

Inside the Times

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December 2, 2021

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Local
Holiday Festivities



Mustang's Festival of the Trees returns to Town Center on Monday. -See Page 10A

Sports
Broncos tip off season



Mustang's basketball teams opened the season this week. -See Page 1B



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Crime

Police investigate homicide after body found in Canadian County

By Traci Chapman
Staff Writer

Oklahoma City Police Department is continuing its investigation into the reported homicide of an individual found deceased

Saturday in Canadian County. Officers were called to the intersection of SW 44th and Richland Road at 2:52 a.m. Nov. 27, after a passerby saw someone lying in a ditch. Officers

located the individual, who was deceased; the medical examiner determined onsite the individual's injuries were consistent with homicide. Police said the victim was a white male. No

further information concerning the victim was released as of press time. Oklahoma City detectives are investigating the case and asked that anyone with information about the individual or the

circumstances leading to their discovery in Canadian County contact the department's homicide tip line at 405-297-1200. The homicide was the 86th in Oklahoma City during 2021, officials said.

Education



Mustang Public School District community education director Kris Green is pictured with operations clerk Jean-Marie Otto during a recent meeting. PHOTO BY TRACI CHAPMAN

Education overcoming pandemic challenges

Course offerings draw participants as program grows

By Traci Chapman
Staff Writer

While Mustang Public School's community education program faced a wall just out of the gate – in the form of the novel coronavirus pandemic – growth is strong and steady as it heads toward the spring 2022 session. “We believe the program is a success, thus far – they say it takes three to five years to grow a successful business, and research shows 30% to 50% of classes will not meet enrollment requirements,” MPS community education director Kris Green said. “We are right

on the mark – 52% of our classes have made and been successful this fall.” The program launched in spring 2020, then was shuttered due to the pandemic. The up and down nature of COVID-19 posed a challenge for Green and her staff – Stacey Elliott, executive administrative assistant; Julie Chastain, Bronco Club district coordinator; and Jean-Marie Otto, operations clerk – but response to the program this fall, as COVID-19 cases began to subside. “Building a program in the midst of a pandemic is a struggle, but we still hit the 50% success rate; the

district takes that as a win,” Green said. Community education was developed to encourage lifelong learning for all ages. Classes are grouped by adult, teen and youth enrichment; Mustang Bronco Club offers after-school care and summer camp. **Class Offerings** Courses for adults run the gamut, with everything from small business and computer/technology offerings, sign language, gardening, genealogy, personal interest and more. Teen classes include things like dance, yoga, See EDUCATION, page 14A

Crime

Man pleads guilty in murder case involving Mustang graduate

By Traci Chapman
Staff Writer

An Oklahoma City man accused of killing a 19-year-old Mustang High School graduate while driving drunk on the Kilpatrick Turnpike has pleaded guilty to the charges levied against him.

Malcolm Douglas Penney, 40, admitted he drove drunk the wrong way down the turnpike in the early hours of Oct. 3, 2020, hitting the car driven by Marissa Murrow and causing her death. He made that admission during a Nov. 23 hearing set in his case.

Murrow, a 2019 Mustang graduate, was pursuing a special education degree at University of Central Oklahoma at the time of her death.

Prosecutors in October 2020 charged Penney with second degree murder and leaving the scene of a fatality accident. His case was scheduled for a jury trial beginning Dec. 6.

During the Nov. 23 hearing before Canadian County District Judge Paul Hesse, however, Penney reversed his previously entered not guilty plea, pleading guilty to second degree murder and *nolo contendere* – no contest – to the charge of leaving the accident scene. Those pleas were entered blind, which means the defense did



Malcolm Penney

not negotiate a stipulated sentence in connection with his crimes with the prosecution. That means Penney's fate rests solely in the hands of Judge Hesse.

According to the probable cause affidavit filed with the court by Oklahoma Highway Patrol Trooper Shayne Ballard, Murrow was killed at about 12:13 a.m., near SW 15th Street. After leaving a wedding reception during which he “drank for hours,” Penney drove a 2018 Mitsubishi Outlander northbound in the southbound lanes of the turnpike, striking Murrow's Ford Focus head-on.

Court documents showed Penney's blood alcohol content was more than twice the legal limit at the time of the crash.

A witness observed Penney in the driver's seat of the Mitsubishi immediately after the crash; the Oklahoma

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Community

Times kicks off annual food drive

By Traci Chapman
Staff Writer

As school breaks that see children not receiving meals some families count on to make ends meet approach, Mustang Times is asking its readers to extend the spirit of giving this holiday season once again. That spirit is needed for the Times' annual holiday food drive, held to benefit Mustang Kiwanis food pantry. The

nonprofit helps families year-round, while building on those efforts during the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays, when they provide special meals to those who need them. “We always look forward to our annual food drive for the community,” Times publisher Steve Coulter said. “We have the best readers and they always come through with lots of food and donations.”



The Mustang Times is collecting food donations to benefit the Mustang Kiwanis food pantry. FILE PHOTO

The paper's readers annually provide thousands of non-

perishables to Kiwanis pantry; with the community's growth,

the continuing financial impact of the novel coronavirus pandemic and upcoming winter break, the need for donations is always higher this time of year.

The Times food drive will be held through Dec. 20, Coulter said. Items may be dropped off at the office, located at 547 N. Mustang Road – across the street from Mustang post office.

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Financial Focus

What to know about early IRA withdrawals

While you're working, you may be contributing to an individual retirement account (IRA), which can provide a tax-advantaged way to save for your future. So, is it ever a good idea to tap into your IRA before you retire?

Ideally, you should leave this account intact until your retirement. After all, you could spend two or more decades in retirement, so you'll need a lot of financial resources. Still, life is unpredictable, so there may be times you'll consider taking money from your IRA. You'll need to be aware, though, that if you withdraw funds before you turn 59½, you will generally trigger a 10% penalty. Plus, you'll be taxed on whatever you take out, thereby losing, at least in part, the benefits of tax-deferred earnings offered by a traditional IRA. (With a Roth IRA, you can withdraw your contributions free of taxes and penalties, but the earnings may be taxed and penalized if you take them out before you're 59½.)

If you need to withdraw funds from your IRA before you're 59½, you may be able to avoid the 10% early withdrawal penalty if you meet an exception, such as one of these:

- **Paying for college** – You are allowed to take penalty-free withdrawals to pay for tuition and other qualified higher education expenses for you, your spouse, children or grandchildren. However, since the withdrawals may be considered taxable income, they could reduce the student's eligibility for financial aid.
- **Buying a first home** – You and your spouse can each withdraw up to \$10,000 from your respective IRAs to buy your first home. To qualify as a first-time homebuyer, you (and your spouse) need to have not owned a home for the two years preceding your home purchase.
- **Having a child** – Following the birth or adoption of a child, you and your coparent can each withdraw up to \$5,000 from

your respective IRA without paying the 10% penalty.

- **Covering medical expenses** – You may be able to avoid the early withdrawal penalty if you use the money to pay for unreimbursed medical expenses (for you, your spouse or dependents) that exceed 7.5% of your adjusted gross income. You may also qualify to take a withdrawal without penalty to pay for health insurance premiums if you are unemployed. In the case of a disability, the 10% early withdrawal penalty also may not apply.

These aren't the only exceptions to the 10% withdrawal penalty, but they do cover many of the common reasons that people may consider an early withdrawal from their IRAs. And if you do need to take an early withdrawal, consult with your tax advisor to determine your eligibility for avoiding the 10% penalty.

Keep in mind, though, that you do have ways to potentially reduce the necessity of withdrawing from your IRA early. One proven technique is to build an emergency fund containing at least three to six months' worth of living expenses, with the money kept in a liquid account. You might also consider opening a line of credit. A financial professional can help you explore other options, as well.

Ultimately, if you can leave your IRA intact until you retire, you'll be helping yourself greatly. But if you do need to tap into your account early, at least be familiar with the possible drawbacks – and how you might avoid them.

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Education:

From Page 1A

cheer and other athletic offerings, creative writing, sports, ACT preparation and several other varied courses, while several of those sessions are also available to youth community education students.

Spring 2022 session is set to begin Feb. 1 and run through the end of April, Green said; summer classes are expected to be held from May through July.

Course prices range greatly, with the district aiming to offer something for everyone, officials said. Senior adults receive a 10% discount.

Community education hopes to have the spring 2022 course catalog available in the near future. Registration for classes is available online and can be accomplished by going to <https://mustangps.ce.eleyo>.

New Classes, Instructors Sought

Green and her staff are constantly looking for new class ideas and instructors, as well, she said. Some



MPS community education staff members, standing from left, Julie, Chastain, Bronco Club district coordinator; Stacey Elliott, executive administrative assistant; and operations clerk Jean-Marie Otto. Kris Green, director of community education, is seated. PHOTO BY TRACI CHAPMAN

community agencies and institutions to become active partners in addressing lifelong education needs and wants throughout our community." More information about MPS community education can be found online at <https://www.mustangps.org/CommUNITYeducation.aspx>, on the department's Facebook page (found by searching for "Mustang Community Education") by emailing communityed@mustangps.org or by calling 405-376-7843.

Crime:

From Page 1A

City man attempted to flee the scene on foot but was located nearby and brought back by law enforcement.

Although Penney refused to comply with troopers' request for a blood alcohol test, one was administered after they obtained a warrant, Ballard said.

Hesse initially set \$350,000 total bond in the case, before assistant district attorney Eric Epplin requested Penney be denied bond; special Judge Khristan Strubhar granted the prosecution's motion after a hearing that included witness testimony given by both sides, court documents showed.

According to court records found on Oklahoma State Courts Network and out-of-state records referenced by prosecutors and researched by the Times, Penney has numerous criminal

convictions, including several related to alcohol:

- A fourth offense driving while intoxicated conviction in Calcasieu Parish, Louisiana, entered in October 2018;
- An October 2013 DUI second offense conviction in McPherson, Kansas;
- A January 2013 public intoxication misdemeanor conviction in Carter County District Court;
- An August 2011 Denton County, Texas, driving while intoxicated conviction; and
- A 2011 Oklahoma County District Court case, in which Penney was convicted of driving under the influence of alcohol in 2012.

Penney also has another criminal conviction dating back to 2017 in McPherson, Kansas, which included criminal damage to property, disorderly

conduct and criminal trespass charges, Epplin stated.

Penney, his wife and others also face a civil action filed by Murrow's parents in November 2020, in which they seek punitive and other damages. That action remained pending as of Monday; the last activity was a motion to quash filed by Penney and his wife pertaining to subpoenas for insurance information related to them and a third person.

A hearing on that motion was set for Dec. 17 as of press time.

Hesse during the Nov. 23 hearing ordered a presentence investigation and set sentencing for Jan. 18. Penney faces at least 10 years and up to life in prison for second degree murder and up to 10 years in prison and a maximum \$10,000 fine for the charge of leaving the scene of an accident resulting in death.

Food:

From Page 1A

Non-perishables always needed include canned fruit and vegetables, macaroni and cheese and other boxed meals, pasta, spaghetti sauce, pancake mix, peanut butter, oatmeal, syrup, pancake mix and jelly.

Monetary donations are also welcome and are tax-deductible, officials said. Monetary donations are used to purchase items like bread, milk, eggs, other fresh items and turkeys and hams for the holidays. During its growing season, Wildhorse Gardens and Market also provides fresh vegetables grown by its volunteer workforce.

Kiwanis will pass out Christmas meals Dec. 18.

They provided more than 100 Thanksgiving dinners to those in need Nov. 20.

Chartered in April 1971, Mustang Kiwanis club has about 30 active members, for which service is their central mission. The food bank is open from 8:30 a.m. until 10:30 a.m. each Saturday and is located in the back of the Old Fire Station, located at 470 W. State Highway 152.

Mustang Times has provided a place for residents and businesses to bring holiday donations for several years; readers have responded to the need, providing everything from canned goods to paper goods, other nonperishable food items and more, Coulter said. In the process, they've given

area families and seniors piece of mind and one less challenge to deal with during challenging times.

For more information about Mustang Kiwanis and its food pantry, send a message through its Facebook page, located online at <https://www.facebook.com/MustangKiwanis/> or by searching for "Kiwanis Club of Mustang." For more information about the Times food drive, call 405-376-6688.

"Don't let your food go to waste - clean out your cupboards and help needy families in the area," Coulter said. "Come on by the Mustang Times with your donated food - we look forward to your help and to seeing you soon."

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