

# GO PIONEER

QUARTER 2, 2026



## FOCUS ON.

Triton

PG. 07

## RECORD-BREAKING ANNUAL MEETING

Pioneer Members show up in historic numbers.

PG. 09

## INTENTIONAL TECH FOR SUMMER

Explore how families can turn screen time into creativity and learning.

PG. 5

# Letters from **LEADERS**

*Mike Baustert - VP Operations & Engineering*



This year we are celebrating the 100th anniversary of U.S. Highway 66.

Highway 66 both shaped and reflected the transformation of Oklahoma in the twentieth century as it became arguably the most popular, and important, roads in the nation. For decades after 1926 the highway unleashed forces of change everywhere it touched. It evolved into a familiar icon of life that still symbolizes times of both hardship and hopefulness for Americans and Oklahomans. Already in the 1920s a population shift was underway from farm to town and from Oklahoma westward, and that shift turned into a vast migration in the depression years. Indelibly associated with images of crowded families and all their possessions heaped into jalopies and trucks bound for California, Highway 66 signified, as John Steinbeck proclaimed, "the road of flight." Yet that route, carrying hordes of people out of Oklahoma, also enabled many others to stay. Highway 66 nourished a multitude of low-capital businesses, the small mom-and-pop operations that found a toehold along the road in the form of gasoline stations, tourist courts, and diners.

Presently, in the 21st century, we are in the process of another transformation of rural areas. Today it is the information highway and the opportunities it provides for reshaping Oklahoma's rural landscape. This technology brings the opportunities to work from home, Telehealth, smart agriculture, education, and interactions we have yet to dream of. All these capabilities depend on a fast, reliable and resilient network. To support this, Pioneer is entering the last phase of a 12-year fiber expansion project encompassing all 76 exchanges. This will enable the speeds and services equaling any metropolitan area in the United States. Think of that for a moment, even the most rural subscriber in any Pioneer exchange will have the same technical capabilities and opportunities as a subscriber in Dallas, New York or Los Angeles. Geography and speed are no longer limiting factors. My belief is that this will provide an opportunity for businesses and families to enjoy the rural community lifestyle while still being engaged in business and commerce at any desired level. This fiber network will be the fuel for the next force of change in rural Oklahoma as we tap into the endless possibilities and innovations it will provide into the next century.

Speaking of enjoying the rural lifestyle, we at Pioneer pride ourselves on "Connect What Matters" but just a friendly reminder this summer, take the time to disconnect, reflect, and remember what truly matters!

God bless and have a safe summer!

## Welcome to GoPioneer!

Our mission is to help the communities of Pioneer learn, evolve and move forward in the ever-changing world of technology.

We welcome feedback, story ideas, or any questions relating to this magazine, previous articles, or even your personal inquiries.

Baffled by your teen's obsession with emojis? Confused about why you get WiFi in the garage but not in your bedroom? Let us know! This magazine is just as much yours as ours, and we are excited to help you become more adept in the tech world.

## Contact Us



*Editor*

Madison McCollum  
GoPioneerOK@ptci.com  
888-782-2667

**Standard Mail**  
Pioneer Telephone  
P.O. Box 539  
Kingfisher, OK  
73750

**Social Media**  
@GoPioneerOK

## Topic of Q2 2026:

### Technology That Opens Doors

This issue explores how technology is creating new opportunities for learning, creativity, and connection — especially in rural communities.

From expanding fiber networks and intentional screen time to educational tools and local success stories, we're taking a closer look at how technology can help people stay connected to both their communities and their futures.

# CONTENTS

## Features

Closing the Distance .....01  
Explore how expanding fiber internet access is helping rural Oklahoma communities grow, connect, and create new opportunities close to home.

Not All Screen Time Is Created Equal ..... 03  
Technology can be more than entertainment. Learn how intentional screen time can encourage creativity, learning, and real-world skills for kids and teens.

Intentional Tech for Summer.....05  
Discover apps and tools that can help make technology more meaningful this summer

## Inside Pioneer

Built Different .....07  
Meet Jeff and Melissa Wedig of Triton Foundation Repair and learn how they built their company around trust, integrity, and community impact.

Record-Breaking Turnout Marks Historic Pioneer Annual Meeting..... 09  
Pioneer Members showed up in a big way this year. Learn about the record-breaking turnout, bylaw updates, and what the future of cooperative participation could look like.

## Community

Meet our Pioneer Scholars..... 11  
Learn more about three of our scholars for 2025-2026.

Anniversaries .....Back  
Help us celebrate the 25+ year anniversaries in our communities.



# Closing the Distance

*How expanding fiber networks are helping small-town communities grow and evolve*

For generations, small towns across Oklahoma have been shaped by one simple reality: opportunity wasn't always local. In many rural communities, students had fewer classes to choose from, fewer programs to join, and fewer ways to explore interests beyond what was available nearby. Career paths often meant leaving home, and access to new ideas or industries could feel limited by distance. Across rural America, many communities experienced long-term population decline as people moved toward larger cities in search of opportunity.

But today, that story is starting to shift. In recent years, rural areas—including parts of Oklahoma—have begun to see new momentum. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated a move toward more flexible living, as people left large metropolitan areas in search of affordability and space. Since 2020, most areas of Oklahoma have gained residents, with migration increasing not only in major metros but also in smaller cities and rural areas (Source 1). In fact, the state has seen multiple

years of population growth driven largely by people moving in from other states, including tens of thousands of new residents in 2022 and 2023 alone (Source 2).

At the same time, that growth hasn't been uniform. While some communities are gaining residents, others—especially more remote rural areas—are still facing long-term population challenges. Nationally, rural populations have only recently returned to modest growth after nearly a decade of decline, highlighting how much transition is still underway (Source 3). Rural communities today aren't simply growing or shrinking; they're evolving.

Technology is playing a major role in that shift. Students can now take classes online, learn new skills, and explore subjects that may not be offered in their local schools. From coding and digital design to advanced coursework, access to online resources allows them to go beyond the traditional classroom. For adults, technology has opened the door to remote work, online training, and new

## What Connectivity Makes Possible

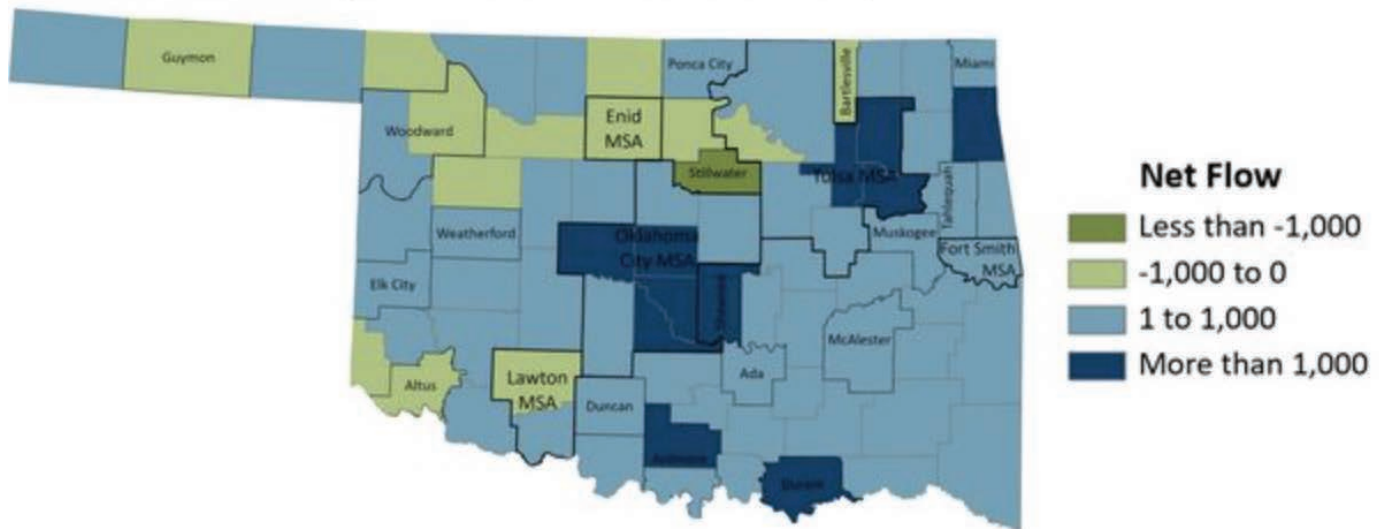
### Education

- Online classes beyond local offerings
- Tutoring & skill-building platforms
- Access to advanced coursework

### Careers

- Remote and hybrid jobs
- Online certifications & training
- Freelance and digital work

# Oklahoma Net Migration from/to Other States During 2020-2023



Chase Farha - Oklahoma Economist - FRBNY Consumer Credit Panel

career paths. Many jobs no longer require a daily commute, making it possible to build a career while staying in the community they call home. This access also supports creativity and connection, giving people more ways to share ideas, start businesses, and collaborate with others across the country.

Behind many of these changes is something people don't always see: infrastructure. Expanding fiber internet into western Oklahoma communities is helping make reliable, high-speed connectivity available in places that were once underserved. That kind of connection allows students to participate in real-time learning, professionals to work without interruption, and small businesses to reach customers far beyond their local area. In communities where distance once created limitations, connectivity is helping remove them.

Rural communities aren't just trying to grow—they're adapting to a new reality. Some towns are gaining residents, while others are still facing challenges, but across Oklahoma there is a clear shift happening. Opportunity is no longer tied as tightly to geography as it once was. Technology isn't replacing small-town life; it's strengthening it, allowing people to stay rooted in the places they love while still reaching beyond them. For many students, that access is just the beginning. With more educational tools, creative platforms, and learning apps available than ever before, technology can help turn curiosity into real skills and open the door to future opportunities.

## Creativity

- Video editing, design, photography
- Music and content creation
- Sharing work instantly

## Connection

- Staying in touch with family
- Collaborating from anywhere
- Access to broader communities

## Resources:

1. <https://www.kansascityfed.org/oklahomacity/oklahoma-economist/population-boom-where-are-oklahomas-newest-residents-living-and-working/>
2. <https://www.kansascityfed.org/oklahomacity/oklahoma-economist/from-brain-drain-to-brain-gain-oklahomas-population-on-the-rise/>
3. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/charts-of-note/chart-detail?chartId=113167>

# Not All Screen Time Is Created Equal

*Why intentional technology use can open the door to creativity and learning*

For a lot of families, summer brings a familiar concern: too much screen time. With school out and more time at home, it's easy for hours to slip by on phones, tablets, and TVs. But not all screen time is the same—and in many cases, it can be something much more meaningful than just a way to pass the time.

Today's technology offers more than entertainment. It gives kids the opportunity to learn, create, and explore in ways that weren't possible even a decade ago. The difference often comes down to how that time is being used.

Passive screen time—like scrolling through social media or watching endless videos—can leave kids feeling unproductive and disconnected. But active screen time tells a different story. It's the difference between watching content and creating it, between consuming information and building something new.

Kids are using devices to edit videos, design graphics, learn to code, and even explore music production. They're picking up real-world skills, often without even realizing it, simply by following their curiosity. What may look like "just being on a screen" can actually be problem-solving, storytelling, and creativity in action.

There's also more access than ever to educational platforms and tools. From interactive learning apps to online tutorials and virtual classes, students can dive deeper into subjects that interest them, at their own pace. For families in smaller or rural communities, this access can be especially meaningful, opening doors to opportunities that may not be available locally.

Of course, balance still matters. Time spent outside, with friends, or away from screens is just as important. But shifting the focus from how much screen time kids have to how they're using it can change the conversation entirely.

When used intentionally, technology becomes less of a distraction and more of a tool. It can spark new interests, build valuable skills, and give kids a sense of ownership over what they're learning and creating.

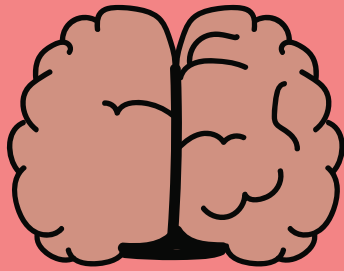
For many, that's where it starts. A curiosity sparked online can turn into something bigger—whether that's a new hobby, a future career, or a deeper interest in how things work. And for those ready to take it further, hands-on opportunities like STEAM camps across Oklahoma offer a way to bring those digital skills into the real world, turning screen time into something that truly sticks.

## Helpful Features in Pioneer SmartWiFi

*Pioneer SmartWiFi gives families simple tools to help create healthier technology habits at home. From setting schedules and pausing internet access to managing devices individually, SmartWiFi makes it easier to balance learning, entertainment, and time offline during the summer months. Coolest part? Some of these features are FREE for Pioneer Customers!*

- Create profiles for each child
- Pause internet access instantly
- Set schedules for devices
- Monitor usage across the home
- Prioritize devices when needed

## PASSIVE SCREEN TIME



## ACTIVE SCREEN TIME



Endless scrolling

Coding or digital learning

Watching without interaction

Editing videos or photos

Mindless multitasking

Creating art or music

Consuming content for long periods

Researching interests

Easy to lose track of time

Building real-world skills

## 3 Ways to Create Better Screen Habits

1

Set Offline Hours

2

Encourage Creation Over Consumption

3

Try device-free times during meals or before bed.

# Intentional Te

Summer screen time doesn't have to mean endless scrolling or mindless entertainment. Technology can also be a tool for creativity, learning, and exploration—especially when used intentionally. From coding and digital art to reading and problem-solving, there are more resources than ever that allow kids to build skills while still having fun.

Educational and creative technology use has continued to grow in recent years, with many families looking for ways to make screen time more meaningful. According to Common Sense Media research cited by the American Academy of Pediatrics, children ages 8 and under spend about 2.5 hours per day using screen media, while tweens ages 8–12 average around 5.5 hours daily on entertainment screen media. As technology becomes a bigger part of everyday life, many parents are shifting the conversation away from simply limiting screen time and toward encouraging more intentional use.

That shift can make a huge difference. Technology is already a major part of how students learn, communicate, and eventually work, and helping kids use those tools intentionally can help build creativity and problem-solving skills that carry far beyond summer break. Whether it's learning a new language, creating digital art, editing videos, exploring coding, or reading through a library app, the right tools can help turn screen time into something productive and engaging. Combined with healthy boundaries and balance, technology can become less of a distraction and more of a resource for curiosity, growth, and future opportunities.

This summer, make it a goal to have more intentional screen time. It can be as simple as exploring a creative app, learning a new skill, or discovering a new interest.

*Here are a few apps and tools that can help make technology a little more meaningful this summer.*



## Creativity & Content Creation

### CapCut



STEAM Focus: Digital storytelling, video editing, creativity

A beginner-friendly video editing app that teaches storytelling, audio editing, transitions, and content creation skills often used in digital media careers.



Free



Free

Premium Available

### Procreate



STEAM Focus: Digital Art, design

A professional-level digital illustration app that encourages creativity while introducing students to graphic design and digital art tools used in creative industries.



\$12.99

### GarageBand



STEAM Focus: Music production, audio engineering, creativity

Allows users to create music, record audio, and experiment with sound mixing and composition while learning audio production concepts.



Free

# ch for Summer

## Coding & STEM

### Scratch



STEAM Focus: Coding, logic, problem-solving

Created by MIT, Scratch teaches coding through drag-and-drop programming blocks, allowing kids to create games, animations, and interactive stories.

Web Browser

### Libby



STEAM Focus: Reading, literacy, research

A digital library app that gives users access to eBooks, audiobooks, and magazines through their local library system. Users should check with their local library to see if it participates in Libby and offers digital access through the app.

Apple Free

Android Free

### Tynker



STEAM Focus: Coding, game design, STEM learning

A coding platform designed for kids that teaches programming, robotics, and STEM concepts through games and interactive challenges.

Apple Free\*

Android Free\*

Premium Available

Free version available; paid plans start around \$12/month\*

### Pok Pok



STEAM Focus: Creativity, exploration, early STEM concepts

A Montessori-inspired learning app focused on hands-on exploration, creativity, and independent learning. Montessori learning encourages children to learn through curiosity, problem-solving, and open-ended activities rather than strict instructions or memorization.

Apple Subscription; Prices Vary

### Duolingo



STEAM Focus: Language learning, memory, problem-solving

Uses short, game-like lessons to help users practice languages while strengthening memory and critical thinking skills!

Apple Free\*

Android Free\*

Premium Available

### Khan Academy Kids



STEAM Focus: Math, reading, critical thinking

Interactive educational activities designed for younger learners that combine reading, math, creativity, and problem-solving.

Apple Free

Android Free

Modern internet doesn't support one person at a time — it supports entire households, all day long.

# Built Different.

How Jeff and Melissa Wedig built Triton Foundation Repair on trust, integrity, and a belief that success means more than money.

For Jeff Wedig, success didn't come from following a traditional path—it came from walking away from one.

"I've been in the construction industry for most of my life," he said. "I was running a remodeling company in my early 30s, and decided one day that I was sick of it and didn't want to do it anymore."

At the time, Jeff was making well into six figures running his own company. Still, he shut the business down and took a job making \$15 an hour as a crew chief for a foundation repair company.

"And immediately, like within a few days, I knew that there was something about this that I was going to be able to do something with and I just ran with it from there."

Within months, he had already moved into a sales role, recognizing the opportunity in a niche industry with little competition.

That decision—one that didn't make sense on paper—became the foundation for what is now Triton Foundation Repair, a company Jeff and his wife Melissa Wedig have built from the ground up. The company specializes in foundation repair—lifting and stabilizing homes, concrete slabs, and structures when shifting soil causes damage.

They opened Triton in April of 2015.

"We just passed our 11th year

anniversary last week or week before," Jeff said.

Like many entrepreneurs, the early years weren't easy.

"The entrepreneur lifestyle is not what people portray it to be on social media," Jeff said. "That's the success side of it. Being in control of your own schedule so that you can now work 110 hours a week... being in control of your own destiny so that you can get just absolutely battered and abused for many, many years."

From the beginning, Jeff knew he didn't want to run a business the way most others in the industry did. His approach wasn't shaped by a traditional path—he grew up in Section 8 housing, was a college dropout, and didn't follow a conventional route into business ownership.

"My mission is to do it my way—and do it right," he said. "There is absolutely no rhyme or reason that I should be here, or where I'm at. I just knew I could do it anyway."

Instead of chasing customers, Triton built its reputation on trust—and patience.

"One of the things that we take a lot of pride in is that we don't pursue clients," Jeff said. "When customers need us, they call us."

And when they do, they don't always get a sales pitch.



"We will tell people to leave it alone," he said. "Most other companies send out salesmen."

That philosophy has become the backbone of the company.

"My reputation will always be more important than your money," Jeff said. "I am not in this business to take your money."

In an industry where customers often don't know what to expect—or what's necessary—that approach stands out.

"We have every opportunity in the world to take advantage of people because they don't know what this stuff is," he said. "The fact that we don't do that is who we are."

As the business grew, Melissa stepped into a larger role. After working in home health, hospice, and HR, she joined Triton and now runs the daily operations.

"I came to work as an admin assistant," she said. "Now I'm here doing all the things... I run the day to day operations, everything goes through me."

Together, they've built not just a business, but a culture—one that reflects who they are.

"We don't operate in a corporate environment," Jeff said. "This is who we are. This is how we operate, and it's mine. It's my deal."





A pile of donated coats collected during Triton Foundation Repair's 2025 coat drive.

At Triton, that culture extends to employees just as much as customers.

*"We have every opportunity in the world to take advantage of people because they don't know what this stuff is. The fact that we don't do that is who we are."*

"My staff doesn't ask me for raises. They don't have to," he said. "When it comes time for a raise, they get it."

It's a workplace built on accountability, trust, and high standards—reflected in how the company operates at every level. They also invest heavily in education, regularly teaching classes for realtors, inspectors, and industry professionals on foundation issues and prevention.

While Triton's work focuses on lifting homes and stabilizing foundations, Jeff and Melissa have built something that reaches far beyond construction.

"We do as much of that stuff as we can possibly manage," Jeff said. "The hard part

isn't doing it; the hard part is saying no."

Over the years, that's included everything from sponsoring local teams to supporting schools and nonprofits—often quietly.

Jeff recalls one moment that stands out.

"My wife caught wind that the Vo-tech our daughter goes to has a community pantry," Jeff said. "She went to four or five of the closest Vo-tech... with \$1,000 or \$1,500 a piece."

They've also paid off school lunch accounts, donated hundreds of coats through an annual drive, and regularly participated in Habitat for Humanity builds.

And when disaster strikes, they show up.

"We shut down our entire operation," Jeff said, recalling a tornado that hit a new employee's neighborhood. "We loaded up six trucks, 25 guys... and spent all day working into his neighborhood."

What started as an effort to help one employee quickly became something bigger.

"We spent the day clearing all those trees off of those roads and those houses," he said, "for a guy that I had met for 20 minutes, 3 weeks prior to that."

For Jeff and Melissa, giving back isn't about recognition—it's about responsibility.

"The world is difficult enough as it is right now," Jeff said. "If we do something from time to time that makes that a little easier, a little lighter, that's the successful part."

Melissa agrees, drawing from her own experiences.

"I was a single mom for many years and struggled," she said. "So, I know what that's like."

At the core of those decisions—how they treat customers, employees, and their community—is something deeply personal for Jeff.

Much of what drives his approach to business traces back to one person—his mother.

"Most of what I do and most of who I am was designed to impress my mother," he said. "So, I treat people in a way that I

think she'd be proud of."

That influence shows up in how the company operates, from customer relationships to employee culture.

"If we get customers that don't share those values, we're probably not the right fit," he said.

For Jeff, success isn't measured in revenue—it's measured in the ability to stay true to those values.

"My business is successful because I get to do business that way," he said. "The fact that we make good money isn't the most important part."

Today, Triton serves much of Oklahoma, continuing to grow while staying rooted in the same principles it started with.

Jeff and Melissa work side by side, building not just a company, but a life together.

"There is nothing that I would prefer to do than hang out with my wife," Jeff said. "We get to work together, we spend 24 hours a day together... that is by far 100% my priority."

As for the future, the path isn't fully mapped out—but that's never been the point.

"My business operates without me and Melissa being here," Jeff said. "That opens up a lot of opportunities for us."

What matters most is what they've already built.

"I think that knowing that they were treated fairly... that's a very positive experience that I hope a lot of our customers recognize," he said.

Looking ahead, Jeff and Melissa plan to continue investing in the communities they serve—supporting local families, schools, and organizations in the same quiet, consistent way they always have.

To learn more, visit [Tritonok.com](http://Tritonok.com).

# Record-Breaking Turnout Marks Historic Pioneer Annual Meeting

This year's Pioneer Annual Meeting was one for the record books!

By 9 a.m., we had officially reached quorum on Tuesday, May 5th — the fastest quorum in Cooperative history — and by the end of the day, 1,587 Members had registered. Seeing that level of involvement from our communities was incredibly exciting and a powerful reminder of what makes a cooperative different!

With quorum reached so early, Members were able to officially vote on several proposed bylaw updates focused on improving accessibility, participation, and Member engagement within the Cooperative.

One of the biggest and most exciting changes is the addition of remote meeting attendance and voting options. Once implemented and approved for use, these changes will allow Members to participate in Annual Meetings remotely rather than always having to travel to Kingfisher in person. For many Members across our service area, this creates more opportunities to stay involved and have their voices heard no matter where they are located. We are so excited to see what this means for future Membership participation!

Additional updates included clarifying that requesting communication services qualifies an individual for Membership, adding instructions for remote participation to official meeting notices, expanding accessibility participation options for Members when needed, and confirming that voting must be completed directly by the Member rather than by proxy.

Members also approved a conduct policy that establishes a formal review process for situations involving threats or acts of violence to help maintain a safe environment for employees and Members alike.

More than anything, this year's turnout showed the strength of our Cooperative community. We are incredibly thankful to every Member who attended, participated, and helped shape the future of Pioneer.

The enthusiasm and engagement shown throughout the day made it clear that our Members care deeply about the future of their Cooperative, and we're excited about what these new changes will mean moving forward.

Check out this video from Management regarding the Annual Meeting!





THANK YOU to all Members who registered. We are truly overwhelmed by the number of Members that showed up and are grateful for your patience as we learn and grow from this record-breaking turn out!



# Meet Our PIONEER SCHOLARS



## Tucker West • District 2 - Technology Center • Fargo

Tucker is currently studying business and marketing at High Plains Technology Center while continuing his college coursework. He plans to graduate in the next couple of years as he completes his program and degree requirements.

"I chose my major because I've always been interested in leadership, business, and helping organizations grow," Tucker said. "Through programs like DECA and BPA, I found a passion for marketing, communication, and connecting with people."

After graduation, Tucker hopes to work in business, marketing, or possibly banking and finance. Long-term, he wants to continue growing into leadership roles where he can make a positive impact on both organizations and the people within them. "I think strong leadership can really change lives, and that's something I want to be part of."

Tucker stays heavily involved in extracurricular activities. He has served as the International Collegiate DECA Vice President and Oklahoma Collegiate DECA State President. He is also involved

in BPA and works with Woodward Main Street helping with community events and projects.

"What excites me most about the future is the opportunity to keep growing, meeting new people, and taking on new challenges," Tucker said. "I'm excited to see where all of my experiences lead."

The Pioneer Scholarship has helped ease financial stress and allowed him to stay focused on his education and leadership opportunities. One of his proudest accomplishments has been earning leadership positions at both the state and international level through DECA, along with qualifying for national competitions.

His biggest challenge has been balancing school, leadership, work, and personal life while learning how to manage his time effectively.

"Get involved early, step outside your comfort zone, and take advantage of every opportunity. The more you put into your experience, the more you'll get out of it."



## Macyn Anne Thomas • District 8 • Nash

Macyn attends the University of Central Oklahoma, where she is majoring in Nutrition, Dietetics, and Food Management. She plans to graduate with her bachelor's degree in May 2027 and complete her master's degree in May 2028.

"I chose my major because I have a passion to help children understand and lead healthy lifestyles both personally and medically," Macyn shared. After graduation, she hopes to become a pediatric dietitian and make a lasting impact through education. "I want to make an impact on young children's lives through education. I want to give children an outlet to be the best they can be."

What excites her most about the future is "finishing my education and using that knowledge to find my place."

Macyn stays very involved both on and off campus. She works at Maurice's in Enid on weekends, volunteers every Tuesday at the Central Pantry on campus, and is a member of the UCO Nutrition Club and Sigma Phi Lambda, a Christian sorority. She also participates in community service projects through

UCO.

In her spare time, she enjoys going to church, spending time with family and friends, baking, and watching movies.

"This scholarship helps me in furthering my education with less financial stress," she said. "Getting a higher education is very expensive and this scholarship has helped me reduce the financial burden on my parents and I."

One of Macyn's biggest accomplishments was graduating high school in May 2025 while also earning her associate degrees from Northern Oklahoma College that August.

Her biggest challenge this semester was balancing Chemistry II and Accounting I at the same time. Still, she's proud of the experiences she's gained through volunteering, especially helping a father shop for his family and daughter with celiac disease at Project 66. She also enjoyed cooking and serving a spaghetti dinner to firefighters on 9/11.

"Work hard and it will pay off in the end. Don't forget to take time off for yourself and your family!"



Alexis is majoring in Communication Sciences and Disorders at Oklahoma State University and will graduate this May.

She originally began college pursuing elementary education because of her love for working with children. However, everything changed after spending a summer working one-on-one with a nonverbal child with autism.

"I had to get creative and find new ways to communicate with him, and through that experience, I discovered how powerful communication truly is," Alexis said. "Watching his growth over that summer sparked my passion for speech-language pathology, and I changed my major the following semester."

After completing graduate school, Alexis hopes to work in an elementary school setting with a focus on articulation and stuttering therapy. She would also love to continue working with adult clients by volunteering at clinics or retirement homes.

"The biggest impact I want to make is helping individuals connect with their families through communication," Alexis said. "Being able to express yourself is something many people take for granted, and I want to help give that ability and confidence to those who need it most."

Alexis stays heavily involved both on and off campus. She works with speech-language pathologists helping find assistive technology for clients and is a member of the National Student Speech Language Hearing Association.

She also volunteers with organizations including the Stuttering Research and Treatment Lab, Our Daily Bread, Night to Shine, Legacy Village, and Special Olympics. She has participated in hearing screenings, literacy camps, and school-based speech-language volunteering opportunities.

"I'm most excited about the opportunity to make a real difference in people's lives," Alexis said. "I especially love working one-on-one with children, and I look forward to creating a fun, supportive environment where they can grow and succeed in speech therapy."

In her spare time, Alexis enjoys spending time with friends, attending Oklahoma State sporting events, playing pickleball, and going to the lake with her family.

"The Pioneer Scholarship has made a huge difference in my college experience. It allows me to focus more on my academics and less on financial stress," she said.

Her biggest challenge has been stepping outside of her comfort zone and learning to build friendships while also managing the financial responsibilities of college.

"Truly soak in your college years, they go by faster than you think. Don't be afraid to embrace challenges and step outside of your comfort zone, because that's where the most growth happens," Alexis said. "And most importantly, stay connected with your family back home, they miss you more than you realize."

Kale Smith • District 11 - Technology Center • Geary



Kale is pursuing a Bachelor's in Instrumentation Engineering Technologies at Oklahoma State University Institute of Technology and plans to graduate in August 2026.

"Instrumentation is the future for many companies, and learning how to be apart of that gives me a whole lot of job opportunities and flexibility for wherever I may find myself," Kale said.

After graduation, he hopes to work in the oil and gas industry.

"I want to make a difference in whatever company I am with, whether I'm updating processes or building them from scratch, my goal is to make any company more efficient and user friendly," Kale said.

In his spare time, he enjoys being outdoors, especially hunting, fishing, and shooting his bow. The Pioneer Scholarship helps him continue toward his goals while minimizing financial stress. "It helps me reach my goal of finishing college with as little financial debt as possible."

One of his biggest accomplishments has been graduating with his associate degree with highest honors and staying on track to complete his bachelor's degree the same way. He is also proud of graduating summa cum laude and serving as the previous president of the International Society of Automation (ISA) student club.

"My biggest challenge in college was time management, but I eventually figured it out and was able to find a healthy balance between my school and personal life," Kale said.

When future students enter college, Kale has simple advice.

"Pay attention in class and always put in the effort for anything extra your professors may ask of you, this leads to not only a better grade but it gives you a good name and shows that you want to be apart of everything"



## **25+** YEARS ANNIVERSARIES

---

**Jason and Robin Genis** - Carter  
Celebrated their 28th Wedding Anniversary March 15.  
They have four children and four grandchildren.

**Mike and Lisa Burch** - Blanchard  
Celebrated their 50th Wedding Anniversary April 30.  
They have two sons and five grandchildren.

**Kevin and Lorie Christensen** - Blanchard  
Celebrated their 30th Wedding Anniversary May 4.  
They have four children and five grandchildren.

**Wendell and Judy Vencil** - Garber  
Will celebrate their 50th Wedding Anniversary July 23.  
They have two sons, two grandsons, and two granddaughters.

---

***Happy Anniversary from all of us at Pioneer!***

***Want your Anniversary published?***

To have wedding anniversary announcements of 25 years or more, simply submit your anniversary information including town, wedding date, and number of children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren to GoPioneer Magazine at any of the following addresses:

Email:  
Subject: GoPioneer Anniversaries  
GoPioneerOK@ptci.com

Standard mail:  
GoPioneer Anniversaries  
Pioneer Telephone Cooperative  
P.O. Box 539  
Kingfisher, OK 73750

GoPioneer.com:  
Find Anniversaries under  
'GoPioneer Magazine' on  
our website.

**\*\*IF SUBMITTING BY MAIL, PLEASE USE PRINT\*\***