

# Osage Health Newsletter

LATEST HEALTH & WELLNESS NEWS, ACTIVITIES, AND HAPPENINGS

# INSIDE Updates

- Excitedment Builds for New ONHS Clinic
- Day of Champions June
- Autism Awareness
- April is Oral Cancer Awareness Month
- Glow Easter Egg Hunt
- Sobriety Walk-A-Thon
- Car Seat Safety Check
- April- Alcohol Awareness Month

# Health & Wellness Topics

The very latest of a variety of Health & Wellness topics happening today.

# Excitement builds for new Osage Nation Healthcare Facility



Foyer of new Wahzhazhe Health Center (pictured from left to right) Osage Nation (ON) Chief Geoffrey StandingBear, Julie StandingBear (ONHS HR Director), Sheryl Decker (Chief Executive Advisor to Principal Chief), Jimmy Aldridge (ON Deputy Chief of Staff), Mark Rogers (ONHS CEO), Cheyenne Powell (ONHS Executive Administrative Assistant, and Jason Zaun (ON Chief of Staff).

Mark Rogers, CEO of the Osage Nation Health System, and Cheyenne Powell, Executive Assistant Administration, recently welcomed Chief Geoffrey Standing Bear and members of his executive staff for an in-depth tour of the Osage Nation Health Facility, currently in the final stages construction in downtown Pawhuska, Oklahoma.

The new facility represents a major investment in the future of Native healthcare, designed to provide state-of-the-art medical services that will significantly enhance the patient experience. From its architecture to its advanced technological infrastructure, the facility is built with a focus on accessibility, quality care, and cultural sensitivity.

Patients will soon have access to expanded specialty services, an

upgraded electronic health records system, and cutting-edge diagnostic equipment—bringing a quantum leap in healthcare delivery to the Osage Nation and surrounding communities. This modern health center is not just a building, but a symbol of the Nation's ongoing commitment to improving health outcomes and providing compassionate, top-tier care close to home.

Transition plans are underway with moves expected to begin in June. The facility is on track for a grand opening anticipated in mid-July 2025. More updates and opening details will be shared as they become available.

Stay tuned as we enter a transformative chapter for Osage Nation Health Services!

# **Autism Awareness Begins with Understanding**

By Dr. Elizabeth Hovey, Pharm. D.



April is Autism Awareness Month and April 2nd is World Autism Awareness Day! As a mother to a young autistic individual, I'm hoping to use this article to help bring awareness to others about Autism Spectrum Disorder, also known as ASD. Many people do not quite understand the disorder and may never even attempt to understand it, unless they are forced to walk in the shoes of an autism parent.

A little about myself and my child with ASD. I am currently a staff pharmacist at the Wahzhazhe clinic, and I have a 9-year-old son who was diagnosed with autism at age 2. He started exhibiting symptoms of autism beginning at infancy, including a delay in crawling, walking, saying words, lack of eye contact, etc., and I even wondered if he was deaf because he would never respond to his name or when he was being spoken to. He did eventually learn to crawl and walk but it was at a later age than typical. He was evaluated and diagnosed as being "severely autistic" just after his 2nd birthday.

What is ASD anyway? It is a developmental disability caused by the affected person's brain being "wired" a little differently than a neurotypical person. The symptoms are extremely varied, and the diagnoses and severity are considered to be on a large "spectrum". There are more symptoms than I will even list here but in my personal experience, these are some of the symptoms

my child experiences and many of his symptoms are very different than his classmates and many other children with ASD as well. Just to name a few, he is considered "non-speaking", he has trouble communicating his needs and wants, and learning in school is very difficult for him as well. He can repeat phrases from movies and songs (echolalia), but he is unable to have an actual conversation with someone. He does not often make direct eye contact, he is sensitive to many sounds, he "rocks" back and forth and "stims" verbally and physically, and he prefers to play on his own. He has been unable to be completely toilet trained, he tends to elope (run away from us or leave without supervision) frequently, and he doesn't understand danger in many situations, including busy roads and/or large bodies of water. He has "meltdowns" when he has trouble with self regulation, and he cannot bathe/shower himself or dress himself, among many other things that he struggles with in life as well. These are just a few of the many symptoms that people affected with ASD might experience.

The prevalence of ASD in Oklahoma is approximately 1 in 51 children and per the CDC website, the national prevalence is 1 in 36 children, and autism is 4 times more prevalent in boys than in girls. We don't know exactly what causes autism, but many do have speculations. One question I often hear discussed is if vaccines can cause ASD. According to the CDC website, the studies continue to show that vaccines are not associated with autism. There is no cure for autism, but treatment includes behavioral, developmental, educational, pharmacological, and psychological treatments, as well as others not listed here. My son receives ABA (applied behavioral analysis), speech, and

## **Autism Awareness Begins with Understanding**

(Continued to page from page 2)

occupational therapy inside and outside of school. He has received 6 years of these types of therapies and has improved over time but still struggles daily, with all of the same symptoms. However, his symptoms have lessened in severity with the help of therapy. All treatments for autism are meant to "seek to reduce symptoms that interfere with daily functioning and quality of life." What I hope to gain from writing this article is to help spread awareness, to help others be understanding, to ask that everyone treat those with autism (and their parents or guardians) with dignity, respect and kindness. Living with autism can definitely be difficult, especially when you think about all the ways our lives are affected by the disorder. There are so many things our family doesn't get to do, and his sister is also affected because of the limits ASD puts on our family. The positive side of ASD for us though, is everything that Parker CAN do! Frist of all, he has the sweetest disposition, smile, and the best

giggles. He can hear a song and then play it by ear on the piano and he can listen to a song and sing it on perfect pitch. He is extremely musical and very talented. He has a great memory too, sometimes I wonder if it is photographic. He loves theme parks and rides and loves to do "parkour" on all our furniture at home, haha. He is the sweetest kid. I'd much rather focus on his "abilities" instead of his "disabilities" and I hope others will do so too. As a parent to a child with autism, for me, the hardest thing about it is to think about his life when will not be there to advocate for and help him. In our specific situation, I'm not sure that my son will ever be able to live independently. We will have to depend on others to be understanding, kind, and to help care for him, and help him live his best life. So that is one reason I want to spread awareness so that others will hopefully be more understanding and accepting and be more willing to help advocate for him and others like him, on down the road.



### at OSAGE NATION HEALTH SYSTEM



### **New Patient Portal:**

- Improved access to your health information
- Communicate directly with your provider
- Request an appointment
- And more!

Activation Code Coming Soon.

Install the app on iphone or Android for real-time access to your health information

Apple version note: MyChart app versions 9.2 and above require iOS 11











# Community Shines Bright at 2025 Glow Fun Walk & Easter Egg







PC: Cheyenne Powell, ONHS Executive Administrative Assistant





The Osage Nation Health System lit up the night on April 11, 2025, as more than 640 community members came together for the annual Glow Fun Walk & Easter Egg Hunt at the Osage Nation Outdoor Health Complex. The event brought families of all ages out for a glowing evening of celebration, wellness, and togetherness.

This year's event included inflatable fun, music, food, games, a movie showing, and a glow-themed walk that wove through the scenic trails of Pawhuska. A total of 350 participants joined the Glow Fun Walk, glowing brightly under the spring sky with neon gear and big smiles. With over 290 people participating in the egg hunts alone, the evening was filled with laughter, excitement, and thousands of glowing eggs scattered across the lawn for all to enjoy.

The event also featured four separate



egg hunts, broken down by age groups to make sure every hunter had their chance to shine:

Ages 0-6: 75 participants Ages 7-13: 100 participants Ages 14-17: 28 participants Ages 18+: 87 participants

"This event is about more than just fun," said an ONHS CEO Mark Rogers. "It brings families together, encourages physical activity, and strengthens our sense of community and well-being."

As the sun set, families gathered to watch a movie under the stars, ending the night with a stronger sense of community and glowing memories.

The Osage Nation Health System would like to thank all the volunteers, families, and community partners who made this event possible. Here's to continuing the tradition of health, joy, and connection—one glowing step at a time.

### **April is Alcohol Awareness Month**

April is Alcohol Awareness Month, a time dedicated to increasing public understanding about the causes and effects of alcohol misuse. For the Osage Nation Health System (ONHS), this month serves as an important opportunity to open conversations, reduce stigma, and support healing within our Native communities—many of which continue to carry the burden of historical trauma and its ongoing impact, including substance use disorders.

Native American communities have been disproportionately affected by alcohol-related issues due to a complex combination of factors, including intergenerational trauma, limited culturally access to relevant healthcare, economic hardship, and the lasting effects of federal policies disrupted traditional lifeways. While alcohol misuse is not unique to Native people, the consequences are often more severe because of systemic barriers to care and long-standing underinvestment in tribal health resources.

Alcohol contributes to a wide range of health and social challenges in Native communities. These include higher rates of liver disease, accidental injuries, domestic violence, depression, and suicide. In some cases, alcohol misuse also increases the risk of chronic conditions such as diabetes and hypertension, which already impact Native populations at higher rates. The effects often extend beyond the individual, disrupting families and placing additional strain on community resources.

For Native youth, early exposure to alcohol—often influenced by family environment, peer pressure, or a lack of positive outlets—can lead to long-term patterns of misuse. Studies show that Native American adolescents are more likely to begin drinking at younger ages



and face greater risk for developing dependency. This makes early intervention, culturally grounded education, and community-based prevention all the more vital.

The Osage Nation Health System is committed to addressing these challenges head-on. Our Counseling Center offers confidential support services, including substance use assessments, recovery planning, individual and group counseling, and referrals to inpatient treatment when needed. These services are offered in a way that respects the cultural identity and lived experiences of our people.

Alcohol Awareness Month is also a time to honor those in recovery and the strength it takes to walk the path of sobriety. It is an opportunity to stand beside survivors, support families, and remove the shame that too often surrounds substance use disorders. Healing is possible, and it begins with access, understanding, and community support.

ONHS encourages anyone who may be struggling with alcohol use—or who is concerned about a loved one—to reach out. Support is available, and no one has to walk the journey alone. For more information or to schedule a confidential consultation, contact the Osage Nation Counseling Center at (918) 287-5413.

# American Indians and Alaska Natives With Diabetes Can Prevent Vision Loss

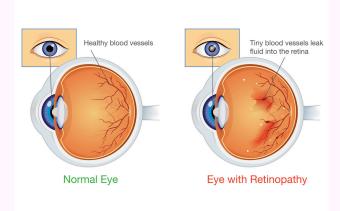
By National Eye Institute

You can't feel it. You can't see it-until it's too late. Diabetic retinopathy, the most common form of diabetic eye disease, is the leading cause of blindness in adults age 20-74. It occurs when diabetes damages blood vessels in the retina. Diabetic retinopathy affects 7.7 million Americans, and that number is projected to increase to more than 14.6 million people by 2030, including many American Indians and Alaska Natives. According to the Indian Health Service, almost 16 percent of American Indians and Alaska Natives have diabetes. Amona them. diabetes considerably in various regions, from 6 percent among Alaska Natives to 24 percent among American Indians in southern Arizona. The longer a person has diabetes, the greater the risk for diabetic eye disease. Once vision is lost, it often cannot be restored. People with diabetes should have a comprehensive dilated eye exam at lleast once a year to help protect their sight. Keeping diabetes in control is key to slowing the progression of vision complications like diabetic retinopathy. There are important steps people with diabetes can take to keep their health on TRACK:

Take your medications as prescribed by your doctor.
 Reach and maintain a healthy weight.
 Add physical activity to your daily routine.
 Control your ABC's—A1C, blood pressure, and cholesterol levels.
 Kick the smoking habit.

Dr. Paul Sieving, director of the National Eye Institute (NEI), says, "Only about half of all people with diabetes get an annual comprehensive dilated eye exam, which is essential for detecting diabetic eye disease early, when it is most treatable. Newer and better treatments are available for the first time in decades, making early detection even more important." With no early symptoms, diabetic eye disease—a group of conditions including cataract, glaucoma, and diabetic retinopathy-can affect anyone with type 1 or type 2 diabetes. American Indians/Alaska Natives are at higher risk for losing vision or going blind from diabetes. Early detection, timely treatment, and appropriate follow-up care can reduce a person's risk for severe vision loss from diabetic eye disease by 95 percent. "More than ever, it's important for people with diabetes to have a comprehensive dilated eye exam at least once a year.

### Diabetic Retinopathy

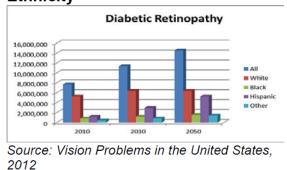


Diabetic Retinopathy. Photo: © Istock / Credit: solar22

### **Did You Know?**

- Everyone with diabetes is at risk for diabetic retinopathy.
- About 16% of American Indians and Alaska Natives have diabetes.
- There are no early symptoms.
- A dilated eye exam can detect eye disease before vision loss occurs.
- Don't wait until you notice an eye problem to have an exam.

### Projected Increase of Diabetic Retinopathy in the United States, by Ethnicity

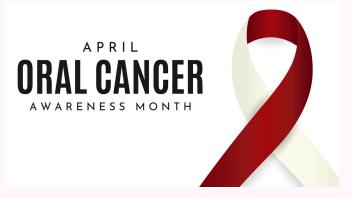


Projected Increase of Diabetic Retinopathy in US by ethinicity. Photo Source: National Eye Institute

## American Indians and Alaska Natives With Diabetes Can Prevent Vision Loss (Continued from page 5)

New treatments are being developed all the time, and we are learning that different treatments may work best for different patients. What hasn't changed is that early treatment is always better," says Dr. Suber Huang, chair of the Diabetic Eye Disease Subcommittee for NEI's National Eye Health Education Program (NEHEP) and member of the NEI-funded Diabetic Retinopathy Clinical Research Network (DRCR.net). "There has never been a more hopeful time in the treatment of diabetic retinopathy," he adds. Remember, if you have diabetes, make annual comprehensive dilated eye exams part of your selfmanagement routine. Living with diabetes can be challenging, but you don't have to lose your vision or go blind because of it. To help friends and loved ones reduce their risk, please share this article. For more information on diabetic eye disease, tips on finding an eye care information on professional. or financial assistance, call NEI at 301.496.5248 visit https://www.nei.nih.gov/diabetes.

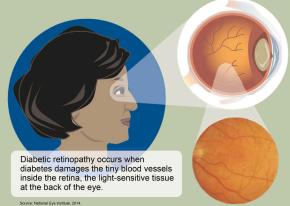




## LEARN THE FACTS

About

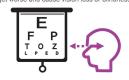
# DIABETIC RETINOPATHY





### **NO EARLY SYMPTOMS**

However, over time, diabetic retinopathy can get worse and cause vision loss or blindness.



# **WHO IS AT**





#### REDUCED RISK OF VISION LOSS

Early detection, timely treatment, and appropriate follow-up care can reduce the risk of severe vision loss by 95 percent.



#### YOU CAN PROTECT YOUR VISION.

Get a comprehensive dilated eye exam at least once a year if you have diabetes.

#### Don't forget to-

Take your medications.

Reach and maintain a healthy weight.

Add physical activity to your daily routine

Control your blood sugar, blood pressure, and cholesterol.

Kick the smoking habit.

**LEARN MORE AT:** www.nei.nih.gov/diabetes





# **Oral Cancer Prevention and Early Detection**

By Miranda Sholz, DDS

April is Oral Cancer Awareness Month and also National Cancer Prevention and Early Detection Month. Let's discuss the risk factors, how it is detected, and what can be done to treat it.

Smoking and tobacco use are traditionally the most common cause of oral cancer in middle aged to elderly patients with alcohol following closely behind. While smoking and tobacco use are significant risk factors for oral cancer, an increasingly large number of cases in young non-smokers are caused by human papillomavirus, or HPV. HPV is a very common virus and can cause different problems ranging from genital warts all the way to cancer. There is a vaccination available against HPV that is strongly recommended to help prevent cancer.

We complete oral cancer screenings for every one of our patients that come for dental exams, and that includes hygiene visits and diabetic exams. Of course it is important to come regularly to the dental clinic for checkups, but it is also important to be aware of the condition of your own mouth by doing regular selfexaminations. Be aware of any sores that do not heal quickly, places that bleed easily, red or white patches in the cheeks, lips, or tongue, or generally suspicious lumps or swellings. Other symptoms may include difficulty chewing or swallowing, numbness of the mouth, loosening of the teeth, or a lump in the neck.



If detected early, the five-year relative for oral survival rate cancer approximately 80% to 90%. The earlier the detection, the easier the recovery. The usual treatment for localized oral cancers that have not spread to other parts of the body is surgical removal. Please call our clinic at (918) 287-9300 if you have any concerns or have something in the mouth you would like to be examined. It is always better to be overly cautious, and it is always easier to remove a small lesion than a large one. But, prevention is key!

# Your experience at our health system matters to us!













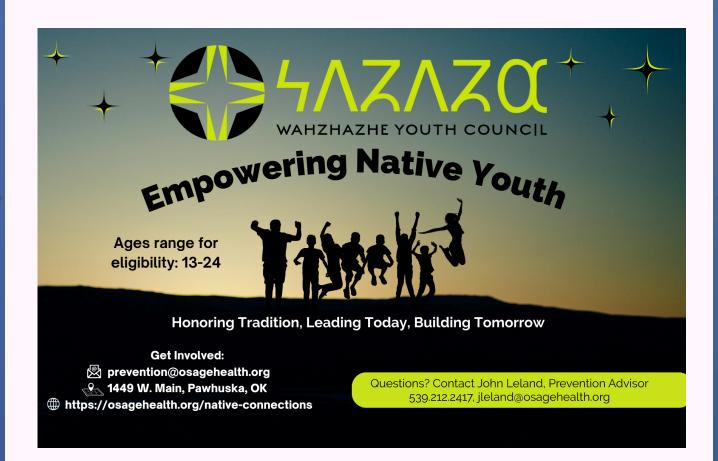
### PLEASE TAKE THE SURVEY

You can access the survey one of three ways:

- Visit:https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/6Q3PMJH
- Visit the front desk to request a paper copy and drop it in our box
- · Scan the QR code to the right with the camera on your phone







## Osage Nation Health System Happenings:



#### FOR INQUIRIES: 539.212.2521 OR PREVENTION@OSAGEHEALTH.ORG

Transportation will be provided from Hominy and Fairfax, however limited seats available.





### Osage Nation Health System Hosts Free Car Seat Safety Checks



The Osage Nation Health System (ONHS), in collaboration with SafeKids Tulsa, is hosting a series of FREE Car Seat Safety Check events to ensure families are traveling safely with their children. Certified technicians will be onsite to inspect car seat installations, provide education on proper use, and share vital information on vehicle safety for children.

See flyer above for details. No appointment is necessary and all families are welcome. This service is provided at no cost and aims to promote child passenger safety throughout the Osage Nation and surrounding communities.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and SafeKids Worldwide, car seats can reduce the risk of fatal injury by 71% for infants and 54% for toddlers in passenger cars.

NHTSA Recommendations:

- Rear-facing car seats for children until at least age 2 or until they reach the maximum height/weight limits of the seat.
- Forward-facing car seats with a harness until at least age 5.
- Booster seats until seat belts fit properly (typically when a child is 4'9" tall, between ages 8-12).
- Children under 13 should always ride in the back seat.

Yet, research shows that 73% of car seats are not used or installed correctly, putting children at serious risk in the event of a crash.

Common issues include:

- Incorrect harness positioning
- Loose installation
- Incompatible car seat types
- Children graduating to booster seats too early

At the ONHS event, certified Child Passenger Safety Technicians will:

- Inspect your child's car seat for recalls and expiration
- Ensure it is appropriate for your child's size and age
- Show you how to install it correctly and adjust harnesses properly
- Provide educational materials and hands-on demonstrations

For questions, please contact the ONHS Community Health Representative (CHR) Program at 539.212.2615.



### Osage Nation Counseling Center Presents: Sobriety Walk-A-Thon

The Osage Nation Counseling Center invites the community to join a powerful three-day event dedicated to celebrating recovery, honoring the strength of survivors, and walking together in solidarity. The Sobriety Walk-A-Thon is more than just a walk—it is a collective step toward healing, awareness, and empowerment.

Participants will gather across three Osage communities—Pawhuska, Hominy, and Fairfax—to raise awareness and support for those impacted by addiction, while encouraging continued paths to wellness and sobriety.

As part of this community gathering, we are proud to showcase artwork created by local Native youth, symbolizing strength, culture, and resilience:

- Micco Forte, Pawhuska High School Freshman – Bold Flower Design
- Meg Rumsey, Pawhuska High School Freshman – Vibrant Floral Artwork
- Gracie Hyslop, Pawhuska High School Senior – Inspiring Buffalo Illustration

These young artists remind us of the powerful role youth play in healing and cultural preservation.

This event is free and open to the public. Each walk will conclude with a community meal and a chance to connect, reflect, and uplift one another. T-shirts will be distributed to participants at check-in.

We encourage families, friends, and community members to come together and take steps toward a healthier future—one walk, one story, and one act of support at a time.



Micco Forte, Pawhuska High School Freshman – Bold Flower Design



Join us in "Walking Strong: Honoring Survivors, Empowering Sobriety."

#### **Event Dates & Locations:**

- Friday, May 2, 2025

  Pawhuska Walk Walking Trail by Bird

  Creek Farms. Meal to follow.

  Speaker: Otto Hamilton & Daniel West
- Saturday, May 3, 2025

  Hominy Walk Hominy Indian Village
  Meal to follow.

  Speaker: Racheal Fortney
- Sunday, May 4, 2025

  Fairfax Walk Grayhorse Indian
  Village Meal to follow.

  Speaker: Santee Mckay

REGISTRATION OPEN AT 5 PM WALK STARTS AT 6 PM

REGISTRATION OPEN AT 10:30 AM WALK STARTS AT 11:30 AM

REGISTRATION OPEN AT 10:30 AM WALK STARTS AT 11:30 AM

T-Shirts available at registration.



Meg Rumsey, Pawhuska High School Freshman – Vibrant Floral Artwork

Gracie Hyslop, Pawhuska High School Senior – Inspiring Buffalo Illustration



# Get Ready for the 2025 Day of Champions Sports Camp – Registration Now Open!

The Osage Nation Health System is thrilled to announce the return of the Day of Champions Sports Camp on June 16 & 17, 2025, from 8 AM to 3 PM at the Osage Nation Outdoor Health Complex in Pawhuska. Open to youth ages 8 to 17, this two-day camp promises a fun, active, and empowering experience for young athletes across the Osage community and beyond.

Following the overwhelming success of last year's event, which brought together 62 youth participants and over 30 volunteers, this year's camp aims to be even bigger and better—and we need your help to make it happen!

Led by experienced coaches and collegiate athletes, the Day of Champions focuses on developing skills in both football and softball, while also instilling core values like leadership, confidence, teamwork, and determination. This is more than just a sports camp—it's about building healthy habits and strong minds that last well beyond the field.

#### **REGISTER TODAY**

Scan the QR code on the flyer on page 9 or visit: https://forms.osagenation-nsn.gov/view.php?id=140877

#### Location:

Osage Nation Outdoor Health Complex 413 Lynn Avenue, Pawhuska, OK 74056 Transportation will be provided from Hominy and Fairfax — but spots are limited!

Help Us Spread the Word! We're calling on families, schools, and community members to help share this opportunity far and wide. Post the flyer, tag friends on social media, or forward the link to families with kids who would benefit from this uplifting experience. Let's work together to make this summer's Day of Champions the most impactful yet!

For questions or assistance, contact:

**\$** 539.212.2521

≥ prevention@osagehealth.org Let's make this summer unforgettable—for our youth, for our Nation, and for the next generation of champions.



Osage Nation Day of Champions Participants from June 17 - 18 2024 Camp

### **Observances for April**

#### April:

- Alcohol Awareness Month
- Medicaid Awareness Month
- National Cancer Prevention and Early **Detection Month**
- National Minority Health Month
- Oral Cancer Awareness Month
- Parkinson's Awareness Month
- Sexual Assault Awareness & Prevention Month
- STI Awareness Month
- Stress Awareness Month
- National Child Abuse Prevention Month
- Testicular Cancer Awareness Month

# PATIENT NOTICE

The Osage Nation Health System (ONHS) is in the process of transitioning to a new electronic health record (EHR), so please be advised the ONHS will need to update all of your registration documents in our new EHR system. The go-live date for the EHR conversion is to be determined, but ONHS wants to ensure you have advance notice of the required registration documents that will be requested when that time comes. Please see the list below:

#### **Adult Registration Required Documents:**

Tribal Membership and/or CDIB card Current driver's license All insurance cards (medical, dental, optometry, and pharmacy)

#### Minor Registration Required Documents:

Tribal Membership and/or CDIB card of minor Current driver's license (of parent/legal guardian) Birth certificate All insurance cards (medical, dental,

optometry, and pharmacy)

Thank You

Osage Nation Health System Registration Department



### **OUR WEBSITE IS NOW LIVE!!**







On our website you can see see department resources and information, upcoming ONHS events, make inquiries and so much more. Follow the Osage Nation Health System on facebook for the official announcement.





# **JOIN THE CONVERSATION!**

Learn about Osage Health Watch's mission to empower listeners with valuable information, resources, and inspiring stories-promoting health advocacy and positive change within Indigenous communities.





Follow OHW on Facebook, Instagram, X, Spotify, and YouTube to stay connected and informed!

### **MPORTANT NUMBERS**

Wahzhazhe Health Center 918.287.9300

Title VI 539.212.2510 Prevention 539,212,2521 ONHS Security 539.212.2559

**Family Violence Prevention (FVP)** 539.212.2506 **FVP 24/7 Crisis Hotline** 866.897.4747

24/7 Suicide Crisis Lifeline: 988

**ONHS Counseling Center** 

M-F 8a-4:30p 539.212.2499