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NEWS

Ottawa County Santa Program shuts down



Jerry Coach, shown during the kickoff of this year's Ottawa County Santa Program, has said on Facebook that he had to shut down the drive.

By Moira K. McGhee
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It was with a sad heart that Jerry Coach announced on Dec. 1 that he was shutting down the Ottawa County Santa Program. A program he'd been running for the last 42 years and something he loved doing for children in need.

"It's just become too big for one person," he said on his organization's Facebook page.

Coach will be giving all the monetary donations and toys he's received so far to the Jay Toys for Tots organization. Although the full transition hasn't occurred yet, campaign coordinator Sandy Love is busy trying to make sure all the needy children in Ottawa and Delaware counties have a great Christmas.

"I had 300 people in Ottawa County already signed up who weren't doing Jerry's program and yesterday (Dec. 2) alone, I had 798 applications out of

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Miami parade is the icing on the cake



Photo by Gary Crow

The City of Miami's utility department entered this float in Saturday's Christmas parade.

By Moira K. McGhee
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Even after a long day of parade watching, the crowd was still thick at the "Music of Christmas" Route 66 Christmas parade in downtown Miami. The parade route was altered last year due to road construction, running south-to-north. The

annual event was back on its traditional north-to-south course this year.

A large chunk of Main Street was closed down to accommodate the parade route, which began at the railroad tracks. Parade participants moved down Main Street among a throng of residents and visitors from surrounding towns until hitting the end of the line at

2nd Street South.

Just prior to the parade, the City of Miami hosted the official lighting of the community Christmas tree at Security Bank & Trust. The Miami Junior High choir performed carols before the tree was lit at 5:30 p.m.

The parade was kicked off at 6 p.m. by grand marshal Ethel Cook who rode in a beautiful blue 1969 Camaro driven by Darrin McNeil, owner of McNeil Electric in Miami. Cook is the current chief of the Ottawa Tribe of Oklahoma and chairman of the Inter-Tribal Council.

Although some floats had appeared earlier in the day at one or more area Christmas parades, they were even more awe-inspiring at night



Photo by Gary Crow

Cast members of the Dance Academy's production of The Nutcracker ride one of the floats.

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LOCAL

County mulls premium pay for employees

Carla Nielsen
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A two-hour discussion was held concerning proposed premium pay for Ottawa County essential employees through ARPA dollars (COVID-related American Rescue Plan Act funds) at a county commissioner's meeting Thursday afternoon.

If the county follows the guidelines set by ARPA, qualifying employees could be paid an additional \$3 per hour as an essential worker for hazard pay. If that is approved, based on an estimate by county clerk Robyn Mitchell, it will cost the county approximately \$316,000.

Russell Earls, chairman and District 3 commissioner, said, "Ed Crone (Grand Gateway Economic Development Association executive director) is working on a process for us to move forward with. I would like to table this while we continue going through the process in administering these ARPA dollars. There are a lot of things that we need to fund through the county government before we look at premium pay for employees, but I want you to study it further and we will look at it again at a later date."

District #1 commissioner Mike Furnas called it a "once in a lifetime" chance in grant form.

"This is something these employees qualify for and they deserve us giving it every consideration," he said. "Let's not just give out verbal accolades. This is something that needs to happen. I would at least like to make a motion to follow the process at least on this one item and see it through."

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Illegal dam removed from Tar Creek

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Crews from several agencies assisted Thursday with the removal of an illegal dam that was obstructing Tar Creek.

The Grand River Dam Authority, City of Miami, Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality and Tulsa District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers were among the agencies coordinating the project.

Work on the dam had taken place over the summer and fall, according to Jim, who is executive director of Local Environmental action Demanded (LEAD) Agency.

She filed a complaint with the Oklahoma department of Environmental Quality after it was discovered around Labor Day weekend.

The complaint was forwarded to the Army Corps of Engineers, who then assigned authority to the GRDA.

The names of those responsible are still being sought by Miami police and the GRDA, Jim said. They removed the main obstruction in the creek — it was considerable," she said. "They removed several of the trees that had been vandalized along the way.

"The vandalism was unnecessary."

Jim said that those who did the vandalism wanted to control the flow of the creek and build

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CHRISTMAS PARADE PHENOMENAL SUCCESS IN TOWN THAT DOESN'T EXIST

By Moira K. McGhee
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From infants to older folk, hundreds of people lined the street to watch the seventh annual Picher Christmas parade Dec. 4.

Kids eagerly awaited the first toss of candy from parade participants while two older gentlemen talked about the glory days on the Picher football field. It was a traditional scene filled with small-town charm and community spirit. There was just one big difference



Longtime Picher resident Burly Grimes was the grand marshal of the seventh annual Picher Christmas parade.



"There's No Place Like Home" was the theme of this float as well as Picher's Christmas parade.

between this parade and the many others that took place on Saturday.

The Town of Picher technically no longer exists.

As most locals know, Picher was once a booming mining community, home to thousands of residents until mining ceased and contaminated water began to seep from the closed mines. Picher became an Environmental Protection Agency Superfund Site in 1983, then was further devastated by an F4 tornado in 2008 that leveled buildings on the main streets and destroyed numerous homes. The EPA determined the town was dangerous to

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IN THE KNOW



The Commerce High School band was featured in the Commerce Christmas parade Saturday.

COMMERCE PARADE GETS GOOD CROWD AFTER SHORT BREAK

By Moira K. McGhee
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After a short break in the afternoon, the Commerce Christmas parade was many people's third parade out of many held on Saturday, Dec. 4.

While some people who'd been to multiple parades

already said they'd gone to the Welch and Bluejacket parades, others said they'd attended the Picher and Quapaw parades earlier in the day.

Led by parade grand marshals Keith and Kay Fichtner, the Commerce Christmas parade had lots of cheerleaders and performances by the

Commerce High School band and other area bands. It also featured numerous animals, including a spunky cat from the Miami Animal Alliance float, Eddie the Eagle on the Ottawa County 4H float and some rowdy reindeers in an ATV.

The Grinch and Santa also put in appearances along with the Miss Eastern

Oklahoma and Miss Oklahoma Teen queens. Local royalty included CHS Mr. and Miss Merry Christmas candidates Marcus and Abigail, Julian and Baylee, Aiddenn Vanatta and Lauren Shackelford, and Giselle Gutierrez and Eric Cunningham with Attendant Gaby Medina.

Bashore bill would lower vehicle transfer, trade-in taxes

Rep. Steve Bashore, R-Miami, has filed legislation for 2022 that would reconfigure how the base excise tax is determined when a vehicle is transferred and would allow a trade-in deduction allowance on the purchase price of a vehicle.

"Letting individuals to keep the money they've earned allows them to make their own decisions about how this income is best spent," Bashore said. "It's proven that lowering taxes and allowing this flexibility stimulates the economy."

Bashore said House Bill 2986 would bring Oklahoma in line with how regional states, such as Kansas, Texas and Arkansas, calculate excise tax — based on the net

cost of a vehicle rather than the gross cost. It also would lower the taxation amount that Oklahomans currently face when trading vehicles. The measure is estimated to save taxpayers about \$47.3 million in associated motor vehicle excise tax from the deduction of the trade-in allowance.

Bashore said the state economy is doing exceedingly well with collections to the state treasurer coming in above estimates and above previous year revenue each month of the fiscal year so far. With a healthy state savings account for the eventual rainy day, he said it's time to allow Oklahoma taxpayers to keep more of their hard-earned money.

GRINCH FAN WINS

Miss Merry Christmas 2021

By Moira K. McGhee
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The Miami Hi-Noon Business Women's Club held its annual Miss Merry Christmas on Thursday, Dec. 3 and they crowned the cutest Grinch in the land. Pat Hecksher emceed the event with six participants ranging in age between 3 and 8.

Elaina Joyce Parker was the winner of the 2021 Miss Merry Christmas pageant.

Three-year-old Elaina is the daughter of Korie Payton and Detrick Parker and the granddaughter of James and Sari Payton. Elaina loves Mr. Grinch as demonstrated by her chosen outfit for the pageant, which sported the Grinch's signature green fur. She also loves riding bikes, reading books and everything rainbow.

Elaina was presented with a sash, tiara, first place trophy and piggy bank containing \$100.

Hecksher announced a tie for the first runner-up. Both girls received a sash, first runner-up trophy and piggy bank containing \$75.

Enzleigh Rose-Dawn Alvarado is the daughter of Cshyla Edwards and granddaughter of Michael Edwards and Kimberly Reece, and Samuel Alvarado and Gabriella Garcia. Enzleigh likes to sing and dance and hang out with her Aunt Misty. She also enjoys coloring, playing outside and being sassy. She's four years old.

Preslee Trask is the daughter of Jason and Lindsay Sinor and granddaughter of Doug and Peggy Williams and Slugger Trask. Five-year-old Preslee loves to play outside, take care of her baby dolls, roughhouse with her big brother and sing and dance everywhere she goes. She loves school but most of all she loves being around her family and friends.

The three remaining participants all received a participation trophy.

Camdyn Bonham is the daughter of Chelsie Bonham and granddaughter of



Elaina Joyce Parker (center) was named the 2021 Miss Merry Christmas by the Miami Hi-Noon Business Women's Club. Also pictured are Preslee Trask (left) and Enzleigh Alvarado (right) who tied for first runner-up.

Jamie Johnston, Gary Bonham and Tracey Bruner. Camdyn is three years old and active in dance at Christi Leonard's Dance Academy through which she's playing an angel in the upcoming Nutcracker ballet. She is also active in pageants and has represented our area on the National Level. She loves to be doing anything outside with her friends and dogs.

Paisley Cummings is the daughter

of Brent and Courtney Cummings and granddaughter of Tammy Rentfrow, and Richard and Carol Rentfrow. Eight-year-old Paisley is enrolled in dance at Christi Leonard's Dance Academy. She also takes tumbling at Flip Out and loves to cheer. She enjoys family time and hanging out with her friends and dog Bow.

Vivienne Paoness is the daughter of Andrea Penalosa and Mike Paonessa and

granddaughter of Don and Adonna Helmig. Vivienne is four years old, attends preschool and does yoga and tennis. She enjoys playing with princess dolls and My Pretty Ponies and chasing and playing with her brother Charlie. Vivienne also likes puzzles, play dough and dancing to music.

A seventh participant wasn't able to attend. Five-year-old Preslie Jean Moberly is the daughter of Kassie and Douglas Moberly.

All six young girls who participated in the pageant were invited to be in the Miami Christmas Parade.

Winners of the contest were chosen based on who raised the most money in any manner they chose and/or by selling tickets for the raffle of \$100. The proceeds from these funds are utilized to provide scholarships to non-traditional students pursuing a degree in nursing or a related field.

This year's Miss Merry Christmas pageant funded scholarships for three deserving recipients. They included Angela Capansky and Misti Axtell in the NEO Nursing Program and Jessica Beck in the LPN Nursing program at Northeast Tech Afton.

Club Present Carole Thornton introduced and thanked her pageant committee volunteers.

She also thanked All Saints Episcopal Church at 225 B St. NW for graciously hosting the pageant for the group.

Family members are encouraged to attend and many were on hand to watch their little girls during the coronation ceremony. Cookies and other refreshments were served to the contestants and their families following the pageant.

This is an annual event so check back next year and enter your daughter or granddaughter into the fun-filled event. Look for updates on the Miami Hi-Noon Business Women's Club Facebook page at www.facebook.com/Miami-Hi-Noon-Business-Womens-Club-114839596927931.

Parade

•Continued from Page 1

when they were all lit up with their Christmas lights and/or other illumination. At least two Grinches and numerous Santa Clauses were also on hand to entertain the kids.

Winners of the Miami parade will be announced at the Chamber of Commerce on Dec. 8. These will include first, second and third place prizes to the best float, best vehicle, best pedestrian and best overall

entries.

The weather was ideal for the parade, warmer than usual and without any precipitation. However, some attendees who arrived early to snag a good spot on the parade route remarked that the turnout seemed poor. The crowd did appear to be somewhat thin at the outset, but by the time the parade began the streets were lined at least two deep

of eager parade watchers. Children were out in force and the streets were soon littered in a candy storm.

Some parents remarked that they'd never seen so much candy being tossed about and the kids couldn't have been more thrilled. At times, the kids had a hard time keeping up with the amount being tossed out.

However, parade participants weren't just

tossing candy. T-shirts, toys, gloves, stuffed animals and even a few items for adults were seen being tossed or handed to audience members.

At least 80 units signed up for the parade. By the time Santa brought up the rear on the back of a Miami Fire Department ladder truck, the crowd was filled with Christmas cheer and ready to call it a day.

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