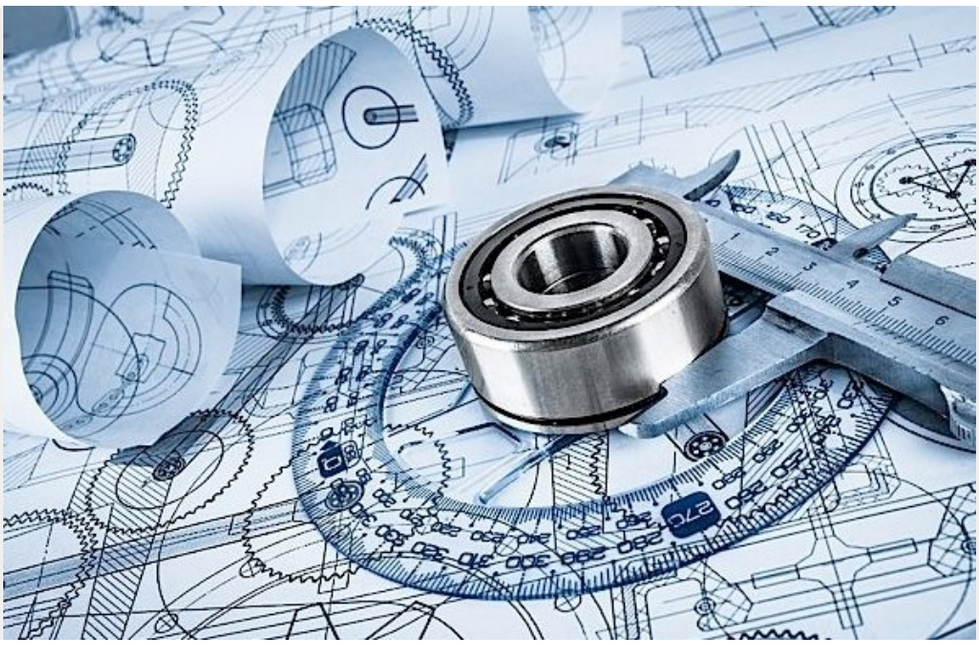
Tribe receives more than $53M in COVID monies



Posted Wednesday, August 4, 2021 12:00 am

By SCOTT HAWKINS

The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians so far has reported receiving $53 million in the federal government's $1.9 trillion federal American Rescue Act funds allocated by Congress in March to help local governments recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The monies will be spread out throughout the 10 counties of the Tribe and will be used in health and education including new schools buildings for Choctaw Central and Choctaw Middle schools.

"This is the first of two payments and it totals $53,051,330," said Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben in a June video detailing their plans. "The federal government is also providing supplemental funding directly to various MBCI departments. Here is a summary of the direct funding that the tribal departments have received under the American Rescue Plan Act to respond to specific sectors such as health and education:

• "Through the Health and Human Services the Choctaw Health Center has received $46,514,453;

• "Through the Department of Interior the Bureau of Indian Education for Choctaw Tribal Schools has received $26,714,010;

• "Through Low Income Housing Emergency Assistance (LIHEA) has received

$68,904

• “Through the Bureau of Indian Affairs Justice Services, the Choctaw Police Department has received $600,788

• “Through the Health and Human Services, Head Start has received $320,662

“The Tribe will receive one more formally based allocation payment,” Ben said. “At this time the amount is unknown. We should find out more on this information, later … Regarding how the funds are invested and utilized, the tribe has identified, certain priorities including new housing in all communities, infrastructure, including broadband and improvements to water and sewer utilities. This will help support new housing, community development and economic development and a new Choctaw Central High School and Middle School campus.”

The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians has more than 11,000 members on land that covers more than 35,000 acres in 10 Mississippi counties.

“Due to the language in the legislation and the guidance of the United States Treasury we also will be seeking financial investments and advance workforce development training and to expand our diversity in our economy,” Ben said.

Ben said the Tribe has distributed a needs survey to all tribal departments for input on their highest needs.

“We will also be making a survey available to all tribal members to allow the members of the community to identify their highest priorities,” Ben said. “We will evaluate each request during July and August and we will present our plan during the annual budget hearings in August and September.

“We are grateful for this opportunity to address our crucial needs within our tribe. Today, we already are in the process of using $25 million of CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act funds to build out an emergency management headquarters and an emergency response facility in each of our tribal communities.”

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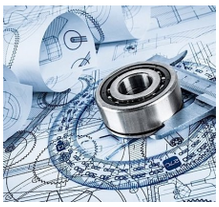

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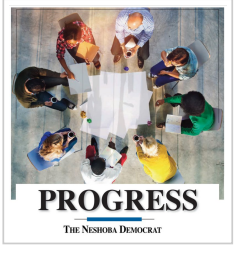

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Marlon Boyd of Philadelphia was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole following his capital murder conviction in Circuit Court last month,

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A Leake County man known to walk around barefoot was arrested and charged in connection with several vehicle break-ins reported at a residence last week near Four Corners in the northwest part of the county, Sheriff Eric Clark said.

Woman faces 7 years for escapes

A Union woman who was charged twice with escape from the Neshoba County Jail, faces seven years in prison after she pleaded guilty to those and three other charges last month in Circuit Court.

McLain to head school's work-based learning unit

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