

## TSET Better Health Podcast Transcript

### Episode 57: Get Your Health Kicks on Route 66

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**Summary:** Route 66 got Americans moving across much of the country when it opened 100 years ago. As Oklahoma celebrates the Mother Road's Centennial, the TSET Better Health Podcast will drive conversation on upcoming Route 66 events that feature healthy fun and physical activity, including a big band dance in Weatherford, the Andy Payne Run in Claremore that honors a local legend and the "Kickin' It On Route 66" centennial event in Oklahoma City.

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#### [Theme music]

James Tyree: Hello everyone and happy spring wherever you may be. Welcome to Episode 57 of the TSET Better Health Podcast. I am your host, James Tyree, associate director of Integrated Communications at TSET ...

Sarah Carson: And I am Sarah Carson, campaign manager for TSET. This year marks the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Route 66, the famous U.S. highway that paved the road to new business, recreational and life opportunities for millions of Americans in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The historic highway stretched from Chicago, Illinois to Santa Monica, California, near Los Angeles, covering more than 2,400 miles.

J. Tyree: Route 66 contributed to the economic health of cities and towns across Oklahoma, and to the physical health of residents and visitors alike. As Oklahoma joins other states this year in celebrating the highway's big birthday, this episode will delve into some fun centennial events across the state that will feature physical activity and other wellness components.

S. Carson: We'll visit eastern Oklahoma, where the Claremore Museum of History will host a running event that honors a favorite son who competed in the first Route 66 foot race back in the 1920s. We also will learn more about a Route 66 birthday bash at Scissortail Park and its activities for people of all ages, and of Oklahoma City's many connections with the Mother Road.

J. Tyree: But we will begin even further west in Weatherford, where a big band dance is scheduled to celebrate a golden era of Route 66. Let's hear more about it from my recent conversation I had with an event organizer. Let's meet him now.

Rhys Martin My name is Rhys Martin and I am the president of the Oklahoma Route 66 Association.

J. Tyree: Please tell us about the Oklahoma Route 66 Association, including its purpose and how long the group has been around.

R. Martin: Sure. Well, our organization was founded in 1989, right around the same time that all eight states that carry Route 66 created organizations that had a similar purpose, and that is to preserve and promote Route 66 throughout the state, as well as provide educational opportunities and really just let folks know the road is still there and still worth traveling.

J. Tyree: Since '89, that's quite a while. So, Rhys, what sparked *your* interest in Route 66?

R. Martin: Well, so the CliffsNotes version of that story is that in 2009, I sold everything I owned and I left the country. I backpacked internationally for 10 months and it was during that experience that I fell in love with history and photography and writing. And so when I came back home to Tulsa, which is where I was born and raised in this area, I realized I'd never paid attention to anything here.

So I just started driving and checking out some places. And I took a road trip up to the Coleman Theater in Miami, Oklahoma on Route 66 in 2013, and just kind of fell in love with the experience and asked myself, "Well, what else is out here on this highway?" And so it took me about two years to drive the whole thing. And then I raised my hand and said, "How can I help you guys do what you're doing?" And here I am now.

J. Tyree: The Mother Road was a major highway for cars and truck for decades, but road stops and towns along the way offered opportunities to stretch one's legs and get some physical activity. A great example is the Big Band Hangar Dance happening soon in Weatherford, which will be one of your association's first centennial activities. Sounds like fun, but I have to ask: Why have a dance to celebrate the highway, why make it a big band dance, in particular, and why connect it to an airplane hangar?

R. Martin: Well, that's a great question because you think you just hop in the car and go from A to B. And Route 66 has always been more than the sum of its parts. It's about the journey, not the destination, and it has so much history built into it. I could sit here and talk to you for hours about the different eras of the road and its evolution and things like that, but the road really came to prominence in the '30s and '40s, not just because of the Dust Bowl and the Great Depression, but because it was one of the earliest, longest paved roads in this country.

It was really important to the war effort in World War II, both troop movements and getting materials where they need to go. So with this year being the centennial of Route 66, we thought it would be a great way to pay tribute to some of the road's history to have an event themed around kind of the World War II era. And so that's where the Big Band Hanger Dance came from.

The Stafford Air and Space Museum in Weatherford, which is hosting us for that event on April 25th, is also a really great partner because that's also kind of an unexpected story. And Route 66 is full of these things where you walk in and you may not have any idea who Thomas Stafford was and you get to learn so much about this great Oklahoman. So it checked a lot of boxes for us.

J. Tyree: Ah, hence the hangar.

R. Martin: That's right. Now it's important to say we call it a Big Band Hangar Dance because it's at an airport, but most of the event's going to be taking place in their brand new event center, which is as big as a hangar, it is gigantic, but we are having some vintage aircraft fly in that people will be able to take pictures with because it's literally right next to the tarmac.

And so you'll have big band music, you'll have swing dancing lessons. There's going to be like a corsage bar there. People have access to the museum, which is a Smithsonian affiliated Air and Space Museum. It's really incredible. We have a documentary that we'll be screening, a short film about Rosie the Riveters in World War II from Katrina Parks. It's just going to be really incredible. We're going to try to have some cars from the era come out that people will be able to see and just have a good time.

J. Tyree: What other Oklahoma Route 66 Association events are planned this year where residents and visitors can get out, walk and explore?

R. Martin: Well, there's a lot. To your point, Route 66 is definitely an automobile corridor, so most of the things focus around cruises and things like that, but every one of these little towns on Oklahoma Route 66 has some things to get out and see and do. One of the events I'm most excited about that's taking place in the latter half of the year is we're going to be popping up again at Cycle 66 in Edmond. Really great bicycle event that has everything from little fun rides to actual timed competitions.

And Downtown Edmond really does a great job with that, and it even is going to offer like a 66-mile course where people can ride their bicycle up and down Route 66 in a whole group. We're also doing an event at the Round Barn in October that's going to be kind of similar to the Big Band Hangar Dance as far as era is concerned. We're going to have a fiddle contest and arts and crafts, and that barn is just really incredible to explore. But we're working to help bring that into a lot of different events throughout the year. And people can go to [Oklahomaroute66.com](http://Oklahomaroute66.com) and see the entire calendar, which is getting pretty full.

J. Tyree: Another way to promote good health is by adopting and implementing a tobacco-free environment. Are any, most or all of the events tobacco-free?

R. Martin: Well, most of the places that we go are already built in that way, like the AAA Route 66 Road Fest at the Tulsa Fairgrounds the weekend of June 27th, that area is tobacco free. We're doing a national caravan, or I should say taking part in a national caravan throughout the month of June where we're driving all the way from Santa Monica, California to Chicago, Illinois with partners from across the country. And that will involve stops across the state. We're helping celebrate the movie "Cars" on September 26th at the Tee Pee Drive-In at Sapulpa, that's an outdoor event. So most of the things that we do are either outdoor focused or partnering with organizations and facilities that are smoke-free.

J. Tyree: Finally, where can someone learn more about the Oklahoma Route 66 Association and of Centennial activities, like the Big Band Hangar Dance and Cycle 66 in Edmond?

R. Martin: Absolutely. Anybody can go to [Oklahomaroute66.com](http://Oklahomaroute66.com) and learn more about us, our mission. There's an event calendar there that has quite a bit plugged in already. And as the year goes on, I'm sure more will show up there. We are membership based, so if someone wants to help out, wants to volunteer, or even just wants to help contribute to the work that we're doing, they can join as a member for as low as 20 bucks a year.

J. Tyree: Thank you for joining us today, Rhys.

R. Martin: My pleasure. Thanks for having me.

**\*\*\* MUSIC \*\*\***

S. Carson: The big band dance with the 1940s feel could be a really good time for people of any generation. It will be one of a wide variety of events scheduled this year to honor the Route 66 Centennial, so it's worth checking out that website to see all that will take place.

J. Tyree: The Oklahoma Route 66 Association is involved with 18 Centennial events, but there are even more happening this year around the state. One is a newer annual running event in northeast Oklahoma that's really picking up the pace – much as its namesake did nearly 100 years ago. Let's hear more about the man, the run and his hometown's rich history from an expert on all of it.

Steve Robinson: My name is Steve Robinson, I am chairman of the board for Claremore Museum of History. And I'm also co-chairing this year's Andy Payne, Route 66, Half Marathon, 5K, Fun Run with Julie Colasacco.

S. Carson: The first and obvious question is, Who is Andy Payne?

S. Robinson: Great, great question. A lot of people don't know Andy Payne, but Andy Payne was a local Cherokee citizen that grew up in Foyil, Oklahoma. He loved to run as a child, was friends with the Will Rogers family. His father worked for Will Rogers. And his joy in life was running, where his brothers and sisters would ride a horse to school, Andy would run alongside them. And it was his favorite thing to do in life and he was bold enough that he decided when he heard about a transcontinental run that would go all the way across the United States on Route 66 and run through his hometown of Foyil, that would give the winner \$25,000, he was bold enough to enter that race.

S. Carson: Andy Payne really took on a big challenge.

S. Robinson: Yes, considering he joined the race as a young high school boy and he entered the race with fellow runners who were world renowned runners, marathon runners, Olympic runners, were the field runners that entered the Bunion Derby in 1928, along with this young man from Foyil, Oklahoma, who had never run professionally or even athletically from a national competition standpoint.

It was a transcontinental run. It was nicknamed the Bunion Derby because the run was so grueling. It took Andy over 84 days, over 3,400 miles, and the run was so grueling that doctors attended the runners at nighttime and would take care of their feet because they would develop blisters or bunions or all kinds of foot problems throughout the course of the race.

S. Carson: I would guess the Andy Payne Run happening this year will be a little easier than that!

S. Robinson: A lot easier. Instead of 3,423 miles, we have 13 miles. So it's a half marathon, but it is along the historic Route 66 mother road and will start in his hometown of Foyil at the statue in his honor in the Andy Payne Memorial Park in Foyil, and it will end at the Andy Payne statue at the Claremore Museum of History.

S. Carson: There are numerous running events all over our state and region. What makes the Andy Payne Run in Claremore unique from any other run out there, and about how many people participate each year?

S. Robinson: Yes, so this is unique in a couple of different aspects. This is our second year. We started last year with just a 5K run. We've expanded the run this year to be a half-marathon with our goal ultimately by 2028 to have it be a full-fledged marathon that is certified by USA Track and Field. Our half marathon is sanctioned by USATF this year, but it is the first time that Oklahoma, the state of Oklahoma, ODOT, has ever allowed a run on a state highway. So besides being on Route 66, and this is the centennial, the 100th anniversary for Route 66 in the United States, we are one of the centennial events this year on the state of Oklahoma's calendar, but probably most importantly is the fact that Oklahoma has never allowed a run on historic Route 66.

Now, there are other runs in Oklahoma that will run along parts of Route 66, but they're within city limits. So the city is responsible. This is the first time the state has actually allowed a run where we will close down the state highway.

S. Carson: That's pretty amazing. When is the race and how can people sign up for it?

S. Robinson: Our race is April 11th. The half-marathon starts at 8:30. 5K starts at nine o'clock. And so we're already ahead of last year's running registrations. Last year we had a little over 300 people participate and this year we're expecting between 350 and 400 people. And so, registration is open and you can go to either [www.claremoremoh.org](http://www.claremoremoh.org) and sign up, or you can go to run sign up, and just search for Andy Payne.

S. Carson: Why is the Andy Payne Run an event worth considering for runners who are very athletic ... and for regular people who are a little less so?

S. Robinson: Well, I think certainly for the people who are athletic, it is a USATF-sanctioned race. I really believe this race will become a race that will be well-known across the United States, especially with the highlighting of the Route 66 connection, as well as the Bunion Derby and Andy Payne connection. But I think most importantly for athletic or non-athletic, it's the historical perspective of the race. A lot of people don't know who Andy Payne is. They do not realize that besides winning the Bunion Derby, he went on to become the clerk for the Oklahoma State Supreme Court. Quite an accomplished individual, got into real estate and land, got into oil business a little bit, and was very, very successful. He was reelected to office multiple times and was really a favored son of Oklahoma for many, many years, and people don't know that story.

S. Carson: Andy seemed to be a very compelling person.

S. Robinson: Absolutely. And that's part of why we're doing the races, especially from the museum's connection. The museum doesn't get anything out of this race. All of the registration and sponsorships go to fund the race and to grow it, to really become a national marathon that people come to Oklahoma to run and participate in. But the reason the museum is involved with it is the historical perspective. We're really trying to tell Andy Payne's story and get it out there.

S. Carson: What else would you like people to know about the Claremore Museum of History?

S. Robinson: Yeah, great question. Our museum, we're very, very proud of it. It's a museum that is completely funded by our citizens in Claremore. We don't receive any state funding whatsoever. And when you walk into our museum, you'll be impressed by just the quality of the museum itself. Our museum was originally the Will Rogers Public Library. It was a WPA project and it was built in 1936. And we have the original building as well

as the original architecture inside. The building is on the National Register of Historic Places. So the building itself is a museum item to go see, to relish in the architecture and the beauty of the building. But once you step inside, you can view the history of Claremore. On one side of our museum we start from our early inhabitants when Claremore was more known as Indian territory with the Osage and the Cherokee, who were the original people who lived in our community, and we go all the way around. And as you walk through the timeline of Claremore's history, you see all the businesses, churches, and school history displayed for people to see.

On the other side of our museum, we really highlight what I think is the most unique aspect of Claremore, and that's its famous citizens. For a town our size, we have an exhibit about Stuart Roosa, who was an astronaut and the pilot for Apollo 14, and he's one of 24 people ever in the history of the world that has gone to the moon. You go on around the corner and you see Patti Page, who was the bestselling female artist of the '50s and won the equivalent of nine Grammy Awards during the '50s and a feat that was really unheralded and is to this day the only woman, the only person who has ever had a television show with their name on all three major networks.

You keep going and you run across Lynn Riggs, who was the best known playwright for the United States and the Southwest region, and is best known for his play, *Green Grow the Lilacs*, which we all know was adopted by Rogers and Hammerstein and became the movie *Oklahoma*, and our state song ultimately came from Lynn Riggs' play. So we like to say Lynn Riggs is the father of *Oklahoma*. And right by Lynn Riggs' exhibit, you'll see *The Surrey with the Fringe on Top*, which Shirley Jones brought to our museum in 1956, along with her dress from the movie. So we have an exhibit around the whole movie, *Oklahoma*. And then of course, Andy Payne, who we're talking about today, we have his exhibit and his story and the accomplishments he made. And Helen Walton is in our exhibit as well. She was born and raised in Claremore, went on to marry Sam Walton and became the wealthiest woman in the United States later in her life.

So for Claremore, the size of Claremore to have that many well-known citizens, and there's a lot of others that we haven't talked about, from gold medal winners to White House press secretaries, all from the city of Claremore, it's quite a rich heritage that we have to share in our museum.

S. Carson: The museum sounds like a great place to check out! So, in closing, is there anything else you'd like to mention about the Andy Payne Run in this Route 66 Centennial year; also where can our listeners learn more about the race and register for it?

S. Robinson: There's a fun run. The fun run will be at the Andy Payne Track at Claremore High School, and then we also have a virtual run. So if you are not athletic at all, but you just want to support this race and its future, we have a virtual one that you can sign up for and participate in. You can just Google run sign up, and then in the search bar, type in Andy Payne and you'll find our race and can register or you can go to the museum's website, which is [claremoremoh.org](http://claremoremoh.org).

S. Carson: Thank you for time with us today, Steve.

S. Robinson: You're absolutely welcome, and thank you for the opportunity to talk about our race and Andy Payne, and we look forward to seeing everybody on April 11th.

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J. Tyree: Our audio engineer Sam Carrillo and I plan to attend the races and shoot video for a special video podcast episode, so stay tuned for that.

S. Carson: Connecting Oklahoma will be a good resource for people throughout the state who want to join others in walking and other forms of physical activity. A great website to visit for physical activity and nutrition tips whether you're alone, with the kids or with friends is our very own <https://www.shapeyourfutureok.com>. The number of enticing recipes and practical ideas to get moving is plentiful, so be sure to check it out.

J. Tyree: TSET has funding opportunities to increase wellness in communities, like the Discovery grant that Activate Oklahoma was awarded and TSET Built Environment. But there's a new one that began this fiscal year that a colleague of ours will tell us more about.

Angel Green: My name is Angel Green and I am the Director of Travel Trade for Visit Oklahoma City.

J. Tyree: Before we discuss the big Route 66 Centennial event coming to Scissortail Park, it's worth mentioning the Route 66 story in Oklahoma was more than small towns and open road because Oklahoma City also has a strong connection. What are a couple of noted attractions along the Mother Road in Oklahoma City?

A. Green: Yeah, absolutely, James. Route 66 is really strong in Oklahoma City because we actually have 51 miles of Route 66 in Oklahoma City, which is, if not the most, it's very close to the most miles of Route 66 in any city. So, we're really excited about that. The attractions that we really like to highlight and tell our visitors about is first of all, the State Capitol building. We are one of the only states that has the Capitol building that actually sits on Route 66. So, that is very special. And with the renovations that's happened at the State Capitol, it is just an amazing place to go and see the art and things that tell the story of our great state. So, I always talk about the State Capitol when we're talking about Route 66.

Another area of Oklahoma City that sets on Route 66 that's really interesting for our visitors is the Asian district. It is the only Asian district that sets on Route 66. So, and the Asian district just shows how diverse Oklahoma City is. And so, that is another great location. Tower Theater in the Uptown district is a great place to go and visit. And then people are looking for the Instagram-able moments, and the big milk bottle on top of the building there along Route 66 is always a place that people want to go and take a picture. So, those are four of our major things along Route 66 here in Oklahoma City that we promote and that we tell visitors to, they need to seek out and see.

J. Tyree: So now let's talk about the Kickin' It Birthday Bash that will be Oklahoma City's big Route 66 Centennial celebration. When is it, and who and what will be there?

A. Green: That's going to be on May 30th. It will take place at Scissortail Park. Oh, we're so excited about this. Scissortail Park has some great activities that start early in the morning. So, those will be taking place. They have farmer's markets, they have skating and different things like that. But the big centennial celebration will kick off around 4 p.m. with a travel hub, and that will be different communities from along Route 66. They will have booths there touting and promoting all the great things that their community has along Route 66.

And then we're going to have a wonderful concert that starts at 6 p.m. All of the acts have some tie to Oklahoma. So, we're really excited about that. We're going to have two acts that were on the Voice. We're going to have Bailey Rae, and OK3 will be playing. And then after that, back in my generation, in the '90s, great country music was popular, and the band Ricochet will be performing on the stage. And then that all leads up to our headliner, which will be Kaitlin Butts. And she is really hot on the charts right now and on country radio. So, the music is going to be something that you don't want to miss.

But then the cherry on top is going to be that drone show that's going to take place after the concert. And the drone show's going to have hundreds of drones that will be doing Route 66 themed pictures and things like that. So, it's all going to be tied to Route 66. But I'm told that it's one of the largest drone shows in the United States, so that's something people don't want to miss.

J. Tyree: In addition to being fun, Kickin' It will provide an environment of health and wellness for all ages, which is why TSET will be a sponsor. Can you tell us more about the farmers markets and, in addition to the walking around one can do, what else can people do there for physical activity?

A. Green: Oh, yeah. Like I mentioned, the farmers' market will start that day in the morning and it will be open. And it goes from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and there will be fresh vegetables, flowers, and a lot of made in Oklahoma products. So, it's a great time just to come out and fill your basket full of things that you're going to cook that night or for the next week. And then to get active, the Scissortail Park has the pedal boats and kayaking that

people can participate in. And those open at 10 a.m. and will run until 8 p.m. So, you can get your exercise there.

And something that I'm really excited about, because again, it takes me back to my youth and younger days, is the roller skating. They're going to have roller skating there. They have that there at Scissortail Park, and that will open at 10 a.m. and go through about 9 p.m. And I'm hoping we can talk them into playing some '60s and '70s music that we can really dance to on our roller skates and things like that. Get that Route 66 theme going on the roller skating music. So, that'll be fun for all the family, grandparents, mothers and dads and kids. So, we're excited about that.

J. Tyree: Will it be a tobacco- and vape-free event?

A. Green: Absolutely, it is. We're working with TSET to make sure that this is a healthy event, and one that people can enjoy without the tobacco and the vaping going on around everybody. So yes, it is a tobacco and vape free event.

J. Tyree: A lot will be happening in OKC this spring that hopefully will include a long playoff run for the Thunder, right across from Scissortail Park. With so much else going on, why, in your opinion, should folks consider attending the Kickin' It Route 66 Centennial event?

A. Green: Well, first of all, yes, the Thunder, we hope we're in the playoffs at that time. And we have been working with the Thunder on how this will work if there is a playoff game and they will still have their activities and things happening. The park will be totally full, there may be some Thunder things happening and all of that. But we want people to come out, visitors and residents. It's important for the residents to come out and celebrate the Americana of what Route 66 brought to Oklahoma City and how it helped shape the city that we are today. We're really anticipating a lot of international visitors to come and attend this event. We know we've been promoting it all over the world for the past two years, and so we know we're going to have international visitors here. And what I really sell to our international visitors is that Oklahoma City, the best thing to see and do in Oklahoma City is the people. Come and visit the people and see the people.

So, we want you to come out and be that welcome group that is there for our visitors that are coming from internationally or other places within the United States, but come and embrace what Route 66 has done for our city and the Americana of that.

J. Tyree: Where can anyone learn more about the Kickin' It Birthday Bash and other fun stuff to do in OKC?

A. Green: I'm going to give you two websites that you can go to. Just focusing on the Kickin' It on 66 event, you can go to [kickinon66.com](http://kickinon66.com), and that will talk about all the entertainment and things that's happening for the May 30th celebration. And then [visitokc.com](http://visitokc.com), we

have a great calendar there that talks about all the events happening throughout the city. And I mean, you can read blogs about great places to eat, and it's just a plethora of information there on Visit OKC. And then Travel OK also has some information on events that are taking place along the route on their Route 66 section of the Travel OK website. So, we have lots of places where you can find information and learn about Route 66 and Oklahoma City, and then travel in Oklahoma in general.

J. Tyree: Thank you for all the great information, Angel. Any final words about “Kickin’ It” for our podcast listeners?

A. Green: It's going to be a lot of fun, James. And come by the Visit Oklahoma City Booth there in the travel hub. Come by and see us and ask questions and just let us know that you heard it here and we'll maybe have something special for you.

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S. Carson: Route 66 is a rich part of Oklahoma’s and our nation’s history, and Centennial events happening this year will make the milestone even more memorable. And although Route 66 – like all highways – center on motor travel, the route also featured and continues to present numerous opportunities to engage in physical activity and healthy living. Just think of all the landmarks and markets along the route to walk around, engage in and explore.

J. Tyree: We want to thank our guests today, Rhys Walker of the Oklahoma Route 66 Association, Steve Robinson of the Claremore Museum of History and Angel Green of Visit Oklahoma City for sharing just a few ways we can get our health and wellness kicks on Route 66 this and every year.

S. Carson: And we thank you, our listeners, for your time and interest in the podcast. You can listen to this or any episode of the TSET Better Health Podcast at [oklahoma.gov/tset/podcast](http://oklahoma.gov/tset/podcast) or anywhere you listen to podcasts. So have a great day, get those healthy kicks on Route 66 and until next time, this is Sarah Carson ...

J. Tyree: And James Tyree wishing you peace ...

S. Carson: And better health.