

PAST

Gene Autry's horse van seen on Vinita street. *Page 2*

SPORTS

Hornets, Lady Hornets earn trophies in Pryor tournament. *Page 4*

Today



Tomorrow



Thursday



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VINITA DAILY JOURNAL, TUESDAY, JANUARY 25, 2022

50¢

## Burglaries, thefts on the rise

Report: Other crimes were down in Craig County in 2021

Denton Thomason  
Journal Reporter

Burglaries and thefts continue to be on the rise in Craig County while other crimes are occurring with less frequency, according to the 2021 crime report from the Craig County Sheriff's Office.

According to the report, there were 74 reported burglaries in 2021. That's up from 58 in 2020 and 57 in 2019.

There were also 71 reported larcenies and property thefts. That's an increase from the 65 in 2020 and 58 in 2019.

"It's definitely up. We're really focused on it most of the time and there's no stop to it. It doesn't seem like it's getting any better no matter what we do to avert it," Sheriff Heath Winfrey said.

Winfrey said there are several factors that are driving

See Crime Page 10

## Sales taxes shoot up in county

Vinita's January tax distribution shot up more than 16 percent, according to figures from the Oklahoma Tax Commission.

The January distribution, which represents sales from Nov. 16-30 and estimated sales from Dec. 1-15, totaled \$312,308, a 16.3-percent increase from the \$268,579 received in the same period a year earlier.

Craig County's other four towns also saw strong gains.

Big Cabin received \$28,775, a 22.7-percent increase from the \$23,459 received a year earlier.

Bluejacket received \$1,545, a 39.7-percent increase from the \$1,106 received a year earlier.

Ketchum received \$24,723, a 64-percent increase from the \$15,074 received a year earlier.

Welch received \$13,758, a 19.2-percent increase from the \$11,538 received a year earlier.

Craig County's two one-cent sales taxes brought in \$300,116, a 19.7-percent increase from a year earlier.

Around the state, sales tax distributions totaled \$193,129,239, a 17.6-percent increase from the \$164,181,289 distributed a year earlier.



Courtesy photo

Bluejacket will host Copan for its winter senior homecoming Thursday night. The homecoming court includes (from left): Haley Fohn, Graceline Brewster, MaKyela Allen, Harley Lee, Brianna Ruberstell, Ella Bluejacket and Jessica Dunbar. The homecoming ceremony will start at 6 p.m., with the boys set to play first at 6:30 p.m.

## Cresap donation helps get Freedom Rock closer to goal

Angela Thomason  
Journal Reporter

Pat Kuebler, a coordinator spearheading fundraising efforts to establish a Craig County Veterans Memorial Rock, was happy to announce the most recent donations toward the project have put the

Freedom Rock committee closer to their overall goal.

RCB Bank made a \$500 donation toward the project, and the Cresap Family Foundation also made a generous donation of \$5,000 to match the funds raised so far.

The rock, also referred to as a

Freedom Rock, will be a painted mural rock honoring local Craig County veterans past and present.

The large boulder which will be the canvas for the painting will be placed near the American Legion Dale Peace Post #40 building.

See Donation Page 10



Photo by Angela Thomason

Craig County Veterans Memorial Rock committee members James Heflin and Pat Kuebler announced a matching donation of \$5,000 from the Denny and Gail Cresap Family to the Freedom Rock project.

## Sales tax distributions

City	Jan. '22	Jan. '21	+/-
Adair	\$30,599	\$28,977	+5.6%
Afton	\$40,659	\$29,449	+38.1%
Bernice	\$20,903	\$18,617	+12.3%
Big Cabin	\$28,775	\$23,459	+22.7%
Bluejacket	\$1,545	\$1,106	+39.7%
Chelsea	\$47,353	\$48,520	-2.4%
Claremore	\$1,233,369	\$1,069,528	+15.3%
Disney	\$11,475	\$7,311	+57%
Fairland	\$24,355	\$19,949	+22.1%
Grove	\$767,845	\$674,119	+13.9%
Jay	\$82,521	\$70,762	+16.6%
Ketchum	\$24,723	\$15,074	+64%
Langley	\$88,340	\$81,353	+8.6%
Miami	\$700,940	\$630,624	+11.2%
Nowata	\$95,444	\$84,942	+12.4%
Pryor	\$858,331	\$763,166	+12.5%
Spavinaw	\$10,023	\$9,181	+9.2%
Strang	\$464	\$356	+30.3%
Vinita	\$312,308	\$268,579	+16.3%
Welch	\$13,758	\$11,538	+19.2%
<b>Craig County</b>	<b>\$300,116</b>	<b>\$250,725</b>	<b>+19.7%</b>
Vinita use tax	\$33,771	\$23,985	+40.8%
Co. use tax	\$55,816	\$42,791	+30.4%

## STREET SCENES

Roger Tyler waving while driving on Scrapper...Bryant Vail serving hot chocolate at AliveChurch...John Carter downtown on business while in from Bluejacket...Jake says a lot of people wouldn't listen to you talk if



they didn't think their turn was next.



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Photo by Angela Thomason

VHS Art Club members (from left) Dillon Hatfield, Tyler Smith, Coleman Kauffman and Wil Rife accept a donation to the Art Club from the Vinita Daily Journal, presented by Journal employees Jasmine Harrel and Brenda Haskell. The VHS Art Club offers holiday window painting each year which includes cleanup at the end of the season. The art students are under the direction of art instructor Kim Heckenkemper.

## Donation

Continued from Page 1

Kuebler announced they are in the process of getting ground work prepared for the rock to be placed in its permanent location.

The Craig County Veterans Memorial Rock will be the first in Oklahoma to be added to the 50 State Freedom Rock Tour, as the mural artist, Ray 'Bubba' Sorensen, continues to paint Freedom Rocks with a goal of having at least one in every state.

Kuebler says they still need to raise about \$5,000 to complete their overall goal, and this will help provide a protective canopy, lighting, and fencing for the rock when it's complete.

"We are very grateful for all the donations from the community and with the matching grant from the Cresap Family Foundation, this has helped us be able to get us to this point," she added.

Kuebler noted that Denny and Gail Cresap are supporters of veterans and wanted to donate to a project that would

honor local veterans as well as Craig County's history.

The goal of the committee is to have the rock placed, painted and ready for viewing by Veterans Day this November.

Kuebler said the rock will feature scenery that is unique to Craig County, and the committee is researching ideas for what the mural will include. They welcome all ideas from the community.

"We can't feature every Craig County veteran, but the rock will honor Craig County veterans and have some

things that are specific to our area. We are also considering adding something that commemorates the state, such as the U.S.S. Oklahoma battleship as part of the mural since it will be the first Freedom Rock in Oklahoma, but we want it to be special for Craig County," Kuebler said.

Donations to the Craig County Veterans Memorial Rock can be made at BancFirst or by contacting Kuebler @ 918-244-8800.

## Crime

Continued from Page 1

the increase in property crimes, but he feels that the biggest driver is methamphetamine addiction.

Other contributing factors include the passing of State Question 780, which went into effect in 2018 and reclassified felony drug possession as a misdemeanor and raised the bar for felony theft from \$500 to \$1,000, and the 2020 McGirt decision that changed legal jurisdictions based on tribal status.

"There are several contributing factors, but methamphetamine and drug use drive a lot of what I'm seeing. There's more people running loose with the law changes and McGirt impacts that somewhat. My opinion is a lot of it is drug use. People are stealing stuff to pay for meth to get high, or gamble. That's what they tell us," Winfrey said.

"With McGirt the fallout is on the prosecution, especially federal authorities with non-Indian offenders for lesser crimes. For the thefts, I point back to State Question 780 and I think property crimes will continue to be on the rise," Winfrey said.

Winfrey highly recommends that rural residents invest in home-security systems with cameras that give investigators something to work with.

"I recommend having a security system. They make a huge difference," he said.

The COVID-19 pandemic and quarantine issues for staff, the jurisdictional changes from the McGirt decision and other factors made 2021 a challenging year for law enforcement.

Winfrey commended his deputies and jailers for their commitment through it all.

"Our staff has been incredible. Their willingness to work hard and put themselves out there at risk, while being short-handed and working extra shifts, is what makes it all work. I'm tremendously proud of my people, both in the jail and the deputies. That's where the difference really comes through," Winfrey said.

Sheriff's deputies took a total of 982 reports in 2021.

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