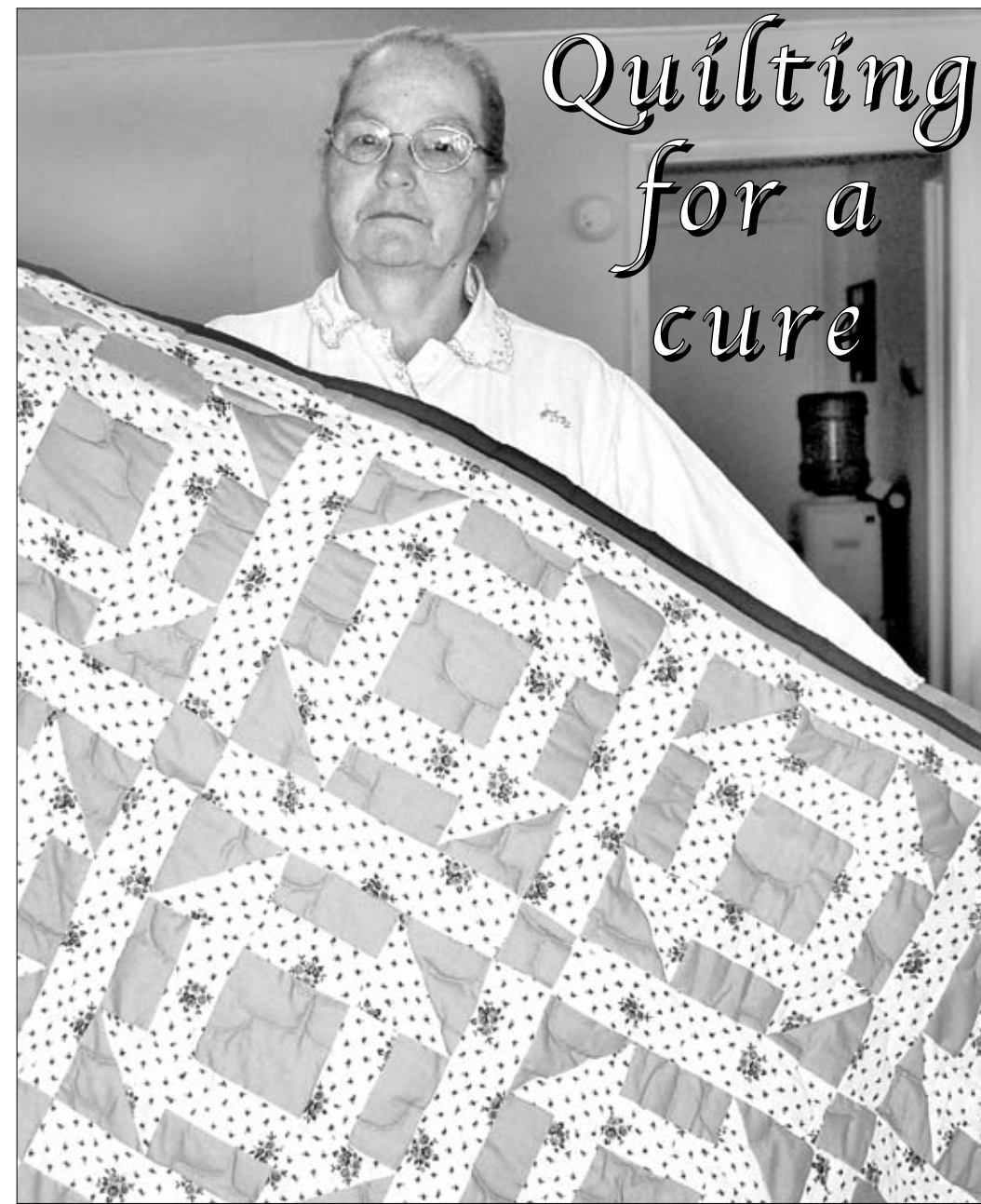


Lifestyles

www.choctawsun.com
choctawsun@millry.net



The Choctaw Sun
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Quilting for a cure

Choctaw Sun photo by Dee Ann Campbell

Local woman makes quilt for Relay

GILBERTOWN — "I've loved every stitch I've put into this," says Mary Mazingo. "I did it in memory of my daughter, Mary Mosley." In memory of her lost loved one and in an effort to raise funds for Relay for Life, Mrs. Mazingo has created a beautiful hand-made quilt to be given away in May. This gorgeous quilt will be on display on a rotating basis at Mr. Discount Drugs in Butler and the Harbor Restaurant in Gilbertown. Donations on the quilt are \$5, with the drawing to be held on May 12. You do not have to be present to win. For more information, or to make a donation on the quilt, call 205-459-4890.



Choctaw Sun photo by Dee Ann Campbell

Part of the cast of *Smoke on the Mountain*, including Ryan Allen, Melissa Snow, Ian Kimbrough, Georgia Dozier, and Bobby Jackson.

'Smoke on the Mountain' selling out

GILBERTOWN — Tickets are going fast for the Ballet and Theatre Performing Arts Companies presentation of *'Smoke on the Mountain.'* Sunday's performance is already sold out, with few tickets remaining for the Saturday show.

The performance will feature more than two dozen songs, many of them vintage Southern Gospel, country and bluegrass hymns — *Life's Railway to Heaven*, *Using My Bible for a Roadmap*, *I'll Fly Away* and many more — as well as hilarious stories from the more

or less devout "Sanders ensemble."

The musicians in the Sanders' Band include Nadine Richardson (piano), Naman Broadhead (mandolin and harmonica), Tommy Campbell (guitar), and John Thomas Lindsey (fiddle). Our two ladies in the Amen Corner are: Miss Maude, portrayed by Joy Lewis, and Miss Myrtle, played by Carol Snow.

The Cast, in order of appearance, include: Mervin Oglethorpe (Ian Kimbrough), June Sanders (Sydney Mosley), Burl Sanders (Bobby F.

Jackson), Vera Sanders (Georgia Dozier), Stanley Sanders (Kenny Richardson, who also plays bass guitar), Denise Sanders (Melissa Snow), and Dennis Sanders (Ryan Allen).

Smoke On the Mountain will be presented at the BTAS Theatre in Gilbertown, Friday, Jan. 26, Sat., Jan. 27, and Monday, Jan. 29 at 8 p.m. nightly, and on Sunday, Jan. 28th at 2 p.m.

Some tickets are still available at the usual banks and businesses in Choctaw and Washington Counties.

Black men die younger

By Dee Ann Campbell
The Choctaw Sun

GILBERTOWN — They're young. They're black. They're male.

And they are dying young.

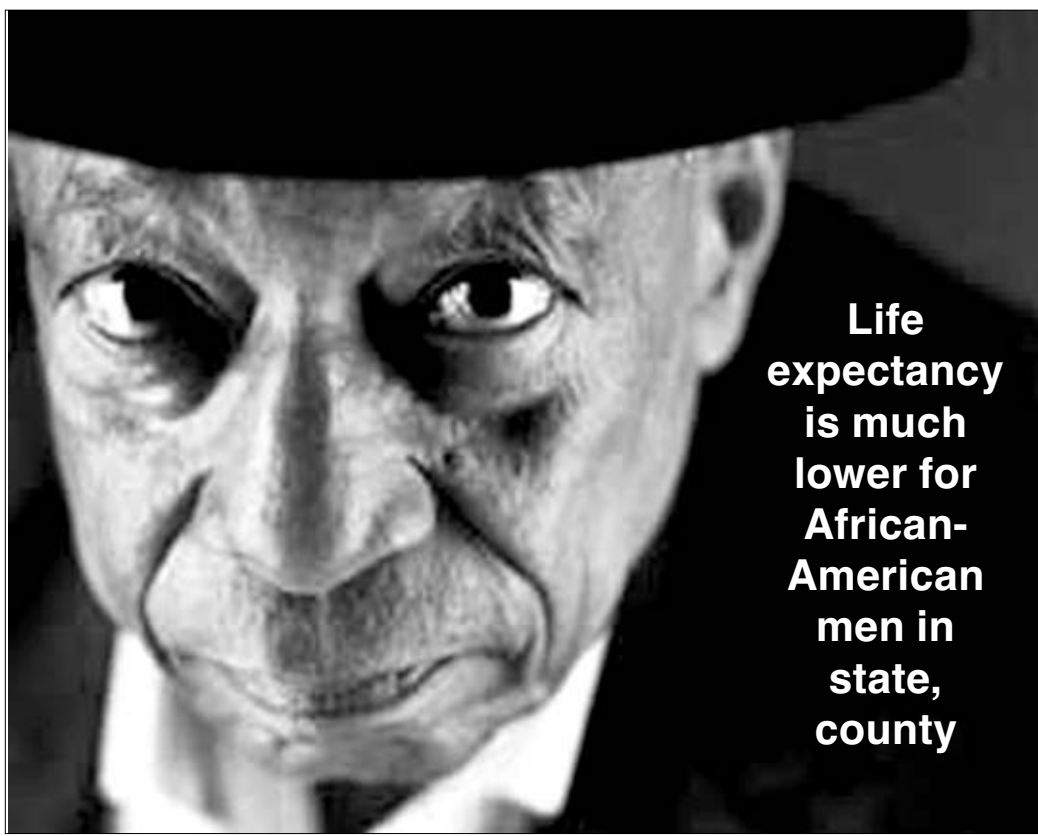
Overall, the life expectancy for Choctaw Countians averages 75.4 years — slightly higher than that state average of 74.8 years. But one segment of the population rarely shares in that longevity. When it comes to dying at earlier ages, no other group has a higher death rate than African-American men.

The reason, say experts, lies in a number of factors, from health risks that plague black men to an increased incidence of death from unnatural causes. While others are seeing increases in life expectancy, on national, state, and local levels, black men are living significantly shorter lives than any other sector of the population.

In fact, although all other population groups are seeing life expectancies of well over 72 years, black men live an average of only 67.8 years in Alabama.

The same is true for Choctaw County. According to the Alabama Center for Health Statistics, about 6,800 African-Americans live in Choctaw County. Of that number, just over 3,000 are male. As children, their numbers are not much different from females of their race. But by the time they reach adulthood, their chances of survival grow slimmer.

In the 65 to 84 age group, the black male population has dipped from over 3,000 to less than 290, and there are less



Life
expectancy
is much
lower for
African-
American
men in
state,
county

Photo courtesy googleimages.com
Most African-American men will not live as long as the gentleman in this photo. Their average life expectancy is 67.9 years.

than 40 black men in the county who are age 85 or older.

By contrast, the black female population in the county totals more than double that number at that age group — about 86.

On the state level, black males between the ages of birth to 4 actually number slightly higher than black females by a population of 52,153 males to 50,677 females. The numbers remain relatively equal throughout early adulthood, but that's when they begin to change.

By age 45 to 64, the numbers of black males in Alabama are significantly less than the numbers of black females by a margin

of less than 125,000 males to 151,000 females.

Between the ages of 65 and 84, the population of black males drops by over 84,000 men, down from 124,740 to less than 40,000.

And when it comes to senior citizens over the age of 85, the population of black males in Alabama declines even more sharply — to less than 4,000 out of just over 66,000 total Alabamians in that age group.

By contrast, white females make up the largest age group of older senior citizens, totaling almost 40,000 statewide, while white males who are 85 or older total 14,789. Even black females in

that age group significantly outnumber their male counterparts, totaling almost 10,500.

By far the most obvious reasons for the early deaths of black men are health risks that are often inherent in that segment of the population. While some may be genetic, others may be due to factors that could be controlled.

On the national level, cardiovascular diseases (CVD) ranks as the number one killer of African-Americans in general, claiming the lives of 36.4% of the more than 290,000 who die each year. Over 4 in every 10 black adults have CVD, which includes diseases of the

heart, stroke, high blood pressure, congestive heart failure, congenital cardiovascular defects, hardening of the arteries and other diseases of the circulatory system.

For every 100,000 people in the United States, about 309 die from CVD. Among blacks the CVD death rate was even higher, and for black men, the rates are frightening. While 354 out of every 100,000 black females die of CVD, almost 480 out of every 100,000 black males die of CVD in the United States.

Heart disease is also the leading cause of death in Alabama, and in Choctaw County. Nearly 12,800 lives were lost in Alabama in 2004 (the last year on record with the state) to heart-related diseases, with black men making up a significant portion of those statistics.

Choctaw County saw a total of 48 deaths in that time period that were attributable to heart disease. Nineteen of those who died were black men — a group that makes up only about 20% of the total population of the county.

The numbers look even grimmer on a national level. According to the American Heart Association, death rates from cardiovascular disease are much higher for black men. While 359 out of every 100,000 white males, the death rate was 480 out of every 100,000 black males.

Heart diseases like CVD are affected, in many cases, by other health problems that are rampant among the black community. According to the American Heart Association, over 40% of black adults, for example, have high blood pressure — one of the highest rates in the

world. In fact, the overall death rate from high blood pressure is 17.9 out of every 100,000. But for black males, the rate is nearly 50.

Compared to the white population, African-Americans are more likely to be overweight or obese and to have diabetes — factors that are not only health problems on their own but can significantly increase the risk of developing heart disease.

In 2004, the death rate from diabetes, for instance, was 24.4 out of 100,000 for the general population. But among black men, the rate was 50.5.

And when it comes to other health issues, black men are again at the top of the list for early deaths. For example, the Alabama Center for Health Statistics lists three HIV-related deaths in Choctaw County for 2004. Two were black men.

Black men are not only in more danger of dying from health-related problems, they are in more danger of dying from other reasons. When it comes to fatal accidents in Choctaw County, for example, they made up half of the total number recorded in 2004 — three out of six.

With advances in healthcare in the United States, the American population is now able to live longer lives, with the average life expectancy climbing to over 70 years in the past ten years. But those numbers still have not changed as much for black men.

For many of the 605,983 black males in Alabama — including the 3,000 who live in Choctaw County — life continues to end before their 70th birthday.

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