

40 Under 40 2017

By Staff - March 29, 2017

Heather Sumner 35 – Okmulgee

Executive Director, Okmulgee Main Street, Inc.

Heather Sumner works hard to promote the city in which she lives. As the executive director of Okmulgee Main Street, Sumner preserves the town's historic district, diversifies the economic base, organizes festivals and fulfills her life's purpose of making the world a better place. To her skeptics, whom she calls CAVE people (Citizens Against Virtually Everything), her approach is to kill with kindness and work hard to impress. "Some of our biggest CAVE people have now turned into our biggest supporters," she says. "Seeing the mindset of people change over time makes me so proud." Although Sumner loves her job, she was once preparing for a different career path. "People would be surprised to learn that I completed my training to become a private investigator."



Melissa Richey 38 – Choctaw

Director of Communications and Marketing, Children's Center Rehabilitation Hospital

Melissa Richey is the type of person who will always share the spotlight – she adores her coworkers at the hospital and gives them plenty of credit. "They make me look good," she says. "I couldn't do this crazy, ever-changing job without them." Working at a pediatric hospital has its trying days, but Richey focuses on the numerous highlights. "I get to witness miracles almost on a daily basis," she says. "Those miracles could be as small as a baby drinking from a bottle for the first time to a teenager taking their first steps following a traumatic accident. I get to stand on the sideline watching these medical workers make miracles happen, and then I get to tell that story."

Harry Ashbaugh 39 – Bixby

Director of Digital Strategies, Cubic

Harry Ashbaugh, a Würzburg, Germany, native, now spends his days directing online strategies for Cubic clients by striving to create the best online brand experience possible. At home, he has a happy, hectic and fulfilling life. "My wife Leah and I have 11-year-old triplets, so our days are full, but spending time with each of them brings a smile to my face." Ashbaugh also volunteers at the American Therapeutic Riding Center and the American Heart Association – two organizations that have personally touched his life. "My daughter, Sydney, was born with a congenital heart defect and has special needs," he says. "These organizations have provided much-needed support and guidance."



Elizabeth "Bea" Keller-Dupree, 32 – Tulsa

Associate Professor of Psychology and Counseling, Northeastern State University; Owner/Therapist, Enrichment Counseling & Consultation

As a professor of psychology and counseling at Northeastern State University as well as a licensed professional counselor, Bea Keller-Dupree says she loves that her career path encourages her to be a lifelong learner. "I have tons of interests (both personally and professionally), and in my career, the more I learn, the better equipped I am to counsel and teach a variety of people," she says. "I often am reminded that there is a trickle-down effect to my learning: when I am engaged with my learning, my students benefit. When my students benefit, their future clients benefit. When future clients benefit, the communities we live in benefit." Keller-Dupree's desire to help people extends beyond her profession – she builds service learning into her courses and volunteers alongside undergraduate psychology and graduate counseling students at NSU at churches and community organizations. She has also served with Red Cross as a Disaster Mental Health Counselor. "I think the causes I support through volunteering are rooted in community – whether that community is local or abroad. I value being hands-on with specific community needs."

Erica Kosemund, 33 – Ada

Executive Director of Corporate Marketing, Choctaw Nation Division of Commerce

Within the Choctaw Nation, Erica Kosemund oversees quite a few locations – 20 gaming sites, 15 travel plazas, several restaurants and 65,000 acres of ranches and farmland, to be exact. The most rewarding bit is that she gets to see her hard work positively affect her community in real ways. “The uniqueness of working in tribal gaming is that you get to see your business successes be invested back into communities, people and programs and services,” she says. Kosemund’s passions lie beyond her work, too. She’s an advocate for breast cancer awareness – the Choctaw Nation raised more than \$250,000 for Susan G. Komen in the past three years – and also spends her time at the American Heart Association and Catholic Charities. On a more personal note, she enjoys mentoring those new to the marketing world. “I have had so many mentors in my career so far, and I want to do the same for them.”



Scott Black, 39 – Tulsa

Managing Director, Tulsa Ballet

Scott Black handles the administrative side of one of the top professional ballet companies in North America, but don’t expect him to have an ego about it. “As a manager, I think it is important for you to know how to do every job that you are asking your employees to do,” he says. “No job was too small for me if it meant that I would be gaining valuable experience for the future.” Tulsa Ballet as a whole is much more than beautiful performances, and Black is extremely proud of that. “We serve over 5,000 public elementary school students each year through our free outreach programs,” he says.

Keith Winter, 36 – Oklahoma City

CEO, HomeWetBar

Keith Winter’s startup, HomeWetBar, produces and ships 350,000 personalized products a

year and employs 20 people full time. Although it seems like an overnight success, Winter has worked hard for years to realize his goals; 14 years ago, the business was just beginning in his one-bedroom apartment. Now, HomeWetBar “is one of the pioneers of online business in Oklahoma,” he says. “We’ve had to engineer everything from the ground up, creating a business along with inventing processes for things that might not have even existed 10 years prior.” Off the clock, Winter spends time with his rescue pup, Oscar. “He’s the most lovable dog you’ve ever met,” he says.



Brandi Johnson, 39 – Oklahoma City

**Community Relations Director/Financial Officer,
Oklahoma County Commissioner, District 2**

As a community relations director, Brandi Johnson serves as a liaison to the Oklahoma County commissioner, but she also facilitates financial operations for Oklahoma County District 2. Her hands may be full at work, but that doesn’t stop her from having a rounded-out life off the clock. Along with volunteering her time at Women of the South, Sharing Tree and the YMCA, she’s also a big music fanatic. “My favorite hobby is going to rock concerts. I enjoy seeing new venues and learning about new bands,” she says. “I maintain a growing collection of concert tickets, lanyards, passes and guitar picks.”

Annina Collier, 38 – Tulsa

**Dean and George Kaiser Family Foundation Endowed Chair, Center for Creativity,
Tulsa Community College**

Annina Collier is all about facilitating creative experiences and cultivating new and exciting artistic endeavors in Tulsa. As the inaugural dean for the Center of Creativity, Collier organized an upcoming TEDxTulsaCC Talk and last year’s groundbreaking *Please Touch the Art* exhibition. “When we were young, we all instinctively sang, dance and drew, and we loved it,” she says. “But as we grow up, not only do most people stop doing these things, they often think they can’t do them.” That mindset is the reason she created the *I Can’t*

workshop series – a free lunchtime workshop for those who don't think of themselves as classically creative – where people can try everything from drawing to dance to digital fabrication. Bottom line: you don't need to feel self-conscious around Collier – she'll love what you have to say. "I work hard to foster a working environment where people aren't afraid to tell me their 'crazy' ideas," she says.



Stephen G. Butler 37 – Oklahoma City

Assistant Dean, Oklahoma City University School of Law

Stephen Butler spends his days developing relationships and securing resources for the OCU School of Law, but he believes that no matter how much you love your job, those around you are what matter most. "I enjoy the people I work with most of all," he says. "Life has taught me that you can do really interesting work and get paid well to do it, but if you don't enjoy the people you work with, you will be miserable in a short amount of time." He also appreciates when his students get the return on their investments. "I love it when our students graduate, secure jobs and pass the bar exam. We're a professional school, so people are giving us their hard-earned money in order to enter the legal field or make a career transition," he says. "We can

take pride when we've helped them accomplish that goal." In his time off, you can find Butler with his family. "I have a 4-month-old and an almost 4-year-old, so as soon as I leave the office, I start

Comments

