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SENIOR FOLLIES

2 SHOWS IN JUNE

STORY ON PAGE 2

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SENIOR FOLLIES

OFFERING TWO SHOWS IN JUNE

Story by Darl DeVault, contributing editor

This year's Oklahoma Senior Follies production of annual Ziegfeld-style variety shows by and for seniors shared its vision, introduced its performers, and highlighted the high energy for its June 6-7 spectaculars.

"The Senior Follies dazzle in a Ziegfeld-style extravaganza you won't forget!" said Rosinna Gies, marketing director. "From the very first note of 'Give My Regards to Broadway' to a high-energy finale featuring an electrifying excerpt from Grease, this show is packed with sparkle, nostalgic show-stopping talent."

This show celebrates aging as a period of creative vibrancy, emphasizing community participation and shared joy for seniors and supporters.

The performances at 7 p.m. Saturday, June 6, and 2 p.m. Sunday, June 7, at UCO Mitchell Hall Theatre, help fund vital Alzheimer's Association programs, giving attendees a chance to make a difference. The cast and performance style will be Follies-style, plotless revue, emphasizing atmosphere over plot. The performance will focus on creating "theatrical excitement" and an immersive experience of Broadway's glamour to kick off the evening's performances.



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This year, applying a Ziegfeld Follies slant to "Give My Regards to Broadway" transforms the energetic George M. Cohan tune into a lavish, high-class spectacle centered on visual opulence. Unlike the original's scrappy "song-and-dance" feel, a Ziegfeld-style rendition prioritizes "glorifying" the setting through staging and visual spectacle. The song will be staged as a tribute emphasizing the modernity and pulsing energy of early 20th-century New York.

The "Follies Beauties" are a centerpiece of the show. These women are community leaders who parade across the stage in custom-designed, spectacular gowns adorned with sequins and crystals.

With all performers aged 50 and older, under the direction of Gina Bramlett and Michael Pone, with Matthew Jones, Ph.D., as music director, the shows feature senior acts and the "Follies Beauties" in choreographed numbers, accompanied by live music.

The Beauty's presence allows Ziegfeld's revues of ambiance to feature statuesque showgirls in elaborate, elegant poses. A hallmark of the Follies, the "Ziegfeld Girls" would likely have paraded down massive, elaborate staircases. Instead, the Follies Beauties make their presence known throughout the performance.

Beyond comedy sketches, the show's central idea is to perform high-energy, synchronized kick lines and tap routines during the upbeat choruses.

Costumes are often the centerpiece, valued more than the choreography itself: The performers will wear extravagant headpieces and outfits that embody the New York Broadway mentioned in the lyrics.

See **FOLLIES** page 4

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FOLLIES con't from page 2



Cast and directors at their last curtain call
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“Along the way, kick up your heels with a lively four-song country line dance number that will have you clapping, stomping, and smiling from ear to ear!” Gies said. “You may even want to get up and dance along. We will also have a number called “One Hit Wonders,” songs that made an impact by different artists.”

Feathers, sequins, big smiles, and even bigger performances—this is classic showbiz with a spirited twist. They will also feature songs where the audience can sing along.

The Beauties this year are Tammy Weiss, Lisa Synar, Marie Burns, Marti Rickman, and Kesha Lashay Bell.

The full cast list is rounded out by Brick Koebrick, Byron Foley, Darrin Hackney, DeWayne McAnally, Fred Mears, Jackie Short, Jerri Hargis, Jerry Bowser and Jim Ivins. Jim Sesock, Kris Blair, Mart Rickman, Mary Nell Brueggan, Mitchell Williams, Pam Holzberger, Robert Davis, Rosinna Gies, Sam Koebrick, Tom Freeman, DeeDee Devore, Marie Burns, Kim Reed, Shannon Mick, Shari Clanin and Joe D Lee.

Experience the magic, music, and memories at the Oklahoma Senior Follies on June 6 and 7. Proceeds support Alzheimer’s education and research. Tickets are available at OKSeniorFollies.org. Reserve early and help them make a difference in our community.

The event accepts direct donations for Alzheimer’s and sells ads for the commemorative printed program. Many patrons purchase memorial ads for loved ones who have been impacted by Alzheimer’s.



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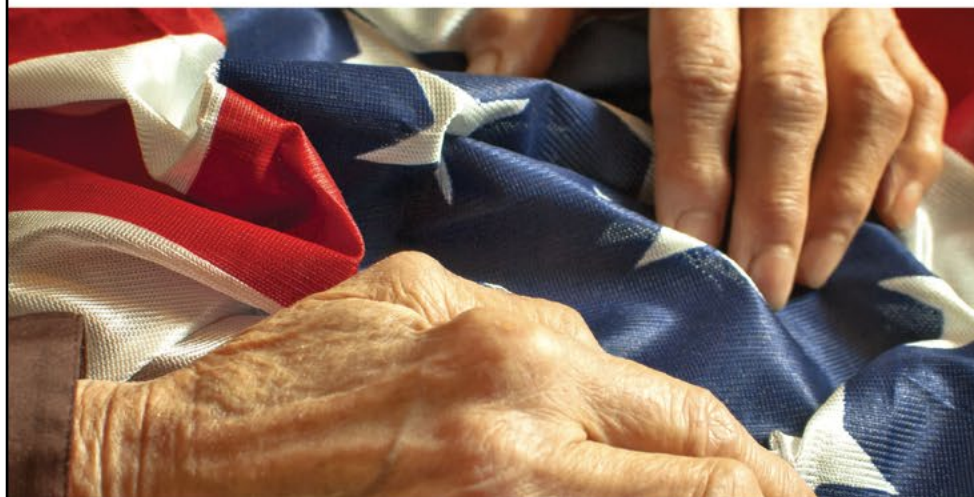
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VillagesOKC Joins YMCA for Healthy Aging Open House

By Eddie Roach

VillagesOKC will join the YMCA of Greater Oklahoma City and other community partners for a Healthy Aging Open House on Wednesday, May 27, from 11 am to 2 pm at the Mitch Park YMCA, 2901 Marilyn Williams Dr., in Edmond. The event is in conjunction with Older Americans Month.

Every May, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Community Living leads the nation's observance of Older Americans Month as a time to recognize older Americans' contributions, highlight aging trends, and reaffirm ACL's commitment to serving older adults.

The 2026 theme, Champion Your Health, focuses on prevention, wellness, and personal responsibility as cornerstones of healthy aging. It encourages taking an active role in managing your own health, advocating for yourself, accessing preventive care, and making informed decisions that support independence.

The Mitch Park open house will provide free all-day guest passes and free joining fees for new members. In addition to trying out group exercise classes and pickleball, attendees will learn about programs from VillagesOKC and the other participating organizations.

Participants will include Mercy Hospital, Aging Our Way: Oklahoma's Multisector Plan on Aging, AARP, Metro Library, Oklahoma State Department of Health and INTEGRIS Health + INTEGRIS Jim Thorpe Rehabilitation.

VillagesOKC will offer a variety of casual 25-minute topical conversations led by local experts in a variety of industries. Raising Cain's will provide tea and lemonade.

Following is a schedule of events:

10:30 a.m. Yoga - Studio B

10:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. Pickleball - Gym



- 11 a.m. - 2 p.m. Demo EGYM - Upstairs Fitness Area
- 11 a.m. - 2 p.m. Connect with Community - Resources + Refuel with Healthy Refreshments
- 11 a.m. - 2 p.m. Coffee Talk with VillagesOKC
- 11:30 a.m. SilverSneakers Cardio Fit - Studio A
- 12:30 p.m. SilverSneakers Yoga - Studio A

In addition to the Mitch Park event, free all-day guest passes and free joining fees will be available May 27 at all 15 YMCA's in the Oklahoma City metro.

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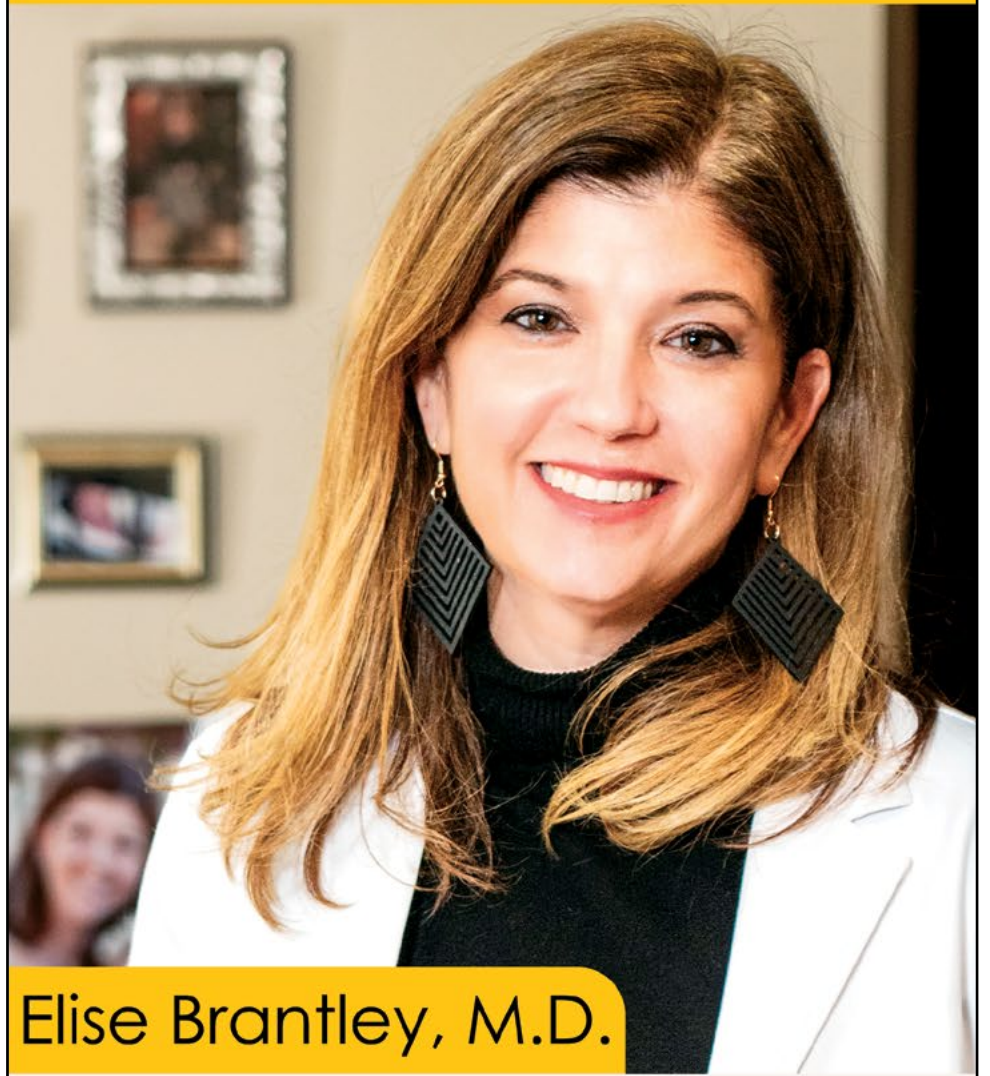


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The Wall That Heals Visits Mitch Park

Oklahomans are invited to join Veterans May 14-17 at Mitch Park in Edmond to experience The Wall That Heals, a three-quarter scale replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. This traveling wall honors the men and women who gave their lives in Vietnam or later died as a result of their service.

"I often enjoy walking in Mitch Park. Having the Wall that Heals there will remind me of the friends I lost during the war and the human cost of the war," said retired Air Force Col. Chuck DeBellevue. "This will create a sacred and solemn place that helps bring a calmness to the memories of my kind and Vietnam Veterans and their families."

DeBellevue, 80, retired to Edmond in 1998 after a distinguished 30-year military career and has since been an active speaker to members of the local and veteran communities. His story as the highly decorated last American air ace on active duty, with six aerial victories in 1972 in an F-4 Phantom II above North Vietnam, is a source of patriotic pride and inspiration for all who hear it.

The Edmond VFW Post 4938 is hosting The Wall That Heals and is recruiting volunteers to assemble it. Through volunteer support, community partnerships, and public engagement, they invite everyone to take part in this shared act of remembrance.

The Mitch Park exhibit spans 375 feet in length and rises to 7.5 feet at its apex, constructed of Avonite, a durable synthetic granite. It features 140 numbered panels supported by an aluminum frame.

Modern LED lighting illuminates the memorial so names can be read clearly both day and night. Visitors are welcome to do name rubbings of individual service members as a meaningful and personal way to honor those listed.

The Wall's 140 panels contain the names of more than 58,000 Vietnam service members, 990 of whom are Oklahomans, ensuring accuracy and consistency with the original Memorial.

In addition to open viewing of The Wall, several special ceremonies and community events will take place during the four days. These moments honor specific groups, recognize service, and provide opportunities for reflection and remembrance.

May 14 - 9 a.m. Native American Vietnam Service Recognition Ceremony
A ceremony honoring the service and sacrifice of Native American veterans and their Nations who served during the Vietnam War.

May 14 - 6 p.m. Vietnam Veterans Welcome Home Ceremony
A long-overdue welcome home for Vietnam veterans, recognizing their service, sacrifice, and dedication.

May 15 - 6 p.m. HMONG SGU Recognition Ceremony
Honoring the Hmong Special Guerrilla Units who served alongside U.S. forces during the Vietnam War.

May 16 - 9 p.m. Light Up the Night - Oklahoma County MIA Tribute
A powerful evening tribute honoring the more than 100 Missing in Action service members from Oklahoma County during the Vietnam War. This ceremony will illuminate The Wall in remembrance of those who have not yet come home.

While traveling, the Walls That Heal are more accessible to many Oklahomans, highlighting their significance and encouraging community engagement. Oklahoma is graced with a permanent replica 80% the size of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall in Washington, D.C., dedicated on Veterans Day 2013 in Enid. This replica was retired to Enid after traveling the country, measuring 380 feet long and 8 feet high at its tallest point, and made of anodized aluminum.

Gov. Mary Fallin proclaimed it Oklahoma's Official Vietnam War Memorial. The memorial reminds patriots that freedom is not free, is open to the public and free of charge from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. year-round, encouraging ongoing engagement and respect.



Retired USAF Col. Charles (Chuck) DeBellevue poses in his formal mess dress at a Veterans charity event at Gaillardia Country Club in Oklahoma City.

The Wall stands at Woodring Regional Airport. "It is a somber reminder of those who gave their lives so we can live in freedom, and a tribute to honor our men and women who are serving or have served in the military," said Gov. Fallin in 2013 at its dedication.

The Living Walls, located across the street from the Vietnam War Memorial in Enid, honor and remember our military heroes. It is dedicated to Oklahoma veterans, active duty, retired, MIA, those killed while serving, and those who made the ultimate sacrifice, fostering pride and respect among visitors.

Just west of the site is the M.L. Becker Educational Center, a collection of permanent and temporary exhibits featuring patriotic, military and war-related memorabilia. The center won a 2019 Oklahoma Museums Association award for Education and Outreach. The center is open by appointment only for student groups, except on Vietnam Veterans Day and Memorial Days, when it is open all day.

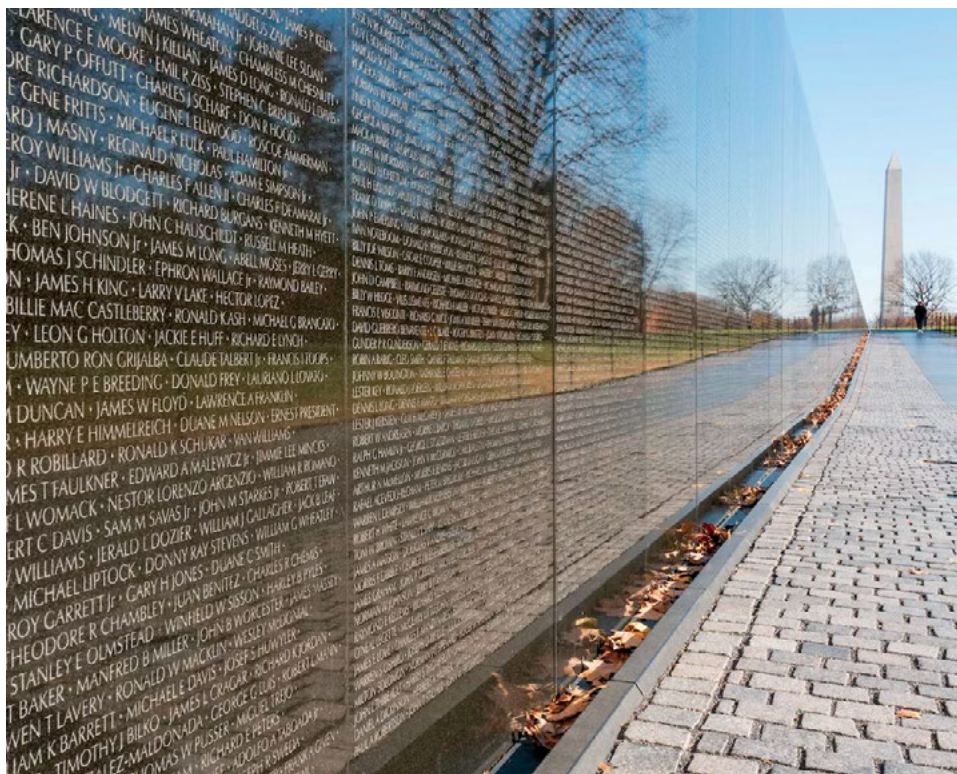
Vietnam Veterans have been the focus of a groundswell of recognition over the past 14 years as the U.S. government has executed a sustained, multi-administration effort to provide "overdue recognition" to Vietnam-era Veterans.

The 50th Anniversary Commemoration (2012-2025), authorized by Congress and launched in 2012, was designed to thank and honor the 9 million Americans who served on active duty between November 1, 1955, and May 15, 1975.

This congressional mandate's primary objective was to "right a wrong" for Veterans who were often ignored or mistreated upon their initial return home.

In reaction to this effort, more than 11,000 local, state, and national organizations, such as the VFW, have partnered with the Department of Defense to host thousands of community-based events.

The Vietnam War Veterans Recognition Act of 2017 codified the nation's commitment to Vietnam Veterans by establishing March 29 as National Vietnam War



Vietnam Veteran's Memorial in Washington, D.C.

Veterans Day.

That date was chosen because it marks the anniversary of when the last U.S. combat troops departed Vietnam, and the last prisoners of war were released in 1973. The act added March 29 to the list of days on which the U.S. flag should be specifically displayed to honor these Veterans.

A central feature of the 50th-anniversary efforts has been the distribution of Vietnam Veteran Lapel Pins in formal ceremonies as a "Token of Gratitude": These pins, featuring the message "A Grateful Nation Thanks and Honors You," were presented at public ceremonies to provide a "welcome home" that many never received. Since 2012, more than 3 million Veterans have been publicly thanked at more than 21,000 ceremonies.

Most importantly, recognition has also shifted toward addressing the long-term physical toll of the war with expanded health research and benefits.

The VA launched the Vietnam Era Health Retrospective Observational Study in 2016, the most comprehensive health assessment of this Veteran group since the 1980s, focusing on the impacts of Agent Orange and PTSD.

And most recently, the new PACT Act integration at the VA in recent years has been offering toxic exposure screenings and expanded healthcare enrollment specifically for Vietnam-era Veterans. ● story by Darl Devault, contributing editor

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Oklahoma Veteran News Magazine Receives Highest Recognition

For the statewide free Oklahoma Veterans News Magazine to receive a Senate Citation of Recognition after just one year in print serves as powerful validation of its role in bridging the gap between state resources and the Veterans it serves.

Such recognition highlights the magazine's value as a statewide communication tool that unifies a community of over 300,000 Veterans.

Co-publishers Steve Eldridge and Veteran Steve Sibley worked together on its creation for more than a year leading up to the publication's first issue in May 2025.

This official validation of impact from State Senator Brenda Stanley (R-Midwest City), who chairs the Senate Veterans and Military Affairs Committee, designates the publication as a trusted source of information for the state's military community.

This legislative commendation reinforces the magazine's role as a "vital part of the state's identity," officially acknowledging its mission to pay tribute to the service and sacrifice of Oklahoma Veterans and their families.

All of this is because the magazine is attempting to help many Veterans who are unaware of available benefits, such as sales tax exemptions. A recognized statewide magazine acts as a critical partner in disseminating this essential information and updates on benefits, services, and new laws, such as the PACT Act and state-specific tax exemptions.

It also serves as a platform to raise awareness of Veterans-owned businesses and encourage "patriotic Oklahomans" to support them.

The platform also promotes storytelling and community engagement. It helps preserve the patriotic legacy by sharing stories of Veterans' achievements. It chronicles their sacrifice, fostering a sense of belonging and "collective pride" across the state.

Its outreach for isolated Veterans continues to expand with over 600 distribution points-including VFWs, American Legion posts, and VA clinics. This magazine reaches Veterans who may not have easy access to digital information, partnering with the Oklahoma Department of Veterans Affairs (ODVA) to feature leadership and highlight state-run programs and ceremonies.

The content of the document follows:

THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA

Citation of Recognition

EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR THE OKLAHOMA VETERAN NEWS MAGAZINE; COMMENDING ITS LEADERSHIP; AND DIRECTING DISTRIBUTION.

WHEREAS, Senator Brenda Stanley, Chair of the Senate Veterans and Military Affairs Committee, proudly supports the mission of the Oklahoma Veteran News Magazine, the first statewide monthly free publication dedicated to serving Oklahoma's veterans, active-duty service members, and their families; and

WHEREAS, the magazine marks one year in print, reflecting its continued commitment to informing, connecting and honoring those who have taken the oath to defend the United States; and

WHEREAS, Oklahoma is home to major installations, including Altus Air Force Base, Fort Sill, McAlester Army Ammunition Plant, Tinker Air Force Base, and Vance Air Force Base, which play a vital role in national defense and serve as key economic drivers; and

WHEREAS, the Oklahoma Veteran News Magazine strengthens the military community by sharing important information, connecting veterans to resources, and promoting awareness, respect, and appreciation for their service; and

WHEREAS, the Oklahoma Senate recognizes the importance of ensuring veterans and their families have access to timely, accurate information and honors the service and sacrifice of those who have defended our freedoms;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE 60TH OKLAHOMA LEGISLATURE:



THAT the Oklahoma Senate expresses its support for the Oklahoma Veteran News Magazine and its mission to serve Oklahoma's military and veteran community, and

THAT co-publishers Steve Eldridge and Veteran Steve Sibley are commended for exemplifying the spirit of "The Oklahoma Standard" through their dedication to veterans' affairs and community service; and

THAT a copy of this resolution be distributed to Steve Eldridge and Steve Sibley.

Signed April 22, 2026: Senator Brenda Stanley
Senate District 42 ●

story by Darl Devault, contributing editor

Are the 5Gs Wasted Money or an Elixir for a Long Life?

Story by Richard Stephens, Jr., staff writer

Do you use the “five Gs” (5Gs) - ginkgo biloba, green tea, ginseng, ginger and garlic - at times?

Dr. P.H. (Public Health Doctorate) Gaines Bradford Jackson of Midwest City recommends taking them all at once.

“These five plants...will synergistically interact with each other and have an overall positive effect on lowering blood pressure, stabilizing your cardiovascular system and making you overall healthy - and not one of these is synthetic. It's all natural. God put them on this good green earth,” explained Jackson. “There's no bad side effects from the mixture of all five of these.”

Mix and Drink

Jackson, age 81, thoroughly mixes an equal portion of the five plants: ginkgo biloba, green tea, ginseng, ginger and garlic, in powdered form in a jar. Then, he adds one teaspoon of the mix to a cup of warm coffee, tea or cocoa, stirs, and drinks it. He's a ten-year user.

His advice? “If you're beyond 65 years of age and a non-smoker and a non-drinker, I would start putting the stuff in and take a teaspoon a day...It takes a month for the overall cardiovascular system to notice a difference.”

Results? Jackson said he feels better and sleeps through the night. He takes Eliquis but no other medicine. “I don't have any major health problems.”

Jackson isn't a snake oil salesman. He has a Bachelor and Masters of Science, a Doctorate of Public Health in Environmental Health and taught at Rose State College's Engineering Science Division for 34 years.

Many people buy and use the 5Gs and hundreds of other herbs, vitamins and supplements that stores and pharmacies sell over the counter, trying to improve their health. Jolene T. at Midwest City's healthpatch store, which sells these, said there's a “general increase in interest in natural products.”

Ginkgo Biloba - Improve circulation to brain, memory. Alzheimer's prevention. Antioxidant.

Green tea - Antioxidant. Lower blood sugar/pressure, reduce memory loss, blood clots, anxiety, cholesterol. Strengthen bones.

Ginseng - Enhance energy, endurance, memory, virility, concentration. Reduce high blood pressure, diabetes.

Ginger - Prevent motion & morning sickness, nausea, diarrhea, blood thinner, respiratory infections. Lower cholesterol, pain.

Garlic - Improve immune, respiratory and circulatory systems and blood pressure. Reduce total and LDL. Assist the liver.

Informed Responses

Brian dela Cruz, a Registered Dietitian with the Senior Nutrition Program, Oklahoma County, said, “The dietary value of consuming these foods (5Gs) has many health benefits for the body, including keeping your heart healthy, keeping your immune system strong, and having benefits for your digestive health.”

Dr. Ryan Biggers, a family medicine physician with Sisters of Saint Mary (SSM) Health in Midwest City, wrote, “My overall assessment is that (while) there do seem to be some health benefits to all of these supplements, there really is no research on using them all together.” He identified some individual benefits below.

- “Green tea - some good results on supporting cognitive function and metabolism. No benefit on cancer treatment or prevention. Some benefit on Alzheimer's prevention due to production of L-theanine.

- “Ginkgo biloba - some evidence of use as an anti-inflammatory with minimal side effects, although not to the extent of well-known medications (NSAIDs). Has been shown to produce nitric oxide, and useful vasodilator (but it could cause low blood pressure).



The healthpatch store in Midwest City sells Natures Sunshine products like garlic, ginseng, ginger and ginkgo biloba

- “Ginger powder - actually the most robust beneficial studies of the five, mostly revolving around its anti-nausea effect...upset stomach, colic, morning sickness, etc.
- “Ginseng - the most widely varied dosed of the five, which makes any consistent studies almost impossible. Does show some promise for cognitive benefit in the elderly and for its use as an anti-viral.
- “Garlic - usually to be considered the safest of the five. This has many medicinal uses, is low-calorie, and is rich in vitamins. Higher doses...seem to be beneficial for lowering blood pressure (and) as a component...Allicin blocks Angiotensin II. It has also been shown to be beneficial to lower LDL cholesterol by as much as 10% (statin drugs lower LDL 40-50%), but does not have any triglyceride-lowering effect.”

Biggers had additional advice. “These supplements show the most benefit when taking for specific conditions, rather than as general health promoters. Quality and standardization of supplement preparations vary greatly, which affects efficacy. Most benefits are moderate (at best) in magnitude.” He closed with, “Although generally safe, potential drug interactions exist, particularly with anticoagulants for ginkgo and garlic.”

Testing the 5Gs

At the end of our interview, curiosity won and Jackson and I sipped the 5Gs together in tea. It has a brown color and tastes bitter.

Will I start taking the 5Gs? Not together. I drink green tea and my wife prepares homemade foods, sometimes adding garlic and ginger for flavor. What will you do?

For more information, go to the FDA, National Institute of Health, www.webmd.com, www.healthline.com, Journal of Health and Rehabilitation Research and others. See the online version of the story for Dr. Ryan Biggers' complete appraisal.

Disclaimer: Dr. P.H. Jackson and the author are not nutritionists or medical or naturopathic doctors and are not offering medical advice tailored to individual needs and situations. Because herbs, spices and other remedies can interact with medications or affect some medical conditions, you should always check with your prescribing health care professional before using them.

OPINION



The Letter Your Loved Ones Will Treasure

Dear Savvy Senior

I want to leave something meaningful for my children and grandchildren, beyond just money or property. I've heard about "legacy letters," but I don't really know what they are or how to start one. Can you help

--Legacy Seeker

Dear Seeker,

You're asking a wonderful question. A legacy letter, sometimes called an ethical will, is a personal note to your loved ones where you can share your values, life lessons, cherished memories, hopes, and guidance. Unlike a traditional will, which focuses on legal matters, a legacy letter comes straight from the heart.

Why write one?

Many people think a legacy is just money or property. But often, it's your words, values, and life lessons that leave the deepest mark. A legacy letter gives your family something to hold onto – your stories, your traditions, and the experiences that shaped who you are. Children and grandchildren often return to these letters for comfort, guidance, or inspiration long after you're gone. In many ways, it becomes an

emotional last will and testament, answering some of the most important questions about your life.

A legacy letter can also help explain the "why" behind your estate plan in a personal, thoughtful way. While a will handles the legal and financial details, a legacy letter adds context – why you made certain decisions or what you hope your loved ones will do with what you leave behind. That added perspective can ease misunderstandings, strengthen family connections, and leave a lasting sense of closeness.

Getting started

Take a moment to reflect on what matters most to you. Consider asking yourself:

- What values or principles have guided my life?
- What moments or experiences am I most grateful for?
- What mistakes or regrets taught me the most?
- How do I hope to be remembered by my loved ones?
- What lessons, advice, or guidance do I want to leave for my family?
- Which family traditions, stories, or dreams do I want future generations to carry forward?

Keep it personal and sincere. You can write one letter or several for different family members. Most letters run one to three pages, though there's no strict rule.

If you'd like a little guidance as you get started, Trust & Will has a free legacy letter writing guide with step-by-step prompts to help you organize your thoughts and begin writing. You can find it at trustandwill.com/learn/legacy-letter-writing-guide.

If writing isn't your thing, consider creating a legacy video. Speak directly to your loved ones, sharing stories, guidance, and heartfelt reflections. Most smartphones now record high-quality video and sound, making it easy to create, store, and share. A video captures your voice, expressions, and surroundings in a way that a letter simply can't.

Storing and sharing

Keep letters or videos in a safe, easy-to-find spot. Physical letters can go in a secure file, safe, or with your attorney, while digital files can be backed up to the cloud or an external drive. You can share them now or wait until later, after you're gone. Be sure to include instructions in your will so family members know where to find them.

When it comes down to it, a legacy letter or video is truly the heart behind your will. It gives you the chance to share your values, tell your stories, and even explain the intentions behind your estate plan, leaving your loved ones with words that will matter long after you are gone. Written with generosity, empathy, and positivity, a few thoughtful pages or a short video can create an emotional imprint that money alone cannot provide.

Send your questions or comments to questions@savvysenior.org, or to Savvy Senior, P.O. Box 5443, Norman, OK 73070

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Rising Property Taxes Examined

Story by Linda Agee



Linda Agee supports saving the American Dream by reining in rising property taxes.

Property taxes in Oklahoma have been rising steadily each year, making homeownership more difficult for many.

During an Oklahoma House study last year, Bradley Ward, Ph.D., deputy state director of Americans for Prosperity, a nonprofit organization that advocates for policy reforms at the local, state, and national levels, presented supporting facts from the U.S. Census Bureau. He displayed a chart showing property taxes have increased 367% since 1993, outpacing household income

growth, inflation, and other tax sources. He pointed out that "The gap between tax burden and ability to pay is widening."

This impacts all homeowners but is especially troubling for seniors on fixed incomes. As property tax and insurance rates continue to rise, some will be forced to sell their homes and downsize or move in with relatives. Consider the following example, showing how property taxes can affect affordability: 1) In Oklahoma today, the property tax on a \$200,000 home would be around \$2,500 per year.

2) In 30 years (using the current 3% annual cap on valuation), the tax burden on that same home will have grown to around \$6,000 per year. And the homeowner will have paid over \$118,000 in property taxes.

This example does not take into consideration school bonds, reassessments due to home improvements or changes to tax laws, so the amounts would likely be more.

Some might call taxing the increase in home value a tax on "unrealized capital gains" because it is a "paper profit," which means taxing the increase in an asset before it is sold.

State Senator Dusty Deever (R-District 32) said in a press release posted to the state legislature website in July 2025, "I hear more about property taxes from my constituents than any other issue, and for good reason. This is a fundamental issue that makes living in one's home difficult for Oklahomans, especially seniors and young families trying to buy their first homes."

People opposed to property tax reform say reducing or eliminating the property tax on Oklahoma homesteads will harm our schools. This is not true. The state constitution says, "The Legislature shall, by appropriate legislation, raise and appropriate funds for the annual support of the common schools of the State ..." It does not mandate the source of that funding.

According to statistics from the State Department of Education, less than 30% of total revenue to fund schools comes from homestead properties. Schools also receive revenue from commercial property tax, the Commissioners of the Land Office, the state lottery, the oil and gas tax, the motor vehicle tax, Rural Electric Association Co-ops, the mortgage tax, tribal donations, state appropriations, federal grants, and other miscellaneous sources. Some counties, like Pottawatomie County, also collect sales tax for schools.

Another misconception is that reducing or eliminating tax on homesteads will increase taxes on other, non-residential properties.

Again, not true. Taxable fair cash value of commercial properties is already capped at 5% annually.

Several property tax reform bills have been introduced during the current legislature, the most prominent being State Question 823 sponsored by former State Representative Mike Reynolds, Senator Shane Jett (R-District 17) and Representative Jay Steagall (R-District 43). An initiative petition is currently underway to place this on the November ballot, and if approved by voters, it would eliminate property taxes on Oklahoma homesteads.

Schools and municipal services must be funded, so SQ 823 would be phased in over four years, giving the Legislature time to determine appropriate sources of replacement revenue.

In addition to ensuring adequate funding for schools and government services, Mike Reynolds believes the legislature should also address spending. He said, "I think a lot of government funding has gotten completely out of control, so I want the money to be used appropriately."

Many state legislators agree. Senator Deever introduced Senate Bill 679, the Property Tax Transparency Act. The bill did not advance during the current session but can be reintroduced during the next legislative session, which starts on February 1, 2027. At least, the conversation has begun.

Bottom line is, our government has relied too long on taxing residential properties to fund schools and government services, to the point of either taxing people out of their homes or destroying their hopes of ever owning a home.

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Seniors Asked to be Literacy Coaches

Story by Darl DeVault, contributing editor

When 350 seniors gathered on March 30 at the Capitol for their annual advocacy day, House Speaker Kyle Hilbert, R-Bristow, asked them to serve as literacy coaches in support of his House Bill 4420 (Strong Readers Act). His was the strongest appeal in the House Chamber as they listened to 10 speakers during the hour-and-a-half program. He is the youngest Speaker in Oklahoma's history, having assumed the role at age 30.

The other speakers outlined specific senior-centric legislation and its status in the legislative process. At the same time, Speaker Hilbert pointed out that seniors have a role to play in their personal lives by reading to children or prompting their children to read to grandchildren.

Every person in the chamber, no matter what agenda brought them to the event, has an interest in the agenda he was explaining. Speaker Hilbert, who leads the lower chamber, expressed dismay at Oklahoma's 49th in the nation's education system.

"For too long, we as Oklahomans have accepted failure from our education system and being near the bottom of education rankings, and I just think that's unacceptable," he said. "We've got to strive for excellence."

He has centered his educational reform platform on a major overhaul of policies on childhood literacy and classroom environments. His primary focus is the "Mississippi Miracle" model, which aims to lift Oklahoma from the bottom of national education rankings through rigorous literacy standards and early intervention.

Speaking early on, his direct appeal to every senior in the chamber made him the de facto keynote speaker, delivering polished, informative remarks within the same time allotted to the others.

Before and after this formal session in the House Chamber, seniors could learn from 30 informational exhibitor booths in the 2nd-floor rotunda. to discover state and nonprofit resources for Aging in Place, Nutrition Programs, Healthcare Access and Public Transportation, especially for those living in rural areas.

The legislature is considering several important bills for seniors this session. By attending and engaging with legislators in their offices, advocates were empowered to influence the future of policies like tax credits, homestead exemptions, COLA, and pension stability that directly affect their lives.

Senate Bill 1114 can provide an ad valorem tax credit for seniors whose income falls below the median household income, essentially "freezing" their tax liability to the level of the first year they qualified.

Seniors were asked to advocate for Homestead Exemption Increases: Proposals exist to increase the homestead exemption specifically for seniors and those on fixed incomes, helping them remain in their homes.

Cost-of-Living Adjustments (COLA) to keep pace with inflation are in bills like HB 2193, which propose an 8% increase for members of various public retirement systems (including Teachers, Firefighters, and Public Employees) who receive less than \$90,000 in gross benefits.

Pension Stability is outlined in SB 10, which specifically targets benefit increases for the Oklahoma Public Employees Retirement System.

After hearing from the speakers on these initiatives, attendees met with their elected representatives to have their voices heard. Volunteers assisted attendees in locating their legislators' offices. This event offered a meaningful opportunity for Oklahoma senior citizens, caregivers, and interested community members to advocate for policies that improve their quality of life actively.

Southern Oklahoma Development Association Ombudsman Supervisor and Systems Advocate Rebekah Williams exceeded the House Chambers proceedings in her duties with the Area Agency on Aging.

Event sponsor, the Oklahoma Department of Human Services, is highlighting its "Aging Our Way" plan to address aging-related challenges, as the 65-plus population will outnumber children in the next decade.

Advocates were asked to push for increased state investment to eliminate service gaps, such as in Senior Nutrition Programs, where a primary concern is the growing waitlist for meal deliveries (like Meals on Wheels) and congregate dining services.

The annual event was a chance for Oklahoma's seniors and their advocates to discuss the needs of the more than 875,877 adults age 60 and older in Oklahoma and approximately 140,000 adults age 80 or older. By 2030, the population of older Oklahomans is projected to increase by 21.3 percent, and, for the first time, as noted earlier, is expected to outnumber children.

The beginning of a legislative session is the best time for seniors to interact with their elected representatives. This is when new laws are being proposed and discussed, and when legislators are more likely to be open to hearing from their constituents.

Organizers said the group of seniors gathered that day was large enough to show legislators the significant number of seniors affected by the lack of services and resources.

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Oklahoma House Speaker Kyle Hilbert, R-Bristow, spoke passionately about improving literacy at the annual Senior Day at the Capitol in the House Chamber.

“The emphasis on Senior Day is many seniors being present at the Capitol to show Legislators their determination to be heard,” said Rebekah Williams. “We must make sure our voices are heard about treating all Oklahomans well from birth to 60, 80, 90 and beyond.”

Seniors could also provide legislators with specific examples of how the lack of services impacts their community. For example, they could discuss the lack of affordable housing options for seniors, the shortage of home healthcare providers, or limited access to public transportation in rural areas.

Gathering at the Capitol also allowed seniors to network with senior advocacy groups that share their concerns. They could share information and strategies for effectively communicating with legislators and organizing to make their voices heard.”

The Oklahoma Alliance on Aging organized Senior Day in partnership with the Oklahoma Silver Haired Legislature Alumni Association, AARP Oklahoma, and the Oklahoma Department of Human Services Community Living, Aging and Protective Services Division.

Oklahoma House Speaker Kyle Hilbert (Republican, District 29) is the youngest Speaker in Oklahoma’s history, having assumed the role on January 7, 2025, at age 30.

OMRF awarded \$3.5 million to study ovarian aging

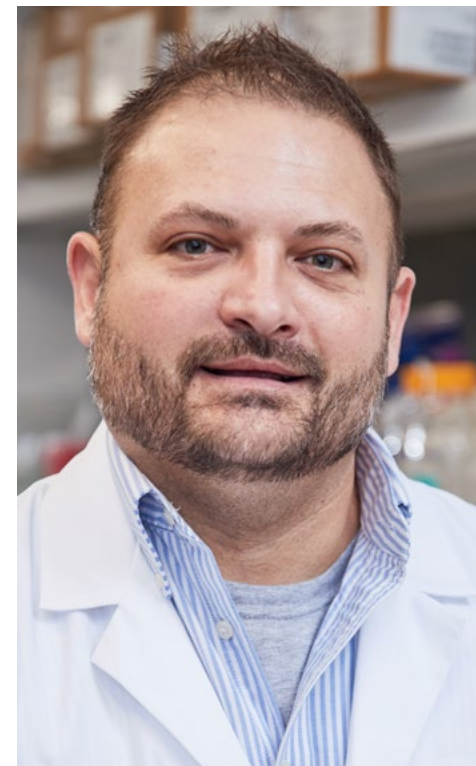
As women hit their mid-30s, ovaries begin to experience chronic, low-level inflammation. Although it’s too faint to be felt, this inflammation foreshadows the end of their peak reproductive period and, years later, the onset of menopause.

Two Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation scientists have received a \$3.5 million National Institutes of Health grant to study what triggers this inflammation. Their findings could ultimately help extend female fertility and delay menopause.

The National Institute on Aging, part of the NIH, awarded the five-year grant to Sarah Ocañas, Ph.D., and Michael Stout, Ph.D.



Sarah Ocañas, Ph.D.,



Michael Stout, Ph.D.

This new research will build on their discovery that specific immune cells begin to accumulate in the ovaries around the same time fertility begins to decline. That accumulation leads to inflammation.

Stout hopes the research will answer a fundamental biological question: “Does inflammation drive ovarian aging, or does ovarian aging trigger inflammation? Once we understand which comes first, we can begin looking for ways to intervene.”

Ocañas will look at why aging begins earlier in ovaries than in the rest of the body. She believes it may be related to the monthly menstrual cycle.

“Each time an egg is released, the ovary must heal itself,” she said. “Over decades, this repeated cycle of slight damage and repair may lead to the chronic inflammation and scar tissue that are hallmarks of ovarian aging.”

Determining the earliest age-related inflammation, the OMRF researchers believe, could lead to potential therapeutic targets to extend reproductive health and improve overall health as women age.

“You have to understand what’s going on biologically – and why – before you can develop treatments,” Stout said. “That’s what this research is about.”

Their grant is No. 1R01AG099844-01. Previous funding from the Global Consortium for Reproductive Longevity and Equality provided preliminary research that made the NIH grant possible.

OK Territorial Museum to Highlight Children's Artwork

By Van Mitchell, staff writer

The Oklahoma Territorial Museum and Carnegie Library in Guthrie, located at 406 E. Oklahoma Avenue in Guthrie is partnering with the International Research and Archives Network (IRAND) on an exhibit highlighting artwork by Cheyenne and Arapaho children who attended the Seger Indian Training School in Washita County.

Staff at the museum will work with the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum in Oklahoma City to create the exhibit, which will be available to international audiences in the coming year.

John Homer Seger founded the Seger Indian Training School in the late 1800s. There were approximately three dozen buildings on the grounds, including a school, hospital and dormitories. The facility closed in 1941.

The two museums in Oklahoma are now the first in the United States to join the international effort to highlight children's artwork and experiences represented in archives and research institutions worldwide.

Erin Brown serves as Curator of Collections at The Oklahoma Territorial Museum and Carnegie Library.

She said IRAND is a subcommittee of the UNESCO Memory of the World program.

UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, is a specialized agency dedicated to strengthening international cooperation in the fields of education, science, culture, and information.

"So, this Memory of the World program, they have projects and programs all over the world and they focus on endangered cultures and history," Brown said. "So, for instance, they have programs and projects in Sudan. They have projects in Ukraine right now. And this could be anything from war, conflict, climate change, population decline, anything that threatens the continuation of learning about a culture or whatever, anything that threatens it to be disappearing within the next couple of generations. They're working to preserve those cultures, those histories, those legacies around the world."

Brown said IRAND as a subcommittee focuses specifically on the experiences and stories of children that are housed in university research archives, libraries, any of these projects, any of these things, stories around the world.

"They're trying to preserve the experiences of children," she said. "So, when they learned about these drawings that we had from the Seger School, they were interested in how children back then viewed their own culture versus white culture, this assimilation process? How did this work? How did the tribes respond to this?"

Brown said she is currently doing research on the school itself and how it operated and the people associated with it.

"We do have a list of names of the children that produce the drawings," she said. "So, I have not yet reached out to the Cheyenne Arapaho tribe. I needed to get my foundational history down before I started asking specific questions for them, but we're going to get trying to reach out to some of these families, these descendants and get their feedback on what their history, what their

legacy, what their story, what their experience with the school has been, and then putting this together. I'm inviting people who may have stories regarding the Seger School to reach out to me. I'd love to hear from them. I want to be sure to give an accurate and honest depiction of this history."

The Oklahoma Territorial Museum and Carnegie Library is a division of the Oklahoma Historical Society. The mission of the Oklahoma Historical Society is to collect, preserve and share the history and culture of the state of Oklahoma and its people. Founded in 1893 by members of the Territorial Press Association, the OHS maintains museums, historic sites and affiliates across the state. Through its research archives, exhibits, educational programs and publications, the OHS chronicles the rich history of Oklahoma.

Brown said the museum received the children's artwork from descendants of Florence Hitchcock who worked for the US Deputy Marshals office in Guthrie, in the Oklahoma Territory.

"She deputized because in her work as stenographer and processing all the legal documents, she had to be deputized to have that authority," Brown said.

She said Hitchcock traveled to Seger and made friends with the people there.

"She made friends with the tribal members. She made friends with the students there. She made friends with the Seger family," Brown said. "And so, she went out there several times personally and on professional business and just maintained that relationship. And so, when she was there, that's when she

acquired these drawings."

Brown said after renovations and repairs to the Carnegie Library are completed, the artwork exhibit will be housed there.

Brown said she hopes people walk away from the exhibit with knowledge of the past and how Native tribe members were impacted then and now.

"I would like to introduce them to stories and people that they may not be aware of," she said. "There's a lot of people outside of Oklahoma around the country and around the world that have never heard of the various tribes. They don't have an awareness that Native American tribes are active today. They don't really have an awareness that even these boarding schools, some of them are still active today."

She continued, "There's still this process going on, and that preserving the cultures and the languages of these various tribes, including the Cheyenne Arapaho is a daily struggle. Even though these drawings were done 100 years ago, this process is still happening, and people are still working to preserve their own identities, their Native identities, and their Native cultures."

For more information on The Oklahoma Territorial Museum and Carnegie Library call (405) 471-8568. For more information about the OHS visit okhistory.org.

Pictured above: The artwork by Cheyenne and Arapaho children who attended the Seger Indian Training School in Washita County included this drawing from Irene and Mildred White Buffalo.





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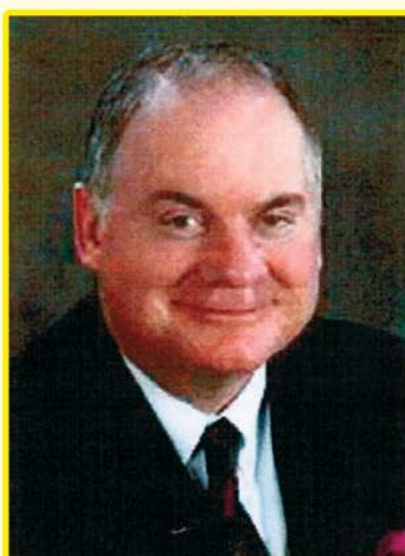
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GYPSY TWANG to Present Concert at Round Barn



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Gypsy Twang's sound blends original songs, traditional favorites, vintage country, Americana, folk, and Red Dirt influences. Steve grew up surrounded by music thanks to his father's boogie-woogie piano and jazz jam sessions, while Sarah developed her love for country and western music from her father. Today, the band performs original songs written by Sarah and John along with tunes by fellow Oklahoma songwriters and beloved country classics.

Current band members include Sarah Barker Huhn (lead vocals and guitar), Steve Huhn (upright bass), John Williams (vocals, guitar, harmonica), and Kurt "Frenchie" Nielsen (mandolin and tenor guitar).

Come out and hang with the Twang!

All concerts are free, though donations are welcomed to support maintenance of the barn, located six miles east of Interstate 35 on historic Route 66. For more information about live music at the barn, call Joe Baxter at 405-833-1350.

arcadiaroundbarn.com/gypsy-twang-to-present-elm-tree-concert/

Tulsa singer-songwriters Gypsy Twang will present a special Elm Tree Concert on Sunday, May 3, from 1–3 p.m. at the Arcadia Round Barn. Guests are invited to enjoy live music beneath the shade of the giant elm tree on the north side of the barn.

Established in May 2009, Gypsy Twang began when husband-and-wife musicians Steve and Sarah Huhn set out to form a band together. After recruiting friends for a single performance, the group quickly found themselves booking additional shows and creating a name inspired by both Bob



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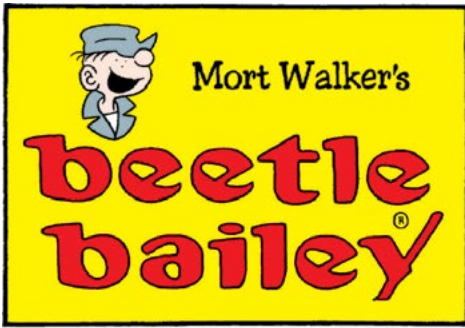
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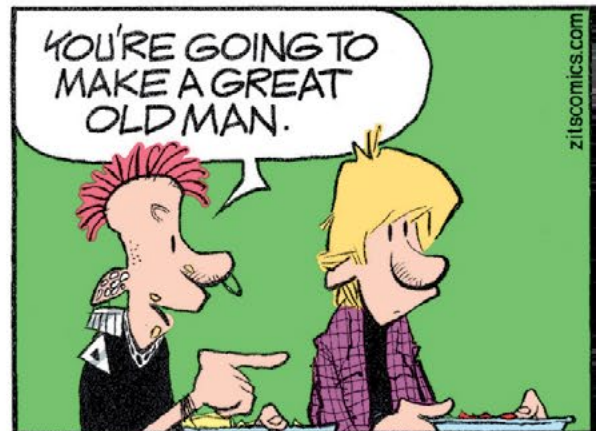
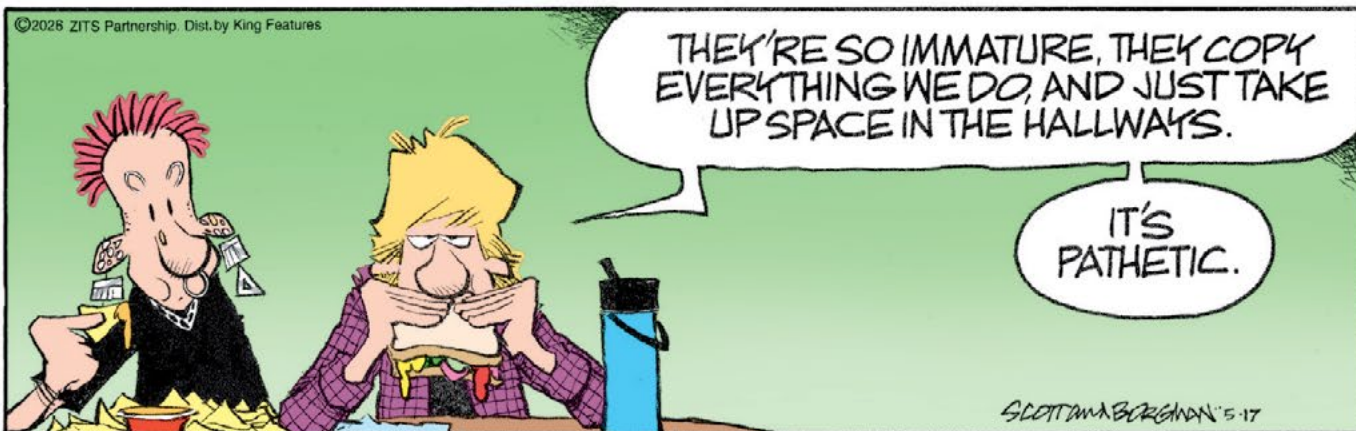
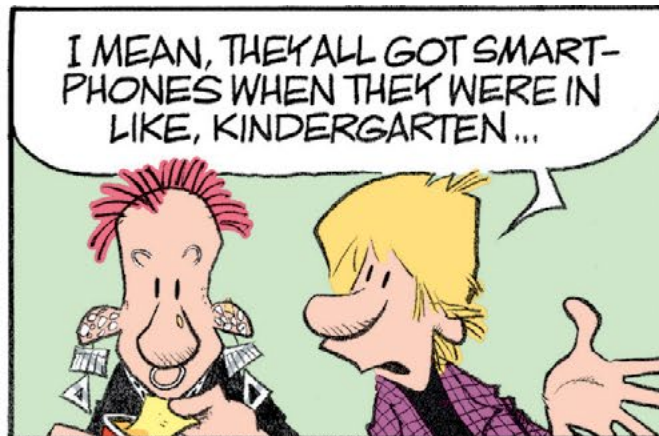
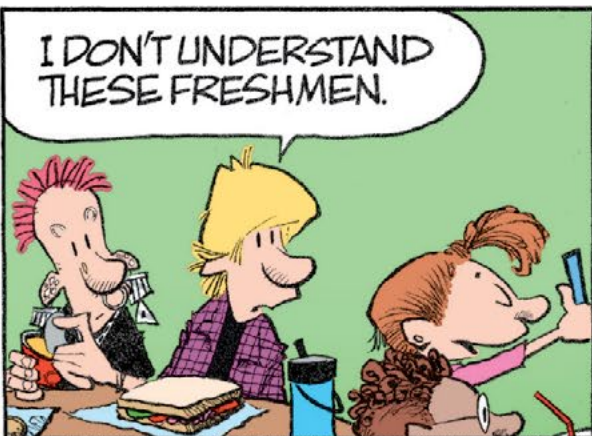
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