

Q1 2025

THE CHAMBER REPORT

TULSA REGIONAL CHAMBER

TULSA REGIONAL CHAMBER
ANNUAL MEETING & INAUGURATION

DRIVING FORWARD

2025 Chamber chair maps a future of
increasing prosperity for our region

From **TUL**

Hundreds of escapes await.



to **TULUM RUINS**
Tulum, Mexico

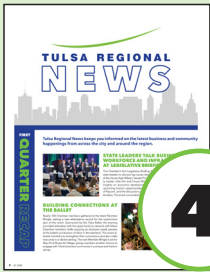
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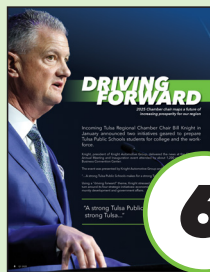
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ON THE COVER:

At its Annual Meeting and Inauguration event in January, the Tulsa Regional Chamber inaugurated Bill Knight, president of Knight Automotive Group, as the 2025 chair of its Board of Directors.
See story on page 6.

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TULSA REGIONAL NEWS

FIRST

QUARTER
RECAP

Tulsa Regional News keeps you informed on the latest business and community happenings from across the city and around the region.



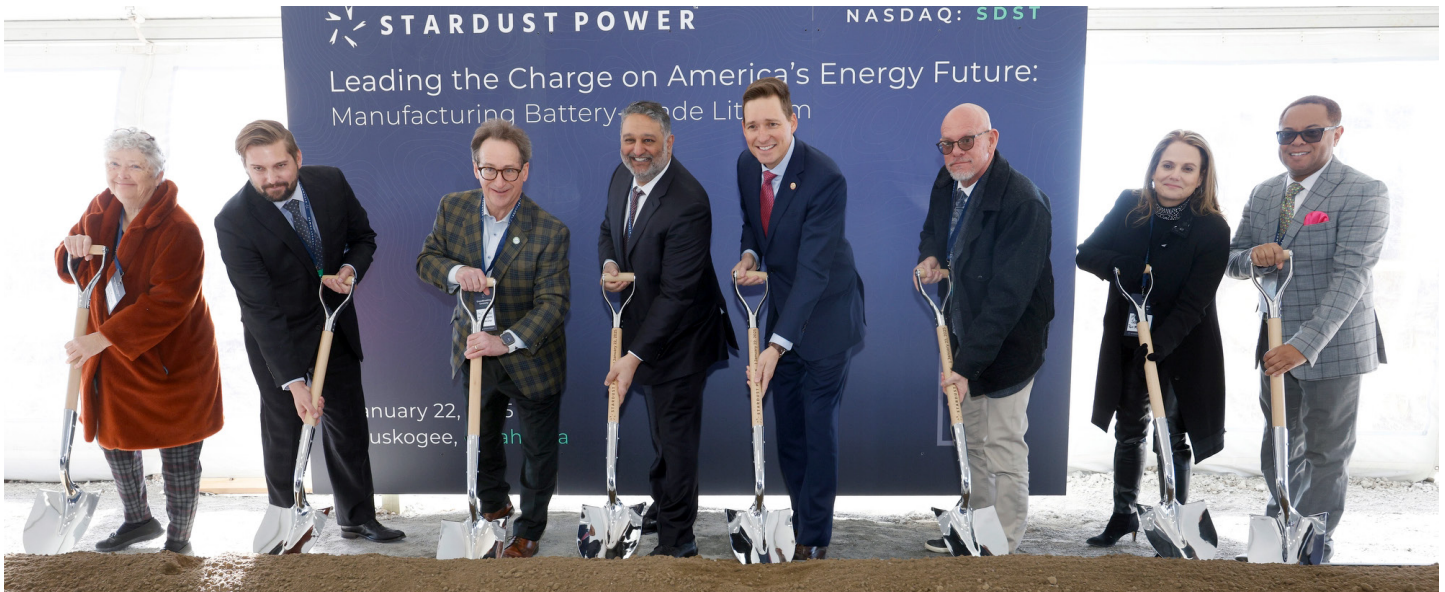
STATE LEADERS TALK BUSINESS, WORKFORCE AND INFRASTRUCTURE AT LEGISLATIVE BRIEFING BREAKFAST

The Chamber's first Legislative Briefing Breakfast of 2025 brought together state leaders to discuss key issues shaping the future of Oklahoma. Speaker of the House Kyle Hilbert, Senate Pro Tempore Lonnie Paxton, Senate Minority Leader Julia Kirt and House Minority Leader Cyndi Munson shared their insights on economic development, workforce growth, infrastructure and upcoming tourism opportunities. The panel was moderated by Seth Paxton of Paycom, and the discussion provided valuable perspectives for the 220 attendees. The event concluded with updates from nearly 20 state legislators.

BUILDING CONNECTIONS AT THE BALLET

Nearly 100 Chamber members gathered at the latest Member Mingle, setting a new attendance record for the sophomore year of this event. Sponsored by the Tulsa Ballet, the evening provided attendees with the opportunity to network with fellow Chamber members while enjoying an exclusive sneak preview of the ballet's production of Alice in Wonderland. This event allowed members to strengthen their connections and also make new ones in a vibrant setting. The next Member Mingle is set for May 22 at Route 66 Village, giving members another chance to engage with Tulsa's business community in a unique and historic venue.





OFFICIALS BROKE GROUND IN JANUARY ON WHAT WILL BE ONE OF THE LARGEST LITHIUM REFINERIES IN NORTH AMERICA

In January 2024, Stardust Power chose to build in Muskogee, citing the state's central location and excellent access to multi-modal logistics. The site benefits from proximity to the country's largest inland waterway system, robust road and rail networks and a skilled workforce rooted in the oil and gas sector.



CHAMBER SUPPORTS TEACHER HOUSING INITIATIVE

The Chamber joined Green Country Habitat for Humanity, the City of Tulsa and the Tulsa Area United Way in launching Education Begins with Home, a \$5 million homebuyer assistance program for certified Tulsa Public Schools teachers. Announced at the Greenwood Cultural Center, the initiative aims to help at least 100 educators in securing home ownership with up to \$50,000 in downpayment assistance. With rising interest rates and construction costs up nearly 60% since 2019, the program seeks to address housing affordability and teacher retention. The Chamber will support the initiative through advocacy and awareness efforts, reinforcing its commitment to workforce development and community investment.



GRAMMY WIN HIGHLIGHTS TULSA'S CHURCH STUDIO

Blues artist Taj Mahal took home the Grammy for Best Traditional Blues Album for *Swingin' Live at the Church in Tulsa*, recorded in 2023 before a live audience at The Church Studio. In his acceptance speech, he thanked Teresa Knox and Claudia Lennear for their roles in bringing the project to Tulsa. Knox, the owner of The Church Studio, called the win a proud moment for Tulsa as a music city, honoring both its rich musical history and ongoing cultural influence. Adding to the studio's legacy, it recently acquired a historic Neumann M48 microphone once used by Ricky Nelson and Rod Stewart, further cementing the studio's status as a hub for legendary sound. ■



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NEWS?**



DRIVING FORWARD

2025 Chamber chair maps a future of increasing prosperity for our region

Incoming Tulsa Regional Chamber Chair Bill Knight in January announced two initiatives geared to prepare Tulsa Public Schools students for college and the workforce.

Knight, president of Knight Automotive Group, delivered the news at the Chamber's Annual Meeting and Inauguration event attended by about 1,200 people at the Cox Business Convention Center.

The event was presented by Knight Automotive Group and Saint Francis Health System.

"...A strong Tulsa Public Schools makes for a strong Tulsa..." he said.

Using a "driving forward" theme, Knight stressed maintaining the Chamber's momentum around its four strategic initiatives: economic development; regional tourism, community development and government affairs.

"A strong Tulsa Public Schools makes for a strong Tulsa..."

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

During 2025, the Chamber will partner with Tulsa Public Schools on initiatives focusing on career exploration and college essentials.

The Chamber plans to identify 10 companies -- five in the spring and five in the fall -- willing to provide a career exploration experience to a group of 20 to 25 high school juniors and seniors. That goal already has been met.

The nonprofit also wants to support college-bound students with items they need to prosper in their freshman year.

"So, think about it; they are first-generation college students, have done all the hard work to earn a scholarship at an Oklahoma post-secondary school but don't go due to lack of resources," Knight said. "We want to help these kids."

"The Chamber would love to identify individuals or companies willing to support a student - angel-tree style - as they begin their college journey by providing items to ensure they make it to their freshman year."

Continuing his education messaging, Knight urged people to support area communities that have school bond issues coming up in 2025.

"Tulsa residents will vote on a Tulsa Public Schools bond in October, which, by the way, will not raise taxes," Knight said. "I can speak with confidence to say that now is the time to invest our tax dollars and our time in (TPS Superintendent) Dr. (Ebony) Johnson and her team at Tulsa Public Schools. So please show your support for our schools by voting 'yes' on bond issues when you have the chance."

Knight stressed continuing to create jobs and increase capital investment through Tulsa's Future, the Chamber-led regional economic development partnership.

Key to accomplishing that, he said, will be leveraging Bridge to the Future 2030, a new five-year fundraising and strategic plan combining the efforts of Tulsa's Future with regional tourism.

"Bridge to the Future 2030 will combine the best of economic development and the best of tourism promotion to better position Tulsa on the national and even the international stage, making us more attractive than ever for job growth, talent attraction, events and visitors," Knight said.



2025 Chamber Chair Bill Knight accepts the chair's gavel from 2024 Chair Jennifer Jezek during Annual Meeting.

REGIONAL TOURISM

Moving on to another Chamber strategic initiative, regional tourism, Knight mentioned several events Tulsans can look forward to.

They include the October launch in Tulsa of The Outsiders musical, which debuted on Broadway in 2024 and subsequently won a Tony Award for best musical. In 2026, a reimagined Gilcrease Museum will open its doors, and Tulsa will celebrate the centennial of Route 66.

Knight also said Tulsa lost out on more than 150 events during fiscal year 2023-24 and that one of the main reasons was the lack of hotel rooms within walking distance to the Cox Business Convention Center.

To remedy that, Knight said the Chamber and city need to follow through with plans to build a 650-room convention center-attached hotel.

"And while the new hotel likely won't be completed until 2029," he said, "the Chamber's tourism team can start selling against it as soon as we break ground, which means they can create a strong future pipeline of large-scale gatherings, meetings and sporting events."

Knight also announced that Salt Lake City will be the destination of the Chamber's 16th annual Intercity Visit in October.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Laying out additional priorities, Knight said he plans to work alongside Tulsa Mayor Monroe Nichols to address homelessness, affordable housing and public safety.

[MORE →](#)



"Like many cities across the country, Tulsa faces an extreme deficit of available, affordable housing," Knight said. "A recent independent study of local housing demand found that, during the next decade, Tulsa must develop nearly 13,000 units to keep pace with demand. As the Chamber continues to focus its economic development work on growing current companies and attracting new employers, having an adequate inventory of workforce housing is certainly part of the conversation."

The Chamber convened a panel discussion on housing solutions during its Intercity Visit to Detroit, and Chamber leaders have met with the leadership of Tulsa's newest initiative, the Housing Partnership Network, launched by the Anne and Henry Zarrow Foundation.

"The bottom line is, we must take a regional approach and collaborate on solutions that incorporate best practices not only for downtown but also for surrounding communities," Knight said. "From the Chamber's perspective, working alongside organizations such as the Downtown Tulsa Partnership and programs such as the George Kaiser Family Foundation's Invest North will be instrumental to driving our region forward."

GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

The 2025 chair identified greater access to childcare as a key imperative for the Chamber-led OneVoice Regional Legislative Agenda.

Studies show that childcare costs now exceed housing costs in all 50 states. Moreover, Tulsa County has 45,000 children under the age of 5 but only 28,000 childcare slots.

"As a business owner, I see the impact of these statistics on a daily basis," Knight said. "Inability to find dependent care leads to higher employee absenteeism. In more and more cases, women are exiting the workforce altogether in order to stay home with their kids.

"And because childcare professionals are not paid well – and less than 10 percent receive benefits – recruiting new caregivers is increasingly difficult, so options dwindle over time. There is hope, however, and it's you. Those of you in the room today can help. If you are a business owner, review your workplace policies to ensure they are as family friendly as possible. And raise your voice. Let your legislators know that childcare is an important issue, and that you want to see childcare credits and incentives maintained, or even increased."

Knight closed his speech by thanking all the Chamber partners in attendance.

"None of the work we have accomplished in past years or plan to accomplish this year would be possible without your ongoing support and commitment," he said. "I may be Chamber chair for a year, but you – each and every one of you – are what make the Chamber so impactful year in and year out." ■



At the 2025 Annual Meeting, Jennifer Jezek, the Chamber's immediate past chair, presented awards to the Chamber's most outstanding partners during 2024:

Economic Development Partner of the Year:
Dana Weber

Regional Tourism Partner of the Year:
Danny Boy O'Connor

Government Affairs Partners of the Year:
Jeannie Cue, Karen Keith and Lonnie Sims

Community Development Partner of the Year:
Rose Washington-Jones

Resource Development Partner of the Year:
Tim Lyons

Regional Partners of the Year:
John Feary and Meggie Froman-Knight

Lifetime Achievement Award:
Kevin Gross



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TAKING A BYTE OUT OF THE COMPUTING INDUSTRY

Tulsa area part of national data center surge

by Rhett Morgan, Director of Communications for the Tulsa Regional Chamber

Employment in U.S. data centers – facilities housing the computer systems that store and manage data – grew more than 60% nationally from 2016 to 2023, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

Those figures are no surprise to Ken Parker, an executive with Crusoe, an AI-infrastructure company expanding in Tulsa.

"It's all about the AI (artificial intelligence) race," said Parker, Crusoe's senior vice president of power engineering, operations and manufacturing. "People believe you're either first or you're last. There's a lot of belief that there will be only one or two winners in this. If you're not going huge, you're not going to be one of them."

Crusoe is going huge by all indications.

The company last summer announced it planned to invest about \$10 million into a new Tulsa manufacturing facility that will create at least 100 jobs.

A couple of months later, Crusoe announced a \$3.4 billion joint venture with Blue Owl Capital to fund purpose-built data center capacity at the Lancium Clean Campus in Abilene, Texas.

"It will be the biggest AI data center in the world when it opens," Parker told The Chamber Report during a virtual interview. "We are full speed ahead right now."

The Texas campus is expected to be operational later this year.

"Rapidly expanding demand for purpose-built data centers proves that markets know the future will be powered by AI," Chase Lochmiller, CEO and co-founder of Crusoe, said in an October news release.

THE AI SURGE

That momentum is being felt at the highest levels of government. In January, President Trump announced a five-year, \$500 billion Stargate AI venture from OpenAI, Softbank and Oracle, an AI infrastructure initiative he said would



position the United States as the global leader in artificial intelligence.

That proclamation came as data center proposals continue to pop up in Oklahoma. Some examples besides Crusoe include:

- Polaris Technologies, Inc., which said last year it planned to pour \$100 million into a 200-megawatt data center at Port Muskogee.
- Core Scientific, which broke ground last fall on a \$4 billion, 100-megawatt data center at Port Muskogee.
- And according to reporting by the Tulsa World, an \$800 million data center is being proposed for east Tulsa, with construction projected to begin in early 2026.

Google has long been the linchpin of commercial computer storage in Oklahoma. Through a spokesperson, Google provided The Chamber Report with statistics on its longtime presence in Pryor, home of one of its data centers.

- Since opening its data center at the MidAmerica Industrial Park in Pryor in 2011, the search engine behemoth has committed more than \$4.8 billion to the state of Oklahoma.
- The Google campus has created jobs for more than 800 people in a variety of full-time and external supplier roles, including computer technicians, engineers and various food service, maintenance and security positions.
- Google and its data centers helped generate more than \$1.98 billion for Oklahoma businesses and startups in 2023.

Alphabet, Google's parent company, reported 2024 earnings of about \$100 billion, a 28% increase over the previous year.

"Our results show the power of our differentiated full-stack approach to AI innovation and the continued strength of our core businesses," Sundar Pichai, CEO of Alphabet and Google, said in the company's most recent earnings report. "We are confident about the opportunities ahead, and to accelerate our progress, we expect to invest approximately \$75 billion in capital expenditures in 2025."



CRUSOE'S GROWTH IN TULSA

Founded in 2018, Crusoe builds and operates clean computing infrastructure, reducing the costs and environmental impact of the globe's expanding digital economy.

According to the company's 2023 impact report, it prevented more than 680,000 metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions through the scaling of Digital Flare Mitigation technology in the United States.

"Crusoe has pioneered digital infrastructure that taps into wasted, stranded or clean energy," Mike Neal, president and CEO of the Tulsa Regional Chamber, said at Crusoe's news conference in August in Tulsa. "It is that kind of environmentally friendly technology that the planet needs and that our community welcomes."

"Tulsa is a pro-business place. The Chamber was – and has been – fantastic, and I mean really fantastic," said Ken Parker, senior vice president of Crusoe.

Tulsa's attributes, which include a scalable workforce and low labor and real estate costs, made it the ideal place for Crusoe to expand, Parker said.

He also was familiar with the city, having grown up in Broken Arrow and attended the University of Tulsa.

"I knew that Tulsa had all the pieces, and I knew where to find them," Parker said. "For me, it's just homefield advantage. So, when I'm trying to get something done, it's just easier."

"Tulsa is a pro-business place. The Chamber was – and has been – fantastic, and I mean really fantastic."

Crusoe's new facility in Tulsa, located at 5404 S. 122nd E. Ave., will encompass roughly 120,000 square feet and manufacture critical elements of data center infrastructure such as switchgear.

Progress on the buildout has been slower than expected, Parker said, but he is preparing for an uptick in every aspect in the spring.

"I wouldn't be surprised if we're up to 150 (employees) within a few months," he said. "We've had great candidates. We're super happy with the candidate pool we've seen so far on the blue-collar side, the skilled work side."

Chamber representatives met Crusoe officials on a 2022 marketing trip to Denver. The company has dual headquarters in Denver and San Francisco.

"Contingent on us being able to scale this facility to the max capacity, which we believe will happen in 2025, Crusoe anticipates adding additional square footage in Tulsa," Parker said. ■

LUFTHANSA TECHNIK BREAKS GROUND ON LOCAL EXPANSION

*Aircraft component services company
enhances capacities, capabilities*

*by Rhett Morgan, Director of Communications for the
Tulsa Regional Chamber*

Lufthansa Technik Component Services,
headquartered in Tulsa since 2012, dug
its roots deeper in the city in February.



Before a crowd of about 250 people, the aircraft component services company broke ground on a 25,000-square-foot expansion, which will bring its total footprint in Tulsa to more than 140,000 square feet.

"With this expansion, we are enhancing our capacities and capabilities to support airlines in the Americas while strengthening our position as a strategic partner in the region," said Thomas Illner, managing director and head of Region Americas at LTCS.

Michael Scheferhoff, departing co-managing director and head of Operations Americas at LTCS, said the company employs about 360 people in Tulsa. A total of 90 new workstations will be added to meet the expanded operational needs of the facility.

"The expansion not only adds physical space for operations but also paves the way for further growth, including strengthening the team with more colleagues," Scheferhoff said. "The new building makes Lufthansa Technik an even more visible and attractive employer in Tulsa."

Set for completion by the end of 2025, the new building will house the administrative departments and an updated avionics workshop, both of which will relocate there. The project also includes the renovation of the existing hangars, with the newly available space being repurposed to expand shop space and boost production capacity.

Mike Neal, president and CEO of the Tulsa Regional Chamber, acknowledged LTCS as a cog in an aviation/aerospace sector that supports roughly \$44 billion in annual economic activity in the state.



"When you combine airports, military aviation and off-airport aviation and aerospace companies, that amounts to \$11.7 billion in annual payroll and nearly 240,000 jobs across direct, indirect and induced impacts," Neal said. "Lufthansa's new facility, for which we are breaking ground today, is the latest jewel in Oklahoma's aviation legacy."

In addition to enhancing its capacity, LTCS plans to introduce new capabilities, including the repair of Integrated Drive Generators (IDG), a component that transforms turbine speed from the aircraft's engines into a consistent generator speed to supply electrical power onboard. The new service complements LTCS's recent addition of Air Data Inertial Reference Units (ADIRUs) repair capabilities. These units provide key information about the aircraft's speed, altitude and position.

A wholly owned U.S. subsidiary of German-based Lufthansa Technik, LTCS employs more than 730 people across 11 locations in North America, Central America and South America. LTCS serves about one-quarter of the world's 20,000 commercial aircraft.

"Lufthansa Technik's choice to grow and invest further at Tulsa International Airport reflects their success and the essential contributions they make to our community," said Paul Myers, executive vice president and chief operating officer of Tulsa International Airport. "The company has been a great tenant and partner of ours for years, and we're excited for this next chapter for their organization. This expansion is yet another prime example of the strength of the aviation industry in Tulsa and the tremendous opportunities for growth at our airport." ■



CHAMBER, CITY OF TULSA WELCOME SIXT USA TO DOWNTOWN

Company president touts city's many attributes

by Rhett Morgan, Director of Communications for the Tulsa Regional Chamber

When Tulsa Mayor Monroe Nichols still was seeking the office he now holds, he last year found himself in a New York airport, desperately needing to return home but unable to because of weather-induced flight delays.

Itching to get to another airport, he set out to rent a car. The only company with one available was SIXT USA.

"My Volkswagen Jetta kept me rolling through storms that took me through Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey maybe," Nichols said. "I made it to (Washington) D.C. and got out at 6 the next morning.

"I had to be back in Tulsa for an event. So, I'm telling you right now, that without SIXT, you may have a different mayor right now. This is a full circle moment for me for so many reasons."



Nichols recounted his anecdote at a March 6 ribbon cutting celebrating SIXT, which is opening a shared services center at One Technology Center.

The company will occupy about 15,000 square feet in One Technology Center and employ more than 70 people in its first year, with operations expected to expand to 41,000 square feet and 200 employees within five years.

The new hub will complement SIXT's North American headquarters in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., by broadening the company's capabilities across essential business functions.

"At the Tulsa Regional Chamber, we are thrilled to share the SIXT journey, and we are eager to supply you with whatever needs may arise around the next bend," said Justin McLaughlin, the Chamber's executive vice president and chief operating officer. "Thank you again for choosing Tulsa."

SIXT was founded by the Sixt family near Munich, Germany. During World War II, Martin Sixt hid a car from the Nazis in a barn, said Tom Kennedy, president of SIXT USA.

"He restarted the company after the war by getting the contract to be the drivers for the U.S. military during reconstruction," Kennedy said. "So, the Sixt family has a real strong appreciation for the United States because without our country, they could have never restarted the company."

Since launching U.S. operations in Miami, Fla., in 2011, SIXT operates more than 100 rental car branches in the United States, serving 51 airports. The company reported more than \$1.5 billion in U.S. revenue last year, Kennedy said.

"Our growth has been tremendous," he said. "We're different than the big three. I appreciate the mayor's endorsement and his experience with us."

Kennedy, whose wife is from Broken Arrow, said SIXT hired a consultant to evaluate which city would be best for a new company branch.

"Tulsa came out far and above number one: quality of life; quality of workforce; education," Kennedy said. "Every parameter you want to measure a city against, Tulsa was number one. You guys should be very proud of this." ■



A Visit WITH REGIONAL TOURISM

QUARTERLY INSIGHTS FROM THE FOUR Pillars



Frequently referred to as the "front door" to economic development, tourism has a significant impact in our region and throughout Oklahoma. This brief quarterly "visit" with Tulsa Regional Tourism, an initiative of the Tulsa Regional Chamber, aims to spotlight some of our community's unique, successful and upcoming activities in this exciting industry—and how it supports your business and quality of life.

VISIT TULSA - LEISURE TRAVEL

SavvyTulsa Storytellers Showcase Tulsa's Tales

A never-before-in-Tulsa program aims to equip Tulsans to tell the city's story with warmth, confidence and authenticity thanks to a completely free online learning module.

SavvyTulsa launched on Valentine's Day as a love letter to Tulsa. The free, online course covers the pillars of Tulsa's tourism community, such as attractions, dining, music and film, as well as the significance of the historic Greenwood District, the Osage Nation, the Cherokee Nation and the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. SavvyTulsa is designed for anyone who wants to confidently promote Tulsa. It features reading materials, interactive surveys and quizzes, and videos from key community leaders, including Tulsa Mayor Monroe Nichols and the principal chiefs of Tulsa's three sovereign tribal nations.

"Many people don't know about Tulsa's history, but the more they get to know, the more they like us and appreciate all Tulsa



has to offer,” said Mayor Nichols, who is featured in the welcome video. “SavvyTulsa is just not about people coming here to visit and enjoy our city, but it’s part of helping people find a new home in Tulsa.”

Graduates will receive access to exclusive merchandise from Mythic Press, tourism assets and marketing collateral, as well as early access to in-person tours and insights on upcoming volunteer opportunities. Users can sign up at savvytulsa.com, and stay Savvy!

'Tourism Talks'

February also saw the debut of a new, standing monthly segment on Tulsa’s CBS affiliate, KOTV-6. The segment, which airs during the 4 p.m. newscast, will highlight the latest and greatest tourism offerings

in Tulsa with various guests, both internal team members and external partners. Tulsa Regional Tourism Director of Communications Jonathan Huskey was the first guest (Feb. 11) to put a spotlight on SavvyTulsa. Next, Tulsa Performing Arts Center CEO Mark Frie was joined by Kristin Dotson of Celebrity Attractions on March 13 to talk all things Outsiders in Tulsa this fall.

Make sure to tune in to stay up to date on Tulsa tourism! The next segment is scheduled for April 10.

Wanna Get Away? Come to Tulsa.

In honor of Black History Month, a Southwest Airlines marketing and content creation team visited Tulsa to highlight the city’s Black History Month initiatives. Inflight supervisor and digital content creator Ashley Smith spent a day touring the historic Greenwood District, including Fixins Soul Kitchen, Fulton Street Books & Coffee, Greenwood Rising Black Wall Street History Center and Silhouette Sneakers & Art.

Along with content for Southwest’s internal communications, the team created social media posts with exposure to more than 8 million followers combined on LinkedIn, Facebook and Instagram.



TULSA CVB - MEETINGS & CONVENTIONS

EXPOntial Impact for Tulsa

Expo Square is like a small city in the heart of Tulsa.

Spanning 240 acres, including the 448,00-square-foot SageNet Center, Expo Square is a unique venue nationwide. Capable of hosting everything from national equestrian shows to indoor auto racing to the flagship, "11 Days of Awesome" Tulsa State Fair, the city-within-a-city is one of the key economic engines of Tulsa, and it takes near-Herculean efforts to keep that engine running.

"Right now, we average about 40 employees that are full-time," said Amanda Blair, vice president and chief operating officer. "I always say we are a small but mighty team, and sometimes less is more."

Blair estimates the team spends 50 consecutive days after Labor Day preparing for the fair, which is solely owned and operated by Expo Square. Beyond the Fair, Expo Square also provides a world-class venue for year-round events. Whether that's 9,000 yards (750 dump truck loads) of clay inside for the Chili Bowl Nationals or flooring for livestock shows, the venue can and does host events that bring visitors to town for multiple nights, sometimes multiple weeks. The resulting hotel stays, dollars spent and monetary impact make it a true economic engine for the Tulsa region.

"Whenever our events occur, it's not just one night," Blair said. "It's people coming from everywhere, staying for a long time."

So the next time you drive down Harvard and pass Expo Square, just know: It may look quiet on the outside, but inside those gates, that engine never stops running.

Golden Nuggets

Interesting facts about Expo Square's Tulsa Golden Driller:

- Weighs 43,500 pounds
- Wears a size 48-foot belt, 393 DDD shoe and a 112 hard hat
- Contains 2.5 miles of rebar and mesh
- First appeared in 1953 as a promotion for Tulsa's International Petroleum Exposition (IPE)





Photo Credit: Pistols Firing

WELCOME TO TULSA

TULSA SPORTS - PRO & AMATEUR

Tulsa Turns Out for Wrestling

Amateur wrestling was the name of the game in Tulsa for the weekend of March 8-9.

The BOK Center hosted the Big 12 Wrestling Championships for the ninth consecutive year, and fans were treated to a thrilling championship Sunday. The team title went down to the last match, with Oklahoma State's Wyatt Hendrickson winning to give the Cowboys their first conference championship since 2021.

A Big 12-record 21,309 fans came through the turnstiles over the four sessions Saturday and Sunday to watch some of the best collegiate wrestling in the country. That resulted in an estimated \$2.1 million in total economic impact (estimated \$1.2 million direct).

Just across the street, Arvest Convention Center hosted the World of Wrestling Youth National Duals with the best wrestlers from ages 9-and-under all the way to 12th grade competing. With estimated economic impacts of \$1 million direct and \$1.8 million total from the Youth National Duals, amateur wrestling accounted for a nearly \$4 million impact to the Tulsa economy that weekend.

TULSA FMAC - CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

FILM - Economic Impact Study

Few states have as much film momentum as Oklahoma, and now there is data to back that up. The Oklahoma Film + Music Office commissioned a study showing the Filmed In Oklahoma Act (FIOA) of 2021 has generated more than half a billion dollars of economic impact throughout the state.

Currently, the FIOA offers a base incentive of 20 percent on qualified expenses for film and TV productions, capped at a total of \$30 million annually. The study showed a near six-fold increase from \$31.8 million in incentivized spending in fiscal year 2020, to more than \$187 million in 2021, the year the FIOA went into effect.

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"Filming in Oklahoma is at never-before-seen levels of success, thanks in large part to the rebates and tax incentives offered by the Filmed in Oklahoma Act," said Meg Gould, executive director of the Tulsa Office of Film, Music, Arts and Culture. "Those funds have helped grow the industry locally and across the state, and to keep this momentum and further solidify Oklahoma as a global production hub, we must ensure our funding stays competitive with other states around the country."

Broken Arrow recently announced its own film incentive. The \$100,000 pilot program includes a 10% rebate on local spending during a film project, a \$500 rebate for every 12 room nights spent at a Broken Arrow hotel, and a 10-20% rebate on the cost of production space used during filming. The program will be evaluated after a year to determine success and long-term viability.

FILM - MovieMaker Magazine

Movin' on up!

Tulsa climbed four spots to number 15 on MovieMaker Magazine's "Best Places to Live and Work as a Filmmaker" list, announced early 2025. This is the third year Tulsa has been included on the "big cities" list and ranked number 19 each of the previous years.

"This is a validation of the hard work of everyone involved in Tulsa's film production industry," Gould said. "Ranking ahead of cities like Charlotte, Fort Worth and Boston shows that Tulsa is continuing to make a name for itself. Thanks to incredible production locations, a thriving community of creatives and a rapidly expanding local workforce, Tulsa is a fantastic

filming location for projects large and small. Congratulations to Oklahoma City as well for debuting at number 13 on the list, further solidifying Oklahoma as a premier film location not just in the country but around the world."

MovieMaker said Tulsa is "having a big moment as a film and TV hub," highlighting the Filmed in Oklahoma Act's 20-30% rebate for productions in the state, along with Circle Cinema and the Circle Cinema Film Festival, and the ease with which film permits are obtained in the state as reasons for the ranking.

MUSIC - Folk Alliance

It's not competition, it's **collaboration**.

Two cities with the most storied music histories in America teamed up Feb. 19-23 at the 2025 Folk Alliance International Conference in Montreal as Tulsa FMAC and the Fort Worth Music Office co-hosted a room at the Le Centre Sheraton Montreal Hotel.

The two organizations recognized their shared passion for helping local artists thrive and decided to "reach across the border."

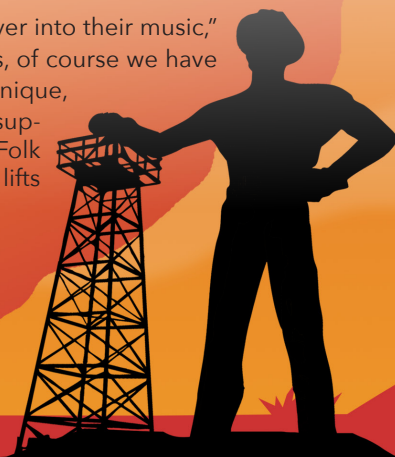
The first night featured Tulsa artists Josh Westbrook, Cassie Latshaw, Carter Combs and Avery Marshall. The next night was a collaborative night between Tulsa and Fort Worth artists, and Fort Worth artists took the stage on Saturday.

"Fort Worth and Tulsa have such unique cultures that aren't found anywhere else, and that carries over into their music," said Tom Martens, director of the Fort Worth Music Office. "In Texas, of course we have Western culture, but we also have R&B and soul, and in Tulsa it's the unique, genre-blurring 'Tulsa Sound' that makes it stand out. We want to be supportive of each other's music industries, and sharing a room at the Folk Alliance was the perfect opportunity. We truly believe a rising tide lifts all boats."



Best Place to Live & Work as a Moviemaker

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ARTS - Tulsa PAC Announces Expansion Plan

The Tulsa Performing Arts Center could transform into a one-stop-shop for arts and entertainment on and off the stage within the next decade.

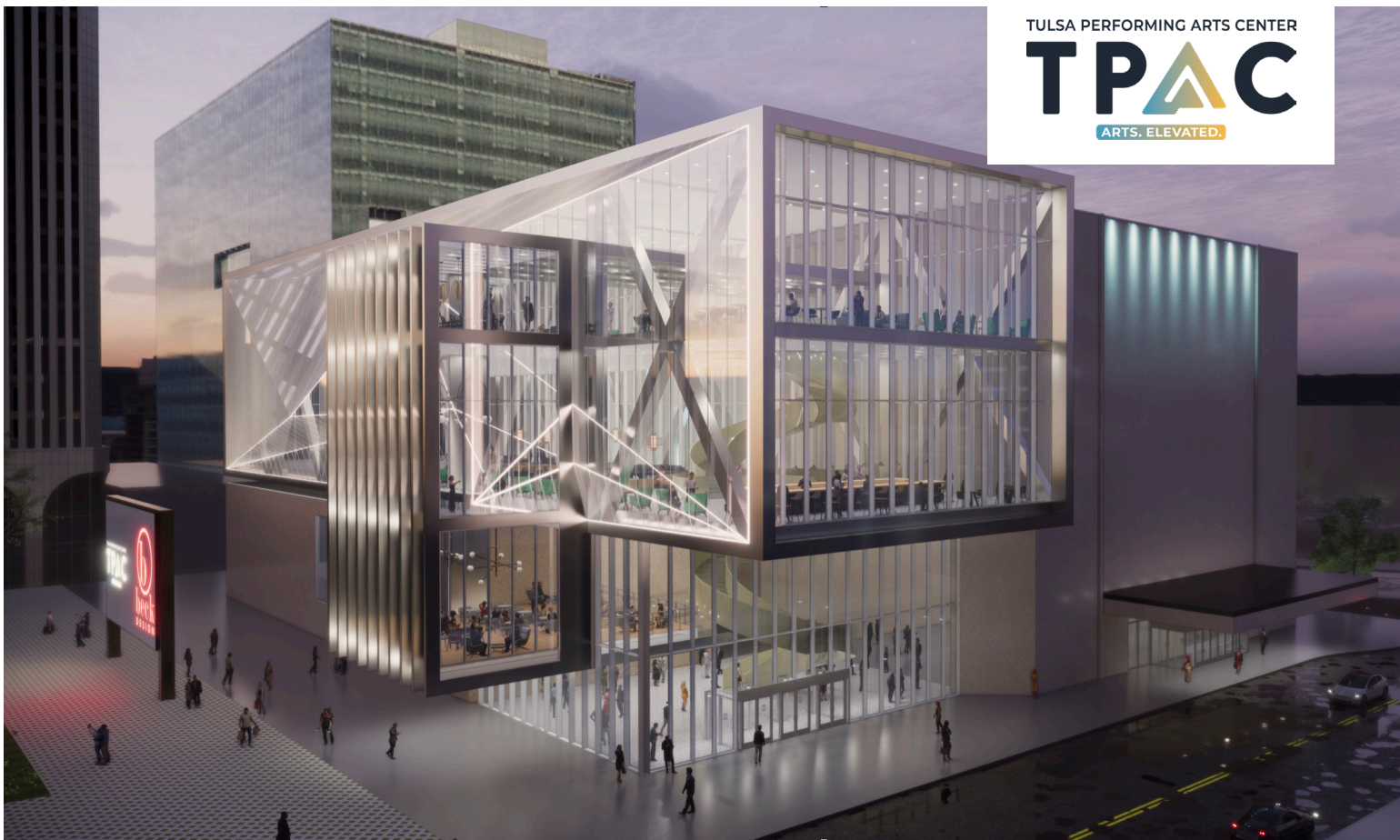
Tulsa PAC CEO Mark Frie recently presented a 10-year master plan to city councilors for a renovated space including a bar, restaurant and several pre- and post-show amenities. The star of the show, as it were, however, would be a new, 1,400-seat theater on the site of a parking lot directly east of the PAC.

"It activates the Performing Arts Center," Frie said in his presentation, according to the Tulsa World. "Our industry used to be that you got people in and out as quickly and safely as possible. (Now) if you look at successful performing arts centers throughout the world, it is an active place that is always buzzing, always open, and it really becomes the center for creativity and collaboration."

The ambitious plans would shut down the PAC for three years, though Frie has a plan for that as well. If funding allows, the new theater could be built first, with renovations to follow. Or, if that option isn't feasible, a "theater tent on steroids" across from the PAC.

"This is a company out of Great Britain," Frie said. "These are theaters in a box. They come, they build all the seating, all the rigging, all the soft goods, restrooms, lobby space. All of this is included in what we could do to stay operational."

The World reported city councilors were supportive of Frie's proposal and "indicated that they plan to approve a resolution saying so." ■



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COUNTY COMMISSIONER LONNIE SIMS

Lonnie Sims has served as Tulsa County District 2 Commissioner since January 2025, bringing more than 20 years of public service experience. Prior to this role, Sims was the mayor of Jenks, a member of the Jenks City Council, and the House District 68 representative in the Oklahoma Legislature from 2018 to 2024. He chaired the County & Municipal Government Committee and held key positions on the Transportation, Judicial-Criminal, and Public Safety Appropriations Committees. In 2023, Sims was honored with the Ed Gerchman Leadership Award for his longstanding dedication to public service. He has also contributed to regional authorities, including the INCOG Board of Directors, Tulsa Vision Authority, and the Arkansas River Task Force. Sims holds an MBA from OSU and has been married to his wife, Lea Ann, for 24 years. They have one daughter, Laney, who was recently accepted to OSU Medical School.

What are the most pressing issues facing Tulsa County today?

The most pressing issue facing Tulsa County is the Tulsa-West Tulsa Levee, a critical piece of infrastructure that demands immediate attention. A failure could put 10,000 residents and over \$2 billion in assets at risk. The consequences go beyond these figures, threatening community stability and regional economic growth. In 20 years of public service, I've witnessed remarkable regional progress through public initiatives like Vision and private investments like the Gathering Place. However, this progress could be wiped out overnight, and we only need to look at Hurricane Katrina to understand the devastating impact of such a disaster.

What role do you see Tulsa playing in broader economic development of the region, and how will you help drive this growth?

Tulsa County has long been a leader in regional economic development, with initiatives like Vision 2025 and 4 to Fix It serving as successful models. Recently, we've embraced a more collaborative, cities-united approach, which helped secure support for the Arkansas River low-water dams, a project decades in the making. These efforts reflect our ability to adapt to local community priorities while driving regional growth. Armed with this local knowledge and serving the past six years in the Oklahoma House, I'm more confident than ever we can leverage these insights

and networks to create new opportunities, foster continued growth and position our region for greater long-term success.

How will your experience with the City of Jenks and in the Oklahoma Legislature contribute to your effectiveness in this new role with Tulsa County?

My 20 years of public service, ranging from planning commissioner and city councilman to mayor and state representative, have provided me with a comprehensive understanding of local governance, regional collaboration and the legislative process. In this new role as county commissioner, my experience in planning and development will guide me in addressing infrastructure challenges, while my time in the Oklahoma Legislature has enhanced my ability to secure funding and build strong regional partnerships. These combined experiences will allow me to effectively tackle issues, drive progress and contribute to my advocacy for District 2 and Tulsa County's continued growth and success.

How do you plan to build on the current momentum in tourism and continue expanding the number of visitors to Tulsa County?

I'll focus on strengthening partnerships across the state, county and local levels with businesses, tourism boards, and regional attractions to create a seamless, exciting experience for visitors. Expanding our marketing efforts to showcase Tulsa's unique culture, arts and outdoor offerings

is a top priority. For example, I recently heard about a group of friends from Michigan who chose the Christmas Chute in Sapulpa for their annual trip. Tulsa's distinctive appeal attracts a diverse range of tourists, and we must capitalize on that. Central to supporting tourism is continued investment in infrastructure improvements that enhance transportation and accessibility. Through collaboration, innovation, and strategic investment, we can grow our visitor numbers and boost the local economy.

Tulsa Mayor Monroe Nichols and you are starting new jobs at the same time. How do you envision the county and city collaborating to move the Tulsa region forward?

The first thing that comes to mind is that God's plans are always bigger than we can imagine. Just a year ago, Mayor Nichols and I were focused on preparing for the upcoming legislative session, and now we both find ourselves in new roles—him as a trailblazing new mayor of Tulsa and me as the newly elected chairman of the Tulsa Board of County Commissioners. It's a tremendous blessing, and one we don't take lightly. Our relationship, forged through shared experiences at the State House, brings a trust and understanding that typically takes years to develop. To bring that into our new roles from day one is incredibly exciting. The opportunities are limitless.... ■

MOSAIC MEETING HIGHLIGHTS ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND INCLUSION WITH SILHOUETTE'S KELLEN JAMES

Greenwood sneaker shop owner shares insights on passion, business and community impact



Building a business takes more than passion; it takes vision, resilience and a commitment to something larger than yourself.

At Mosaic's February meeting, attendees heard first-hand how entrepreneur Kellen James turned his love for sneakers into a thriving business that is not only shaping Tulsa's sneaker culture but also strengthening the Greenwood community.

The first installment of Mosaic's Journey Unseen series featured a conversation with James, owner of Silhouette Sneakers & Art in Tulsa, and Jonathan Long, vice president of diversity, equity and inclusion at the Tulsa Regional Chamber. The meeting explored James's evolution from sneaker enthusiast to entrepreneur, the significance of Silhouette's location in the historic Greenwood District and his dedication to making an impact beyond just selling shoes.

James's affinity for sneakers, especially those he couldn't get as a child, eventually led to his owning a business.

"The shoes that sparked the most passion were the ones that you couldn't get your hands on," he said.

Silhouette's presence in Greenwood is significant for James and his family. More than a sneaker store, it has become a hub for community engagement, hosting events such as Dreamland and fundraisers for Booker T. Washington High School's girls' basketball team.

"The proudest moments I've had don't have anything to do with selling shoes," he said. "It's about bringing people together in Greenwood."

James also spoke about the challenges and rewards of balancing multiple responsibilities. In addition to running Silhouette, he is a firefighter, husband and father.

"Without [my wife], I fall apart for real, man," he said, acknowledging the importance of family support and time management in his journey.

James envisions Silhouette as a defining part of Tulsa's identity, a landmark that reflects the city's history, culture and creative energy.

"When you think of Tulsa, when you think of Black Wall Street, when you think of Greenwood, I want it to be, 'You have to go to Silhouette,'" he said.

As the Journey Unseen series continues, Mosaic meetings will highlight more leaders making an impact through inclusive leadership.

Check out tulsachamber.com/events for more information and registration for the next meeting in this series. ■



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ONE VOICE DAY AT THE CAPITOL CONVENES BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY LEADERS

Signature state advocacy trip visits OKC

by Braden Patton, Communications Manager for the Tulsa Regional Chamber





The Tulsa Regional Chamber hosted its annual OneVoice Day at the Capitol on March 3-4. The Chamber's signature state advocacy trip brought 150 business and community leaders from the Tulsa region to Oklahoma City to discuss critical issues with elected officials.

The trip began with a legislative reception at the First National Center's Library of Distilled Spirits, where nearly 30 Oklahoma legislators joined Chamber members for face-to-face conversations about issues impacting the Tulsa region.

"When business leaders and legislators know each other by name, it makes a real difference in the policymaking process," said Katie Henke, senior vice president of government affairs for the Tulsa Regional Chamber. "This trip is all about strengthening those connections and ensuring our members have a voice in state government."

Tuesday's programming featured a range of speakers and policy dialogues, beginning with a discussion on film and television production in the state from Meg Gould, executive director of the Tulsa Office of Film, Music, Arts and Culture, and Jeanette Stanton, director of the Oklahoma Film and Music Office.

Later that morning, Oklahoma Attorney General Gentner Drummond addressed the breakfast audience and outlined key challenges facing the state, including organized crime, drug trafficking, tribal relations and workforce development.

"Oklahoma has the raw material to be a superstar state; we just need leadership willing to take risks," Drummond said. "With the right leadership and partnerships, we can make Oklahoma a national leader in business and workforce development."

Drummond spoke at length about Oklahoma's efforts to shut down illegal marijuana grow operations, which he said have been linked to international crime organizations. His office's Organized Crime Task Force has already shut down 9,000 illegal farms across the state.

"We are going after these criminals, and we are not stopping," Drummond said.

He also emphasized the economic contributions of Oklahoma's tribal nations, calling for stronger partnerships between state leaders and tribal governments to drive economic growth. He stressed that tribal nations invest heavily in infrastructure, health care and job creation and should be seen as key partners in shaping the state's future.

[MORE →](#)



Lt. Gov. Matt Pinnell speaks at the OneVoice Day at the Capitol.



Kyla Guyette (far right), CEO of the Oklahoma Workforce Commission, speaks during a OneVoice panel discussion alongside Brent Haken (second from left), state director of Career and Technology Education; Sean Burrage (second from right), chancellor of the Oklahoma State System of Higher Education; and panel moderator Tina Parkhill, the Chamber's vice president of government affairs.

"We need to find a way to partner with and harness the economic power of our tribal partners and stop treating them as 'them,'" he said. "It is 'we.' We are on the same team."

Later in the day, Oklahoma Lt. Gov. Matt Pinnell spoke about workforce development and the impact of tourism on the state's economy. He highlighted the upcoming Route 66 centennial celebrations as a major opportunity to drive economic activity and attract visitors to Oklahoma.

"Lieutenant Governor Pinnell continues to be a tremendous champion for Tulsa," said Mike Neal, president and CEO of the Tulsa Regional Chamber. "He's always eager to engage with northeast Oklahoma's business leaders and understands the issues that matter to our region."

Workforce development was a major theme throughout the trip and was the focus of a panel discussion moderated by Chamber Vice Chair of Government Affairs Tina Parkhill. Panelists were Kyla Guyette, CEO of the Oklahoma Workforce Commission; Sean Burrage, chancellor of the Oklahoma State System of Higher Education; and Brent Haken, state director the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education. The discussion centered on how to ensure Oklahoma's education and training systems effectively prepare workers to meet industry demands.

For Guyette, one of the biggest problems is figuring out where workforce dollars are actually going.

"We are spending a lot on workforce development," she said. "The question is, are we investing it in the right places? Probably not."

Her team is working on a statewide public dashboard to track workforce funding, measure program effectiveness and help eliminate duplication.

Burrage highlighted higher education's critical role in workforce retention, particularly in fields facing major labor shortages such as engineering, nursing and education.

"Sixty percent of out-of-state students who attend Oklahoma public colleges are still working here a year later," he said.

But even the best training programs can't help if workers face employment obstacles. Principal among those in Oklahoma, the panelists said, is a lack of childcare.

"It's not just about training people," Guyette said. "It's about removing the barriers that keep people from working in the first place."

The trip concluded with a visit from Sen. John Haste, who spoke about key bills moving through the legislature, and a Q&A session with Oklahoma House Speaker Kyle Hilbert. The discussion reinforced the importance of direct engagement between the business community and state leaders to ensure that workforce development, economic growth and public policy align with Oklahoma's long-term success. ■



Oklahoma Attorney General Gentner Drummond said "Oklahoma has the raw material to be a superstar state" during an address at the Tulsa Regional Chamber's OneVoice Day at the Capitol.

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bhid.com

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36 E. Cameron St., Ste. 22
Tulsa, OK 74103
ourcollectiveimpact.com

Collective Impact is a consulting firm and software platform designed to help grassroots community organizations cultivate and strengthen their capacity by mapping the internal and external resources, systems and infrastructure needed for long-term success.

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Hotel.

Inventure Design

508 S. Boston Ave.
Tulsa, OK 74103
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Inventure is a dynamic team of architects, designers and innovators experienced in architecture, interior design, furniture and brand storytelling. Innovative, curious and endlessly creative, it crafts its design solutions to elevate clients' aspirations, centered on the impact that these changes will bring to their everyday lives.

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8801 S. Yale Ave., Ste. 100
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kecomms.com

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newstorybrewing.com

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902 S. Boulder Ave.
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Tulsa, OK 74132
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Tulsa Irish Fest

P.O. Box 3163
Tulsa, OK 74101

tulsairishfest.org

Tulsa IrishFest is a 501(c)(3) dedicated to bringing culturally authentic, family-friendly Irish entertainment and experiences to Tulsa the second weekend in March each year. Our long-term goals include an artist-in-residence program and a cultural center funded by proceeds generated at the festival each year.

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Victory Properties is a full-service short-term property rental management company. Its properties are available for Airbnb, VRBO, Booking.com and our website.

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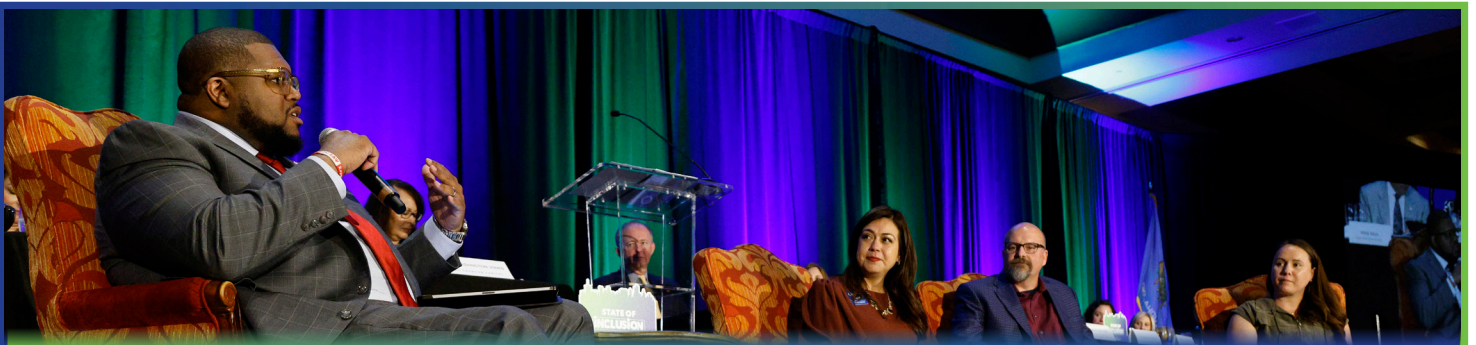
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