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Running Persistence Personified

Story and photos by Darl DeVault, contributing editor

Despite health concerns over the years, Kevin Lynes, 69, is an accomplished distance runner who sees his longevity and fitness as a byproduct of running. His story demonstrates that, with proper medical guidance, running can be safe even with health challenges such as his heart condition.

He first joined Weight Watchers in 2004 and began running two miles at a time. He discovered his love for running at age 48, once his children had grown up. A co-worker soon encouraged the Yukon resident to start participating in races, starting with a 5K run (3.1 miles).

He joined the Landrunners Oklahoma City Running Club, which took its name from the famous 1889 Land Run. He began training with other new runners and finally ran his first marathon in Chicago in 2006.

"Training in a group here and running the first marathon in such a big event as the Chicago Marathon, I was hooked!" Lynes said. "I began running 2-3 marathons a year and was encouraged to try longer distances. I began running ultra marathons, which are longer than a marathon, usually 50K (31 miles) and up."

The Oklahoma City Landrunners (officially known as the Oklahoma City Running Club) has more than 600 club members. This makes it the largest nonprofit, all-volunteer running organization in Oklahoma.

Lynes has served on the Landrunners' board of directors for 20 years and served as president for 3 years.

Lynes is a manager at O'Steen Meat Specialties, Inc. in Oklahoma



Kevin Lynes in 2026, wearing his Landrunners volunteer board member shirt at the Oklahoma City Memorial Marathon Expo.

City. He shared what he has learned about his health with "Senior News and Living" while volunteering at his running club's booth during packet pickup on Friday at this year's Oklahoma City Memorial Marathon Expo in late April.

He was soon trying the longer events in what is called 24 The Hard Way, beginning with a 6-hour, then a 12-hour, and finally the full 24-hour race.

"I ran 51 miles in the 12-hour race and the next year ran 80 miles in the 24-hour race," Lynes said. "Here is where my story changes." Having been diagnosed with a heart murmur as a small child, after his first 24-hour race, he had an echocardiogram and was diagnosed with critical aortic stenosis. Stenosis is the narrowing of the valve opening, severely restricting blood flow from the aorta.

"After a series of tests, I needed open heart surgery to replace my aortic valve," Lynes said. "I was born with a bicuspid (two-leaflet) valve, where a normal valve is a tricuspid (three-leaflet) valve, and that was the cause of my heart murmur and stenosis."

He underwent surgery at the Oklahoma Heart Hospital in 2013, nine years after beginning serious running. He also had surgery on both feet because of arthritis that had bothered him for several years after the heart surgery.

After a long and difficult recovery, the dedicated runner resumed training and took on more marathons and ultramarathons. "I had to give up both distances in 2018 due to a severe back injury from arthritis. As of 2018, I had run 24 full marathons and 10 ultra marathons and was on hold from any real long distance," Lynes said.

He has participated in the Memorial Marathon full marathon 10 times and the half marathon six times. He ran the finishing distance with ease in the inaugural OKC Memorial Marathon cumulative Senior Marathon presented by Mercy in 2023, starting on the front line. This year, he walked and ran it at a more leisurely pace.

"I had been running half marathons as my longest distance starting in 2018, but in 2025, I ran the Oklahoma City Memorial Marathon quarter marathon (6.55 miles), down from half marathons due to arthritis in my feet."

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RUNNER con't. from page 2

He was running much more slowly than before, and he thought it was due to his arthritis flaring up. When he had his yearly echocardiogram in November of 2025, he had developed stenosis again.

"My cardiologist said my slower pace was most likely due to the stenosis combined with arthritis," Lynes said. "After another series of tests, I was qualified to get a transcatheter aortic valve replacement (TAVR), which is a valve that is inserted into the old valve through the femoral artery without cutting the chest open."

"I had that surgery on March 30, 2026. It was a very easy procedure and had no pain, but I had to be off for 2 weeks with no driving. This valve will last 8-10 years on average, so another heart surgery is likely at that time."

"I'm not worried about it since we never know what technology will exist in 8-10 years. Less than 30 days after getting the TAVR valve, I was able to run the OKC Memorial quarter marathon very slowly with a group of friends."

"The point of my story is that resilience and effort can overcome physical limitations," Lynes said. "If your goal is to walk, run, bike, or hit the gym, start today. It transformed my life, and it can do the same for you. I am very blessed!"

ON THE COVER
Kevin Lynes, center, wearing a gray long-sleeve Oklahoma City Running Club Landrunners jersey, is set to begin the final leg of the inaugural Senior Marathon in 2023.



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Current TFCU members in good standing will be automatically entered at the close of the sweepstakes period, with no action required. Nonmembers and prospective members may also enter, and anyone who becomes a member during the sweepstakes period will automatically be entered to win.

For complete official rules and eligibility requirements, visit TinkerFCU.org/WinGas.

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Giving Straight Answers
to Common Estate
Planning Questions

By Tamara Cain, Attorney and Estate
Planning Educator, Cain, Cain & Janik

Q: Once I sign my estate
plan, am I finished?

A: That may be the most common misconception I encounter in estate planning. After helping hundreds of families over many years, I've noticed that most people view estate planning as a project. They gather information, meet with an attorney, sign documents, and check an important item off their to-do list. Once the documents are signed, they are placed in a safe location and often remain there for years without any other thought.

The problem is not that the plan was poorly designed. In many cases, the plan was exactly what the family needed at the time. The problem is that life continues to move forward while the documents remain unchanged.

When I meet with families who created their plans ten, fifteen, or even twenty years ago, I often find that their circumstances have changed significantly. Children have grown up and started families of their own. Grandchildren have arrived. Marriages and divorces have reshaped family relationships. People named trustees, personal representatives, or powers of attorney may have moved away, become ill, or passed away. Assets that once represented a substantial portion of the family's wealth may have been sold, inherited, or replaced with something entirely different. Our experiences teach us that estate planning is not really about documents. It is about people. And people rarely stay the same over the course of twenty years.

In our practice, we often work with families during some of life's most difficult transitions, including disability, illness, and death. Those experiences have reinforced an important truth: the plans that tend to work best are usually the ones that have been reviewed from time to time as life unfolds. Major revisions are not always necessary. Often the greatest value comes from simply confirming that the plan still reflects the client's wishes and that the individuals named in important roles are still the right choices.

There is another benefit that is frequently overlooked. A periodic review helps establish or maintain a relationship with
(Con't. next page)



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an estate planning law firm before a crisis occurs. When a spouse becomes incapacitated or passes away, surviving family members are often overwhelmed and uncertain about what steps to take next. Having a trusted professional who is already familiar with the family and their planning can provide both guidance and peace of mind during a difficult time.

A Good Rule of Thumb

Consider reviewing your estate plan when:

- A family member dies.
- A marriage or divorce occurs.
- A grandchild is born.
- Significant assets are acquired or sold.
- Someone named in your documents can no longer serve.

The goal is not to constantly rewrite your estate plan. The goal is simply to make sure it still tells your story and carries out your wishes. After all, estate planning documents may sit quietly in a drawer for years, but eventually they have a job to do. When that day comes, you want them to work for the family you have today, not the family you had twenty years ago. Consider this your invitation to dust off your own estate plan and look at it through the lens of today’s laws, your current assets, and your family dynamics as they exist today. You’ll be glad you did.

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Veterans, Seniors Say July 4 Is A Day For Remembering Sacrifice, Celebrating Freedom

From the Publisher

As fireworks light the Oklahoma sky this Independence Day, many veterans and senior citizens say the holiday is about far more than parades, cookouts and patriotic music. For them, July 4 is a reminder of sacrifice, resilience and the enduring promise of freedom that has shaped generations of Americans.

Across Oklahoma, where military service and patriotism run deep, veterans and older residents view Independence Day through the lens of personal experience. Some remember serving overseas during times of war. Others recall growing up during World War II, the Korean War or the Cold War, when patriotism was woven into daily life and national unity often took center stage.

For Army veteran James Carter, 78, July 4 has always been a day of reflection.

"When you've worn the uniform, the flag means something different," Carter said. "You think about the people who didn't make it home and the freedoms they gave everything to protect."

Carter, who served during the Vietnam War, said the holiday offers an opportunity to honor fellow service members whose names are etched into memorials across the country. While he enjoys family gatherings and local celebrations, he also makes time for quiet remembrance.

Marine Corps veteran Linda Reynolds, 72, hopes younger generations enjoy the holiday while understanding its deeper meaning.

"Freedom isn't something you inherit without responsibility," Reynolds said. "Every generation has to protect it in its own way."

For many seniors, Independence Day also serves as a bridge between generations. Grandparents pass along stories of military service, family traditions and defining moments in American history that younger relatives know only through books.

Mary Thompson, 85, of western Oklahoma remembers celebrating Independence Day as a child shortly after World War II.

"There was a feeling that everyone had sacrificed together," she said. "People appreciated what freedom meant because they'd lived through difficult times."



Today, Thompson enjoys watching her grandchildren wave flags during community celebrations while sharing memories of earlier generations.

Military organizations throughout Oklahoma often use the holiday to recognize veterans and encourage civic engagement. Ceremonies frequently include presentations of the colors, recognition of active-duty military personnel and moments of silence for those who died in service to the nation.

For some veterans, however, fireworks can bring mixed emotions. Loud explosions may trigger memories associated with combat or military service. Veteran advocates encourage communities to remain mindful of neighbors who may experience anxiety during holiday celebrations and to provide advance notice of public fireworks displays whenever possible.

Despite those challenges, many former service members continue participating in Independence Day events because they believe the holiday represents the ideals they pledged to defend.

Air Force veteran Robert Ellis, 81, said Independence Day reminds Americans to focus on what unites them.

"Our country has been through disagreements before," Ellis said. "July Fourth reminds us that we're all Americans first."

Community leaders say those perspectives offer valuable lessons for younger generations navigating an increasingly divided political climate. The holiday provides an opportunity

to celebrate shared values rather than political differences.

As families gather at lakes, parks and town squares across Oklahoma, veterans and seniors say the celebration ultimately comes down to gratitude—for those who served, for the freedoms secured through generations of sacrifice and for the opportunity to pass those values to future generations.

As evening falls and fireworks illuminate the prairie sky, many Oklahoma veterans will stand for the national anthem, remove their caps and quietly remember friends who never returned home. Nearby, grandparents will watch children chase sparklers across backyards, hoping they grow up understanding that Independence Day is more than a summer holiday.

For those who have lived through war, hardship and decades of American history, July 4th remains a powerful reminder that freedom carries both privilege and responsibility—a legacy they hope will endure long after the last firework fades from the Oklahoma sky. ●



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OPINION



What to Do When Medical Bills Pile Up

Dear Savvy Senior

I'm 63 and recently had a hospital stay that left me with bills I can't afford to pay. I had Affordable Care Act health insurance, but after my premiums went up in January, I had to drop my coverage. Now I'm overwhelmed by medical bills. What can I do?

--Struggling Patient

Dear Struggling,

You're definitely not alone. Medical debt is very common. About 1 in 12 Americans are dealing with it, and many had insurance when the bills started piling up. The good news is there are ways to reduce what you owe and make it more manageable. Here are some steps that can help.

Check your bills

Medical billing errors are more common than you might think, so start by taking a close look at every bill and explanation of

benefits you receive. Watch for duplicate charges, services you did not receive or prices that seem off.

If something does not look right, call your provider's billing office and ask for an itemized bill. Do not be shy about asking questions. Even small mistakes can add up.

Ask about help

Most hospitals, especially nonprofit ones, are required to offer financial assistance programs, often called charity care. Depending on your income, you may qualify to have part or even all of your bill forgiven.

Call the hospital billing office and ask specifically about financial assistance. You can also visit DollarFor.org, a nonprofit that helps patients apply for charity care programs at no cost.

Negotiate costs

If you do not qualify for assistance, you still have options. Many hospitals and doctors are willing to work with patients, especially if you reach out early.

Ask if they can lower the bill or offer a discount if you can pay something upfront. You can also request a no interest payment plan to spread the cost out over time. If this feels overwhelming, a medical billing advocate can help. The Alliance of Professional Health Advocates, at aphadvocates.org, can connect you with professionals who review bills and negotiate on your behalf.

Find programs

Since you recently lost coverage, it is also worth checking whether you qualify for Medicaid, especially if your income has dropped. You can apply through Healthcare.gov or your state Medicaid office.

Another helpful tool is BenefitsCheckUp.org, from the National Council on Aging, which can point you to programs that help lower health care and prescription costs.

Get support

You do not have to handle this on your own. There are several trusted organizations that offer free or low-cost help. The Patient Advocate Foundation (patientadvocate.org) provides case management services and can help you find financial assistance. The National Foundation for Credit Counseling (nfcc.org) offers nonprofit credit counseling and guidance on managing debt. You can also visit NeedyMeds.org to locate programs that can help lower the cost of prescriptions and other medical expenses.

The most important thing is to act sooner rather than later. Ignoring medical bills can lead to collections and added stress, but many providers are willing to work with you if you reach out.

Start by reviewing your bills, then explore assistance programs and payment options. With some persistence, you can often lower what you owe and set up a plan that fits your budget. Medical debt is common, even among people who had insurance, but it is often negotiable, and there are real resources available to help you through it.

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

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Museum Opens New Exhibit for America250 Commemoration

The Oklahoma History Center Museum announced the opening of “Moments That Made US,” a special exhibition during the America250 commemoration that explores how generations of Americans have given meaning to the ideals set out in the Declaration of Independence. The exhibition is now on view at the Oklahoma History Center Museum at 800 Nazih Zuhdi Dr. in Oklahoma City.

The exhibition looks back across centuries and highlights both challenging and celebratory moments from the colonial era to more recent generations. It explores five themes drawn directly from the Declaration of Independence: Created Equal; Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness; Free and Independent States; Consent of the Governed; and We Mutually Pledge. The 15 featured moments from American history remind us that our nation’s story was never inevitable—we shaped it at every turn.

“Moments That Made US” was developed through a multi-state collaboration to ensure that Americans throughout the nation would have the opportunity to meaningfully engage in the nation’s 250th anniversary. It adapts the acclaimed exhibition created by

History Colorado, currently on view at the History Colorado Center in Denver, into a format that allows host venues to connect local history to the nation’s story.

“‘Moments That Made US’ is a meaningful way for Oklahomans to engage with the America250 commemoration,” said Nicole Harvey, director of the Oklahoma History Center Museum. “We were proud to help bring the print-on-demand version of this exhibition to Oklahoma, and we hope other organizations across the state will consider hosting it in their own communities.”

“Moments That Made US” is on view at the Oklahoma History Center Museum through August 2026. It is included with paid museum admission.

Registration Open for Three-Day Genealogy Symposium

Genealogy Symposium, Inc. is partnering with the Oklahoma Historical Society to host a three-day hands-on symposium that will teach participants how to use Ancestry and FamilySearch, along with the resources of the OHS’ John and Eleanor Kirkpatrick Research Center. The event will take place on August 13, 14 and 15 at the Oklahoma History Center in Oklahoma City.

Professional genealogists and educators Billie Stone Fogarty and Dave McDonald will serve as the workshop instructors.

Each day of the three-day event will have a specific focus. On Thursday, August 13, the group will receive an overview and a teaching tour of Ancestry, the world’s largest genealogy site. On Friday, August 14, instructors will explore FamilySearch, one of the world’s largest genealogy organizations and networks. On Saturday,

August 15, participants will learn about the Oklahoma Historical Society’s digital portal, The Gateway to Oklahoma History, and resources available at the OHS Research Center.

Registration is now open, and the workshop will be limited to 48 registrants. The OHS will assist with the program and provide behind-the-scenes tours of the OHS Research Division and museum collections. Lunch will not be provided, but participants are strongly encouraged to bring their own lunch on Saturday, August 15.

Registration is now open, and preference will be given to full three-day registrations. Early bird registration is open through July 13. It is \$60 per day or \$150 for all three days. Registration from July 14 to August 7 will be \$80 per day or \$225 for all three days. To register or learn more, email dave@thegenealogysymposium.com.





Expands Summer Half-Price Transit Pass Sale to Include Oklahoma River Cruises

Take advantage of incredible savings July 1 – 8 on daily, weekly, monthly and annual fixed-route bus, RAPID NW and Oklahoma River Cruises

EMBARC is kicking off its summer bi-annual Half-Price Transit Pass Sale on all fixed-route bus, RAPID NW and Oklahoma River Cruises passes purchased from July 1 to 8.

This year, EMBARK expanded the sale to include Oklahoma River Cruises, offering residents a chance to experience the river as both a transit option and as a unique local attraction. Recently, Oklahoma River Cruises opened a new landing, the FAM Landing, providing residents and visitors with access to both the First Americans Museum and OKANA Resort & Indoor Waterpark along the Oklahoma River.

“Our summer Half-Price Sale now offers Oklahoma City residents and visitors great savings on a popular warm-weather attraction they can use right away or later in the season,” said Jesse Rush, Director of EMBARK. “Oklahoma River Cruises offers a great way to explore Oklahoma City from a different perspective, and with the recent addition of the FAM landing, there’s even more to enjoy along the Oklahoma River. We hope that people who haven’t tried Oklahoma River Cruises will take advantage of the lower cost to try it out.”

Rush added that the transit passes purchased during the Half-Price Sale can be activated at any time and never expire, offering residents flexibility when planning their daily transportation or a special outing with out-of-town guests.

“Many residents regularly use public transportation for work,

appointments and other daily needs, but some may use transit services less frequently for special events or activities,” he said. “Our summer Half-Price Sale is designed to help residents, business owners and service providers save money while accessing reliable, sustainable public transportation.”

Half-price passes can be purchased through the Token Transit mobile app. Fixed-route bus and RAPID NW passes also can be purchased in person at EMBARK’s downtown Transit Center, located at 420 NW 5th St. The Transit Center is open Monday through Friday from 6 a.m. to 6:45 p.m. For Oklahoma River Cruises, passes can be purchased in person at the Regatta Park Landing, 701 S. Lincoln Blvd.

EMBARC Half-Price Sale Rates: Fixed-Route Bus and RAPID NW Pass

- 24-Hour: Reduced to \$2
- 7-Day: Reduced to \$7
- 30-Day: Reduced to \$25
- Annual: Reduced to \$300

Oklahoma River Cruises

- Ferry Day Pass: Reduced to \$6

(Con’t. next page)

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Half-price fares also apply to reduced-fare rates for seniors (65+), Medicare recipients, and individuals with qualifying disabilities. Youth 18 and under ride free on buses through the Haul Pass Program, and children six and under ride free on Oklahoma River Cruises.

The Half-Price Transit Pass Sale is also open to community agencies and nonprofits that support transportation for those in need. Organizations can increase their impact by purchasing bulk orders of 50 or more passes online through July 20. These savings help stretch budgets and improve outreach efforts. To qualify for the discounted rate, bulk pass orders must be placed during the sale period.

For additional questions, please call 405-235-RIDE (7433).



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OU Health Lands International Leader in Neuroradiology

After a competitive national search, Dr. Javier Villanueva-Meyer, M.D., has been named chair of the Department of Radiological Sciences at the University of Oklahoma College of Medicine and clinical service chief of radiology at OU Health, the University of Oklahoma's academic health system. He will begin in September 2026, pending approval by the University of Oklahoma Board of Regents.

In addition to his clinical leadership at OU Health, Villanueva-Meyer will hold educational and research responsibilities for the university, advancing OU Health's three-part mission of patient care, research and education.

The appointment comes at a pivotal time for the department. Radiology sits at the center of modern clinical care and serves as a foundation for discovery, education and the use of advanced technology, including artificial intelligence, theranostics and precision medicine.

An academic neuroradiologist and operational leader, he has built his career at the intersection of advanced imaging, quality and safety, technology, and multidisciplinary care. His research in brain tumor imaging, molecular neuroimaging and PET/MRI has earned him international recognition, and he is known for integrating emerging technology into clinical practice. His research program is supported by National Institutes of Health (NIH) R01, P01 and SPORE funding, and he has authored more than 160 peer-reviewed publications.

Villanueva-Meyer joins OU Health from the University of California, San Francisco, where he serves as associate professor of radiology, vice chair of quality and technology in the Department of Radiology



Dr. Javier Villanueva-Meyer, M.D.

and Biomedical Imaging, and medical director for radiology quality and safety at UCSF Health.

Villanueva-Meyer earned his medical degree from Baylor College of Medicine and completed a diagnostic radiology residency, an NIH T32-funded postdoctoral fellowship and a neuroradiology fellowship at UCSF. He is board certified by the American Board of Radiology and holds a Certificate of Added Qualification in neuroradiology.

"Dr. Villanueva-Meyer is an accomplished neuroradiologist and an operational leader who understands where modern radiology is headed," said Dr. Ian F. Dunn, M.D., FACS, FAANS, professor and executive dean of the University of Oklahoma College of Medicine and OU Health chief physician executive. "His experience building academic programs, developing faculty and bringing emerging technology into patient care aligns directly with our aspirations for this department. He will be a tremendous addition to our community."

Villanueva-Meyer succeeds Dr. Anthony Alleman, M.D., MPH, who served as chair for more than a decade and helped shape the department's growth and direction. Dr. David Teague, M.D., served as interim chair during the transition.

"I am honored to join OU Health and the University of Oklahoma College of Medicine at such a pivotal moment for our field," said Dr. Villanueva-Meyer, M.D. "The department has a strong foundation anchored by talented faculty and a deep commitment to its patients and its mission. I look forward to working alongside this team to advance discovery, strengthen education and ensure the people of Oklahoma have access to the most advanced imaging care available."

"Radiology touches nearly every patient's care, from diagnosis through treatment," said OU Health President and CEO Dr. Richard Lofgren, M.D., MPH. "Recruiting a leader of Dr. Villanueva-Meyer's caliber reflects our commitment to building destination programs in Oklahoma, so that patients can receive advanced, research-driven care without leaving the state."

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Edmond Lions Club Looking for New Members



The Edmond Lions Club has been serving the Edmond community for about the past 64 years. Pictured are some of the members of the Edmond Lions Club.

By Van Mitchell, staff writer

Lions Club's in Oklahoma and across the nation are struggling to grow due to an aging membership and not enough new members.

But those challenges haven't stopped the Edmond Lions Club from carrying out its mission of helping others.

The Edmond Lions Club is a Community Service Organization, and a chartered member of the Oklahoma State Lions Club District 3SW and Lions Club International.

Carl Breazeale, a long-time Edmond Lions Club member, said Lions Club has been in Edmond for 64 years, and at one point there were two Clubs in town, but dwindling membership caused one to be phased out.

"We've got about 12 or 14 members. We've lost a lot due to aging out and passing away. And we're not nearly as strong as we were," he said. "I'm 80 years old, and we've got other members that are quite a bit older than I am. I think our oldest member is 99. We're getting up there, but we'd also have a few younger members that are helping us, and starting to do some things, helping to be a team effort. We are always looking for new members."

Edmond Lions Club meetings are held the second and fourth Tuesdays at 6:30 p.m. at the VFW Post, located at 425 South Fretz in Edmond.

Breazeale said Edmond Lions Club supports a variety of projects that benefit the Edmond community.

"We do an annual youth fishing derby at Lake Arcadia. We sponsor that for the City of Edmond," he said. "We perform children's eye site testing in our community when requested by local daycare centers. Our club donates food to local food banks and makes cash donations when we can."

"Our club provides funding for prescription eyeglasses to local under-privileged Edmond children through the Edmond Hope Center," Breazeale said. "We also collect used eyeglasses and lenses from Edmond area optometrists and vision care businesses and turn them into our State Lions Club office. In turn, Lions Club International distributes these glasses internationally to those in need of them. Last year we turned in over 4,000 pairs of eyeglasses and lenses to help those in need internationally."

Breazeale said Edmond Lions Club is also involved with the Lions Club's state project, the Lions Meadows of Hope in Stillwater.

LMOH is a certified foster care agency, who place foster children in certified homes which are in Payne County and surrounding counties. There are currently 77 kids and 49 homes involved with LMOH.

Elizabeth Beck, Director of Development for LMOH said Lions Clubs across Oklahoma including Edmond, have been instrumental in supporting Lions Meadows of Hope for generations.

"Through annual club donations, special fundraising efforts, memorial and legacy gifts, and individual giving, Lions continue to make a lasting impact on the lives of children and families experiencing foster care," she said.

Beck said one of the most meaningful traditions each year is the Parade of Checks held during their Christmas celebration.

She said Lions Clubs from across the state gather to present their year-end gifts, demonstrating their collective commitment to supporting children and families served by Lions Meadows of Hope.

"These donations help provide critical resources such as foster family support, training, emergency assistance, extracurricular stipends and opportunities that help children thrive. Several clubs have scholarships available that assist in furthering their education," she said. "Together, these financial investments continue to support the mission at Lions Meadows of Hope: we unite brothers and sisters in foster care, surround them with a community of hope, and help them grow into caring and productive adults. The generosity of the Oklahoma Lions is more than financial support, it is a tangible expression of compassion, service, and hope that changes lives every day."

Breazeale said the Edmond Lions Club strives to achieve their mission of service through a commitment to working together for a better future.

"We just do the best we can to try to stay together and do it. It's just hard work," Breazeale said. "And we've got people that care about what we do and they can continue to make it happen. You must have the desire to serve in our community and try to do what you can when you can."

For more information about Edmond Lions Club call Breazeale at (405)-590-7289 and for information on LMOH contact Beck at Elizabeth@lionsmoh.org or visit the LMOH website at www.lionsmoh.org.

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Pati Thurman leads this Oklahoma Senior Games Swim Training Team, based at the Earlywine Park YMCA, which will automatically qualify for the 2027 National Games if it participates this year.

Story and photo by Darl DeVault, contributing editor

As a host-state perk for the upcoming 2027 National Senior Games in Tulsa, all Oklahoma residents over 50 who participate in an event at the 2026 Oklahoma Senior Games (OSG) automatically qualify for the same event at the national championships. The National Senior Games Association (NSGA) typically requires athletes to place in the top four of their age division or meet a strict Minimum Performance Standard at a state-level qualifier to advance. However, because Tulsa is hosting the national games from June 30 to July 11, 2027, a special host-state exemption applies.

Oklahoma's Senior Games run from August through November in locations around the state.

"Every athlete with an Oklahoma address who competes in the 2026 Oklahoma Senior Games will qualify for the 2027 National Senior Games," said Kathleen Fitzgerald, state director. "It doesn't matter whether you medal or even place in 2026; you automatically qualify to compete against athletes from across the country in the 2027 National Senior Games."

Pickleball is the only sport excluded from this automatic rule due to limited court capacities. Pickleball players must place in the top three in their state event to advance to compete in Tulsa in 2027. Certain sports—such as cornhole, line dancing, and beach volleyball—are classified as "open" for 2027, meaning anyone over age 50 can register directly for nationals without needing to qualify. Veterans are encouraged to register early, as they receive a 50% discount funded by community sponsors, showing appreciation for their service and making participation more accessible.

The early-bird registration fee is \$65 (rising to \$75 after August 1), covering up to six sports. Veterans pay half, making it easier to join and enjoy the games.

The nationals will be hosted in Tulsa, Oklahoma, from June 30

to July 11, 2027. This marks the first time Tulsa has hosted this major multi-sport event, expected to draw over 12,500 participants competing in 28 sports, making it a significant opportunity for Oklahoma residents to be part of a historic event.

—The Tulsa Sports Commission partners with the NSGA to bring the event to the region. Humana remains the presenting sponsor for the 2027 and 2029 games.

Local leaders estimate the event will generate approximately \$48 million in total economic impact for the Tulsa area. Competitions will take place at various world-class arenas, stadiums, and fields throughout the greater Tulsa area, including The University of Tulsa. As more participants are expected, volunteer recruitment is key. Regina Stewart highlights how volunteers help build a strong community and make the event memorable.

Stewart, the volunteer director, is emphasizing the importance of community service in supporting the events. She mentioned the need for volunteers across numerous sports, including cornhole, volleyball, golf, table tennis, weight lifting, racquetball, badminton, and tennis.

Reach out to Stewart at 405-821-1500 or via email at regina.stewart@okseniorgames.com. For online registration, visit <https://okseniorgames.com/volunteer-with-osg/> to find updated forms or specific shifts.

The Games are also seeking volunteers to staff their booths in four-hour shifts at the Oklahoma State Fair's Modern Living Building from September 17 through the 27.

Note that volunteer registration for the 2027 National Senior Games will open separately in Fall 2026. Organizers say volunteering for the state games now is a great way to gain experience before the national event arrives.

Register today at okseniorgames.com. If you have questions, message or call 405-821-1500.

Red Earth Art Festival Homecoming

Story and photo by Darl DeVault, contributing editor

Native American art enthusiasts are invited to attend the 40th Annual Red Earth Festival, August 1–2, 2026, at the Oklahoma City Convention Center, marking a highly anticipated return to downtown Oklahoma City.

This move is historically significant because it brings the festival back to the district where it launched in 1987, symbolizing a “homecoming” for one of the nation’s most respected Native American cultural events.

“‘Coming Home’ isn’t just our theme this year, it’s a feeling,” said Chelsey Curry, executive director of Red Earth, Inc. “For 40 years, Red Earth has brought people together to celebrate Native art and culture. Returning to downtown Oklahoma City honors our history and sets the stage for an exciting future.”

After moving to other locations in recent years, such as the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum, the event’s return to the heart of the city for its 40th milestone reconnects it with its founding legacy.

The festival brings together nationally recognized Native artists, cultural demonstrations, dance showcases, youth art exhibitions, and special anniversary programming for the weekend. It features more than 130 Indigenous artists from across the country, presenting original works in painting, jewelry, sculpture, beadwork, textiles, and more. Visitors can explore the juried art market, meet artists, and view award-winning competition pieces in an expanded exhibition space. A VIP Shopping Hour on Saturday morning will offer collectors and early guests exclusive early access before the art market opens to the public.

Throughout the weekend, the festival will present dance showcases and competition specials, including the Women’s Fancy Dance Special on Saturday and the Men’s Fancy Dance Special on Sunday. These events highlight the artistry, athleticism, and cultural traditions of Native America.

Festival attendees will have the opportunity to meet both 2026 Emerging Artist Award recipients, Georgia Adeline “Ushta” Harjo and Saralyn Chee, in person throughout the weekend. Their booths offer visitors the chance to engage with their work and see two distinct moments of artistic growth within the Red Earth community. The festival’s 40-year rich history of promoting the traditions of Native American artists and dancers kicks off with the Festival Art Awards Celebration. Begin your festival weekend by joining artists, collectors, sponsors, and supporters at the celebration. Sponsored

by the Chickasaw Nation, this separate, limited-seating, \$35-per-person event kicks off the festival weekend at 6 p.m. Friday, July 31, 2026, at the Will Rogers Theatre on North Western.

The Awards Celebration recognizes outstanding Native artists from across the United States. It features the presentation of the festival’s top honors, including the Kathleen Everett Upshaw Award, the Grand Award and the President’s Award.

Tickets can be purchased from the Red Earth Festival Ticket Site. Single-Day General Admission is \$15 and is valid for either Saturday, August 1, or Sunday, August 2. Single-Day VIP Admission is \$20 and includes exclusive entry to the VIP Shopping Hour on Saturday from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. A 2-Day General Pass is \$25 while the 2-Day VIP Pass is \$30. Children under age 5 are free.

The art market is open Saturday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Red Earth’s mission extends beyond the festival, encompassing education, a museum collection, and fine art markets, all aimed at advancing understanding of and the continuation of Native American culture and arts.

Red Earth, Inc. is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization that promotes the rich knowledge of Indigenous and Native American arts, cultures and traditions through education, a premier festival, museum collections and fine art markets.

For more information about the Red Earth Festival, please visit www.RedEarth.org



Stroud's SummerFest Sizzles

by Richard Stephens, Jr., staff writer

Stroud celebrated summer a week early on June 13 with its annual SummerFest, using Saturday afternoon and evening to enjoy wine and a car show set to music on four blocks of Main Street (Route 66). Adam Chace, the Lead Planner with the host Chamber of Commerce, estimated 4,500 people came.

Hundreds walked through the pavilion, tasting wine by the glass after paying a \$20 entrance fee. Cooling afternoon temperatures encouraged many to sample – and resample – white and red wines with dry, sweet and fruity flavors served as is or as slushies from the wineries of Wildhorse Canyon Farms of Luther, Native Spirits of Norman, Tidewater of Drumright and four other booths. Rick Vollmer, the Native Spirits Winery owner, sold \$17 bottles of wine. “We’ve done pretty well out here. There was a nice crowd earlier.”

Eighty-one highly polished and cleaned cars, pick-ups and motorcycles from four states - with some rough originals as well – parked on Main Street for viewing and judging. Admirers viewed 93 years of road history - everything from a 1929 Ford Model T to a 2026 Chevrolet Corvette.

Justin Lackney of Lawton’s wonderfully wacky purple “Dead Sled” custom car was a crowd stopper. Using a 1930 Model A Ford and Chevy chassis and displaying eight, five-foot-tall exhaust pipes, he added two caskets: one to sit and drive in and the other, a pulled wagon which displayed an orange-faced skeleton – unique!

Car owners earned first through third place trophies in 18 categories, along with awards for Best Engine and Interior and Best

of Show. Brandon Wikel of Cushing won the Chamber of Commerce Choice and David McCutty earned Best of Show with a 2019 Ram Truck.

Co-Owner Halle Mash of The Old Stroud Trading Post and Pawn was pleased with sales. “This is our favorite day of the year. One of our best-selling days.”

On center stage, three types of live music entertained attendees. First, The Andrews Sisters, dressed in 1940s uniforms, sang songs from that period. Ashley Mandanus, Grace Martin, and Maggie Sherman work for Character Connections in Oklahoma City. They said, “We love singing in the ‘40s style. And we love playing homage to the original Andrews Sisters.”

The Highway 66 Band took care of business with popular songs from the 1950s – 1990s. Finally, Loose Gravel’s four-man rock and roll band entertained hundreds playing hits from Blue Oyster Cult, Santana, and The Outfield in advance of the fireworks at 10:00 p.m.

The fireworks capped a nice day’s celebration of Stroud. Plenty of wine, merchandise, showy cars and musical entertainment combined to make this a memorable festival on Route 66.

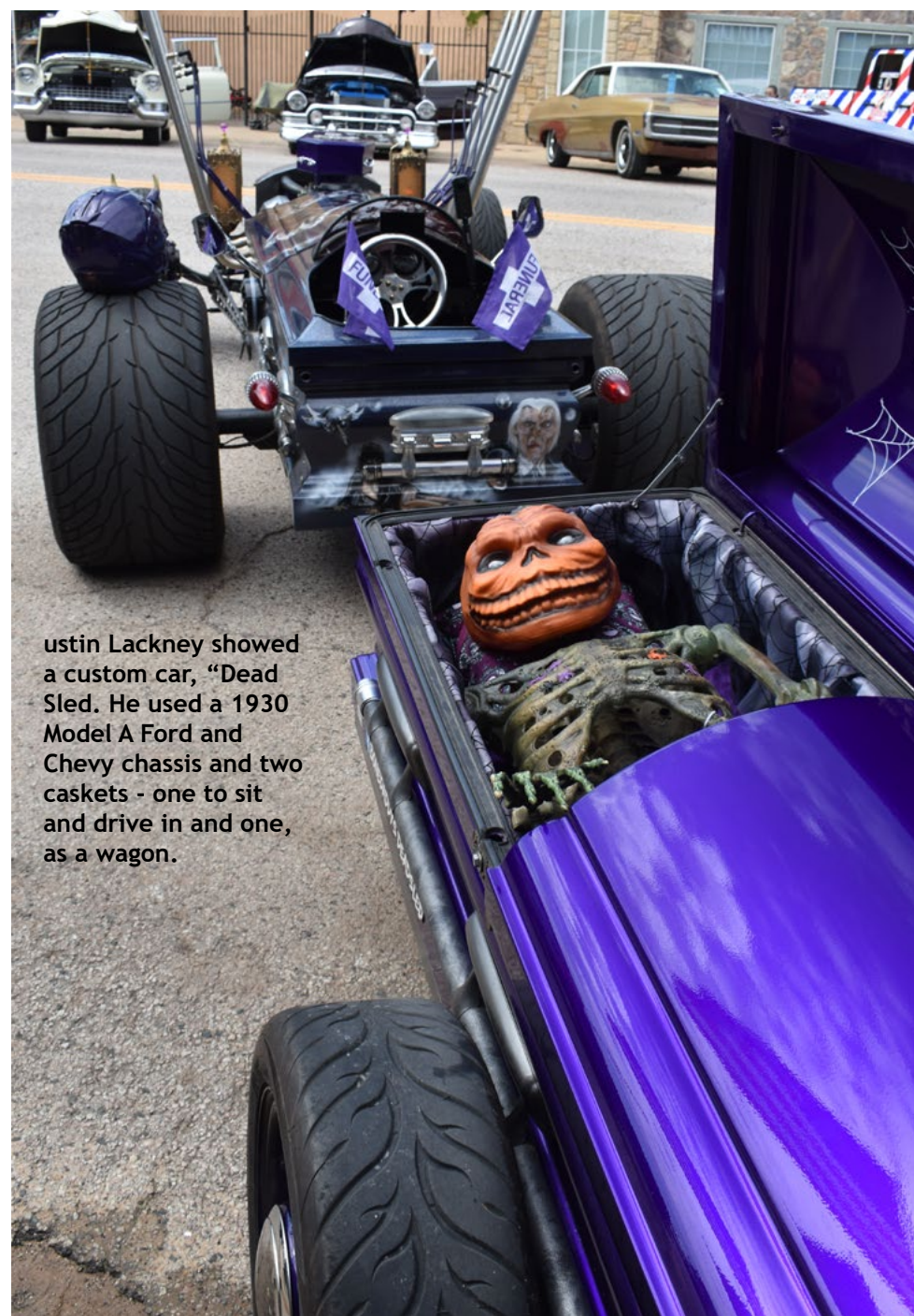
Chace was pleased. He said, “With 81 car show entries, people going up and down the street having fun, 78 pop-up (tent) vendors and with hundreds of entries of wine tasting, these made the festival a success.”



Three women ride Stroud's Magic School Bus at 2026's SummerFest.



Another happy wine connoisseur! A member of Tidewater Winery from Drumright provides wine samples.



Justin Lackney showed a custom car, “Dead Sled.” He used a 1930 Model A Ford and Chevy chassis and two caskets - one to sit and drive in and one, as a wagon.



UPCOMING EVENTS

The road is free to drive on its 99th year – here's where to go to see events (mostly festivals) in Oklahoma towns.

July 18, Tulsa, Route 66 Festival: Tales of the Mother Road

Make your way to Tulsa's Gathering Place park for the Route 66 Festival. This free community celebration brings the spirit of the Mother Road to life with themed food, hand-on educational activities, live on-stage performances and a vibrant Route 66 vendor market. The festival is sure to be a day full of nostalgia and summer fun at Gathering Place. Don't miss this exciting event in Tulsa during the Route 66 Centennial year.

Jul 24 - 25, 2026, Miami, Route 66 Heritage Festival

The City of Miami celebrates its heritage as a Route 66 icon with a weekend filled with live music, great food, the Rigs on Route 66 show, vendors and an opening ceremony that will wow the crowd. Family activities, a scavenger hunt and a decorated bike contest are just a few attractions offered at the festival. The Route 66 Heritage Festival is in its sixth year and will be even more of a must-visit during Route 66's centennial year.

Aug 22, Fort Reno, Historic Spirit Tour. Walk through original homes and WWII cemetery and hear ghost tales of the old west. Cost: \$15. Time: 6:45 - 10:00 p.m. Call or text 405-262-3987. Go to Fort Reno Facebook page or <http://www.fortreno.org/> for more information.

Aug 14-15, Bristow, Western Heritage Days. On August 14 on Main Street (Route 66), guests will see a parade, shop with vendors and stores, and children will enjoy inflatables and a petting zoo. The Bristow Rodeo is in the evenings of August 14 and 15 (fee). Enjoy bull riding, bronc riding, barrel racing, roping competitions, mutton busting, and more. See Facebook or <https://www.greencountryok.com/>

Sep 3, Yukon, Rock the Route, 6:00 – 10:30 p.m. Red Dirt Country music festival with plenty of family-friendly fun & activities, food trucks, and more. Headliner: Josh Weathers. Special Guest: The Smokin' Oaks. See <https://www.visityukonok.com/event-details-registration/rock-the-route-1>

Sep 5, Clinton, Century Lap on Route 66. Food Trucks, Crafts & Handmade Items, Apparel.

Sep 11-12, Sapulpa, 37th Route 66 Blowout Car Show & Festival, 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.. Friday night: unscheduled cruise on Dewey Ave (Route 66) and Main Street. Food trucks and LIVE music from 7pm to 10pm. Saturday 0900-1600: A vintage & modern car show with food vendors, family fun, a kids' zone, and more. Sapulpa Arts and Humanities Foundation Art Show. Go to <http://www.route66blowout.com/>

To look up more events in Oklahoma, go to TravelOK.com or to the Oklahoma Route 66 Association website, Oklahoma Route 66 Association, <https://oklahomaroute66.com/>. For events in all eight states, see Route 66 Road Map, <https://route66roadmap.com/>

Route 66 Book Wins Two Major Awards

This year marks the centennial of historic Route 66, and the premier book celebrating that event, "Route 66: The First 100 Years," by Jim Ross and Shellee Graham, has earned two prestigious honors.

On May 16th it was awarded the Gold Medal for Best Coffee Table Book from the Independent Book Publishers Association, a national competition drawing nearly 2,000 entries. On the same day, it won the prestigious Oklahoma Book Award for Design/Illustration/Photography, recognizing the book's outstanding visual presentation.

Released by Reedy Press of St. Louis in May 2025, the book is a biographical journey through the route's birth, life, demise, renaissance, and legend. The authors, who have decades of experience exploring, documenting, and writing about Route 66, have published numerous other books and are both well-known ambassadors for America's Mother Road. Previously, the book was named to the Summer Reading List by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and chosen by Smithsonian Magazine as one of the 10 best travel books of 2025.

Route 66 conjures up images of dreamers, road-trippers, migrants, and nomads. On a deeper level, it is a story of escape, triumph, deliverance, and adventure during the best and worst of times. With over 400 photographs, many of them vintage, Route 66: The First 100 Years combines striking imagery with a compelling narrative celebrating the history, culture, and enduring legacy of America's most famous highway.

To schedule Ross and Graham for an interview or book talk, contact Reedy Press publicist Khaleah Webb at: mediacoordinator@reedypress.com



Jim Ross and Shellee Graham



WINTERING IN HUGO

A look inside the quiet months when Oklahoma's circuses repair, rest, and prepare to roll again.

by Richard Stephens, Jr., staff writer

Did you watch amazing circus acts as a youth? In the warm season, circuses gave one or two shows a day, then drove to the next town. During the cold

season, where did Oklahoma's circuses go?

Then and now, Hugo is the winter retreat, as insiders say. In the circus heyday of the 1940s - 1980s, up to nine rested in Hugo. The last two Oklahoma circuses, Carson & Barnes Circus and Culpepper & Merriweather (C&M) Great Combined Circus, still call Hugo home. What goes on, though?

Repair and relaxation

For the C&M Circus, November to March is a time of reconstitution and relaxation, well-earned after 32 weeks on the road performing one or two shows a day in 200 towns in 17 states. Ronald Dykes and I met in February at the C&M trailer park on Kirk Street. Mobile homes sat next to circus trailers. Dykes speaks softly and knowledgeably about a business he's been part of for 45 years. These days, he's an animal caretaker; previously, his family performed a variety of acts.

He explained, "Everybody needs a rest because we work five days a week." He meant humans and animals. "There's always repairs. If you can put 'em off to the winter time you do, because when we travel; it's traveling every day."

David Rawls, former owner of the Kelly Miller Brothers Circus, and I talked in Hugo's Olivet Cemetery. Isn't that an odd place to meet? Not in the circus world - we stood in "Showmen's Rest," a 1,000-foot section of the cemetery. He seemed at ease surrounded by family members and friends he knew. Six-feet tall, Rawls was casually, yet neatly, dressed and wore a brown outback hat.

He explained, "It's repair and maintenance. My winter quarters, we worked typically five days a week. ... The performers, a lot of the people went to where they lived, or where they came from. But we had a core staff here, the welders, mechanics, people who could rebuild things, paint. ... All of the trucks and trailers had to be gone through. ... And if you were gonna buy any new equipment, you bought it in the wintertime, put it into service."

People Know Their Jobs

Are rehearsals necessary before the new season? Dykes said, "Generally not, because most of the acts are responsible for their own (training)." Rawls' response: "One rehearsal."

When I looked astonished, he added, "They already knew their acts. What you had to rehearse for was prop changes, wardrobe changes, the music, new acts. You couldn't put somebody (performing) in the Flying Act in the next act, and several of them did two or three spots in the show. You had to make sure the wardrobe changes were possible, the rigging changes were possible."



Left: David Rawls, former owner of Kelly Miller Brothers Circus, stands in Showmen's Rest of Hugo's Olivet Cemetery. He stands by gravestones of the famous Miller family. Behind him, a marker says, "A Tribute To All Showmen Under God's Big Top."

Below: Part of headstone of Loter Francis Padilla, honored circus performer, who lived Jan 15, 1925-Jan 22, 2003. She is buried in Mount Olivet Cemeter

Former Acts

Dykes' family used to perform a variety of acts, including one with a horse. "It was called Big and Little. We had a big draft horse and a little miniature pony. And they were like the opposite extremes of what riding could mean. He'd stand there on this little table and she'd go around his legs, in and out. People loved it," he chuckled. Seven family members also rode unicycles and horses. Dykes juggled and walked a high wire. We discussed what circus life was like.

Hard but Rewarding Work

"In most ways, it's just like any profession, a lot of hard work," Dykes said. "It's in your attitude. ... But if you work, participating in the show and doing what you can to help other people out, it makes it a better experience ... it was the circus people that made me want to be there."

Rawls also loved circus life. He formed a partnership with the great D.R. Miller in 1984 and they successfully toured America and Canada for 25 years. Previously, D.R. Miller operated the AL G Kelly & Miller Brothers Circus and the Carson and Barnes Circus. Representatives from the Carson and Barnes Circus were not available to contribute to this story.

"There wasn't anything better than being on a green, grassy lot, blue sky, and a tent full of people," he remembered. "The music playing and people coming out of the tent. ... I also had a lot of friends around the country."

A Tradition That Endures

Rawls closed by saying, "When the kids become teenagers, they become fans of the carnival. And then when they have children, they come back to the circus."

Today, fewer, smaller circuses tour but two still come home to Hugo in the winter, carrying on a wonderful tradition.





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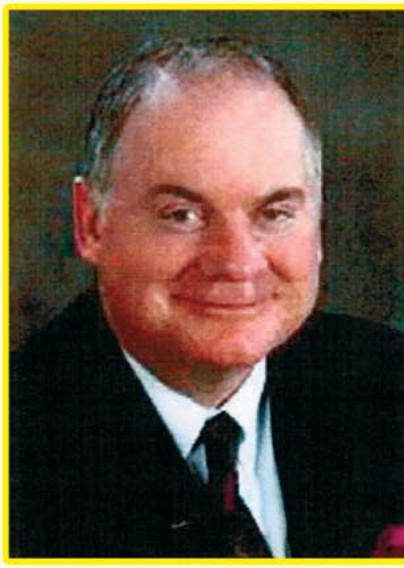
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Oklahoma
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Kerr Homestead Dugout in Noble County Added to National Register of Historic Places

The Oklahoma Historical Society and State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) are pleased to announce the National Register of Historic Places designation for the following property in Oklahoma. The National Register of Historic Places is our nation's official list of properties significant in our past.

Noble County
Kerr Homestead Dugout
Morrison vicinity

The Kerr Homestead Dugout in Noble County has been listed in the National Register of Historic Places for its significance to Exploration and Settlement in Oklahoma and for its potential to yield information regarding dugout construction during the opening of the Cherokee Outlet to settlement. Constructed in 1893 by Elias Kerr and sons David and Sabe, the 13.5-foot-long by 6.5-foot-wide dugout was constructed of readily available materials, including native sandstone, and typifies the red bed plains physiographic landscape, where homesteaders built their dugouts in response to environmental conditions and the availability of resources as adaptive practices.

Further geoheritage research of the Kerr Homestead Dugout, focusing on how specific geological resources served as essential components of early architecture and settlement, will aid in developing a more detailed understanding of dugout construction at the turn of the 20th century.



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Kristi, United Way Partner Agency client

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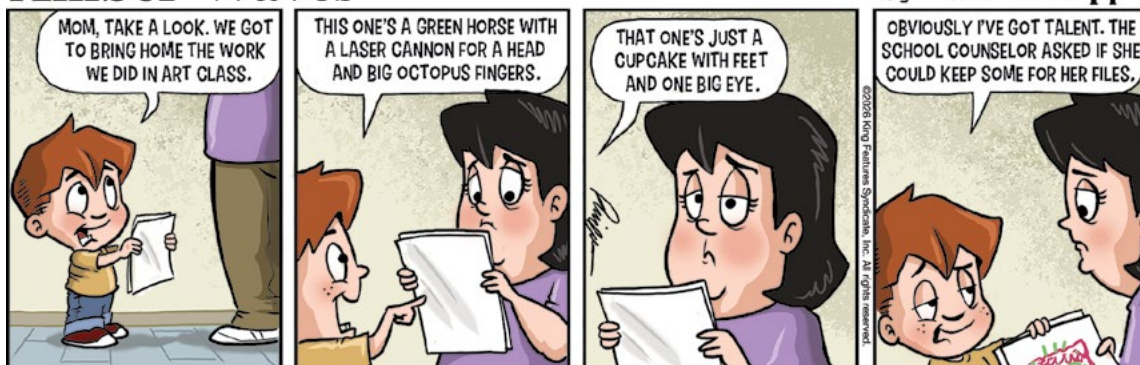


Medicare Required Disclaimer: We do not offer every plan available in your area. Currently we represent 8 organizations which offer 73 products in your area. Please contact Medicare.gov or 1-800-MEDICARE, or your local State Health Insurance Program to get information on all your options.



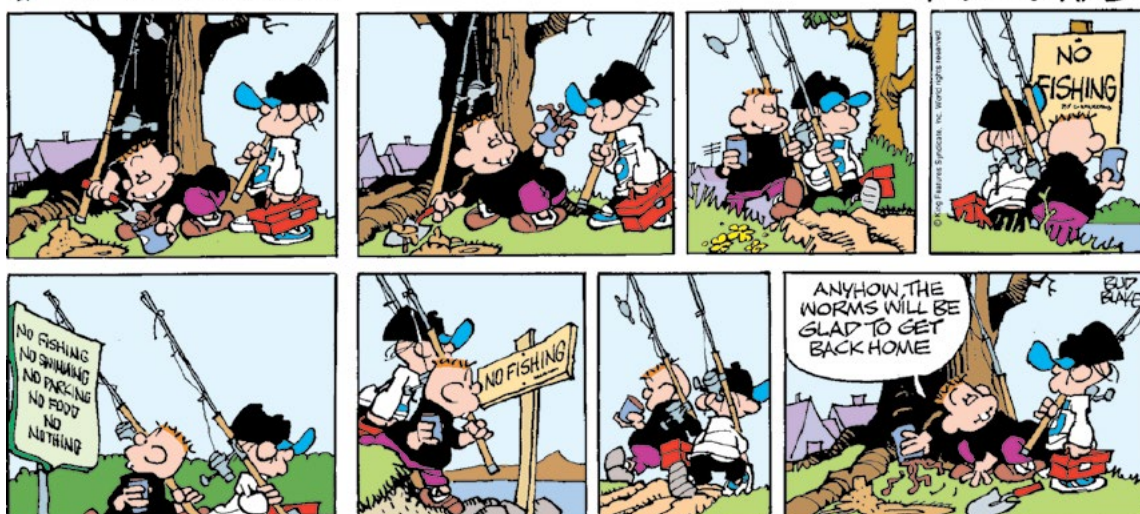
Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps



TIGER

by BUD BLAKE



BIBLE WORD SEARCH

by Elie's Spiritual Treasures

Psalms 42:6b-8a

therefore I will remember you from the land of the Jordan, the heights of Hermion—from Mount Mizar. Deep calls to deep in the roar of your waterfalls; all your waves and breakers have swept over me. By day the Lord directs his love, at night his song is with me—

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B Y A D W S O N G E

Answers on pg 8



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King Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 "Caught ya!"
4 Spring melt-down
8 Baby's bed
12 Barbecue seasoning
13 Meditative exercise
14 Verdi heroine
15 Muffin-like treats
17 General — Chicken
18 Couturier Christian
19 Bracelet site
20 Liniment targets
22 "Arrivederci —"
24 One-named supermodel
25 Castle features
29 Unruly group
30 Ram
31 Solidify
32 Short extracts
34 Taj Mahal site
35 TV host Kelly

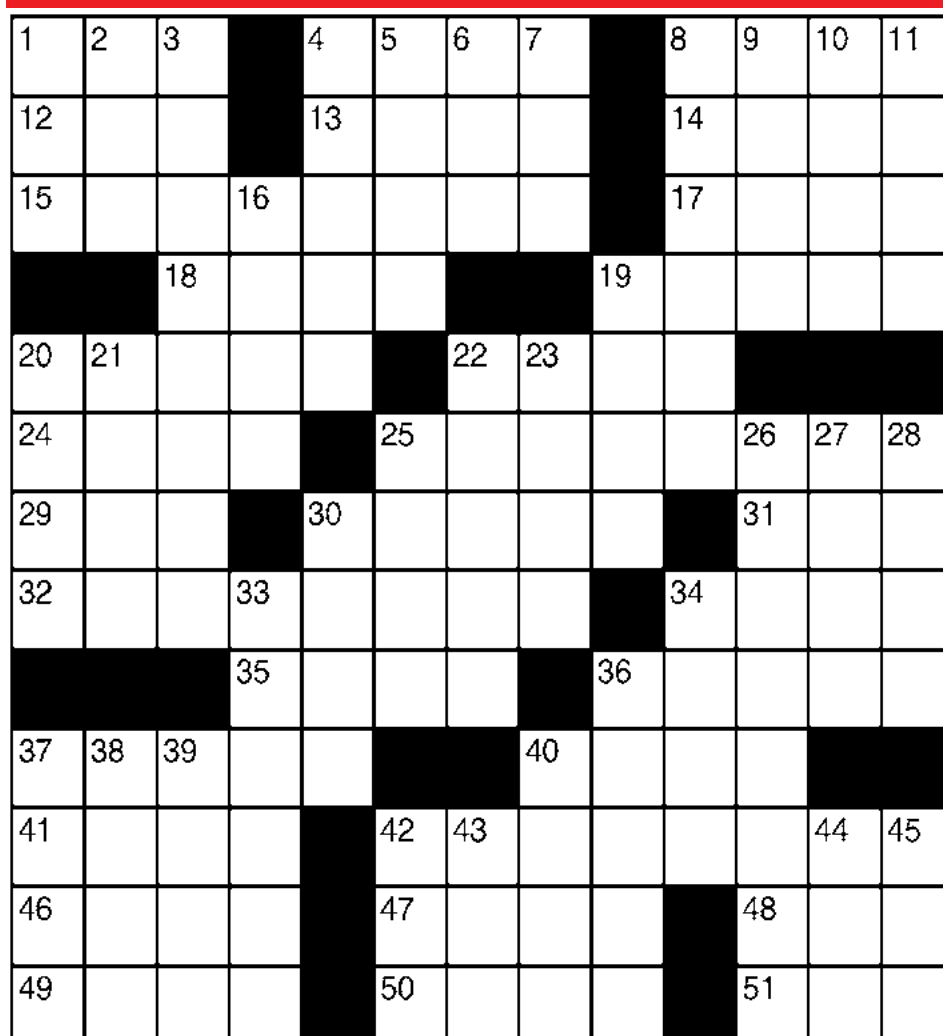
DOWN

- 1 Curved line
2 "Ben- —"
3 Middle Eastern capital
4 Printing errors
5 Farmer, at times
6 Literary rep
7 Existed
8 40 winks
9 Jeopardize
10 Teen fave
11 Pyramid part

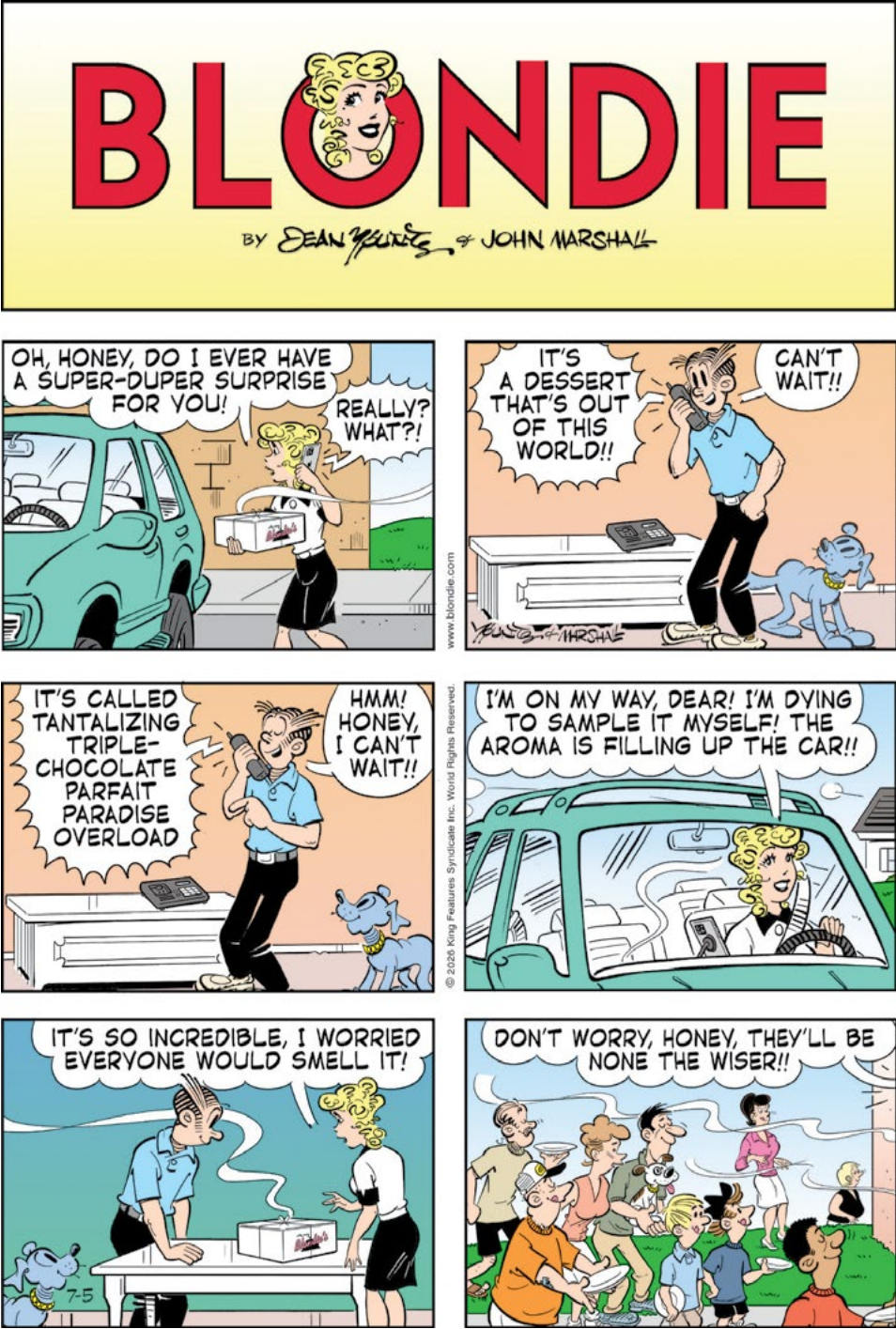
- 16 Carriage
19 You love (Lat.)
20 Goals
21 "Let's go!"
22 Indian yogurt dish
23 Unrefined metals
25 Get ready, briefly
26 Paint finish
27 Prefix with byte
28 Do in
30 Neat as —
33 Plug parts
34 Now, on a memo
36 Makeup brand
37 Scorch
38 Highly rated
39 Baby carriage
40 Duelist Aaron
42 Youngster
43 MGM rival
44 Eastern path
45 Boston team, for short

Answers on pg 8

Puzzle Sponsored by Eagle Group Agency

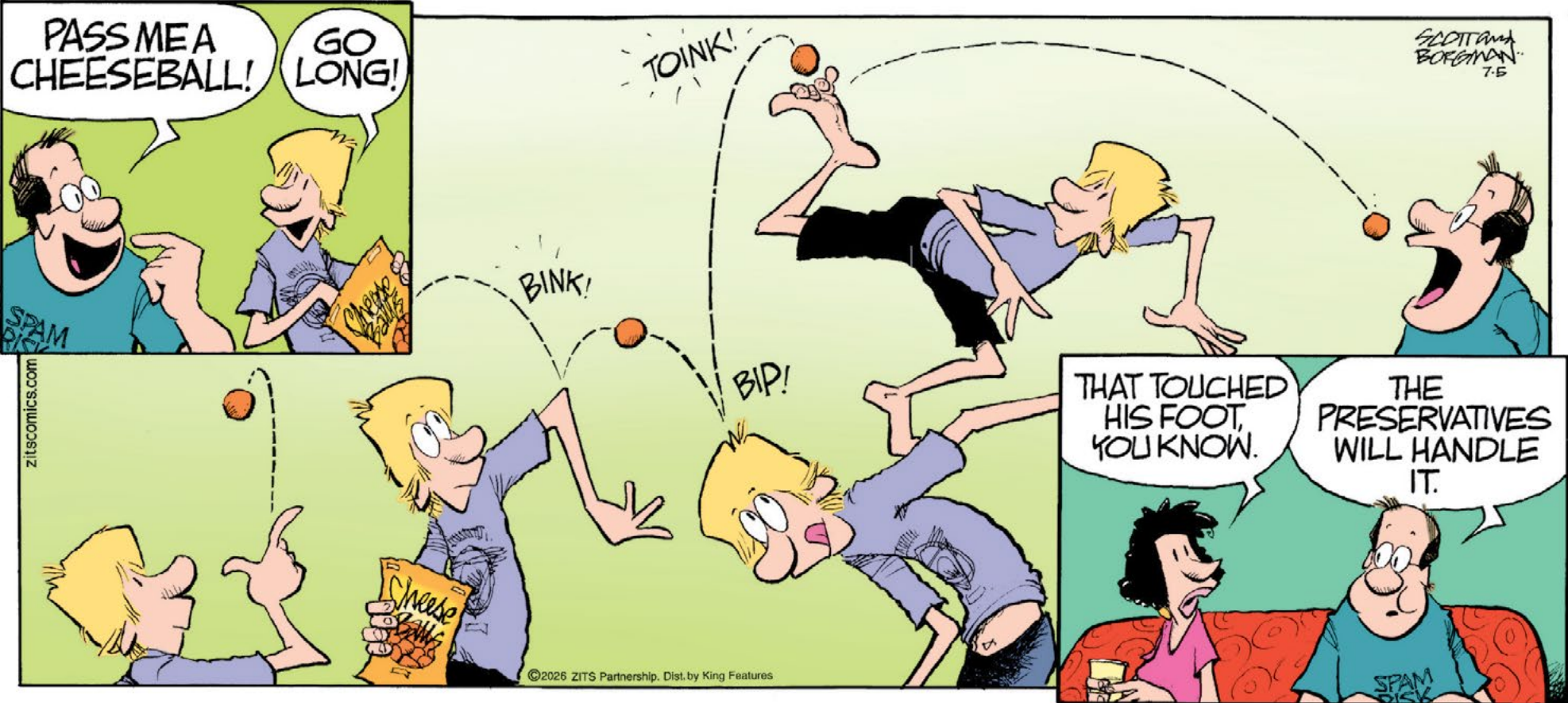


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