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PHOTO BY ANDREA MURPHY PHOTOGRAPHY

healthy NEW YEAR!

I was talking to my daughter, who is a graduate assistant at a large university in a very cold state. She mentioned that she was signing up for unlimited classes at the university gym this semester to give her an indoor place to work out, plus a variety of classes. I'm probably giving credit where none is due, but it made me think that a childhood investment in a healthy lifestyle has paid off with all three of our kids. My husband and I have been life-long runners, and we're fairly active. With a genetic predisposition to high cholesterol on my husband's side, my cooking leans toward an awareness of that. I love being outdoors, so swimming, bikes, parks and sports were all part of our lives. My adult children all take care of their health. My daughters are runners (and great cooks!) and my son follows a healthy diet.

Was that difficult? No. It was a lifestyle. Honestly, it wasn't even that much of a conscious effort. I wasn't taking my kids out on forced marches or making them eat tofu every day, or even talking about it much. But, we can be aware that we are role models for our kids.

This month's issue has some pretty simple health tips that everyone can do to maintain good mental

and physical health. If you're not doing them, choose a couple of things to add to your family's life. Maybe it's going for a daily walk, or having dinner together and talking about what good things happened to you that day. Your kids will pick up on that, and maybe they'll share their day with you. Don't force it, but be open.

We may all be feeling a bit of health fatigue coming out of the COVID pandemic. Pneumonia, flu, COVID and RSV have spiked recently. Fortunately, we have vaccines now to prevent, or at least lessen the effects of, all of these illnesses. You may have gotten behind on your child's vaccination schedule. Talk to your healthcare provider about how to catch up.

Think of the healthy adults you want your kids to be, and become that role model. Those good habits will last a lifetime.



Betty Casey

ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER
AND EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

tulsakids

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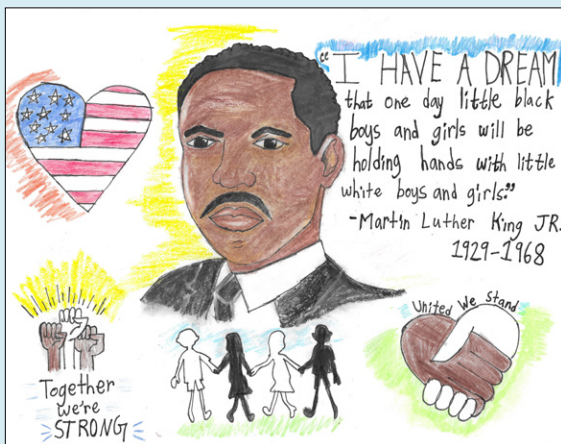
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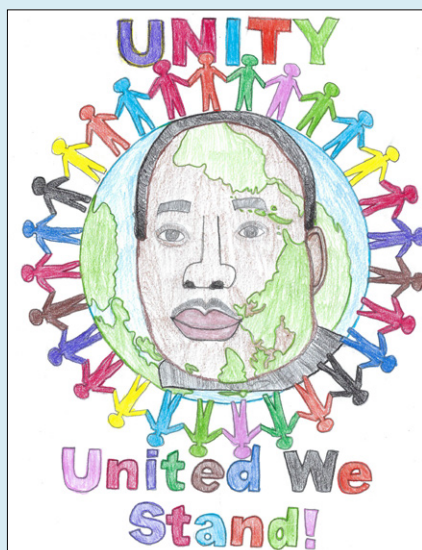
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1st Place: Ava Walters



2nd Place: Ananya Duggirala



3rd Place: Khloe Bowman

MLK, JR. COMMEMORATION SOCIETY PICKS STUDENT CONTEST WINNERS

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemoration Society announced the Tulsa-area students who won art, essay and oratorical contests honoring Martin Luther King, Jr. Day on January 15. The theme this year was "Dr. King's Dream: A Vision for the Future."

Student contest winners are as follows:

Youth Art Contest: Students in grades K-6 were asked to create an illustration based on one of three themes that characterize Dr. King's life and work — Love, Peace or Unity — and what the theme means to them. All three winning drawings are showcased in the 2024 MLK Souvenir Book.

- 1st Place (\$175): **Ava Walters**, 5th Grade, Augustine Christian Academy;
- 2nd Place (\$125): **Ananya Duggirala**, 3rd Grade, Moore Elementary, Union Public Schools; and
- 3rd Place (\$75): **Khloe Bowman**, 6th Grade, Centennial Middle School, Broken Arrow Public Schools.

Essay Contest: Middle school students (grades 6-8) were asked to write a 350-500 word essay on the topic, "I live my life as a reflection of Dr. King's dream by..." Essays were judged based on originality/creativity, clarity, use of facts or specific examples and other criteria. Their essays are published in the 2024 MLK Souvenir Book. Prizes were awarded as follows:

- 1st Place (\$250): **Brin Bradford**, 7th grade, Carver Middle School, Tulsa Public Schools;
- 2nd Place (\$225): **Khloe Bowman**, 6th grade, Centennial Middle School, Broken Arrow Public Schools; and
- 3rd Place (\$200): **Nathaniel Mseti**, 6th grade, Union 6th/7th Grade Center, Union Public Schools.

Oratorical Contest: High school students (grades 9-12) were asked to memorize Dr. King's iconic "I Have a Dream" speech for a chance to showcase their oratorical skills. Contestants were judged on clarity, quality, delivery, stage presence and memorization skills. Prizes were awarded to the following:

- 1st Place (\$1,000): **Chiedza Mahuni**, 11th grade, Union High School; and
- 2nd Place (\$500): **Collin Walters**, 10th grade, Vanguard Academy of Broken Arrow Public Schools.

Chiedza Mahuni, the 1st Place winner, performed Dr. King's speech for ONE Gas employees at a special Martin Luther King, Jr. event on Tuesday, Jan. 9, 2024. ONE Gas is the official sponsor of the Martin Luther King Jr. Oratorical Contest. She also presented the speech at the Sunday Commemorative Service on Sunday, Jan. 14 at 6 p.m. at Boston Avenue United Methodist Church, 1301 S. Boston Ave., in Tulsa.

2024 "Dream Out Loud" Student Award and Scholarship: This award is presented to a high school student who has demonstrated leadership, academic excellence and a commitment to the message and values of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. **Arihana Sanders**, a senior at Broken Arrow High School, is the winner of this \$500 scholarship. She is currently enrolled in the criminal justice program at Tulsa Tech's Peoria Campus. Upon graduation, Arihana plans to join the Tulsa County Sheriff's Office as a detention officer in hopes of one day becoming a crime scene investigator. She wants to give back to the community by volunteering at local shelters to feed the homeless. Arihana also looks for opportunities to donate much-needed items such as blankets, clothes, shoes and hygiene products for those in need. The "Dream Out Loud" Award is presented annually by the Tulsa County Sheriff's Office, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemoration Society and Tulsa Tech.

Sponsors of MLK Student Awards include PepsiCo, ONE Gas and Boston Avenue United Methodist Church.

The Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Commemoration Society, Inc. is a Tulsa, Oklahoma-based 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization focused on honoring and preserving the works and ideals that Dr. King practiced. The society has provided programming, leadership development, civic engagement and opportunities for artistic expression involving more than 20,000 boys and girls in Tulsa County and the surrounding area since it was founded in 1978. The Society has awarded \$132,000 in scholarships over the past three decades to local high school graduates aspiring to achieve Dr. King's dream.

AMEKA PREMIERE AT CIRCLE CINEMA

To kick off Black History Month, Dr. Tamecca Rogers, a member of the Tulsa-based Artists Creative Fund, will present "Crowning Glory: The Ameka Premiere Extravaganza" on Sat., Feb. 3 at 2 p.m. The red-carpet event is an exclusive celebration of the animated series *Ameka and Her Magical Crown*, created and directed by Dr. Rogers.

Children and their adults are invited to attend dressed for the red carpet, while Omalee B will perform live music. There will be food, STEM experiments provided by Discovery Lab, an awards presentation for the young stars who contributed to the series, a screening of *Ameka and Her Magical Crown* followed by a question-and-answer session with Dr. Rogers and the young people involved in the animated series, which follows a spirited young girl who discovers that her voluminous hair is a magical crown leading her on adventures.

Circle Cinema is located at 10 S. Lewis Ave., Tulsa.



THE OPPORTUNITY PROJECT HIRES NEW DIRECTOR

The Opportunity Project (The Opp), a nonprofit that provides afterschool activities and opportunities for Tulsa students, has named Lauren Sivak as executive director.

She is the former managing director of 2nd Story, a Chicago storytelling collective.

Evan Taylor, communications and engagement coordinator, wrote, "The Opp seeks to improve the quality, access and delivery of expanded learning opportunities for youth in Tulsa by integrating the city's array of youth-focused programs, services and curricula."



GATHERING PLACE EXHIBITING SCOTT CARTER SPORTS COLLECTION

Gathering Place, in partnership with the Scott Carter Foundation, invites the Tulsa community to view a nearly 300-piece collection of autographed sports memorabilia. The Scott Carter Heroes Collection will be on display in ONEOK Boat-house through March 31 and features autographed jerseys, balls, bats, boxing gloves, and more sports gear from sports legends like Michael Jordan, Kobe Bryant, Baker Mayfield, Tiger Woods and others.

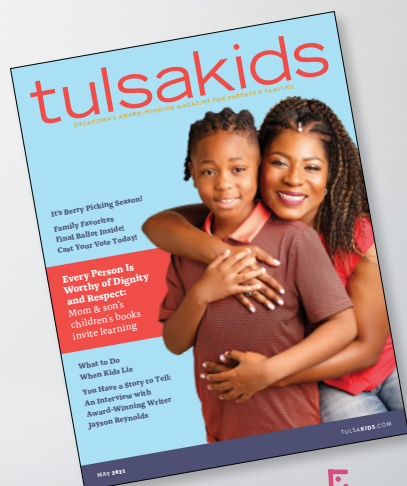
Scott Carter was a 13-year-old boy from Tulsa, Oklahoma, who died in December 1993 after a three-year battle with bone cancer. Throughout the duration of his illness, Scott amassed an impressive collection of sports memorabilia. Scott's wish was to showcase the collection across the country to raise money and find a cure for pediatric cancer, the number one disease killer of children. To fulfill his wish, Scott's parents, Mike and Paula Carter, founded the Scott Carter Foundation. After spending over 20 years at Walt Disney World in Orlando, Florida, the Heroes Collection, featuring many items only able to be seen at a National Hall of Fame site, is returning to Scott Carter's local community.

For more information on Gathering Place and this free exhibition, visit gatheringplace.org.

WHAT'S GOING ONLINE?



TATSIANA VOLKAVA/GETTY



CONTESTS & GIVEAWAYS

Get links to the
following at
tulsakids.com/contests.



AMAZING MOMS CONTEST

From **Feb. 15–29**, tell us about an amazing mom you know! One winning nominee will be featured on the **cover of our May issue**, where we will also share some additional testimonials.



FIND FAFSA INFO IN OUR COLLEGE PLANNER

The 2024–2025 FAFSA Form is now available at studentaid.gov. Visit the TulsaKids' College Planner (tulsakids.com/college) for FAFSA tips and other helpful information for college-bound students.



COMING SOON: FAMILY FAVORITES NOMINATIONS START MARCH 1!

Nominate your Family Favorites **March 1–15**. This is a chance to help your favorite local businesses and professionals secure their spot on our Family Favorites Runoff Ballot. Read about last year's winners and finalists at tulsakids.com/family-favorites.



BABY SHARK TICKET GIVEAWAY

Baby Shark's Big BroadWave Tour is swimming into the Tulsa PAC March 15 and 16! From **Feb. 15–29**, enter to win four tickets to the 6 p.m. performance on March 15. Tickets are also available for purchase at tulsapac.com.

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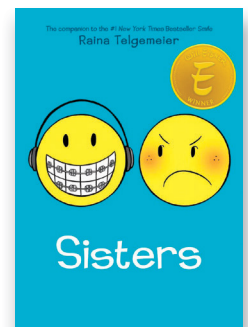
Mr. Henry's Books EDUCATOR WORKSHOP

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- Learn how to incorporate various elements of *Sisters* into your classroom and receive lesson plans on how to use Telgemeier's works in a variety of school subjects.
- Be introduced to Tulsa City-County Library's Anne V. Zarrow Award for Young Readers' Literature.
- Gain an opportunity to win a classroom visit by Raina Telgemeier on Friday, May 3.



Every participant will receive their copies of *Sisters* **after** the workshop, as well as an official continuing-education certificate. Participants must be employed by a school district within Tulsa County.

REGISTRATION REQUIRED

Deadline: Saturday, Feb. 10
Registration is limited.
www.tulsalibrary.org/mr-henrys-books-registration



Mr. Henry's Books is a program of the Tulsa City-County Library, sponsored by the Tulsa Library Trust, made possible by a grant from the Anne & Henry Zarrow Foundation.



Parenting is not a Pleasure Cruise

By **Alicia Kobilnyk**



There will be times when their behavior is unlovable, when it is hard to love them.
Don't let it sink your ship, Captain.

It's funny rummaging around in the corners of my mind, seeing what information I have tucked away over the years. One special collection of memories, like a battered box, holds all my thoughts, dreams and hopes about what it would be like to be a mother, curated from my earliest musings cradling bald, bedraggled baby dolls (all of whom were famously named Jeremy), to the days decades later, cradling a bulging belly and praying for my own baby (likely to be bald but most decidedly not named Jeremy).

Searching this little trove of whimsy, naivety and trepidation, I find many wonderful things. But not once, even dusted in the corner and scrawled on the back of some inglorious receipt paper, do I find the following:

I wonder if I will ever feel I don't like my child.

Blasphemous, I know. Who would think that? Why I assume that thought would have occurred to me as a brand-new parent, I have no idea. Honestly, it never even occurred to me until I was holding a newborn that I'd need to trim her nails until she was old enough to do them herself. But here she was, rendering me a mother. And as a mother, it was not long until the creepy tendrils of sleep deprivation gripped my limbs, pulling me from rest and whispering unpleasant truths and half-truths into my ears. The long nights, stressful "make it work" moments and screams of my tiny, helpless baby echoed into my soul, and though each time we MacGyvered our way through, I nearly always felt defeated or frustrated.

This was not what I'd thought it would be.

Where was the flawless scoop, settle and snuggle as my new baby, pink and precious, cooed softly and looked to her rested and effortlessly beautiful mother, a bastion of wisdom and love? This squalling, demanding baby, rejecting my clumsy help, and throwing herself backwards as if dodging my pit-stained pajamas and morning breath was not what I'd envisioned. As I wrangled, wiped and whisper-begged my infant to just *stop*, my primal lizard brain, like an irrationally angry citizen at a town hall, would step up to the mic and shout confidently, "She's doing this on purpose. This sucks! I'm not even sure she loves me. Maybe the feeling is mutual!"

That sentiment, even if only uttered in my mind, broke me each time it came. Those difficult moments, off and on over the years, when little ones would just *not* sleep, spat out the last salvaged bit of infant Tylenol (as if teething pain was preferable to artificial cherry-flavor) or threw a horrific fit at Grandma's Christmas party brought out something dark, scary and, worst of all, a teeny bit honest in me.

No, my children were not doing anything on purpose. And they did love me. There was no denying that. I was their favorite person, their safe place. But it *did* suck to have those experiences and to have to be the captain of that chaotic cruise. And while I have deeply loved my children from the moment they began, I have not always *liked* being with them, wild and ridiculous passengers they sometimes are.

~~~~~

"To quote the endlessly loving and wise Fred Rogers, 'Love isn't a state of perfect caring. It is an active noun like struggle.

**To love someone is to strive to accept that person exactly the way he or she is, right here and now.'"**

~~~~~

NADEZHDA1906/GETTY

Settling back on my heels and sitting with these less rosy memories, tossed haphazardly into a disheveled box covered with scrawls of black sharpie and dysfunctional duct tape, I realize that the raw honesty of these slices of parenting life only add beauty to what it means to love a tiny human.

As we approach a holiday full of frilly hearts and candy-coated, capital-lettered LOVE everywhere, reflect on your emotions through the season you're in. The broader the spectrum of feeling and acceptance of these ups and downs, the deeper your peace and appreciation of it will be. To quote the endlessly loving and wise Fred Rogers, "Love isn't a state of perfect caring. It is an active noun like struggle. To love someone is to strive to accept that person exactly the way he or she is, right here and now."

It doesn't matter if your child is four seconds old or 4 years old (or even 40, so I hear). There will be times when their behavior is unlovable, when it is hard to love them. Don't let it sink your ship, Captain. Just grip the helm, batten down the hatches, and love them through it. After the storm passes (or you dodge that iceberg), those darling little passengers will be delightful once more. **TK**

Alicia Kobilnyk is an Early Childhood Educator who works with young toddlers. She finds joy and inspiration to write in their cheeky shenanigans, as well as those of her three daughters.



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Empowering Diversity: The Transformative Impact of DEI on Education, Workforce and Oklahoma's Prosperity

By **Tamecca Rogers, PhD**



Senator Mary Boren

DEI is not about promising equal outcomes but ensuring equal access to opportunities and fostering an atmosphere of decency, empathy and intelligence within educational institutions and workplaces, as well as all aspects of public life.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) stand as pillars of progress in education, the workforce and the economic landscape of Oklahoma. In the dynamic realm of education, DEI fosters inclusive environments that empower students from all walks of life to thrive academically and personally. Beyond the classroom, DEI plays a pivotal role in shaping a competitive and adaptable workforce capable of recognizing the unique perspectives of individuals and viewing differences as assets rather than points of contention. The positive impacts of DEI also extend to the economic development of Oklahoma, where a diverse and inclusive workforce is crucial for attracting businesses and driving prosperity. To delve deeper into the multifaceted significance of DEI, I spoke with Oklahoma Senator Mary Boren with the aim of gaining insights into the role of DEI in shaping the state's students, workforce and economy.

Addressing Misconceptions and Criticisms

In face of challenges, such as Gov. Stitt's DEI executive order, signed on Dec. 13, 2023, to defund DEI efforts in public colleges, critics often misinterpret the fundamental purpose of DEI, portraying it as an obstacle to the attainment of an equitable society. However, it is essential to acknowledge the bias and privilege embedded in such perspectives. DEI is not about promising equal outcomes but ensuring equal access to opportunities and fostering an atmosphere of decency, empathy and intelligence within educational institutions and workplaces, as well as all aspects of public life. These directives are particularly relevant in Oklahoma, as the state's demand for highly qualified workers adds urgency to the need for inclusive practices.

Contrary to the prevalent misconceptions, DEI is not synonymous with affirmative action; yet misleading talking points often create unwarranted associations between the two initiatives. Senator Boren emphasizes

this distinction, stating, "DEI gives everyone the opportunity to show up to school and work with their merit. DEI opens doors for diverse backgrounds, including single parents, caregivers for older individuals, people with disabilities and those dealing with mental health issues."

As pointed out by Senator Boren, adherence to the DEI principles is essential for breaking down unnecessary barriers, providing more Oklahomans with the chance to utilize their full potential. Thus, criticisms that draw parallels between DEI and affirmative action, as Senator Boren notes, constrict the circle of opportunities, limiting workforce prospects for those wishing to find employment in the state.

The Inclusivity Beyond Race, Gender and Sexual Orientation

DEI initiatives transcend traditional boundaries, reaching out to a diverse spectrum of individuals beyond the conventional focus on race, gender and sexual orientation.

By providing support to first-generation students, those with disabilities, veterans and neurodiverse individuals, and by acknowledging the impact of socioeconomic factors on individual life trajectories, these initiatives create an inclusive and enriching learning environment for everyone. In recognizing that diversity encompasses a wide array of experiences and backgrounds, DEI becomes a powerful tool for fostering equal opportunities and a sense of belonging in our educational institutions, workplaces and communities. This inclusive approach is essential not only for disadvantaged individuals, but for every member of our society, ensuring that every individual, regardless of their background, has the opportunity to thrive and contribute to collective prosperity.

Implications for the Economy and Community

Beyond the classroom, DEI emerges as a linchpin in economic development, and the

apprehensions surrounding the ban on DEI initiatives underscore its potential impact on economic strategies and the future employability of business professionals. In an age characterized by rapid technological change, sociopolitical discord and growing globalization, having a diverse workforce capable of navigating and appreciating differences stands as a decisive competitive advantage. The exclusion of DEI not only jeopardizes the formation of global partnerships but also deters businesses from considering Oklahoma as a viable destination for expanding their market reach.

Senator Boren aptly emphasizes this point, stating, "DEI is a mainstream pathway to get the workforce to work together and to attract and retain the highest qualified workforce possible." Senator Boren's insight underscores the strategic role of DEI in shaping a workforce that can collaborate effectively both internally and on a global scale.

Businesses and stakeholders are increasingly recognizing the significance of fostering diverse and inclusive workplace environments for maintaining competitiveness, as they appreciate that DEI is not only important for the well-being of employees and customers but also for the broader success of economic enterprises.

"If you're selling Starbucks," Senator Boren says, "you're not just selling Starbucks to one demographic. And they know that. And they know that to be competitive, they have to be targeting everybody. Everybody has to see themselves in a particular brand." DEI is inextricably linked with market dynamics, as adherence to its core principles ensures that businesses remain relevant and have the potential to attract a wide and diverse consumer base.

Embracing the Diversity of the New Generation

As the fastest-growing workforce, millennials prioritize workplace diversity and inclusivity. Therefore, educational institutions lacking DEI programs run the risk of depriving students of a crucial competitive edge, leaving them unprepared for working with all types of individuals, including different cultures, races, abilities and more.

"If we look at the workforce and if we look at how corporate America

is utilizing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion," Senator Boren says, "it's basically about manners [and how to collaborate] with diverse people. How to show up at a business meeting and not say things that are horribly ignorant and horribly offensive."

Moving Forward Amidst Challenges

It is crucial for business owners to communicate the impact of DEI on their bottom line to Oklahoma lawmakers. As noted by Senator Boren, it is important to discuss the tangible economic costs of discriminatory practices within the business community. By engaging in these conversations, and by demonstrating how divisive rhetoric and discriminatory policies hinder economic goals, business owners can collectively advocate for DEI programs.

This process should also include community members as their active participation will emphasize their personal commitment to diversity. As challenges like the ban on DEI programs persist, collaborative efforts from educators, community leaders and concerned citizens become even more vital. Through advocacy, education and grassroots movements, a united front can be formed, and this collective movement aimed at creating a more inclusive and economically prosperous Oklahoma can mitigate the absence of state-funded initiatives.

Conclusion

The recent executive order is not merely an attack on DEI initiatives, it is a threat to the very foundation of healthy communities. The recognition that equitable and inclusive schools are essential for all students to achieve their full potential, and are thus the bedrock of thriving communities, emphasizes the invaluable role of DEI in education. It is time to recognize the benefits of DEI and a wide array of its dimensions. We can work collectively to ensure that our educational systems prepare students for a future where diversity is not a challenge but a strength. **TK**

Dr. Tamecca Rogers is Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at Tulsa Technology Center. She is a writer and mom to three boys who love adventures.



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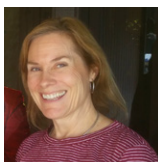
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Having “The Talk”: Amplify Can Help

By **Julie Wenger Watson**



Teen Talking Tips

(adapted from amplifytulsa.org)

Initiate the discussion — Find the right time and place with minimal distractions. Talking while engaging in another activity, like walking the dog or riding in the car, can feel less threatening.

Find and use teachable moments — Look for songs, news articles or TV shows that can springboard a conversation about consent, healthy relationships, etc., and ask your child open-ended questions to start the conversation.

Empathize with your teen — It can be uncomfortable to talk about sex. Be honest about your feelings and use empathy to create a safe and supportive environment.

Listen without judgment — It's important for your teen to feel heard and not judged. Ask open-ended questions and listen.

Recognize what you don't know — It's okay not to have all of the answers. If you don't know the answer to your child's question, let your child know and offer to find out.

Be the louder and more influential voice — Talk with your child about what media and social media portray and what you think about it. Encourage critical thinking about the streaming, music and social media they see and how to set their own limits.

If you're struggling to talk to your teen about sexual health, you're not alone. Middle school memories of awkward conversations and cringe-worthy graphics on an overhead projector still haunt many of us. However, the topic is an important one, especially in the digital age when kids, quite literally, have a world of (mis)information at their fingertips. Fortunately, Tulsa nonprofit Amplify Youth Health Collective is here to help. The organization is dedicated to advancing youth sexual health and well-being and is a resource for educators, parents and kids alike.

“Sex ed is about so much more than just preventing pregnancy,” says Heather Duvall, Amplify's executive director. “It's about learning what healthy relationships are. It's about understanding what consent is. It's about sexual violence prevention and more.”

Amplify, which began in 2013 as “Tulsa Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy,” takes a collaborative

approach to its mission, partnering with youth-serving organizations like Tulsa-area schools, Youth Services of Tulsa and the Tulsa Health Department, to provide training and resources to empower youth with the information and support they need to make healthy decisions in their own lives.

That's challenging work, especially in a state with the fourth highest teen birth rate in America. In order to “educate, collaborate and advocate” to improve the lives of Tulsa youth, Amplify brings everyone into the conversation, including the youth themselves.

“Our Youth Leadership Council is made up of young people who are peer advocates for sexual health,” Duvall says. “It's really a leadership development program focusing on our mission, which is advancing sexual health and well-being. We work with about 15 young leaders from the Tulsa area every year.”

The good news is that the efforts of organizations like Amplify appear

to be helping. Between 2009–2020, Tulsa County saw a 57.7% decrease in the teen birth rate.

“Teen birth rate isn't the only indicator, but it is an indicator, of healthy communities,” Duvall notes. “I want to emphasize that young people are the ones who are making healthy decisions for themselves. That teen birth rate wouldn't have declined if young people weren't choosing safe and healthy options for themselves.”

Amplify provides training opportunities for youth-serving professionals, healthcare professionals and sexual health educators. The training covers foundational sexual health knowledge and best practices, such as trauma-responsiveness, cultural humility, inclusivity, monitoring personal values and answering sensitive questions. The organization also has several initiatives to support some of Tulsa's underserved populations, including programs specifically for

Spanish-speaking students and customized materials for students with disabilities.

“Sexual health education is more important than ever,” Duvall says. “Giving young people the information, resources and education to help them plan for their futures is one of the most important things we can do. Amplify is here to support young people, parents, schools and the entire community to understand adolescent sexual health better, which can build the foundation for a lifetime of favorable health outcomes and healthy families.” **TK**

For more information, visit amplifytulsa.org.

Julie Wenger Watson is a freelance writer who's worked in all aspects of music promotion. She's also Co-Director of “Live From Cain's,” a public radio show pilot.



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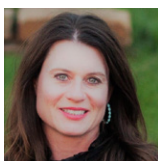


tulsakids

Dr. Amy Emerson

A Heart Full of Hope

By **Nancy A. Moore**



Dr. Amy Emerson with her family (and their favorite waiter) in Rome.



Having hope is a critical component to health. This fundamental pillar is backed by science, with studies indicating it as one of the single best predictors of well-being across a person's lifespan. How can individuals foster and build hope for themselves and their family? That's where local nonprofit Hope-Driven Parenting comes in. Dr. Amy Emerson serves as the director of Hope-Driven Parenting, an organization that provides resources, training and support to anyone on their parenting journey. In her career as a pediatrician, she has seen the power and science behind hope and how it helps individuals and families thrive. Dr. Emerson shares her thoughts about the importance of hope, the science behind it, as well as tips on how to overcome hope stealers.

She also provides details about the first Hope-Driven Parenting Summit in Tulsa on March 2, 2024. The event is free and open to the public with a childcare stipend provided.

TK: What is Hope-Driven Parenting?

Dr. Emerson: Hope-Driven Parenting is a program designed to empower parents and caregivers to raise thriving children who become healthy adults. Based upon the science of hope, the program consists of workshops, social media content, lectures and resources. Hope-Driven Parenting is the most recent program by Hope Rising Oklahoma and was created in response to requests we've received from community members across the state who are hearing about hope science and the amazing power of a hope-driven mindset. For several years, Hope Rising Oklahoma Summits have been hosted across our state, and our program joins the already-robust program, Hope-Driven Coaching.

TK: Tell us the purpose of the organization and how it benefits Tulsans and/or Oklahomans.

Dr. Emerson: We exist to support anyone on their parenting journey, and we are starting right

here in Tulsa...but we are creating resources to be accessed by anyone, anywhere, anytime. Most parents and caregivers have moments when we feel overwhelmed and need help, and sometimes it's easy to feel underqualified for what we know to be the most important job on the planet — nurturing children to become kind, responsible adults who thrive. We want to say to every Oklahoma parent: *"You can do this! You may need resources, and we all need support, but you can take steps right where you are to be a better parent for your children, and we can help you on this journey."*

TK: Why is this organization close to your heart?

Dr. Emerson: Firstly, I'm a mom of four children, each of whom is very different. Even with all the tools I have at my disposal, being a mom is the hardest yet most satisfying "job" I have. Secondly, I'm a pediatrician who has a special interest in normal childhood development and brain growth, so I look at things from a scientific perspective,

and I see the power of the science of hope. Lastly, through my involvement with the child welfare system, juvenile justice system and my general work with families, I see families are hurting like never before! Because of the universal trauma of the last few years and generational trauma we've experienced as Oklahomans, we are sitting in the midst of a crisis. Despite this, we can do the hard work of raising resilient kids who triumph over hard things.

TK: Why is having hope so important?

Dr. Emerson: There are over 2,000 studies that show HOPE is one of the strongest predictors of well-being for children and adults. When you envision a future that is better than your past and recognize that you have the power to make it a reality, it leads to better outcomes in all areas of your life. Studies tell us that people facing major health crises fare better, kids are more likely to graduate from school and do well in college, athletes are more

Hope-Driven Parenting Summit

Saturday, March 2

To register for the FREE event, go to hoperisingoklahoma.org/hope-driven-parenting or follow us on social media for more information and to access the sign-up link.

Check out Hope-Driven Parenting online at hopedrivenparenting.org;

Facebook and Instagram: [@HopeDrivenParenting](#) [@HopeRisingOklahoma](#) [@HopeDrivenCoaching](#)

likely to compete at higher levels... if they are hopeful! The most exciting thing for me, as a doctor, is that collectively, our community's level of hope can help those in our midst who are experiencing abnormal difficulties. Strong support systems, like family units, school communities, faith-based communities and others, can help lift all of our children to lead better lives.

TK: Tell us a little about the science behind having hope.

Dr. Emerson: There are three main components of the science of hope. The first is goal setting, which is common for most of us, but when you're hopeless, it's hard to dream of a better tomorrow. The second component is pathways, which are the strategies for pursuing a goal and overcoming adversity. The third component is willpower, the ability to work toward the goals we set for ourselves. A person with low hope is missing one or more of those components. Anyone can measure their hope score and see areas in which they need extra support. Individuals with higher hope report a greater sense of well-being.

Many times we, as parents, don't take the time to think about what our goals actually are. We are often in a constant state of moving from one stress to the next with no real focus. This creates a sense of chaos and frustration. Some people are

really good at knowing what they want, but if they lack the ability to create traction in meeting their goals, it can feel disappointing or overwhelming. And others, while they may have the ability to focus on achieving a goal, if they are left without pathways or mechanisms to reach their goal, it can feel as though they are stuck in a helpless — or hopeless — situation. Hope science shows us every person can grow their personal hopefulness by setting and meeting attainable goals. This, in turn, can lead them toward bigger goals and ultimately a better future.

TK: Can you share an example of the impact Hope Rising has made and how you have seen improvement as a result of this organization?

Dr. Emerson: A great example is helping a mom recognize how much her own childhood trauma was interfering in her parenting journey. Her goal was to yell less at her children and have a more predictable response to them in moments of stress. By listing small, daily goals and ways (pathways) to achieve them, she began to see small successes, which allowed her to feel strong enough to start leaning into relationships with other moms in her school community for support. This lessened her personal emotional load and surrounded her with community. She was then able to work with a therapist. Arriving

at this level of vulnerability took intentional work. She and her children are now thriving, and she's helping other moms overcome obstacles in their own lives.

TK: What are some common examples of hope stealers? What tips can you share for parents on how to overcome them?

Dr. Emerson: Anything that depletes our mental energy can be a hope stealer! Hopefulness requires willpower, and when we are mentally and physically tired, our willpower is lacking. One hope-stealer is allowing our families to become overcommitted to activities, which can make us fatigued mentally and physically. Our society has created an expectation that kids need to be enrolled in all kinds of activities, yet studies show children need more opportunities for free play and activities that support their connection to us as parents. Trading out the commitment of an organized team sport for occasional playtime at a local park and a nightly habit of dinner with family might be a healthy decision, depending on your family's goals.

Unstructured screen time is another hope stealer. As studies show, scrolling social media can make many of us feel more anxious, which also depletes us of mental energy. The CDC reports that kids ages 8–18 now spend over seven hours a day in front of a screen, on average (not counting time spent on screens in school). This limits physical activity, time for outside play with friends and time spent on relationship building and learning conflict resolution skills with family. Again, if we start by defining our goals, we begin to see what activities and pathways are leading us to our goals...and what pathways are leading us in the opposite direction.

TK: Tell us more about the free Parenting Summit in March.

Dr. Emerson: We are so excited to host our first Hope-Driven Parenting Summit in Tulsa on March 2. It will be from 9 a.m.–1 p.m., and a stipend for child-care will be provided. Drs. Chan

Hellman and Angela Pharris will join me in speaking. Any parent, foster parent, grandparent or individual who works in the early child-care world is invited to join us. Our goal is to introduce the Science of Hope and provide helpful tools and tips that parents can implement immediately. We will also make parents aware of many hope-building community resources that are available to them. If anyone would like to be featured, they are welcome to email me at aemerson@hoperisingoklahoma.org for details.

TK: What else would you like to share?

Dr. Emerson: One of the most practical ways to build hope and foster connectedness today in your own family is book sharing. Our friends Jessica Hogaboom and Scott Pennington at Union Public Schools have put together a great collection of book recommendations that illustrate concepts of Hope. (sites.google.com/view/unionhopehub/hope-in-books) These can be easily checked out from the TCCL library or even viewed together on YouTube. Growing hope in your family is not difficult. Anyone, at almost any age, can raise their own levels of hope and, in so doing, share their hope with others.

Dr. Hellman and Dr. Emerson are launching a Hope-Driven Parenting podcast soon. They will feature information on the science of hope and its application in all areas of life. **TK**

Sharing Passion and Purpose:
To listen to the full interview with Dr. Emerson as well as learn some key strategies to cultivate gratitude and boost hope, go to the podcast at sharingpassionandpurpose.com.

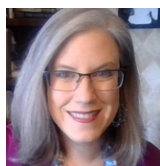
Nancy A. Moore is a Public Relations Coordinator at Montereau, Adjunct Professor at Tulsa Community College, and has been writing for TulsaKids for almost 20 years.

Take A Beat! Get On Your Feet!

Books with rollicking rhythms, smooth moves and boffo beats

By **Laura Raphael, MA, MLIS**

CHILDREN'S SERVICES COORDINATOR
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I've always loved the speculation by evolutionary biologists and other anthropology scientists that humans first used singing (or at least, musical tones and verbal sounds) to communicate. Only later did we realize we needed language with words to get across what we wanted others to understand.

After all, our heartbeats bang a steady drum, and every baby can interpret their parents' moods and intentions long before understanding a single syllable.

(If you've ever hummed either a delighted "mmmm!" before eating a delicious meal with your family or a disapproving "mmmm?" at a misbehaving child, you know what I'm talking about!)

Children's book authors and publishers, fortunately, know how to deliver the rhythm goods, especially in picture books meant to be read (and sometimes sung) out loud. Here are some of my favorites.

Classic

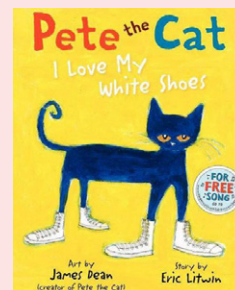
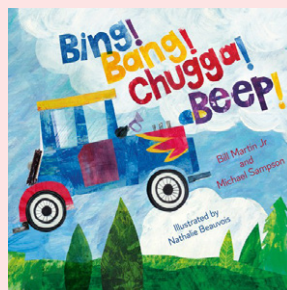
Bing! Bang! Chugga! Beep!
by Bill Martin Jr. and Michael

Sampson; illustrated by Nathalie Beauvois

Somehow, 20 years after his death, Bill Martin Jr.'s ideas for rhythm-ready, toe-tapping, foot-slapping picture books keep being made with the brilliance of co-creator Michael Sampson. This latest truck-based adventure can be read in a straightforward (but sound-packed) way OR sung to the tune of This Old Man. (Earlier Bill Martin Jr. books like *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom* are absolute classics in how they combine rhythm, rhymes and delight in the musicality of language.)

Pete the Cat: I Love My White Shoes by Eric Litwin; illustrated by James Dean

Listen, nothing beats Pete the Cat books for their humor and style, but this original one has the unique distinction of starting out as a song first. (Check out former teacher Eric Litwin's YouTube performance video from back in the early aughts!) While Pete's shoes turn different colors (and then get wet), you can invite children to sing along the refrain with great enthusiasm!



Bring in the Energy, Bring in the Jam

Bing, Bop, Bam: Time to Jam!
by Valerie Bolling; illustrated by Sabrena Khadija

Neighborhood jams are the best jams (after raspberry jam on sour-dough toast, of course)! The library's catalog description summarizes this best: "Author and educator Valerie Bolling's rhyming text makes for a rollicking read-aloud and features instruments from all around the world including the agog, banjo, daegeum, djembe drums, double bass, erhu, maracas, piano, steel drums and trumpet. Sabrena Khadija's stunning illustrations depict the joy of dancing, playing music and feasting with neighbors and friends. Readers will clamor to plan jam sessions of their own!"

Inspiring

Drum Dream Girl: How One Girl's Courage Changed Music
by Margarita Engle; illustrated by Rafael Lopez

Drumming comes naturally to most children, but in the early 20th century it was forbidden for girls

to start on this musical path in any real way. This is a fictional account (but based on a real person) of a young girl who took on the strictures of her times and became a famous drumming musician. Be sure to check out the free animated read-aloud (with music!) on the library's Hoopla app.

Highly interactive

Tap! Tap! Tap! Dance! Dance! Dance! by Hervé Tullet

Tullet is known for books that are more like action-adventure directives (*Press Here* is the height of interactivity), and this adds a layer of musical movement that will turn your living room into a dance club.

Roll, Roll Little Pea by Cécile Bergame and Magali Attiogbé; translation by Angus Yuen-Killick

How many animals want to eat the little pea? So many! Repeating, rhythmic phrases invite a musical approach that also teaches new vocabulary and introduces animals from all around. **TK**

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Feeding Toddlers: Getting the Portions Right

By **Natalie Mikles**



Knowing how much to feed a newborn baby is one of the great stressors for new parents.

Once those brand-new baby days have passed, most parents settle in and develop a feeding routine with their babies, noting when baby isn't eating enough or when baby is growing and needs more nourishment throughout the day.

But as babies ease from babyhood to toddlerhood, parents again begin to question how much to feed their 1- to 3-year-olds.

Toddlers are in that wonderful and curious stage where they're gaining a little independence, exploring new tastes and loving the word, "No!" When they shove their plates onto the floor or demand more and more squeeze tubes of yogurt, when do you know it's OK? Knowing if your toddler has had enough or too much to eat is one of the anxiety-producing rites of parenthood.

Talking to your doctor is the best idea for getting advice on portion size since it's as dependent on children's height and weight as it is their age.

Asking other parents — whether those in the trenches with you or

seasoned parents — can also be helpful so you know you're not in it alone.

Here are some guidelines for toddler portion size and some recipes to try. It's hard to find any recipe that's a toddler slam dunk. But these are tested and proven to be loved by at least some toddlers. Maybe your toddler will like them, too.

How much to feed a toddler

The easiest calculation is to portion about a quarter to a half of an adult's portion onto the child's plate.

Dietitian and therapist Ellyn Satter's years of research and formula for promoting a mealtime division of responsibility is something else to consider when portioning food for kids. Yes, have a basic idea of how much food should go on the toddler's plate, but then leave it up to the toddler to decide. Satter's division of responsibility theory states that toddlers should be in charge of determining how much and whether or not they will eat, and parents determine what to eat, where to eat and when to eat. This is based on children without health conditions or a feeding issue, and doesn't apply to all children, depending on their medical needs.



Wondering if your kiddo is eating enough? Running out of ideas for what to feed your toddler? Here's a sample of what to feed a hungry toddler in a day.

Day in the Eating Life of a 12- to 24-month-old

Breakfast

- 1 slice whole-grain toast with butter
- 1/4 banana
- 1/2 cup whole milk

Snack

- 1/4 cup blueberries
- 1/2 cup milk

Lunch

- 1/2 grilled cheese on whole-grain bread
- 4 baby carrots, cooked and sliced
- 1/4 cup sliced strawberries
- 1/2 cup whole milk

Snack

- 2 whole grain crackers
- 2 tablespoons hummus
- 1/2 cup water

Dinner

- 1/4 chicken breast
- 1/2 cup pasta
- 1/2 mandarin orange
- 1/2 cup whole milk

Snack

- 1/4 cup plain yogurt

Toddlers will like this chicken's sweet and tangy flavor. It makes four adult servings or 16 baby servings. It can be chopped fine for younger toddlers. Older toddlers can handle slightly bigger pieces.

Baked Sweet and Sour Chicken

- 4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts
 - 1/2 cup tomato sauce
 - 1/2 small onion, finely chopped
 - 3 tablespoons brown sugar
 - 2 tablespoons cider vinegar
 - 1/2 cup crushed pineapple with juice
 - 1 garlic clove, mashed
 - Cooked rice
1. Place chicken breasts in a casserole dish.
 2. In a small bowl, combine tomato sauce, onion, sugar, vinegar, pineapple and garlic. Spoon sauce over chicken. Bake in 350-degree preheated oven for 45 minutes or until chicken is fully baked.
 3. Serve chicken and sauce over cooked rice.

It's snack time! Toddlers will like these oatmeal cookies with a glass of milk.

Oatmeal Raisin Cookies

MAKES 4 DOZEN SMALL COOKIES

- 1 cup butter, softened
 - 3/4 cup brown sugar
 - 1 egg
 - 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
 - 1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
 - 1/2 teaspoon salt
 - 1 teaspoon baking soda
 - 2 cups old-fashioned rolled oats
 - 1 cup raisins
1. In a large bowl, combine butter, brown sugar, egg and vanilla with an electric mixer. Beat until smooth.
 2. In another bowl, combine flour, salt, baking soda and oats. Add to butter mixture, mixing well.
 3. Scoop tablespoon-size balls of dough onto a baking sheet. Bake in a 350-degree preheated oven. Bake 10–12 minutes or until lightly browned.

This quick-to-make corn chowder has a nice sweetness that kids like.

Easy Corn Chowder

MAKES 3 CUPS

- 1 can low-sodium cream of potato soup
 - 1/2 cup milk
 - 1/2 cup canned cream-style corn
 - 1 Roma tomato, seeded and diced
 - 1/4 teaspoon dried thyme
 - Black pepper, to taste
 - 1/4 cup shredded cheddar cheese
1. In a medium saucepan, combine soup, milk, corn, tomato, thyme and pepper. Bring to a boil, stirring constantly. Spoon into serving bowl, cooling to a safe temperature. Sprinkle with cheese.

Make one or several of these. Toddlers like them, but big kids and adults do, too.

Ham and Egg Breakfast Muffin

MAKES 2 SERVINGS

- 1 slice whole-wheat bread
 - 1 teaspoon butter
 - 1 slice ham, chopped
 - 1 egg
 - 1 tablespoon grated cheddar cheese
1. Remove crusts from bread, and butter one side. Press bread into muffin tin, buttered side down. Sprinkle with ham and top with egg. Sprinkle with cheese. Bake 15 minutes or until egg is cooked. TK

Natalie Mikles is a mom of three. She writes about food, sharing recipes for busy families and picky eaters.



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Valentine's Day Crafts for All Ages

By **Danielle Hill**



Heart-Shaped Bird Feeders



Stained Glass Hearts

Holiday crafts are a great way to connect with the children in your life, especially if you do the crafts together and plan to share them with others! Here are a few Valentine's Day crafts to make with your loved ones this February. We have included crafts that will work with both younger and older children and teens. Enjoy!

Heart-Shaped Bird Feeders

INTIMATEWEDDINGS.COM

These bird feeders are easy and fun to make with children of all ages. They make wonderful gifts for anyone who enjoys hosting feathered friends and has a space to hang them. Plus, with February being the National Audubon Society's Great Backyard Bird Count, it's perfect timing! The number of feeders this will create will depend on the size of cookie cutter you use.

INGREDIENTS:

- 3/4 cup flour
- 1/2 cup water
- 1 envelope unflavored gelatin (2.5 teaspoons) **You can find gelatin right next to the boxes of Jell-O mix.*
- 3 tablespoons corn syrup (Both light and dark corn syrup will work here.)
- 4 cups birdseed
- Extra Supplies:
- Large mixing bowl
- Heart-shaped cookie cutter
- Nonstick cooking spray or oil

- Cookie sheet
- Parchment paper
- Straw, chopstick or other item for poking holes in the feeders
- Jute or other natural string for hanging
- Scissors

**If you wish to make personalized tags, you will also need cardstock, a hole punch, paint for the fingerprint hearts and a marker.*

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Mix the water, gelatin and corn syrup together in the mixing bowl. This is a great task for children who are learning about measurement, and children of many ages can help with stirring. Once combined, mix in the flour. Finally, mix in the birdseed. I found it easier to finish mixing in the birdseed with my hands and to scrape the excess off with a spoon. It's very sticky, so adding a little oil to your helpers' hands might be a good idea. You can also use a spoon that's been sprayed with nonstick spray or lightly oiled.
2. Place parchment paper on the cookie sheet. Spray both the inside of the cookie cutter and the front and back of a spoon with nonstick spray or a light coat of oil. Have a helper set the cookie cutter on the parchment and begin filling it with the birdseed mixture, using the spoon or lightly oiled hands.

Pack the mixture well, as this will keep the seeds from falling off after the feeder has dried. Poke a hole in the feeder using a chopstick or straw. Carefully press the contents of the cookie cutter down as you gently pull the cutter up and away. This last task is great for older children or adults, as it's important to be gentle. Repeat the process until you run out of the mixture.

3. Let the feeders dry overnight.
4. If you would like to make tags for the feeders, cut tag shapes from cardstock and invite helpers to make hearts with paint or inkpad fingerprints. Then, they can write their names. Once the paint has dried, punch a hole in each tag and thread it onto jute or another natural yarn. Thread the jute through the hole in each feeder and tie it off using a sturdy knot. I knotted mine several times for strength. That's it!

Stained Glass Hearts

FIREFLIESANDMUDPIES.COM

These hearts made of decoupage tissue paper make a stunning gift either for your own home or for loved ones, and the best part is that children of all ages (adults included!) will enjoy making them and seeing the final result. If you aren't familiar with Mod Podge, you can find it at craft stores

or Target. I chose the gloss finish, but other types would work. Be sure to lay something down to protect your table!

SUPPLIES:

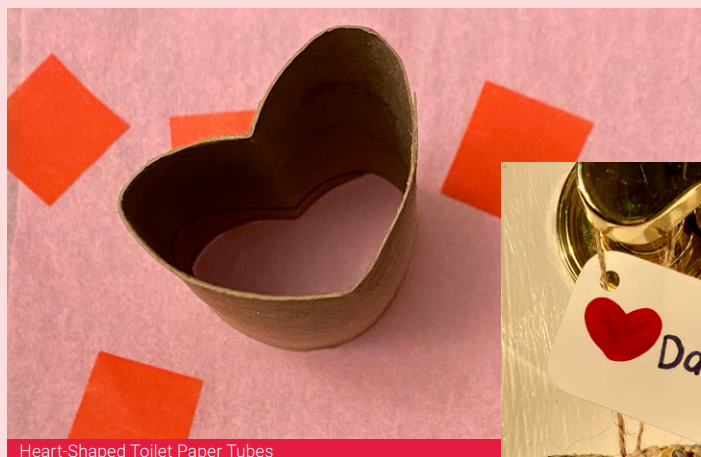
- White cardstock
- Tissue paper
- Scissors
- Foam paint brushes
- Clear sheet protectors
- Mod Podge
- Pen

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Have a helper cut out squares of tissue paper. 1" x 1" squares work nicely here, but other sizes would work, just be consistent.
2. In the meantime, you or another helper can make a heart template. Fold your cardstock in half, draw half of a heart shape, and cut it out. There is a printable template online, or you can make your own.
3. Now it's time for the super fun part! Spread a thick layer of Mod Podge on the sheet protector. It's important to paint a nice thick layer so that the tissue paper will be coated on the back side. Next, lay down the tissue paper squares until the sheet protector is covered. Sandwich the tissue paper with another layer of Mod Podge on the top. Start by dotting the Mod Podge on top, and then have your child use dabbing motions to cover everything and keep it in place.



Heart Strings



Heart-Shaped Toilet Paper Tubes



Heart-Shaped Finger Prints

I found that dragging the brush repeatedly weakened the tissue paper, so be sure to use dabbing motions to apply a thick layer of Mod Podge.

4. Let it dry overnight.
5. Carefully bend the sheet protector and peel off the layer of tissue paper. Some people who did this craft chose not to do this and instead removed the other side of the sheet protector (the one with nothing on it) and kept the remaining side of the sheet protector attached to the tissue paper. This made the hearts a little sturdier, but they may be less transparent.
6. Trace your cardstock heart shape on the decoupage tissue paper using a pen, then cut it out. I managed to cut out a larger heart and two smaller hearts from one sheet protector.
7. Hang your suncatchers in the window using double-sided tape or a couple pieces of rolled-up tape.

Heart Strings

MYGOLDENTHIMBLE.COM

I would recommend this craft for older children and teens, as it involves the use of pins and requires a little more dexterity than our other two projects. There are so many options for what you and your children can do with the hearts you create. Add a loop of string to the top and make an ornament, or string several together to make a garland — the choice is yours!

SUPPLIES:

- Yarn
- White glue
- Water

- Two or three pieces of thick cardboard (This can be found on boxes from online orders, shipping containers, etc.)
- Sewing pins (Choose ones you won't mind throwing away.)
- Paintbrush
- Bowl or something to hold the glue mixture
- Scissors
- Glitter (This is optional, but after I made mine without it, I would highly recommend using it!)
- Cardstock or plain paper
- Pencil

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Decide what size of heart you want to make and create a heart template by folding your cardstock or paper in half, drawing half a heart and then cutting it out.
2. Cut two or three pieces of cardboard to a size that will allow for enough room to fit the heart shape and still have a bit of working room around the sides. Trace your heart shape on the middle of one of these pieces and then stack the other two pieces underneath. You should have a stack of cardboard with the heart on top.
3. Make sure you are working on a protected surface before you do the next step. Place the pins evenly around the heart shape, being sure that they go from the first piece of cardboard into the second.
4. Measure out your yarn by wrapping the yarn around four fingers approximately 20–25 times.
5. Mix two parts glue to one part water. (If using glitter, you can either add a good amount of fine glitter to the glue mixture or paint a little extra glue mixture on your heart in the end and sprinkle it on then.) Place your yarn into the container to soak up the glue mixture. Make sure the mixture coats the yarn, then take it out and gently squeeze out the excess.
6. Tie one end of the yarn around the pin at the bottom point of the heart. You will have a little tail that hangs from the bottom. Begin wrapping the yarn between the pins to fill out your heart shape. You can either try to make a shape or just randomly bounce back and forth across the heart for an abstract appearance.
7. When you are happy with the interior of your heart, wrap your yarn around the outer edge of your heart several times. Each time you reach the pin that is in the valley between the two hills at the top of the heart, wrap the yarn around the pin to hold it in place. To finish, wrap the yarn around the pin at the point of the heart, and pull the second tail over to the empty area of the cardboard, placing a pin in it to hold it in place.
8. Use a paintbrush to apply more of the glue mixture to all parts of the heart, including the inside strings. Take special care to apply extra glue around where the inside strings connect to the edges. This step is very

important, as painting all strings with the glue mixture will ensure that the heart holds its shape.

9. Let your creation dry overnight. Remove the pins by gently twisting them with pliers and pulling them up and out. If you need to reattach a few inside strings to the outside, you can do so by adding a little more glue.

Tips for Card Making

Card making is undoubtedly one of the most popular crafts of the Valentine's Day season. Here are a few items that can come in handy for helping young children who want to make hearts but may not want to draw them.

- **Celery sticks:** Cut off the end of a celery stick and use it as a heart stamp! Your child can dip it in paint and use it to add a fun element to their card.
- **Toilet paper tubes:** You can bend these into a heart shape and let your child stamp them in paint and onto a card.
- **Fingers:** Show your child how to use paint or inkpad fingerprints to make heart shapes. Simply make one fingerprint for one side of the heart and another for the other side. The photo of the birdfeeder tags shows a heart made from fingerprints. **TK**

Danielle Hill is a local freelance writer and former elementary school teacher.

TIPS FOR healthy Families



PHOTO BY ANDREA MURPHY PHOTOGRAPHY

Tips for Healthy Infants

(CDC.GOV)

GOOD NUTRITION: Breastfeeding is the best option. Breastfed infants have reduced risks of ear and respiratory infections, asthma, sudden infant death syndrome and obesity. Add healthy solid foods at 6 months.

PROTECT BABY FROM SECONDHAND SMOKE: Babies exposed to secondhand smoke are more likely to die from SIDS and are sick more often.

SAFE SLEEP: Place babies on their backs to sleep for naps and at night. Use a firm, flat sleep surface. Use a crib or bassinet in the same room where you sleep for 6 months. Do not use soft bedding such as blankets, pillows, bumper pads and soft toys. Don't cover the baby's head.

MEDICAL AND DENTAL CARE: Well-child visits are important to make sure baby is growing and meeting developmental milestones. Get vaccines to prevent illnesses. Good oral health starts in infancy. (see tips below)

CAR SAFETY: Buckle infants and toddlers in a rear-facing car seat with a harness in the back seat until they reach maximum weight or height limit of their car seat — usually between 2 and 4 years.



DARRIN KLIMEK/GETTY



Tips for Dental Health: Year One

PROVIDED BY DR. RYAN ROBERTS, PEDIATRIC DENTIST,
ON THE CUSP PEDIATRIC DENTISTRY

- 1. Good dental habits begin at birth:** Babies are born with a full set of 20 baby teeth in their gums; 10 on top and 10 on bottom. That's why dental care begins before the first tooth appears.
- 2. DO make cleaning part of your feeding routine:** Even if your baby's teeth haven't appeared yet, clean his or her mouth after each feeding with a moistened gauze or washcloth. Once teeth begin to appear, brush them twice a day with a soft toothbrush and a small "smear" of fluoride-containing toothpaste.
- 3. DO NOT share cups, utensils or food:** Cavities are contagious! Avoid sharing utensils or food... blowing on food to cool it off... tasting from the spoon... putting pacifiers in your mouth... and kissing on the lips.
- 4. DO use fluoride:** Use toothpaste that contains fluoride. If your drinking water does not contain fluoride, your child may need supplements.
- 5. DO NOT let your child fall asleep with a bottle of milk or juice:** You're literally bathing her teeth in a puddle of sugar. Don't ever put your baby to bed with a cup or a bottle of milk or juice, NO MATTER WHAT.
- 6. Say "bye-bye" to the bottle by 12–14 months:** By the time your child is one year-old, he or she should be able to sit up, hold a cup and drink from it.
- 7. DO take your child to the dentist by age one:** Tooth decay can occur as early as 6 months old. DO NOT wait until your child is 2 or 3 years old before taking them to the dentist.

Get it done, year one.

Dr. Ryan Roberts is a board-certified pediatric dentist at On the Cusp Pediatric Dentistry.

Tips for Mental Health for Families

PROVIDED BY DAVID LEIFESTE, MS LPC

The focus is on small, realistic habits that tune us in to our needs, while bringing us together. Modeling self-care, emotional awareness and work-life balance helps prevent burnout and builds strong mental health.

1. **Practice Gratitude:** Taking time each day to write down or share things you're grateful for trains our brains to focus more on the positive. This builds resilience.
2. **Get Active Outside:** Regular exercise, especially outdoors, reduces anxiety and boosts mood through endorphin release. Going on family walks models self-care.
3. **Set Aside Device-free Time:** Constant stimulation from technology heightens stress. Enjoy activities together device-free to be mentally present with one another.
4. **Share Emotions and Validate Them:** Creating an open environment where everyone feels safe expressing emotions teaches healthy coping mechanisms.
5. **Try Mindfulness Techniques:** Simple breathing exercises, meditation or yoga helps calm the nervous system. Doing this as a family develops emotional intelligence.

David Leifeste has nearly 40 years of experience in counseling, executive coaching and public speaking. davidleifeste.com



Tips for Healthy Kids

PROVIDED BY CHARITY POLLAK, MD FAAP, MIDTOWN PEDIATRICS

Many elementary-aged children have not developed a strong immunity to common illnesses. Frequent illness is not unusual in this age group. While it is impossible to keep your children from ever getting sick, it pays to try to reduce their chances.

HANDWASHING: The most important thing you can do to help limit your child's exposure to infections is to teach them how and when to wash their hands. Handwashing is most important after using the bathroom, before eating, after touching pets, after playing outside and after coughing, sneezing or blowing the nose.

SLEEP: Several studies suggest that inadequate amounts of sleep affect how your body is able to make antibodies and other substances that help fight infections. The American Academy of Pediatrics advises children ages 3-5 years get 10-13 hours of sleep and ages 6-12 years get 9-12 hours.

IMMUNIZATIONS: Vaccines reduce illness, hospitalization and death. I advise parents to follow CDC guidelines in order to decrease the chances of their children becoming sick. This year, in addition to routine vaccines, elementary-aged children should get flu and COVID-19 vaccines. Flu vaccines are updated annually. Children should ideally be vaccinated every fall, although it is not too late to get a flu shot. In mid-September, the CDC approved an updated 2023-2024 COVID19 vaccine. Even if your child had a COVID vaccine in the past, they should get the updated shot. If it is not available at your doctor's office, children can get the vaccine at Walgreens, CVS or the Tulsa Health Department.



JOVANMANDIC/GETTY



Tips for Healthy Adults

PROVIDED BY RACHEL RAY, D.O., FAAFP

Good health is essential for a long, self-managed and fulfilling life, and adopting healthy habits can reduce disease and improve mental and physical well-being. Here are five important tips adults should consider:

BALANCED NUTRITION: A well-rounded diet is the foundation of good health. Plan to eat a variety of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins and healthy fats. Avoid large portions and limit the intake of processed foods, fast food, sugary beverages and excessive amounts of saturated fats and sodium. Hydration is vital to our organs and bodily functions — target eight glasses of water a day and avoid excessive caffeine.

REGULAR EXERCISE: Regular physical activity promotes cardiovascular health, helps maintain a healthy weight and boosts our mental health. Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic exercise per week and combine that with muscle-strengthening activities on two or more days. Focus on activities you enjoy and make them part of a long-term routine.

ADEQUATE SLEEP: Quality sleep is linked to improved brain function, mood regulation and a strong immune system. Adults typically need 7-9 hours of sleep per night. Create a consistent sleep schedule, establish a relaxing bedtime routine, and create a comfortable sleep environment that is cool, quiet and uninterrupted.

STRESS MANAGEMENT: Chronic stress can negatively impact physical and mental health. Try stress-reducing techniques such as deep breathing exercises, mindfulness, meditation or engaging in relaxing hobbies. If you have symptoms of mental illness or addiction, talk with your doctor or visit a mental health professional.

REGULAR HEALTH CHECK-UPS: Schedule time with your doctor for preventative health care including heart and cancer screenings, blood pressure checks, vaccines, and tests for diabetes, cholesterol and other illnesses. Understanding your health condition(s) and making informed decisions can help you avoid chronic diseases and life-threatening situations.

Incorporating these health tips into your lifestyle can contribute to a healthier, more vibrant life, promoting longevity and overall happiness.

Dr. Ray is a board-certified family medicine physician at the OSU Family Medicine — Harvard clinic. She provides acute care services for adults and children with urgent conditions such as coughs, COVID, flu, sinus infections, sprains, fractures, digestive issues and other non-life-threatening conditions. Dr. Ray earned her doctor of osteopathy degree from Oklahoma State University College of Osteopathic Medicine and completed her family medicine residency at the University of Oklahoma College of Medicine. She is a Fellow of the American Academy of Family Physicians, and a member of the Oklahoma State Medical Association, the Oklahoma Osteopathic Association and the Tulsa County Medical Society.

BREAKFAST: Many studies have linked eating breakfast to improved school performance. Some studies suggest it may also improve immune system function. Carbohydrate-rich foods like fruits, whole grains and low-fat dairy are more slowly digested than other sugary foods and provide a more steady supply of glucose. Adding a protein such as eggs, nuts or avocado provides energy to cells for even longer.

STRESS: Stress that occurs regularly over a long period of time can have a negative impact on a child's immune system and physical health. Providing daily routine, consistency, peaceful spaces and fun activities helps reduce stress.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY: Exercise can improve health and immune system function. The US Department of Health and Human Services recommends that children ages 6 and up get at least 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity daily.

Dr. Pollak is a board-certified pediatrician and a Fellow of the American Academy of Pediatrics. She has been a practicing pediatrician in the Tulsa area for over 20 years. She is on staff at Hillcrest Medical Center and sees patients at her private practice, Midtown Pediatrics, at 12th and Utica. She has three children and is a strong supporter of Tulsa Public Schools. Her outside interests include cycling, yoga and all kinds of music.



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TULSAKIDS' 2024

HEALTH & WELLNESS GUIDE

Find TulsaKids' Health & Wellness Guide online year-round at tulsakids.com/guides.



AKARAWUT LOHACHAROENVANICH/GETTY

EASTERN OKLAHOMA ENT

Tulsa Office: 5020 E. 68th St., Tulsa

Mingo Office: 9343 S. Mingo Rd., Tulsa

918.492.3636

eoent.com

With 45 years of medical care in Tulsa, Eastern Oklahoma Ear, Nose & Throat's team of physicians and audiologists focus on treating conditions of the head, ears and throat. We deliver compassionate, state-of-the-art, personalized medical care for you and your children. Our team of board-certified ENT doctors and audiologists look forward to helping restore the health of our valued patients, whether they be children or adults!

THE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL AT SAINT FRANCIS

6161 S. Yale Ave., Tulsa

918.488.6688

saintfrancis.com/childrens

As the only children's hospital in eastern Oklahoma, The Children's Hospital at Saint Francis provides state-of-the-art technology and a dedicated staff to meet the comprehensive healthcare medical needs of children. More than 100 pediatricians and 45 pediatric subspecialists work as a team to provide care for the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of children and their families.

The hospital is home to Oklahoma's only St. Jude Affiliate Clinic and provides the latest advancements in oncology/hematology care for children diagnosed with cancer or other related conditions. It is also the only Cystic Fibrosis Center in eastern Oklahoma, has the area's only pediatric intensive care unit and the only level four neonatal intensive care unit, which is the highest level possible. Each year, the health of thousands of children is improved through the expertise of our skilled medical professionals and family-centered care.

SOCCERCITY TULSA

5817 S. 118th E. Ave., Tulsa

918.249.0044

soccercitytulsa.com

Step onto the field during any Lil' Kickers class and you will find it transformed into a world created just for your child. Our well-trained coaches will thrill your child with 50 minutes of highly creative, high-energy and age-appropriate activities that serve as a great introduction to soccer and help children master developmental milestones appropriate for their age.

Because Lil' Kickers is first and foremost a child development program, our purpose is to help children mature on all levels. We believe in teaching children in ways that suit their developmental level. So, you won't see adult-like skill drills in our classes, but you will see teaching methods specifically designed to create an atmosphere that is effective and fun.

Whether your child is new to soccer or has already developed a love for the game, the progressive nature of Lil' Kickers offers a place for children at every level.

Our convenient class times provide families options to accommodate multiple children and busy schedules.

2nd Winter Session dates: NOW–March 16. No Holiday Breaks. Spring is set to start March 25, with registration opening by mid-February.



HEALTH & WELLNESS GUIDE

AMPLIFY YOUTH HEALTH COLLECTIVE

1601 S. Main St., Suite 200, Tulsa

918.794.9073

info@amplifytulsa.org

amplifytulsa.org

Amplify advances youth sexual health and well-being through collaboration, education and advocacy. Amplify serves as the collective impact agency for adolescent sexual health in Tulsa and provides training and resources to school and community-based organizations to educate and support youth, parents and other trusted adults.

Tulsa County's teen birth rates have declined 67% in the last decade, alongside the expansion of effective, evidence-based sexual health education programs and services. When young people are given accurate information, they make the healthiest decisions for themselves. Our vision is to create vibrant communities with informed youth and equitable access to services and information. We work with partners in the community to ensure that every child has the knowledge and support they need to thrive.

Visit amplifytulsa.org to find resources for engaging in open, honest conversations with your children about changing bodies, love, sex and the building blocks of healthy relationships.

COUNSELING & RECOVERY SERVICES OF OKLAHOMA

YES Tulsa: 918.779.HELP

The CALM Center: 918.394.CALM

crsok.org

Counseling & Recovery Services of Oklahoma provides Tulsa's comprehensive, around-the-clock youth crisis care services - available regardless of ability to pay.

YES (Youth Evaluation Services) Tulsa provides immediate urgent crisis intervention, diversion and de-escalation services from licensed behavioral health, social support and administrative professionals. Services include:

- Emergency mental health evaluation
- Screenings for co-occurring disorders
- Emergency prescriptive medication services
- Clinical feedback and diagnoses
- Trauma-informed crisis intervention
- Family-style model of care
- Next-day follow-up appointments
- Continued care plan after discharge
- Coordination of higher levels of care, as needed.

The CALM (Child and Adolescent Life Management) Center offers a brief residential treatment program for youth struggling with emotional, behavioral or substance use issues. The CALM Center has three major goals:

PAUSE. A safe pause from the young client's community or family stress to identify trauma, explore strengths, clarify emotions and learn life management and coping skills to integrate for their future.

PERSPECTIVE. A clinical perspective on the client's behavioral health and diagnoses from an experienced team of board-certified physicians, nurses, life skills coaches and clinical therapists.

PLAN. A coordinated plan connecting the client and their family with the next step in treatment and their future needs.

ON THE CUSP PEDIATRIC DENTISTRY

8222 E. 103rd St., Tulsa

918.921.6778

4444 S. Harvard Ave., Tulsa

918.921.6778

onthecuspdds.com

On The Cusp offers Tulsa families a complete range of specialized pediatric dental services. Our board-certified doctors are focused on preventing oral disease and gentle treatment options and are uniquely positioned to provide professional pediatric dental guidance as your child grows and develops.

Our dentists have a passion for helping kids and receive special training to meet each child's individual needs, including children with special needs. From routine dental exams and restorative dentistry to laser dentistry and safe sedation, we are committed to promoting healthy oral hygiene and habits that will last a lifetime.

Additionally, our experienced and board-certified orthodontist provides various comprehensive orthodontic treatments for both children and adults. We're pleased to offer complimentary orthodontic consultations to patients who need braces.

During each visit to our Midtown or South Tulsa offices, you and your child will enjoy a refreshingly unique, patient-centric experience. We are proud to have created a space that is fun, loving, kind and professional.

We offer families a complete range of specialized dental services, including:

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- Orthodontics
- Sedation
- Laser Dentistry
- for the entire family
- Frenectomy

We're humbled to be recognized as TulsaKids' Family Favorite Pediatric Dentist for three years in a row. Let us give YOU a reason to smile! For a fast and easy appointment or check-up, visit us online at onthecuspdds.com or call 918.921.6778.



HEALTH & WELLNESS GUIDE

OSU PEDIATRICS

918.382.4600

osumedicine.com

OSU Pediatrics is committed to delivering comprehensive, compassionate care for children from birth to 18 years of age. Our board-certified physicians offer preventive services including well child visits, developmental screenings, behavioral evaluations, sports physicals and more.

Additionally, we provide care for serious illnesses and complex or chronic medical conditions including asthma, autism spectrum disorders, cerebral palsy, chromosomal disorders and many others.

OSU Medicine operates a network of 27 clinics throughout Tulsa and surrounding communities and provides more than 18 specialties including obstetrics & gynecology, family medicine, behavioral health, cardiovascular medicine, surgery and many other specialties for all ages and health needs.

PARKSIDE PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL & CLINIC

1239 S. Trenton Ave., Tulsa

918.588.8888

ar@parksideinc.org

parksideinc.org

Established in 1959, Parkside Psychiatric Hospital & Clinic is dedicated to providing exceptional mental health treatment and support services to our Eastern Oklahoma community and beyond. This past year marked a significant milestone as we transitioned to become a youth-oriented inpatient hospital.

Parkside provides inpatient behavioral health services to children as young as 5, adolescents and young adults aged 18 to 26 in our recently launched MOMENTUM adult program.

The heart of Parkside lies in our caring and experienced team of health professionals, who continue to uphold our mission and provide compassionate care to those we serve. With 120 inpatient beds and a range of outpatient services, our organization remains steadfast in its commitment to fostering mental health and well-being.

Our ACCESS department, which is operational 24/7, stands ready to assist with referrals and intake, benefit inquiries and any other support our community needs when mental health crises arrive.

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Located near 71st and Yale, our south Tulsa location is within minutes of three hospitals and within one mile of a major hospital. This location allows us to have close proximity in case of an emergency but with the comforts of home. Our facility also offers comfortable offices and a family-friendly waiting room.

We welcome your calls to schedule a time to meet a midwife, tour the facility and ask all your questions.

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Our hospital and ER charges are in-line with and, most of the time, lower than the regional average. By law, insurance plans cover ER services at the patient's in-network rates. In short, the patient may select their ER of choice. We don't balance bill for any services received. Emergency room care can be expensive, so we work with your insurance company for fair payment resulting in less unforeseen expenses. We also provide discounted and upfront rates for self-pay patients.

More caring, more personal, more convenient. How healthcare should be.



.KNOW YOUR.
TK
NEIGHBORS

Written by Betty Casey
Photography by Ian Upton
(unless otherwise noted)

OWASSO

PHOTO COURTESY OF ACS PLAYGROUND ADVENTURES

History of Owasso

Owasso is located 6 miles north of Tulsa on U.S. Highway 169 in Tulsa County.

According to the Oklahoma Historical Society, Owasso began as a settlement in 1881 in the Cherokee Nation. Located along Elm Creek, it was known as the Elm Creek settlement. In 1897 the Oklahoma Central and Southwestern Railway acquired right-of-way near the town, and the natural spring was dammed for a lake where the steam locomotives got their water and turned around to go north. Owasso is a Native American word (there's uncertainty about whether it's Osage or Cherokee) that means "the turn around" or "the end."

In the 1950s, Owasso became a bedroom community for Tulsa and has had steady growth over the years with expanded industrial development, including American Airlines, Nordam Group, Whirlpool and MCI WorldCom. The Port of Catoosa is also nearby. On Sept. 28, 1972, the Town of Owasso became the City of Owasso.

QUICK FACTS

- Owasso is a growing community of over **39,000** residents
- Median household income: **\$79,183**
- Median value of owner-occupied housing units: **\$218,400** (source: census.gov 2022)

OWASSO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

(owassops.org)

- Enrollment: **9,900**
- **15** schools: 9 elementary, 6th grade center, 7th grade center, 8th grade center, Owasso High School, Owasso Ram Academy
- Average elementary class size: **20**
- AP courses offered: **26**
- Graduation rate: **92.4%**

Funtastic Island in Veterans Park



Places to See in Owasso

Redbud Festival Park: Main Street, between 86th & 76th St. at 109 N. Main St.; redbudowasso.com

- This community park offers free classes such as Zumba in the Park, strength and conditioning, a Farmers' Market, a Summer Library Series, music, movie nights, yoga, holiday festivals and other seasonal events.

Farmers' Market: Redbud Festival Park during spring/summer months.

Wheels & Thrills: Family Entertainment Center, 10637 N. Garnett Rd.; wheelsandthrills.com

- Roller skating, laser tag, arcades, a play zone and more give parents and kids of all ages a fun place to hang out.

Owasso Historical Museum: 26 S. Main St.; cityofowasso.com

- Even the building is a piece of history—catch the mural outside for a photo op. The place is filled with artifacts relating to the history and growth of the town.

MAD Eats: 201 S. Main; madeatsok.com

- Kids will love a treat at this place. They have food, but the Mad Shakes are over-the-top confections that are works of art.

Airtopia Adventure Park: 12932 E. 86th St. N.; airtopiapark.com

- Trampolines, ropes, an area for toddler play, a Ninja course, arcade and more make for hours of entertainment.

Funtastic Island in Veterans Park: 10320 E. 116th St. N.; cityofowasso.com

- This popular park has it all—a plethora of playground equipment, water features, shelters for picnics and more.

Main Street





PHOTO BY KATIE GARCIA WITH RAW LIFE IMAGES PHOTOGRAPHY

The Carroll Family

Paige Carroll and her husband, Dallas, have lived in Owasso for nearly a decade. In fact, Dallas grew up in Owasso and moved back after college graduation to start a business, Carroll's Commercial Floors. Paige says she met Dallas when she was visiting her brother in Owasso after returning from a mission trip in Brazil. The couple has been married for nine years and have three children: Cohen, age 7, who is a first grader at Owasso Public Schools; Eason, age 5, who attends Grand Central Kids Preschool at Central Baptist Church, Owasso; and Brielle, who will be 2 this month.

Paige says she loves the small-town feel of Owasso. "I'm from a small town," she says. "I run into people I know at the grocery store or at the park. Tulsa's great, but I just feel so good in Owasso. You see friendly faces everywhere you go."

That friendliness often translates into friendships for the Carroll family. Paige says she finds it easy to connect with people, either at church, at school or at the gym where she works out and teaches. Even Cohen has instigated some playdates with friends he met at the gym.

"I've connected with other moms at his school," Paige says. "I met a mom at the pick-up line, and we go on runs together. It's so nice."

Owasso's Hodson Elementary School where Cohen attends is one of Paige's favorite things about Owasso. "We love his school," she says. "I feel the love, care and compassion they have for the kids. Everybody knows his name, and they go out of their way to make him feel loved. I can't say enough good things about the staff and teachers."

She has also found a warm and caring preschool for Eason at Grand Central Kids. "He loves it," Paige says.

Besides feeling good about the children's schools, Paige says that Owasso has plenty of family entertainment to keep them in the community. The Tulsa Zoo is one big draw outside of Owasso, but Paige points out that it's fairly close to Owasso.

"We spend most of our time here," Paige says. "We hit up the parks and meet friends. We go to the movies or bowling. We go to storytime at the library. My kids love Sugar Llamas, and the tacos from the food truck Tacowasso. We get those all the time."

Owasso High School football games are another fun activity. The high school is near their house, and they have a niece in the band. "My husband went to Owasso High School and was in track, so he keeps up with track and cross country. We also like to do 5K races."

Ultimately, Paige says she loves the sense of community in Owasso. "It's a perfect place to raise a family. I fell in love with my husband and then I fell in love with Owasso."



The Payne Family

Jennifer and her husband, Chad, moved to Owasso in early 2019. Prior to that, they lived in Houston. They have two daughters: Kennedy, age 8, and Charlee, age 6.

Since Chad is an airline pilot, one plus of living in Owasso is its proximity to the Tulsa International Airport. "It's an easy commute," Jennifer says, "and a nice town that's close to Tulsa."

While Jennifer has lived in California and Ponca City, it was living in Houston that really made her appreciate Owasso. "I didn't realize how much I liked it here. In Houston, I felt like we were in the car all the time. I never felt like we got involved and met people."

Creating community in Owasso has been much easier for the Payne family than it was in Houston. "We found a church here that we love," Jennifer says. "I have amazing neighbors."

During the pandemic, Jennifer tried homeschooling the girls and found that it worked well with the family schedule, especially Chad's work schedule. "Even though we homeschool, we're involved in so much. Kennedy and Charlee are both in swim."

Kennedy belongs to Trident Swim Club, competing in meets around the state. Charlee

takes lessons at Miller Swim School.

Jennifer and the girls also attend a bible study, and there's a homeschool group within that, but Jennifer says they're not part of a homeschool coop at this time.

"My kids are so social," she says. "I have to say 'no' a lot because we haven't been home!"

Both girls got skates for Christmas, so Jennifer says they're looking forward to spending more time at Wheels and Thrills, which also has skate times for homeschool groups.

"One of the places we love is Dreaming Donuts on Main Street," she says. "They have great donuts, and they're the nicest people."

Jennifer also says that her kids love the outdoors, so they spend a lot of time at local parks. "There's a sports complex not too far from where we live," she says. "We go on a one-mile loop with bikes and scooters. And we love watching the airplanes—we can see my husband's flight coming in."

Jennifer's main message is that Owasso is a very family-centered place. "After living in a big city, I just really appreciate that," she says. "Family is important here. People are intentional about valuing family time."



Emersumnice Brewery





MAD Eats



Funtastic Island in Veterans Park

PHOTO COURTESY OF ACS PLAYGROUND ADVENTURES

Where The Wild Things Play

Open 'til bed time!	Cereal	\$1.50
	Fruit Bowl	\$2.50
	Pancakes	\$3.50
Sweet Treats		
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	Brownie	\$1.25
	Cookie	\$1.00
	Cupcake	\$2.00
	Cotton Candy	\$1.50
	Banana Split	\$3.00



From Our Facebook Friends

We asked TulsaKids' Facebook followers about their favorite things to do in Owasso.

Here are a few of the responses:

"Owasso High School baseball! Eat at Trails End BBQ."

CHRIS-MELITA A.

"Get the everything pass for the kids at Wheels and Thrills while I enjoy their fully stocked concessions!!"

APRIL O.

"Ollie Pop Craft Shop is an amazing place to be creative for adults and kids! So much fun!!!"

TANA H.D.P.

"Wheels and Thrills and Funtastic Island."

ELIZABETH R.

"Eat at El Fagon. On warmer days, Funtastic Island. On colder days, The Copper Kiln, Where the Wild Things Play, Airtopia."

MACY N.

"Airtopia, Where the Wild Things Play, Wheels and Thrills and eat at Baja Jacks."

KIRSTEN D.W.

"Work! I work at the best hospital—Bailey Medical Center!"

JENNIFER B.S.

"Watch a lacrosse game—2022 boys high school state champions. Home of the largest high school lacrosse program with five teams."

GINA J.

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How can you protect your digital legacy?

Gone are the days of physical photo albums and shoeboxes full of family keepsakes. In our increasingly digital world, many of our most treasured memories, and important records live in the cloud. This is why your estate plan should incorporate not just your physical assets, but your digital assets as well.

Start planning your digital legacy by preparing a list of all your digital assets — social media accounts, emails, bank accounts, and cloud storage, among others. Then, just as you would name a power of attorney to care for your physical needs, decide on a trusted person to act as your digital power of attorney. This person will ensure that your digital legacy survives and is passed on to your loved ones.

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JACOB WACKERHAUSEN/GETTY

FEBRUARY 2024

Jaimi Cullen & Arman
Zazyan in **Tulsa Ballet's**
Strictly Gershwin.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOSH NEW

SCAN THE QR CODE
to find more events at
[tulsakids.com/calendar!](https://tulsakids.com/calendar/)



Anette Barrios-Torres
as Eliza Doolittle in
the National Tour
of *My Fair Lady*.

PHOTO BY JOAN MARCUS 2023



Celebrate International Hoof Care
Month with a visit to **Tulsa Zoo's**
newest additions, the sitatungas!

PHOTO COURTESY TULSA ZOO.

BROUGHT TO YOU BY





Visit Marlow the Pig and youth librarian Jayme Taylor at the **Owasso Library** on National Take Your Child to the Library Day, Feb. 3.

PHOTO COURTESY TCCL

February 1 Thursday

NATURE CRAFT F W

Ages 2+, 3-4 p.m.,
Ray Harral Nature Center, 7101 S.
3rd St., Broken Arrow, facebook.
com/rayharralnaturecenter

Drop in for a new nature-themed craft each week.

MAKE-AND-TAKE STORYTIME F

All ages, 6-6:30 p.m.,
Central Library, 400 Civic Center,
tulsalibrary.org

Bring the whole family for this evening storytime all about teeth and take home a toothbrush craft.

CRAFT HAPPENS: LEARNING TO DRAW WITH HEARTSTOPPER F

For teens and tweens, 6-7 pm.,
Hardesty Regional Library,
8316 E. 93rd St., tulsalibrary.org

Discuss *Heartstopper Volume 1* by Alice Oseman and learn how to draw in the style of the comic. Pre-register at tulsalibrary.org/events.

February 2 Friday

FAMILY NATURE WALK + NATURE FUN FRIDAY W

All ages, 10-11:30 a.m.,
Philbrook Museum, 2727 S.
Rockford Rd., philbrook.org

Spark your curiosity at an easy-going Family Nature Walk at 10 a.m., then stick around for an exciting hands-on nature exploration!

DISCOVERY AFTER DARK

Ages 21+, 7-10 p.m.,
Discovery Lab, 3123 S. Riverside
Dr., discoverylab.org

Be a kid again at Discovery Lab's 21+ event. Your ticket includes admission, a drink ticket, cotton candy and access to color lab activities.

TULSA OILERS GAME

All ages, 7:05 p.m., BOK Center,
200 S. Denver Ave., tulsaoilers.com

Cheer for the Tulsa Oilers as they play hockey against the Utah Grizzlies.

ANNIE

All ages, 8 p.m., Tulsa PAC,
110 E. 2nd St., tulsapac.com

Theatre Tulsa presents this beloved musical. Additional showtimes through Feb. 4.

February 3 Saturday

SATURDAY MORNING BIRDING F

All ages, 8-9:45 a.m., Oxley Nature
Center, 6700 Mohawk Blvd.,
oxleynaturecenter.org

Join Oxley for their monthly Saturday morning bird walk. Bring binoculars if you have them.

CROWNING GLORY: THE AMEKA PREMIER EXTRAVAGANZA

All ages, 2 p.m., Circle Cinema,
10 S. Lewis Ave., circlecinema.org

This red-carpet event is an exclusive celebration of the animated series *Ameka and Her Magical Crown*, created and directed by the Dr. Tamecca Rogers. Details at circlecinema.org.

NATIONAL TAKE YOUR CHILD TO THE LIBRARY DAY: FANTASY SCIENCE F

All ages, 2-3 p.m., Hardesty
Regional Library, 8316 E. 93rd St.,
tulsalibrary.org

Explore interactive stations including making unicorn/glow-in-the-dark slime, building fairy-tale catapults, designing superhero cars and crown/mask decorating.

NATIONAL TAKE YOUR CHILD TO THE LIBRARY DAY: CHINESE NEW YEAR FOR KIDS F

All ages, 3-4 p.m., Bixby Library,
20 E. Breckenridge Ave., Bixby,
tulsalibrary.org

Ring in the Year of the Dragon with a special drop-in celebration including snacks, crafts and games for all ages.

TULSA SYMPHONY PRESENTS FANTASTIQUE

7:30 p.m., Tulsa PAC, 110 E. 2nd St.,
tulsasympphony.org

TSO's own concertmaster, Rossitza Goza, is the featured soloist for this fantastical evening. The concert includes Édouard Lalo's *Symphonie espagnole*, Op. 21, as well as Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique*.

February 4 Sunday

SENSORY SKATE SUNDAY

All ages, 10:30 a.m.-12:30
p.m., Wheels and Thrills,
10637 N. Garnett Rd., Owasso,
wheelsandthrills.com

Have fun at Wheels and Thrills with no flashing lights or loud music; the arcade and laser tag will be suspended as well.

FAMILY SWIM **F**

All ages, 4-6 p.m.,
Miller Swim School, 6415 S.
Mingo Rd., millerswimschool.com

Enjoy warm water, exercise and fun family time. Just \$5 per person, ages 3 and under swim free.

February 5 Monday**STUFFED-ANIMAL SLEEPOVER!** **F**

Ages 0-12, 10 a.m.-8 p.m.,
Broken Arrow Library, 300 W.
Broadway Ave., Broken Arrow,
tulsalibrary.org

Drop off your stuffies on February 5 and pick them up at noon or later on Feb. 6 to see pictures of their over-night adventures.

MUSIC MONDAY

For toddlers and preschoolers,
10:30-11 a.m., Central Library,
400 Civic Center, tulsalibrary.org

Enjoy a fun morning of singing and dancing to help foster early literacy skills.

February 6 Tuesday**BUILD A READER STORYTIME: FAMILY/STAY AND PLAY** **F W**

Ages 0-5, 10:15-11:15 a.m.,
Brookside Library, 1207 E. 45th Pl.,
tulsalibrary.org

After storytime, join for games, toys and activities that foster critical early literacy skills.

YOGA FOR EVERY BODY **F W**

All ages, 6-7 p.m., Central Library,
400 Civic Center, tulsalibrary.org

Join a beginner-friendly yoga class taught by certified yoga instructor Beth Richmond.

February 7 Wednesday**BIKES & BALLS** **W**

For toddlers and preschoolers,
9:30-11 a.m., Whiteside Park
Community Center,
4009 S. Pittsburg Ave.,
tulsaparks.recdesk.com

This is an open gym time for young children. \$1 per person.

STORY TIME AT TULSA ZOO **W**

All ages, 10 a.m., Tulsa Zoo,
6421 E. 36th St. N., tulsazoo.org

Listen to a story and meet an animal ambassador every Wednesday morning inside the Cox Nature Exchange (located in the Life in the Cold building).

February 8 Thursday**CAT KID COMIC CLUB**

Recommended for grades 1-5,
9:30 and 11:30 a.m., 6 p.m., Tulsa
PAC, 110 E. 2nd St., tulsapac.com

Cat Kid and Molly Pollywog have started an epic club to teach 21 rambunctious baby frogs how to make their own comics! This hilarious musical is an adaptation of Dav Pilkey's popular *Dog Man* spin-off series, *Cat Kid Comic Club*.

STORYTIME WITH THE TULSA ZOO

Geared to kids 10 and under,
10-10:30 a.m., Philbrook Museum,
2727 S. Rockford Rd., philbrook.org

Join Philbrook for a special animal storytime and visit from Tulsa Zoo.

February 9 Friday**OPEN HOUSE AT PRIMROSE SCHOOL OF BROKEN ARROW** **F**

4-5:30 p.m., Primrose School of
Broken Arrow, 1701 W. Albany St.,
BA, primroseba.com

Tour Primrose School of Broken Arrow, the nation's leader in premier early education and care, serving infants through pre-K.

BLACK HISTORY IN MOTION

All ages, 6-8:30 p.m., O'Brien Park,
6254 N. Birmingham Ave.,
facebook.com/tulsacountyparks

View live booth presentations by young historians, watch presentations of broadcasts from historic events, snap a photo in the family photo booth and more.

SANKOFA FREEDOM AWARD HONORING TERRY MCMILLAN **F**

All ages, 6:30-9 p.m., Rudisill
Regional Library, 1520 N. Hartford
Ave., tulsalibrary.org



Fans of Dav Pilkey won't want to miss *Cat Kid Comic Club* live at the **Tulsa PAC**, Feb. 8.

PHOTO COURTESY TULSA PAC.

Distinguished American novelist Terry McMillan will receive the 2024 Sankofa Freedom Award. There will be a free public presentation, followed by a Q&A, book signing and refreshments.

STRICTLY GERSHWIN

7:30 p.m., Tulsa PAC, 110 E. 2nd St.,
tulsaballet.org

With a huge cast of performers, guest vocalists and the incomparable music of George and Ira Gershwin, this Tulsa Ballet production will transport you to the golden age of Hollywood.

February 10 Saturday**SATURDAY TINY TOTS** **W**

Ages 0-6, 9-11 a.m., Wheels and Thrills, 10637 N. Garnett Rd.,
Owasso, wheelsandthrills.com

Skate, play, ride and jump with your favorite characters! Today's theme is *Trolls*.

I CAN'T SALSA **F**

All ages, 11-11:45 a.m., TCC
McKeon Center for Creativity, 910
S. Boston Ave., facebook.com/
centerforcreativitytulsa

Latin Dance 918 leads a free Salsa workshop as part of TCC McKeon Center for Creativity's I Can't series. Held in person and online.

FAMILY SWIM **W**

All ages, 1:15-3:15 p.m.,
Miller Swim School Tulsa
South, 7820 E. 101st St., Suite A,
millerswimschool.com

Enjoy warm water, exercise and fun family time. Just \$5 per person, ages 3 and under swim free.

February 11 Sunday

Find more family fun at
tulsakids.com/calendar.

February 12 Monday**BUILD A READER STORYTIME: PRESCHOOL** **F**

For preschoolers, 10:30-11 a.m.,
Broken Arrow Library,
300 W. Broadway Ave.,
Broken Arrow, tulsalibrary.org

The best in children's literature, songs, games, finger plays, rhymes and other reading-related activities are shared with your preschooler. Repeats Feb. 5 and 26.

TEEN TIME F

For teens and tweens, 3:30-5 p.m., Charles Page Library, 551 E. 4th St., Sand Springs, tulsalibrary.org

Hang out in the library's meeting room. There will be a Nintendo Switch and crafts. Repeats Feb. 5 and 26.

February 13 Tuesday

CENTRAL BARDS' CLUB: THEATER GAMES, IMPROV, DRAMATICS F

For teens and tweens, 6-7:30 p.m., Central Library, 400 Civic Center, tulsalibrary.org

This is a place for teens and tweens to learn and practice performance arts skills. No experience necessary.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH WITH TOMMY TERRIFIC: A MAGIC SHOW CELEBRATING JAZZ PIONEER LOUIS ARMSTRONG F

All ages, 10-11 a.m., Rudisill Regional Library, 1520 N. Hartford Ave., tulsalibrary.org

Join Tommy Terrific for this interactive magic show featuring Louis Armstrong's innovative jazz standards.

February 14 Wednesday

FAIRY FROLIC: FUN FOR FAE FOLK! F

For adults, 6-8 p.m., Central Library, 400 Civic Center, tulsalibrary.org

Enjoy fairy fun with. Crafts, games, light refreshments and costumes! Registration encouraged; register at tulsalibrary.org/events or call 918.549.7323.

TULSA OILERS GAME

All ages, 7:05 p.m., BOK Center, 200 S. Denver Ave., tulsaoilers.com

Cheer for Tulsa Oilers as they play the Kansas City Mavericks!

February 15 Thursday

STORYTIME AT PHILBROOK W

Geared to ages 10 and under, 10-10:30 a.m., Philbrook Museum, 2727 S. Rockford Rd., philbrook.org

Drop in for imaginative stories geared towards kids 10 and under.

February 16 Friday

HOMESCHOOL FUN FRIDAY F

All ages, 1-2 p.m., Charles Page Library, 551 E. 4th St., Sand Springs, tulsalibrary.org

Construct and build using LEGOs, blocks and cardboard.

THE WINTER'S TALE

7:30 p.m., Henthorne Performing Arts Center, 4825 S. Quaker Ave., clarkyouththeatre.com

Clark Conservatory will perform this Shakespearean masterpiece Feb. 9-18.

February 17 Saturday

I CAN'T DANCE WITH TULSA BALLET F

All ages, 10-10:45 a.m., TCC McKeon Center for Creativity, 910 S. Boston Ave., facebook.com/centerforcreativitytulsa

Step out of your comfort zone and try something new at the McKeon Center for Creativity's I Can't workshops. Participate in person or watch live online. Additional dates and themes available.

TELESCOPE WORKSHOP

All ages, 10:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m., Tulsa Air and Space Museum, 3624 N. 74th E. Ave., astrotulsa.com

Bring your telescope and let the Astronomy Club of Tulsa help you learn to use it in a 30-minute hands-on session. Pre-register at astrotulsa.com.

February 18 Sunday

PHILBARK DOG DAYS

All ages, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., Philbrook Museum, 2727 S. Rockford Rd., philbrook.org

You and your four-legged family members are invited for a tail-wagging good time sniffing all the smells in Philbrook Gardens. More details online.

February 19 Monday

WINTER CAMP: LEGEND OF THE LOST KINGDOM: ELEPHANTS

Grades 1-5, 9:30 a.m.-4 p.m., Tulsa Zoo, 6421 E. 36th St. N., tulsazoo.org

Journey with to a mysterious world deep within the heart of the Tulsa Zoo where ancient ruins of the jungle have been rediscovered! What secrets will be uncovered as campers discover majestic and endangered animals like elephants on this expedition into Asia? Aftercare available till 5:15 p.m. Pre-register at tulsazoo.org/camps.

February 20 Tuesday

WINTER CAMP: ADVENTURES ACROSS AFRICA

Grades 1-5, 9:30 a.m.-4 p.m., Tulsa Zoo, 6421 E. 36th St. N., tulsazoo.org

Journey across the savannah located right here at the Tulsa Zoo. Discover gigantic giraffes and remarkable rhinos that call the savannah home. Aftercare available till 5:15 p.m. Pre-register at tulsazoo.org/camps.

MINGO VALLEY CHRISTIAN OPEN HOUSE F

6-7:30 p.m., Mingo Valley Christian, 8304 S. 107th E. Ave., mingovalley.org

Learn more about Mingo Valley Christian. Visit mingovalley.org/openhouse to register.

February 21 Wednesday

AFRICAN AMERICAN HERITAGE BOWL: AFRICAN AMERICANS IN THE ARTS F

For middle school and high school teams, 6-9 p.m., Rudisill Regional Library, 1520 N. Hartford Ave., tulsalibrary.org

Community teams will compete for prizes and trophies by answering questions about this year's theme: "African Americans in the Arts." Contact Adrienne Teague at adrienne.teague@tulsalibrary.org to register your team.



Anette Barrios-Torres as Eliza Doolittle and the company of the National Tour of *My Fair Lady*.

PHOTO BY JOAN MARCUS 2023.

February 22 Thursday**INTRODUCE A GIRL TO ENGINEERING**

6-8 p.m., Discovery Lab, 3123 S. Riverside Dr., discoverylab.org

Meet, create and build with partners and women engineers. Workshops and additional activities available Feb. 24 and 25. Pre-registration required.

SCIENCE AFTER SCHOOL F

For elementary schoolers, 4-5 p.m., Brookside Library, 1207 E. 45th Pl., tulsalibrary.org

Join for hands-on science projects and literature connections.

February 23 Friday**TABLETOP GAMES F**

Ages 5-12, 4-5 p.m., Hardesty Regional Library, 8316 E. 93rd St., tulsalibrary.org

Join for a fun afternoon of tabletop games. Games are provided.

MOVIE NIGHT: ERNEST GOES TO JAIL F

All ages, 6-9 p.m., Will Rogers Memorial Museum, 1720 W. Will Rogers Blvd., Claremore, willrogers.com

Watch a fun movie at Will Rogers Memorial Museum! Doors open at 6 p.m., the movie will start at 7. Free admission and popcorn.

February 24 Saturday**SEED SWAP**

All ages, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., Philbrook Museum, 2727 S. Rockford Rd., philbrook.org

Bring your seeds, swap them for others and learn about the best varieties from Philbrook's experts.

FAMILY WORKSHOP: MANDALAS AND MINDFULNESS

10 a.m.-12 p.m., Philbrook Museum, 2727 S. Rockford Rd., philbrook.org

Create unique mandalas inspired by the work of the de la Torre brothers while learning the practice of mindfulness through art. More details online. Advance tickets recommended.

FULL MOON NATURE HIKE

All ages, 5:30-9 p.m., Tulsa Botanic Garden, 3900 Tulsa Botanic Dr., tulsabotanic.org

Take a self-guided night hike to experience the sights and sounds along a 1+-mile nature or opt for a guided hike with a horticulturist starting at 6 p.m.

MEAN GIRLS

Recommended ages 10+, 8 p.m., Tulsa PAC, 110 E. 2nd St., celebrityattractions.com

Mean Girls is a hilarious hit musical based on the popular film. ASL interpretation will be offered for the Feb. 25 performance at 6:30 p.m.

RIVERFIELD ROCKS

All ages, 6-10:15 p.m., Cain's Ballroom, 423 N. Main St., facebook.com/riverfieldrocks

Enjoy an evening of music performed by the musicians of Riverfield Country Day School's rock music program, Riverfield Rocks.

February 25 Sunday**OPEN SWIM F W**

All ages, 4-6 p.m., Miller Swim School, 6415 S. Mingo Rd., millerswimschool.com

Swim with friends and family for just \$5 per person. No reservations needed. Kids 3 and under swim free.

February 26 Monday**MONDAY MORNING PROGRAMMING W**

For early learners, 11-11:30 a.m., Discovery Lab, 3123 S. Riverside Dr., discoverylab.org

Early learners and their caregivers can participate in educational activities taught by experienced educators.

February 27 Tuesday**NATURE BUDDIES**

Ages 0-3, 10:30-11:30 a.m., Tulsa Zoo, 6421 E. 36th St. N., tulsazoo.org/learn

Meet a zoo educator to start building a connection with nature. Registration required.

CELEBRATE POKÉMON DAY! F

Jack London's classic, *Call of the Wild*, comes to life in a multimedia production at the **Tulsa PAC**, Feb. 29.

PHOTO COURTESY TULSA PAC

Ages 5-15, 4-6 p.m., Martin Regional Library, 2601 S. Garnett Rd., tulsalibrary.org

Celebrate National Pokémon Day with various crafts.

KAWAII BENTO F

For teens and tweens, 4:30-5:30 p.m., South Broken Arrow Library, 3600 S. Chestnut Ave., Broken Arrow, tulsalibrary.org

Make adorable rice balls and learn about meal prep.

MY FAIR LADY

Recommended ages 8+, 7:30 p.m., Tulsa PAC, 110 E. 2nd St., celebrityattractions.com

My Fair Lady tells the story of Eliza Doolittle, a young Cockney flower seller, and Henry Higgins, a linguistics professor who is determined to transform her into his idea of a "proper lady." Additional showtimes through March 3.

February 28 Wednesday**TEEN ADVENTURER'S GUILD: DUNGEONS & DRAGONS F**

For teens and tweens, 4:30-5:30 p.m., Pratt Library, 3219 S. 113th Ave. W., Sand Springs, tulsalibrary.org

Join for an afternoon of epic adventures. Materials provided; however,

participants are welcome to bring their own D&D materials. Costumes welcome.

TEEN CONNECTION F

For 6th-12th grade, 4:30-6 p.m., The Arc of Oklahoma, 2516 E. 71st St., Suite A, thearcok.org

This is a social group for middle and high school students with high-functioning autism.

February 29 Thursday**CALL OF THE WILD**

Recommended for 3rd grade and up, 9:30 and 11:30 a.m., 6 p.m., Tulsa PAC, 110 E. 2nd St., tulsapac.com

Jack London's classic tale comes to life on stage. This multi-media adventure mixes performance and storytelling with projected illustrations to tell the story of Buck, the magnificent offspring of a St. Bernard and Scottish Collie.

KIDS CRAFT CLUB: UPCYCLED BIRD FEEDERS F

For elementary schoolers, 4-5 p.m., Nathan Hale Library, 6038 E. 23rd St., tulsalibrary.org

Make upcycled bird feeders in celebration of National Audubon Society's Great Backyard Bird Count.

Kid-Friendly Valentine's Events

Celebrate love at these fun events!
Find even more at tulsakids.com/valentines.

NATURE DATE

Feb. 10, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Ray Harral Nature Center,
7101 S. 3rd St., Broken Arrow

Take your Valentine on a nature date to Ray Harral Nature Center and create an EcoJar together! For all ages. Free, no registration required. facebook.com/rayharralnaturecenter

SATURDAY BUILD A READER STORYTIME: FAMILY/ STAY AND PLAY

Feb. 10, 11 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Herman and Kate Kaiser Library,
5202 S. Hudson Ave.

Wear your PJs and bring the whole family for this 0-5 storytime celebrating Valentine's Day. tulsalibrary.org

HEARTFELT PAPER CRAFTS FOR YOUR PERSON

Feb. 10, 2–3 p.m.

Schusterman-Benson Library,
3333 E. 32nd Pl.

Make Valentines, paper hearts and paper cranes for the people you love. For elementary schoolers. tulsalibrary.org

DADDY DAUGHTER DANCE

Feb. 10, 5–6:30 p.m. and 7:30–9 p.m.

Nienhuis Park Community Center,
3201 N. 9th St., Broken Arrow

This annual dance includes a DJ, refreshments, goodie bag and more. Get tickets at secure.rec1.com/OK/broken-arrow-ok/catalog

LOVEBIRDS BIRD WALK

Feb. 13, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Ray Harral Nature Center,
7101 S. 3rd St., Broken Arrow

On this free, family nature walk, participants will listen for mating calls, observe courtship behaviors, and fall in love with birding. facebook.com/rayharralnaturecenter

LITTLE VALENTINES: CELEBRATE LOVE AND KISSES

Feb. 14, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Philbrook Museum, 2727 S. Rockford Rd.

Make Valentines, show favorite Philbrook artworks some love and find totally loveable ways to celebrate family and friendship. philbrook.org

Things to Do in Owasso

Learn more about fun things to do in Owasso in this month's **Know Your Neighbors** feature!

HOMESCHOOL SKATE

Feb. 1, 1-3 p.m.

Wheels and Thrills, 10637 N.
Garnett Rd., Owasso

Join Wheels and Thrills for their monthly Homeschool Skate event. This month's theme is Valentines! wheelsandthrills.com

SATURDAY TINY TOTS

Saturdays, 9-11 a.m.

Wheels and Thrills, 10637 N.
Garnett Rd., Owasso

Skate, play, ride and jump with your favorite characters! Each week features a different theme. Don't forget your socks! wheelsandthrills.com

BUILD A READER STORYTIME: BABIES AND TODDLERS/STAY AND PLAY

Feb. 6, 13, 20, 27; Storytime is 10-10:25 a.m. or 10:30-10:55 a.m.; Stay and Play is 11-11:30 a.m.

Owasso Library,
103 W. Broadway St., Owasso

After storytime, join for games, toys and activities that foster critical early literacy skills. tulsalibrary.org

BUILD A READER STORYTIME: PRESCHOOL/ STAY AND PLAY

Feb. 7, 14, 21, 28; Storytime is 10-10:25 a.m. or 10:30-10:55 a.m.; Stay and Play is 11-11:30 a.m.

Owasso Library,
103 W. Broadway St., Owasso

After storytime, join for games, toys and activities that foster critical early literacy skills. For ages 3-5. tulsalibrary.org

1-2-3 PLAY WITH ME PARENT-CHILD WORKSHOP SERIES

Feb. 9, 16, 23, 10:30-11:30 a.m.

Owasso Library,
103 W. Broadway St., Owasso

This three-week play workshop series is for parents and children ages 1-3. Class size limited. Must pre-register at tulsalibrary.org/events or by calling 918.549.7323.

PERLER BEADS: CREATE FUN DESIGNS

Feb. 12, 4-5 p.m.

Owasso Library,
103 W. Broadway St., Owasso

Enjoy this fun and easy way to create Perler bead creations. For teens and tweens. tulsalibrary.org

KIDS CREATE: EXPLORING MODELING CLAY

Feb. 29, 5:30-6:30 p.m.

Owasso Library,
103 W. Broadway St., Owasso

Create using modeling clay. For elementary schoolers. tulsalibrary.org



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Shermya Jackson:

Catching Up with A Former Tulsa Kid

By **Betty Casey**



Shermya Jackson, now 17, appeared in this column four years ago. Since we featured her at age 13, we have learned that Shermya attended Booker T. Washington High School, where she graduated at age 16. She continued her education at Tulsa Community College (TCC), completing her first semester with a 4.0 GPA. Shermya plans to attend Rogers State University in the fall to pursue a bachelor's degree in nursing. While her accomplishments are impressive enough, Shermya has completed these goals while fighting a serious, chronic disease.

TK: Why did you choose the educational path that you've been following?

Shermya: I plan to go on to graduate school to get my master's degree in nursing. My career goal

is to become a psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner. As long as I can remember, I have wanted to be a nurse. I helped my mom take care of my grandmother and grandfather, checking their vitals and giving them their medications. Both my grandparents unfortunately passed away this past year. It meant a lot to me to be able to help them, and I want to help others in that same manner.

I want to specifically be a psychiatric mental health nurse because I know the importance of having a proper diagnosis and treatment when it comes to your mental health. Dealing with mental health issues stems from my lupus diagnosis. It is very important to get the proper diagnosis and treatment to work on your mental as well as your physical health needs.

TK: What is lupus, and how has it impacted your life?

Shermya: Lupus is a chronic, life-long disease of the immune system. Immune cells attack the body's healthy tissues, leading to inflammation, illness and tissue damage. It causes inflammation (swelling), organ damage and pain in any part of the body. It can cause damage to the skin, joints and internal organs. Lupus can affect your kidneys, heart, lungs, brain, central nervous system, blood and joints.

Lupus has impacted my life, good and bad. Learning to cope with the disease has not been easy. I experienced a variety of emotional reactions, including denial, fear, frustration, anger and anxiety. I was very upset and depressed. My parents sent me to therapy over the years to help me learn coping skills

and to deal with depression and anxiety. I have suffered lots of pain and was tired and still have issues with fatigue. I wake up tired no matter how much sleep I get. There are some days I can't even get out of bed and have to stay home from school and miss events and activities. I missed an average of 30 to 40 days of school a year, but receiving a medical accommodation allowed me to complete school. There were several times I almost had to withdraw and homeschool because I had missed so much school due to being sick or being hospitalized, but I wanted to finish school at Booker T. because my parents, aunts, uncles and cousins went there, and I wanted to graduate and be a Booker T. Washington Hornet.

I am not going to lie, school was very hard at times because Booker T.



You are not your illness. You are not a victim;
you are a survivor. Never let your illness control you.
Lupus is just one part of my life. I am still of value and
still have something to offer the world and so do you.

understand either and were not accommodating. Thank goodness for those students and teachers who did understand and wanted to see me succeed.

The daily management of the disease consists of eating properly, getting adequate sleep, taking my medication and trying to stay stress-free. I take about 10 pills per day and have 10 doctors/specialists that I see, several of which are in OKC.

What has been the most difficult part of the disease is having to give up playing volleyball competitively. My legs would hurt severely after just practicing. My doctor said there was too much pressure on my joints and recommended I stop playing. It was very hard to give up because I had envisioned myself playing in college.

The good thing I have experienced is coming in contact with people who truly care about me and want to see me be successful. Those people help me make it through the rough times. I look to them for support. I have been recognized several times for my strength and resilience to fight and not give up, which has meant a great deal to me because I look to inspire others going down a similar path.

TK: Who inspires you?

Shermya: My mom inspires me because she also has lupus and has had it since she was a child. She understands what I am going through. She motivates me to keep pushing on to stay strong and not give up, and to believe that I can do anything that others can do. I might just have to do things a bit

differently or allow extra time to complete them. My parents in general are a great source of inspiration. They have taught me valuable lessons that will take me far in life and have been the biggest support system a person can ask for.

TK: What advice would you give to others who are battling an illness or other hurdles in life?

Shermya: The advice I would give to others would be that your illness doesn't define who you are. You are not your illness. You are not a victim; you are a survivor. Never let your illness control you. Lupus is just one part of my life. I am still of value and still have something to offer the world and so do you. Keep striving to reach your goals, no matter the obstacles you encounter. Stay positive and don't focus on what you can't do but focus on what you can do. Most importantly, don't suffer in silence. Help is out there to take care of your mental health.

TK: What keeps you moving forward despite the obstacles?

Shermya: The thing that keeps me moving forward is my faith. I pray a lot and know that if God brought me to it, he will bring me through it. My belief system keeps me moving forward. I believe in myself, and I know I am just as capable as the next person in doing whatever needs to be done.

I have a strong support system of family and friends that I lean on when I need to. Never be afraid to ask for help from family, friends, or a mental health advisor.

Some specific things I do to stay positive are to pray, go to church,

work out at the gym, stay hopeful, possess a positive attitude, deal with my emotions by going to counseling, spend time with positive people, and avoid negative thoughts and negative people. I am grateful for what I have and say positive affirmations to myself daily. I focus on what I can change and accept the things I can't. I realize that difficult times are a part of life and that things will get better. It's all about how you deal and cope with those things.

TK: What is your favorite thing to do in Tulsa?

Shermya: My favorite thing to do in Tulsa is go to the mall. I love shopping at places like Urban Outfitters, Five Below and dining at restaurants like Olive Garden and Texas Roadhouse. I love going to the movies, going to Gathering Place when the sun goes down, going to Main Event, going to sporting events and bowling

TK: What is a fun fact about you?

Shermya: I am a shoe and clothes fanatic. I love animals. I would like a snake, a lizard and a gecko when I have my own house. My parents said lol. I have a cat and a dog, and they love each other. **TK**

Betty Casey is the Associate Publisher and Editor-in-Chief of TulsaKids Magazine. She has been with TulsaKids for over 20 years.

is a high-performing, college preparatory school, and it was very easy to get behind. Even when I was sick at home, I had to do my work. There were times when I was in the hospital that I would bring my laptop and do my work.

I had a goal, and I wasn't letting anything stand in my way. Friends would take notes for me, and teachers would communicate with me and allow extra time to complete my assignments. I didn't always receive understanding and compassion from everyone, especially other classmates because I was absent a lot, and some people couldn't understand how I was passing and why I was receiving accommodations. Some people thought I was skipping. They didn't understand what I was going through. Some teachers didn't

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