

GOPIIONEER

SEPTEMBER 2023

COMMUNITY FAVORITES:

Meet your LOCAL Public Relations Specialist

Beginning on Pg. 1

Words of Wisdom from some of our Local
Chamber Executive Directors!

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FOCUS ON.

Rental Property
Program

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THE DRAMA BEHIND
THE LETTER



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Letters from **LEADERS**

Kim Grellner - VP Marketing Sales & Service

As we savor the final moments of summer and head deeper into the start of another school year, I find myself reminiscing about the activities and memories accumulated with friends, family, and customers. For me, and for many, this year has been different than years past, both personally and professionally. From a personal perspective, my new favorite role as KiKi (grandma) has been a joyful one. I have enjoyed watching the personalities of my toddler grandchildren develop into the sweet, helpful, sensitive and onery little ones they are. I have often been overcome with pride watching my children become parents and thinking about their school age years. The older I get, the faster the years pass by. But as for enjoying life these days, personally, I recommend it, being a KiKi is the best thing ever.

Professionally, the memories that come to mind also bring a smile to my face and a tear to my eyes. As you are aware, Pioneer's decision to cease cellular customer operations has been impactful for both customers and employees. Now that the customer transition process has begun and the porting window opened for most of our customers, the reality of this decision is having full impact on all of us. The relationships we have built here at Pioneer with our cellular customers over the past 30 years have been nothing but memorable. I recall the number of different devices that have been popular throughout the years, but most of our long-term customers will remember the beloved bag phone. This phone changed the way consumers trusted their mobile device, it gave us security while on the road and helped make mobile communications what it is today. Device capability has significantly improved over the years, making cellular a must-have service for consumers of all ages.

These memories of our cellular experience will continue in my heart and in my mind for many years to come. In many situations, Pioneer will continue to proudly serve you with our other products, such as telephone, internet, or iVideo. However, if this is the end of your Pioneer relationship, let me take this opportunity to wish you a very sincere thank you for your service. I hope your memories with Pioneer Cellular can provide you the same smile and tear they provide for me! It has been a memorable and eventful nice ride...Thanks for the Memories Pioneer Cellular!



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.

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Topic of September 2023:

Looking Local...and Global

Dive into the heart of our communities with this month's GoPioneer edition!

Meet the faces and stories behind our local PR representatives who shape our narrative and the voices that resonate in our town. Glean invaluable insights from our Chamber of Commerce leaders, and for those scratching their heads, unravel the mystery of "What is a Chamber of Commerce?"

Plus, if you're in for a tad bit of digital drama, don't miss our expansive four-page spread delving into the transformation of Twitter. It's a blend of local meets global in this issue, and we're thrilled to have you on this journey with us.

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PR Spotlight

CINDY HARRIS

Kingfisher



Cindy's partner, Maximus!



Hello everyone, my name is Cindy Harris and I am a Public Relations Specialist for Pioneer.

I was born in Scott City, KS, but my parents moved while I was an infant to Liberal and Harper, before settling in Ellinwood, KS. We lived there for eight years before moving to Kingfisher, OK in 1975 where I attended high school. Even though I've now lived most of my life in Oklahoma, I still count myself as a Kansas girl... their roads are better, haha!

I began working for Pioneer in 1986... so I will let you do the math, lol! I started out as a telephone operator for approximately eight months, before taking a position as Public Relations Assistant. From there, my title & responsibilities evolved until I became the PR representative I am today. I love what I do because my job is never the same from day-to-day, plus I get to build & foster relationships with so many great people throughout the communities Pioneer serves.

I've reached the point now in my role at Pioneer, that I'm now the "older one" or the "Boomer" when working with these younger twenty-some year olds, lol. I suppose some people today might have issues relating with the younger work force, however, I see it as a challenge and learning curve for me. They are the ones that grew up with the technology we use today and understand it completely, and I am always willing to learn. However, I do like to think I have equally shared with them some of my knowledge, from the era I grew up with. I attended the school of hard-knocks and have had the chance to attend numerous leadership trainings thru the years, including University of Madison in Madison, WI!

After working for DHS in Child Protection Services for several years, my husband Bill took a position with Kingfisher Public Schools about two years ago, as a School Based Social Worker, so we are rooted in Kingfisher! We enjoy OU Football & Basketball, traveling and we both love to dance. Together we have a daughter, Amanda Harris and her family who reside in Bethany, OK, and a son, Mitch Kuehn and family residing in the community of Kona, on the big island of Hawaii. How blessed are we that we get to visit Hawaii and basically have free room and board, PLUS have our very own tour guides?

I have been so blessed and am very grateful for my job at Pioneer. I have worked with hundreds of individuals over the years who have since retired, moved on or, unfortunately, passed away, but they all will forever hold a special place in my heart. I love that the place I work at is a family-oriented environment! I'm excited to see what lies ahead for Pioneer and for what lies ahead for me in the future!

PR Spotlight

MANDA WHEELER

Woodward



Manda's partner, Shirley!

I grew up in the Pacific Northwest in Oregon and Washington State. After graduating from high school, I started working as a cashier at a grocery store called Fred Meyer, where I met my husband, Zack, in 2010. We moved to Woodward, Oklahoma in 2012 for Zack's career in Renewable Energy, and we got married a year later, in 2013.

Shortly after marrying, I decided I wanted to go back to school, so I enrolled at Northwestern Oklahoma State University to work on my bachelor's degree in marketing. While in school, I worked as an Assistant Sales Manager at CATO and had our first son, Arick, in 2016. I graduated with my degree in 2018 and had our daughter, Harper, two months later!

I started working at Pioneer in 2018 as a Sales Representative. I loved the environment that Pioneer provided to their employees and how much it felt like a family. I enjoyed working in sales; however, I've always enjoyed being involved in my community and boosting economic growth. I set a goal to become more integrated into my community and transition into Public Relations—something I was able to achieve last year at Pioneer!

Being a part of a rural community in Northwest Oklahoma has allowed me to discover the needs of smaller communities and recognize how different they are from those of big cities. One of those necessities is high-speed, reliable internet, which makes me passionate about my role at Pioneer.

What I've loved most about working in the community is the amount of support Pioneer has received and the relationships I have gained along the way. Being a part of the Chamber of Commerce has shown how every business is monumental in the overall success, functionality, and economic growth of our community. After 11 years in Northwest Oklahoma, I couldn't be happier to call this home.



PR Spotlight

ROBIN FIELDER

Blanchard-Newcastle



Robin's partner, Thelma!



Hey, I'm Robin Fielder, Public Relations Specialist for the incredible company, Pioneer.

One of the best parts of my job is that I get to spend ample time in my hometown of Newcastle, home to the best mascot this side of the world... drum roll... The Newcastle Racers! While there are Lions, Tigers, Demons, and Bobcats in my exchanges, I cherish all the friendships I've built with each one. I'd cheer for them too—if they weren't playing against the Racers!

Before joining Pioneer, I was an entrepreneur at Queen of the Tees, with locations in Newcastle and Purcell. We created vibrant and sparkly spirit wear for schools, teams, businesses, and groups. We also had a spirited gift shop and tanning salon. This was such a fun job! I made so many lifelong friendships and am so grateful for the 15 years I spent there. However, it was time for a change as I was growing older, so, at 51, I applied for a LOCAL Public Relations position with Pioneer. Miraculously, I landed my dream job! It was one of my best decisions. I discovered so many amazing people, not only in the Pioneer family, but in the Tri-City area that I didn't even know!! I can easily say that I have the BEST "family" (friends who are like family) groups!!! This role has allowed me to build awesome relationships, reconnect with old friends, and spread LOVE among the LOCALS—one of my favorite activities. I've participated in numerous parades, held Board of Director positions, and attended countless events. I truly am a LUCKY girl!

Some of my favorite things include a warm cup of sugary coffee in the morning, cozying up with a Hallmark movie, a fresh bouquet of flowers, or enjoying a Sunday afternoon nap. I absolutely love Christmas music, the OU football season, a warm crockpot meal after a long day, furry socks, Christmas lights, playing pickleball, weekend escapades with my dear friends, belting out my favorite songs, and DANCING. But at the tip-top of my favorites list is my FAMILY! Kelsie Jr., my devoted husband of almost 25 years, Kelsie Three, my sweet son, and Kasadie, my crazy, big-hearted girl. We're not quite empty nesters—according to Kelsie. My son operates a thriving business that often takes him away, while my daughter, a junior at Auburn University in Alabama, proudly represents the Auburn Livestock Judging Team...-Boomer Sooner!

I'm still getting the hang of this chapter of life, but so far, I'm LOVING it!

PR Spotlight

RYAN BALDWIN

Weatherford



Ryan's partner, Beast!



Hello! I am Ryan Baldwin.

I am a public relations specialist for Pioneer out here in Weatherford! I was born in Elk City, Oklahoma but I lived in a much smaller town of Erick, OK until I was in second grade. My father was the basketball coach and when he got a new job, which meant we were leaving for Fairview, Oklahoma, where I would graduate in 2015.

After graduating Fairview, I attended the great Southwestern Oklahoma State University on the hilltop—GO DAWGS!—and while I studied to be many things, I eventually decided on Business degree with a focus in marketing and a minor in Public Relations. Isn't that convenient? Haha. I graduated from SWOSU in 2018 and went to work at the Bank of Western Oklahoma.

I worked in banking for almost 2 years before deciding to leave the industry and turn my career towards being an insurance agent, but after almost two years of working for Eitzen Agency as an independent agent, I decided my focus needed to change and I needed to think about what I wanted to do forever. I started my job hunt to find something fitting. I knew I wanted a job that was engaging and had to deal with people. When I saw the job opening for a Public Relations specialist with Pioneer, I knew I had to apply... lucky for me, I ended up with the best job!

Here at Pioneer, every day is a new day for me. I attend civic groups, community meetings, and enjoy setting up booths at local events. I enjoy talking with anyone—no stranger will ever feel like they can't talk to me. I run some of our community Facebook pages and try to be active with videos and updates. I also have done door knocking cold calling sales work. Needless to say, every day is a new day in my position.

What I love most about Pioneer is its commitment to rural Oklahoma. I was a long-time customer, if you count living with my parents, before I was ever an employee. I love being a part of a team that is bringing high speed internet to this area and boosting an economic impact in an area that is normally forgotten about. I love being from small-town Oklahoma and love being on this mission with Pioneer!

I married my wife, Lexi, two years ago and we have such a blessing daughter, who keeps me on my toes. We live in Weatherford and attend Faith Church in Hinton. In my free time, you can catch me spending time with my daughter, enjoy some golfing with my dad, and watching my beloved Sooners. I enjoy watching The OKC Thunder as well! I'm excited to be a part of the Weatherford community and can't wait to see this community grow!

Hello...



The Drama Behind Twitter

Imagine a world where Twitter, the platform once synonymous with global conversation, becomes the epicenter of an unprecedented digital upheaval. The reason? One man: Elon Musk.

When news broke that Elon had acquired Twitter, the digital realm buzzed with anticipation and anxiety. Twitter users, who had long seen the platform as a free space for open dialogue, now questioned its future. Would Musk's distinctive approach bring innovation or instigation?

What unfolded in the subsequent months was nothing short of a digital drama, filled with tension, clashes, and a great migration of users. As discontentment grew, a significant portion of Twitter's populace began to seek refuge in alternative platforms, afraid of what a potential crash or detrimental change might mean for their online voices, content, and— with its heavy artist user base— even their livelihood.

This is not just the story of a business acquisition. This is a tale of trust, influence, and the vast power of online communities. Grab your tea cups and dive deep into this detailed timeline to witness firsthand the gripping saga of ~~Twitter~~ under Elon Musk.



MIT reported a firm that tracks Twitter behavior “Believes that around 877,000 accounts were deactivated and a further 497,000 were suspended” between Oct. 27 and Nov. 1 alone.

DIVE DI

Oct. 27, 2022

Elon Musk Owns Twitter

This was a \$44 billion acquisition that came after months of legal drama. Elon, in an interview in April 2023, admitted he only purchased Twitter because he believed, legally, that he'd be forced to anyways.

On day one, he fired former CEO Parag Agrawal, CFO Ned Segal, general counsel Sean Edgett, and head of Legal, Trust and Safety Vijaya Gadde.



November 3

Layoffs

Elon laid off 3,700, which accounted for almost half of Twitter's staff. There was a class-action lawsuit in response to not giving employees an advance notice of a mass layoff and, a week later, the app reached out to some employees citing they were laid off “by mistake”.

Many executives quit, including the head of trust and safety. By April 2023, Elon would have laid off more than 6,000 employees—around 80% of Twitter's workforce.

START HERE



E INTO THE RAMA

November 1, 2022 Bye-Bye Verification



Coca-Cola ✓
@ActualCocaCola

If this gets 1000 retweets we will put cocaine back in Coca-Cola.

2:39 PM · 11/11/22 · [Twitter for iPhone](#)

1,644 Retweets **103** Quote Tweets **2,652** Likes

For years, the blue checkmark on Twitter served as an assurance that a public figure's account was authentic. However, Elon replaced this invite-only verification system with Twitter Blue, available to anyone at \$8/month. As a result, the platform became rife with impersonators of prominent figures. Politicians, corporations, and celebrities alike became targets for inappropriate jokes and misrepresentations. This chaos led many companies and advertisers to sever their ties with the platform

December 2022 The U-Turn Sagas



Elon Musk ✓
@elonmusk

Given that Twitter serves as the de facto public town square, failing to adhere to free speech principles fundamentally undermines democracy.

What should be done?

✕ **Elon Musk** ✓
@elonmusk · Mar 25, 2022

Free speech is essential to a functioning democracy.

Do you believe Twitter rigorously adheres to this principle?

[Show this poll](#)

12:51 PM · Mar 26, 2022

In his early months overseeing Twitter, Elon faced user disapproval for certain decisions. This escalated in December when they pointed out contradictions between his actions and prior statements. On Nov. 7, 2022, he tweeted, “My commitment to free speech extends even to not banning the account following my plane, even though that is a direct personal safety risk.” Yet, by December, he banned that account which monitored his Gulfstream G700 jet’s movements.

Before purchasing Twitter, Elon advocated for all legal speech on the platform, stating, “I hope that even my worst critics remain on Twitter.” However, by December, he’d suspended multiple journalists, allegedly for referencing his jet’s whereabouts.

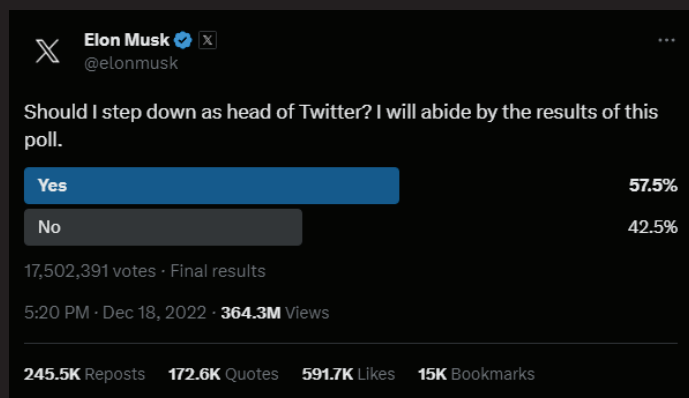
These two decisions had users turning a closer eye to Elon’s history and promises, both present and past.



THE ~~TWITTER~~ DRA

CONTINUE HERE!

December 2022 The Deciding Poll



Elon created a Twitter poll asking whether he should step down or not. With more than 17.5 million votes casted, 'yes' won with 57.5%. Twitter users continued to bring up the poll through the ever-going Twitter-drama.

Elon tweeted, "I will resign as CEO as soon as I find someone foolish enough to take the job!" on Dec. 21. He would name Linda Yaccarino CEO in June.

May 2023 Facing Eviction

A judge evicted Twitter from its Boulder, Colorado office after three months of unpaid rent. The landlord took the company to court with a bill over \$75,000. To be fair, Twitter didn't pay traditional rent for this building. In 2020, the company was provided with a letter of credit for \$968,000, which they used to pay the landlord. The credit ran short after Elon's acquisition. This was not Elon's only 'pay yo bills' suit. Twitter faced another lawsuit for failing to pay \$136,250 in rent for its Headquarter office in San Francisco.

According to a December 13th New York Times report, Twitter had stopped paying rent on all of its global offices to save on costs.

February 2023

4,000 Characters... and counting

Twitter Blue subscribers were given the ability to post 4,000-character posts, more than 14 times the 280-character limit. Twitter has undergone only one other character-length expansion, which occurred in 2017 when it doubled its 140-character limit to 280. This limit remained in place until April, when Elon increased the character limit to 10,000 characters, and then again in June to 25,000 characters.

Many users and marketing experts, including social media agency LiquidBubble, argued against the change. They noted that Twitter's concise character limit allowed for unique, brief posts and believed the modification would kill the art of live tweeting.

January 2023 HQ Furniture Auctions



Elon, in the tweets and eyes of Twitter users, had made a few decisions in his first few months that users didn't agree with. However, in December, users began mocking and calling Elon out on discrepancies between previous statements and actions. The two most notable were the suspension of the ElonJet account and his support of free speech.

Office supplies included unique memorabilia, designer furniture, and industrial equipment. Some of the items featured were bikes that can charge your phone, a 6-foot "@" sign with artificial plants, and tons of industrial kitchen equipment.

AMA CONTINUES...

June 2023 Competition

There are roughly 128 social media platforms you can join today, like Facebook, Pinterest, and Instagram. However, for Twitter users who wanted to jump ship and take their following with them, there weren't any Twitter-like options outside of Mastodon, which was launched in 2016. But within a few months of Elon's purchase, alternatives began hitting the app stores.

Here are a few:

Bluesky, launched February.



Threads, launched July 5. Spill, launched mid-June



June 2023 Limiting Tweets

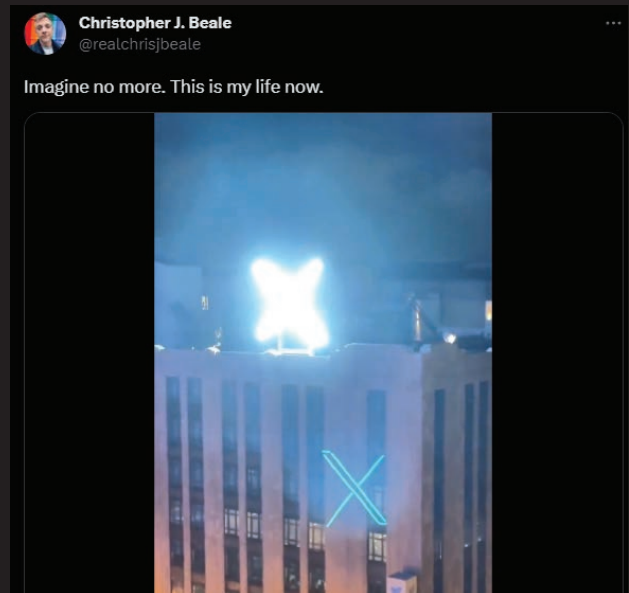
On July 1, a vast number of users were unable to access Twitter. This unexpected hurdle came after Elon suddenly introduced measures to counteract what he labeled as inappropriate utilization of Twitter data to develop advanced AI systems, such as ChatGPT. These AI models pull large amounts of online data to produce text, images, videos, and other forms of content resembling human output.

Musk clarified the constraints on a following Saturday. He mentioned that accounts without verification (Twitter Blue) would be limited to viewing 600 tweets daily, whereas those with verified statuses could access up to 6,000. However, after receiving significant criticism, Elon revised the numbers, suggesting an increase to 800 tweets for unverified users and 8,000 for those verified. Eventually, these numbers were adjusted to 1,000 and 10,000 tweets, respectively.

July 2023 Chaotic Rebrand

Elon Musk has a noticeable penchant for the letter 'X'. This can be seen from his early venture, X.com, which later evolved into PayPal, to his aerospace company, SpaceX, and even in the naming of his son, X Æ A-XII, pronounced "X". Given this trend, it wouldn't be surprising for him to rebrand Twitter as "X".

A few months after discreetly re-registering Twitter as X Corp in Nevada, Elon abruptly rebrand over a July weekend, causing quite a stir. Elon revamped not just the website's logo and name but also undertook a comprehensive revamp of its San Francisco headquarters. The San Francisco Police Department ended up shutting down the removal of the Twitter name because Elon didn't file for a permit. It didn't stop there.



Elon also placed a massive, light-up "X" on the top of the building. The logo was held down by sandbags and flashed repeatedly, prompting complaints and concerns from local residents... and mockery from X users. The new logo was up three days before it was torn down and the Department of Building Inspection issued a notice of violation and gave Elon a fine of \$4447 ... which his landlord paid.

The End...?

Streamlined Connections

Pioneer partner up with property owners to create a streamlined internet experience.

Since 1953, Pioneer's service footprint has spread into many different types of locations, from small towns like Cleo, OK, to growing cities like Weatherford, OK.

Having communities of different sizes and needs can be difficult, but Pioneer is always adapting to fulfill the needs of their customers. This is why Pioneer launched a Rental Property Program in Weatherford.

"Weatherford is a unique place. We have our traditional community members, like families, businesses, and locals that were born-and-raised here, but we also have something a lot of western Oklahoma towns don't—college kids," Public Relations Representative, Ryan Baldwin, said. "If they're not in the residence halls or living at home, that means they need a place to stay."

College students aren't the only individuals that might need to rent a home or apartment, but they do have a unique set of needs that traditional renters don't.

"College students move in quick and they're out on a schedule," Ryan said. "Some of the students that come to SWOSU won't know exactly where they're living until a week or two out. That means they need internet quick in a town they're not familiar with."

Pioneer began reaching out to rental property owners to help solve the problem.

"The goal was to make Pioneer a permanent fixture for college students. We know trustworthy internet is important for anyone, but especially students who have to research, connect with friends and family, and attend class. So, we reached out to rental property owners and worked out a program to make sure residents could get quality internet access, with no contracts or obligations," Ryan said. "Now, as soon as they move in, all they have to do is call Pioneer and they're ready to browse."

With the launch of the Rental Property Program, Pioneer made some great partners.

The Internet Problem

Milan Davis at Davis Properties has been managing rental properties for over 30 years. Before Pioneer, Milan noted that residents were consistently expressing grievances with their internet quality.

"A few years ago, you can either use a local cable company, AT&T, or one of several satellite companies," Milan said. "The biggest complaints that I heard from residents on previous services is that one was slow or the other was down. You could watch Facebook and people would say, 'Hey, is your internet up or down? How long has it been? Have you been able to get hold of anybody?', and that might go on for days."

Ryan has lived in Weatherford for 10 years and doesn't hesitate to speak about

Participants in the Rental Property Program

Weatherford

Tautfest Rentals
Kevin Kelley Properties
Davis Properties
Okie Dust
Bobby Caulkins Rental Properties
Kyle Slegell Properties
The Estates of Weatherford

Woodward

Bryan Rowland Properties
E-Towne Property Management NW

Quick Facts

Pioneer's Rental Property Program is designed to simplify internet access for residents in rental properties. Tenants can swiftly set up their fiber Internet on move-in day with a call to our local office or by visiting our online store.

This initiative springs from our deep-rooted commitment to connecting and serving the Weatherford community.

THE PERKS:

Hassle-Free Setup: Tenants can easily activate their fiber Internet on the day they move in, ensuring immediate connectivity.

No Additional Equipment: A WiFi 6 (or newer) gateway is already installed in the rental property, meaning tenants don't have to purchase or set up any additional equipment.

Remote Activation: A simple call to Pioneer or a visit to the online store is all it takes to activate the service, eliminating the need for on-site technician visits.



**FOCUS
ON.**

Rental Property
Program

THANK YOU

to our partners for trusting Pioneer to provide their residents with quality service.



High-Speed Fiber Internet: Tenants get access to a reliable and fast fiber-optic network, ensuring seamless online experiences whether they're working, studying, or streaming.

No Service Contracts: Flexibility is key. Tenants are not bound by lengthy service contracts, giving them the freedom to choose how they want to manage their Internet service.

Local Support: Tenants can benefit from local customer service representatives, technicians, and a Public Relations specialist, ensuring that any issues or questions are addressed swiftly by community-focused professionals.

Zero Equipment Responsibilities: If there are any issues with the equipment, Pioneer takes care of maintenance and replacements. Tenants don't need to worry about equipment malfunctions or associated costs.

Weatherford's previously inadequate internet infrastructure.

"When I went to school at SWOSU we had two options and both used copper wiring. They were constantly lagging, constantly buffering, and about every other week they were out for various periods of time," Ryan, who graduated from SWOSU in 2018, said. "The trust with one of the companies was so bad that I switched my monthly payment from autodraft to check, because they started to charge me for things out of my control and would go against their word."

Pioneer launched fiber in Weatherford in 2022. Wanting to provide Weatherford residents with quality internet as quick as possible, Pioneer would open service in sections as they finished the overbuild.

"I've gone door knocking in places where we started offering fiber and I'll be talking to people who started out with a competitor for \$60," Ryan said, "but now they're paying \$100. Then others will be paying similar prices for speeds where they're only getting 30 Mbps up and 5 Mbps down. That's crazy to me."

For those unfamiliar with internet terms, that speed isn't impressive. Pioneer fiber internet offers symmetrical speeds up to five gig, which means things like less lag time when gaming, hosting or attending a zoom class, or even watching multiple TV streams around a house.

The goal of the program isn't just to provide great service, but also a clean and tidy place to live.

"As a landlord, it was a pain to deal with internet, because you'd have a provider come in and they'd run their cables and drill their holes, or you'd have a cable company come in and do the same thing—or, worse, you'd have the satellite companies—we had complexes looking like we were trying to talk to Mars," Clay Gilliland, owner of Tautfest Rentals said. "This partnership benefits the condition of our properties. It's not messy outside or inside. and people aren't making swiss cheese on the brick or siding, because no one will use the same hole twice."

Convenience

The owners that participate in the Rental Property Program aren't forcing their residents to use Pioneer's internet.

"Our plan is to leave the equipment there when another tenant moves out, so it's ready the moment someone steps in," Kevin Kelly, owner of Kevin Kelly Properties said. "It's just plug and play, and they don't have to have someone come out. That's a huge benefit whether these young individuals realize it or not."

For residents in homes that participate in the Rental Property Program, getting connected is straightforward. Previous residents will leave behind their WiFi 6 equipment and all a resident has to do is call into the office or visit the website to sign up for service, making it painless and easy.

Most of Pioneer's partners provide their new residents with a sheet of utility providers, putting the choice in their hand.

"I absolutely recommend it to everybody. I provide a utility sheet and the internet section has every possible provider and I list them in order from best to worst. I always tell them Pioneer's number one," Kevin said. "I've been super pleased. The work and installs are always professional, plus, they're a local company with a local office."

The goal of Pioneer and our partners is simple: a positive experience.

"We started this program because there's a need for quality internet in Weatherford and in rental properties. We want students to succeed, and we want new families and residents in Weatherford to get to back to their normal life as quickly as they can," Ryan said. "Thanks to our partners, we're able to do that, and if anyone ever has a problem with their service, we're just a call away to help them fix it."

Pioneer is currently working with several partners in the Weatherford area and has began launching the Rental Property Program in Woodward.

Have a local business we should
FOCUS ON?

Visit GoPioneer.com/FocusOn
and fill out a nomination form!

What is a CHAMBER OF COMMERCE?

When I started my “big-girl job,” my co-worker Cindy invited me to a “chamber banquet” in Kingfisher. I agreed, of course, eager to get involved and, as any poor, recent grad, get a free meal. “Chamber of Commerce” sounded like something more hoity toity than it really was. The attendees were kind, the food delicious, but the idea of a chamber dealing with, well, commerce, was still undefined. Luckily, I had great mentors who helped me understand what a chamber of commerce does. I even had the opportunity to get involved with my own local chamber in Crescent, America. I now understand just how essential this organization is, not only to the businesses but to everyday folks and, particularly, to the heartbeat of rural communities.

A chamber of commerce, at its core, is a local association of businesses and professionals. Their goal? To promote and protect the interests of its members. But its influence stretches far beyond just business. It’s a melting pot of networking, knowledge-sharing, and community building.

For business owners, the chamber is a goldmine. It offers networking opportunities, exposure through chamber-organized events, and a platform to voice their needs or concerns. It’s a hub for collaboration, where companies, regardless of their size, come together to strengthen the local business climate.

But what if you don’t own a business? You can still

benefit from knowing or being involved with your chamber! Chambers frequently collaborate with local governments and organizations to facilitate community events, creating a robust sense of community spirit. For a regular citizen, it means access to events, training sessions, and sometimes even discounts through member businesses.

Rural communities, in particular, can benefit enormously from a chamber of commerce. In areas where businesses might be sparse and resources limited, a chamber provides a lifeline. They can attract new businesses, leading to more job opportunities and enhanced local services. For a small town, a chamber is often the catalyst for growth, innovation, and community cohesion. I’ve had the privilege of being a part of Crescent’s chamber, which has grown from about 17 members to over 90 in just two years! It is amazing to see the opportunities and resources the chamber can provide to its members, particularly the small businesses!

TLDR*; know your chamber, whether you’re a small-town average Joe, business owner, or even a manager at a corporation. Chambers are the backbone of a community, ensuring that everyone can find support, resources, and a touch of hometown pride.

***TLDR = Too Long Don’t Read. A common acronym used online as a “quick summary” or point for a longer story.**

THE BIG Q’S

We turned to some of our best chamber experts in our areas for the inside scoop on some important questions. Check them out!

What advice would you give to a young professional?



“Get to know your city’s community. It might be tiring, but go to everything that you are invited to.”

Elizabeth Amen

Chief Executive Officer
Weatherford Chamber of Commerce

ADVICE FROM THE INSIDE...

What's your best piece of advice to anyone wanting to be a part of the business world?



Gayla Riddle

Chief Executive Officer
Newcastle Chamber of Commerce

“Immerse yourself in all things community-related! You can do that through civic groups, your local chamber of commerce, non-profit organizations, or volunteering — just show up and make a difference. Being involved helps build and nurture a robust network of professionals, mentors, and peers. Make sure to always maintain high ethical standards. Trust is vital!”

What advice would you give to a young professional?



Cheryl Hendricks

Chief Executive Officer
Blanchard Chamber of Commerce

“Learn to accept all types of feedback. Good or bad you can learn from all your experiences. Just because the job or situation seems minor or inconsequential to them at the time doesn't mean someone else isn't watching you and keeping notes.”

What's your best piece of advice to anyone wanting to be a part of the business world?



CJ Montgomery

Executive Director
Woodward Chamber of Commerce

“Our mission at the Chamber is to create a healthy business environment for support and growth in addition to enhance and support the image of Woodward. My advice to those wanting to be a part of the business world is they recognize and understand how important they are to the community. They are literally the lifeblood. They should also know there are tremendous resources to help and they don't have to go it alone. Lastly find a niche and involve yourself in the community. You don't have to wrap yourself around everything, but community involvement will always pay huge dividends.”

What's your best piece of advice to anyone wanting to be a part of the business world?



Shauna Rupp

Executive Director
Kingfisher Chamber of Commerce

“As a new business owner, don't try to be an “island unto yourself.” Take advantage of peers, business owners whose experiences offer you wisdom, and networking opportunities. Making valuable connections and learning how to market will increase your sphere of influence!”



MEET OUR PIONEER SCHOLAR
Sarah Lichtenwaller

District 1: Mooreland High Plains Technology Center Major: Nursing

Q&A

Sarah Lichtenwalter's calling became clear when she was just 12-years-old.

"My sister got sick when she was a kid and I remember the experience of her being in the hospital and how nurses comforted our family," Sarah said. "It made the experience so much easier. I've known since then that this is what I wanted to do."

Sarah recently graduated school from High Plains Technology Center and she is now a fully licensed practical nurse (LPN).

"A LPN and RN [Registered Nurse] are both nurses, but a LPN focuses more on the skills portion of the job, and RNs are in a more management type position where they can do a wider variety of things," Sarah said.

Attending a technical school gave Sarah invaluable hands-on experience and practical knowledge.

"I just came from rotation, I almost had to wear my scrubs to the interview," Sarah said in March, when she was interviewed. "We started our first rotation in September [2022], and we did two weeks in field and then in class, and after Christmas break, we started again. We've been in the classroom for two weeks, then we'll be in clinicals for two weeks—it rotates back and forth."

Having an immersive learning experience was invaluable for Sarah, who practices her skills daily at Dr. Kirkendall's office in Woodward, preparing her for more education.

"I did a lot of pre-requisites in high school at Northwestern here in Woodward. I'm planning to start school in August to finish up my pre-requisites and going to school to be an RN," Sarah said. "Being an LPN was a way to make money while in nursing school because my plan is to go all the way up to nurse practitioner."

Sarah is continuing her education online through Pratt Community College, where she entered her program debt-free.

"I moved out right after I graduated high school and live with my boyfriend.

It's been challenging," Sarah said. "I've been very blessed. He's been able to take care of mostly everything by himself since I haven't been able to work. Luckily all my scholarships paid for my school... I cried when I got my last scholarship."

The LPN program ran from Monday to Friday, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., leaving Sarah little time for work or other activities.

"I haven't had to stress about working or finding time to work to be able to pay my tuition," Sarah said. If I didn't pay my tuition, I wouldn't be able to finish school, but thanks to Pioneer I was able to finish this whole year with my tuition paid."

However, Sarah still chose to work at Dr. Kirkendall's office during her LPN studies, driven more by passion than necessity.

"People who need a nurse—they need them for a reason and it's probably not a good reason. They're in pain; they're sick; they're hurting—I want to be the person that's there for them," Sarah said. "I want to be the person that puts a smile on my face and eases whatever pain they're experiencing."

Though Sarah is several years away from becoming a Nurse Practitioner, she is committed to Western Oklahoma.

"I don't think I could ever leave. Healthcare options in rural Oklahoma are limited, that's the only way to put it. Our clinics are mostly nurse practitioners. There are two or three doctors' offices in Woodward that are doctors and not nurse practitioners or other types of physicians," Sarah said. "I just want to serve the small communities that don't have many good options."

Sarah will conclude her prerequisites by next Spring, aiming to join nursing schools in the Fall of 2024.

"I'm excited to be able to make a difference. I want to make people feel better, and I want to be someone that brings joy to people's lives," Sarah said.

What has been your biggest challenge since starting school?

Not being able to have free time. I'm a very social person, so it's been hard having to reel myself in and just focus on studying right. That has by far been the hardest part, just not being able to have a life. My friends have been really understanding of the fact that I spend probably 12 hours a day studying and won't be able to hang out.

How long do you think you'd survive in the zombie apocalypse?

Like, 2.2 seconds? Haha. I would either last like 20 seconds or a long time, because I would try and hide. Hide and cry.

If you had to remove one color from the whole world, what would it be and why?

Orange.

Do people eat or drink soup?

Eat. Most of the time soup has chunky stuff in it. Even when it's tomato or something, you still drink it out of a bowl.

What species would be the rudest if all animals could talk?

Cats, because they're mean. They hiss at you and fight. My parents have a cat and it is so mean, every time I try and pet it just hisses at me. I'm not really an animal person at all, but I like my dog.

Do you think aliens exist?

No.

Would you like to time travel back to the past or to the future?

The past. I'm an old soul and I think I would like it... I'd want to go back to when all the girls had big hair, red lips, and poodle skirts.

When you're having a bad day, what do you do to make yourself feel better?

Cry. I have horrible coping strategies.

"He's kind of a picky eater, but he absolutely loves this."

Roma Meat Roll

ingredients

1 1/2 lbs.	ground beef
1	egg
3/4 c.	cracker crumbs
1/8 tsp.	pepper
2	8 oz. cans tomato sauce
1 tsp	salt
1/2 c.	finely chopped onion
1/2 tsp	oregano
2 c.	shredded mozzarella cheese

Preheat oven to 350°.

Combine meat, egg, cracker crumbs, oregano, pepper and one can tomato sauce.

Mix well and shape into a flat rectangle about 10 x 12 inches on wax paper. Sprinkle cheese over meat mixture. Roll up like a jelly roll and press ends of roll to seal.

Place in shallow baking dish. Bake 1 hour.

Drain excess fat. Pour remaining can of sauce over meat roll and bake an additional 15 minutes.

Nothing is more important than family for Customer Service Representative Tammi Taylor. Family was at the front of her mind when she submitted the Roma Meat Roll to the Pioneer cook book.

"I chose to submit this recipe because it's my grandson's favorite recipe. He's kind of a picky eater, but he absolutely loves this," Tammi said. "My daughter-in-law adds French's crispy fried onions on the top the last five minutes."

This recipe is at least half a century old and almost like a family heirloom.

"I got it from my mom. This was a 1970s recipe that my mother got from her best friend and it's been passed down. It's just been such an easy recipe."

Tammi's family lives in Texas, which makes time with them more precious. Luckily, her Roma Meat Roll is a versatile recipe.

"A lot of times, I just put it in the freezer. I'll make it up and freeze it, then thaw it and feed it to my kids and my grandkid," Tammi said. "I do this because then I can spend time with them. I don't have to spend time making up a bunch of food because it's already made up."

For Tammi, simple is best. She doesn't like to spend time in the kitchen.

"I've made this for years and years and years and years. It's my go-to recipe because it's easy, but also a little different because of the twist with the mozzarella cheese in the middle," Tammi said. "That's what makes it stand out."

Tammi encourages everyone to try this recipe for any event or occasion... especially if there are any picky eaters.



Tammi Taylor and her grandson, Ethan.

COMMUNITY EVENTS OCTOBER

October 7

Central Plains Stone Age Fair
Major County Expo Center
808 East Highland
Fairview, OK

On behalf of the Oklahoma Archaeological society we are pleased to announce this years annual Central Plains Stone Age Fair. This is a fun family friendly and educational event that is free to the public. We will have 100+ 8 foot tables of lifetime collections that exhibit of all types of stone age tools and artifacts— some that date back 13,000 years ago! Everyone is welcome.

Event Hours:

Saturday, Oct. 7 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

October 31

Pumpkinfest
Main St.
Blanchard, OK

Hey ghosts & goblins, it's Halloween in Blanchard! Come join us this Tuesday on October the 31st for Pumpkinfest. The fun can be found on Main Street where the celebrations begin at 6pm. Be sure to bring your friends, family, and pets along for a spooky good time. We will have: A costume contest, pet costume contest, music, and of course, candy, candy, and more candy!

Event Hours:

Tuesday, Oct. 31 6:00 p.m.



From the Editor:

We would like to thank everyone who has submitted their anniversary for the magazine! Each month, and with every issue, Pioneer receives dozens of submissions online and through the mail. We are so honored to get to celebrate your day! Unfortunately, we can only fit a 11-13 anniversary submissions per issue. This is just a gentle reminder that the anniversary submissions are displayed in the order they're received and as timely as possible.

Please don't fret, we have your anniversary and will add you to our celebration list as soon as we can!

Well wishes,

Madison McCollum
Editor

Are you missing out on an internet and telephone discount?

Do you qualify for:

- SNAP
- Medicaid
- Federal Public Housing Assistance
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- WIC
- Veterans Pension or Survivor Benefits
- Lifeline

If so, you should apply for these programs:

1. AFFORDABLE CONNECTIVITY PROGRAM (ACP).



fcc.gov/acp

2. Lifeline.



checklifeline.org

The **Affordable Connectivity Program** is an FCC program that helps connect families and households when they are struggling to afford internet service.

*Provides up to
\$75/month on
qualifying Tribal lands.*

— OR —

*A \$30/month discount
for qualifying
households that aren't
on qualifying tribal
lands.*

————— **AND** —————

Lifeline is a federal government benefit program and only qualified persons may participate. Applicants must present documentation of household income or participation in qualifying programs. Lifeline is only available for one service per household whether landline, wireless, or internet.

*You could qualify for discounts on basic service ranging
from \$5.25 to \$34.25 per month!*



25+ YEARS ANNIVERSARIES

Bill & Dana Glasscock - Hydro

Celebrated their 50th Wedding Anniversary March 9th. They have three sons, two daughters-in-law, and four grandchildren.

Jimmie & Vicki Ice - Fay

Celebrated their 50th Wedding Anniversary March 25th. They have two children and four grandchildren.

Mr. & Mrs. Gene Ham - Hennessey

Celebrated their 65th Wedding Anniversary June 14th. They have three children, eight grandchildren, nine great-grandchildren, and a great-grandchild.

Trent & Janna Delano - Waynoka

Celebrated their 25th Wedding Anniversary June 27th. They have three sons and three daughters.

Jerry & Gayle McKinley - Frederick

Celebrated their 63rd Wedding Anniversary July 5th. They have two children, three grandchildren, and five great-grandchildren.

Mick & Doris Austin - Apache

Celebrated their 50th Wedding Anniversary July 7th. They have two children, a son and daughter-in-law, four grandchildren, eight great-grandchildren.

Warren & Caroline Harkins - McAlester

Celebrated their 60th Wedding Anniversary July 19th. They have four sons, four daughters-in-law, 14 grandchildren, and a great-grandson.

Fred & Jaree Stehr - Clinton

Celebrated their 50th Wedding Anniversary August 10th. They have two daughters, a son, and seven grandchildren.

James & Marilyn Hutton - Frederick

Celebrated their 50th Wedding Anniversary August 11th. They have five children.

Tom & Renee Curry - Hennessey

Will Celebrate their 30th Wedding Anniversary October 2nd. They have three furry schnauzer-children.

Kurt Kaya & Shel Wagner - Kingfisher

Will Celebrate their 25th Wedding Anniversary October 10th. They have two children.

Larry & Linda Wilcox - Dover

Will Celebrate their 50th Wedding Anniversary October 6th. They have two children and four grandchildren.

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.

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