

AMBUNK

Week of:
December 19, 2022

GREAT PLAINS AMBUCS NEWSLETTER

A publication of
Great Plains AMBUCS
Lawton, OK
Edited by Monte Brown
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LAST MEETING

The December 19, 2022 club meeting was called to order by Jenny Clement-Shaw. Larry Kindt led the group in prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance.



Taron Epps

Taron Epps, Executive Vice President for the Lawton Fort Sill Chamber of Commerce, was the guest speaker. He has been in the position for a little over a year after serving over 20 years as an officer in the Army. Following his military career Epps worked for Northrop Grumman and Amazon.

Epps explained how the Chamber operates two offices. One focuses on membership. The other is the Convention and Visitors Bureau. Between them, their mission is tourism, membership services, community enhancement projects, legislative and military affairs and educational projects. Together the offices have ten employees.

Epps said he was surprised to learn that tourism is the third largest industry in Oklahoma. In 2020, the Lawton Fort Chamber of Commerce was able to increase out of state visitors by 400,000 people. He said many of them came from

NEW YEAR - SAME MISSION



Texas. Epps said hotel/motel tax dollars from the City of Lawton have generated a \$7 million dollar return on the investment. He said it's the result of digital marketing and other efforts to recruit visitors and provide incentives for conventions and conferences to come to Lawton. 46 events were sponsored by the LFS Chamber last year for an economic impact of \$340,000. The LFS Chamber continues traditional marketing efforts by distributing thousands of visitor guides and brochures throughout the state.

On the membership side, the LFS Chamber offers website business referrals, job postings and events to support local businesses. One initiative that has seen success is the Grow the 580 program. It consists of gift certificates that can be redeemed at a number of local merchants.

November through January has become extremely busy for the LFS Chamber as Holiday in the Park has grown. Epps said it has become an economic driver for the community and provides additional recreational opportunities for young people. He said it's also creating memories that families will share for a lifetime.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- More than half of the contributions expected for the 2023 Bags for Cash Charity Cornhole Tournament have been turned in. T-shirts will be ordered soon, but not as many as last year.
- Kelly Harris announced that Freedom Fest will again be a two-day event in 2023. Planning is underway for changes to festivities on the first day to increase attendance. Great Plains AMBUCS chapter will continue vending operations for beer and soft drink sales. The tentative dates for the festival are June 30 - July 1.
- 5 containers of AMTRYKES were delivered to the National office just prior to Christmas, with a sixth expected to arrive. Chapters with those Trykes on order should receive them soon. Our chapter will present an AMTRYKE at the January 16 meeting.

GUESTS

Neil Clement
Sponsored by Jenny Clement-Shaw

50/50

Larry Kindt drew the Queen of Diamonds. The pot is at \$220.

NEWSLETTER

Zeldon Rice had the winning ticket and his copy of AMBUNK.