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Court: Woman can appeal conviction

A Tahlequah woman serving a prison sentence for first-degree manslaughter will be allowed to appeal the conviction, the Court of Criminal Appeals has ruled.



Catron
Trisha De-nae Catron is serving a five-year sentence in prison with the balance of a life sentence being suspended.

Story on Page 3A



Carrie releasing new album

Carrie Underwood, originally from Checotah, has amassed the respect of the industry and the adulation of fans who are anxiously awaiting the arrival of her third album, which Underwood has titled "Play On."

Story on Page 1C

Readers' poll

POLL

How will you spend the Labor Day holiday?

- At home with family
- Travel in state
- Travel out of state
- At area lakes, rivers
- Don't know

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Eufaula mayor faces felony charges

Smith later issues letter suspending chief of police until City Council hearing

By Liz McMahan
Phoenix Staff Writer

Eufaula Mayor Dean Smith appeared Thursday in McIntosh County District Court on four felony counts of embezzlement made against him in the alleged misuse of a city credit card.

He was released on recognizance until an October court appearance, said Assistant District Attorney Greg Stidham. After the court appearance Smith issued a letter to Don Murray, chief of police, ordering Murray suspended with pay until a Sept. 17 hearing by the City Council. In a separate letter, Smith named Capt. Charles Hammett as acting chief

of police. Smith's letter to Murray said he was recommending Murray be terminated "for the good of the service." Murray was one of the officers investigating Smith on an embezzlement complaint. Murray could not be reached for comment. In an e-mail, Smith

said there is no connection between the charges filed against him and his suspension of Murray. "It was unfortunate that all this took place today," Smith wrote. "But my actions revolve around several months on this situation with the police chief and are two totally different issues." Smith did not comment

on the charges against himself. Stidham said the investigation on the embezzlement charges began shortly after Smith's arrest in August 2008 by city officers on a complaint of driving under the influence of alcohol, transporting an open

(See EARLIER, 2A)

Forum draws different response



Staff photos by Liz McMahan

Dean Swan told a panel on health care reform Thursday night that he is thinking of dropping his Medicare coverage because he cannot afford the \$97 per month premium. If he does, he would have to solely rely on VA medical care, which does not cover many medical conditions. The meeting was held by Oklahomans for Health Care Reform to address rising health care costs.

Many attendees call for health reform

By Liz McMahan
Phoenix Staff Writer

Lana Reed feels strongly that her entire family needs health insurance. So she has enrolled them in a group plan through her job as a teacher. However, while it gives her comfort to know the insurance is there, paying the premium of \$1,000 per month is a burden, she told a forum held Thursday night by Oklahomans for Health Care Reform.



Warren
The meeting drew only a fraction of the standing-room-only crowds that attended recent congressional town hall meetings here. But many of the faces were also in those larger crowds. Unlike the vocal town hall meeting crowds, however, many of those attending the forum spoke in favor of adopting a national health care plan.



State Rep. Eric Proctor, D-Tulsa, answers a question at the Oklahomans for Health Care Reform forum Thursday night. At his left is Eric Cullen, a candidate for state representative in Tulsa. At right is Jeff Raymond, executive director of Oklahomans Watchdog.

decisions," he said. "And half the time they don't know what they're talking about." Calvin Rock said that when he bought his house he couldn't find a company that would write an insurance policy on it. He contacted the Oklahoma Insurance Commission and they required a company to provide him coverage. "What I want to know is why can't we get insurance for every person in Oklahoma, regardless of their income," he said. "If we can make insur-

ance companies insure homes, we can make them insure every person in Oklahoma." Raymond Sewell said the nation already has several social medicine programs, including Medicare, veterans hospitals and Indian Health Services. "I think it's ridiculous that the country can't cover us all," he said. "That's discrimination." Reach Liz McMahan at 684-2926 or lmcman@muskogeephoenix.com.

Wall tumbling down causes evacuation, closing of downtown block

By Liz McMahan
Phoenix Staff Writer

A portion of a wall on an old downtown brick building tumbled to a parking lot Thursday afternoon, causing officials to have utilities shut off and to cordon off the area.

Pisano's Pizza, 102 N. Second St., was evacuated after an area of the brick wall of the building just to the north of it fell, said Fire Chief Derek Tatum. Gas and electric service to the restaurant



Tatum was disconnected to prevent problems if more of the wall collapsed.

Second Street between Okmulgee and Broadway will remain closed until the building is stabilized and foot traffic also will be prohibited in the area for safety reasons, Tatum said.

The collapsed wall was on the building that once housed Shrimp's Pawn Shop and another business. There have been no businesses in the building for some time, said owner Jack Hagerstrand of Tahlequah.

He said he will get the wall secured as soon as possible and then try to sell it to someone "who wants an old building or wants to build a parking lot."

Hagerstrand said the building, as far as he knows, is not historic. It is separated from the restored Severs Block Building to the north by an alley.

Tatum said the engineers inspected the property after the bricks collapsed and agree that the remaining wall is bowed and likely to fall.

"They can't tell us when it's going to come down — in the next five minutes or the next three or four days, but it will fall," he said.

The bricks are believed to have fallen because of the age and deterioration of the building, Tatum said.

Reach Liz McMahan at 684-2926 or lmcman@muskogeephoenix.com.

Are you ready for football?

Take a look at area teams as they prepare to kick off their seasons tonight. Muskogee plays Owasso, and Hilldale faces Skiatook both here at 7:30 tonight.

Stories on Page 1B



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