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# NEIGHBORS

## Symbiosis theme of new art display

By SHEILA ROBINSON  
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DUNCAN — "Symbiosis on the Chisholm Trail," featuring the artwork of Jennifer Cocoma Hustis, is on display at the Chisholm Trail Heritage Center through Feb. 25.

Edmond artist Hustis said symbiosis, or living together, is a combination of syn, meaning with; and bios, meaning life.

"I have never had an art exhibition in Duncan before, but I do have wonderful friends in Duncan," Hustis said. "I am honored to be part of the 150th year celebration of the Chisholm Trail and I have enjoyed researching the many inspiring stories during that time for my exhibition 'Symbiosis on the Chisholm Trail.'"

Symbiosis was adopted by the scientific community in the late 1800s, according to Hustis, though it had appeared in English in a non-scientific sense as far back as 1622. "When a biological symbiosis is mutually beneficial, it is termed mutualism. For example, when the yucca moth lays her eggs in the seed pods of the yucca, she acts as pollinator, and when the larvae hatch they feed on some, but not all, of the seeds," Hustis said.

When one organism lives off another at the other's expense, it's called parasitism.

Either way, living together is what symbiosis is all about.

"I love to paint the beauty of nature and believe that there is no separation between the spiritual and physical world, and that souls exist not only in humans, but also in animals, plants and even geographic features," Hustis said. "Throughout this exhibit I hope you find ways to see how symbiotic or 'living together' relationships can hinder or help life."

As she researched the Chisholm Trail for the exhibit, she found herself intrigued by brave stories of daring survival.

"I believe the job of the artist is to bring history to life. In this solo

### Symbiosis on the Chisholm Trail

A free workshop is set at 3:30 p.m. Feb. 4 at the Chisholm Trail Heritage Center, 1000 Chisholm Trail Parkway, featuring Jennifer Cocoma Hustis.

The workshop is open to all ages and will last about an hour. A reception for Hustis will follow. Call 580-252-6692.

exhibition of my art, I use symbolic imagery of animals, nature and the artist's instruments to remind us of the importance of the artist as a historic messenger. My goal is that you leave contemplating how you approach life with respect of the innate knowledge of nature."

### About the artist

Hustis is an Oklahoma artist who has spent her life capturing the spirit of animals in her drawings, paintings, prints, photographs and sculptures. She believes that animals are messengers in life. That belief inspires her passion for animals and capturing their images. She hopes that those who see her art both love the image and are similarly inspired to embrace their own love of animals and nature.

Hustis' art has received numerous accolades and awards in national and international exhibits, been published in books and is on display in permanent museum collections throughout Oklahoma. Her commissioned artwork is displayed in private and public venues. She has a Master of Fine Arts from Pratt Institute in New York in painting and sculpture. Hustis shares her gifts by teaching all ages and creating hands-on art programming for museums, non-profits and community public projects. She is the founder of Art of Horsemanship LLC, a safe, holistic and creative way to approach horsemanship and art lessons for all ages.



Stampede acrylic on canvas 95x60 inches by J. Cocoma Hustis 2016.

COURTESY PHOTO

"Throughout this exhibit I hope you find ways to see how symbiotic or 'living together' relationships can hinder or help life."

JENNIFER COCOMA HUSTIS  
ARTWORK ON DISPLAY AT CHISHOLM TRAIL HERITAGE CENTER



Artist Jennifer Cocoma Hustis and husband, Mark, visit near one of the largest pieces in her collection "Birds of a Feather."

PHOTO COURTESY TOMI HOPPER

## Forestry experts to examine trees in Duncan, Lawton

By STEVE METZER  
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While they probably won't discover any "champion" trees when they visit Lawton and Duncan soon, experts from the Oklahoma Department of Forestry say they're still looking forward to visits.

Mark Bays, the state's urban forestry coordinator, said Lawton and Duncan have arranged to have forestry service experts assess trees in their public parks and other open spaces. It's something that Bays suggests municipalities do every three to five years. Goals should be to make sure that trees are well-suited for the parks and other places they occupy, and also to make note of any trees that have been damaged by fire, ice storm or other catastrophe or that might be otherwise compromised by pests or disease. The tree experts might then pass along advice to local parks officials or others about how to best preserve and manage their arboreal assets.

"That's pretty important, I think, for cities and towns that have open spaces," Bays said. "Otherwise, how do you know where to go unless you know where you're at?"



COURTESY PHOTO

The Oklahoma Forestry Service's Alanna Cooper and Mark Bays stand under the state's champion English Walnut tree, located in Bixby. A champion tree is the largest of a particular species. It has a certain mystique that stimulates interest, respect and a certain amount of awe. Champions are not only special; they are worth protecting and recognizing for future generations. Oklahoma's champion tree program recognizes the largest tree of each species and provides a registry in "The Great Trees of Oklahoma." To view the registry of state champion trees in Oklahoma visit the Oklahoma State Champion Trees website.

It's hard to predict how long the tree assessments in Lawton and Duncan might take. Bays said the Forestry Department, like every

other department in Oklahoma, has limited assets and must budget wisely. It may be that surveyors will hit the largest, most popu-

lar local parks first and then come back, if necessary, to do followup work.

"We can get them started, maybe give the local parks people things to look for that might indicate elevated risks, hopefully get them more proactive than reactive in taking care of trees. Sometimes, it takes a trained eye to see if trees are safe or maybe in need of some pruning or other mitigation," Bays said.

It's unfortunate, but Bays said that many towns in Oklahoma don't put the focus on "community forestry" that they should. Local parks and open spaces contribute a great deal to quality of life, and keeping trees healthy should be a priority. The Forestry Department also can help communities to plan tree-planting projects, assist in supplying saplings and help to educate local folks about how to properly care for trees. Something they can't do is respond to calls of individual homeowners. Bays said there are usually good commercial arborists in communities who can help private citizens.

The Oklahoma Forestry Service also is dedicated to the conservation, management and protection of some 12.5 million acres

of forest and woodlands across the state. Forestry experts, in cooperation with the Oklahoma Forestry Association, even maintain records on the largest or best examples of different varieties of trees in the state — which they've dubbed "champion trees" and list on the Forestry Department's website.


<http://www.forestry.ok.gov/>. The registry is updated yearly and published every December. Currently there are close to 100 champion and co-champion trees listed.

Bays said he's not aware of any champion trees in Duncan or Lawton, but the tree surveyors will certainly be on the lookout for prime specimens.

"Maybe there's a cedar elm that might be in that area, or maybe a mesquite or burr oak or cottonwood."

Bays said forestry officials hope that by listing champion trees and their locations it will get Oklahomans interested not only in planting and taking care of trees but also in getting out to enjoy all that nature offers in Oklahoma.

"We just wanted to inspire people to get out and see big trees, to encourage people to enjoy nature and trees," he said.



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