

TULSA REGIONAL CHAMBER

# THE CHAMBER REPORT



## THE RIGHT STUFF

*IRONMAN PROVES TULSA IS AN ADVENTURE SPORTS PLAYER*

## CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

*FLOODING DRAWS ATTENTION TO ARKANSAS RIVER LEVEES*

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**ON THE COVER:** Jessica Jones Meyers is a West Point graduate and Army veteran, mom of three, and a proud Tulsan. She's also a professional triathlete and has competed in multiple IRONMAN events, including the 2016 IRONMAN North America Championship. Learn more about what Jessica expects for IRONMAN Tulsa in 2020.

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Tuesday, Aug. 27 | Noon-1:30 p.m.  
Cox Business Center

### OneVoice Regional Legislative Summit

Wednesday, Sept. 4 | 8-11 a.m.  
Doubletree by Hilton Tulsa - Downtown

### Intercity Visit

Oct. 1-3  
Minneapolis-Saint Paul, Minnesota

### Tulsa Small Business Summit

Thursday, Oct. 24 | 7:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.  
Renaissance Tulsa Hotel & Convention Center

### State of Inclusion

Thursday, Oct. 31 | 8-9:30 a.m.  
Location TBD

### New Member LEAP

Wednesday, Nov. 6 | 3:30-5 p.m.  
Philbrook Museum of Art

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### EDITORS

Jim Morgan  
Senior Vice President of Communications  
Chris Wylie  
Vice President of Communications

### PUBLICATION AND DESIGN

Bryan Campbell  
Director of Creative Services  
Michelle Stokes  
Senior Graphic Designer

### CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Taylor Costley  
Senior Account Executive  
Chris Rogers  
Senior Account Executive  
Jarrel Wade  
Senior Account Executive



**THE**

**TRIGLIA**



# HT STUFF

## With IRONMAN, Tulsa proves it has what it takes to be an adventure sports destination

By Taylor Costley, Chris Rogers and Jarrel Wade

"It really is a dream come true, and I felt like that was the universe's sign to get going again."

Tulsan Jessica Jones Meyers is a West Point graduate, Army veteran and professional triathlete. She's traveled the world competing, but after having her third child in 2018, she didn't know if she could keep up the pace as a professional.

That all changed when she found out Tulsa would host a full-distance IRONMAN, the first new North American event since 2014 for the premier global brand of endurance triathlons.

"For a race of this caliber to show up on your doorstep, it's just unheard of," says Jones Meyers. "I don't know if people realize how unusual and awesome this is."

Surreal: it's the word that kept coming to Jones Meyers' mind to describe the announcement. She's racked up three professional wins and multiple podium finishes in her two decades as a triathlete, but never thought she'd have the opportunity to compete in her home city.

The event includes a 2.4-mile swim, 112-mile bike ride and a full 26.2-mile marathon. As a professional, Jones Meyers trains year-round. Her regimen typically includes 5-6 hours of swimming, 10-12 hours of biking and 4-5 hours of running per week. Jones Meyers says she's on the lighter side of training compared to other professionals. When she's not training, she's taking care of her three children, which can be a full-time job on its own.

Jones Meyers also coaches other athletes across the country, and her coaching business has doubled since the announcement of IRONMAN Tulsa. She thinks IRONMAN athletes

and their families will be pleasantly surprised by Tulsa. People don't often expect a lot from Tulsa; neither did she before moving here in 2007.

"People are going to be surprised how hilly it is, how green it is," she says. "I think people are going to be surprised at how much culture there is here with the Art Deco architecture, the music, and our restaurant and brewery scene."

Jones Meyers has been to cities all over the world, and she knows how big of a deal this is for Tulsa.

"To say I'm excited is an understatement, and I hope the city is excited, too."

## Passing the competition

For several months before IRONMAN announced Tulsa as its newest host city, a team of people worked behind the scenes to bid for the event. Leading this team were Ray Hoyt and Matt Stockman of Tulsa Regional Tourism, a division of the Tulsa Regional Chamber.

As director of experience for Tulsa Regional Tourism, Stockman is certainly familiar with the fierce competition for events of IRONMAN's caliber. A Chamber employee since 2013, Stockman has worked on the bidding for and execution of logistically complex events like Bassmaster Classic, NCAA March Madness and more.

"When securing events of this scale, there are many obstacles to be faced," says Stockman.

For starters, the quick turnaround - tourism staff regularly bid for Tulsa to host events three, four or five years away. In the case of IRONMAN, the event would happen in just 14 months.

"The process began when IRONMAN first reached out to us in early spring," says Stockman. "They let us know they wanted to have a full-distance IRONMAN triathlon in this region in 2020, with Tulsa as a possible host."

With less than three months to put the bid together, the team quickly went to work developing multiple options for each stage of the race, securing financial commitments from sponsors and scheduling room blocks with area hotels.

The daunting operational challenge revealed the regional collaboration required for a successful IRONMAN bid. Multiple community partners across three counties joined in the effort, including Tulsa River Parks, the George Kaiser Family Foundation, the cities of Tulsa and Mannford, St. John Hospital, ONE Gas, and many others.

The bid process also included four site visits, during which IRONMAN staff came to Tulsa to survey potential course options and discuss event logistics. In addition, IRONMAN wanted to gauge the potential host cities' enthusiasm for the event as measured by social media engagement.

"Throughout the selection process, we had to show not only that Tulsa could handle an event of this magnitude, but also that our city really wanted this event," says Stockman. "IRONMAN wanted to see the public's reaction, and to envision the possibilities."

Three other cities competed against Tulsa for the event: Des Moines, Memphis and Fayetteville, Arkansas.



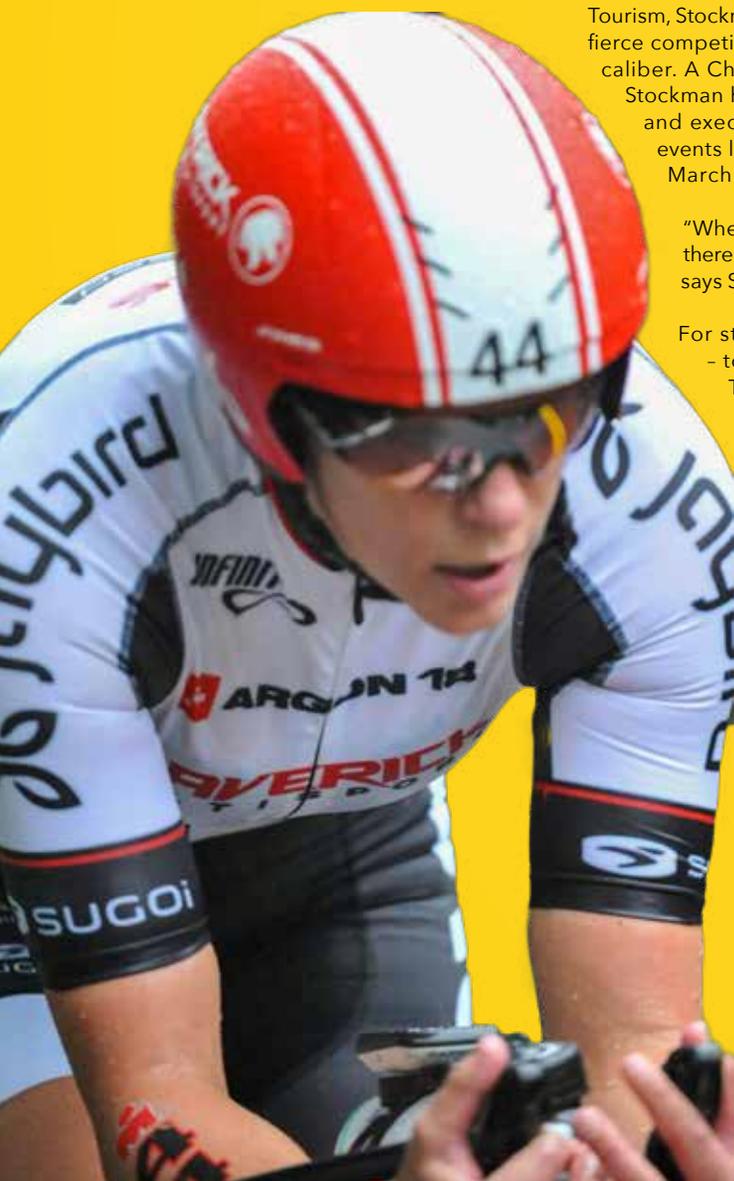
Matt Stockman (left) and Ray Hoyt at the IRONMAN Tulsa announcement.

Fayetteville boasted a strong cycling and outdoor culture, while Memphis leveraged an all-in-one venue at Shelby Farms Park, which is five times larger than New York's Central Park.

Despite the stiff competition, Stockman remained optimistic.

"As we worked through the checklist, establishing that we have the correct venues, the dedicated staff and partners, and the community support, we were confident that Tulsa was the top choice," he says.

Of course, Stockman was one of the first people to learn that, in fact, Tulsa was the top choice. The city will host the event for three years starting in 2020.





"Keeping the secret was difficult – the moment you find out, you want to shout from the rooftops," he says. "The excitement of winning the bid was amazing, and it's great to see the hard work by so many be rewarded."

That secret was made public on June 12 with the announcement of a full-distance IRONMAN in Tulsa, the 42nd city in the world to host such an event. IRONMAN Tulsa's unveiling, along with the recognition of Certified Piedmontese Beef as the title sponsor, took place at Guthrie Green – a fitting venue that will also be the race's finish line.

"We are encouraged by the venues that Tulsa and the surrounding areas offer, including the beautiful Keystone Harbor in Mannford and Guthrie Green in downtown, as we create an enjoyable experience for athletes and support crews," said IRONMAN Group COO Shane Facticeau at the announcement. "We have very demanding athletes. The swim, the cycling and the run: every technical aspect of what we do has to be fantastic. Certainly, Tulsa and surrounding areas will deliver that."

Ray Hoyt, the Chamber's senior vice president of tourism, is certain that Tulsa has what it takes to be an IRONMAN host city.

"This opportunity further validates Tulsa as a world-class city," says Hoyt.

## Crossing the finish line

The more than 2,400 athletes expected for IRONMAN Tulsa will see a lot of northeast Oklahoma.

The race begins in Mannford with the 2.4-mile swim in Keystone Lake. From there, the athletes transition to bikes for a 112-mile ride through the Osage Hills and across the sweeping prairie. Upon arriving at OSU-Tulsa, they'll transition to a marathon along the banks of the Arkansas River on the River Parks trails.

As much as organizers work on shaping the course for athletes, they also design it for the spectators. The final stretch of the marathon will be through Gathering Place toward a cheering crowd at the finish line in the heart of downtown. An Adopt-a-Mile program will ask volunteer groups, clubs and businesses to generate activity along the course.

"We want to break up the course and let people take control of those sections," says Stockman. "If you want to have a food truck, great. If you want to have a band, even better. We want you to bring people to your section. The last leg will be very difficult. We need people to cheer on the athletes and bring excitement."

With a 6:30 a.m. start time, many of the athletes will be on their final drops of energy by the end of the race.

"The last leg will be very busy," says Stockman. "They need people to cheer them on."

As much as the marathon miles need activity, the big party will be at the finish line. Athletes will begin to cross starting in the afternoon, with finishers arriving throughout the evening.

"All those businesses and bars, we want them to stay open late," adds Stockman. "The event doesn't end until midnight. In other IRONMAN cities, you can't even walk down the sidewalk because so many people have come to eat and drink and cheer the athletes on."

IRONMAN events in other communities attract thousands of athletes from around the world. But there will be more than just the athletes coming to Tulsa. Each brings some combination of family, friends, coaches and trainers. Some have corporate sponsorships and entire support crews. All of these out-of-state visitors bring with them out-of-state dollars to spend in northeast Oklahoma's restaurants, bars, museums and retail businesses.

IRONMAN estimates host cities typically book as many as 12,000 hotel room nights and report more than \$10 million in total economic impact from their events – that's just counting the direct impact of visitors.

In the lead up to the event, local businesses have already seen a boost.

Jason Broadway manages T-Town Bicycles, a locally owned shop in business since 1991. He says the excitement started immediately after the IRONMAN announcement and hasn't let up.

"We're getting calls about the event every day," Broadway says. "People are saying, 'This has got me excited about riding again.' Even people that aren't planning to participate in the event, they want to ride again. They are calling and just showing interest. They are just wanting to get their bike out of the garage."

Broadway says the real boom will start when the athletes get to town.

"There will be [thousands of] riders, and maybe just 150 of them are from Tulsa," he says. "It creates a huge amount of work for us. We'll have a few weeks where no one gets a day off."

## Undisputed champion

In June, a very different type of race took place downtown. Helmet-and-pad-wearing adults pedaled beefed-up kids' tricycles down Boulder Avenue Bridge. They dodged obstacles on their way across a finish line flanked by water-balloon-throwing spectators.

Boulder Dash, in its inaugural event, captured the energy anticipated from IRONMAN spectators, even if the athletic rigor wasn't on par.

"We did Boulder Dash two weekends after Tulsa Tough, and we had no problem getting people out there," says Ryan Howell, an events coordinator at River Parks and Boulder Dash organizer.

Tulsa Tough is nationally renowned among professional cyclists for being among the loudest, most outlandish parties on the professional circuit. On the final day of the event, thousands of Tulsans line Cry Baby Hill, the race course's steepest climb, to cheer on the athletes.

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### **"By embracing active lifestyles, Tulsa recognizes that creating and attracting these prestigious events provides real value for residents and businesses"**

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"The reason I think Cry Baby Hill is such a success is because it's the Tulsa version of Bourbon Street during Mardi Gras," Howell adds.

It's this level of enthusiasm from the community that gives Tulsa an edge as a great host city for events like IRONMAN.

Rob Gardenhire, chief marketing officer for USA BMX, says his organization and other cycling groups gravitate toward Tulsa for several reasons.

"Tulsa has a central location with the Tulsa International Airport," he says. "The region has a well-organized and developed cycling culture, plus a history, art and music scene."

Tulsa also enjoys a climate that allows cycling year-round, adds Gardenhire. Investments into biking trails on River Parks, Gathering Place's BMX tracks, and support of major cycling events and youth development all make Tulsa ideal for cycling sports.

"By embracing active lifestyles, Tulsa recognizes that creating and attracting these prestigious events provides real value for residents and businesses," Gardenhire says.

USA BMX brought the Grand Nationals - the "Super Bowl" of BMX

racing - to Tulsa more than 20 years ago. As the sport grew, so did USA BMX; they are now building their national headquarters in Tulsa and plan to host Olympic trials here ahead of the 2024 Summer Olympics.



"Our city will need to continue to invest in cycling infrastructure - such as bike lanes, trails, safety campaigns, pump tracks and BMX tracks - to show we're a welcoming city for cyclists and adventure sport enthusiasts," says Gardenhire.

"Adventure sports" is a loose category of athletic activities that push participants to their physical and mental limits. They're as much an endurance test as they are a race against other competitors.

Stockman says that drivers in the Chili Bowl - an indoor midget car race that's been held in Tulsa since 1987 - are a great example of matching mental endurance with the physical toughness needed to precisely maneuver lap after lap.

"They train year-round," says Stockman. "This isn't just a hobby; this is their life."

IRONMAN's selection of Tulsa validates what the community has known about itself for years: northeast Oklahoma is a destination for adventure sports.

In 2020, Tulsa Tough and IRONMAN will take place on consecutive weekends. These top-tier events, combined

with others like the Chili Bowl and USA BMX Grand Nationals, have built a self-sustaining, critical mass over the past two decades.

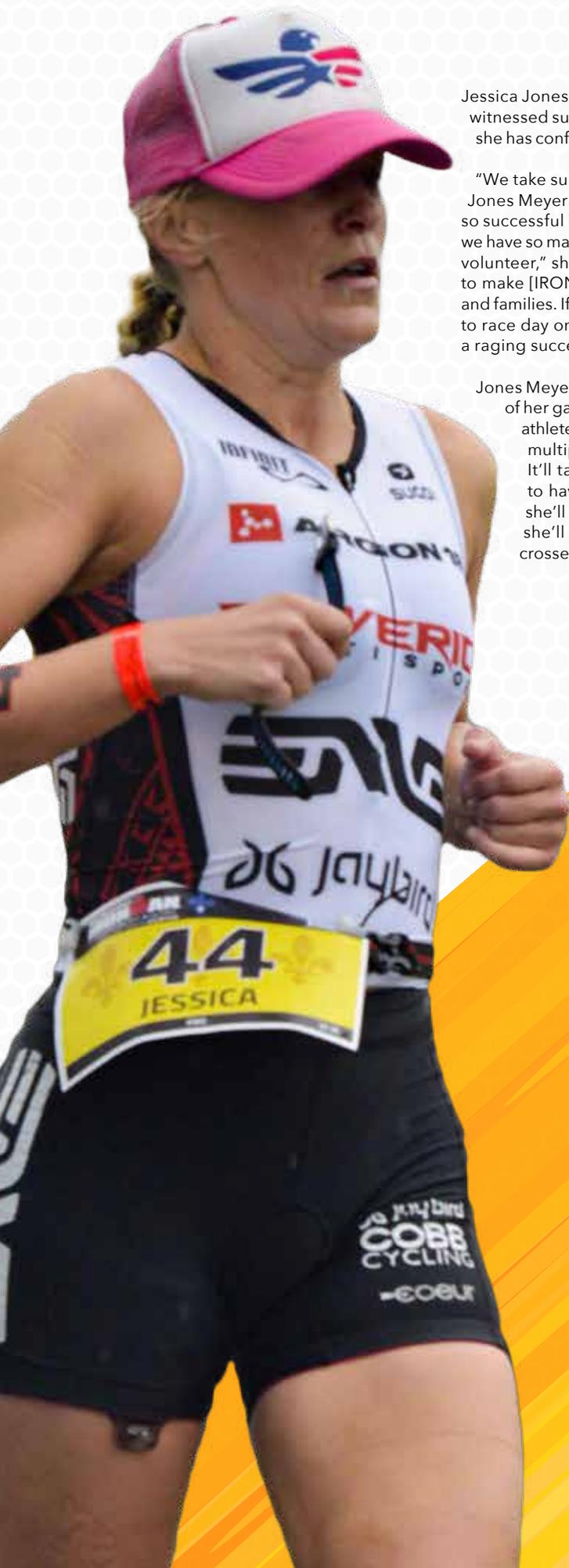
"Tulsa is filled with strong visionaries who have helped build an international model for outdoor recreation and tourism," says Hoyt. "Like the IRONMAN athletes we look forward to welcoming in 2020, Tulsa aims to perform at the highest level."

For Jason Broadaway, the region's commitment to this critical mass turned Tulsa from a nice place to visit to an attractive place to live.

"I moved to Tulsa three-and-a-half years ago," Broadaway says. "One of the reasons I moved is because of the cycling community in Tulsa, with Tulsa Tough and the riding trails. I'm a lifelong BMX racer, so USA BMX moving here pushed me over the edge."

Broadaway says the job offer at T-Town Bicycles enabled his move to Tulsa, but it wasn't the work that brought him.

"The city sold me on moving here."



Jessica Jones Meyers is also sold on Tulsa. She's witnessed successful IRONMANs firsthand, and she has confidence that Tulsa has the right stuff.

"We take such pride in our sport and our city," Jones Meyers says. "One reason Tulsa Tough is so successful is our community, and the fact that we have so many people go support, go cheer, go volunteer," she says. "I think that's what's going to make [IRONMAN] so memorable for athletes and families. If we can bring that same excitement to race day on IRONMAN, we are going to have a raging success."

Jones Meyers knows that when she's at the top of her game, she can compete with the best athletes in the world, a point proven by her multiple podium finishes in past events. It'll take a few more months of training to have a better idea of how she thinks she'll do in 2020, but one thing's for sure: she'll proudly represent her city as she crosses the finish line for IRONMAN Tulsa.



#### BY THE NUMBERS

**2,400-2,700**

ANTICIPATED TRIATHLETES

**10,000+**

ANTICIPATED SPECTATORS

**2,000+**

COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR THE RACE

**\$13 MILLION**

ESTIMATED ECONOMIC IMPACT

**2,000**

POUNDS OF MEAT DONATED BY TITLE SPONSOR  
CERTIFIED PIEDMONTESE BEEF TO THE COMMUNITY  
FOOD BANK OF EASTERN OKLAHOMA

**\$10,000**

DONATED BY THE IRONMAN FOUNDATION TO THE  
DISASTER RELIEF FUND FOR EASTERN OKLAHOMA

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Photo by Tom Gilbert  
Tulsa World Media Company



# CRITICAL INFRASTRUC

*FLOODING DRAWS ATTENTION TO ARKANSAS RIVER LEVEES*



BY JARREL WADE

# TURE

When Arkansas River floodwaters peaked in late May, Tulsa County Commissioner Karen Keith's longtime fears became real. Keith had pled with federal lawmakers for years to focus their attention on repairing and maintaining Tulsa County's system of levees. The 74-year-old mounds of dirt had their limits. Despite her warnings, the rising waters had come at last.

"It was touch and go, but it held," she says. "Thanks to the resources we were able to pull together, the levees were able to hold."

## **BUT JUST BARELY.**

National Guard helicopters dropped sand at critical spots where water had begun to seep through the levees, a warning of possible failure, while troops and volunteers on the ground piled sand and dirt by hand at similar spots, protecting entire neighborhoods.

Major industries came to a standstill as the waters rose. Tulsa-area ports ceased operations, cutting off supply lines to national industries west of the Mississippi River. Tulsa's refineries – considered a national security threat if breached by floodwater – were temporarily closed.

# “EVERYONE WAS ABLE TO SEE HOW IMPORTANT THE LEVEES ARE”

# AC

Further downstream, Muskogee, Fort Gibson, Braggs, Webbers Falls and more were inundated as the Arkansas River became a lake in and around homes. Hundreds of northeast families fled from the river they'd lived along for decades.

by a coalition of more than 75 cities, counties, economic development organizations and education institutions across the Tulsa region. Repairing the west Tulsa County levees has been a federal OneVoice priority for years.

The levees protect an estimated 10,000 people and \$2 billion worth of infrastructure in Sand Springs, west Tulsa and Tulsa County. The system includes almost 12 miles of levees on the left bank of the Arkansas River and nearly eight miles on the right bank. In 2008, the Corps designated their condition “unacceptable.”

In addition to levee funding, the OneVoice agenda also prioritizes development along the Arkansas River corridor and maintenance along the McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System (MKARNS). Inland shipping is a significant regional economic driver; according to a 2015 study, the Oklahoma segment of MKARNS supports more than 22,760 jobs and more than \$4 billion in revenue.

Jennifer Jezek, the Chamber's vice chair of government affairs and president of York Electronic Systems, says federal priorities take committed advocacy before gaining traction.

“While the OneVoice agenda's state priorities tend to be much more immediate and garner much more attention, as the May flooding demonstrated, federal priorities are just as important,” Jezek says. “Northeast Oklahoma is fortunate to have people like Karen Keith who are committed to these issues, which often take sustained advocacy for years, if not decades.”

“Everyone was able to see how important the levees are,” Commissioner Keith says. “Every member of our federal delegation was here. Lt. Gen. Todd Semonite (of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers) flew in from Washington, D.C. This flood [brought] to light some issues that we hold with a 74-year-old levee system.”

## Advocacy in action

In the wake of the flooding, the Chamber's OneVoice Washington D.C. Fly-In took on heightened importance.

“This year's trip is especially important for our region given the recent severe weather and flooding,” said 2019 Chamber Chair David Stratton ahead of the fly-in. “There are a number of urgently needed infrastructure upgrades critical to the safety of northeastern Oklahoma, and we will be talking at great length with our federal delegation about those needs.”

The fly-in is the Chamber's signature federal advocacy trip on behalf of the region's business community. Regional leaders take this opportunity to meet with Oklahoma's congressional delegation about the federal priorities included in the OneVoice Regional Legislative Agenda, a list of policies endorsed



# WOMEN

# TION



Commissioner Keith had planned to attend the fly-in as she had in previous years, but Vice President Mike Pence's simultaneous visit to Tulsa preempted her departure at the last minute.

"Commissioner Keith was missed this year, but touring the levees with the vice president was exactly where she needed to be," says Chamber President and CEO Mike Neal. "In

the many years she joined us in D.C., Karen tenaciously called for attention to the west Tulsa levees. Her years of dedication to this issue were certainly remembered when the levees faced their greatest test in almost 75 years."

While Commissioner Keith received federal delegates in Tulsa, fly-in attendees met with James C. Dalton, the director of civil works for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Dalton leads, manages and directs the policy development, programming, planning, design, construction, operation and maintenance activities of the Army Civil Works Program, a \$6 billion annual program of water and related land resources.

Dalton explained that an unprecedented number of projects are on the Corps' backlog, where Tulsa's levee fixes also languish. The nearly \$100 billion backlog comprises projects across the nation that Congress assigns to the Corps for planning but doesn't always follow through with funding.

Tulsa's first hurdle is a feasibility study, required to be completed before any major repairs to the levees could begin. The feasibility study examines the current conditions of the levees and river and will inform the engineers who develop construction plans.

"Fly-in attendees, especially Oklahoma Rep. Jadine Nollan, were able to share impassioned, firsthand accounts of the flooding's impact just days after the Arkansas River reached its highest level," Jezek says. "The timing of this year's trip allowed us to send a clear message to the Army Corps of Engineers: we need to repair the levees now."

Weeks after the trip, Oklahoma congressmen reinforced that message with a letter to the Corps, urging them to expedite the feasibility study. The letter, signed by U.S. Sens. Jim Inhofe and James Lankford and U.S. Rep. Kevin Hern, asked the Corps to complete the study before the end of the year. The congressmen also requested the immediate implementation of critical improvements following the conclusion of the study. Oklahoma Gov. Kevin Stitt, Tulsa Mayor G.T. Bynum, Bixby Mayor Brian Guthrie and Jenks Mayor Robert Lee sent a similar letter in early July.

"We are all working very hard right now," Keith says. "We need to complete the feasibility study and then get into the engineering and design phase. Having our federal delegation engaged has been a game-changer for us."



Photo by Tom Gilbert  
Tulsa World Media Company

# RECOVERY

## Community response

Tulsans are all too familiar with the destructive potential of the Arkansas River.

Deadly creek flooding in 1984 prompted a citywide response. The plan included buying out and moving more than 500 families from the flood plain, adopting a drainage fee to pay for stormwater maintenance, stringent regulations on new buildings, and a capital funding program that built 23 detention ponds doubling as some of Tulsa's most beloved parks.

Tulsa is now known nationally as the gold standard for stormwater mitigation.

"In the process, Tulsa citizens became arguably the most flood-savvy in the nation," says Ann Patton, author of "The Tulsa River" and a former City of Tulsa employee who developed stormwater mitigation plans after the mid-80s floods. "Out of that long debate, punctuated by repeated flood disasters, Tulsa developed a great – but not perfect – program for managing floodwaters."

Because of this history, the Tulsa community has learned how to effectively respond to natural disasters on a citywide scale. In late May, the Tulsa Community Foundation (TCF) and Tulsa Area United Way (TAUW) established the Disaster Relief Fund for Eastern Oklahoma. The fund will provide assistance to nonprofit organizations addressing mid- to long-term

recovery needs. Similar funds have been created in the past, typically delaying disbursement of funds for two to three months when more of the social, physical and emotional needs become evident.

While dozens of area nonprofits work on the ground to restore homes and businesses, the Disaster Relief Fund for Eastern Oklahoma allows the community to support longer-term repairs to infrastructure like Tulsa's River Parks, where trails, lights and landscaping were badly damaged.

Federal intervention has also been vital to the recovery. By late July, combined state and federal assistance reached nearly \$64 million in funding from FEMA, U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) low-interest disaster loans and the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP).

As northeast Oklahoma communities recover and rebuild, the Chamber will continue to advocate for the infrastructure critical to flood mitigation.

"The voice of the business community is essential to conveying the importance of Arkansas River infrastructure," says Jezek. "Now is the time to stand with longtime advocates like Commissioner Keith to ensure this priority becomes a reality."

# INDUSTRY

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# The Chicken Salad Chick

Fast casual restaurateur Stacy Brown to speak at 2019 Tulsa Small Business Summit



In 2008, Stacy Brown was a stay-at-home mom. She decided to make chicken salad out of her Auburn, Alabama, home kitchen and sell it door-to-door. After a phone call from the county health department informing her that what she was doing was illegal, she and her business partner purchased a small restaurant and Chicken Salad Chick was born.

Flash-forward 11 years, and Chicken Salad Chick is one of the fastest growing franchises in the country with more than 124 restaurants in 15 states. Two of the newest Chicken Salad Chick locations include Broken Arrow and the Shops at Warren Place in Tulsa. Brown's path to success was not an easy one, though.

Brown and her business partner, Kevin Brown - whom she later married - didn't have any restaurant experience when they opened

the first Chicken Salad Chick. Brown quickly realized she was not only the owner, but also the cashier, the janitor and the cook.

The success of the first store prompted the Browns to open two more locations in Auburn shortly after. As Chicken Salad Chick continued to grow, Brown and her husband decided to franchise the concept. Kevin became the CEO and Stacy was vice president of brand and product development.

In 2015, Kevin passed away from colon cancer. As difficult as it was for Stacy, she knew she had to keep moving forward for her children. Before Kevin passed away, the Browns found new business partners and hired a new CEO. Stacy attributes the company's ability to move forward to the team of dedicated people she and Kevin hired. The employees were able to maintain the company's vision while Stacy took time to heal.

Brown is proud to be surrounded by a number of female mentors who have supported and encouraged her throughout her journey. That's why at any Chicken Salad Chick location, you'll find chicken salad flavors such as Classic Carol, Fancy Nancy and Jalapeño Holly - flavors named

after important women in Stacy's life. Because of the support she received, she now uses her experience to reach out to other women considering a business venture of their own.

Today, Stacy's role is more visionary, while CEO Scott Deviney manages operations. Chicken Salad Chick has experienced rapid growth over the last two years, and has been recognized as one of Entrepreneur magazine's "Top Food Franchises of 2019" and QSR magazine's "Nine Best Franchise Deals" for 2019, and the company is ranked number 23 on Fast Casual's "Movers and Shakers" list. Chicken Salad Chick has more expansions planned this year, with 25 additional locations slated to open before the end of 2019.

You can hear more from Brown and other speakers at this year's Tulsa Small Business Summit on Thursday, Oct. 24. The summit is northeast Oklahoma's premier small business event, bringing together business leaders from across the region to learn from national speakers and local business experts. In addition to topical breakout sessions, the event includes an annual awards presentation to honor northeast Oklahoma's outstanding small business owners and their companies.



Presented by



## TULSA SMALL BUSINESS SUMMIT



**THURSDAY, OCT. 24**  
**7:30 A.M.-1:30 P.M.**

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## "DEI OR DIE"

Chamber of commerce professionals gather each summer at the Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives (ACCE) annual convention to learn from their peers. At this year's convention, the Tulsa Regional Chamber's own Kuma Roberts presented "DEI or Die" - why cities, regions and chambers of commerce must celebrate diversity, champion equity and cultivate inclusion for their long-term economic prosperity.

As executive director of diversity, equity and inclusion for the Tulsa Regional Chamber, Roberts leads the organization's efforts to educate, lead and influence businesses on the value of diverse workforces, inclusive workplaces and equitable economic development. Roberts' presentation at the ACCE convention is not only applicable to chamber of commerce professionals, but also Tulsa-area companies keen on how the regional economy competes with other metro areas across the world.

Here are five key reasons why the Tulsa region must prioritize DEI:

### 1. Changing demographics

Communities of color have been the main source of population growth in Tulsa County. According to research by Impact Tulsa, roughly 37% of the total county population are people of color, yet more than half of the county's children under the age of five are people of color. These demographic changes will continue to have a significant impact on the makeup of the Tulsa-area workforce.

### 2. Tight labor markets

Economic development professionals rank the availability of talent among their top priorities when evaluating a region for capital investment. However, the Tulsa County unemployment rate reached a 17-year low in April of 2.7%, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Under these conditions, employers must leverage all available sources of labor, and the region must strengthen systems that connect people of color with meaningful work.

### 3. Educational attainment

The majority of jobs created since the Great Recession require some form of postsecondary education. However, educational attainment for communities of color lags behind those of the white (non-Hispanic) population, both nationally and in the Tulsa area. The region must seek parity in educational outcomes for students of all ethnic and racial backgrounds in order to reach its full economic potential.

### 4. Underrepresentation

Among the 2,512 executive and senior-level positions at Tulsa companies, only 24% are held by women. Research by Morgan Stanley finds that increasing diversity among executives and on corporate boards "can translate to increased productivity, greater innovation, better decision-making, and higher employee retention and satisfaction." Tulsa-area companies that invest in the diversity of the workforces stand to benefit in very real ways.

### 5. Equity is essential to economic growth

A 2017 study by the Brookings Institution found that pre-tax income growth for the bottom 50% of U.S. wage earners has remained flat since 1980. At the same time, "metro areas where low-income children experienced higher upward mobility underwent faster subsequent per capita income growth, controlling for other factors that influence growth." In order for the Tulsa region to maintain the greatest competitive advantage possible, equity must be an essential component of economic development strategies.

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In honor of its 75th anniversary, GableGotwals is continuing its long tradition of giving back to the communities it serves by committing to an additional 750 community service hours in 2019. The Firm has a strong culture that includes community support, civil leadership, and

pro bono work. It is evident in the numerous organizations Gable employees support. Last year alone, the Firm gave a recorded value of \$784,000 worth of time.

**750**  
the number of hours  
GableGotwals employees  
commit to serving in the  
community this year



In addition, GableGotwals is pleased to announce it has established a \$7,500 scholarship at The University of Tulsa College of Law in memory of complex litigation Shareholder and former Chairman, Oliver Sterling Howard. Due to his passion for the Tulsa community and his willingness to mentor new attorneys within the Firm, Gable is honoring Oliver by giving back to

the Tulsa legal community. The scholarship will be awarded to diverse TU law students who similarly give back to the community.



**\$7,500**  
the scholarship amount  
GableGotwals is providing  
to The University of Tulsa  
College of Law

GableGotwals began as a two-person enterprise between Ellis Gable and Charles Gotwals in 1944 and has since grown into a distinguished full-service law firm that employs approximately 100 attorneys and 60 professionals with offices in Oklahoma City, Tulsa, and San Antonio. Though Oklahoma-based, our connections and reach are global, representing a diversified client base that includes Fortune 500 companies, private and public entities, entrepreneurs, foundations, and individuals. Clients trust us every day with the stewardship and strategic management of their legal challenges due to the exceptional services provided by our litigators and transactional attorneys.

A photograph of two men in business attire shaking hands. The man on the left is smiling broadly, and the man on the right is also smiling. They are in a well-lit indoor setting, possibly a conference or meeting. A red bag is visible in the foreground.

## MEMBERSHIP DIRECTORY

*All Access is an inside look at different Chamber programs and resources available to member companies and their employees. The Chamber offers a number of money-saving and promotional opportunities, all with the goal of helping its members gain increased exposure, credibility and access to information.*

The Chamber encourages the utilization of the goods and services of its member companies through an online membership directory. As a member, the online directory provides your business with increased exposure and the opportunity for business referrals.

The directory provides an up-to-date listing of all active Chamber members, and members can be searched alphabetically, by keyword or by business category. The Chamber is also proud to highlight the diversity of its member businesses with a diverse business graphic.

To get the most value out of your membership directory listing, it's important to make sure your business information is current and your business categories are correct. Your account manager can edit your address and phone number online. You can even add your company logo to be displayed in the directory.

You can use the membership directory for all of your business or recreational needs - browse through it at [tulsachamber.com/member\\_directory](https://tulsachamber.com/member_directory).



# FOR THE GREATER GOOD

*Intercity Visit to Minneapolis-Saint Paul will offer lessons in talent attraction and retention, regionalism and inclusivity.*

by Jim Morgan

No matter where you call home, there's always going to be a fight for good talent.

That's the perspective of Richard Davis, former chair of GREATER MSP, the Minneapolis-Saint Paul regional economic development partnership.

"Fighting for talent is the new normal," says Davis. "We are all well aware of the war for talent that is occurring around the globe. A company's success depends on the strength of the people it employs, retaining its best leaders, and its ability to help them be more productive, more innovative, and more inspired."

GREATER MSP's efforts in the area of talent attraction and retention will be but one of the marquee topics showcased during the Tulsa Regional Chamber's upcoming Intercity Visit to Minneapolis-Saint Paul, taking place Oct. 1-3.

Regional collaboration and efforts to drive inclusive economic growth will also take center stage during this year's tenth anniversary Intercity Visit. Past trips have visited communities such as Pittsburgh, Indianapolis and Cincinnati. Intercity Visits afford Chamber members

representing businesses of all sizes, elected officials, educational administrators, young professionals and regional partners the chance to hear from peer communities facing challenges not unlike our own and to observe best practices that might be successfully emulated in Tulsa.

Roger Ramseyer, chair-elect of the Tulsa Regional Chamber and vice president and Tulsa market leader for Cox Communications, will lead this year's trip.

"While the primary goal of Intercity Visit is to learn about new and unique practices from which the Tulsa region and our own businesses can benefit, many attendees find equal value in the opportunity to develop closer relationships with the diverse group of Tulsa's business and civic leaders who participate," Ramseyer says. "We expect almost 100 to attend, and I'm hoping business leaders who have not previously joined us will consider this exceptional opportunity."

## To attract and retain

With the need to attract and retain talent challenging every community, one of the ways GREATER MSP addresses the challenge is through its Make It MSP program. Make It

MSP brings together leaders at more than 100 organizations all working to make the region as attractive as possible for talented people.

The International Economic Development Council (IEDC) deemed Make It MSP to be the nation's best talent attraction and retention effort in 2018, and the numbers bear that out. Current net migration statistics show a 390% increase in millennial talent moving into the region.

Tiffany Orth is the manager of Make It MSP. As she sees it, today's tight labor market and unprecedented workforce shortages dictate that regions be highly proactive.

"No region can successfully compete in the global economy without improving its ability to attract and retain talent," says Orth. "Tackling these challenges cannot be done by any single organization. That's why Make It MSP is intended to function as a platform for cross-sector partners to work together to improve the region and deepen the pool of talent."

Far from being a single initiative, Make It MSP is actually a collection of projects, each tackling a



specific need. For example, MSP Hello focuses on welcoming newcomers to the region, helping them build support networks. MSP Tech works with partners across sectors to expand the pool of technology talent in the region. And BE MSP connects professionals of color to create a culture of belonging.

In many ways, the BE MSP approach is a model for both collaboration and intentionality in program development. A partnership between the Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce, GREATER MSP and the Minneapolis Regional Chamber, BE MSP began with a series of focus groups. The resulting insights led to a comprehensive professionals of color survey, which in turn yielded key themes that informed development of a free digital toolkit.

That toolkit - available through the BE MSP web site - is intended to help employers spark meaningful, authentic conversations that result in more inclusive workplace cultures. More than 300 organizations across the region have already implemented the approach.

"The toolkit has proved invaluable," Orth says, "and is something we want to continue to improve as more and more people use it."

### Strength in numbers

In addition to learning more about BE MSP, attendees on this year's Intercity Visit will also hear about another GREATER MSP initiative - the Regional Indicators Dashboard.

The dashboard is a set of shared metrics that track the region's progress on critical economic, environmental and social outcomes. Now in its fifth year, the dashboard - which measures entrepreneurship, talent availability, and housing affordability, among other things - was created through extensive collaboration by

a wide variety of regional research partners.

With more than 3.5 million people in the region - only 20% of whom are actually in either Minneapolis or Saint Paul - the danger of fragmentation is ever present. According to Matt Lewis, vice president of strategic initiatives for GREATER MSP, the dashboard is a primary mechanism to keep everyone in the 15-county region moving in the same direction.

"One of the reasons GREATER MSP was originally formed was to help answer the question, 'How do we tell our story as a region?'" says Lewis. "The dashboard helps us do just that by giving everyone visibility on how we are performing in the areas that matter most to our future competitiveness. It also allows us to benchmark against peer regions like Dallas-Fort Worth, Portland and Charlotte."

Perhaps not surprisingly, all three of those competitor regions are past Intercity Visit destinations.

### Economic opportunity for all

One of the main metrics included in GREATER MSP's dashboard is inclusive economic growth, and its centrality to the regional effort is a testament to the pioneering work of Tawanna Black, founder and CEO of the Center for Economic Inclusion (CEI).

"We are changing the ways all types of institutions think about economic growth," Black says. "We partner with employers, policy makers and investors to build an economy that works for everyone."

As the nation's first organization created exclusively to advance economic inclusion across all sectors in a major metropolitan area, CEI is uniquely positioned to drive meaningful and

long-lasting change through a combination of education and inspiration.

"We held our first Parity and Inclusion Summit in April," says Black. "We had 400 leaders gathered from all sectors, all committed to learning how to move the needle. Speakers were vulnerable about where they have gotten it right and where they have gotten it wrong. That environment has not existed before, and it speaks to the desire of our region to do better."

To that end, in addition to being a research partner for the overall regional dashboard, CEI also maintains its own deeper-dive dashboard that tracks inclusivity across 14 key metrics, from wages and job location to mortgage denials and home ownership.

### Success story

The work of organizations such as GREATER MSP and CEI is attracting admiration. One notable fan is urban studies theorist Richard Florida, author of "The Rise of the Creative Class" as well as "The New Urban Crisis." Florida praises the Minneapolis-Saint Paul region for its progress during the past decade.

"Minneapolis has long been interesting," says Florida. "The University of Minnesota is a huge asset for them. Twenty years ago, there was nobody downtown, but now it's busy. Especially in regard to reducing inequality and enhancing affordability, they are a great hidden success story."

### JOIN US IN THE TWIN CITIES ON OCT. 1

To hear more from Minneapolis-Saint Paul's leaders in the areas of talent attraction and retention, regionalism and inclusivity, as well as from experts in downtown and river development, make plans now to be part of this fall's Intercity Visit, Oct. 1-3. For more information and to register for the trip, visit [tulsachamber.com/intercityvisit](http://tulsachamber.com/intercityvisit). **Register by Sept. 10 for best pricing.**

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# U.S. REP. KEVIN HERN

In November, Kevin Hern was elected to serve the remainder of former congressman Jim Bridenstine's term following his appointment as NASA administrator. Because of the vacancy, Hern had the option to be sworn in immediately or wait until January for the traditional swearing-in.

As he has done his entire career, Hern got right to work.

Since taking the oath of office, Rep. Hern has maintained a near perfect record on roll call votes. His seven missed votes came during Oklahoma's historic flooding in May and June. During that time, he returned home to help with the flood response and recovery.

Hern joined Congress with two decades of experience as a northeast Oklahoma business owner. In 1999, he bought two McDonald's restaurants in Muskogee. This began a successful company that now includes 10 McDonald's restaurants and more than 400 employees across the Tulsa region. In addition, he has part ownership in a manufacturing facility in Muskogee, real estate ventures and three technology companies.

**The Tulsa region was hit hard by flooding in May and June. What is the federal government's responsibility in protecting against future flooding? How did your tours of flood-damaged areas inform that position?**

This flood was bigger than anything we've seen. Even those who were around for the 1986 flood said that this one was much worse and more disastrous. The levee system in Tulsa is aging - we've known for a long time that it needs to be updated. By the grace of God, those levees held up this past May and the damage was not near as catastrophic as it could have been.

This was a learning experience for everyone. I spent a lot of time with Mayor Bynum, Tulsa County Commissioner Karen Keith, and our Sens. Jim Inhofe and James Lankford throughout the flood, monitoring the damage, speaking with emergency crews, talking to the Army Corps of Engineers, learning what caused the floods and what could be done to prevent them. It's not a simple answer. There's a lot we're still learning about the infrastructure of our dams and levees.

The first step, however, is for the Corps to complete a study on the levees, find the weak points, and determine what needs to be done to modernize them and strengthen them for the future. I joined Sens. Inhofe and Lankford on a letter to the Corps last month urging them to

complete this study as quickly as possible so that we can begin the process of rebuilding and preventing this kind of disaster from happening again.

**Your staff have said you will fill any gap in your daily schedule with more work, more travel and more responsibilities. Have you always kept that pace? Has it been difficult to maintain in Congress?**

From an early age, I learned the value of hard work. A lot of people know that I grew up on food stamps, in absolute poverty. From the moment I could begin working, I was determined to never let myself go back to that, which meant I was going to work harder than anyone else. It's a virtue I've carried with me my entire adult life.

In Congress, there's a lot of freedom to have as busy or empty a schedule as you want. There's no shortage of opportunity to fill it, though. With constituent meetings, policy briefings, caucus events, committee assignments, interviews with the press and meetings with my staff, among many other things, no two days look alike. With so much going on, it's important to find the things that add value and prioritize attendance at those events. Take committee hearings, for example. Many members of Congress will show up for their allotted five minutes of speaking time and leave, never hearing the testimony of the witnesses or what their

colleagues have to say. You can learn so much about these issues just by showing up to the hearing and taking the time to engage with the experts.

It's important to me to not just have a full schedule, but to fill it with things that are worthwhile and make me a better, more informed representative for the people of Oklahoma's 1st Congressional District.

**How have you adjusted to the pace of the public sector?**

In the business world, I could wake up in the morning, start a project, and see it through by the time I left the office that day. In Washington, I'm still trying to get things done that I started in January. The bureaucracy holding everything up is astounding. There are so many checks and balances on the legislative branch. It can be incredibly frustrating at times, but that's how our government was designed to be. Our founding fathers knew what they were doing; they weren't going to give a handful of lawmakers the power to make quick, drastic changes to the country. Instead, everything goes through a process where ideas are refined, debated, amended and pulverized to a pulp before the end product comes about.

I'd give our community the advice to not give up. Keep talking about the agenda items you're passionate about, keep asking your lawmakers about them. The government was meant to move at a slower

pace, and it's not a bad thing, so don't be disheartened.

**What's the most important lesson you've learned after almost a year in office?**

In the business world, success can always be measured. You're making money, providing for your employees, everything can be measured in quantitative values. In Congress, success is much more subjective. Depending on who you talk to, you could be amazing, or you're the devil. Recreational haters are a hazard of the job. The barometer of success at my job is incredibly less clear than in the business world. The only true quantitative value I can put on it will be our next election day in 2020. Especially in the minority, where we're not working with much of a strategy, it's important to remember what the goals are: create jobs, put people back to work, get our kids educated and make our communities a better place. If I'm working towards those goals, that's a success.

**What are your goals or priorities for your next year in office?**

My biggest priority coming into Congress has always been the success of small business owners. The American dream is based on the ability of a person, regardless of background, to build something, work hard and find success with it. In Congress, I want to help our small businesses find access to capital, get off the ground, get the government off their backs and achieve that American dream. I want to help our communities create jobs and put people back to work. These kinds of goals are absolutely achievable from the minority, because there is a lot of bipartisan support for job creation and economic growth - we just sometimes differ on how to get there.

It's been a big year already for jobs. I hope to keep building on that, promote a pro-growth economic agenda and see even more successes for our small businesses back home.





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# SMALL BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

## MYTHIC PRESS



*Mythic Press creates and sells custom apparel and products. Their team provides merchandise planning and design services, coupled with in-house screen printing and embroidery production. Mythic also operates a retail gift shop at Mother Road Market that sells their own apparel and local products. We spoke with owners Cole Cunningham and Hershel Self to learn more about them and their business.*

### **How and when did you decide to form Mythic Press?**

Founded in 2015, Mythic Press was born from a design agency. Our vision for Mythic Press was to leverage our agency experience to offer premium screen printing and merchandise consulting. Over the years we've added more services and have grown to a staff of about 10 people.

### **You recently celebrated your four-year anniversary. What's the biggest thing you've learned in the last four years?**

Discipline and focus. As a small business, it's really hard. We're constantly tempted with projects that we could fulfill but are outside of our core offering. Understanding what an ideal project and client is, and staying true to that, is critical to moving a business in the right direction. Having a vision and being able to objectively decide if a project fits into that are key. To this day, we continually review services, clients and projects to ensure they are serving this. We will continue to make time for oddball projects, but only as a small percentage of our business.

### **What advice would you give your younger selves?**

Offer something tangible. Our formative years were spent working strictly in the creative services field (design, website development, photography), which are all great fun. For us though, it wasn't until we tapped into a more commodity-focused business and began offering a product that it really started to click. Decorated apparel as opposed to just charging for design has allowed us to build a business that is less volatile and higher sales-volume. Plus, who doesn't love a good T-shirt?!

### **How do you foster creativity?**

We aren't afraid to be bold and take chances when it comes to design and process. We try to foster a growth mindset within the organization, in that we want to continually improve forever. Nothing is permanent, and if you have an idea, let's give it a try. This tends to attract a more creative staff and loyal customer base willing to trust us.

### **What is one of your proudest moments as business owners?**

Honestly, it's a great feeling every time we see someone wearing a T-shirt we created. But one

of our biggest moments is happening right now. Our company organized a fundraiser for Tulsa River Parks and has raised almost \$15,000 to help repair flood damage. We've sold over 900 shirts, and the community support has been incredible. There has been great feedback and news coverage, and the idea of giving back through business is exciting for us.

### **Your original designs showcase your Tulsa pride. What do you think makes Tulsa unique?**

Tulsa, and Oklahoma in general, is an underdog. There's a lot of culture and good things going on here. As native Oklahomans, we're thrilled to participate by making cool designs and products that allow others to promote and show off their city. The new Tulsa Flag has been a huge part of this. We offer a number of products and have even helped customers create custom Tulsa Flag-inspired designs as well.

### **What is your go-to meal at Mother Road Market?**

It's a wonderful place with some really strong options depending on your mood. A shrimp burrito at Mr. Nice Guys or a panini at Trenchers are at the top of our list currently.

# NEW MEMBERS

May/June 2019

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agents.allstate.com/kimberly-white-muskogee-ok.html  
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arthritis.org  
*Helps conquer everyday battles through life-changing information and resources, access to optimal care, advancements in science, and community connections.*

### avid Hotel Tulsa South - Medical District

8007 S. Mingo Rd.  
Tulsa, OK 74133  
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avidhotels.com/hotels/us/en/reservationHotel.

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### B&H Construction, LLC

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edwardjones.com/james-daugherty.com  
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(918) 521-3420  
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fulltiltwraps.com  
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tulsamentalhealth.org  
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holleyscaffold.com  
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**JenLex Educational Consulting**  
2616 E. 33 St.  
Tulsa, OK 74105  
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*Personalized curriculum and college planning services to high school students.*

**Jensen Mixers International, Inc.**  
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Tulsa, OK 74147  
(918) 627-5770  
*Manufacturer of side-entry agitators used for petrochemical blending.*

**Kanati Strategies**  
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**DIVERSE BUSINESS**

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Tulsa, OK 74103  
(918) 582.5044  
lillyarch.com  
*Architectural firm.*

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6363 S. Trenton Ave.  
Tulsa, OK 74136  
(918) 745-9868  
metroca.com  
*College preparatory school serving approximately 900 students P3-12th grade.*

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*Brewery, bar and beach volleyball courts.*

**Planned Parenthood Great Plains**  
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Tulsa, OK 74106  
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planned-parenthood-great-plains  
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May/June 2019

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treadconnection.com  
*Mobile tire service.*

## **Tulsa Healing**

1815 E. 15th St  
Tulsa, OK 74104  
(918) 401-0377

tulsahealing.com

*Chiropractic, natropathy, reiki and energy healing.*

## **DIVERSE BUSINESS**

## **Tulsa Polo Club**

7306 E. 191st St. S.  
Bixby, OK 74008  
(918) 527-7964

*Private lessons and corporate event party planning at Mohawk Park.*

## **ValPak**

18811 E. 42nd St  
Tulsa, OK 74134  
(918) 747-0990

valpak.com/advertise/local/tulsa  
*Direct mail advertising.*

## **Whataburger**

20484 E. 45th St.  
Broken Arrow, OK 74014  
(918) 697-8316

whataburger.com  
*Quick-service restaurant.*



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Tulsa Abstract & Title Co.

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Stand-By Personnel  
Cyntergy AEC  
Scott Rice  
Drummond Law, PLLC  
Tulsa Oilers Hockey Inc.

## 15 YEARS

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Delta Dental of Oklahoma  
Magellan Midstream Partners, L.P.

## 10 YEARS

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Holder Advertising Specialties  
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NuStar Catoosa Asphalt Terminal  
Asphalt and Fuel Supply, LLC  
American Indian Chamber of Commerce of OK  
(AICCO)  
NotionBox Creative, LLC

## FIVE YEARS

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Pro Power Electric  
Redbud Physical Therapy  
Stifel  
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Jones Public Relations  
Kirkpatrick & Kinslow Productions, LLC  
Low T Center  
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