

2 teens charged in slaying of National Guard member Two teenagers have been charged with murder in the slaying of a Tulsa member of the National Guard. Tyler Kerry Hamlett, 17, and Michael Morris Taylor, 19, were charged Wednesday with one count each of felony murder, first-degree burglary and robbery with a dangerous weapon. Hamlett has also been charged with cruelty to animals. Jerry Lee VanEllen, 38, was shot early Saturday outside his home in the 5800 block of South 87th East Avenue. Police said they believe that Hamlett and Taylor went to VanEllen's house when trying to find a drug dealer's house but got the wrong address. The intruders reportedly held his family at gunpoint and stole cell phones and other items. Tulsa Police Sgt. Mike Huff said the men also sliced the throat of the family's dog. VanEllen, a noncommissioned officer in the Army National Guard, chased the intruders outside through the front door, and one of the men shot at him twice, hitting him once in the chest, police said. Hamlett was arrested Sunday, and Taylor was arrested Monday afternoon. Both are being held in the Tulsa Jail. A fund has been set up to help VanEllen's wife and children. People who want to donate may contribute to the Jerry VanEllen Memorial Fund at MidFirst Bank, 321 S. Boston Ave., Suite 100, Tulsa, OK 74103. - JERRY WOFFORD, World Staff Writer

Police plan in-between holidays patrol increase Tulsa police officers will be especially vigilant in watching for impaired drivers during the week between the Christmas and New Year's holidays, a Police Department spokesman said. According to a press release from Officer Craig Murray, the department's traffic safety coordinator, this time period traditionally has been one of the most dangerous times of the year because of an increase in drunken driving. "The past few years, fewer people have lost their lives to drunk drivers, and we hope to keep that tradition continuing," the release says. The Tulsa Police Department will join other law enforcement agencies in an effort to ensure that the trend continues. Directed patrols and the use of the Tulsa police reserves will help in that effort to save lives,

the department reported. "Our mission is to ensure that people enjoy the upcoming New Year, but only if they wear their seat belts, watch their speed and ... don't drink and drive," the release says. - FROM STAFF REPORTS

Former TCC administrator to retire from Connors The president of Connors State College - a former Tulsa educator - will retire next year. Donnie Nero told the Muskogee Phoenix that his departure from the Warner college will be effective June 30. Nero has been president for 11 years. Doug Wilson, executive secretary for the Board of Regents for Agricultural and Mechanical Colleges, said the board is forming a presidential search committee. Wilson said Connors' accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission for 10 more years speaks volumes about the quality Nero has brought to the college's presidency. Nero received his bachelor's degree from East Central University in Ada in 1971, a master's degree in educational administration from Oklahoma State University in 1977 and a Ph.D. in occupational and adult education from OSU in 1993. Nero was an instructor and administrator at Tulsa Community College from 1985 to 2000. - FROM STAFF AND WIRE REPORTS