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Panhandle

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GOODWELL, OK
ONE OF THE REGION'S
BEST PLACES TO LIVE



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ONE OF THE REGION'S BEST PLACES TO LIVE

Located in the Oklahoma Panhandle,

Goodwell, Oklahoma, is a safe and welcoming community that offers a unique blend of small-town charm with a college town experience. Home to Oklahoma Panhandle State University, this community has gained recognition as one of the best places to live in the state according to Niche.com and Bestplaces.net. Goodwell's cultural opportunities, lower cost of living, community spirit, and safety all work together to make Goodwell one of the best places in Oklahoma to call home.

Along with the outstanding community, OPSU is at the heart of Goodwell. Known for its exceptional academic programs, OPSU is the educational cornerstone that attracts students from all over the region. Offering a wide range of undergraduate degrees, the University has a strong commitment to providing quality education to its students right in their own backyard.

Dr. Julie Dinger, University President, shares her perspective on the role of the University in the community. "At OPSU, we take pride in not only shaping the future of our students but also being partners and members of our local community in Goodwell. Our campus is a hub for exciting college events and activity for the community, but more than that we consider ourselves just one part of this great community. Our faculty, staff, students, and alumni live, work, and worship together in our community. It's a great place to call home."

Goodwell not only shines in higher education but also offers top-notch opportunities for elementary and high school education. The public schools in the area provide a high-quality education to students, fostering a strong foundation for their future. According to the Public School Review, Goodwell Public Schools ranks in the top 20% of all schools in the State of Oklahoma. With dedicated teachers and a commitment to academic excellence, Goodwell's public schools play a vital role in shaping the community's bright young minds.

Eddie Smith, Superintendent of Goodwell Public Schools, adds, "Our public schools are committed to nurturing the potential of every student. We take pride in

offering a well-rounded education that prepares our students for success in a rapidly changing world. Goodwell's schools are an essential part of this thriving community, and we're proud of the education we provide."

Goodwell's strong sense of community and cost of living affordability are two of its most appealing qualities. "Goodwell is an amazing, supportive community," said Goodwell Mayor, Kenny Smith. "The town, the public schools, and the university work very well together to make the most of all our strengths."

The cost of living in Goodwell is lower than the state and national averages, and the town's residents foster an environment where everyone knows their neighbors, creating a warm and welcoming atmosphere. This community spirit is especially evident during OPSU events and activities, like the athletic tailgates, where students and locals come together to support the Aggies.

Chief of Police, Travis McDowell, emphasizes the importance of safety in Goodwell: "We prioritize the safety and well-being of our residents and students. Goodwell is a place where people can feel secure and build lasting relationships. Our collaborative efforts with OPSU and other community organizations have helped us maintain a low crime rate and a peaceful environment."

Goodwell's location in the Oklahoma Panhandle provides residents with easy access to the great outdoors. The region offers opportunities for hiking, fishing, and camping. The town's proximity to Black Mesa, the highest point in Oklahoma, makes it an ideal destination for nature enthusiasts.

Goodwell, Oklahoma, is a hidden gem in the heart of the Oklahoma Panhandle. With Oklahoma Panhandle State University as its educational focal point, a thriving sense of community, and a commitment to safety,

Goodwell has earned its reputation as one of the best places to live in the state. Its natural beauty and affordability further enhance its appeal. Whether you're considering higher education, a change of scenery, or simply a welcoming community, Goodwell, Oklahoma, should be at the top of your list. **P**



OPSU

FEATURED ON KOSU

KOSU News Published by Anna Pope

The state's Hispanic population and workforce have grown, requiring more programs to ensure job readiness.

Tito Aznar

started teaching as an English tutor when he was 14 at a private institute in Argentina. By the time he was 16, he was hired as a full-time instructor. "So, I would go to high school in the mornings and then I would work in the evenings and take classes," Aznar said.

He came to Oklahoma Panhandle State University (OPSU) as a student, and after earning his degree in 2004, Aznar started working there.

Now, he is chair of the English department, teaching English and Spanish and directing plays for the university. Watching students advance and listening to how the topics taught in class have prepared them for a career is gratifying, Aznar said.

"That just makes you feel really fulfilled because something you've done in class, or something that you've done outside of class in the office or just on campus, had some sort of an impact on a student's life then," Aznar said. "Even if it's just touching that one student, it's all worth it."

Although many Latino and Hispanic communities have long been established, the populations are growing in rural America. In Oklahoma, between 2010 and 2020, the proportion of Hispanic residents grew from almost 9% to nearly 12%, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Institutions like OPSU are adapting to these shifts by providing some bilingual services.

The university has bilingual staff at new student orientations and local high school events to help guide people through the federal financial aid form. It also created El Centro, the Hispanic Student Support Center, to give all university students access to financial literacy, advising, workshops and a study space.

Julie Dinger, president of the university, said the school is adding online services in Spanish through a grant from the U.S. Department of Education.

"It's an onerous process to translate websites," Dinger said. "Websites all by themselves are a headache. But making sure that we've got meaningful translations has been important because it's not as simple as running it through Google Translate."

OPSU is in Texas County, in the middle of the state's mostly rural panhandle. About 50% of people identify as Hispanic or Latino in the county, according to the Census.

Panhandle State offers early college credit, work certifications and



KOSU Reporter, **ANNA POPE**, and University President, **DR. JULIE DINGER**.

associate and bachelor's degrees. Of the 1,294 students who were enrolled in Panhandle State in fall 2021, nearly 27% identified as Hispanic, according to the National Center for Education Statistics.

Dinger said because the university is the provider of post-secondary education in the panhandle and has two-year and four-year degree programs along with work certifications, the federal government measures the school's outcomes over an eight-year period. Over that time frame, the school has a 27% graduation rate.

The university is a Federal Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI), and because of the distinction, it can apply for federal grants and additional funding. To have the HSI title, 25% of a university's full-time undergraduate student body must identify as Hispanic.

In 2021, of the 328 undergraduates identifying as Hispanic, 43 students received a bachelor's degree and 25 received an associate degree.

"Part of why we were so competitively placed for our HSI grant with the federal government is because we have a lot of work to do in terms of outcomes," Dinger said. "We have a very high transfer out rate and withdrawal rate right now and so that's something that the grant has helped us attack."

The HSI grant helped the university fund its Aggie Writing Center. Dinger said the center is for all students to use, but especially students struggling academically.

"We want to be able to document best practices for serving our population," Dinger said. "And we want to make sure that we're still a place where students from across the state and across the region, regardless of how they identify, can choose us because we're the right fit for their plan of study, for who they want to be when they grow up." **P**



INTRODUCES THE THREE CORNERS CONNECTOR SCHOLARSHIP

The Panhandle State Foundation a new endowed scholarship made possible through Three Corners Connector. The endowment of \$24,000 aims to award approximately a \$1,000 scholarship to one student each academic year. This scholarship is targeted to students in the Texas and Cimarron counties of Oklahoma and will be available to students in the 2025-2026 academic year.


Being a recipient of the 2023 Community Investment Program (CIP) grant helps establish scholarships offered to local graduates and gain access to higher education. This new scholarship aims to support students and encourage them to pursue their educational dreams at Oklahoma Panhandle State University.

Chyanna Black, the Executive Director of the Panhandle State Foundation, said, “This scholarship shows our commitment to supporting students from this area. It’s not just about money; it’s about helping future leaders. We are grateful to Three Corners Connector and everyone who has made this happen for supporting our scholarship program.”

The CIP was established at Cherokee Strip Community Foundation as a way to support communities in Cimarron and Texas Counties, where Grid United is developing Three Corners Connector, a transmission line connecting the U.S. eastern and western electric grids in Oklahoma and Colorado. Because Grid United is dedicated to partnering with the communities in which Three Corners Connector is being developed, the CIP funds support projects that enhance quality of life while strengthening communities in this corner of Northwest Oklahoma.

Dr. Julie Dinger, University President, stated, “The community members who served on the selection committee showed tremendous support for our university with this generous scholarship.”\

President of the Panhandle State Foundation Board of Directors Jim Quimby added, “We want to bring communities together through this scholarship. It’s about helping deserving students achieve their goals.”

Panhandle State Foundation is a 501(c)3 charitable organization with the sole mission of supporting Panhandle State and its students. All donations are tax-deductible. 



LIVESTOCK SHOW TEAM EXCELS AT NATIONAL WESTERN STOCK SHOW IN DENVER COLORADO

The Livestock Show Team at OPSU made their mark at the National Western Stock Show held in Denver, CO. Their remarkable display of expertise and dedication resulted in a series of victories across various categories, showcasing their exceptional skill in handling Hampshire and AOMB Yearling Ewes.

The accomplishments of the Livestock Show Team were nothing short of extraordinary:

- Champion Overall Hampshire Ewe and Champion Hampshire Yearling Ewe
- Reserve Champion Hampshire Yearling Ewe
- Champion Pair of Hampshire Yearling Ewes
- Champion Pair of AOMB Yearling Ewes
- Reserve Champion Pair of AOMB Yearling Ewes
- Reserve Champion AOMB Yearling Ewe
- 3rd, 4th, and 5th place in AOMB Yearling Ewe categories

Team Captain Bronk Embry was also honored with the Reserve Grand Champion Senior Showman accolade for his leadership and expertise in showcasing livestock.

The team members who participated include Mya Martinez, Kaley Legrand, Jordan Monical, Kami Kornele, Bronk Embry, Kreslyn Smith, Alya Arana, Shelby Seabourn, Colby Perez, Conner Pritchett, and Grant Theurer.

Cassidy Tolle, Livestock Show Team Coach, commented, "I am proud of the Livestock Show Team at the National Western Stock Show. Their success shines a spotlight on their accomplishments and reflects the collective effort and support within the Livestock Show Team."

The Livestock Show Team sets its sights on continuing this success, aiming to excel further and elevate their performance in future competitions. As the team continues its first season, they carry invaluable experiences and lessons learned, ready to further showcase their skills and passion for the world of livestock. **P**



KELSEY HALLIN, CHICAGO-AREA NATIVE CAME FOR COLLEGE, STAYED WHEN PANHANDLE BECAME HOME

Published by the Guymon Daily Herald

Texas County is truly blessed with a diverse culture and great opportunities for business owners. Kelsey Hallin is one who is embracing this chance with open arms, just the way Guymon opened its arms to her.

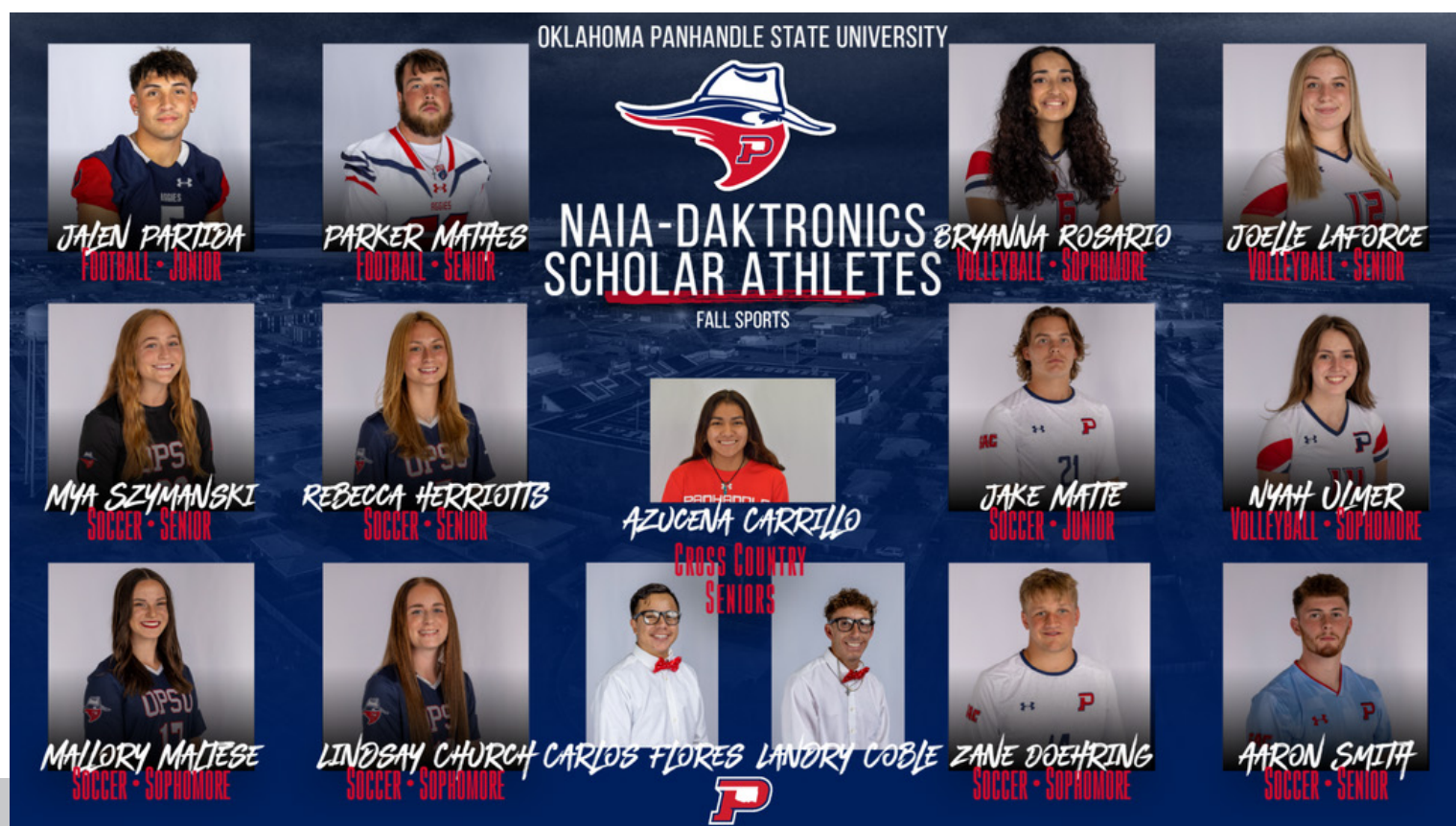
A graduate from OPSU originally from the Chicago area, Hallin had some justifiable fears about finding her people and fitting in, but instead she found a home. "I found myself craving the charm Guymon presented when I came for a college visit," Hallin said.

Her new business, Panhandle Marketing LLC will help local businesses optimize the usage of platforms, mainly Facebook, Instagram and TikTok. Hallin will take the guess work out of trying to manage the algorithm and can go further with unlimited content creation, full customer engagement, messaging transactions and even more. "Panhandle Marketing LLC is a complete marketing service to all of the platforms with content creation applications and engagement services as well," Hallin said. The packages will be available for all goals and budgets.

Degrees in business and marketing are the root of Panhandle Marketing LLC. Hallin found her calling when presented opportunities straight out of college. "I had a handful of marketing opportunities in front of me after college and when I decided to pursue those avenues was when I realized my love and talent for marketing!" Hallin said. Gaining experience in a real world setting just cemented her desire to pursue marketing as a full career and was how Panhandle Marketing LLC was born.

Another goal of Hallin's is to act as a connection to aid Guymon in utilizing its new film friendly status. "I aim to show the region and the world what Guymon has to offer through social media marketing," Hallin said.

The business has already had its official launch, but now is the time to get to work with Hallin. "Panhandle Marketing is offering New Years specials as well as package deals for new and existing customers," Hallin said. **P**



15 FALL SPORTS

STUDENT-ATHLETES NAMED NAIA DAKTRONICS SCHOLAR-ATHLETES

Oklahoma Panhandle State Athletics is proud to announce that 15 of our outstanding fall sports student-athletes have been recognized as NAIA Daktronics Scholar-Athletes for their exceptional achievements in the classroom.

This prestigious honor is bestowed upon NAIA-member student-athletes who are sophomores or above, maintain a minimum 3.5 cumulative GPA, and have demonstrated academic excellence while contributing to their respective sports.

The Daktronics-NAIA Scholar-Athlete program reflects OPSU's commitment to fostering an environment where student-athletes can thrive both academically and athletically. Eligible candidates must appear on the eligibility certificate for their sport and have completed at least one full year as a non-transfer or one full year as a transfer student.

The list of OPSU's fall sports student-athletes recognized as NAIA Daktronics Scholar-Athletes is as follows:

Football: Jalen Partida and Parker Mathes; Volleyball: Bryanna Rosario, Joelle LaForce, and Nyah Ulmar; Cross Country: Azucena Carrillo, Carlos Flores, and Landry Coble; Men's Soccer: Aaron Smith, Zane Doehring, and Jake Matte; Women's Soccer: Mya Szymanski, Rebecca Herriotts, Mallory Maltese, and Lindsay Church.

Congratulations to all these outstanding student-athletes for their remarkable dedication to excellence in both academics and athletics. We are immensely proud of how you represent OPSU in the classroom and excel in your respective sports. Your hard work, commitment, and achievements serve as a testament to the values of our university and the spirit of the Aggie family. **P**



ON THE MOVE: BRITTANY WAY LEADING IN MEDICAL RESEARCH

Brittany Way, an Oklahoma Panhandle State University graduate from the class of 2021, has been named the Fall 2023 Alumni on the Move by the Panhandle State Association of Alumni and Friends. Brittany graduated with two Bachelor of Science degrees in Biology and Chemistry and has made her mark in the field of medical research.

While at Panhandle State, Brittany was heavily involved in campus life and held positions in the Noble Center as a lifeguard and in the Communications Department as a photographer. Additionally, she actively engaged in extracurricular activities such as the Science Club, OPSU Concert Choir, HALO, and was a part of recruiting soccer players in 2019. Her presence was further recognized by her selection to the homecoming court in 2021.

However, Brittany's journey didn't stop at graduation. Her trajectory soared higher as she ventured into the realm of medical research. Currently serving as a Research Coordinator at CurieDx, affiliated with Johns Hopkins Hospital, Brittany is pioneering groundbreaking work in artificial intelligence. Her focus on utilizing technology to identify common pediatric illnesses speaks volumes about her commitment to bettering healthcare for the future.

"I aspire to become a physician and give back to the communities that played a pivotal role in my journey, like OPSU, Pratt Kansas (my community college), and my hometown in Texas," stated Brittany.

Hard work and academic success paved her ascent to this influential position. While pursuing a Master's in Biotechnology at Johns Hopkins University, Brittany dove into cutting-edge research, contributing notably to projects such as an augmented reality headset aiding pediatric CPR performance. Her journey continued with invitations to work at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, eventually leading her to her current role at CurieDx.

Brittany's gratitude extends to members at OPSU, such as Doc Collins, Tenoch Ramon, and Natasha Eidson, who played pivotal roles in shaping her journey. Her heartfelt appreciation also embraces the friendships forged during her undergraduate days, acknowledging their impact on her personal growth.

Director of Alumni Relations, Shawn Joy, stated, "Brittany Way shows what it means to be an OPSU grad—hardworking, flexible, and always aiming high. Her story inspires us all and proves how an OPSU education sets you up for amazing things."

Brittany Way's story is a testament to the transformative power of an OPSU education. Her strides in the medical field showcase the caliber of alumni who continue to make remarkable contributions to society, setting an inspiring precedent for current and future generations of OPSU students. **P**



WELCOMED NEW EMPLOYEES AND CELEBRATED EMPLOYEE ACHIEVEMENTS AT THE SPRING 2024 CONVOCATION

OPSU welcomed back its employees at the Spring 2024 Convocation. The morning showcased the introduction of several individuals who have joined OPSU's faculty and staff, signifying the institution's commitment to academic excellence and growth across various disciplines. Notable appointments include:

- College of Arts and Education: Welcomed three accomplished faculty members in History, Music, and Psychology.
- College of Business and Technology: Introduced a new faculty member who brings expertise in Hospitality Management.
- College of Agriculture, Science, and Nursing: Added a new faculty member to the Biology Department.
- Athletics Department: Introduced a new coach, poised to drive excellence and inspire Women's Soccer to new heights.
- Fiscal Affairs Office: Welcomed three staff members to the University's business office.
- Upward Bound Program: Introduced a new staff member, bringing fresh perspectives and support to this important initiative.

In a moment of celebration, the OPSU Staff Association proudly recognized Larry Wright as the Fall 2023 Employee of the Semester, applauding his exceptional dedication and contributions to the Information Technology Department and the whole university.

Additionally, Dr. Curtis Bensch spoke on behalf of the Faculty Senate, delivering an address, urging faculty members to engage with faculty senate and make the university the best it can be.

The Spring Convocation served as a platform to reaffirm OPSU's commitment to academic excellence and its priority, student success. The week of activities included professional development, departmental and campus updates and training. It began an exciting academic term filled with promise, collaboration, and opportunities for the OPSU community. **OPSU**

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OPSU Alumni, **JOSH FROST** earns Reserve World Championship at **WNFR**.

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RIDING HIGH ON TRADITION AND EXCELLENCE

Oklahoma Panhandle State University has a long history of rodeo excellence, and the rodeo team continues to carry this legacy into the 2023-24 season. With a proud tradition dating back decades, the Aggies are once again making waves in the rodeo arena. Coaches and athletes, with the support of university leadership, are at the heart of OPSU's rodeo program, and their commitment to rodeo and their vision for the future run deep.

Head Women's Rodeo Coach at OPSU, Shelbie Rose, is no stranger to rodeo success. As a recipient of the Walt Garrison award during her time in the arena and a 3x Coach of the Year for the Central Plains Rodeo. With a proven track record of developing champions, Rose's contributions to OPSU's rodeo program are invaluable. Rose states, "Our women's rodeo program at OPSU is not just about winning; it's about empowering our athletes to be strong, confident, and successful individuals. We focus on the fundamentals and ensure that our athletes excel both in and out of the arena. It's an honor to be a part of their journey."

Robert Etbauer, 2x World Champion Saddle Bronc Rider and Head Men's Rodeo Coach at OPSU, brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the table. Etbauer stated, "At OPSU, we try to keep the winning tradition alive. Rodeo is more than just a sport; it teaches a strong work ethic and determination that will continue to benefit our athletes after their time in the arena is done. We're training our athletes for success on and off the rodeo trail. Our commitment to our cowboys and cowgirls is unwavering, and it's what sets us apart here in the Panhandle."

Dr. Julie Dinger, University President, commented, "Our rodeo team sets the standard for OPSU. We are proud to support our athletes in their pursuit of excellence in both their academic and rodeo endeavors. Our coaches' dedication and our rodeo team's resilience are the best examples of our values at OPSU."

The impact of OPSU's rodeo program extends beyond the arena. With 7 College Rodeo National Championships

and 26 CNFR Individual Champions, the OPSU rodeo team is creating a legacy, fostering leadership, and nurturing the Panhandle spirit. Talented and dedicated coaches support collegiate rodeo athletes as they ride with Aggie Pride in the arena and carry that mentality into their post-graduation endeavors.

The legacy of OPSU Rodeo met at the Wrangler National Finals Rodeo in Las Vegas, where three OPSU graduates, Josh Frost, Dawson Hay, and Orin Larsen, showcased their skills and Aggie Pride. Josh Frost stood out as the Reserve World Champion Bull Rider, securing 3rd place in the finals' average and earning over \$400,000 throughout the year. His journey reflects personal dedication and the solid foundation provided by OPSU's commitment to excellence.

Dawson Hay achieved an impressive 11th place in the world in Saddle Bronc Riding, with a 12th-place finish in the NFR average and notable accomplishments throughout the year, including total earnings of over \$200,000 and winning the Calgary Stampede. Orin Larsen secured a notable 14th place in the world in Bareback Riding, showcasing consistent performance in the Thomas and Mack arena with total earnings of over \$160,000 for the year.

The OPSU community congratulates Josh Frost, Dawson Hay, and Orin Larsen for their stellar performances at the National Finals Rodeo. We take great pride in the remarkable achievements of our alums, and we eagerly anticipate their continued success. **P**

"We focus on the fundamentals and ensure that our athletes excel both in and out of the arena. It's an honor to be a part of their journey."

— Shelbie Rose, Head Women's Rodeo Coach

OKLAHOMA PANHANDLE STATE UNIVERSITY

RODEO

TOP HAND AUCTION

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PICKLE CREEK | DOORS OPEN @ 5:30PM

**SILENT AND LIVE AUCTION, DINNER, AND DANCE
PROCEEDS GO TO SUPPORT OPSU'S RODEO TEAM**

**FREE ADMISSION
MEAL PROVIDED BY HUNNY'S**

