

TULSA REGIONAL CHAMBER

THE CHAMBER REPORT



WHO WE ARE

ROSE WASHINGTON OUTLINES PRIORITIES
AS 2021 CHAMBER CHAIR



CHAMBER OF THE YEAR
2005 • 2008 • 2010 • 2020

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HEADTABLE

RECAPPING OUR RECENT ACTIVITIES, EVENTS, PROJECTS AND MORE



TULSA SELECTED TO HOST 2022 PGA CHAMPIONSHIP

The PGA of America has awarded Tulsa's Southern Hills Country Club the 2022 PGA Championship. The Tulsa club was one of about 30 courses that expressed interest in hosting the tournament when the PGA announced its 2022 championship would no longer be held at Trump National in Bedminster, New Jersey. Southern Hills has hosted 15 major championships since 1946, most recently the 2007 PGA Championship won by Tiger Woods.

Tulsa Regional Tourism, the Chamber's destination marketing organization, estimates the championship will have a \$143 million total economic impact. Southern Hills will also host this year's Senior PGA Championship, which is scheduled for May 25 through 30. The tournament is estimated to have a nearly \$25 million total economic impact.



ALLISON WALDEN NAMED NATIONAL CHAMBER STAFF PERSON OF THE YEAR

Allison Walden, senior vice president of resource development at the Tulsa Regional Chamber, has been named the recipient of the Gerald W. Hathaway Staff Person of the Year Award by the Western Association of Chamber Executives (W.A.C.E.). The Hathaway Award is given annually to an outstanding chamber of commerce staff member for contributions to attaining specific chamber goals, creating innovative new programs, and securing funding and resources.

"We at the Chamber are absolutely thrilled by this national recognition of Allison's exceptional talent," says Mike Neal, president and CEO of the Tulsa Regional Chamber. "Allison's work was critical to the Chamber achieving its fourth Chamber of the Year recognition in 2020. I am privileged to work with some of the finest chamber of commerce professionals in the industry, and Allison truly embodies the best of our profession."



TULSA NAMED AMONG BEST CITIES FOR FILMMAKING

Tulsa was recently named to MovieMaker magazine's "Best Places to Live and Work as a MovieMaker in 2021" list, ranking No. 7 among small cities and towns. MovieMaker determined the winners using surveys, research on tax incentives and recent productions, personal visits to most of the locations on the list, and information on safety precautions taken in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"This was obviously a very different year for our annual list of the Best Places to Live and Work as a MovieMaker - it's a time of incredible upheaval, but also opportunity," says Tim Molloy, MovieMaker editor-in-chief. "Many in the film and TV industry are looking to change their way of life, and many cities and towns across the country are welcoming these storytellers with open arms."



BIG 12 WRESTLING

Ticket sales are underway for the 2021 Big 12 Wrestling Championship, scheduled for March 6 and 7 at Tulsa's BOK Center. The Big 12 Conference and the Tulsa Sports Commission, which is housed at the Chamber under Tulsa Regional Tourism, previously announced a partnership to host the championship in Tulsa through 2024.

Several health and safety protocols will be in place for the tournament, including socially distanced and limited-capacity seating, temperature screening for all fans, and a face mask requirement for all fans and staff 10 years and older.

Visit bokcenter.com to purchase tickets.



CHAMBER NAMES ARTHUR JACKSON SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Tulsa Regional Chamber announced the hiring of Arthur Jackson as senior vice president of economic development, effective Feb. 22. Jackson will lead the Chamber's economic development efforts through Tulsa's Future, the Chamber-led public-private regional economic development partnership. Jackson will also be responsible for workforce and talent strategies, such as the Chamber's recent designation as an Oklahoma Manufacturing Center of Workforce Excellence.

"It's a privilege and an honor to lead the next phase of Tulsa's Future at such a critical time in the community," says Jackson. "We'll continue to build upon the strong foundation that's been laid by the Chamber and Tulsa's Future to fuel job growth, workforce development, innovation and economic prosperity for all northeast Oklahomans."

WHO WE ARE

ROSE WASHINGTON OUTLINES PRIORITIES AS 2021 CHAMBER CHAIR



Catalyst, convener and connector are just a few ways Rose Washington describes her role as CEO of TEDC Creative Capital. Washington has spent her career championing the unlikely winner and pushing for the under-resourced to gain fair access.

As the Tulsa Regional Chamber's 2021 chair, Washington has no plans to change that. During her inaugural address at the Chamber's virtual Annual Meeting in January, Washington outlined her vision to prioritize inclusive, equitable and collaborative growth within the Tulsa region.

"When I moved from Los Angeles to Tulsa in 2001, I became active with three organizations: the Metropolitan Tulsa Urban League, the Greenwood Chamber of Commerce, and the Tulsa Regional Chamber," said Washington. "These organizations all aspired to connect and

improve the people, businesses and communities of our region."

Where some may see challenges brought about by the past 12 months of economic tumult and social unrest, Washington sees opportunity.

"Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) should be integral to everything we do and everything we are," said Washington. "From every individual, to every company, to our entire community, DEI should not just be something we aspire to do well - diverse, equitable and inclusive should be who we are."

During her tenure as Chamber chair, Washington plans to focus on three key audiences: people, small businesses and the wider community.

"I am honored to lead the Tulsa Regional Chamber as its 2021 chair - not just because of this

organization's enormous impact, but just as important to me, because of the historic significance that this represents," said Washington. "If ever there was a moment for me to serve, I believe it is now."

PEOPLE

Investing in people - especially the region's young people - will help move our region forward. A key part of Washington's vision as Chamber chair is to create more equitable opportunities in workforce and leadership development.

Washington pointed out that the unemployment rate among African Americans is more than double that of white Tulsans.

"As I see it, we have an available workforce that just needs greater skills to meet industry requirements," said Washington.



Gov. Kevin Stitt and the Oklahoma Department of Commerce recently designated the Chamber-led Tulsa's Future partnership as a Manufacturing Center of Workforce Excellence. This designation serves as official recognition of the hard work and dedication of our local community to leverage and align resources. The Chamber will build upon this work to create a comprehensive workforce development system that is responsive to local and state needs.

"As a business community, we must be more intentional about bringing all underserved, underrepresented and underskilled individuals into the labor force," said Washington. "We will do this using the Chamber's strategic partnerships with business and industry, higher education, career tech, K through 12 education and workforce agencies."

Washington also noted that the answer to greater equity is often simply greater access.

"As a kid in rural Mississippi, one summer I participated in a youth work program," Washington recounted during her address. "Thanks to my high school business teacher, I interned in a local city clerk's office instead of cutting tall grass in public spaces. I believe that opportunity at the Durant, Mississippi, City Hall put me on the path that has led me here today."

To provide greater career access to students, Mosaic - the Chamber-led coalition of individuals and companies committed to diversity, equity and inclusion - will partner with state Sen. Kevin Matthews to give a cohort of minority high school juniors and seniors C-level externships in banking and finance, information technology and entrepreneurial development.

Another goal of Washington's is to foster leadership opportunities for the region's young professionals, including young professionals of color. TYPROS, the Chamber's young professionals organization, recently launched 918 Lead, a nine-month boot camp that will prepare 30 young Tulsans to run for local, state and federal office.

"By providing more initiatives targeting our youth, our emerging workforce and our young professionals, we will create opportunities for 'diverse, equitable and inclusive' to be who we are," said Washington.

BUSINESSES

Small businesses in the Tulsa region were hit especially hard by the pandemic. Despite a challenging economic climate, many new businesses opened - one being Fulton Street Books and Coffee.



"Fulton Street represents a brilliant young black woman's unconquerable dream brought to life in the face of a worldwide crisis," said Washington. "Fulton Street created a business strategy that attracts customers and revenue from across the nation even as the company also serves the local community."

Drawing inspiration from Fulton Street, Washington's second area of focus is northeast Oklahoma's small businesses.

“BY PROVIDING MORE ACCESS, ASSISTANCE AND GUIDANCE FOR OUR SMALL BUSINESSES, WE WILL CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ‘DIVERSE, EQUITABLE AND INCLUSIVE’ TO BE WHO WE ARE.”

"We must meet their need for strategic resources, guidance and assistance, and we must raise up a new, more diverse, equitable and inclusive group of entrepreneurs, businesses and services," said Washington.

To further support small business growth, Washington encouraged the Chamber's larger companies to either create or expand diversity supplier initiatives, noting that ensuring inclusive procurement opportunities are in place - and effectively promoted - will help accelerate growth for diverse companies that can meet a supply or service need.

"With this type of initiative, we will move forward as a region by giving existing small businesses, start-ups and entrepreneurs a greater chance to thrive," said Washington. "We will also reduce inequity and ensure that the benefits of prosperity are shared more broadly."

The Tulsa Small Business Connection, the Chamber's dedicated resource for the region's small businesses, will work to increase diverse business participation. To reduce barriers to engagement, a majority of the Connection's events will be free of charge through the second quarter of the year.

"By providing more access, assistance and guidance for our small businesses, we will create opportunities for 'diverse, equitable and inclusive' to be who we are."

COMMUNITY

To overcome the divisions of Tulsa's past, we must grow together. Standing at the site of the soon-to-be-open Oasis Fresh Market in north Tulsa, Washington spoke about a project near to her heart.

"For me, Oasis represents rebirth, restoration, and hope," she said. "It will be a tribute to the five-and-dime store owners of historic Black Wall Street who never had the chance to scale into large grocery store chains because their businesses were destroyed. As its name implies, this store will be a food oasis in the middle of a food desert. It will be a place of pride and dignity where the north Tulsa community can buy fresh, affordable and quality groceries without driving a car or riding a bus five or 10 miles from home. Oasis has been a labor of love for TEDC and for me personally in partnership with the City of Tulsa and City Councilor Vanessa Hall-Harper."

2020 PARTNER OF THE YEAR AWARDS

In just a few short months, all eyes will be on Tulsa as the city and nation commemorate the centennial of the Tulsa Race Massacre. With the centennial comes an opportunity to share Tulsa's history and show how the community is overcoming prejudices that enabled the tragedy.

"Thousands will be drawn to Tulsa for the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre centennial commemoration," said Washington. "They will have the chance to learn hands-on about the horrific event that destroyed what I believe was once the most prosperous black economy in the country. They will experience the destructive impact of the race massacre and how hatred is a root of evil. And they will walk away, I hope, with a personal commitment to help heal our land," said Washington.

In addition to racial healing, the region must also focus on building inclusive social capital - the networks of relationships among people who live and work in a particular society, enabling that society to function effectively. Washington urged people to build inclusive social capital by building relationships over diversity dinners.

"While COVID-19 has created a barrier - at least for a while - to hosting in-person diversity dinners, I encourage all of us to spend time getting to know those with backgrounds different than our own. I encourage you to lift, as you rise, by choosing to mentor or sponsor a person with a diverse background and guide them in their professional journey."

Another opportunity for building community in Tulsa is the increase in remote workers. Bringing more residents with diverse backgrounds and a passion to engage with the community will further the region's equitable prosperity.

"Developing mutual respect, discussing unconscious biases, and intentionally eliminating stereotypes requires that we invest the time to get personally acquainted," said Washington. "By doing so, I am convinced we can make our community stronger and more attractive for ourselves and for new neighbors."

Recognizing this opportunity, the Chamber will work with the Oklahoma Legislature to acknowledge the benefits of quality jobs attracted to the region through Tulsa Remote and seek the state's full participation as a partner in importing talent and incomes.

"Twenty years ago, I myself was a remote worker for a brief time after moving here," said Washington. "Imagine the economic impact on our local small and minority businesses if Tulsa Remote drew twice as many remote workers, all with a passion to build equitable prosperity, engage in community, buy homes and raise families in our region."

By providing more chances to connect and build village-making skills in our community, we will create opportunities for "diverse, equitable and inclusive" to be who we are.

While the work may be challenging, Washington encouraged fellow Chamber members that now is our greatest opportunity to make diversity, equity and inclusion integral to our region.

"From every person, to every small business, to our entire regional community, let's not make DEI just something we aspire to do more of," said Washington. "Let's make diverse, equitable and inclusive who we are."

To re-watch Rose Washington's inaugural address, visit tulsachamber.com/annualmeeting.

CARLIN CONNER

Economic Development Partner of the Year

As 2020 co-chair of Tulsa's Future, Conner's leadership guided the Chamber's economic development strategy pivot to meet the immediate needs of area businesses. Conner also helped launch Tulsa's Future: Road to Recovery, a one-year strategic work plan and funding campaign that will drive economic recovery in northeast Oklahoma.

MIKE MEARS, MAGELLAN MIDSTREAM PARTNERS

Regional Tourism Partner of the Year

Mears helped guide strategies to increase the economic impact of Tulsa's travel and tourism industry during his two-year tenure as chair of Tulsa Regional Tourism, the Chamber's destination marketing organization. In addition to securing high-profile events such as the 2021 IRONMAN North American Championship and 2023 NCAA Wrestling Championships, Tulsa Regional Tourism launched the Tulsa Safely campaign to tell the region's safety story to residents and visitors.

MERCEDES MILLBERRY FOWLER, BLUE CROSS AND BLUE SHIELD OF OKLAHOMA

Community Development Partner of the Year

Millberry Fowler is a champion for diversity, equity and inclusion through her work at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Oklahoma and her long-time involvement with Mosaic. She served as chair of Mosaic during 2019 and 2020 and supported the Chamber's work to engage business and community leaders in important dialogue about race and equity.

TULSA COUNTY

Regional Partner of the Year

Tulsa County Commissioners Karen Keith, Ron Peters and Stan Sallee worked tirelessly to distribute federal CARES Act funding to meet the needs of area businesses, municipalities, government agencies and nonprofit organizations impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. In July, Tulsa County partnered with the Chamber and TAEMA to distribute more than 2,000 personal protective equipment kits to area businesses. The County also contributed \$60 million to the TEDC RESET program, which administered forgivable loans to small businesses.

GINGER KOLLMANN AND JOHN LINDSAY

Resource Development Partners of the Year

Kollmann and Lindsay, co-chairs of Tulsa's Future: Road to Recovery, helped secure investment from Chamber members to support the region's economic recovery. They are both valued advocates for the Chamber's mission to improve economic prosperity in northeast Oklahoma.

DR. BRUCE DART

Community Champion Partner of the Year

Dr. Dart faced unprecedented challenges as executive director of the Tulsa Health Department. He and his team continue their unwavering efforts in the battle against COVID-19 and the mass-vaccination effort currently underway. His leadership, responsiveness and care have guided the community through the pandemic and ongoing recovery.

DR. KEITH BALLARD

Lifetime Achievement Award

Dr. Ballard dedicated his nearly 50-year career to education. As superintendent of Tulsa Public Schools, he worked with the community and the Chamber to improve education for all. Dr. Ballard is admired for his leadership, service and commitment to Tulsa's students.



mosaic
powered by the tulsa regional chamber

WHO WE ARE

During her inaugural address, 2021 Chamber Chair Rose Washington spoke of the need to increase access to economic opportunity. For many small businesses, this includes more opportunities to compete in the procurement process. Smaller and minority-owned companies are too often excluded from procurement bidding, particularly for government service and supplier contracts.

The Oklahoma Supplier Diversity Initiative is one way to increase access to these opportunities. The initiative would create a state-sponsored database for government agencies and private businesses intentionally seeking diverse Oklahoma-based suppliers. The initiative was requested by the Governor's Minority Business Council, which includes several Chamber members.

Under the initiative, the Oklahoma Department of Commerce would develop a certification program for qualifying businesses to include annual

revenue, employee count, geographic location and additional dimensions of diversity considered by the U.S. Small Business Administration. Diverse businesses could register with the Office of Management and Enterprise Services to be automatically notified of state bidding opportunities, which would include a simplified vendor registration and bidding process.

HB 2365 by Rep. Ty Burns (R-Morrison) authorizes the initiative and unanimously passed the House Government and Efficiency Committee in February. It now awaits a floor vote in the House of Representatives.

As the bill works its way through the Oklahoma Legislature this session, we encourage you to advocate for and champion the Oklahoma Supplier Diversity Initiative as a way to make diverse, equitable and inclusive who we are.

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OKLAHOMA SEN. KEVIN MATTHEWS

Oklahoma Sen. Kevin Matthews represents Senate District 11, which encompasses a significant portion of north and northwest Tulsa, as well as downtown. Sen. Matthews was elected to public service as a state representative in 2012 and as a state senator in 2015.

A native Tulsan and Booker T. Washington High School graduate, Sen. Matthews is membership chair of the 100 Black Men of Tulsa mentoring organization and was a charter member of the North Tulsa Rotary Club. He attended Central State University in Edmond, where he pledged Phi Beta Sigma. Sen. Matthews later earned a degree in fire protection technology while serving 25 years with the Tulsa Fire Department, retiring in 2010 as administrative fire chief.

Sen. Matthews also founded and chairs the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre Centennial Commission, a collaborative effort to further awareness about the massacre and its impact, remember its victims and survivors, and create an environment conducive to sustainable entrepreneurship and heritage tourism within the Greenwood District.

What are your top priorities for the 2021 legislative session?

My top priority for the 2021 session is the continued support of bringing students and others to Tulsa to visit the Greenwood Rising History Center, which was made possible by my SB 17 that passed unanimously in 2017 with bipartisan support. I am also working on ways to connect our Black history learning footprint from Greenwood Rising in Tulsa to the Clara Luper Center in Oklahoma City. Finally, I am working on ways to remove barriers to the growth of our library system.

Criminal justice reform has been a long-time priority on the Chamber's OneVoice Regional Legislative Agenda. Do you expect any significant progress on this reform in 2021?

The most sweeping criminal justice reform actions taken were to decriminalize the use of marijuana for medicinal purposes and bring home nonviolent offenders. Unfortunately, rather than make significant advances on those reforms, I am seeing measures coming forward to add and increase felonies and penalties that would lead to incarceration, which I believe is counterproductive to full criminal justice reform.

With renewed hope for a federal infrastructure package this year, what infrastructure projects in the Tulsa area would you prioritize?

In the short term, I would like to assure sufficient highway access directly to the Greenwood area

rather than the divided barrier we have now, as well as sufficient access to the new veterans hospital at the OSU Medical Center campus in my district.

The centennial of the Tulsa Race Massacre will be an important milestone for our city, state and nation. For people outside of Tulsa who don't know the history of Tulsa's Greenwood neighborhood, what do you hope they take away from the centennial commemoration?

The work of the commemoration and the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre Centennial Commission is tremendously challenging and highly sensitive for good reason. My hope is that if we here in Tulsa can show that we did our best to come together to tell this story transparently, then people would be inspired to have courageous conversations, dialogue and action toward progress and coming together to heal hurting communities around the world.

What can elected leaders do to advance the legacy of Tulsa's Black Wall Street?

Elected leaders can put down political ideology and unite around the humanity of "doing the right thing" instead of the popular cancellation politics that have become normalized. We need to heal. This means that elected leaders should not be afraid to address the inequities in redlining, dismantling of our public school system and police reform, all of which cause continued resentment in the Black community today.

Why is reconciliation important to you personally? How does that impact your choices and decisions as an elected leader?

As a Black businessman, father and grandfather who has lived in Tulsa for 60 years, reconciliation is mandatory in my view. We cannot move forward as a city without healing. Telling this story and acknowledging the truth is the foundation. I am working with the Chamber and other groups around equity and inclusion, which are helpful as well. There are many forms of reconciliation - these are the forms I am involved with at this time.

How can the Tulsa-area business community support the centennial commemoration of the Tulsa Race Massacre?

We could always use financial donations, as well as opportunities to join the committees doing the work - information is available at tulsa2021.org. We are also asking businesses to join our efforts with the Chamber to support and get involved with a planned externship program. This program includes Black youth mentorship and creates diversity, equity, and inclusion direct impact which is good for business and good for Tulsa.



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BUILDING A LEGACY

Remembering former Chamber leader Clyde Cole

Tulsa would not be the city it is today without the leadership of former Chamber executive Clyde Cole, who passed away in January at age 88.

During his 31-year tenure as president of the Metropolitan Tulsa Chamber of Commerce, Cole was instrumental in the economic, social and cultural development of Tulsa and northeast Oklahoma. His focus was on improving quality of life through forward-looking programs like Goals For Tulsa and Leadership Tulsa, and initiatives like River Parks, the Tulsa Performing Arts Center, Tulsa Community College and University Center at Tulsa, which evolved into OSU and OU campuses.

“During more than three decades leading our organization, Clyde’s dedication to our city and region was evident in countless high-impact projects,” says Chamber President and CEO Mike Neal. “These included the establishment of Cherokee Industrial Park, the expansion of existing employers such as American Airlines, and the attraction of significant new employers such as Whirlpool and Hilti. Clyde also helped bring events such as the PGA and U.S. Open championships to Tulsa, elevating our city’s profile as a premier destination for sports enthusiasts.”

Cole was born May 4, 1932, in Chickasha. He attended college on a football scholarship, first at Northeastern Oklahoma A&M and then at Eastern New Mexico University, where he attained a bachelor’s degree and met his wife, Marcia Anne Johnson. The two raised four children together.

Cole began his chamber of commerce career in Guymon, and he held positions at chambers in Oklahoma, South Carolina and Indiana before arriving in Tulsa early in 1967. Cole’s vision for, and establishment of, a public/private partnership through the Chamber attracted major industries and employers to the area. His economic development efforts for the region were global in scope and took him all over the world, including Japan and Russia.

“To say the least, Tulsa is a far better community as a result of Clyde’s numerous initiatives,” says Neal. “Clyde was also a friend and a mentor to me and numerous other younger chamber executives and staff for many years. For those who knew him personally – and even for those who didn’t – Clyde’s legacy is extensive and indelible. He will be missed by many.”



MAKING TULSA AWESOME

A letter to young professionals from 2021 TYPROS Chair David Tollette

About 10 years ago, I received a piece of life-changing advice. While sitting with fellow summer interns, our program director announced in no uncertain terms, "If there is one thing you do during your time here, make sure to get involved with TYPROS!" She was referring to a series we now know as Intern in Tulsa. Several of us took the opportunity to participate, and I'm grateful we did.

The next year, when TYPROS showed up at TU looking for help promoting a networking event on campus, I was excited to volunteer. This led to an internship with TYPROS, involvement with multiple crews over the years and, eventually, to expanded leadership roles. This year, I have the honor to serve the community I love as the 2021 chair for TYPROS.

Growing up in Tulsa, I always appreciated the beauty of our city and the kind hearts commonly found in the people here. Still, I never intended to stay in my hometown. To be transparent, it was a combination of family, friends and opportunities for me and my high school sweetheart (now wife), Leanne, that kept us here.

TYPROS has been instrumental in those opportunities, as it has provided a place to learn, serve and grow over time. This organization guided me from attending meetings to helping on projects already in progress. It encouraged me to go from ideas without action to working with others to make our concepts a reality. Most importantly, TYPROS has introduced me to a whole family of like-motivated people who, despite their different perspectives and experiences, are willing to work collectively to help others and drive progress in our region.

TYPROS has adapted a great deal over time, and the challenges of 2020 have certainly been a catalyst for accelerated change. While the majority of our meetings, events and initiatives will remain virtual, it is our re-

sounding desire to reestablish the sense of the community we shared with in-person gatherings.

You can also expect to see us try new things. As we try new things, we will test often, fail fast and take what we learned to propel us forward. Some of our greatest successes last year came from a new concept or a virtual version of programming that would otherwise have been held in person. We also found some things fell flat in the virtual space. Both lessons are equally valuable. We will continue to utilize technology and a mindset of "failing forward" as we experiment with new ways to connect people, develop leaders and build community in Tulsa.

While we do not know what 2021 will hold, I believe we are in the best place in our organization's history to adapt and thrive in uncertainty. Besides uncertainty, I believe the greatest challenge we see is apathy in the face of overwhelming loss. May we all take a moment to recognize the incredible amount of loss we have collectively sustained.

I know the last thing you want is one more Zoom call or Teams meeting or to-do item in your life. I also know that getting involved in a community of people doing work that matters can provide a sense of healing and purpose in a time of grief. I know from experience that a group of young people with grit, a few resources and a lot of imagination can make a measurable change in Tulsa.

I don't know what your journey with TYPROS will look like, but I offer you the same advice I received long ago - if there is one thing you do during your time in Tulsa, make sure to get involved with TYPROS! Your perspectives, voices and talents are critical as we reengage our community, take on tough conversations, provide access to growth opportunities and lead initiatives to #MakeTulsaAwesome.

2021 TYPROS Leadership Team

David Tollette

2021 Chair

Aba Hammond

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Dustin Thames

XLT Chair

Ashley Knox

TYPROS Foundation President

Jackie Gonzalez

At-Large Leader

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RETAIN, RETRAIN AND REHIRE

Chamber releases results of dislocated workforce analysis

The northeast Oklahoma workforce will be an essential driver of economic recovery. While the Tulsa-area unemployment rate remains almost twice what it was before the pandemic, the region has outpaced the national average for job recovery. The pandemic has had both a short-term effect on employment and left a long-term impact on talent and workforce development that will be felt for decades to come.

To better understand these new dynamics in the region's labor force, the Chamber commissioned an analysis of dislocated workers. This comprehensive study and roadmap for recovery will help business and civic leaders better understand the outlook for workers dislocated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which skill sets are available in the regional talent pipeline, what is needed to retrain and rehire these dislocated workers, and how best to position northeast Oklahoma's workforce to compete in the future job market.

The analysis focuses on dislocated workers rather than the more familiar category of unemployment. The distinction emphasizes the barriers that prevent people from smoothly reentering the workforce. Dramatic industry upheaval, the changing nature of work, critical health risks and skill misalignment are all pressures capable of turning the unemployed into the dislocated.

"Our immediate priority is to support northeast Oklahoma's recovery, and one way to do that is to make sure the tools and training we're offering our workforce align with the skills area employers are looking for," says Rue Ramsey, vice president of workforce and talent strategies at the Tulsa Regional Chamber. "This study will shape our future workforce development strategy by providing insights on the current talent pipeline and identifying any gaps in training or educational offerings."

Quantifying the impact

Based on a survey of area employees, about one-third of responding companies laid off employees, and one-third furloughed workers, in response to the pandemic and ensuing economic crisis. The analysis also found that throughout the pandemic, the largest volumes of dislocated workers in Tulsa have been in the manufacturing, accommodation and food services, and retail trade sectors.

"It's critical we find ways to support Tulsa's unemployed and underemployed workers during this time," says Tulsa Mayor G.T. Bynum. "This

analysis was conducted at the recommendation of the Mayor's Economic Recovery Advisory Committee, and its findings will allow civic leaders, businesses, training partners and educational institutions to effectively and efficiently transition people to high-demand jobs, putting Tulsa on a positive path toward economic recovery."

The Chamber partnered with Mayor Bynum and the City of Tulsa in April to form the Mayor's Economic Recovery Advisory Committee, which convened key stakeholders to address issues ranging from unemployment to supply chain opportunities brought about by COVID-19. Building on a recommendation of the committee, the Chamber leveraged Tulsa County CARES funding for the dislocated workforce analysis, which was conducted by labor market analytics firm Emsi in partnership with the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL).

The pandemic has exacerbated wealth gaps and created deeper disparities throughout the region, and Emsi and CAEL placed an intentional focus on collecting data from a variety of perspectives to ensure the region's resilience strategies are as inclusive as possible. A total of 54 individuals participated in focus groups, which included company owners, CEOs, managers and human resources staff at firms ranging from privately owned companies with as few as a dozen employees to multinational corporations headquartered in the Tulsa area. Information from the focus groups was supplemented by surveys of industry partners, higher education institutions and other stakeholders, as well as a multi-lingual survey of dislocated workers delivered by the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission.

Key recommendations

The Chamber will focus its efforts on several recommendations from the analysis to best position northeast Oklahoma for post-pandemic recovery. This effort closely aligns with the Chamber's recent designation as a Manufacturing Center for Workforce Excellence by the Oklahoma Department of Commerce and will involve businesses, training partners and educational institutions.

The top recommendation is for civic leaders and stakeholders to refresh efforts to retain talent, upskill the regional workforce and make the case to firms to hire locally. Given that some industries face a more permanent shift to an

increasingly remote workforce, companies realize they are no longer limited to local residents when filling positions. Employers hunting for specific skillsets have learned they can attract and retain remote talent, forming a competitive alternative to rehiring Tulsa's dislocated workers. As this trend can have a serious negative impact on local employment, the Chamber will work to increase the visibility of the local workforce and align skillsets with the needs of local employers.

Some specific skills currently exist in cybersecurity, advanced data analytics, artificial intelligence and related fields. Whether in advanced manufacturing, energy or health care, the ability to interact with machines remotely and communicate across platforms will be critical for the future job market. A key recommendation from Emsi and CAEL's analysis is for institutions and industry to train for the jobs of tomorrow and diligently shift from programs that are out of step with progress. The Chamber will collaborate with training and educational institutions to close the training and education gaps in these areas and ensure the workforce is adequately prepared to meet the current and future job demand.

In response to Emsi and CAEL's surveys and focus groups, industry representatives and education institutions across the board expressed a desire to collaborate more intensively on workforce development, including a goal of convening a larger series of roundtables between industry leaders and higher education to work on building the region's talent. The Chamber will pursue this recommendation to strengthen relationships between the regional business community and educational institutions by hosting executive education leadership roundtables.

"Supporting northeast Oklahoma's dislocated workers is an important first step toward recovery," says Ramsey. "This collaborative strategy aligns the immediate needs of businesses and dislocated workers while building the infrastructure and systems to support future job demand."

Northeast Oklahoma's economic recovery depends on the full utilization of a strong, skilled workforce. Retaining, retraining and rehiring dislocated workers as efficiently as possible will not only help meet the short-term needs of businesses - it will have a long-term impact on the region's future prosperity.

SMALL BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

SILO DESIGN BUILD



Licensed architects Gabe Palacios and Brian Henley founded SILO Design Build in 2015. Together, they have more than 35 years of industry experience. SILO is a real Design-Build firm that works with clients starting with initial planning, concept and design, and all through construction. In addition to architectural services and construction management, they also offer in-house steel fabrication and erection services. We spoke with Gabe Palacios to learn more about the business.

How did you know you were ready to become a business owner?

My father was a small business owner, which allowed him the ability to be there for us growing up, and I knew that was my goal early on in life, as well. I entered the workforce with the mentality that each job I took was an opportunity to learn as much as I could, with the end goal being to start my own firm one day. Before starting SILO Design Build, I took on side projects to test my ability and refine my vision. It was the success of those projects that gave me the confidence and clarity needed to take the leap.

Where do you find inspiration for your designs?

We try to draw inspiration from wherever we can, be it nature, art, music, fashion, etc. SILO Design Build is fundamentally rooted in the belief that all forms come into connection with one another through a Simple Innovative Layered Order (SILO). We aim to incorporate these principles in catering to the unique needs of each client.

What is a challenge you had to overcome early on in the business?

One of the biggest challenges of going out on our own was not having the same resources we had at a large, established firm. I had to

quickly adapt to wearing all the hats involved with running a small business. As we have grown, we've hired and outsourced some of those jobs.

How has your business strategy pivoted during the last year?

We are constantly in a pivot position and must be able to respond to market forces. Because we offer design, construction, and steelwork, we are diversified in a way that allows us to move according to demand at any given time. This past year, specifically, we've seen growth in our steel division and have put more attention toward expanding steel services.

Do you have a favorite building in Tulsa? If so, what is it?

Even in a city with such a rich history in art deco and mid-century modern architecture, one of our favorite buildings in Tulsa has to be the BOK Center by iconic, famed architect Cesar Pelli.

What is an upcoming project you're excited about?

We're working on a sustainable community garden and affordable housing development that utilizes innovative technology in an effort to achieve a true net-zero site. Plans include structural Styrofoam dwelling spaces, green

vegetative roofs, agrophotovoltaic gardens, EV charging stations, geothermal HVAC and more.

What is one thing you would tell an aspiring business owner?

Have a clearly defined vision for the business and yourself. Keeping this vision top of mind will help you as you endure the sleepless nights and unexpected challenges that come with building something new.

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COVID-19 WORKPLACE GUIDELINES

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)



Stay home if you are sick.

COVID-19 symptoms include cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fever, chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat and loss of taste or smell.



Wash your hands often.

Wash with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.



Wear a mask.

Cloth face coverings can slow the spread of the virus. Face covers should fit snugly against the side of the face, include multiple layers of fabric, and be able to be laundered and machine dried.



Clean and disinfect.

Routinely clean and disinfect all frequently touched surfaces, such as keyboards, telephones, light switches, drawers, cabinets, handrails and doorknobs, as well as shared equipment, such as printers and copiers.



Keep your distance.

Keeping six feet between you and others is one of the best ways to avoid exposure and slow the spread of the virus.



Avoid touching your face.

Germs can spread from other people or surfaces when you touch your eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.

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