State University
- Held a **Stop Human Trafficking Summit with First Lady Sarah Stitt** and brought in the world's foremost expert researcher on human trafficking from London – **at no cost to the state**
- Partnered with 3 non-profits statewide and an internationally acclaimed Subject Matter Expert throughout 2019-2020; published **The White Paper, Growing Epidemic of Human Trafficking in Oklahoma** in 2021 that is memorialized in the Oklahoma Department of Human Services publication, **"A Snapshot Report on Efforts to Fight Human Trafficking in Oklahoma"** and detailed in HB 4210 that established the Human Trafficking Response Unit in the Oklahoma Attorney General's Office, which was provided funding in 2023.
- Held statewide Facebook Live Community Conversations on the growing epidemic of human trafficking

2020 – Focus on Census (In-person events limited due to pandemic)

- Held Community Conversation on Facebook Live "Stand Up and Be Counted: Shape Your Future, 2020 Census"
- Held Proclamation presentation event at the State Capitol celebrating the 100th Anniversary of the 19th Amendment – Women's Right to Vote



2019-2017 – Focus on Mental Health and Substance Abuse

- Held first statewide Facebook Live Webinar with Subject Matter Experts on underlying mental health and substance abuse issues leading to the high incarceration of women; the National Commission on the Status of Women shared the webinar nationwide and to state and local commissions
- Held several Regional Community Conversations on Mental Health and Substance Abuse in Ada, Oklahoma City, Woodward and with Hispanic community partners, while conducting survey research
- Formed partnership with Girls Scouts of Western Oklahoma to provide role models in many professions for young girls, and participated in Girls Day of Discovery event

2016-2015 – Focus on Domestic Violence

- Held Regional Community Conversations on Domestic Violence in Tulsa, Weatherford and Stillwater; conducted survey research at each event
- Held a statewide Summit on Domestic Violence; partnered with YWCA and other non-profits
- Developed and distributed fact sheets to the legislature on the Status of Women in the U.S. and Oklahoma with focus on underlying causes of incarceration: Domestic Violence of Women, Behavioral Health and Mental Health and Substance Abuse, and Women's Health
- Held Community Conversations on women's health, reducing incarceration, improving educational and economic status in Ardmore and Tulsa, partnering with the Oklahoma Women's Coalition
- OU's Carl Albert Research Center transferred The Appointment Project (get more women appointed to boards and commissions) and LINKS (registry of state organizations focused on advancement of women) to Commission for implementation

2014 – Focus on Human Trafficking

- Held a statewide **Summit on Human Trafficking** and partnered with Survivors for Solutions, plus many women's groups
- Collaborated with the Justice System partners in Norman on domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking that led to the Commission's focus on human trafficking.

2013 -2011: Focus on Health

- Held statewide Summit on **Wise Choices: Solutions to Obesity and Diabetes in Women** and partnered with Harold Hamm Diabetes Center. Summit was funded by U.S. Public Health Service grant and partners.
- Co-hosted a legislative interim study on the growing human trafficking issue and partnered with Oklahoma Bureau of Narcotics and several law enforcement entities.
- Statewide collaboration on Gestational Diabetes for women and their children to prevent obesity. Partners included Harold Hamm Diabetes Center, OUHSC Gestational Diabetes Clinic, OSU Diabetes Clinic, Choctaw Nation Gestational Diabetes Clinic of Excellence, Chickasaw Nation Gestational Diabetes Clinic of Excellence, and Oklahoma Department of Health County network of maternity clinics.

2010-2009 – Focus on Incarceration

- Published **Oklahoma Women's Baseline Statistical Report** and distributed statewide. Partnered with Oklahoma State University's Women Archives.
- Held Blue Ribbon Panel to address reducing the incarceration rate of women; partnered with the George Kaiser Foundation and Oklahoma Department of Corrections
- Held statewide Summit to develop the **Public Agenda Action Plan by 2020** to reduce the rate of incarceration of women with increased community services in prevention, intervention and diversion, recidivism, and reentry, which stimulated policy and community service changes
- Established the Guardian Award as an annual recognition to elected officials contributing to guarding, protecting and preserving the rights of women, after presenting the first Guardian Award to Rep. Ron Peters for legislation passed supporting women.



2008-2007 – Focus on Health

- Statewide Summit featuring U.S. Assistant Secretary of Health Wanda Jones to discuss health, also incarceration of women.
- Regional Summits on Osteoporosis and Heart Health held in Stillwater, Muskogee, Seminole and Woodward.

2006-2004 – Focus on Health, Incarceration

- Published Oklahoma Women's Almanac; partnered with OSU Women's Archives
- Statewide Summit on drugs and mental health courts as an approach to reduce women incarceration
- Implemented 2004 Task Force recommendations to reduce women incarceration
- Commissioner legislators introduced bill to develop Oklahoma's Breast and Cervical Cancer Program.
- Published Special Task Force Report on Incarcerated Women

Prior to 2004:

From the inception of the Oklahoma Governor's Commission on the Status of Women (1960s) to the legislated Oklahoma Commission on the Status of Women (1994), the Commission selects one to three topical focus areas and spends two to four years researching the topic, conducting community conversations to gain local input, and finally, convening a Summit for the purpose of making recommendations to the legislature and the Governor.

Not Me, Stop Human Trafficking Educational Initiative Launch - Year One

The Oklahoma Senate allocated \$150,000 funds for an initiative to reach students through schools that increases their knowledge and awareness about human trafficking and learn to identify and recognize early signs of potential trafficking.

Following a focus group with college and high school students at Southwestern Oklahoma State University, this research was used to launch Oklahoma’s first educational initiative, *Not Me, Stop Human Trafficking* educational initiative in January 2023. It focuses on detecting the early signs of human trafficking with a Community Conversation of expert panelists. As of summer 2023, the Commission reached approximately 1,500 Oklahoma students, community and business leaders through five events. The commission conducted pre-event and post-event surveys to measure an increase in awareness from the Community Conversations, and the data is attached. The allocation funds the Commission’s educational initiative through September 2024.

The first *Not Me, Stop Human Trafficking* Community Conversation was held at Seminole State College and more than 250 high school and college students, and business and community leaders attended the two events. The Commission partnered with the Seminole Chamber of Commerce and invited high school students from Okemah and other nearby towns.

The Commission is leveraging the U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s *End Human Trafficking* community toolkits and marketing materials by distributing to school and community leaders as a follow up to the *Not Me* Community Conversations.



Not Me Keychains



Information card



Event flyer



Facebook page

The Commission made *Not Me, Stop Human Trafficking* social media pages: @NotMeOkla on Facebook and Instagram

2022 Human Trafficking Focus Group Report

Overview

- A focus group was held on December 16, 2022, in Weatherford, OK, for the Oklahoma Commission on the Status of Women. It was held inside the Weatherford Chamber of Commerce conference room at 210 W Main St, Weatherford, OK 73096. The group convened from noon to 1 p.m. The facilitator for the focus group was Cory Cart, APR, who presented this report to the Commission.

Attendees

- Joining the moderator were nine participants. The participants represented numerous subsets of the state's population based on gender, age, ethnic background, career, and residency location.
- Gender: Two men and seven women comprised the group.
- Ethnic Backgrounds Represented: Caucasian, Hispanic, Native American, and mixed
- Age: Participants ranged in age from 20 to 67
- Location of Home Residence: Participants hailed from five cities: Weatherford, Seminole, Yukon, Hydro, and Clinton.
- Career: Participants represented a variety of careers, including a county HR director, a university marketing director, an administrative assistant, two university students, a loan officer, and three CASA advocates.

Feedback by Topic

- Participants were presented with open-ended questions to gauge their diverse reactions to each. All participants engaged with the subject matter, and nearly all contributed to each topic. Instead of grouping feedback by the question asked, it is grouped by topic. This is because once a question was asked, the conversation was allowed to take shape organically, and the participants discussed topics rather than giving direct answers to questions.

Topic 1: Defining human trafficking

- When asked to define human trafficking, participants paused and were confused. No one was able to define the topic fully.
- Several people mentioned kidnapping as the only way to describe this topic.
- One participant stated numerous times that immigrant populations are the most targeted.
- Discussion at one point centered on the fact that human trafficking is not something that voluntarily materializes. In other words, they said it was not something you choose to do. They feel that there is confusion over topics like prostitution. The group discussed that it is assumed that everyone in this area chooses to do it voluntarily, but that is not always the case.
- A few participants stated that human trafficking only impacts impoverished Oklahomans.
- A few participants stated that it typically impacts college students the most.
- One mentioned it referred to illegal activity along I-40.

Topic 2: Signs one is being targeted

- Overall, there was very little understanding or consensus of what warning signs might indicate you are being targeted.
- Several participants described that the primary way of being targeted is by being followed in stores or parking lots.
- A portion of the discussion centered on tagging cars with markers such as zip ties, window writing, and other identifiable objects.
- One stated that manipulative relationships are a sign.
- Two brought up age dynamics – specifically older men with younger women.

Topic 3: How and where to find help

- When asked where to seek help or assistance beyond calling 911, the room fell silent. Overall, no one knew where to go for help specifically related to human trafficking.

Topic 4: Scope of human trafficking in Oklahoma

- There was no degree of certainty about the impact human trafficking has on Oklahoma.

Topic 5: Creative feedback

- Overall feedback on creative and branding from the participants included:
 - The creative should convey the various aspects of what human trafficking is and how it is defined. For instance, most didn't think of men or that you can experience human trafficking in a corporate environment.
 - The creative needs something to make it "more real" and "more Oklahoma."
 - They want to know if there is a website or phone number for people to call if they need help. Thus, part of the education about human trafficking should be focused on where and how to seek help beyond calling 911.
 - They pointed out that Oklahoma's immigrant populations are greatly impacted by human trafficking, so they recommended that the campaign be presented in English and Spanish.
 - **Top Choice Concept:**



- Participants liked the left side of the billboard but didn't feel the text on the yellow half was impactful. Participants suggested that the yellow side of the billboard feature Oklahoma-specific statistics that illustrate the problem. They said the stats would make it the "most real".
- They did NOT like the tagline "Say No to Human Trafficking." They felt this conveyed that human trafficking was a choice a person made. They did not find it effective, rather one stated it was offensive.
- One participant felt this logo evoked action that kids would understand. She stated that it would help kids know to use this hand gesture and say "Not me" if they were in an unsafe situation.
- They felt there needed to be a website or phone number on the billboard so that people could know where to turn to when they, or someone they know, needed help.

Topic 6: Educational resources

- All participants agreed that they would start with a Google search
- Podcasts were suggested as an educational tool to learn more. These could live on a website and be available for free.
- Numerous participants asked if there was an Oklahoma-specific website for this campaign. One recommended the URL of oknotme.com.
- Several participants said shareable resources were important to them.
- One participant pointed out that area bathrooms at gas stations had a phone number inside the bathroom stalls for women to call for help while in the restroom. They suggested this should be a focus for gas station bathrooms situated alongside Oklahoma's interstates.

Topic 7: Promo Products

- All participants agreed that stickers for water bottles and laptops would be good.
- It was also highly suggested that belt bags and bucket hats are best for high school-age and college students.
- Pop sockets and key chains were suggested as something that would be always on a person, and it is recommended that a phone number and website be on the items. No matter the final decision on what to purchase, the group agreed that the items should always be on you to know where to access safety information if you were being targeted easily.

Recommendations

Trends identified throughout the focus group shape the recommendations for the next steps.

- Focus should be put on educating Oklahomans on what human trafficking is and how it is defined. No one knew it included situations beyond sex trafficking. A focus on the corporate aspects of human trafficking resonated with this group and stimulated the most interest in learning more about the topic. Thus, scenarios that shock or surprise your audiences will have the most impact.
- Overall, the group said that being exposed to more facts, stats, and figures would make them take notice of the issues and explore it in more detail.
- Women are most familiar with the subject of human trafficking. There is a clear pattern that men do not think it impacts them. Thus, a portion of the education should be focused on educating men about how to protect their family and friends from being targeted and helping them understand that they can be targeted.
- Nearly all participants wanted a website to access educational materials and a phone number to have saved in case they needed to direct someone in the event they found themselves targeted. While the commission's mission is to educate, it is recommended that all materials feature the national human trafficking hotline number if one specific to Oklahoma isn't available.
- Only one participant could articulate what to do if they found themselves in a bad situation. Education should be provided on where and how to seek help if needed.
- There was not a clear understanding of the signs you are being targeted. Education needs to be provided about situations and signs that would indicate someone is being targeted as a potential victim.



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 10, 2023

Media Contact: Kitti Asberry
(405) 401-6970
Pakita.Asberry@omes.ok.gov

Oklahoma Commission on the Status of Women Launches Anti-Human Trafficking Series and Not Me Educational Initiative

OKLAHOMA CITY -- Each year, an estimated 4,000 Oklahomans seek help from human trafficking situations. The Oklahoma Commission on the Status of Women will launch two anti-human trafficking educational efforts -- series of *Community Conversations to Stop Human Trafficking* at schools and a *Not Me* initiative.

“Human trafficking is modern-day slavery,” said Commission State Chair Brenda Jones Barwick. “It’s a \$150 billion a year industry and Oklahoma is not immune to it. Most human trafficking in Oklahoma is not happening by people passing through on highways, but by Oklahomans who are family members, friends or acquaintances entrapping Oklahomans into involuntary servitude through labor, sex or drugs.”

The series of *Community Conversations to Stop Human Trafficking* will be held at high schools, colleges and universities statewide to educate Oklahoma teens, young adults, teachers and parents on how to recognize early signs of a person being targeted for human trafficking servitude. The first Community Conversation will be held at Seminole State College on Thursday, Jan. 12, at Noon in the Jeff Johnstone Fine Arts Center ballroom with community leaders, following a 9:30 am panel discussion with students and faculty.

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The Commission began its work on human trafficking in 2014 when it partnered with the Oklahoma Bureau of Narcotics to host *Solutions, Initiatives, Strategies on Human Trafficking Summit*. In 2020, First Lady Sarah Stitt hosted a summit on this topic at the Governor’s Mansion with a panel of experts. Additional information about the Commission’s work on human trafficking, including a White Paper published last year, can be found at <https://oklahoma.gov/ocsw/human-trafficking.html>.

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Library's next book discussion set for March 9

At Johnston County Library's "Let's Talk About It" series "Much Depends on Dinner," the club will discuss *In Defense of Food* by Michael Pollan on Thursday, March 9, at 6:30 p.m.

Dr. Glenn Melancon will serve as the evening's scholar.

Food - there's plenty of it around, and we all love to eat it. So why should anyone need to defend it?

Because in the so-called Western diet, food has been replaced by nutrients, and common sense by confusion - most of what we're consuming today is no longer the product of nature, but of food science.

The result is what Pollan calls the American Paradox: The more we worry about nutrition, the less healthy we seem to become.

With *In Defense of Food*, Pollan

proposes a new and very old answer to the question of what we should eat that comes down to seven simple but liberating words: "Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants."

Pollan's bracing and eloquent manifesto shows us how we can start making thoughtful food choices that will enrich our lives, enlarge our sense of what it means to be healthy, and bring pleasure back to eating.

This book discussion will be led by Melancon. He completed his Ph.D. in European History from Louisiana State University.

He is currently a professor at Southeastern State University in Durant. Melancon is the author of *Britain's China Policy and the Opium Crisis: Balancing Drugs, Violence and National Honor, 1833-*

1840.

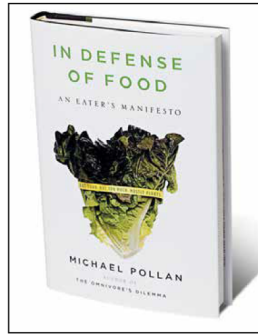
He has served as a Cubmaster for a local Boy Scout troop and is a volunteer at St. Mary's Church.

Funding for this program is provided in part by a grant from the Oklahoma Humanities (OH) and the Kirkpatrick Endowment for the Humanities. Any views, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this program do not necessarily represent those of OH.

This program is free and open to the public. Copies of the books are available at the library.

For more information, call the Johnston County Library at 371-3006 or visit the library at 116 West Main in Tishomingo.

The Johnston County Library is a branch of the Southern Oklahoma Library System (SOLS).



Powerlifter supreme

Tishomingo senior Aiden Clark is seen preparing to squat one of his heavy lifts at the McAlester powerlifting meet last week, as Coach Burrows serves as his spotter. Clark brought home first place individual honors in the 220 weight class.

Unbeaten Continued from Page 9

shon and Rock ended with one hit apiece. Ileana Lucio fired four innings, allowing one unearned run on two hits, with Hopkins adding the final three shutout frames for the win, giving up just one hit and striking out four.

In spite of illness and injuries sidelining several Murray State starters, the second-ranked Lady Aggies had plenty still in the tank to post a convincing sweep of Division I 17th rated Hutchinson College in Tishomingo on Friday afternoon.

The Lady Aggies exploded to an 18-2 run-rule victory in the opener and followed with an 8-0 blanking of the Kansas visitors.

Mullens' club rode a couple of early home runs from Tuck and Russell to a 4-2 advantage before breaking it wide open during a monster nine-run third frame. Mershon smacked a two-run double for the key blow, with Rock adding two singles and driving in a pair. Tuck, Hook, York and Morgan also had hits in the Murray uprising.

Murray State tacked on five more runs one stanza later to help end it early, as Hewitt smacked a two-run homer

and Tuck added her second roundtripper of the contest to plate three more.

Clark was the benefactor of the massive run support, working five innings in the circle while yielding two runs on two hits for the win. Tuck ended with three hits and five RBI as Morgan, Mershon, Rock and York all had two hits.

Lucio got the pitching assignment in game two and twirled another gem as she fired five shutout frames, scattering three hits along with five strikeouts.

The Lady Aggies plated the only run they would actually need just two batters into the bottom of the first stanza as Morgan doubled home Hewitt, who had led off with a walk.

Hewitt again got in on the offensive action in the second frame, highlighting a five-run offensive burst by driving in three more runs with a home run. Tuck also tossed in her third homer of the day while chipping in two RBI.

Rock doubled and came around to score the eventual game-ending run in the fifth.

NOT ME

BE A PART OF THE COMMUNITY CONVERSATION TO
STOP HUMAN TRAFFICKING

TUESDAY, FEB. 28
 9:30am-11:00am

Choctaw Event Center
 3702 Choctaw Road in Durant

FREE & OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Think you know about human trafficking?
 Tell us what you know and scan the QR code to answer 4 quick questions.

OKLAHOMA
 Commission on the Status of Women

OSU Extension to Add Native American Educator Roles

By Gail Ellis

The northeast district of Oklahoma State University Extension has received two Native American Agriculture Fund grants to support new and ongoing partnerships with multiple Native American tribes and nations in Oklahoma.

NAAF provides funding to eligible organizations for business assistance, agricultural education, technical support and advocacy services to support Native farmers and ranchers. Nancy Johnson, director of OSU Extension in the northeast district, said OSU Extension received similar grants from the Federally Recognized Tribes Extension Program in the past, but this most recent award is the first distributed by NAAF.

The two grants, one allotted to the Muscogee Nation and another designated for a group of nine tribes in the northeast part of the state, will provide approximately \$335,000 over the next four years for agricultural projects tied to the preservation of Native American culture.

Objectives outlined for the Muscogee Nation grant by Johnson and co-principal investigator Leslie Lewis include establishing a new OSU Extension educator position to help relaunch an archery club, introduce anti-bullying and health curricula and train youth in meat judging. Native Farmers and Ranchers programming will explore pecan grafting as well as beef and small animal production and management.

Other portions of funding for the Muscogee Nation

will support community development with training in resume writing, job skills and soft skills, along with education on the dangers of substance abuse and social media safety. Tribe members will learn about county and tribal government, the benefits of growing their own food, food distribution and how to ensure a healthy diet.

"Some of the training opportunities will be intertwined with their native language, and we hope to incorporate elders into the process of cultural preservation through customs such as basket weaving," Johnson said.

The Muscogee Nation has about 87,000 members in Oklahoma; the nation covers Okmulgee, McIntosh, Okfuskee, Hughes, Creek, Tulsa and Wagoner counties along with portions of Mayes, Rogers and Seminole counties. Johnson said the NAAF grant was written in collaboration with the College of the Muscogee Nation, and the new educator will be housed on its campus when hired.

The goal of the nine-tribes grant, co-authored by Kathy Enyart, is to fund an educator to build upon resources already in place, including free water testing and childcare training.

"The Eastern Shawnee Tribe has an outdoor class-



The Native American Agriculture Fund grant awarded to the Muscogee Nation will provide education and training on the benefits of growing a garden. (Photo by Todd Johnson, OSU Agricultural Communications Services)

room it's going to let us use, and the Quapaw Nation could potentially let us use its meat processing plant for meat judging," Johnson said.

The nine tribes of the Inter-Tribal Council are the Eastern Shawnee Tribe, Miami Tribe, Modoc Nation, Ottawa Tribe, Peoria Tribe, Quapaw Tribe, Seneca-Cayuga Nation, Shawnee Tribe and Wyandotte Nation, all located in Ottawa County.

In addition to the latest

round of funding through NAAF, Federally Recognized Tribes Extension Program grants currently support projects involving community gardening in Pawnee County and an OSU Extension educator position and full-time program assistant in Osage County.

"We'll collaborate with 12 different tribes in this grant cycle, and that's pretty substantial," Johnson said. "Our county educators

connected and partnered with these tribes to lay the groundwork we've applied for this latest grant, and that has been successful."

OSU Extension uses research-based information to help all Oklahomans solve local issues and concerns, promote leadership and manage resources wisely throughout the state's 77 counties. Most information is available at little to no cost.

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Anti-Human Trafficking Series Launched This Week in Oklahoma

News Release

OKLAHOMA CITY -- Each year, an estimated 4,000 Oklahomans seek help from human trafficking situations. The Oklahoma Commission on the Status of Women will launch two

anti-human trafficking educational efforts -- series of Community Conversations to Stop Human Trafficking at schools and a Not Me initiative.

"Human trafficking is modern-day slavery," said Commission State Chair Brenda Jones Barwick. "It's a \$150 billion a year industry and Oklahoma is not immune to it. Most human trafficking in Oklahoma is not happening through on highways, but by Oklahomans who are family members, friends or acquaintances entrapping Oklahomans into involuntary servitude through labor, sex or drugs."

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1 Month in advance.....6.50

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3 Months in advance.....44.00

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Subscription see rates listed under U.S. Mail Elsewhere in Oklahoma

Human Trafficking Awareness to be Discussed at SSC, Forum



News Release

A panel discussion on human trafficking awareness will be presented in two separate programs Thursday, Jan. 12 on the campus of Seminole State College. A program for SSC students, SSC employees and area high school students will be held at 9:30 a.m. in the Jeff Johnston Fine Arts Auditorium. The event is free, open to the public and being held in honor of National Human Trafficking Prevention Month.

Another panel discussion on the topic will be the featured program of the Seminole Chamber of Commerce's monthly forum luncheon. Forum will be at noon Thursday in the Utterback Ballroom of the Harney Center. Cost for the luncheon will be \$10, payable to the Chamber at the door.

The panel discussions are sponsored by the Oklahoma Commission on the Status of Women and the SSC Help Center. Panelists for the morning session include Co-Founder and Director of Communications and Development of the Dragonly Home Melissa Eick, Drug Intelligence Officer for the Oklahoma region of the Texoma-High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas program Mike Hoskins and Chief Agent for the Oklahoma Bureau of Narcotics Craig Williams.

In addition to her role at The Dragonly Home, a human trafficking survivor services agency, Eick is also a member of the Oklahoma Commission on the Status of Women Advisory Council and a member of the Commission's Human Trafficking Committee. Melissa specializes in educating the public on the complexities of human trafficking and the needs of survivors through writing, speaking and diverse avenues of digital and social media. Melissa participated on the Oklahoma Human Trafficking Task Force, serving as Co-chair of the Training and Awareness Committee, as well as serving on the Conference Planning Committee. Melissa holds a JD from the University of Tulsa and is a licensed attorney.

Hoskins is a member of the Overdose Response Strategy, a collaboration between public health and public safety, created to help local communities reduce drug overdoses and save lives by sharing timely data, pertinent intelligence and evidence-based strategies. He began his career with the Oklahoma City Police Department, retiring as a Major in 2014. He served as Commander of the Special Investigations Division; (Criminal Intelligence Unit, Gang-VICE-Narcotics, and other units), the Director of Training & Recruiting and commander of the Tactical Operations/ Negotiations Unit. He is a graduate of the US Air Force - Air War College/ National Security Forum, FBI National Academy, Senior Management Institute for Police, and the FBI's Law Enforcement Executive Development program. Hoskins served on the Advisory Council for Oklahoma's Council on Law Enforcement Education and Training, Executive Board of the FBI - Joint Terrorism Task Force Board as well as the Oklahoma FUSION Center Advisory Board and Attorney General Scott Pruitt's Human Trafficking Committee.

Williams currently oversees the Marijuana Enforcement Teams and the Human Trafficking sections within the state's Bureau of Narcotics. Williams attended Southeastern Oklahoma State University, as a Parson's Scholar, where he earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in criminal justice in 1996. He recently completed a master's degree in education leadership, also from Southeastern. Williams' interest in law enforcement began with an internship at the Durant (See Forum on Page A2)

Sunspot Increases Solar Storm, Northern Light Chances

*By Bob Melton
County Editor*

A powerful X-Class flare that erupted late Thursday/early Friday caused a shortwave radio blackout across the South Pacific, and it has drawn attention to a newly emerging sunspot that could possibly have a major effect on Earth in the near future.

Solar flares are giant explosions that occur in localized regions of the sun's atmosphere when energy in "twisted" magnetic

fields is released. These regions are known as sunspots, and the solar flares send electromagnetic radiation such as X-rays, visible and ultraviolet light, and high-speed particles out into space.

These flares are classified by their strength, with the weakest called an "A-Class." Each class is also categorized in strength from 1 to 9. A B-Class is ten times stronger than an A-Class, and a C-Class is ten times stronger than a B-Class. The next larger Class is M-Class, and the largest storms are X-Class. An X-Class flare is the only class that can be measured higher than 9.

The flare on Friday was rated as an X1.2-Class, or at the lower end of the strongest class. If the flare is pointed towards the earth, stronger storms can have a drastic effect on satellites in space and electronic equipment on the ground, possibly causing black outs in some areas.

The sunspot that created the flare on Friday is named AR182, and it had just become visible as it rotated into view from the far side of the sun, so the earth received an indirect hit. The SpaceWeather.com website posted a video of the exploding, explaining that an inflated dome of glowing-hot plasma hovered above the blast site for more than an hour. They add that this dome may have contained the debris because, so far, no coronal mass ejection (CME) has been observed.

The website also reports that, given the size and complexity of the AR182 region, there is a "good chance" that explosions at the site will continue over the coming days, posing a significant threat of producing more strong solar flares.

A growing number of sunspots and flares are also expected to increase in the longer run, as the roughly 11-year-long cycle of increasing activity continues towards its peak in 2025.

The high and low peaks in this cycle are called "solar maximums" and "solar minimums."

Geomagnetic storms also trigger the Aurora Borealis, or "Northern Lights" ("Southern Lights" are their counterpart in the southern hemisphere). These beautiful waving sheets of colorful light have been fascinating observers forever, with the first suspected recording being a cave painting in France from approximately (See Sunspots on Page A2)

Emergency Drought Commission Allocates Remainder of Funds

News Release

The Emergency Drought Commission met Thursday to direct all remaining funding allocated to the Commission.

The Emergency Drought Commission also determined any funds unused and returned by the local conservation districts for the Emergency Drought Cost-Share Program at this time.

All actions of the Commission are pending approval by Governor Kevin Stitt.

The Oklahoma Conservation Commission works to conserve, protect and restore Oklahoma's natural resources, working in collaboration with the conservation districts and other partners.

The Commission is composed of five members, (See Funds on Page A2)



A group of models from the 2022 Down Syndrome 3.21 Fashion Show celebrate the end of the show with members of the band American Slang. Down Syndrome Association of Central Oklahoma will host its annual 3.21 Fashion Show, at the Criterion in Bricktown at 6 p.m. on Thursday, Jan. 26. See story page A11. (Photo provided)

Today In Seminole County

-BIRTHDAYS-

Today's birthdays include Kay Crabtree, Floyd Davis, John Daugherty, Avis Dorsett, Chris Hale, Dawnette Herrell, Mark Hill, Steven Jackson, Byron King, Justin Lena, Scott Lloyd, Debbie Lyons, Melinda McDowell, Freda Morrison, Carol Narcomey, Lenora Narcomey, Trevoe O'Daniel, Ron Parker, Cheryl Plummer, Cindy Riley, Polo Sumano & Wes Womack.

Monday birthdays include Penny Alvey, Clariece Anderson, Martha Anderson, Larry Barryhill, Lora Bennett, Hannah Brewer, Tere Camp, L.D. Cathey, Bryton Colbert, Jordan Ewert, Eastman Harjo Jr, Steven Ibery, John Johnson, Abbie Jones, Sis Jones, Karol Parker, Jake Reese, Dale Storie, Marnell Thompson, Danny Timmons, Patricia White & Jason Young.

-ANNIVERSARIES-

Today's anniversaries include Jim and Jo Mills, Mr. and Mrs. Joe North, Bill and Donna Renton Jr. & Jim and Jennie Stafford.

This Week In Seminole County

Saturday anniversaries include Irene and William Bodey.

-SLANTS-

Becky Gates recommending a book...Stephen Baker looking for Kibbles & Bits.

-MONDAY-FRIDAY-

➤ Heritage House Nutrition Center 210 College, Seminole. Now open for dine-in.

-SATURDAY-

➤ Memorial Walk from the Mekusucky Mission to Maud. Meet at 10 a.m., walk begins at 10:30.

-TUESDAY-

➤ City of Seminole Special Election Jan. 10. Polls open 7 a.m. - 7 p.m.

➤ JOM Parent Meeting 6:30 p.m. at Seminole Middle School

WORDS TO LIVE BY:

"There is little that can withstand a man who can conquer himself."

Louis XIV



SWOSU hosts panel to discuss human trafficking in Oklahoma

Kiersten Stone
WDN Lifestyles Editor

The SWOSU Political Science Student Association partnered with the Oklahoma Commission on the Status of Women to host a panel

discussing the early warning signs and the effects of human trafficking in Oklahoma.

The panel consisted of four panelists who were experts in their field. The first panelist was Melissa Eick, co-founder and director

of Communications and Development of the Dragonfly Home. The second panelist was Mike Hoskins, drug intelligence officer for the Oklahoma region of the Texoma-High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas Program.

The third panelist was Craig Williams, chief agent of the Oklahoma Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, Marijuana Enforcement Teams and the Human Trafficking Sections. The fourth and final panelist was Ashley Chapman,

vice president of the Red Cord, Southwest Oklahoma's Anti Human Trafficking Organization.

The panel began by

• Please see **Panel**, Page 12

Xpress Wellness Urgent Care Weatherford won the Connections Food and Resource Center Grand Can Sculpture Competition with a Shark made out of tuna cans. The shark is swimming in bottles of water.

Provided



Montgomery Malone/WDN

Xpress Wellness Urgent Care Weatherford is the Connections Food and Resource Center Grand Can Sculpture Competition Champion. Pictured from left is Sarah Creason, Misty Crider and Brooke Ward.



Street fair to be a family affair

Kiersten Stone
WDN Lifestyles Editor

The 2nd annual Ag Parade and Street Fair is set to be full of free activities and photo opportunities for all to enjoy.

The parade will begin 5:30 p.m. and travel along Main Street between Caddo and 8th Street.

After the parade ends, all floats, tractors and combines will circle back and park downtown for pictures and close-up looks. The Weatherford Fire Department also will have the

firetrucks in Towne Centre for kids to get a hands-on experience with.

• Please see **Parade**, Page 12



Police — 6-7

Puzzles — 11

Classifieds — 8-10

Legals — 11

Sports — 2-5



50¢



Inserts inside



Chatterbox

Do you have information for the WDN Chatterbox? Call (580) 772-3301. Jerry Waldrop, who can be reached by calling (618) 421-5794, is a volunteer of Veterans Corner, along SH 9 in Norman. He will be at the Heartland Museum in Weatherford from 9 a.m. to noon Friday, April 7, to aid veterans in filing for disability benefits. Veterans need to bring their DD-214. Happy Birthday to WDN Facebook friends Christi Stewart, Barbara Jones, Debo Johnson, Ron Williams, Morgan Milliron, Cindy Sink, Bobby Johnson, Rory King, Jim Edwards, Jamie Spain, April Watan, Tisha Nevels and Brent Reed.



OKLAHOMA Commission on the Status of Women

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