



Notes from the Chief

What I'm working on for You



Osiyo -

AARP has a mission to provide information, advocacy and service to its members, and the Oklahoma chapter for the past decade has been recognizing distinguished tribal elders for their lifetime of work. These citizens have positively influenced their community, family, tribe, state and country.

In 2018, four Cherokees – James Hail, Gary Farris, Bud Squirrel and Ronda Williams – were among 50 award recipients at the AARP's 10th annual Indian Elder Honors. We certainly appreciate their example, leadership and continued dedication to the Cherokee Nation. We are proud of these citizens and every Cherokee who has been recognized over the years.

In the past 10 years, AARP has honored 500 Indian elders from every tribal government in Oklahoma. That includes more than 35 Cherokee Nation citizens. The common thread among all these honorees is the wisdom they have imparted and the positive effect they have had. The AARP Oklahoma Indian Elder honorees represent what is best about Indian people in Oklahoma: love of family, dedication to culture and respect for all people.

Mashell Sourjohn, who is Cherokee and Creek, serves as AARP Oklahoma's associate state director of outreach. She continues to do an exceptional job of organizing this event, which grows larger and better with every passing year. Nationally, it is one of AARP's most significant events. It is the largest gathering of its kind in the state, and probably the country. We are proud to collaborate with AARP Oklahoma, as it continues to expand its vital work on issues impacting tribal elders, including access to quality health care, transportation needs and cultural preservation.

We take these critical issues seriously as well within the Cherokee Nation and our 14-county area.

Recently, the tribe hosted its fourth annual Elders Summit, which is an opportunity to share lunch

while also giving information on all the programs and services our tribal government provides for our senior citizens. This is information they may not always know how to find, so we promote all the ways we can help. The Elders Summit not only reflects our respect, but also provides an outlet for important information on services, including financial fraud awareness, that better ensures our seniors remain safe and secure, both physically and financially.

As Cherokees, our elders remain the foundation of our families and communities. We lean on them for support, rely on their expertise and stand on their shoulders to reach new heights. They are the guardians of our collective legacy, just as the next generation must be the guardians of our elders.

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