

# EASTERN BAND OF CHEROKEE INDIANS OFFICE OF INTERNAL AUDIT AND ETHICS 2024-2025 S.O.A.R. AWARD RECIPIENTS

## CHIEF NOAH POWELL FISCAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

### Tsali Manor



Tsali Manor is a day program helping seniors from all communities serving lunch daily as well as activities to help seniors stay active such as arts and crafts, exercise room, exercise classes, outings, and the annual elders walk. The program goes above and beyond helping homebound clients by delivering meals and providing opportunities to do activities within their homes. Tsali Manor also assists seniors with emergency assistance such as power bills,

appliances and emergency food boxes.

Tsali Manor strives to maintain high visibility in the community where older people can receive assistance they need to live with dignity and choices in their homes and communities for as long as possible.

## FISCAL COMMITMENT AWARDS

### Cherokee Bottled Water



Cherokee Bottled Water sells and delivers bottled water to Tribal programs, the community, and businesses. The program now proudly offers water in cans, making it even more accessible and environmentally friendly. Through a strategic partnership with Pepsi, Cherokee Water will be distributed alongside Pepsi products in select retail locations expanding up to a 240 mile radius. This collaboration marks a major step toward

expanding the visibility and reach of Cherokee Water, bringing it to a wider audience while honoring its roots.

With the ability to wrap cans, the program created a custom can to honor the Cherokee Lady Braves' state championships. The program is also exploring a unique opportunity to showcase

the incredible talent of local artists. The diversity of art will allow a vibrant collection of Cherokee Water cans, each telling a visual story and celebrating the rich cultural heritage of the Cherokee people.

### **Qualla Boundary Public Library**



The Qualla Boundary Public Library is dedicated to providing exceptional service and convenient access to resources that support the educational, informational, and recreational needs on the Qualla Boundary and surrounding counties.

The library has made significant progress in enhancing its services and community outreach. Through a grant, it successfully raised reading scores

among targeted Cherokee Central Schools grade levels. It hosted more events in a single year than the previous five years combined. New initiatives such as expanded outreach, community partnerships, and the publication of Cherokee authors are transforming the local library into a vibrant hub for cultural and educational events.

### **Qualla Boundary Head Start and Early Head Start**



Qualla Boundary Head Start/Early Head Start has been a driving force in establishing autism services and resources on the Qualla Boundary. The goal is to provide families and children with autism, a safe and enjoyable space to gather, learn together, and support one another through understanding and shared experiences. Two program employees are certified Autism Support Group Leaders.

This year the second annual Cherokee Autism Celebration was held offering informational booths, panel discussions, and fun activities. There were over 700 participants, more than double from the previous year. This is the first autism support group established west of Asheville, reflecting growing public understanding and outreach for autistic individuals.

## Tribal Fish Hatchery



The Tribal fish hatchery is responsible for the entirety of Cherokee's trout fishing and hatchery program. The fish are grown to stocking size at the hatchery including brook trout, brown trout, golden trout, and rainbow trout. The department stocks over 250,000 trout per year throughout the Qualla Boundary.

In 2024, the fish hatchery lost a huge quantity of fish and sustained significant damage to the facility due to the storms from Hurricane Helene. The hatchery has recovered and is now at 80% capacity.

The program contributes significantly to the local economy through fishing permit sale, fishing tournaments, and the annual Talking Trees Trout Derby.

## Tribal Emergency Medical Services



Tribal Emergency Medical Services (EMS) provides state-of-the-art pre-hospital instruction and community education. Tribal EMS responds to and addresses all emergency and non-emergency calls on the Qualla Boundary, as well as in surrounding communities and the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

In partnership with a new billing company, Tribal EMS has enhanced and modified their billing operations resulting in additional checks and balances and improved collections. They are exceeding budget expectations and have increased staff reporting and performance audits. Tribal EMS exceeds most national averages by at least 10%.

This year Tribal EMS added a new protocol using medication for the treatment of certain types of heart attacks in the field, increasing survival rates. They are the second program of this kind in the state.

## **Cherokee One Feather**



The Cherokee One Feather is the official publication of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, delivering news, articles and information to the public. In addition to local news, the paper highlights various topics such as Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW), EBCI Government Explained, Federal legislative updates, a Pow Wow series featuring

local dancers, and photo contests. This year they awarded the first Student of the Year Award. The paper collaborates with partners like the Cherokee Indian Hospital, Cherokee Boys Club, Harrah's, government agencies, and tribal nations to expand the information delivered to the public.

The paper continues to be recognized with awards from the North Carolina Press Association including "Breaking News Coverage", "Sports Photography", and "City, County Government Reporting". Reporter Brooklyn Brown received second place for "Excellence in Beat Reporting" from the Indigenous Journalists Association for her coverage of the MMIW on the Qualla Boundary.

## **Cherokee Language Master Apprentice Program**



The Cherokee Language Master Apprentice Program is instrumental in revitalizing and preserving the Cherokee language and culture of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. The program includes tribal members who are fully committed to learning and speaking the language. New learners are paired with fluent Cherokee Speakers in an immersive environment. The goal is

to stay in the language all the time and to incorporate culture activities.

Learners support fluent speakers by assisting with chores which embodies nurturing relationships and cultural practices. The impact is also extended through community outreach. Learners teach community classes, helping to broaden access to the language. The program demonstrates an atmosphere of support, accountability, and shared purpose.

## Public Health



Public Health promotes and protects the health of the people and communities through prevention efforts. Public Health achieved National Public Health Accreditation from the Public Health Accreditation Board. This prestigious recognition signifies the department's unwavering commitment to providing the highest quality public health services. It is the gold

standard in public health practice.

The accreditation journey strengthened the departments infrastructure, improved service delivery, and deepened partnerships. Public Health is only the 3rd in North Carolina and the 7th federally recognized tribe to earn this distinction, demonstrating leadership in public health excellence and cultural responsiveness. The national accreditation signifies the collective effort and commitment to ensuring the health and well-being of EBCI community members.

## Facility Management



Facility Management, with 32 full-time employees, provides support services to maintain all Tribal buildings and grounds to ensure a safe and clean environment. The services include building maintenance, HVAC, plumbing, carpentry, electrical, and landscaping.

The program participates in the Day of Caring and provides essential support to the community food pantry. The program assists with setting up various events, including Christmas lighting throughout the Boundary. The program provides valuable assistance to tribal programs on a daily basis and assists communities when requested.

## Tribal Alcoholic Beverage Control Commission



The Tribal Alcoholic Beverage Control Commission (TABCC) was established in 2009 to administer and enforce the Tribal ABC laws. The TABCC functions as the regulator and supplier, sets rules, conducts outreach education, and leads efforts to prevent alcohol misuse.

The administrative and operations functions process permit applications, and receive payments for fines and licensing fees, and handle wholesale distribution. They also operate the Tribal ABC store. The law enforcement function consists of ALE agents who enforce and regulate the Tribal ABC laws and ABC Commission rules.

They reorganized the warehouse for improved inventory tracking, participated in "Shop with a Cop", improved working relationships with permit holders, and enhanced employees' skills in leadership and management.