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▲ Annamaria Thomas in her sash and crown as Miss Teen Oklahoma in 2021

MHS student, beauty queen signs modeling contract

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Annamaria Thomas may not be a stereotypical model but she's already a popular one.

The Miami High School senior recently signed a modeling contract with Elite Modeling Agency in Miami, Florida, but she still plans to live in Miami, Oklahoma, and attend Northeastern Oklahoma A&M while modeling.

Thomas was just 12 years old when

a scout singled her out.

"I was in the mall and a pageant scout saw me and told me I should do pageants and handed me a bunch of brochures," Thomas said. "That's kind of how I got started in it."

She began winning pageants in 2017 when she won Miss Junior Teen Oklahoma. That year, she competed at nationals and won National Covergirl. In 2018, she was crowned Miss Junior Teen Oklahoma again and won National Ambassador at nationals. She was Miss Ottawa County for the United States Agriculture pageant in

2019 and won state covergirl.

Due to COVID-19, 2020 and 2021 were basically combined. Thomas won Miss Teen Oklahoma in 2020 and nationals weren't held that year so she retained her title in 2021. She won national personality when she competed in Orlando, Florida, at nationals in 2021. It was at this pageant she would find both her manager and the modeling agency she would sign with.

Thomas was the only girl Marc-Philippe Tuschler with Revolution Management signed during the 2021 national pageant. She was also the only girl Elite Modeling would sign that year.

There were 20 agencies represented at the pageant and Thomas received callbacks from 15 of them. A callback

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Annamaria Thomas (center) is joined by her parents as she signs her modeling contract with Elite Modeling Agency in December 2021

NEWS

County continues discussions on upcoming jail renovations

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During Tuesday's first meeting of the new year, Ottawa County commissioners addressed a relatively short list of items that were basically routine procedure, but included discussions on the renovations planned at the county jail.

Approved were a memorandum of understanding between the Cherokee Nation and the county, a resolution establishing an account fund for the sheriff's office, and the requisitioning and receiving officers for the county tribal ARPA (COVID-related) grant funds.

During his weekly report, District 1 commissioner Mike Furnas said, "We have an inventory list here that we prepare to keep track of everything (equipment, etc.) we have in District 1. Our state auditor has asked that we provide a copy of this for the record."

District 3 commissioner and chairman Russell Earls said that he had an inventory list to submit for his district as well, and also discussed the upcoming planned renovations at the jail.

He followed up by setting up a meeting with other county officials to discuss the matter further.

Earls added that the concrete work in particular will be complicated and not every contractor will have the qualifications to be able to bid on it.

He also mentioned that previous contractors that have had workers on the roof have left it in disarray and unacceptable conditions, and suggested that the county will need to establish guidelines and rules for anyone that has access to the roof in the future.

New uniforms, same faces as store changes name

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Rumors have been flying and it turns out they're true. The uniforms will change but the faces will stay the same as Marvin's switched over to Harp's Foods on Jan. 5. Consumers won't notice many differences beyond signage and some new products in the near future.

Miami store manager Brittany Dixon said they'd gotten the word back in October about the change, but they were just now able to start making the transition. It's a process that she said will take some time.

"I'm excited for the employees," Dixon said. "It's a big change. We've all worked long hours with the holidays and the pending transition. My employees are great and I'm glad Harp's kept our entire staff. Everybody stepped up and did what they needed to do and it's going very smoothly."

Staff members are busy learning Harp's way of doing things, though Dixon said it wasn't much different from the way Marvin's does things.

"At the moment, everything is running pretty much like we always have," she said.

Consumers worried about changes at their hometown store will be pleased to know that many things will remain the same.

"We'll be keeping the Best Choice and Always Save brands, which are both really popular," said Dixon. "Everybody loves these two brands and they're very good products. Harp's will likely bring in some new products down the line because they also have their own brand."

The new Harp's will still have a deli and offer bakery items. It will also still operate an extensive meat department, which will now include big meat sales every Saturday.

Currently, there aren't any plans for a big remodel and Dixon doesn't anticipate any more closures or interruptions in business as the transition from Marvin's to Harp's continues.

"Yesterday killed me," she said. "We had customers come up to the door, even though we have signs out. I felt so bad we were closed."

They will eventually get all new registers,



New Harp's signage grace the registers at the former Marvin's, including a flier on the Super Saturday Meat Sale, one of the changes the transition brings.

which Dixon said was great because theirs were a little outdated. However, they'll be switching out the registers one at a time so the store can remain open during the changeover.

Harp's representatives were working throughout the store on the first day of the takeover, helping where needed.

"Their representatives have been great," said Dixon. "They want us to do good and they're doing everything they can to make sure we do."

Another thing that won't change with the name is the personal service customers have come to expect at Marvin's.

"This is the town's hometown grocery store. You come in and you want that smile. You want that 'How are you doing today?' and 'Did you find everything okay?' That personal service that makes you feel welcome. We love our customers. Our regular customers are just awesome and we love being able to call them by name and that absolutely won't change."

Dixon said she was also excited for the town of Miami.

"Even though people love the Marvin's name and no one will ever forget Marvin's, we needed this change. The town needed this change."

LOCAL

Miami, area schools face back to school challenges



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Throughout the nation, over 2,000 schools reportedly closed the first week of 2022 citing COVID concerns. While some schools only closed for a day, others closed the entire first week back following the holiday break.

The Northeast and Midwest saw the most back-to-school disruptions, but Oklahoma wasn't immune. Several schools in Tulsa suspended in-person learning and went virtual the first few days back but cited staffing shortages.

Closer to home, Miami Public Schools and other area schools held classes as scheduled but are keeping tabs on the situation.

Nick Highsmith, superintendent of Miami Public Schools, said their biggest challenge at this time was protecting in-person instruction.

"With the surge in COVID-19 cases, we're watching student and staff attendance numbers daily. If our staffing levels

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Contract

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means the agency wants to sign you. Out of the 15, Thomas chose to sign with Elite.

"I have the record for the most callbacks in this pageant's history," Thomas said.

After the pageant, the contestants went to Disney World where they were required to wear their sashes to promote the pageant. However, they weren't required to wear their tiaras, which would have been extremely difficult on many of the rides.

Next weekend (Jan. 14-16), Thomas will be flying to Florida to do her test shoot. She said if those photos turn out well, they'll automatically put her on their website so she can start booking jobs. However, she doesn't actually schedule jobs until later.

"As soon as I graduate, they want me down there for two weeks so I can go through the modeling training and the runway classes," she explained.

"This is when they'll start sending me on jobs and not just booking them."

Thomas said she wants to do some alternative modeling for alternative brands. This essentially reflects her rather unique attitude as a model.

"One of my biggest things," Thomas said, "is you don't have to fit a certain stereotype to be successful. When a lot of people think of a pageant girl, they think of a blond bimbo, pretty much.

"A lot of people are scared to dress the way they want to or embrace themselves or be outward about what they like, what they watch or what they listen to. What you dress as and what you define as, even if you define as a stereotype like grunge or gothic or whatever, that shouldn't hinder what you're successful at. It shouldn't make there be less opportunities out there for you."

Thomas is considered very approachable and she isn't afraid to show who she is, which isn't always the norm for beauty queens.

"It's okay to break away from what society deems normal," she said. I have this baby Yoda figure and I carried it around with me the entire pageant, it was like my comfort thing, it sat in my bag the entire pageant. You could see it. It was obviously there. My manager thinks that one of the things that drew people to me is because I don't try to hide who I am or what I enjoy."

Thomas plans on still getting her degree at NEO while she's modeling. She's already racked up 40 college credit hours during her high school career. She plans on majoring in criminal justice and psychology.

Thomas has also been doing plays with NEO since her freshman year of high school. She said she'd like to continue being part of their theatre program as she'd like to also pursue acting in the future.

"You can't major in theatre at NEO but they do have a very good program," said Thomas.

She plans on living in Miami and flying out to Miami, Florida, when she has modeling jobs. She doesn't see this as a problem while attending NEO because her teachers have always been very understanding when she needed to be absent to do something pageant related.

When asked if there was anything specific that she'd like to tell young girls getting into modeling, she said, "You have to treat it like a business."

"That's one of the number one things. A lot of girls get into it thinking it's going to be all beauty and glamour and partying, it's not.

"Both my manager and Elite have told me that there are two different kinds of models. The girls that are in it for the business aspect and the girls that are in it to party and look pretty. The ones that are in for the business aspect stay in it longer and get more jobs."

School

•Continued from Page 1

drop or too many students are absent, then we may have to move to virtual instruction.

If too many students are absent, the State Department of Education won't allow us to count the day as a day of instruction," Highsmith said.

"Our school nurse now has the capability to conduct free, voluntary COVID testing for students, staff members and families. Interested parents may call 918-961-0087 to make their appointment. This is made possible by the Oklahoma Schools COVID-19 Prevention Program Grant, and we're grateful to provide this service to our district."

David Carriger, superintendent of Quapaw Public Schools, said when school resumed on Jan. 4, "We had a few students in quarantine due to family Covid cases over the holidays. We had a couple of students that have decided to go virtual for the next few weeks because of health issues.

"We're continuing to encourage students and staff that have symptoms or sickness to please stay at home, get tested and monitor any changes. We hope we can get

through the month of January with very few new cases."

Commerce Public Schools superintendent Steve Moss said, "We're looking at our numbers daily. We haven't seen a big increase in the first two days of return from winter break but are anticipating the possibility and planning accordingly. We'll continue to follow the state law and CDC guidance in response to positive cases and exposure."

Brad Wade, superintendent of Wyandotte Public Schools, said his district returned to school like normal and had no changes at this time.

Randy Gardner, superintendent of Afton Public Schools, also said they weren't facing any challenges at the present.

Parents can help keep schools open by keeping children at home if they're sick, especially if they're running a fever. If you suspect a COVID-19 infection, take your child(ren) to be tested. If the test comes back positive, follow appropriate quarantine procedures until they're well and no longer contagious before continuing in-person schooling.

Hundred acre woods

Rebecca Jim

There at the end of "The World of Pooh," in "the Enchanted Place" chapter, there is a moment when the inevitable seems to be happening, when the boy is on the edge of saying he is about to leave his childhood behind.

Christopher Robin experienced the tenderness of a child's first love outside of parental love, the bond to a cherished bear. Can we reach back to ours? Who were they,

what were their names, these lost loves. My mother and her only brother remembered her dolls' names when they were pulled out of the high cupboard in my grandmother's home seventy years since they had been cuddled. My little brother had a blanket that we all knew as his, "Me."

Pooh experienced the hundred acre wood and those that lived in it became his friends and adventurers. Just out the door of my home in only a few feet I can launch myself into the wilderness and do. The best times

there are those without purpose, timeless pursuits of discovery. Each season bringing change and the beauty of the place.

Can places be loved dearly? Longed for? My prairie lands and the woodlands that follows the creek bed down in the gullies, filled with the native plants who have deep roots and the new species that do not belong edging themselves in, winding round and longing to belong themselves.

There on the prairie before it falls off the edge, I created an ecosystem of places I

Tar Creek is getting some help in Kansas. EPA is working on her before she enters Oklahoma, for how can we do a real cleanup until the most upstream parts are addressed.

had loved by planting pines I could smell in the summer when the heat brought out the aroma of the Black Hills or the Rocky Mountains where I had lived in New Mexico and Colorado.

I had a dream this week that people, all sorts of people began to love Tar Creek and wanted to have birthday parties along the stream, they wanted to send rubber ducks down her, they longed to have Easter Egg hunts along the edge each spring. Graduation parties would take place and candle ceremonies like Tora Nagashi, the Festival of Recovery with floating lanterns which started in Japan after WWII when in 1946 so much of Japan remained in ruins. Perhaps our floating candles might be lit for the people who have lost their lives, from or during our current pandemic.

Tar Creek is getting some help in Kansas. EPA is working on her before she enters Oklahoma, for how can we do a real cleanup until the most upstream parts are addressed. As Piglet said to Pooh, "I used to believe in forever, but forever's too good to be true," but cleanup has begun on Tar Creek because landowners began to believe the efforts could work.

The landowners along our section of Tar Creek have begun believing. She is damaged, yes, but even naughty boys can be loved, right? So let's start having creek dreams and start longing to enjoy the new improved creek she will become, the enchanted place she will be.

There are tough times for Miami coming and it is hard to believe but the councilors must trust the city's attorneys to speak for you and the trees you all live in the shadows of in the fight for the life of the city during this GRDA relicensing process. <https://www.grda.com/pensacola-hydroelectric-project-relicensing/> Catch up with the fight, encourage those who long to protect your homelands, your hundred acre wood, to keep you high and dry.

S U D O K U

			4	1				
		2				8	7	
4		6				5	2	
		7	1	2	8			
8								1
		2	8	5	9			
5	4				7			6
2	1				5			
		9	2					

Tuesday's Sudoku

3	1	6	7	8	4	5	9	2
4	2	9	5	3	1	7	8	6
5	8	7	6	9	2	1	4	3
1	9	5	4	2	8	3	6	7
7	3	2	1	6	9	8	5	4
8	6	4	3	5	7	9	2	1
9	7	8	2	1	6	4	3	5
2	4	3	9	7	5	6	1	8
6	5	1	8	4	3	2	7	9

Sudoku uses pure logic and requires no math to solve. It is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers.

The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once.

C R Y P T O Q U I P

RIAVP FYWBMEFX YWVBISIGMR
VPFV'R F YFOIB SBITAEWB IK
EBWIFY - KMGGW T EIINMWR :

IBWI TW OFXWMBI.
Tuesday's Cryptoquip: IF GYMNASTS ARE OUT ON THE BIG FLOOR TUMBLING, I'D SAY THEY'RE THROWING THEIR WEIGHT AROUND.
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: Y equals M

C R O S S W O R D

- Across
- 1) United voting group
 - 5) La_ (opera house)
 - 10) Unappetizing food
 - 14) Turner of old Hollywood
 - 15) Of musical sound
 - 16) 12-point type
 - 17) Dec. 24 and 31
 - 18) "Astro Boy" genre
 - 19) Feed store items
 - 20) Household conveniences
 - 23) Apres-ski drink
 - 24) Lift the spirits of
 - 25) Colorless, odorless fuel gas
 - 28) Miner's exit
 - 30) Blacken with fire
 - 31) Athenian lawman
 - 33) "Emergency!" at sea
 - 36) Not bleed?
 - 40) It may have a silver lining?
 - 41) Toy that hums
 - 42) Bridge toll unit
 - 43) Camp Lejeune, e.g.
 - 44) Fire-suppression rake
 - 46) Human moles, e.g.
 - 49) In a vertical direction, nautically
 - 51) In need of a lifeboat
 - 57) Enthusiastic about
 - 58) Borneo ape
 - 59) Sundial 8
 - 60) Order to a broker, sometimes
 - 61) Bar Harbor locale
 - 62) Slight advantage
 - 63) Iditarod necessity
 - 64) Immigrants' Island
 - 65) Musical symbol

- Down
- 1) Used a Breathalyzer
 - 2) Kilauea outpouring
 - 3) Billfold bills, often
 - 4) Emergency plastic
 - 5) What a batter gets into
 - 6) Zaire, today
 - 7) Inner personality, to Jung
 - 8) Mongolian monk
 - 9) Guinness who was Obi-Wan

- 10) Pampered to a fault
- 11) Thick jungle vine
- 12) Eight people as a unit
- 13) Antiquated
- 21) Electrically charged particle
- 22) "Die Lorelei" poet Heinrich
- 25) Sound on the rebound
- 26) God with a hammer
- 27) Alan of "Gilligan's Island"
- 28) Sax type
- 29) "How dumb ofme!"

- 31) 42 regular, e.g.
- 32) Lennon's bride
- 33) Medieval German region, to the
- French
- 34) Christiania, now
- 35) Tool building
- 37) Edict of the Russian tsar
- 38)Faux_
- 39) Easy task
- 43) "Look at that!" old-style
- 44) Combines into one company
- 45) Truck driver's compartment
- 46) Cheese choice
- 47) Comic-strip unit
- 48) Basketwork fiber
- 49) To no_ (worthless)
- 50) Old copper coin of Finland
- 52) Stadium with a roof
- 53) Like some testimony
- 54) Man Friday
- 55) Fixes, as flights
- 56) Program for losers

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14				15					16			
17				18					19			
20			21					22				
23			24					25				
26	27					28	29					
30					31	32			33	34	35	
36				37	38				39			
40				41					42			
43								44	45			
46	47	48				49	50					
51					52	53				54	55	56
57					58				59			
60					61				62			
63					64				65			

Answers to Friday's crossword

WETS	PSALM	DAMP		
EPIC	UNDUE	UVEA		
BEER	DOORS	FINS		
BEDANDBREAKFAST				
PULSE	ULNAE			
ONLINE	ACME			
ROAN	GENOA	FED		
BRIGHTANDBREEZY				
SAD	OASES	RARE		
BUMPS	COSTAR			
ARIES	SAUNA			
BIGGERANDBETTER				
UGLI	ANIMA	ZANY		
SOON	UNPIN	ERIE		
EROS	LASTS	SODS		