
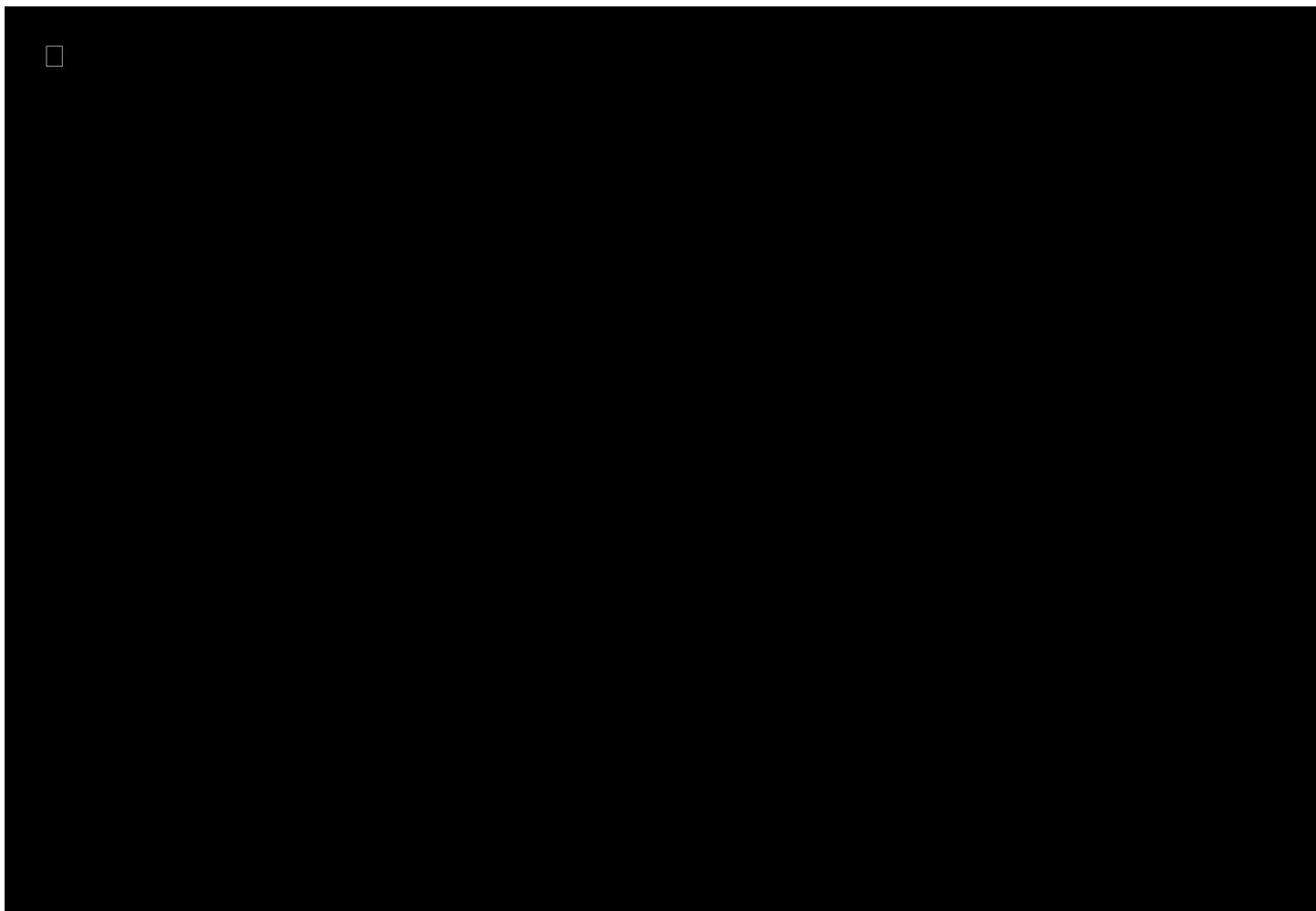


  **COME CHECK OUT OUR  
UNIQUE VINTAGE ITEMS**  
Just South of TU on Harvard

☐ **NEXT UP**  Restaurant news: Laffa Medi-Eastrn Restaurant to host first wine dinner ☐  
The Spanish-themed dinner is scheduled Jan. 22.

## Tulsans of the Year: Kimberly Johnson takes Tulsa libraries into the next century with joy

By Ginnie Graham News Columnist Dec 21, 2017 ☐ 0





Tulsa City-County Library CEO Kimberly Johnson poses for a portrait at the Tulsa Central Library. MIKE SIMONS/Tulsa World

[Buy Now](#)



Just over Kimberly Johnson's desk is a personalized autograph from the late author Maya Angelou with the message, "Joy!"

It's with that outlook Johnson took over as the Tulsa City-County Library chief executive officer on Jan. 1, 2017.

When reflecting on the past year, Johnson smiles and excitedly mentions people who have visited the Central Library, such as Clary Sage College students who made clothes with the 3-D image maker and a retired nurse who launched a podcast.

She mentions five weddings held at Central, summer reading program successes, a full schedule of community meetings, out-of-state visitors and partnerships to address issues with child nutrition,

medical needs and literacy. It's a giddy and breathless type of excitement.

"We belong to the community. We open the space and let the community use us," Johnson said.

Her passion for her work and dedication to the library system earned her a spot among our 2017 Tulsans of the Year.

Johnson was named CEO after working 18 years in the library system. She took over after the agency weathered internal conflicts with the previous two top administrators.

She joked that it's been a year with no controversy. Though, she is serious about handing out praise to her staff and meeting the library's mission.

"We have an amazing team here," she said. "We are able to change people's lives here."

Having grown up in the Bronx borough of New York, Johnson married native Tulsan Earl Johnson, then finished her bachelor of arts degree from the University of Tulsa. She holds a master's degree in library and information science from the University of Oklahoma.

In 1998, Johnson was hired by the library as the first coordinator of the African-American Resource Center, responsible for collecting, preserving and providing access to documents critical to the center's mission. This led to her establishing the library's annual public tour of Oklahoma's historic all-black towns and the countywide reading initiative, "Tulsa Metro Reads."

In 2005, she was promoted to manager of the South Broken Arrow Library branch, then became the Hardesty Regional Library manager five years later. In 2012, Johnson was elevated to regional manager to oversee 11 of the system's 24 locations.

A year later, Johnson became the deputy director/chief innovation officer, and then chief operating officer in 2015. She is the first African-American CEO of the Tulsa library.

The nearly three-year and \$55 million renovation of Central Library was opened three months before Johnson took over. She calls Central the "huge highlight" of the past year, attracting visitors from across the country.



**Jeffrey A. Hensley**

**Lawyers For  
Divorce**

- \* Real Talk
- \* Real Results
- \* Real Experience

"Hensley Legal Services"  
Call Us : (918) 398-5692



**\$3.95 a month: Get unlimited access to tulsaworld.com so you are in the know on all the fun.**

No one covers entertainment, food and restaurants, and things to do like the Tulsa World's Scene and Weekend. For a limited time, get a digital subscription for just \$3.95 a month. **Sign up now at [tulsaworld.com/subscribe](https://tulsaworld.com/subscribe).**

One change being made is adding 9,000 book titles to Central. Also, tablets will be added to the end of each book stack for looking up titles held in the basement for ordering on site.

"We are listening to our customers," she said. "That is one of the complaints we have heard, so we are responding. ... Libraries are evolving, and we are evolving to meet the needs of users."

Next up for the library system will be addressing needs at the branches, including possible expansions at both Broken Arrow locations, Jenks and Bixby.

Johnson encourages her staff to attend national and international workshops when possible, with emphasis on the American Library Association activities. The library won the bid to host the conference of the Black Caucus of the American Library Association in 2020.

"That will help bring in tours and national authors," Johnson said. "We are known as a leading library in the country, and we want to be on the cutting edge and what's next."

Residents will be hearing more about the Tulsa libraries in the upcoming months as a marketing campaign kicks off. The highlights will show services found in libraries and online.

“We’re going to raise the visibility of the library,” Johnson said. “I want to get to people who haven’t been using the library. If they have not come to us, we want to go to them. We want people to know what we have to offer.

“We want them to see this is not the library they remember.”



### News Columnist Ginnie Graham

Born and raised in Oklahoma, Ginnie is a news columnist writing about human interest and social justice issues. Phone: 918-581-8376



 (0) comments

## Welcome to the discussion.

The Tulsa World requires that you use your real first and last name on your account, which will appear next to your comments. If you see a questionable comment or a fake name, click the report button next to the comment. **Review the guidelines to post comments.**

[Post a comment](#)

[Watch this discussion.](#)



**FROM FREE  
NEXT-DAY  
DELIVERY\***



## Latest News

---

- 7-year-old injured after crashing car he was driving in Wagoner County  
.....
- OSU notebook: Cowboys' safety room will empty out after Thursday  
.....
- Holidays events continue, find out where  
.....
- SemGroup, NGL Energy Partners sell intrastate pipeline  
.....
- Photo gallery: Bruce Plante's favorite local cartoons of 2017  
.....
- Armed robbery suspect, Tulsa police officer fire shots in west Tulsa  
.....
- Man attempts to rob woman on Christmas day, interrupted by 'concerned citizens,' police say  
.....



12 THINGS  
TO KNOW  
BEFORE  
BUYING A  
THERMAL  
CAMERA

GET THE  
GUIDEBOOK NOW!

FLIR

## Email Newsletter Options

---

- Breaking News
- Morning Read
- Obituaries
- Tulsa World Offers
- Contests & Special Promotions
- ePaper\*
- Latest Headlines at 4 pm
- OU Sports
- OSU Sports
- TU Sports
- High School Sports
- Food & Restaurants

Weekend: Things to Do  
Home & Garden  
Downtown Tulsa  
Downtown Lunch Specials  
Real Estate  
Outdoors

## Sign up

---

Email:

\*Access to the ePaper is available for 7-day home delivery and digital-only subscribers. If your home delivery subscription is anything other than 7-day, please call 918-582-0921 to get access to the e-edition.

## Most Popular

---

- 1 Hard Rock announces Alanis Morissette concert
- 2 The Pioneer Woman hosting a book signing in Owasso
- 3 Oklahoma model with cerebral palsy hopes to inspire others
- 4 Tulsans of the Year: Pat Crofts spearheads astounding year for River Spirit Casino
- 5 Oklahoma-made movie 'Wildlife,' Paul Dano's directorial debut, premiering at 2018 Sundance Film Festival





**Jeffrey A. Hensley**

**Lawyers For  
Divorce**

- \* Real Talk
- \* Real Results
- \* Real Experience

"Hensley Legal Services"  
Call Us : (918) 398-5692



## Today's ePaper

---

e-Edition

**Make changes to your subscription**

**Log in to your account**

**View an ePaper demo**

**Subscribe for unlimited digital access**

**Spring  
Cleaning?**

Sell Your Stuff.  
It's Free.



TULSA **marketplace.com**

## Today's ePaper

---

e-Edition

**Make changes to your subscription**

**Log in to your account**

**View an ePaper demo**

**Subscribe for unlimited digital access**

## Sections

---

- 
- News
- Sports Extra
- Scene
- Work & Money
- Special Reports
- Communities
- Opinion
- Weekend
- Photography
- Obituaries
- Tulsa World TV

## Marketplace

---

- Autos
- Classifieds
- Deals
- Findit
- Homes

- [Jobs](#)
- [Browse job categories](#)
- [Browse job subcategories](#)
- [Legal Notices](#)
- [Display Ads](#)
- [Store](#)
- [Advertise with us](#)

## Info

---

- [Learn about us](#)
- [Contact us](#)
- [Report a correction](#)
- [Advertise with us](#)
- [Apply to be a carrier](#)
- [View job openings](#)
- [Subscription Services](#)
- [Terms of Use](#)
- [Contractor](#)

