



**PAYNE COUNTY
EXTENSION**

STRENGTHENING OKLAHOMA FAMILIES

Family and Consumer Sciences News

FEBRUARY 2025

Tax Season is Prime Time for Scammers

Tax season has arrived and with that comes another opportunity for scammers to take your money. Awareness of scammers' unscrupulous schemes can help keep taxpayers from becoming victims.

While scammers work year-round, tax season is prime time for them, said [Mengya Wang, Oklahoma State University Extension](#) finance specialist.

"Although anyone can get scammed, older people tend to be more vulnerable, along with individuals new to paying taxes," she said. "Scammers often use a sense of urgency, making people feel rushed into making a decision they might not otherwise. Your best line of defense is to remember the **Internal Revenue Service** will not call, text or email you. Any form of communication in these manners is not legitimate. The IRS communicates only through the U.S. Postal Service."

A popular scam involves answering a phone call in which the caller indicates the taxpayer owes money that must be paid immediately to avoid being arrested or fined. The scammer then asks for bank account information to withdraw the payment.

Another ploy claims the IRS recalculated the tax return and the taxpayer is owed money. In this

case, the caller asks to confirm bank accounts so the refund can be deposited.

Wang said taxpayers should also be aware of fraudulent tax preparers.

"If they offer an unusually low rate or base the rate on a percentage of the tax return, be cautious," she said. "Other red flags include guaranteeing a large refund without fully reviewing your financial situation, asking you to sign a blank tax form or requesting fees to be paid upfront in cash – especially if they don't provide a receipt."

To help prevent being scammed, Wang suggests filing taxes as early as possible. This will help avoid the last-minute rush to finish everything by the April 15 filing deadline.

Some taxpayers may discover during the tax-filing process that their identity has been stolen. If this happens, file an [Identity Theft Affidavit](#). This form alerts the IRS that someone has filed taxes using your information. Be sure to check with the credit reporting agencies and put a freeze on your credit.

The IRS offers legitimate sources for taxpayers to get help filing taxes. The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance and the Tax Counseling

for the Elderly programs offer free help for qualifying taxpayers. [More information on these programs is available online.](#)

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In This Issue

- Northeast District OHCE Meeting in Guthrie
- Northeast District OHCE Meeting Silent Auction Fundraiser
- OHCE Achievement Day Award Winners
- OHCE Yearbooks are Here!
- March OHCE Leader Lesson
- OHCE Scholarships for County High School Seniors
- Photography Tips

(Continued from front page):

“No matter what time of year, consumers who are tempted to take action due to a phone call, text message or an email, take a pause,” Wang said. “Nothing is so urgent a decision must be made in that moment. Call someone and get a second opinion. Once you step back and consider everything, it’s much easier to see the whole picture and determine it was likely a scam. That little bit of extra time can save you money and protect your assets.”

CONGRATULATIONS!!!

to everyone who turned in award entries this year.
The following awards have been submitted for District competition.

Outstanding Member: *Betty Rutledge, Cherokee*

Outstanding Rookie Member: *Jana Cook, Cherokee*

Outstanding Young Member: *Ruby Flowers, Floral Valley*

Heart of OHCE: *Joyce Lackey, Cimarron Valley*

Photography: *Jana Cook (Judy Ford Preparing Pie Crust for the Fair Kitchen)*

Bernadean Lilly (Back to School School Supply Drive)

Bernadean Lilly (2024 Floral Valley Christmas Party)

County Group Report: *Family Enhancement/Make it Sew Workshop, Carol Robbins*
Resource Management/Botanic Garden Tour, LaVerne Atkinson
Special State Project/Make Every Bite Count, Jana Comer

Local Group Report: *Family Enhancement:*

Developing Community Outreach, Cherokee

Pearl of Grace Ranch Art Supplies, Lunch Bunch

Gift Bags for Our Daily Bread, Rising Star

Healthy Living:

Alpha-Gal Syndrome, Cherokee

MPower Tour, Rising Star

Membership:

Flower Press Workshop, Lunch Bunch

Stained Glass Project, Rising Star

Resource Management:

Resource Management, Cherokee

Monkey Blankets, Lunch Bunch

Special State Project:

Make Every Bite Count, Lunch Bunch

OHCE YEARBOOK UPDATE

The 2025 yearbooks were handed out to local group members at Achievement Day so you should get your yearbook at your February meeting! **Thank you!!** to Kathie Tanner & everyone who helped get them done!



PAYNE COUNTY OHCE NEWS



NORTHEAST DISTRICT OHCE MEETING Tuesday, March 25th in Guthrie

Mark your calendar for Tuesday, March 25th & plan to attend this year's Northeast District Meeting at Meridian Technology Center, 3025 S. Division Street in Guthrie. Kay, Logan & Noble counties have worked hard to have an educational, fun meeting for Northeast District OHCE members. This year's theme is *"OHCE Spring Cleaning—Heart and Home."*

All registration is due by Friday, February 21st at 4:30 p.m. to the Extension Office.

Registration fee is **\$25.00 per person** which includes morning refreshments and lunch catered by *Granny Had One*—it will be delicious! Make checks payable to **Payne County OHCE.**

Payne County OHCE (along with Pawnee County OHCE) will be hosting the 2026 District Meeting as well as our members are conducting a gift basket silent auction fundraiser this year. We need ***MANY*** of you to attend the district meeting this year to help with the fundraiser and see what all the host counties do. ***Therefore, the Payne County Executive Board is reimbursing \$15.00 of the \$25.00 registration fee for up to 50 members who attend the meeting this year! When you register, you will pay the full \$25 registration fee and when you return from attending the district meeting, you can request your refund and a check will be prepared for you.***

Meeting registration starts at 8:30 a.m. and the meeting will start at 9:30 a.m. with introductions, business and awards. **There will be TWO \$100 door prizes given away at the end of the meeting.** The winners must be present to win.

Workshop possibilities include *working with food pantries, financial readiness for caregiving, lasagna gardening, quilting, historical dress making, starting a side hustle, and there will be more!*

Be sure to register for the meeting by Monday, February 21st at 4:30 p.m. Make your check payable to Payne County OHCE and drop it off at the Extension Office. Make sure they know it's for the OHCE Northeast District Meeting registration and have them put it in the yellow Northeast District OHCE Meeting folder.

Payne County OHCE President and Secretary as well as county outstanding member award winners will have their \$25 registration paid by Payne County OHCE if they attend the meeting.

MARCH OHCE LEADER LESSON

"History of the Canning Jar" will be taught on **Tuesday, February 11th at 2:00 p.m. at the Extension Office.** This will be an interesting and fun lesson! If you are the lesson leader for your local group, please try to attend the lesson presentation.

NORTHEAST DISTRICT OHCE MEETING GIFT BASKET SILENT AUCTION FUNDRAISER

As hosts for the 2026 Northeast District OHCE meeting, Payne and Pawnee Counties are conducting a gift basket silent auction fundraiser this year at the Northeast District Meeting.

At the OHCE Executive Board meeting, members decided to **ask that each group provide two gift baskets with a value of \$40 to \$60 for each basket.** The Executive Board will also put together a basket. With local group baskets and the county basket, there will be 13 baskets from Payne County and 9 baskets from Pawnee County which will be a great number of baskets to raise funds for the 2026 meeting.

So that we can try to limit duplicates, please email Delpha Whitefield (delpha.whitefield@yahoo.com) with your group's basket themes by **Friday, February 21st.**

Baskets need to be wrapped in cellophane or shrink wrap and tied with a bow or ribbon so they will be easy to load, transport and unload and the contents will be kept safe. **Please attach a list of items that are in your gift basket as well as the value of the items to the outside of your basket with a ribbon so shoppers can see what all they are getting when they bid.**

If you need help putting your baskets together and wrapping them, let Delpha know when you send her your themes and we can plan a time to meet at the office and help you finish your baskets. You can purchase basket shrink wrap bags at Hobby Lobby, Jo-Anns, and probably other places as well and they are not expensive. You can also get cellophane in a roll, but it can be very hard to manage so if you can find the basket bags, I would suggest those.

THANK YOU!!! for your commitment to this fundraiser to help have a successful 2026 meeting. Let us know if you have questions or need more information. We can't wait to see all the different basket themes and items in them!

OHCE SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS WILL BE OUT SOON!

OHCE Scholarship forms will soon be sent to all county schools for graduating seniors to apply for a **\$1500.00 scholarship** from Payne County OHCE. We will give two scholarships.

Complete rules will be attached to the form, but they must be Payne County residents who are seniors graduating this spring, and must use the scholarship for university, college, business school, nurse's trade, or technical school. Applications are due **Monday, March 24th at 4:30 p.m. in the Extension office.** If you know of a student who needs a form, have them come by the Extension office to pick one up.

If you encourage someone to apply, please have them make sure the forms are filled out completely and correctly with all information included that is requested. Incomplete or incorrect applications will not be considered.



PHOTOGRAPHY TIPS

***Photo Planning & Selection:** Action photos are eye-catching & attention-grabbing compared to a posed group photo

***Clean the lens:** Lint, dust, fingerprints, etc. can collect on the lens and create a blurred image

***Use the highest resolution possible for a better photo**

***Light your subject well:** shoot outside or turn on lights when shooting inside

***Stabilize your phone/camera:** Use a tripod or hold phone/camera with both hands and brace your upper arms against your body to steady the shot

***Avoid using digital zoom:** Doing so could decrease the photo quality. Instead, edit photo later using photo editing software on your computer

***Anticipate shutter lag:** Get used to the timing of your phone/camera so you'll have a good feel for when to press the shutter button to capture the moment

***Edit images later:** While it can be fun to use effects, like Instagram on your phone, editing photos on your computer produces a much better quality image

***Take a lot of pictures and don't throw away "mistakes":** Digital photography offers the ability to shoot many pictures quickly, which means you can experiment with different modes and composition. The phone/camera screen may not be great so keep even "mistakes" until you can see them on a computer screen

***Shoot at eye level:** When taking a photo of someone, hold the camera at the person's eye level; for children, that means stooping to their level.

***Use the rule of thirds:** Imagine two horizontal lines and two vertical lines crossing like a tic-tac-toe grid on the screen (your phone/camera may have a grid option available.) Place strong lines like the horizon on the gridlines and let elements of interest fall on the intersections.

***Use a plain background:** Study the area surrounding your subject. Make sure the safety shower isn't growing from the head of your subject or that no faucets extend from their ears. If the background is cluttered, fill the frame of your phone/camera by moving in closer to your subject.



Payne County Home & Community Education

FEBRUARY 2025



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10 Cimarron Valley Floral Valley	11 2:00 Leader Lesson—Ext. Office Elm Grove	12	13 Lunch Bunch Rising Star	14	15
16	17 Office Closed President's Day Holiday	18	19	20 Cherokee	21 4:30: NE District Meeting Registration DUE to Extension Office & Silent Auction Basket Themes Due to Delpha	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	

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