An NEO running back makes a move at the scrimmage against Bacone College. Photo courtesy of Jim Ellis, Miami News Record.

NEO Students Return to Campus
NEO Hosts Math Bootcamps for the Third Year
NEO Hosts Successful Summer Art Camp
NEO Hosts Free Summer Science Camp
NEO Opens Grove Center for Fall Semester
NEO Names New Grove Center Coordinator
Comedian Derrick Tennant Performs During NEO Welcome Week
NEO Distinguished Lecture Series
NJCAA Names Rylee Bayless 2016 Female Athlete of the Year
NEO Ag Hosts Night of Fun and Fellowship at Third Annual Aggie Alumni and Friends Banquet
NEO Cowboy Places Eighth in the Nation
NEO and GRDA Sign NEO, GRDA Agricultural Education Partnership
Foundation Selected by Buffalo Run Casino Classic as Benefiting Charity

Dr. Jeff Hale delivered the annual NEO State of the College address on Tuesday, August 16, in the Calcagno Family Ballroom. Hale stressed that in spite of the challenges facing education in the state of Oklahoma, NEO was focused on fulfilling its vision to provide outstanding academic programs, co-curricular learning experiences, intercollegiate athletics, and campus life at NEO.

Several individual students, staff, and faculty members were highlighted for their outstanding achievement. Rylee Bayless, former NEO student and softball third-baseman, was recognized by the NJCAA as the Female Athlete of the Year, along with her back-to-back Softball Player of the Year titles. Hale also recognized the outstanding achievement of the NEO chapter of the Phi Theta Kappa (PTK) international honor society. The NEO chapter was again recognized as a Five-Star chapter for their involvement in local and global projects.

Among the campus achievements, Dr. Hale recognized the significant contribution that staff and faculty members have made in securing multi-million dollar grants and a record number of endowed scholarships. NEO currently has 48 endowed scholarships, and this year’s total is upwards of $75,000. Four new endowed scholarships were added over the past year: The Roger Fent Memorial Agriculture Scholarship, the Marcus Allen Bunce Memorial Nursing Scholarship, and the Dr. Charles H. and JoAnn Angle Scholarship.

Hale then introduced five speakers who shared a number of new projects NEO will complete over the next 18 months. McKenzie Nygren, Agriculture Department chair, shared the continued success of the NEO Agriculture “Branding Tradition” campaign for improvements to Synar Farm. Along with improved lighting, parking, and stalling for the NEO multi-purpose arena, Nygren shared that construction on the Animal Science Teaching Facility should begin in the next thirty to sixty days. This new facility will continue to make NEO students competitive in a global agriculture market by providing hands-on classroom experience.

Dustin Grover, co-chair of the master plan executive strategy committee, presented designs for two new housing units that NEO expects to complete within 12 months. The two buildings are expected to address many student requests; including semi-private rooms with attached, private restrooms. Grover also shared that through financing offered through Oklahoma’s State Master Lease program; NEO will be able to finance much of the construction cost, while fully servicing the debt with the revenue collected from the new dormitories.

Matt Westphal, interim director of IT, introduced a fiber-optic upgrade plan that
NEO students have returned to campus and the fall semester is in full swing. Classwork began on August 22, but to help students acclimate to campus life, NEO hosted the third annual Camp Row and a series of Welcome Week activities. While the activities were geared toward getting students involved with their peers and NEO services, they were more than just fun and games.

Camp Row is now in its third year and hundreds of incoming freshmen have benefited from the program. Established as an orientation to college living, Camp Row is a three-day program that allows incoming freshmen the chance to become familiar with the campus, get settled in, and meet some new friends.

Beginning on August 17, students checked in for housing and had a campus cookout. The next morning, freshmen got their first taste of all that Sodexo can offer at the Student Union. The day included breakout sessions and evening activities. The final day included more breakout sessions, and concluded with a movie and welcome party at Red Robertson Field. NEO followed Camp Row with Welcome Week, including inspirational comedian, Derrick Tennant.

At NEO, Camp Row and Welcome Week activities are considered incredibly important. Research shows that students who are more engaged with their peers and student activities are more successful in their classes.

Good luck to all of our new and returning students! Make this semester one to remember and Go, Go, NEO!

NEO STUDENTS RETURN TO CAMPUS

Nearly 90 incoming freshmen participated in this year’s Camp Row.

Camp Row students participated in breakout sessions that helped them become familiar with campus and helped them build study skills.
will remove and replace the two-decade old fiber-optic cable currently in place on the NEO campus. In response to the evolving network needs of the college, NEO will lay new cable to upgrade speeds and expand Wi-Fi reach on campus, including expansion to Red Robertson Field. The project will future-proof the campus and significant portions of the cost will come from a combination of grant funds and financing.

Rachel Lloyd, Title III Part F grant director, shared NEO’s dedication to success with a new collection of student services geared toward academic success. Lloyd introduced the Academic Support for Accelerated Progress (ASAP) center, which will focus on graduation coaching, career and transfer counseling, and student mental health services. While many mechanisms for the center are already being assembled, NEO is seeking another Title III grant to secure funding for rapid expansion of the program.

Finally, Pat Creech, Business and Technology Department chair, announced the formation of the NEO Academic Honors program. Creech and her committee have worked with area colleges and universities to create a blueprint for an honors program at NEO. The program will include honors-level courses taught by NEO instructors, and will include several leadership and academic opportunities for participating students. NEO is also exploring options with area colleges and universities to allow NEO honor students direct access to area honors programs.

Dr. Hale closed by reiterating that regardless of the challenges, NEO must remain competitive, affordable, and excellent in order to provide the best education to area students.

The Agriculture Department will begin construction on the Animal Science Teaching Facility within 60 days.

Concept art of the new proposed dormitories presented by the Campus Master Plan committee during the State of the College address.

For many students who enter college, deficiencies in math may prevent them from earning their degree. In response, NEO, has offered a series of free math preparation “bootcamps” during the summer for the past three years. These programs help students build their confidence in math and helps them complete any required remediation (required courses to prepare for college-level math).

This summer, NEO offered two Math Bootcamps, serving nearly fifty students. Kenton Adams, math instructor, along with NEO student math tutors Jesus Covarrubias and Morgan Turner, provided one-on-one instruction to participants during the sessions.

“Math Bootcamp is a great program for students who struggle in math,” said Adams. “At the end of the course the students have the opportunity to test out of remedial math classes, so we spent time working on basic math skills to get them ready for college level math.”

If students are able to test out of the remedial math courses, they can save time and money completing their academic program.

Data shows that 70% of our students who participate in a self-paced summer math bootcamp meet the cut-off scores to place into a higher level math course. Participants also nearly double their odds of passing a math class the following fall semester.”

Rachel Lloyd, Title III grant director and coordinator of the Math Bootcamps

The Math Bootcamp was piloted with student athletes and has now become a major asset for the NEO football program. Coach Clay Patterson shared that the program was incredibly beneficial for his student-athletes.

“This program is huge for us, it gives us the ability to help our student-athletes catch up on math skills and accelerate their graduation,” said Patterson. “The overwhelming majority of student athletes in the program tested up at least one level of Algebra. It was awesome to see the excitement on the students’ faces when they excelled in the test and achieved their goals.”

Along with the Math Bootcamps, NEO offers a variety of student services. These include technology support, tutoring services, and the Center for Academic Success and Advising (CASA).
NEO HOSTS SUCCESSFUL SUMMER ART CAMP

NEO held its fourth annual Summer Art Academy on July 19th. During the camp nearly twenty students, ranging from grades 7-12, learned acrylic painting techniques, and completed two pieces on canvas.

The annual camp was conducted under the direction of NEO Art Instructor Jessica Stout. Stout was able to not only educate the students, but also encourage them to express themselves through art.

“It was a fun day of intense painting. The kids were great to work with and they created a lot of interesting and original works by the end of the day. Overall, we had a great time exploring two completely different styles and concepts.”

Jessica Stout, NEO Art Instructor

The first painting was a “still life.” This style is inspired by Dutch traditional paintings of the 1600s. The second painting was based on the “surrealist” works of early 20th century artist Mark Chagall. This work allowed students the opportunity to exercise their creative freedom.

At the conclusion of the camp, the students’ artwork was on exhibit in the Charles Banks Wilson Gallery of Kah-Ne Hall for friends and family to admire.

The NEO Art Camp, now in its fourth year, is a joint project between the NEO Art Department and the NEO Development Foundation. It is funded through a grant from the Sarkeys Foundation.

“This free camp gave students a chance to tour some of our manufacturing facilities in Miami and the surrounding area. These are high paying careers in high demand and our camp provides fun, applied learning of key manufacturing concepts.”

Dr. Mark Grigsby, math and science department chair
NEO NAMES NEW GROVE CENTER COORDINATOR

Officials at NEO have selected Mrs. Stacey Lane as the new Grove Center Coordinator. Lane is an NEO alumna and grew up in Grove.

“As a student, I took classes at the Grove Center and it was incredibly helpful. I was able to take general classes like English and history,” said Lane. “I also taught adjunct at the Grove Center for the past three years. I feel like the center is so important for students from Jay, (Okla.,) Grove, or even Southwest City, (Mo.).”

We really wanted someone who knows the Grove area and has a good relationship with the community. Our commitment to provide excellent education in and around the Grove area is very strong. Stacey has the skills necessary to accomplish the goals we have set for the Grove Center.”

Scott Donaldson, assistant vice president for student affairs and director of recruitment

“So many students come to college just needing some guidance and I love to help them succeed,” added Lane. “I was able to work with speech students when I was teaching here at the Center, but I am very excited to get a chance to work with all the students we serve.”

Lane will serve as a point of contact from Grove students when it comes to enrollment, advising, financial aid, and technology services. Along with her associate degree from NEO and bachelor’s degree, she earned her Master’s Degree in Reading Education from Northeastern State University. She now lives in Southwest City, Mo. with her husband, also an NEO alum.

The Center offers students in Grove and the surrounding area the opportunity to complete many of their general education courses, including First Year Experience, English, and College Algebra courses.

NEO OPENS GROVE CENTER FOR FALL SEMESTER

Officials at NEO announced that despite extensive state budget cuts to higher education, NEO remains committed to the Grove area by continuing the operation of the NEO Grove Center. Some had feared that the budget reductions that forced layoffs and program closures would hinder the Center’s operation; however, NEO President Dr. Jeff Hale reaffirmed NEO’s dedication to offering affordable and accessible education.

“Higher education in Oklahoma has seen some dramatic reductions in recent years, but NEO is committed to offering convenient and affordable education. Our Grove Center is an integral part of our institution,” said Hale. “Continued cuts to higher education disproportionately disadvantage our distance students, but our partners in the Grove community and the hundreds of students who have benefitted from the Grove Center can rest assured that our support for them remains strong.”

The Center opened for the fall semester on August 15, and advisors were on location during the afternoons of Aug. 17, 18, and 19 to enroll students and make course changes.

“Very, very few small towns in Oklahoma have a college branch within walking distance of their local high school. Many of our NEO Grove high school students enter 4-year colleges with a semester or more of college instruction already finished, saving students and their parents thousands of dollars.”

Dr. Lesli Deichman, NEO instructor and faculty association president
“Bleepfree” comedian Derrick Tennant performed in August as part of the NEO Welcome Week Activities and the NEO Distinguished Lecture Series. Tennant performs both comedy and inspirational talks.

Derrick Tennant was a promising athlete until he suffered a coma inducing injury. Following brain surgery, extensive rehabilitation, and life in a wheelchair, he was able to regain the use of his legs. While he has limited use of the left side of his body, Tennant has used his story of recovery as the foundation of his comedy and inspirational talks. Focusing on overcoming obstacles and looking “on the RIGHT side” of situations, Tennant uses “bleepfree,” or clean comedy, to share his message of hope and love with audiences.

The Oklahoma State Regents’ Endowment Trust Fund supports the free events of the Distinguished Lecture Series, which is co-sponsored by NEO and the NEO Development Foundation. The fund was established in 1988 to strengthen academic programs and enhance the quality of higher education in Oklahoma. The lecture series is designed to bring nationally known speakers to campus who are relevant in politics, science, literature, and popular culture. These events are sure to enlighten, entertain, and inform. For more information about the Distinguished Lecture Series, contact the NEO Development Foundation at 918-540-6250.
The NEO Distinguished Lecture Series will continue with three performances currently slated for the 2016/17 school year. Upcoming events are free and open to the public and include The Amazing Race’s Jet and Cord McCoy, Astronaut and Navy Commander Dr. John Herrington, and finally World-famous Animal Scientist and Autism Self-Advocate Dr. Temple Grandin.

Co-sponsored by NEO, the NEO Development Foundation, and Frank Fletcher Toyota of Joplin, Mo., the Distinguished Lecture Series hosted its inaugural lecture earlier this year with help from the Miami Arts and Humanities Council. Spoken Word Poet Sarah Kay was the featured guest lecturer in honor of National Poetry Month. That event was then followed by the comedy of Derrick Tennant.

"NEO, the NEO Foundation and local partners like the Miami Arts and Humanities Council are in a unique position to bring arts, culture and entertainment to the Miami area. The newly created NEO lecture series, funded through the Oklahoma State Regents endowment funds, will help the college attract national and international level talent to the campus of NEO A&M College." — Dr. Jeff Hale, NEO President

Brothers Jet and Cord McCoy will perform on Sept. 21, 2016 at 7 p.m. in the Fine Arts Auditorium. Known for their second place finish on season 16, their sixth place finish in season 18, and their fifth place finish in season 24 of the CBS Hit series, The Amazing Race, these sweet-natured Oklahoma natives captured America’s attention. Apart from their stints on the Amazing Race, the McCoy brothers have made waves in both junior and professional rodeo competitions.

Dr. John Herrington, retired commander of the United States Navy and NASA astronaut will speak on November 30, 2016 at 6:30 p.m. in the Calçagno Family Ballroom. Dr. Herrington is an Oklahoma Native of the Chickasaw Tribe and was the first Native American to walk in space. After serving as a Naval Aviator for over a decade, he was selected to the Astronaut Support Personnel Team in 1996.

Finally, Dr. Temple Grandin, world-famous animal scientist, TED Talks speaker, and autism self-advocate will speak on April 20, 2017 at 6:30 p.m. in the Fine Arts Auditorium. Author of several books, including Animals in Translation, Thinking in Pictures, and her most recent bestseller The Autistic Brain: Thinking Across the Spectrum, Dr. Grandin has built a career as one of the most successful livestock-handling equipment designers.

Dr. Grandin is also an advocate for greater understanding of the autism spectrum. Encouraging flexibility in education, she notes that many children and adults with autism exhibit uneven skills. “Don’t hold these math geniuses back. You’re going to have to give them special ed. in reading...but let them go ahead in math," she mentioned in The Autistic Brain.

The free events are supported by the Oklahoma State Regents’ Endowment Trust Fund. The fund was established in 1988 to strengthen academic programs and enhance the quality of higher education in Oklahoma. The lecture series is designed to bring nationally known speakers to campus who are relevant in politics, science, literature, and popular culture. These events are sure to enlighten, entertain, and inform. For more information about the Distinguished Lecture Series, contact the NEO Development Foundation at 918-540-6250.
The National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) notified the Athletic Department at NEO that Rylee Bayless was selected as the 2016 NJCAA Betty Jo Garber Female Athlete of the Year. The NJCAA Executive Committee chose Bayless from among the many qualified candidates to receive this prestigious honor.

“This is the first time in the history of NEO Athletics that an athlete has received such a prominent award. Rylee has kept NEO Softball and the college in the limelight as she has set and broken school records and been awarded numerous honors. We are very proud of her and her accomplishments.”

Dale Patterson, athletic director for NEO

The Betty Jo Garber Award was created by the NJCAA in 1992 in honor of women’s basketball coach Betty Jo Garber. Graber was instrumental in women’s sports in the NJCAA as she served on committees, helped established the NJCAA Women’s Basketball Coaches Association, and is a member of the National Women’s Basketball Hall of Fame. The Betty Jo Garber Award is given to the top female student-athlete who exhibits leadership, dedication, service, and resilience.

In addition to this prestigious award, Bayless was also the only softball athlete to be named NJCAA Player of the Year back-to-back for her performance in 2015 and 2016. She has signed with Oklahoma State University to continue her education and softball career.
The Agriculture Department at NEO College hosted the Third Annual Aggie Alumni and Friends Banquet in July. Over 200 NEO Ag alumni attended the event, which included a dinner, scholarship endowment, and a live and silent auction that raised nearly $7,000 for scholarships and other Agriculture events.

During the banquet, Dearl, Joe, and Ronn Cunningham were inducted in the Aggie Hall of Fame for their outstanding contribution to the fields of agriculture and agriculture education. In addition to the Cunningham brothers’ induction, Ms. Lauren Brock was also recognized as the first recipient of the $500 Roger Fent Memorial Agriculture Education Scholarship. Ms. Brock is from Decatur, Ark.

From left: Dr. Jeff Hale, Ronn Cunningham, Joe Cunningham, Dearl Cunningham, McKenzie Nygren.

**NEO AG HOSTS NIGHT OF FUN AND FELLOWSHIP AT THIRD ANNUAL AGGIE ALUMNI AND FRIENDS BANQUET**

The Agriculture Department at NEO College hosted the Third Annual Aggie Alumni and Friends Banquet in July. Over 200 NEO Ag alumni attended the event, which included a dinner, scholarship endowment, and a live and silent auction that raised nearly $7,000 for scholarships and other Agriculture events.

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**“The Agriculture department is deep-rooted in tradition and this year’s Alumni and Friends Reunion showcased highlights of that tradition. We thoroughly enjoyed the evening – taking every opportunity to reconnect with former Aggies. The support our department receives from our alumni, community, and administration is second to none.”**

McKenzie Nygren, Agriculture Department chair
Two NEO College Cowboys recently travelled to Casper, Wyo. to compete in the College National Finals Rodeo (CNFR). At the event, Patrick Houchins, a second-year student from Frankford, Mo., finished eighth in the nation in team roping. Tylen Layton, a third-year student from Copan, Okla. and member of the Missouri State University Pathways Program, also finished among the top 50 in the nation in tie-down roping. Each year, over 400 participants from 100 colleges travel to this National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association (NIRA) championship event.

This marks the sixth consecutive year that NEO has sent competitors to the event. Layton and Houchins, both studying Agribusiness, earned their spot by finishing in the top three in the Central Plains Region. For Layton, this is his second consecutive trip to the CNFR.

“I am very proud of the way these guys performed,” said Kolby Ungeheuer, NEO rodeo coach. “They made NEO proud. I also wanted to give a special thank you to Dr. Hale and the President’s Partners. They have made it possible to transport students to the CNFR for the past six years.”

Kolby Ungeheuer, NEO rodeo coach

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NEO COWBOY PLACES EIGHTH IN THE NATION

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“I also wanted to give a special thank you to Dr. Hale and the President’s Partners,” added Ungeheuer. “They have made it possible to transport students to the CNFR for the past six years.

The NEO rodeo team enjoyed a successful season, with the men’s team finishing second among two-year colleges in the region and the women’s team finishing third among two-year colleges.
Officials from both NEO and the GRDA have recently signed an agreement that will increase agricultural education opportunities and revitalize area agricultural production through sound conservation practices. Under the agreement, NEO will lease approximately 1,600 acres of land in the Neosho River Bottom (Ottawa County) from the GRDA in order to promote hands-on learning and increase not only scientific discovery, but also student understanding of natural resource preservation and management.

“The NEO & GRDA agreement will create exciting new learning experiences for our Ag students and faculty. Private-public partnerships continue to help NEO and other state colleges deal with massive reductions to public education. Local pecan producers have played a key role in the development of our joint NEO | GRDA agreement and will be key to the long-term success of this joint venture.”

Dr. Jeff Hale, NEO President

“We’re excited about partnering with NEO to support educational and agricultural opportunities for here in Northeast Oklahoma,” said GRDA Chief Executive Officer Dan Sullivan. “At a time when many educational institutions are dealing with budget cuts, GRDA is pleased to be a part of an effort that is opening up new ways for students to get excited about learning while also supporting the local pecan producers.”

NEO will arrange subleases to area pecan growers and cattle ranchers. This not only benefits NEO and the GRDA, but also revitalizes area production. In managing these subleases, NEO can offer students hands-on experience in several educational areas including grassland management, natural resource conservation, crop and cattle production, wildland fire management, and more. The program will also create employment opportunities for students, increased scholarship availability, and fellowship opportunities for NEO agriculture students.

“The NEO Agriculture Department could not be more excited to embark on the educational partnership with GRDA,” said McKenzie Nygren, NEO Agriculture Department Chair. “This combined effort provides benefits for students and the surrounding community alike.”

NEO is also announcing the first sublease, to be operated by Jim and Holly Hollon. Currently managing property near the sublease, the Hollons have grown pecans and managed cattle in the Miami area for several years, and are eager to expand their operation and manage a portion of this property.

“Caring for the natural resources has always been at the core of the GRDA mission,” said GRDA Assistant General Manager of Ecosystems Dr. Darrell Townsend. “We’re looking forward to working with NEO and its students to continue to implement sound conservation management practices on this land in a way that will benefit everyone.”
The NEO Development Foundation was named the benefiting charitable organization of the 2016 Adams Pro Tour Buffalo Run Casino Classic. This marks the fourth consecutive year that the NEO Foundation has benefitted from the tournament for a total of $75,000. The donations are used to fund scholarships and support NEO Athletics.

This year, Executive Director of the NEO Development Foundation Jennifer Hessee received a check totaling $18,250. Chief John Froman of the Peoria Tribe of Indians and Steve Bashore, CEO of Buffalo Run Casino presented the check.

“We were very honored to again be selected as the benefiting charitable organization,” said Hessee. “These funds are vital to student success at NEO, especially at a time when student loan debt is on the rise. Every dollar donated to the foundation makes a difference in a student’s education.”

Jennifer Hessee, Executive Director of the NEO Development Foundation