Alicia Kirkpatrick

According to Stillwater City Manager Dan Galloway, the city of Stillwater is made up of roughly 35% OSU students. During the summer, a lot of these students return to their home towns. This has an effect on the economy of the city.

“Even though we had a recent census it is difficult to pin this number down to an exact percentage, but from all the information I have seen, OSU students make up about 35% of the total Stillwater population in the city limits.” Galloway said.

When asked about the biggest change he notices, Galloway gave some insight into the economy of Stillwater.

“It is really a pretty interesting phenomenon in Stillwater.  Generally most cities see sales tax revenue go up significantly during the summer.  Mostly because people greatly increase leisure activity and buy grills, outdoor furniture, landscape material, flowers, picnic supplies, lawn mowers and many more that they normally don’t buy during fall, winter and spring.  So the economy usually picks up a lot in summer.  But in Stillwater we have a significant number of OSU students leave Stillwater for the summer and there are fewer OSU events in the summer attracting big crowds of visitors like football, basketball, graduation, etc.  So student shopping and people eating in restaurants falls off a lot in the summer.  As a result of the two things, our economy stays pretty stable throughout the summer.” Galloway said.

The local residents of Stillwater also notice the change each summer. Amber Selvey, a Stillwater resident, notices the changes.

“The biggest change I notice during the summer is the traffic. Not as many crazy drivers!” Selvey said.

Selvey and her husband, Tyler, both grew up in Stillwater. They are now raising their family here. They live roughly five miles from campus. Luckily for the Selvey family, their jobs are not dependent on the economy boost that the OSU students give.

“Neither of us have jobs that change during the summer. Tyler works at USDA Hydraulic Lab and I coach tumbling.” Selvey said.

Although residents notice the change, it’s not as significant as it was in the past.

“I think it is not as easy to tell when they leave as it used to be.” Galloway said. “When our population was much smaller the percent made up by students was much greater.  Plus in the past fewer students stayed for Summer Term.  So ten or fifteen years ago it was very noticeable when school was out for summer.  Much more parking available, less traffic on the streets, pace of things seemed to slow down.   Today it is less noticed but still there is a difference.  I think we notice a little less traffic on the streets and one major thing is we never have to wait in line to get a seat in a restaurant.  But I have never heard anyone say they will be glad when school is out and the students leave.  Somehow having all the OSU students here has become the “normal” Stillwater we all enjoy.  We are really glad to see them come back in the fall.” Galloway said.

John Autry, a journalism senior, has never spent a summer in Stillwater.

“I go home mostly because I live with family in Tulsa so everything is cheap or free and I am guaranteed more hours in Tulsa to work.” Autry said.

Autry works at American Eagle in Tulsa, but has been lucky enough to transfer to the American Eagle in Stillwater during school.

“I've only worked at American Eagle in Stillwater. I work at AE in Tulsa so I just transferred to the one here. Still I got lucky that the AE in Stillwater liked me enough to give me hours.”

A lot of students stress over finding work when they return to Stillwater for school. Some students choose to stay in Stillwater for summers, and are lucky enough to keep jobs they have then.

Jacci Nix, a Nutritional Sciences-Dietetics major, spent this past summer in Stillwater. She, like Selvey, noticed the change in traffic.

“The major change I noticed this summer was that there was no traffic at all. All the businesses seemed slow. The town was like a dead town.” Nix said.

Nix works as a waitress at Applebee’s in Stillwater, and said they are affected each summer by the students leaving.

“Business at Applebee’s was a lot slower. During school we will have about 10 servers on a night and during the summer we would only have four or five. I got the same amount of hours because a lot of employees went home for the summer. So the staff decreased in size.” Nix said.

Most local businesses are affected by the changes as well. Melonie Perry is the office manager at Kids Kingdom, a gymnastics and cheer gym in Stillwater.

“We have a lot of coaches that leave for the summer, but we also have coaches that don’t attend OSU but live in Stillwater that come home for the summer as well.” Perry said.

Perry said the number of kids at the gym doesn’t change much from the school year, but a lot more kids miss class due to vacations. The kids adjust well to having different coaches over the summer, Perry said.

Although a lot of students go home and some people think Stillwater to be a ghost town during the summer, Galloway explains that is not always the case.

“Summer is a busy time of year in Stillwater even though many of the students are gone.  In many ways it would be good if more students stayed in Stillwater during the summer.   I think many landlords would like it so their apartments didn’t go vacant for three months, and shops, restaurants, movies and other place would be glad to do more summer business.  And some businesses have a little more trouble finding part-time employees in summer when students are gone.”

So although it may seem that Stillwater is deserted during the summer, this isn’t the case.

Headline: Stillwater Summers-Ghost Town or Boom Town?

Sources: John Autry- student

Jacci Nix- student

Dan Galloway-city manager

Ryan McCaghren- Police Chief

Amber Selvey- Stillwater resident

Melonie Perry- Office manager, Kids Kingdom

(none minority)

Info Box:

Biggest Changes: Traffic

Not as crowded (movie theaters, restaurants, etc.)

Web link: http://stillwater.org/