

# TULSA WORLD

A year later, the Tulsa Premium Outlets has proven to be a boon for Jenks **BUSINESS, PAGE E1**



Sweetie Pie's brings the favorite Amish foods of Chouteau to midtown Tulsa **SCENE, PAGE D1**

High school coaches split on value of 7-on-7 football in player development **SPORTS, PAGE B1**

Editorial: What can you do to help Tulsa Public Schools this year? Here's a list **OPINION, PAGE E5**

Sunday, August 17, 2025

WHERE YOUR STORY LIVES

tulsaworld.com

## Cellphone-free school year arrives

New law bans students from using personally owned electronic devices

**LENZY KREHBIEL-BURTON**  
Tulsa World

Classes started Thursday for Owasso Public Schools and the school year already looks a little different for Maya Keene.

Thanks to a new state law, the Owasso High School sophomore and other students across the state are not allowed to use cellphones, smart watches and other electronic devices during the school day.

Along with making it more challenging to find her friends during lunch and passing periods, it's prompted some other minor moments during the first two days of classes.

"I can obviously read a clock, but I'm just used to looking at my smart watch for the time," Keene said. "It's definitely a bigger adjustment than I thought it would be."

"I have a feeling we'll all get used to it,

but I just don't like it."

Earlier this year, the state Legislature approved and the governor signed Senate Bill 139, which requires Oklahoma school districts to adopt a policy for the 2025-26 school year banning all students from using personally owned electronic devices during the school day.

Although the measure has been referred to as a "cellphone ban," the law also extends to smart watches, laptops, tablets, Bluetooth headphones and any other electronic device that can be connected to a network.

For Maya's father, Joe, the prospect of reducing distractions in the classroom by curbing access to electronics is welcome — even if it means his daughter has to resort to old-school notes on paper to track her friends down for lunch.

"I support it," he said. "The phones can be a big distraction and anything you can do to do away with distractions is good, especially in a school setting. It's a big positive that there aren't any phones allowed."

Please see **CELLPHONES**, Page A3



**MIKE SIMONS, TULSA WORLD**

Junior Cale Jones, front right, looks at a lesson on the board in advanced algebra 2 Friday at Owasso High School. Under a new state law, students across the state are not allowed to use cellphones, smart watches and other electronic devices during the school day.

### HOMELESSNESS IN TULSA

## Outreach workers vital to helping the homeless



**MIKE SIMONS, TULSA WORLD**

Tears fall as Pixie describes how the influences of being homeless had taken her hope before Josh Sanders convinced her a better path awaited. "Josh is in my community," Pixie said of the Tulsa Day Center outreach coordinator. "He gave me space for myself. This has been my second start in life. I know I am meant for better things."

### Challenging cases require a unique approach that involves building trust

Nestled in the corner of a Tulsa motel, Angie Humble is shy about answering her door. Nine years living on the street has her leery of people, but a painful skin cancer eating into her nasal passage amplifies her reluctance to be around others.

That hesitancy changed recently when Josh Sanders was making the rounds to check on people participating in Tulsa's Rapid Rehousing Program operated by

the Day Center. As soon as Sanders said his name, Humble broke into a smile, opened her arms out for a hug and started crying.

It was a hero's welcome. "I didn't need to be on the streets anymore. I needed to get out," Humble said. "When you're on the streets, you get in a rut and lose what it is you want. You have the fight but no longer the want. He got me out."

Humble, 52, had been living in an encampment near 41st Street and Charles Page Boulevard after being moved off a levee due to concerns about flooding.

Medicaid funds her treatment for HIV and skin cancer through Oklahoma State University Medical Center. But homelessness makes health care consistency and recovery difficult.

She chokes back emotion when recalling how a case manager offered in July to get her into temporary housing with Sanders' help.

"This came at the right time because of the heat was coming on. They came on a day I was suffering from heat exhaustion. I literally couldn't figure out

Please see **GRAHAM**, Page A4

## Private prison firm seeks detention officers

Company is advertising jobs at vacant sites in Watonga and Sayre

**KEATON ROSS**  
Oklahoma Watch

As federal spending on immigrant enforcement and detention soars, a private prison company is advertising detention officer positions at vacant prisons in Watonga and Sayre.

Tennessee-based CoreCivic, whose stock has risen 52% since President Donald Trump's victory last November, is offering \$27 per hour to detention officer recruits as it negotiates contracts with the federal government to reopen the idle facilities. That's \$5.50 per hour more than what Oklahoma pays its entry-level correctional officers.

No law enforcement or corrections experience is necessary to apply, according to the postings. Applicants must be 21 or older, have a clean driving record and hold a high school diploma or GED.

The Watonga prison, which housed out-of-state prisoners from Hawaii, Wisconsin and California during the late 1990s and 2000s, has been empty since May 2010. The Oklahoma Department of Corrections vacated the North Fork facility more recently in June 2023, citing persistent staffing shortages. The facilities have a combined capacity of 4,560 beds.

During a third quarter earnings call on Aug. 7, CoreCivic CEO Damon Hininger said the company was in advanced negotiations with the federal government to open two of its vacant prisons. In May, company officials described its Oklahoma facilities as especially attractive to the federal government because they're centrally located and close to the Federal Transfer Center in Oklahoma City.

"Contracting activity is happening at a much quicker pace," Hininger said. "They have a need and a funding for all these solutions."

CoreCivic spokesman Brian Todd directed questions about when the facilities could reopen to the United States

Please see **PRISONS**, Page A5



**Lottery**  
For the latest lottery numbers, point your smartphone camera at the QR code, then tap the link.

**Weather**  
Partly sunny  
**High 95 • Low 76**  
FORECAST • A20

### Inside

Asking Eric	D11	Letters	E6	Scene	D1
Comics	D6-9	Obituaries	A16	Sports TV	B2
Crosswords	D10	Opinion	E4-6	What to Watch	A19

**Sunday - \$4.00**

