

# Community Juide 2023



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### Welcome!

On behalf of the McAlester Area Chamber of Commerce, welcome to McAlester, Oklahoma! Whether you have been a resident of our beautiful community for years, have recently settled in, or are possibly looking to relocate to our area, we hope that the new Community Guide and Business Directory will be a valuable source of information for you in 2023.

As we kick off the new year, the excitement surrounding the McAlester area and the local economy is undeniable. With new businesses opening in every part of town and new community events filling up the local calendars, there is something for everyone right here in McAlester.

Here at the Chamber, we are doing our best to aid the growth of our local business community. With numerous new projects underway, as well as events and resources that

have become staples in town throughout the years, we are positioning ourselves to grow alongside the thriving businesses in our area. We hope that this new-look publication will be a one stop shop for everyone that is seeking information about what makes McAlester, OK a true **COMMUNITY!** 

Brian Flynn

Brian Flynn President & CEO

McAlester Area Chamber of Commerce





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# Letter from the Mayor John Browne



Hello! This is Mayor John Browne, welcome to our wonderful community of McAlester. I am very proud to get to brag on our city and share a few reasons why I am sure you will enjoy visiting either in person or virtually.

We are currently enjoying a renaissance of spirit and economy. Combining private investment and local government we are enhancing the quality of life for our citizens and those from surrounding communities. Events such as the Dancing Rabbit Music Festival, Grillmarks Competitions, along with the Italian Festival allow us to show our home off to all who visit. In addition to these events, we also have a growing number of public arts projects. Arvest Park and many murals painted throughout downtown bring a modern quirkiness to the downtown area. Another area that we excel in is our belief in and treatment of our veterans. We have recently received the honor of being recognized as a Purple Heart City. Put this together with our annual Armed Forces Day Parade and the recently completed mural dedicated to Michael Hunter and all other Vietnam Veterans and you will discover the high esteem we hold for our former and current members of the Armed Forces.

McAlester is very business friendly. We are in the process of completing a 200,000 square foot shopping center which was put together through the use of a Tax Increment Financing program. We also have incentives in place for businesses choosing to locate here and are willing to listen when they come calling.

Thank you for your interest in our town and we welcome you to visit, talk about, or relocate here. We look forward to seeing you!

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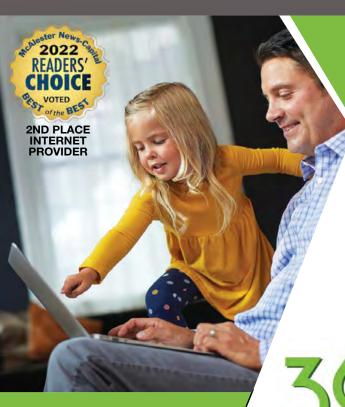
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# WHAT DOES A CHAMBER OF COMMERCE DO?

### **Great Question! One that we get asked often!**

### To put it simply, we have 3 Main Organizational Objectives.

Advocating for businesses on a local and state level

Communicating the needs of businesses to our local leaders and decision makers. Making sure that their voices are heard so that they can focus on the daily operation of the business itself.

Providing benefits and resources for businesses

Coordinating networking and business building forums to get companies and entrepreneurs the information and connections that they deserve. Building a member to member benefits package to bring value to the Chamber experience.

Facilitating Community Involvement for businesses

Providing opportunities for businesses to market, volunteer, and recruit in the community. Letting the McAlester area know the time and effort that local businesses are investing in the area.

We also aid in promoting the McAlester area as a whole and work with our local government officials to promote economic development.

If you have any questions, contact us today!



# CHAMBER OF COMMERCE EVENTS

### **NETWORKING EVENTS**







These events are designed to get our local business professionals in the same room to network and build working relationships in a casual environment. Our networking events are important to the overall vitality of our business community and help facilitate economic growth.

### **ANNUAL EVENTS**



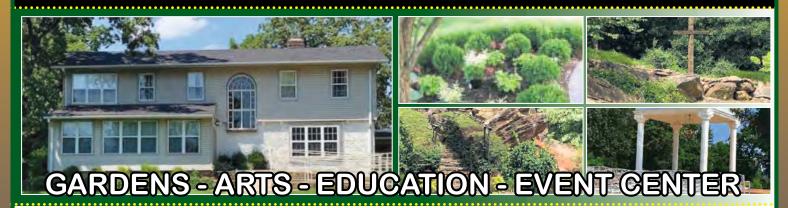
Our premier networking and social event of the year! Join us every September as we recognize our local individuals, businesses, and organizations while celebrating the McAlester Area business community.

The Annual Chamber of Commerce Golf Tournament is a great way for businesses to spend a day supporting the local community. This 4-man scramble tournament provides an opportunity for our members to entertain clients or employees, while having fun out on the course!



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#### Arvest Park

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### **Chadick Park**

9 422 S. 5th St.

### **Connally Park**

N. Strong Blvd. & E. Electric Ave.

### **Hunter Park**

14 E. Smith Ave.

### **Hutchison Park**

N. 4th St. & E. Krebs Ave.

### Komar Park

9 501-599 S. B St.

### Leadership Park

W. Jefferson Ave. & N. Hickory St.

### Lee Park

301 E. Fillmore Ave.

### Mullen Park

N. A St. & W. Springer Ave.

### Puterbaugh Park

(°) 1001 E. Seneca Ave.

### Rosso Park

702 W. Madison Ave.

### **Rotary Park**

9 801 N. 9th St.

### Thunderbird Park

908 E.Pierce Ave.

### Will Rogers Park

9 1502 S.13th St.

# PUBLIC FACILITIES

- Buffalo Run Disc Golf Course - Rotary Park.
- J.I. Stipe Center -Rotary Park. Pickleball, gymnasium, men & women basketball leagues, & more
- McAlester EXPO Center - West on HWY 270
- SE Oklahoma Softball Complex -West on HWY 270
- Arboretum Mike
   Deak Walking Track,
   S. 13th St.
- Archery Range -West on HWY 270

### DOG PARKS

### Central Bark Dog Park

S. B Street and W. Seneca Ave.

### WALKING TRAILS

- Chadick Park
- Mullen Park

# POOLS & SPLASH PADS

### Jeff Lee Pool

301 E. Fillmore Ave.

### Chadick Park Wading Pool & Splash Pad

Chadick Avenue and S. 3rd St.

### Komar Park Wading Pool

S. B Street & Comanche Ave.

### Leadership Park Splash Pad

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- (918) 423-4542

### Puterbaugh Upper Elementary

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- (918) 423-

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- (918) 423-

### Randy Hughes Middle School

- o 7th. 8th
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- **(** ТВА

#### McAlester High School

- o 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th
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#### McAlester Christian Academy

- Ages 2 5
- (°) 1700 S Main St
- (918) 423-

#### 4743 Lakewood Christian School

- o K3 12th
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# Shops at McAlester drawing thousands of visitors

By James Beaty
MCALESTER NEWS CAPITAL MANAGING EDITOR

The Shops at McAlester highway shopping center in McAlester is already drawing thousands of visitors, with a number of buildings still under construction or in the planning phase.

"During the month of August we had 90,000 visits," said city of McAlester Economic Development Director Adam White. "It's the top shopping center within 50 miles of McAlester."

The city of McAlester has benefitted in several ways from the addition of the Shops at McAlester center.

"About 150 people have been hired so far at pay higher than the average pay for Pittsburg County," White said. "That's a win for us."

That number is expected to increase as more businesses open at the site.

"Once all the buildings are open, we expect 200-plus jobs in the Shops," White said.

Among the next major grand openings will be the opening of the Chick-fil-A, expected in October, said White. He said the restaurant is creating about 40 jobs in McAlester. It's also expected to pull more traffic in from the highway that might have otherwise driven right through McAlester. When it opens, it will be the only Chick-fil-A along the highway between Muskogee and North Texas, White said.

Other businesses with construction underway at the site include Ollie's, which retails closeout merchandise and excessive inventory from other stores Five Below, where most items are \$5 or less, with a smaller amount of offerings ranging from \$6 to \$25. Construction on Jiffy Lube hit a bump due to supply side shortages, city officials said, but it's expected to move forward once the needed materials arrive.

McAlester Community Development Director Jayme Clifton said concrete should be poured soon for the pad that will house The Bank N.A.'s new Shops at McAlester location.

Five Below is nearly ready for a Certificate of Occupancy inspection by the city of McAlester, which must be passed before a building is certified as safe for people to occupy, she said.



DERRICK JAMES | Staff photo

An aerial view of the Shops at McAlester shopping center.





Shops at McAlester is at the intersection of Fourteenth Street and U.S. Highway 69, also known as the George Nigh Expressway where the highway wends its way through McAlester. It's been opening in stages, with Starbucks the first business to open at the site in March, followed by Burkes Outlet, Hobby Lobby, T.J. Maxx, Ross and Rack Room shoes.

Plans for a multi-tenant building adjacent to Starbucks call for a Tropical Smoothie at 1,800 square feet and a 2,500-square-foot T-Mobile, with room for two additional tenants.

### TIF AGREEMENT

After several false starts, the Shops at McAlester project took off after developer Burk Collins of Burk Collins & Co. became involved.

Collins agreed to build the highway shopping center at his own expense through a Tax Increment Financing agreement, known as a TIF, made with the McAlester City Council and the Pittsburg County commissioners.

The agreement called for Burke Collins & Company to get 90% of the city's and the county's portion of sales taxes from the site for five years or until he receives \$5.5 million, whichever comes first.

Those making purchases in McAlester pay a 10% total sales tax rate or a dime on the dollar — but only 4% of that 10% sales tax total goes to the city of McAlester.

Another 1.5% goes to Pittsburg County, while the remaining 4.5% is the state sales tax. Collins get no part of the state's 4.5% sales tax at the Shops at McAlester site — but the TIF agreement allocates him 90% of the city's and county's shares collected at Shops in McAlester.

### CITY AND COUNTY TOTALS

When the \$167,016.46 in sales taxes collected on behalf of the city from Shops at McAlester is added to the \$62,905.32 collected on behalf of the county from May through August, the two amounts total \$229,921.46.

Burk Collins & Company's share of the \$150,314.82 90% reimbursement reflecting 90% of the money collected on behalf of the city of McAlester at Shops at McAlester on May through August, added to his 90% reimbursement of the \$56,614.79 collected on



IAMES BEATY | Staff photo

T.J.Maxx and Ross are among the anchors stores already drawing thousands of visitors to the Shops at McAlester highway shopping center.

behalf of Pittsburg County during the same time period totals \$206.929.61.

That \$206,929.61 represents the amount Burk Collins and Company is to be paid per the TIF agreement from the city and Pittsburg County combined for the four-month period covering from May through August 2022.

Swift, the city of McAlester's CFO, said the TIF agreement calls for payment to be made on the one-year anniversary of when the first business that opened at Shops of McAlester made its first sale and that would be Starbucks. The city is planning on making its first payment in March 2023, which will cover the 12 month period since Starbucks opened in March 2022, Swift said.

The Shops at McAlester project hit some bumps along the way, much of it attributable to the COVID-19 pandemic and supply side shortages that have been felt nationwide.

Seeing the first stores open at the site has been a long process for the city of McAlester, which started working toward the development of a new highway retail center several years ago. Some of the initial attempts through other potential developers didn't work out.

Things finally started moving forward when Burk Collins of Burk Collins & Company came on-board about four years ago.

Collins took on the project through a Tax Increment Financing agreement with the McAlester City Council and the Pittsburg Country commissioners. Initial details were worked out through the McAlester Area Southside Reinvestment Committee, also known as the Highway TIF Committee, which consists of representatives of entities which benefit from city and county tax collections.

Several delays occurred during the construction process, with some attributed to disruptions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and others to supply side shortages, but the project kept moving.

Today it is already drawing the aforementioned thousands of visitors each month — a number expected to increase as each new business opens.

• Contact **James Beaty** at jbeaty@mcalesternews.com.







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Leadership McAlester is designed to give business professionals and future leaders the opportunity to learn more about their community while developing relationships with other participants and community leaders.

The curriculum for Leadership McAlester is built around seven (7) informative and educational highlights of our city spread over six (6) days throughout the year. On the third Thursday of every month the class will tour and learn about the history of McAlester, the local healthcare system, education system, non-profit organizations, large business sector, city and county government, and economic development. The participants will also develop their team building skills by choosing a service project that will be completed within six months of the class graduation. Past class projects have included several additions to our community:

- Coal Miners Cemetery kiosk
- Hope House exterior paint
- Downtown way-finding signs (Promoting Walkability)
- Leadership Park splash-pad & adding new playground equipment
- Landscaping of Key Academy entrance

Leadership McAlester classes begin with a welcome reception in October and end with the class graduation ceremony in June. If you are interested in participating in a future Leadership McAlester class, please contact the McAlester Area Chamber of Commerce by email at chamber@mcalester.org!



By Adrian O'Hanlon III MCALESTER NEWS CAPITAL EDITOR

Work continues on the \$35-million middle school and event center being built at McAlester Public Schools.

School board members recently received an update on the site — projected to be complete May 31, 2023 — with representatives from Crossland Construction, the project manager, saying crews started electrical and plumbing work, plus brick work on the exterior.

"We're going to do more site work soon, I know it looks pretty messy right now but we're going to clean that up," Crossland representative Ronald Smith said.

"Pretty much everyday it looks amazing," board member Greg Rock said.

"It does and that brick is going up fast," Tribbey said.

"Well not as fast as we want it but we're working on it," Smith said with a laugh.

Nearly 80% of MPS district voters approved in February 2021 a \$34.9 million bond toward construction of a middle school and event center. The bond extended two previous measures that brought an 8% tax increase in 2019, but did not increase taxes.

Plans for the facility include several classrooms and a new event center that doubles as a storm shelter for nearly 800 students in grades 7-12.

Work started in November 2021 on the multi-level facility being constructed on the hill between McAlester High School and East Van Buren Avenue.

Construction is projected for completion May 31, 2023.

Board members voted this month to call the new site Randy Hughes Middle School.

Hughes was the MPS superintendent with the vision for the new middle school before he retired last year.

He started as the MPS superintendent July 1, 2016, but previously served the district for more than two decades. Hughes started as a teacher at McAlester in 1985 and coached baseball, winning state championships in 1988, 1996, 1998 and 2000.

Hughes also served as principal of the alternative educator program, middle school and high school during his tenure in McAlester.

He left McAlester to accept the job at Middleberg in 2012 after



ADRIAN O'HANLON III | Staff photos Construction continues on a new multi-million-dollar middle school and event center at McAlester Public Schools.

his wife Nancy Hughes, a former business manager at MPS, started a job in the Oklahoma State Department of Education.

He inherited a troubled financial situation upon his return to McAlester as superintendent in 2016 — with school officials saying at the time that state aid cuts, increased nonessential spending, a nonexistent budget and more contributed to a financial crisis.

The new middle school also opened the district to consolidating buildings and renaming a few more.

Board members voted in December to change the name of Puterbaugh Middle School to Puterbaugh Upper Elementary because the site will soon only serve third and fourth grades and no longer house a middle school.

Emerson Elementary School was also renamed to Karla Brock Early Childhood Center. Brock taught at McAlester schools for more than 20 years and served as an assistant principal at Will Rogers Elementary before becoming principal at Washington Early Childhood Center.

She retired in 2012 while principal at Jefferson Early Childhood Center and officials said she impacted thousands of students during her career.

Crossland representatives previously said steel work would wrap up in November and workers started installing win-

dows in classrooms.

Interior framing was basically complete in November and crews were mostly through with sheetrock.

Insulation crews were to start after Thanksgiving to add texture and foam before adding brick veneer under more precise weather conditions.

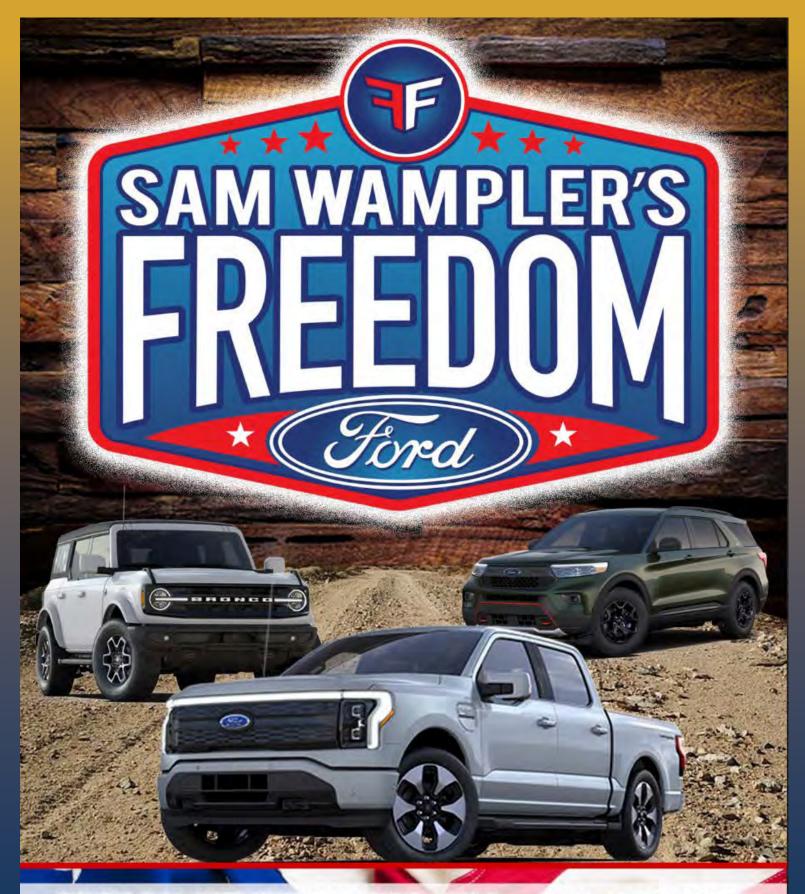
Contractors were to meet with the painter and start after the Thanksgiving break adding primer to everything before beginning to paint.

District officials publicly discussed over the past few years how to consolidate buildings after completion of the new facility — moving kindergarten through second grade to the Will Rogers building, and moving third and fourth grades to Puterbaugh site.

McAlester-based nonprofit Shared Blessings showed interest in purchasing a school facility.

Plans call to leave Eugene Field as the facility for alternative education and the nutrition department.

Officials have said Edmond Doyle Elementary, Jefferson Early Childhood Center and William Gay Early Childhood Center could be repurposed.



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# McAlester aeronautics program continues soaring

By Adrian O'Hanlon III MCALESTER NEWS CAPITAL EDITOR

ADRIAN O'HANLON III | Staff photos McAlester Public Schools students Max Gaytan and Blake Wilt listen to Chase Tindle during the aeronautics course Thursday.

Max Gaytan said a new program at McAlester High School is going to help him reach his career goal.

The MHS senior said he wants to become an airplane technician, so he enrolled in the district's aviation program and is part of the new course teaching students how to build and fly an airplane.

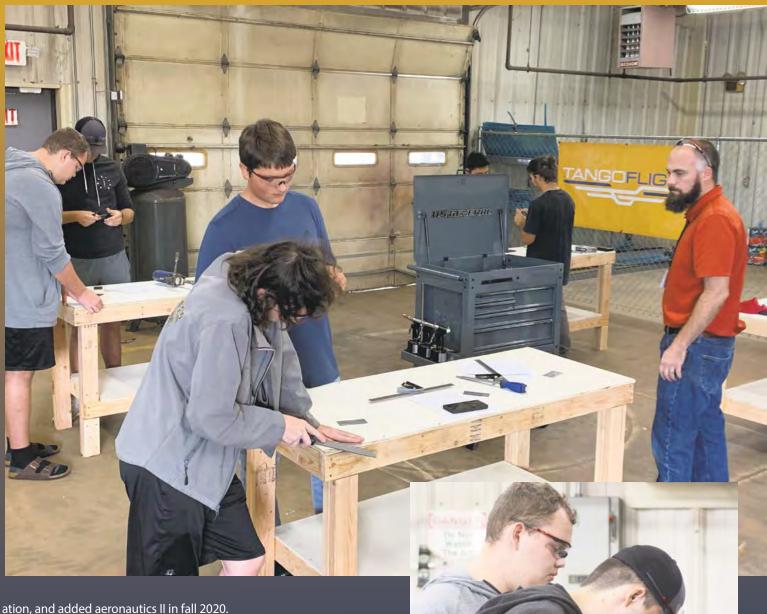
"It's really cool and I like the class," Gaytan said. "I want to become an airplane technician and this is a way to start learning the things I need to know while I'm in high school."

Blake Wilt, another MHS senior, said he signed up for the class because he enjoys working on cars and is considering becoming a mechanic.

But he said the program introduced him to more potential career paths.

"I enjoy working in mechanics and this is a great way to give me more options," he said.

MHS started offering aviation in 2018, added aeronautics I in fall 2019 through a partnership with the Aircraft Owners & Pilots Associ-



STEM teacher Amy Shaw said students learn terminology and pieces for planes and unmanned aircraft through the first two aeronautics courses. She said the courses also introduce students to possible career paths in the growing aeronautics industry.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports the 2020 medium pay for airline and commercial pilots was \$130,440 annually — and predicts 11-percent employment growth in the field from 2020-2030.

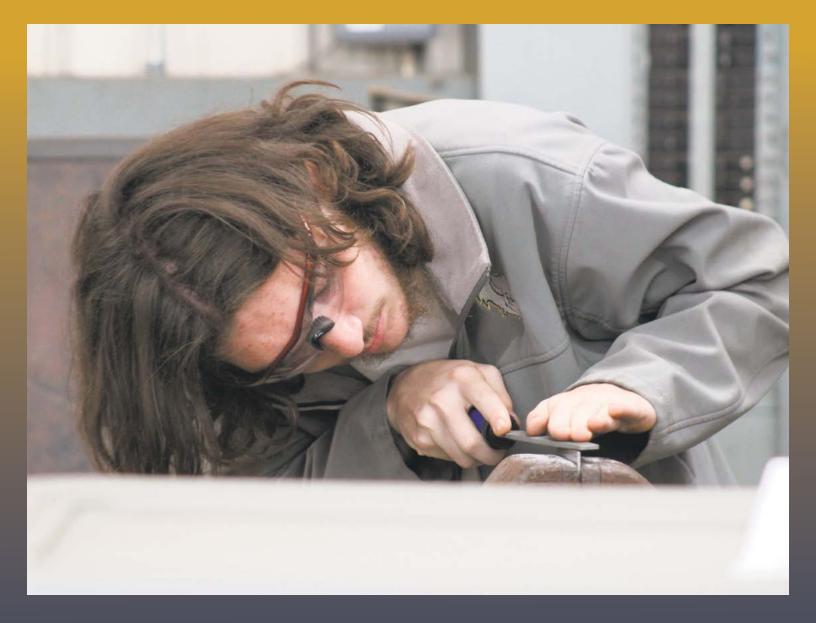
Boeing's latest Pilot and Technician Outlook predicts 612,000 new pilots and 626,000 new maintenance technicians over the next 20 years.

Shaw said the program aims to give students options for after graduation.

"I want to give them as many viable options as possible," Shaw said. The program expanded to offer four flight simulators and 10 drones to the more than 80 enrolled students.

MPS received a grant toward drones and drone cages, which are 12x12 cages to keep allow students to maneuver drones in a safe

Shaw teaches three levels of aeronautics, with students learning various aspects of flight leading up to the capstone course where they build and fly an airplane.



MPS partnered last spring with Tango Flight, Inc. to become just one of three programs across the state to offer a program teaching students how to build and fly an airplane.

Tango Flight, Inc., which started in 2016, is an educational non-profit that aims to inspire the next generation of engineers, pilots, aviation mechanics and technicians.

The organization's curriculum offers hands-on training and students can apply classroom knowledge to building an FAA certified airplane.

Tango Flight's curriculum pairs aviation and avionics to teach the fundamentals and mechanics of aircraft and avionics equipment.

The nonprofit partnered with Wichita State University and the Airbus Foundation to create the curriculum focused on mechanical, electrical and engineering foundation.

Chase Tindle, the McAlester Regional Airport manager, started last year as an adjunct instructor at the district in a partnership between the school and the city. Some students last year received scholarships to undergo flight training at the airport — and this year, the curriculum focuses on learning how to build an airplane.

"We do a lot of classroom work on different parts of the airplane, different structures, history of aircraft," Tindle said. "We also get into

some aviation math and aviation physics principles.

"But the exciting part of the class is actually building an airplane," Tindle said.

Students are learning to build an RV-12iS — a two-seat all-metal side-by-side plane with a span of 26'9" and length of 19'11".

All students will be able to work on the plane and take a flight upon passing inspection and the project will take about two years to complete.

Tindle said the program offers students the opportunity to learn from and connect with mentors.

"We're really excited and I think it's a great program," Tindle said.

McAlester was already one of five Oklahoma schools participating in the "You Can Fly" four-year curriculum AOPA developed.

Oklahoma is ranked third for implementing AOPA curriculum with more than 30 schools participating after several years of the Oklahoma Aeronautics Commission advocating for it.

McAlester is also among five schools named "Aviation High Schools of Excellence" after the commission was awarded a Federal Aviation Administration Workforce Development Grant in late 2021.

• Contact Adrian O'Hanlon III at aohanlon@mcalesternews.com



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### February

Chocolate Tour — Participating businesses across downtown McAlester and Old Town offe deals and treats for which customers can cast their vote

### May



Grillmarks Steak Festival— The annual steak competition and community block party offers a free event with good food and music, snacks, games, biergartens, food trucks and more.

Armed Forces Day Parade — McAlester's Armed Forces Day Parade recently celebrated its 75th Anniversary as the parade continues to brings hundreds to downtown in celebration of our military veterans.

McAlester Italian Festival — Families and friends have celebrated their Italian heritage for more than 50 years at the McAlester Italian Festival that offers food, games, and fun at the Pittsburg County Fairgrounds.

### June

Dancing Rabbit Music Festival — DRMF began in 2021 with shows in May, June and July and brings in national acts from various musical genres for a series of free community concerts.

### July

Stars and Stripes Fireworks Show — The city of McAlester and partners offer a free fireworks show set to begin just after dark usually on the Fourth of July at the Southeast Expo Center.

Miss McAlester and Miss McAlester's Outstanding Teen competition — The competition is affiliated with Miss Oklahoma and Miss America, with the local contest offering several scholarships to competitors.

### September

Pittsburg County Free Fair — The annual free fair with livestock showing, judging, art entries and more for local students to showcase.

### October

Country Music Festival — A fun fall-themed festival at Simply Country Ranch, the award-winning ranch at 7838 Krebs Lake Road in McAlester.

Robbers Cave Fall Festival — An annual festival in Wilburton that includes more than 200 arts and crafts vendors, food and drinks, rides, and live entertainment, plus the Fall Foliage Cruise and Car Show on Saturday.

McAlester Pink Ribbon Luncheon — Oklahoma Project Woman hosts the annual McAlester Pink Ribbon Luncheon to raise awareness about breast cancer and celebrate the local community.

### November

Ribtoberfest — Enjoy an Oktoberfest-style community event and rib competition with live music, games, biergartens, college football on the big screen, and lots of fun and food.

Veterans Day Parade — Come enjoy a parade that aims to honor and celebrate all military veterans, promote awareness and patriotism in our community, and foster pride

# Calendar of events



in our country.

### December

Downtown Christmas Parade — People come from all around to see themed holiday parade entries in the annual Downtown Christmas Parade in McAlester.

\$10,000 Cash Giveaway — An annual event that draws hundreds to downtown McAlester to see if their ticket will be drawn for the grand prize or several smaller prizes leading up to the final winner announcement.



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### Americann Lodge & Suites

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### Armed Forces Career Center - Navy

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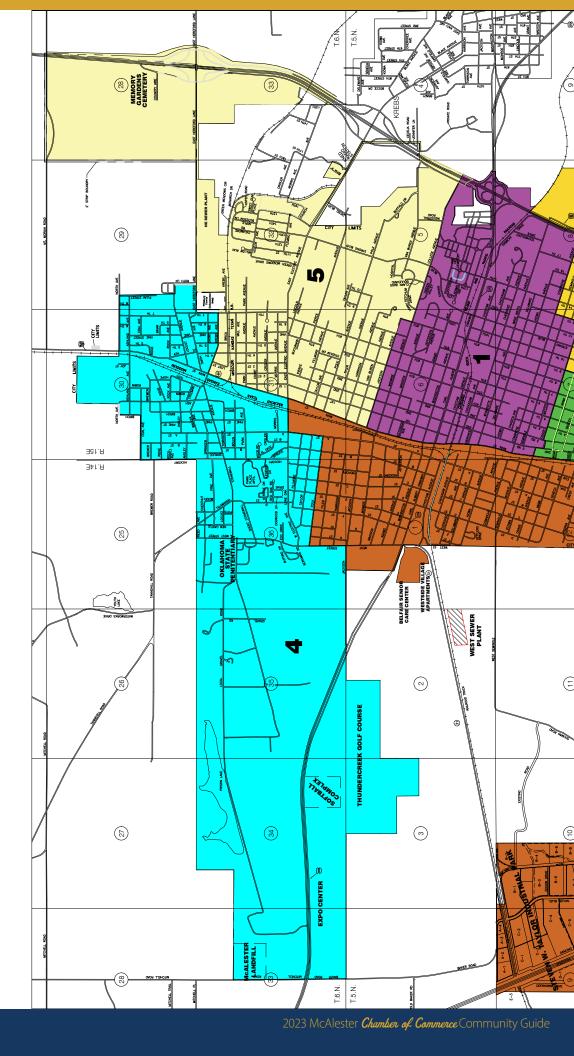
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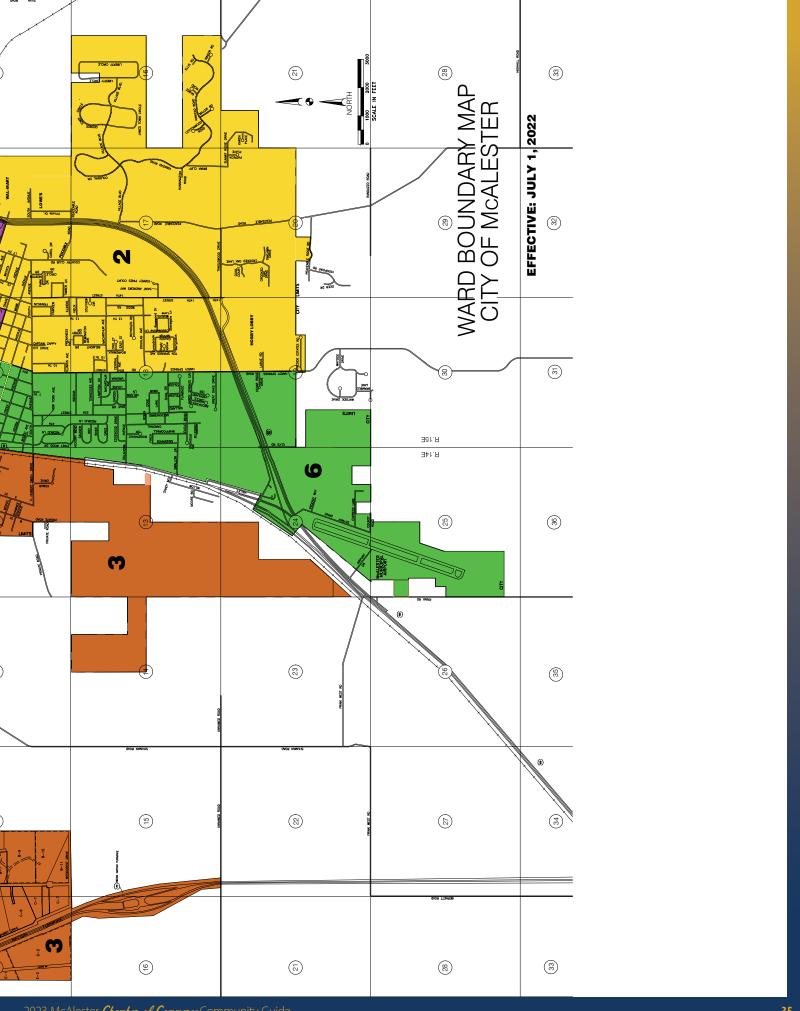
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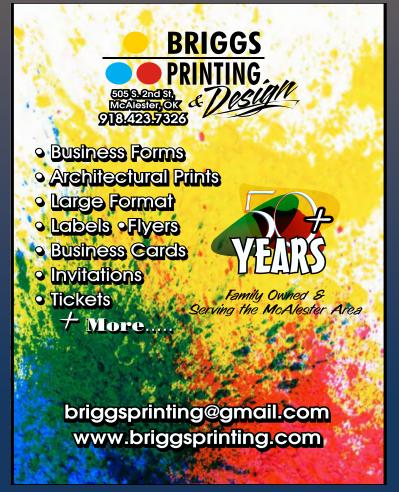


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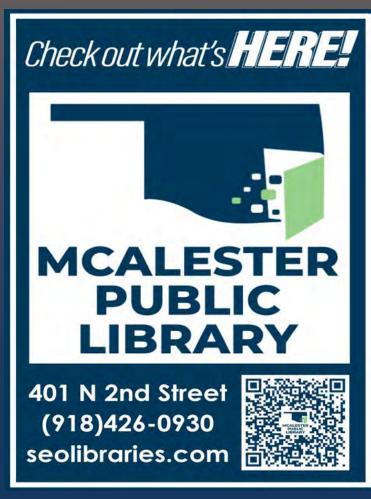
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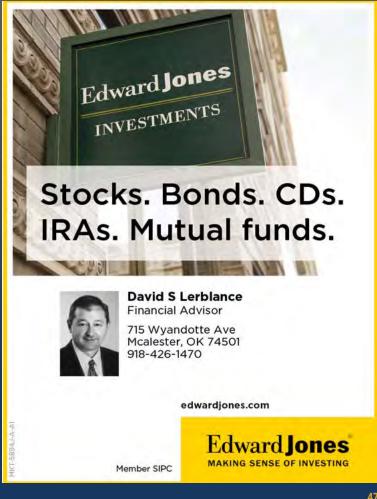
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