



VISIONS

NEWSLETTER OF THE NAI SOUTH CENTRAL REGION

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FALL 2025

Letter from the Editor

By Kate Huffman

Happy December! You may be wondering why you're getting an additional newsletter from us - that's because a few articles that were meant to be included in the Fall issue didn't make it in. I apologize for the oversight during our transition from two to one editor.

Thank you for understanding! You'll find the missing articles in this supplement to the Fall 2025 edition of *Visions*.

As always, if you have an article or news you'd like to share with the region, please email us at naisouthcentral@gmail.com.

Message from the Deputy Director

By Angel Ray

Fellow interpreters, this year I was called to examine the impact made in a young life taken too soon. The news came in a shock wave of disbelief, followed by grief that overtook all our summer camp staff. Austen Mary, age 14, died of cancer...this jovial soul who graced our site for summer camp four years in a row. She had pulled flax, churned butter, danced, made pies, and excelled at woodworking. Not to mention the laughter she shared. Most remembered was laughing over "tow." She loved pulling the flax over the sharp heckles to remove the remaining outer husk, separating the silky hair like product from the fuzzier shorter fibers called tow. She had the campers laughing and laughing at the name, wanting to take tow home with them.

Each year, we are grateful for the return in campers, which typically number a third to half of the participants. They, like Austen Mary, invite their friends and a wait list is born. Seeing them develop strengths, skills, problem solving, and proficiency at historic craft as they mature makes it all worthwhile. Meanwhile, this challenges us to come up with new projects that match their increased skill level.

This year, Austen Mary was unable to return to camp because she was fighting for her young life. She did, however, return to our site in spirit. We received a call from her family shortly after her passing in July asking if they could celebrate her life at the site. You see, she loved many things - art, theater, dance, sparkly things - but history was among those loves as well. She had connected to the site, and it only seemed right that she would have loved ones

share in the peace found at The Historic Daniel Boone Home site.

On August 1st, approximately 300 loved ones cycled through the Grand Pavilion and Old Peace Chapel on site, paying their respects and seeing some of the work of Austen Mary's hands. A bench, a shelf, a rope tension bed...she took part in making all these items that are used for interpretation. Her name is scribed on the back or bottom of each along with the other campers.

As campers would sign their finished work, we'd tell them how these items help tell the story of how people lived 200 years ago. And, how the work of *their* hands may still be here for generations to come, welcoming them and their families to return and remember. They are part of the site's legacy. Austen Mary is part of the site's legacy.

I say all of this as a reminder that it is an honor to bring understanding and joy into others' lives with our professions, even when it is a life short lived. That we, too, are receiving a great gift in return through their attentiveness and investment into the place where we stand.



STATE NEWS

Missouri

Revolutionary Story Time

By Angel Ray & Megan Atchley

-The St. Charles County Heritage Museum has been offering a monthly American Revolution Story Time featuring a carefully curated American Revolution children's book and historic craft for pre-school and early elementary-aged children once a month. Historic Interpreter Megan Atchley spent months going through children's books on the American Revolution to pick the right stories, looking for historic accuracy as well as a range of topics based on events and a diversity of people featured, such as people of color and women. Stories included *Gingerbread for Liberty: How a German Baker Helped Win the American Revolution*, *Revolutionary Prudence Wright: Leading the Minute Women in the Fight for Independence*, *Phillis's Big Test*, and *George vs. George: The American Revolution as Seen from Both Sides*. Crafts included marbled paper, construction paper gingerbread men, tricorne hats, and parchment paper journals.

Atchley has also been giving programs for adults on the American Revolution at the Heritage Museum on the First Continental Congress, Loyalists, and the Boston Tea Party Tea Party, in which visitors go to try- and dump! - the same teas dumped in Boston Harbor during the Boston Tea Party. She also debuted a program at the Heritage Museum called *The Declaration As Told By Taylor Swift*, as a way to interpret the Declaration of Independence to more diverse audiences. She will get to do this program again at her other job at the St. Louis County Library District (along with making red, white, and blue friendship bracelets) four times in 2026!

Former Lead Interpreter (now the head of Construction & Restoration) at the Historic Daniel Boone Home, William Ray, has been using skills acquired from the John C. Campbell Folk School to build a timber frame structure. For the past several months, he and fellow staff and volunteers have painstakingly marked, measured, and chiseled. Even the summer campers got in on the build by making pegs on the shave horse and white oak shingles. This structure will serve the site for both fiber arts and historic woodworking programming.



Oklahoma

Amy Morris is a retired naturalist who most recently worked at Tulsa's Oxley Nature Center. Amy writes:

I have been eco printing and had some silk scarves/wall hangings available for sale at Tulsa's "Monarchs on the Mountain" event. This festival was the 10th annual celebration that was held at Tulsa's Chandler Park. The event featured monarch butterfly experts demonstrating how they tag these butterflies (in order to gain information about their migration). In addition, vendors also gave festival participants an opportunity to purchase live milkweed plants."

2025 OKC Parks GO Bond: Potential Improvements for Martin Park Nature Center

As part of the City of Oklahoma City's 2025 Government Obligation Bond (GO Bond) election, Martin Park Nature Center could receive up to \$6 million dollars in funding for critical infrastructure upgrades. These upgrades include three bridges, replacing the existing "Iron Bridge" rated at 7 tons with a 10-ton capacity bridge, and two new bridges which will allow OKC Parks staff and the OKC Fire Department maintenance and emergency access to the southeast and eastern sectors. These areas are currently inaccessible from the interior of the park. Martin Park's garage and workshop, known as the "Blue Barn," is also included in the bond project, with upgrades including concrete being poured to replace gravel as the current flooring in the garage, the addition of a shower, washer, dryer, and locker room for staff, new roof, siding, gutters, insulation, and an addition built onto the existing structure to increase floor space for park equipment and tools. New perimeter fencing and maintenance access gates are the final proposed upgrade for Martin Park as some sections were damaged following the October 2020 Ice Storm and February 2021 Polar Vortex.

Citizens cast their vote as part of a special election on Tuesday, October 14th. In total, citizens voted on 11 propositions totaling \$2.7 billion towards future upgrades across the greater OKC metroplex. For more information on the 2025 GO Bond, please visit <http://vision.okc.gov/go-bond-2025>

Martin Park Nature Center serves as OKC's only urban nature park. First opening in 1975, the park spans 144 acres with 2.5 miles of hiking trails, including a .54-mile ADA-accessible trail loop, Visitor Center, picnic areas, and a nature-themed playground. Martin Park staff provide over 100 nature-pased programs & events for visitors of all ages and sees an estimated visitation of 275,000 visitors per year.

-William Hagenbuck, III, CPRP
Head Naturalist/Park Manager, OKC Parks

Homeless? Unhoused?

Is it all a matter of semantics?

By Neil Garrison, Oklahoma

In the greater Oklahoma City metropolitan area, there is a monthly publication titled: CURBSIDE CHRONICLE. It is a periodical that is both about...and...for...those persons who are homeless. The distribution of this publication is done by those people who are trying to better themselves. They stand on street corners and sell the magazine to those motorists that come to a stop at the traffic light.

It came as a surprise when the editor of the CURBSIDE CHRONICLE contacted me and asked if I would be willing to be interviewed for a

feature article in the September 2025 issue.

Yeah...yeah...at this point in my telling of the story, I am pretty sure that you are musing: "Why, heck! I had no idea that Neil had come upon hard times...and...is now living on the street."

Well, calm yourself down. Nothing of the sort has befallen me.

Instead, the magazine editor had a notion of writing a piece about the 50-year anniversary of the place where I had worked for 30 years of my career - Oklahoma City's Martin Park Nature Center.

All of this eventually came to pass, and the magazine article turned out to be something of which I am proud...but...it does seem surreal that

this homeless publication would turn out to be a method where I could have but one more opportunity to promote environmental education.

Wonders never cease!

The “World Wide Web” as a Venue for Nature Programming

By Neil Garrison, Oklahoma

Back when I was in college, my curriculum advisor insisted that I enroll in a computer science course. At the time, I remember thinking: “For gosh sakes, why?” (Please remember that I am no young pup, and the college years of which I speak got their start in 1969.)

I just couldn’t, for the life of me, figure out how something as silly as computers would ever factor into what I would be doing later on during my workaday world experiences.

Many, many years have passed since then and an iPhone and a personal computer are now an ever-present part of my world each and every day.

As if best to illustrate this life transformation, I’d invite you to log onto this specific site on the YouTube homepage:

<https://youtu.be/fVUf9HB4Go>



Would this be Called a “Hybrid” Nature Hike?

By Neil Garrison, Oklahoma

One of the things that I enjoy doing is leading nature hikes. Birdwatching is my special interest, and it is a lot of fun sharing that passion with others. Now that I am retired, I do a lot of volunteering...doing things that give me joy, i.e. being a tour guide.

The Veteran’s Administration placed a request with the local nature center for a birding hike for their group of military veterans. The problem, however, was that they needed a Monday gig and, unfortunately, the nature center is not open to the public on Mondays. Since I volunteer at the nature center, the staff asked me if I could accommodate this special request. Everything eventually fell into place, and I now lead birding hikes (as a volunteer) for the VA at local sites other than the nature center.

Which brings me to the story about the latest episode. Unbeknownst to me ahead of time, one of the hike participants showed up in a motorized wheelchair. Fortunately our tour loop was an asphalt-topped surface, so I was well able to provide an enjoyable experience for this participant.

What did sort of throw me for a loop was when I discovered that two additional hike members would not be showing up in person, but rather, would be auditing my performance via the video feed on a cell phone. That was a new experience for me! I guess in this day and age of technological advances, I should have not been too surprised that “remote learning” would have found a way to worm its way into my nature education program. All in all, everything seemed to fall into place.

Welcome to the Space Age!