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Periodical
Post Paid at
Okla. City, OK

The Education Focus
OEA's all-member publication

Mr. Henry's Challenge Rallies Tulsa Community

By Doug Folks

Every community should have someone like Henry Zarrow.

During one of this state's worst economic downturns, Mr. Henry — as he is known in Tulsa — made a \$1 million matching pledge to Tulsa Public Schools (TPS) and energized a community. As a result, his challenge brought in more than \$2 million for Tulsa Public Schools, and donations are still coming.

The OEA has named Zarrow its 2003 Friend of Education for his generosity and leadership to better public schools.

Early this year, the 87-year-old Zarrow offered to match dollar for dollar, up to \$1 million, donations to TPS's general fund to help offset mounting state budget cuts. On March 25, the fund exceeded the mil-

lion dollar challenge when individuals' donations of \$25,000 and \$1,000 arrived just 3½ months after Zarrow made his challenge. Ironically, Mr. Henry received the Excellence in Education Award from the Foundation for Tulsa Schools that same night, an honor for which he had been selected a year ago.

"In this time of economic crisis, it's heartwarming that Mr. Zarrow not only gives of himself, but he is able to encourage others to give as well," said Carolyn Crowder, OEA President. "He has a long history of giving to public schools all over Oklahoma. No one is more worthy of our Friend of Education award than Mr. Henry."



2003 Friend of Education

Henry Zarrow made a \$1 million challenge pledge to Tulsa Public Schools; and the community matched his gift in less than four months. His leadership during the state's dire financial crisis earned Mr. Henry OEA's 2003 Friend of Education Award.

Grants and donations from the Anne and Henry Zarrow Foundation have touched every corner of Oklahoma. Education has been a high priority for the Foundation, along with
See "Zarrow Foundation" on Page 7

Felts Wins OEA Vice Presidency

Tahlequah's Becky Felts won a three-way race for OEA vice president in March's statewide elections while the races for NEA Director and Education Support Professional at-large to the OEA board of directors both move to runoff.

Greg Johnson of Mustang and Dr. Karen Dawson of Tulsa will face each other in a runoff for NEA Director. Johnson received 30 percent of the vote with 3,385 votes while Dawson drew 27 percent with 2,973 votes.

In the ESP runoff it will be Sherrie Barnes of Tulsa's Union School dis-

trict versus Vernon Moore of Henryetta ESP. Barnes received 27 percent of the ESP vote while Moore received 23 percent.

Ballots for the NEA Director and ESP runoffs must be received at OEA Headquarters by 5 p.m. Friday, May 2.

Felts, who recently finished her



Becky Felts

second term as one of Oklahoma's NEA Directors, won 52 percent of the vote with 5,896 votes. Moore ACT President Roma Clark received 26 percent with 2,929 votes and Broken Arrow's Greer Nichols won 22 percent with 2,451 votes.

"I am excited about the opportunity to serve our members. My heart is with Oklahoma public schools, and I believe in the work of the OEA," Felts said.

A fourth grade math and science teacher at Tahlequah's Cherokee

See "Felts Brings" on Page 3

Break The Silence!

By Carolyn Crowder
OEA President

All year we've been talking about the train wreck that was going to happen on April 10, the deadline for school districts to notify personnel regarding employment for next school year. We told state leaders that unless they agreed on a new revenue stream to fund this year's needs, next year's needs and future growth, schools would be forced to cut thousands of jobs and vital educational programs.

April 10 has come and gone, and the wreckage of lost jobs and lost educational opportunities is evident in school districts all over our state.

From large districts like Oklahoma City (600 jobs lost) and Lawton (155

jobs lost) to small districts like Wainwright (4 out of the 9 faculty members have lost their jobs), no district has been unaffected. Programs such as art, music, foreign language, technology, physical education, counseling, and alternative education have been slashed. Class sizes are ballooning, making students the ultimate victims.

I thought the sound of all these crashes would be the scariest thing I would hear all year, but it wasn't. It was bad, but there is something worse. It is the silence I've heard from state leaders who could still do something about this mess. And worse still, the silence I've heard even from many of our members,

who seem to have given up.

WE CAN'T GIVE UP! There is one last chance to change this situation! The OEA, in partnership with the school administrators' associations and the municipal league, is working with key legislators on an idea that could still turn this situation around. Our plan includes lifting a few of the over \$2 billion worth of tax exemptions in our state. We have selected exemptions that do not directly affect the health and welfare of our citizens. And yet the plan raises enough revenue to pull education out of this crisis, improve things for years to come and even incrementally lower the grocery sales tax.



Carolyn Crowder

Now we need you to MAKE SOME NOISE! Log onto www.okea.org to read about our plan and send a message to your legislator immediately. Plan to attend a local meeting with area legislators. These meetings will be similar to the Insurance Town Meetings of last year, but this time we will be joined by police, fire and city personnel to bring attention to the "Crisis In Our Communities."

As long as we don't give up, there is still a chance to break this unbearable silence and Save Our Schools!

\$1.95 Billion Budget Falls Short For Schools

"We must never despair; our situation has been compromising before; and it changed for the better; so I trust it will again; If difficulties arise; we must put forth new exertion and proportion our efforts to the exigencies of the times." – George Washington.

By Stacy Martin

Because the expected \$1.95 billion education budget is not enough to truly help schools, the Oklahoma Education Association continues to aggressively pursue new revenue proposals.

"The bottom line is this funding level assures continued program cuts, unacceptably large classes and education employee layoffs."

OEA President Carolyn Crowder.

The \$1.95 billion starts out as a \$90 million cut over what was promised school in 2003. It will not restore the cuts in education services, programs or personnel drained from schools in the past three years as a result of about \$342 million in cuts.

The most promising OEA revenue plan would lift some of the estimated \$2.5 billion in tax exemptions for goods and services. Speaker of the House Larry Adair agreed to convene

a committee to formulate a plan and write a bill. The legislation should emerge soon.

The \$1.95 billion education funding agreement was one in a series of ups and downs for schools that have characterized the 2003 Legislative session.

On the day of the Oklahoma Education Coalition's "Save Our Schools" Rally at the State Capitol, Legislative leaders announced they would give education \$25 million in emergency funding derived from the State's Rainy Day Fund. Within days of re-

ceiving the money, schools learned they were being hit with more state budget cuts totaling \$30 million, canceling out the Rainy Day money, plus another \$5 million cut.

The Education Lottery bill proposing that the people vote on a lottery was passed at the Legislature. OEA currently has no position on the lottery, but supports the right of the people to vote on it. Any funds raised by a lottery would be at least one to

two years away, so it would not solve the present crisis.

Senate Joint Resolution 11 was defeated, killing a vital new revenue option. It would have allowed local communities to vote to increase their own ad valorem revenue to fund local schools.

"The bottom line is this funding level assures continued program cuts, unacceptably large classes and education employee layoffs," said OEA President Carolyn Crowder. "We must raise revenue if we are to correct these situations. Oklahomans cannot afford to suffer a deterioration in educational quality."

To that end, OEA is working with legislative leadership to identify possible sources of new revenue. The most promising plan removes some of the estimated \$2 billion in tax exemptions granted to some businesses and service providers.

Legislative leadership is looking at the exemptions to determine which ones are the most appropriate to target. OEA leaders are monitoring the discussions closely to ensure the

See "Legislature" on Page 3

OEA

The Education Focus

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Felts Brings Wealth of Association Experience to Vice President's Office

Continued from Page 1

Elementary, Felts has 26 years experience in the classroom including the last 21 in Tahlequah. She spent the first five years of her career at Peggs Schools.

After graduating from Tahlequah High School in 1972, she went on to earn a bachelor's in elementary education and a master's in elementary administration at Northeastern State University in Tahlequah.

Felts' work for the Association includes extensive experience on the local, state and national levels. She was president and building representative for Tahlequah EA, also serving on the Staff Development Committee and the Bargaining Team. She was a member of the OEA Board of Directors from 1987-94, serving on the Legislative, Communications and ESP Committees. She was chair of the OEA's IPD Committee and served on the Legal and Corporate Services Committee.

In addition to her duties as NEA Director from 1995-02, Felts worked on the NEA Resolutions Committee and the Oklahoma Commission for Teacher Preparation. She didn't limit her volunteer work to the Association, also giving time to the First United Methodist Church in Tahlequah, the Democratic Party, Cherokee County Democratic Women, the Tahlequah Chamber of Commerce, Delta Kappa Gamma Society International, American Federation of Women's Clubs and the American Association of University Women.

As vice president, Felts pledges her energy to the membership.

"I want all of Oklahoma's public school employees to know that OEA is here to support the work they do," she said. "I'll give our members all I have to give."

2003 OEA Election Results

* — denotes election winners

+ — denotes participants in runoff

Statewide Races

OEA Vice President

Becky Felts, Tahlequah EA	5896*
Roma Clark, Moore ACT	2929
Greer Nichols, Broken Arrow EA	2451

NEA Director

Greg Johnson, Mustang EA	3385+
Dr. Karen Dawson, Tulsa CTA	2973+
Vicki Vaughan, Putnam City ACT	2319
Marilyn Jackson, Okmulgee CTA	1597
Shelly K. Cherry, OEA-OKC	861

OEA Board of Directors Races

Zone Northeast A

Judy Locut, Ketchum PEAK*

Zone Northeast C

Tom Osburn, Cave Springs EA*

Zone Southwest A

Linda Long, Elk City EA*

Zone Southwest D

Charlsie Allen, Ardmore EA*

Zone Northwest A

Mike McIlwee, Chisholm EA*

Zone Northwest B

Teresa Barbour, Guthrie EA*

Zone OKC-A

Mary Jane Chiles, Moore ACT*

Zone OKC-C

Martha Wissler, Edmond ACT*

Zone Tulsa-A

Lynn Stockley, Tulsa CTA 641*

Lupe E. Johnson, Tulsa CTA 165

Jan Everitt, Tulsa CTA 82

Zone Tulsa-E

Cheryl L. Kelly, Broken Arrow EA 416*

Keri Marlin, Jenks CTA 212

Administrator-at-Large

Todd Crabtree, Byng EA*

ESP-at-Large

Sherrie L. Barnes, Union SPA 29+

Vernon W. Moore, Henryetta ESP 25+

Phyllis J. Mahafay, Indianhomia EA 21

Randy Herring, Edmond SEE 20

Samuel Mark Selig III, Edmond SEE 5

Sterling Willis Ballard, Sand Springs EA 5

Albert C. Armstrong, Union SPA 2

2003 NEA-RA Delegate Races

Delegate-at-Large Northeast

Deborah Rader, Tahlequah EA 999*

Denise Rhodes, Quapaw CTA 584*

Tom Osburn, Cave Springs EA 528

Shirley Nero, Porum PACT 347

Don Ryan, Cleveland EA 243

Delegate-at-Large OKC Metro

Elise Robillard, Moore ACT*

Kelly Fry, Mid-Del ACT*

Delegate-at-Large Southwest

Becki Munholland, Healdton ACT 1047*

Todd Richards, Comanche EA 1031*

Charlene Bower, Frederick ACT 808

Delegate-at-Large Tulsa Metro

Lynn Stockley, Tulsa CTA 1462*

Ruby Faye Starks, Tulsa CTA 666*

Euva D. Dill, Tulsa CTA 622

Jan Everitt, Tulsa CTA 491

Brenda G. Larrabee, Tulsa CTA 361

Delegate-at-Large NEA Category II

Todd Crabtree, Byng EA*

NEA Retired Delegate-at-Large

Tommy Fulton, Del City 119*

Jane Mershon, Lawton 109*

Joyce Drew, Oklahoma City 94

Barbara S. Smith, Miami 79

Michael C. Phillips, Tulsa 46

2003 OEA Delegate Assembly Races

Delegate-at-Large Ethnic Minority

Shirley Nero, Porum PACT 4550*

Carolyn White, Idabel EA 4444*

Monique E. Reed, Putnam City ACT 4120*

Marilyn B. Jackson, Okmulgee CTA 4071*

Ruby Faye Starks, Tulsa CTA 3159*

Lupe E. Johnson, Tulsa CTA 3863*

Todd Richards, Comanche EA 3117*

Louise Raines, Ketchum PEAK 2782*

Sharon K. Hill-Wooten, Idabel EA 2524*

Euva Dill, Tulsa CTA 2429*

Debra E. Hatler, Ketchum PEAK 2303*

Helena Gappa, Pioneer-Pleasant Vale EA 2254*

Yuvonna Hemperley, Claremore CTA 2240*

Jessie Wharry, Broken Bow CTA 2219*

Rosetta Y. Hortman, Tulsa CTA 1749*

OEA Retired Delegate-at-Large

Barbara Smith, Miami 261*

Michael C. Phillips, Tulsa 166*

Continued from Page 2

proposal is a good one.

"We believe it needs to be a progressive plan that is equitable and does not place a disproportionate burden on those least able to pay," said Crowder.

Early in the session, OEA had urged lawmakers to consider a list of revenue enhancements, the highlight of which was a temporary, one-penny sales tax increase. Within 90 days of implementation, a sales tax hike would begin pumping \$25 million monthly

back into the state budget. However, Gov. Brad Henry and a large block of lawmakers did not support the plan.

OEA legislative experts are urging OEA members to contact lawmakers to support the newest plan to raise revenue for education.

"Legislators need to know that there is strong grassroots support for raising revenue to save our schools," said Crowder. "This is our best chance to turn things around this year."

Legislature Encouraged To Find Alternative Funding Sources

Kenneth Corn Named Outstanding Legislator



Erin McGregor

Sen. Kenneth Corn, D-Howe

By Stacy Martin

Sen. Kenneth Corn's consistent support for public educator legislation has earned him the Oklahoma

Education Association's 2003 Outstanding Legislator Award.

Corn continually backs legislation advancing the salary, benefits and working conditions of Oklahoma educators.

While a member of the House of Representatives, Corn authored HB 1968, which provided fully-paid, individual health insurance for education employees. The bill was introduced in a year in which the odds were stacked against its successful passage. Corn

relentlessly fought for both the funding and passage of the legislation. It was the largest single increase in health insurance benefits ever gained for education employees.

Corn, 26, has described advancing

education as his ongoing commitment and highest priority as an elected official. He is believed to be the second youngest person ever elected to the Oklahoma Legislature.

The Democratic lawmaker was born in Poteau, later moving to Howe prior to junior high school. He attends the University of Oklahoma, studying political science.

OEA's Outstanding Legislator Award is given by the OEA Board of Directors to that legislator who has made significant contributions to the advancement of public education with his or her involvement in bills at the Oklahoma Legislature. The following criteria are used in selecting the award recipient:

1. The legislator has authored OEA legislation.
2. Over time the legislator has an outstanding voting record on OEA legislation.
3. The legislator works with the OEA lobbyists to assist in the passage or defeat of legislation.

OKC Zone C Wins Political Action Award

Oklahoma City Metro Zone C has won the Stan Bryant Political Action Award for 2003.

Martha Wissler, OC Metro C director AND president of the Edmond Association of Classroom Teachers (EACT), credited Edmond's Diana Campo for doing the hard work required to educate members regarding the importance of political action contributions. Campo serves on both the OEA PAC Committee and the OEA PAC Council.

The Stan Bryant award is given to the OEA zone that generates the highest significant contribution per member to the OEA Political Action Committee. In all, 792 members of OC Metro C contributed \$2,574 to the OEA-PAC. The money was raised during a spring 2002 and a fall 2002 campaign.

OEA Forms Alliance with Cities and Counties

There's no doubt about it. Our communities are in crisis across the state of Oklahoma. Government services are suffering from severe budget cuts that are already triggering the layoff of such essential workers as police officers, fire fighters and school teachers.

Indeed, public education, fire fighting and law enforcement cutbacks are among those that will affect Oklahomans deeply. If their fiscal needs are not addressed, Oklahomans could see deterioration in the most vital areas of their lives.

To that end, the Oklahoma Education Association has asked the Oklahoma Municipal League and other public service organizations to join in a project, "Communities in Crisis." The goal of the City/County/School Alliance is to educate everyone about

the adverse impact of reduced government services.

The event will also give Alliance leaders an opportunity to explain a revenue proposal now being studied at the state Capitol. The proposal calls for lifting selected business and service tax exemptions, pumping new revenue into state coffers.

Lifting tax exemptions was among several revenue proposals OEA began advancing at the State Capitol several months ago. In response, Speaker of the House Larry Adair formed a committee to study the issue. A bill is expected to result soon.

Meanwhile, the education process is kicking into high gear. Communities in Crisis Alliance leaders have scheduled a major Town Hall Meeting event at 7 p.m., Thursday, May 1 at venues across the state.

The session will feature input from legislators, city and county leaders and education groups. All city, county, state and school employees are encouraged to attend.

Meetings will be held in Altus, Ardmore, Bartlesville, Broken Arrow, Burns Flat, Chickasha, Claremore, Durant, Edmond, El Reno, Enid, Hen-

ryetta, Idabel, Lawton, McAlester, Miami, Midwest City, Moore, Muskogee, Norman, Okla. City, Putnam City, Owasso, Ponca City, Sapulpa, Shawnee, Stillwater, Tahlequah, Tulsa and Woodward.

Information, including exact meeting venues, will be included in Web site updates at www.okea.org.

TCTA Member to Appear on Millionaire

TCTA Member Nancy Christy will try to win a fortune when she appears on "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?" during May sweeps. Christy, an 8th grade language arts teacher at Tulsa's Carver Middle School, has already competed but can't tell the outcome until after the show runs. Her episodes will run at 4:30 p.m. May 7-8 on Tulsa's KJRH, Channel 2. In Oklahoma City, KWTV News 9 airs "Millionaire" at 3 p.m. weekdays. At press time a News9 spokesperson said the station had not been told when Christy's episode would run in Oklahoma City.



Ruth Ann Stewart is Noble ESP's MVP

By Doug Folks

Many times award winners are recognized for a single event. The award could be for developing an outstanding curriculum, or scoring the winning shot in a basketball championship, or discovering a cure for a disease.

But in the case of Ruth Ann Stewart, this year's winner of the OEA Education Support Professional Award, the prize is for a career's worth of work for the Noble Support Professional Association (NSPA).

"You name it, she's done it," said Pat Miller, ESP member at-large on the OEA board of directors and a member of NSPA. "She's the member everybody would like to have in their organization."

Stewart was one of the first orga-

nizing members of Noble's ESP group. She currently serves as secretary, and has served as treasurer, vice president, executive board member and on several NSPA committees including the Grievance, Negotiations and Membership Committees. She also served on a committee that rewrote job descriptions of Noble ESP positions.

Stewart has worked for Noble Schools for 18 years. She started as a secretary at Kathryn I. Daily Elementary, which was then known as Crosstimbers, and later moved to the Central Office as a secretary for the superintendent. She is now an accounts payable clerk, processing invoices and supply requests.

If she's not working for the Association, Stewart may be found

volunteering for the district.

"One year, our yearbook department was so in debt from the previous year that we weren't going to even have a yearbook," Miller said. "But Ruth Ann organized an effort to make sure that class of students had a yearbook."

Working with other parents and students after school, the group worked throughout the year to publish an annual. "We wouldn't have had a yearbook without Ruth Ann," Miller said. "She helps with everything from 'Project Graduation' to the sports teams, even though her own kids have graduated."

Stewart's sons, Matthew and Jeffrey, graduated from Noble High



ESP Award Winner

Ruth Ann Stewart was a founding member of the Noble Support Professionals Association, and she's held just about every volunteer job in the local during her 18 years in the district.

School in 1995 and 1997, respectively.

They live in Noble with their own families now, and have given Ruth Ann three grandchildren between the two of them. Her husband, Doug, works at Tinker Air Force Base.

"I still want to keep in touch with teachers and upcoming students," Stewart said of her work in the district. "I do it when I can. It's just fun. I enjoy it."

Ardmore Negotiates First Master Contract

By Doug Folks

When the state bargaining law went into effect in 1978, the Ardmore Classroom Teachers Association became one of the state's first bargaining locals. Ironically, the Ardmore local did not have a master contract until earlier this year.

Now known as the Ardmore Education Association (AEA), the local has won the OEA Collective Bargaining Award for turning a policy handbook into a master contract.

The AEA team is comprised of Lucinda Hull, AEA president, and Charlsie Allen, both from Ardmore Middle School; Marsha Rogers, Lincoln Elementary; Patty Green, Will Rogers Elementary; and Nancy Peavler, OEA advocacy specialist for the Southwest Region.

For 25 years, AEA has bargained items of importance to its members, such as duty free lunches; salary and

fringe benefits; and shared sick leave, to name just few. But all of those agreed upon items accumulated in a Policies and Procedures Handbook of the Ardmore Board of Education.

Peavler, who is based in Ardmore, has encouraged AEA to negotiate a master contract for years. The process was attempted in the past, but failed to fully

materialize. The current AEA negotiations team began work on the master agreement two years ago. The two sides met at the table last July, and

the master contract finally reached fruition on Jan. 16 when Ardmore teachers ratified the contract.

Among the big gains in the contract

are a clearer process for reductions in force, fewer steps in the grievance procedure and better bereavement leave.

AEA entered into the process at a time of great distrust (if not dislike)

between the Association and the Ardmore administration. To help moderate the process, Dave Renfro of the Federal Mediation and Concili-

ation Service was brought in. AEA President Lucinda Hull said his presence made a world of difference.

"It was just so much easier (with Renfro)," she said. "It was not like your side and my side. Mr. Renfro didn't let the teams sit on opposite sides of the table. He made us alternate team members around the table."

Teachers have access to an electronic version of the contract, and AEA is still working to get hard copies printed for every teacher. Nonetheless, Hull says the contract is a real positive for Ardmore teachers.

"The teachers will have, in hand, exactly what is expected of them and what is expected from the administration," she said. "We'll have better communications. New teachers will be able to see in writing what kind of sick leave they have or what the bereavement leave policy provides."



Collective Bargaining Award

Ardmore EA negotiated its first master contract this year. Members of the team were (clockwise from top left) Lucinda Hull, AEA president; Charlsie Allen; Patty Green; and Marsha Rogers.



Teachers Teaching Students

Tulsa CTA member and Gifted and Talented teacher Joy Brewer continually searches for creative methods to reach students like Brittany Boswell, seen here with Brewer at Tulsa's Waite Phillips Elementary.

Knowing a Student's Learning Style is the Key

By Jeff Savage

Ginger Mendenhall believes a teacher can reach any child if that teacher just understands the learning style of the student.

She has put the philosophy in practice and proven its success. For instance, math and science test scores of her students have improved dramatically – from the 55th percentile in 1996-97 to the 90th percentile in 2001-02.

In recognition of her success, Mendenhall has earned the OEA Instructional Excellence in Education Award, Teachers Teaching Teachers.

“Being a learner and a teacher go hand-in-hand as understanding of human knowledge expands,” said Mendenhall, a 5th grade teacher at

Tulsa's Marshall Elementary School. “It is important to know your students and how they learn.”

Teachers from all over the state have benefited greatly from Mendenhall's expertise. Her excitement and willingness to share her ideas with others has made a great impact on not only those teachers, but their students as well. In her workshops, Mendenhall shares how to discover student learning styles and why it is so important to the success of the learners as well as to the success of teachers.

“... I have an obligation to share the knowledge I have gained with my colleagues at workshops and presentations. I want others to benefit from my findings,” she said.

Creativity Earns Tulsa's Joy Brewer Instructional Excellence Honor

By Jeff Savage

Joy Brewer believes a teacher must have a “diversified, eclectic methodology,” learn from his or her students and model respect for the students. Add to that a healthy dose of creativity and you have a dynamic classroom teacher.

Her success in the classroom has earned Brewer the “Instructional Excellence In Education Award” for teachers teaching students. The award recognizes members for outstanding contributions in instructional excellence with students.

Brewer, a member of the Tulsa Classroom Teachers Association, was nominated for her creative ways to help students remember Social Studies facts. An example of her creativity is her use of acronyms such as “RAPPS” that helps students remember “religion, assembly, petition, press and speech,” for the 1st Amendment.

Inspiration can come to Brewer at any time. Once in the middle of the night, an idea came to her that caused her to get out of bed and draw a picture to help her fourth graders remember the symbols on the Oklahoma State Seal.

A 13-year veteran, Brewer claims she loves teaching more each year. She believes the most important thing about teaching is to help children realize how important they are and to find their gifts.

“Teachers cannot be cookie cutters,” said Brewer, who teaches gifted and talented students at Tulsa's Waite Phillips Elementary. “We have to reach the children where they are and pull them forward.”

The payoff for Brewer as an educator comes when kids graduate and come back to see her and say, “I thought you were the hardest teacher, but I am so glad you made me learn.”



Teachers Teaching Teachers

Ginger Mendenhall works with student Liana Diaz at Tulsa's Marshall Elementary. Mendenhall's presentations stress understanding each student's learning style.

The bottom line for Mendenhall is the students.

“The number one goal of my workshop is to help educators become aware of how to reach each child and help him or her become a well-func-

tioning citizen in the world today,” she said. “As each teacher across the state is informed about teaching children through their learning style preference, everyone becomes successful as a learner and a teacher.”

Benson's Perseverance Protected Oklahoma's CareerTech System

By Patti Razien

In spite of a difficult struggle against political powers that tried to dismantle Oklahoma's premier career and technology education programs, Dr. Ann Benson persevered. Even when faced with sometimes overwhelming opposition, she maintained she was doing the right thing, and the state's CareerTech program survived.

Benson has been named winner of the OEA's Advocate for Academic Freedom Award for her contributions to CareerTech and for the well-being of public education.

Advocate for Academic Freedom Award

"I knew in my heart that it was the right thing to do," Benson said of her fight for the state's highly acclaimed vocational system. "You have to continue as long as you feel progress is being made in the right direction," she said.

Benson is immediate past director of the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education. She is a career educator who has served professionally in many educational

capacities.

"I like to think of myself as an educator first and a career education teacher second," Dr. Benson stated.

Her determination in the face of adversity is just one of the things that have earned her the admiration and respect of her peers. Because of her perseverance, core curriculum math and science credits are now recognized on student transcripts from career and technology classes that have core math and science embedded into their knowledge and skills curriculum.



Former State CareerTech Director
Ann Benson

While Dr. Benson is now enjoying her retirement, her accomplishments will not soon be forgotten. It is through the efforts of great leadership such as hers that we continue to grow and develop in the field of education.

Cache's Irene Runnells is Finalist for Teaching Excellence Award

By Bruce Treadaway

Cache's Irene Runnells has been chosen as Oklahoma's finalist for the NEA Foundation for the Improvement of Education's (NFIE) Foundation Award for Teaching Excellence.

Runnells has taught for 25 years, with stints in Kansas and Arizona before coming to Oklahoma. Her experience is rich in assistance to her schools and her local Association. In the past five years alone, she has received nine grants totaling \$546,540 for the betterment of Cache schools. Among her grants is the prestigious Christa McAuliffe Fellowship Grant, which brings with it a \$25,000 award. She has also served as Project Director for the Cache High Tech Connections, which brought a \$393,000 grant; and the ASTECH Assessment, a \$40,000 grant.

In addition, Runnells is a nationally certified high school English teacher and has made presentations at the OEA State Convention, the Governor's Conference on Employment of People with Disabilities, and at conferences for the Council for Exceptional Children, Career Tech, and the state Learning Disabilities

NEA Foundation for the Improvement of Education

Association of Oklahoma.

If Runnells is selected as the national NFIE award winner, she will receive a top prize of \$25,000, a plaque and national recognition. Four

runners-up will receive the Horace Mann-NEA Foundation Awards for Teaching Excellence, which includes a \$10,000 cash prize and an expenses-paid trip to the awards banquet in Washington, D.C.

What can first-year teachers learn from Runnells?

"The most important teaching tool is student engagement," she says. "Making sure that, as a teacher, you must keep education alive and interesting for yourself will certainly keep students engaged, interested and learning."

Zarrow Foundation Helps Schools Statewide

Continued From Page 1

specific interest in children's issues, the homeless and the poor. According to the "Oklahoma Foundation DataBook," the Zarrow Foundation has donated thousands of dollars to individuals for college tuition, as well as tens of thousands of dollars to common schools, private schools, colleges and various higher education scholarship funds.

Mr. Henry has lived in Tulsa all but the first six months of his life. He was born in Milwaukee to immigrant parents from Latvia, and started working in his father's grocery store at age 6. By the time he turned 13, he was operating his own grocery which he opened for business each morning by 6, closing in

time for school and reopening each afternoon until dusk.

His father encouraged Henry to learn something other than the grocery trade, so he went to work for a cousin in the pipe business. He quickly learned there was more money to be made in used pipe than groceries. He tried attending the University of Oklahoma, but the drive back and forth to work on weekends in Tulsa became too much. Mr. Henry transferred to the University of Tulsa, but the cost was too much for more than a semester. So, he gave up on college and turned his full attention to the pipe business, opening Sooner Pipe and Iron at the age of 22. That business became known as Sooner Pipe and Supply, a company that be-

came global in the 1960s.

Throughout his life, Mr. Henry has been known not only for his success in business but also for his generous heart. He has made charitable commitments before he knew how he would cover them, but he always did. Mr. Henry has said it was his wife Anne who has been the biggest influence on his charitable giving. She routinely gave him lists of "to-dos," which were actually assignments to help someone through an agency she had read about in the paper.

"Miss Anne" passed away two years ago, but Mr. Henry continues her legacy of helping others, as do their children Judy Kishner and Stuart Zarrow.

Crowder's Efforts as OEA President Worthy of Claude Dyer Memorial Award

By Stacy Martin

The Claude A. Dyer Memorial Award is given to a particularly meritorious Oklahoma teacher whose efforts have significantly advanced the salary, working conditions and civil rights protections of all Oklahoma educators.

For 2003, the worthy recipient of this award is Carolyn Crowder, who as president has led the Oklahoma

Education Association for the past six years.

A Guymon native, Crowder has been an Oklahoma vocal music and elementary educator for 20 years, most recently in the Mustang Public Schools.

As leader of the 40,000-member OEA, the state's largest educator organization, Crowder has been instrumental in bringing about positive

change for teachers and support professionals.

During her tenure, Oklahoma educators won the largest single salary increase in state history. In addition, she successfully led the fight for fully paid, individual health insurance.

Crowder was a key organizer of the Oklahoma Education Coalition, bringing together over a dozen, diverse education groups. The OEC uses its



Carolyn Crowder

considerable clout to lobby for pro-public education and against legislation detrimental to schools and their employees.

Crowder's lengthy service to education includes stints as Executive Vice President of Governance, National Council of State Education Associations and the NEA/AFT Advisory Committees.

She served on the NEA's Task Force on State Publications and its Task Force on Diversity.

At the state level, she has served as member of the OEA Board of Directors and chair of the OEA Bargaining and Instruction and Professional Development Committees. She was president and bargaining spokesperson for the Mustang Education Association as well as County Chair of the State Democratic Party. She was awarded the OEA Political Activist Award in 1996.

Crowder's term of office as OEA President extends through July, after which she may be celebrating her election to the NEA Executive Committee. That election is scheduled for July 3.

Crowder is a member of the Leadership Oklahoma Class of 1998-1999. She graduated cum laude from Southern Nazarene University and received a master's in elementary education from the University of Central Oklahoma.

Her husband Terry is a social studies teacher at Emerson Alternative High School in Oklahoma City.

Outstanding Communications Recognized

Marshall Gregory Awards

The Marshall Gregory Awards honor professional and student journalists for excellence in covering public education. Following are the professional division awards for 2003.

Professional Division Print, Exceptional Year-Round Coverage

Sonja Harris, Editor, *The Leader Tribune*, Laverne

Tippi Rasp, *Enid News and Eagle*, Enid, Series and Feature Stories

Helen Barrett, *Alva Review-Courier*, News Stories and Photojournalism

John & Faith Wylie and Carolyn Estes, Editor, *Oologah Lake Leader*

Jeff Packham, *Capitol Network News*, Oklahoma City, Series

Steve Bolton, *The Comanche Times*, News Stories

Heide Brandes, *The Midwest City Sun*, Exceptional Year-Round News Coverage

Brandon Johnson, *The Duncan Banner*, Exceptional Year-Round News Stories

Print, Single Event Coverage

Helen Barrett, *Alva Review-Courier*, News Story

Lynn Martin, *Alva Review-Courier*, Special Edition, and Editorial

Karen Anson, *The Seminole Producer*, News Story

Jeff Packham, *Oklahoma Education Today*, News Story

Broadcast, Year-Round Coverage

Ashli Sims, KOTV-6, Tulsa

Broadcast, Single Coverage

J.D. Taylor, DTV-10, Duncan, Editorial

Janna Clark, KOKI-Fox 23 News, Tulsa, News Story

Jeff Gould, KOKI-Fox 23 News, Tulsa, News Story

Robert Perkins, KOKI-Fox 23 News, Tulsa, Photojournalism

Doug Johnson, KOKI-Fox 23 News, Tulsa, Photojournalism

Golden Apple Awards

The Golden Apple Awards are presented to local Associations for outstanding internal and external communications efforts.

Exceptional Internal Communications, Newsletters

Professional Educators of Norman, *Pen Point*

Guthrie ACT, *GACT Newsletter*

McLoud ACT, *ACT Newsletter*

Enid EA, *EEA Advocate*

Sand Springs EA, *In Focus*

Edmond ACT, *EACT Insight*

Special Communications Projects

Mid-Del Association of Classroom Teachers, Scholarship Program

Mid-Del Association of Classroom Teachers, National Teachers' Day Reception

Professional Educators of Norman, Read Across America

Professional Educators Association of Lawton, PEAL Golf Tournament

Five Star Local Awards Program

The OEA 5 star local program is intended to strengthen local association programs and to recognize locals who meet the criteria in each program area.

5 Star Locals

Edmond Association of Classroom Teachers

Moore Association of Classroom Teachers

Professional Educators of Norman

McLoud Association of Classroom Teachers

Sand Springs Education Association

Professional Educators' Association of Lawton

Ponca City Association of Classroom Teachers

4 Star Local

Putnam City Association of Classroom Teachers –

Organizational Development, Advocacy, Teaching & Learning, and Communications

3 Star Local

Tulsa Classroom Teachers Association –

Advocacy, Communications, and Legislative & Political Organizing

2 Star Local

Enid Education Association –

Legislative & Political Organizing and Advocacy

1 Star Local

Frederick Association of Classroom Teachers –

Teaching & Learning

Bargaining Teams Should Look at Improving Language

By Doug Folks

No one will describe 2002-03 as a good year financially for education, and next year doesn't look any better. For bargaining teams around the state, the prospects of a successful negotiations year probably seem pretty slim.

But OEA advocacy specialist David Williams says local Association negotiators should not prejudge success based solely on money issues. There are a number of language items to consider that could strengthen a contract.

"A local is always better off communicating," said Williams, who works for the Oklahoma City Metro team. "Now is the time to concentrate on areas of the contract that a

local may not have dealt with much in the past. There is always language that can be improved."

As far as salary goes this year, Williams said step movement shouldn't be automatically dismissed as unattainable. But even without money discussions, there are three language areas in particular that may need attention.

- **Reduction in Force Policy** – RIFs seldom occur, but many districts have dealt with them this year. A local may need to revisit the policy and ask, "Did the RIF policy work fairly, and does it reflect current law?" Some districts have a clause in their policy that allows the administration a chance to protect certain positions from being affected by the RIF. Will-

iams said the OEA believes that is in violation of a recent court decision, but that no local has challenged the specific policy in court.

- **Transfers and Reassignments** – With layoffs and nonrenewal of temporary contracts creating openings around a district, what does the negotiated agreement say about filling those slots? Are members afforded equal opportunities to apply for vacancies or is the district making those decisions without giving employees a chance to apply for openings?

- **Grievances** – Does this area need to be cleaned up in your contract? Can your local file a grievance on behalf of the members or must an individual file the complaint?

"Our locals also have to be aware

of deadlines within the negotiated agreement," Williams said. "Either side must notify the other of intent to bargain by a certain date, or they lose that right to open negotiations. The local needs to make sure it knows what that deadline is."

He added that teacher and support locals should at least meet with board teams and agree on any date revisions in the negotiated agreement.

"Bargaining is a communications process," he said. "I believe education employees should look forward to opportunities to discuss working conditions with the administration."

Are there risks involved with opening bargaining? Williams says no.

"Either side can ask to bargain, so I have to believe that if a district is intent on taking something away, the district will be the one to open the talks," he said. "You go to the table to reach an agreement no matter what the subject, so there is no reason for a local not to open discussions."

Over 2,200 Education Employees Have Lost Their Jobs

By Doug Folks

The good news is there haven't been as many reductions in force (RIF) as OEA leaders first expected.

The bad news is that over 2,000 teachers and support professionals are losing their jobs. This is in addition to the 2,300 teachers and support professionals who lost jobs last year.

In addition to RIFs, schools are not renewing temporary contracts or filling positions vacated by retirements or voluntary resignations. The bottom line? Classes will be larger next year and the unemployment lines longer.

While final tallies of education job losses won't be known until sometime this summer, OEA research shows 1,971 teachers and 252 support professionals have already been notified their jobs will not be renewed for next year. Many smaller districts are laying off just one or two positions, but some are making drastic cuts.

"We've heard some legislators say

schools have enough money to keep doing what they've been doing, or even that there is no education funding crisis," said Carolyn Crowder. "I'd like those legislators to tell that to the 2,200 teachers and support professionals who are looking for a job in a state with a virtual hiring freeze in education."

In the **Northwest Region**, 30 of Chandler's 80 faculty members have been notified their jobs are being eliminated through a RIF. The district has also announced that it is eliminating all extra-duty contracts. The Chandler EA, working with OEA, is still trying to determine the true meaning and impact of that decision. Enid has eliminated 38 teaching positions, including 27 temporary contracts. Woodward has RIFed 11 teachers.

In the **Southeast Region**, Gore eliminated eight positions and North Rock Creek cut five and a half jobs. In McCloud, all five teachers who

were RIFed earlier have already been recalled.

Some **Southwest Region** schools have announced large layoffs. Little Axe eliminated 14 jobs, including the middle school art program and the elementary music program. Lawton has notified 132 teachers – all first, second and third year employees – they are being eliminated. In Norman, all 82 temporary contracts have been nonrenewed and another 12 vacancies from retirements are not being filled next year. Altus is not renewing 30 temporary contracts.

The numbers are astounding in the **Oklahoma City Metro Region** where the Oklahoma City district has notified 600 teachers they are losing their jobs. Midwest City-Del City is RIFing 62 positions and nonrenewing 126 temporary contracts. Moore has identified 65 teachers in its RIF and is not renewing another 25 temporary contracts. Edmond is eliminating 68

jobs. Putnam City is dropping 84.

In the **Tulsa Metro Region**, Tulsa Public Schools employed more than 3,000 teachers this year, but the state's largest district is not renewing the temporary contracts of 252 teachers. The cuts represent more than 8 percent of the faculty. Owasso will have 40-50 fewer positions next year, Broken Arrow is dropping 80 teachers, and Jenks is eliminating 56.

RIFs in the **Northeast Region** have eliminated 11 jobs at Oklahoma Union, Cave Springs have notified 11 teachers of a RIF, Chelsea has cut 13, and Pawhuska has laid off seven.

The numbers accumulated by OEA are neither complete nor official, but they do show the severe level of the financial crisis facing education in Oklahoma. It is expected that some districts will be able to recall at least a few of the professionals who have lost their positions.



Dealing With the Iraqi War In the Classroom

Kathryn Shafer's 3rd graders (left, with Kathryn) have sent care packages to local soldiers serving in the Persian Gulf, including SPC W.A. Peetoom (below) in Kuwait. He is the son of Ann Peetoom, Shattuck's special education teacher.

Talk of Summer Overshadows War

By Patti Razien

The war in Iraq is a subject that really doesn't come up too often in Kathryn Shafer's 3rd grade class at Shattuck Elementary. Their concerns are mainly about class assignments and what they're going to do when school's out for the summer.

"Sometimes a student will have seen a news report the night before and want to know why those people are so upset. We mainly discuss the fact that the people in Iraq don't have the same freedoms we have so our soldiers are over there to help them

gain their freedom," said Shafer, president of Ellis County EA. "They can understand about not having the freedoms, so I can openly discuss that with them."

Shattuck special education teacher Ann Peetoom has a son, SPC W.A. Peetoom, serving in Kuwait. Shafer's students sent a care package to him in early March consisting of beef jerky, candies, razors, sports magazines and a copy of the local newspaper so he could keep up on the latest local news. They recently learned that after almost a month he

had received the package.

There are at least nine other soldiers serving in this war from the Shattuck area that Mrs. Shafer's class and other elementary classes, have begun writing. However, there is not a daily discussion about the war.

"Most of the kids in my class talk to their parents if they have questions about what's going on in Iraq," said Shafer.

At this age it seems the problems of the world are not as much of a concern as the worry over how many more days 'til school's out.



OKC Teacher's Call Up Brings War Close to Home

By Bruce Treadaway

The War in Iraq has hit too close to home for the students and faculty at Rockwood Elementary in Oklahoma City. One of their own – fifth-grade teacher Terry R. Haines – was called up to active duty March 17.

"On the surface, it doesn't appear that we've been impacted by Terry's absence," said Gilbert Oliver, Rockwood principal and a former soldier himself. "The students have had a lot of questions about where he is and when he'll be back. The kids he dealt with are resilient and strong. They've dealt with it and accept it. They appreciate the fact that he's do-

ing what he is doing."

Oliver said the staff already misses Haines and have talked about sending "goody packages" to him.

"Terry is committed and true to his call," he said. "He accepted his responsibility readily."

Haines' wife, Zelma, said Terry was first called to duty for a few days in February but was then sent home.

"It seems that Oklahoma didn't have enough money to keep his unit at Fort Sill," said Zelma, who teaches at Robin Hill Elementary north of Norman. "He was called up and sent back so many times that he had exhausted his sick leave. It was at this

point that Terry decided it was better for his students if he didn't go back to his teaching assignment."

Terry, a 23-year-veteran of the classroom, is now assigned full time to his unit at Fort Sill and expects to ship out for the Middle East on May 9, according to his wife.

"He actually got his first paycheck from the military and it was about what a substitute teacher makes in Oklahoma," Zelma said. "The way it works out now that he is official is that the school will pay him for 30 days of military leave. It will be very tough financially on us now that Terry

will be gone for an indeterminate period of time."

Zelma talks with Terry nightly but the communication with him will be much less frequent after he reaches his next assignment.

"He thought about getting a cell phone, but he was told he could be targeted in Iraq when he used it so that was out. He will get to use e-mail or the phone once a month," she said.

Terry has been counseling many of the younger soldiers, she added. "Since so many of the younger soldiers have babies, he has been a steadying influence on them."



AP History teacher Jennifer Seal says students who are anti-war are generally more vocal about their positions and better educated about the ramifications of war.

High Schoolers' Feelings Run the Gamut of Emotions

By Doug Folks

When it comes to America's war on Iraq, the emotions of Putnam City North history students hit both ends of the spectrum, said history teacher Jennifer Seal. Ironically, classroom debates have not been overly heated.

"We have kids that say we need to go in there and nuke them, and we have kids (making) arm bands protesting the war and wearing them around school," she said.

"We've not had a lot of heated debate (about the war), like we've had about gun control or abortion," Seal said. "I think that's because the war hasn't touched their lives. It's all over the television news, but these kids have cable. They have hundreds of other channels to choose."

Seal said those students with anti-war beliefs are more vocal than those supporting the effort in Iraq.

"From my perspective, the students who are against the war are educated about the ramifications," she said. "They've gone out to the Internet and done some research."

Seal has a unique perspective on the war in that she has a heritage connection to the region. Born in Iran, the fourth-year teacher was adopted as an infant by Americans who had moved to the Middle Eastern country. With the fall of the Shah in 1979, she and her family left Tehran for Oklahoma. She teaches Advanced Placement and regular U.S. History courses and team-teaches an American Studies class, which combines history and English.

Her American Studies students must bring three current events to class each day. About two-thirds of those articles have been war-related since the war began, she said.

War in Iraq Distracts Middle Schoolers

By Jeff Savage

It is difficult to keep 8th grade American History students focused on the Civil War when the present war in Iraq is being played out every day on television, says Linda Arnett of Fort Gibson Middle School.

Her students remember the terrorist attack of 9-11, which removed some of the security they felt at home. Arnett remembers the time when she was a student and air raid drills were more common than tornado or fire drills.

The Iraq War is personal to approximately one-fifth of the students in her class because they have a family member or someone close to them in the military.

"Students want to be reassured and they bring their worries to school," stated Arnett.

Arnett ties the Iraq War to the Civil War in classroom discussions. The Jessica Lynch story stirred students to discuss going eight days without food. Arnett directed the students to pictures in the textbook of Civil War

prisoners at Andersonville and how malnourished they were.

Another recent discussion centered on antiwar protesters and their rights under the first amendment. When students ask for her opinion, Arnett is careful to help the students see all sides of an issue.

"You have to be careful not to go against family beliefs sometimes," said Arnett.

Her students are influenced most by their parents regarding their beliefs about the war. The student's views have shifted from a "war about oil" to liberation of the people of Iraq. Arnett says she is seeing a newfound respect by her students for the American flag and freedom we enjoy.



Fort Gibson's Linda Arnett says her students' opinions of the war are shaped by their parents. Since the conflict began, she has seen a newfound respect for freedom.

Laws Protect Teacher Jobs While on Active Military Duty



Heath Merchen

By Heath Merchen
OEA Associate General Counsel

Over the past year, hundreds of teachers who serve their country through the reserves have been called into active duty. Fortunately, the vast majority of school districts has recognized their legal and patriotic responsibilities to these employees and will ensure that their return to work is unhindered.

However, if you or a loved one are returning from duty to a district that fails to recognize its responsibility, it is important to know your rights.

70 O.S. §6-105 (C) ensures that teachers are paid for the first 30 days of military leave and also guarantees them a leave of absence for the period of active service, (generally up to five years and even longer when the

employee cannot obtain a release from service). Hence, school districts must hold the job open while the employee is on military leave, hiring substitutes to perform the work if necessary. Remember, however, that the law requires employees to provide employers with advance notice of military service, if possible. While oral notice is sufficient under the law, we recommend notifying your employer in writing.

Additionally, 72 O.S. § 48 provides that political subdivisions, including school districts, may elect to pay employees the difference between their regular salary and their military pay for the duration of the employee's leave. Check your negotiated agreement to see if your district is required to make these payments — if not, it

may be an issue worth raising in bargaining when your contract reopens.

In addition to the above state statutes, the federal Employment and Re-employment Rights of Members of the Uniformed Services Act (ERRMUSA) protects military personnel, including reservists, from discriminatory hiring practices, refusals to promote and/or failures to properly advance on the salary/benefit schedule. The law also guarantees reemployment in the same manner as the above Oklahoma statutes. Under the ERRMUSA, any person who believes his or her employer has violated the Act must report the violation to the Secretary of Labor, who will investigate the allegations. Following the investigation, the Secretary of Labor may initiate an enforcement proceed-

ing through the Attorney General or the individual may file suit.

For our members, OEA legal services can assist in filling out the Department of Labor complaint forms and can also represent members in subsequent litigation if the Secretary of Labor is unsuccessful in resolving the dispute.

OEA believes that it is of the utmost importance to ensure that our teachers in uniform can serve their country secure in the knowledge that the jobs they left behind await them when they return home. If you or someone you know is being penalized by a district due to military service, be sure to call your OEA advocate as soon as possible.

Golf Tourney Offers Great Prize

A brand new Harley-Davidson motorcycle is one of the prizes to be offered at the second annual Professional Educators Association of Lawton (PEAL) golf scramble on May 31.

A hole-in-one on a designated par 3 will win the player a 2003 V-Rod Harley-Davidson. Cash team prizes and awards for the longest drive will also be presented.

Proceeds from the tournament will purchase supplies for Lawton teachers to help offset their out-of-pocket expenses for classroom supplies.

Entry fees are \$50 per person and the tournament is limited to the first 18, four-player teams to enter. Teams must carry a combined 30 handicap.

For a registration form or for more information, call Judy Runnells, PEAL president, at 580/355-9465.

An Invitation

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OEA Members Win Prestigious Honors

As the 2002-03 school year rolls to a conclusion, several OEA members are being honored with prestigious awards from a variety of scholarly organizations.

The Mathematical Association of America (MAA) tapped three OEA members with its annual Outstanding Math Teachers prize: Putnam City's **Monique Reed**, Stillwater's **Judy Ferrell** and Norman's **Laniel L. Gibson**.

Every year, the Oklahoma/Arkansas Section of the MAA selects three Oklahoma teachers who exhibit qualities most desirable of math teachers. One honoree is selected each year from the elementary, middle and high school levels.

Reed is a 12-year veteran who teaches 7th and 8th grade math at Putnam City Central Middle School. She is very active in the Putnam City ACT on multiple levels.

Parents say Reed is a strong believer in making her subject relevant to her students' lives.

"I overheard my twins talking while doing their homework," said Lee Ann McCullough, whose children are students of Reed's. "What was this strange sound I heard while they were doing math? Laughter! They seemed to be doing some kind of financial analysis on their favorite music artists. They were freely using terms such as 'gross profit' and 'percentages.' They were understanding math in language a teenager understands."

A 26-year National Board Certified educator, Norman High's Laniel L. Gibson is highly committed to teaching excellence, both in himself and others. He has received other outstanding teacher awards from such institutions as Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cornell and Princeton Univer-

sities and the University of Chicago.

Colleagues describe him as someone who always takes time to mentor others and otherwise help them develop as teachers.

"Lenny's unique abilities include being a mentor to students, an exemplary teacher, a respected mathematics

teacher in the state of Oklahoma, a reader for the Advanced Placement program and computer "lifesaver" for all of us," said Norman High principal Lynn Chesley.

Ferrell, a 5th grade teacher at Stillwater's Sangre Ridge

See "Niblack Wins" on Page 16

Ed Fair Applications Due May 15

OEA members have until May 15 to apply for a spot in next fall's Ed Fair at the State Convention in Tulsa.

The Ed Fair was a new addition to the convention last year. Participants receive a \$300 stipend, lodging at the host hotel and special recognition in the convention program issue of "The Education Focus."

In turn, Ed Fair participants staff a booth in the convention hall during the day, telling visitors about a favorite lesson plan, teaching strategy or class project.

The Convention is set for October 16 at the Tulsa Convention Center. The downtown Doubletree Hotel will serve as convention headquarters.

Interested members can visit www.oeka.org/Convention/edfairgrant.htm for an application. It should be sent to Debby Stine, OEA Northwest Regional Office, 2315 Downs Ave., Woodward, OK 73801 by May 15. For more information, call Debby at 800/439-0393 or 580/256-0071, or e-mail her at dstine@oeka.org.

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You Decide

This issue's question:
"Should athletics be moved outside the regular class day?"

A monthly column of member opinion.

Athletics During Class Day Is More Beneficial

By Jay Solomon

Highland West Junior High, Moore

Having competitive athletics during the school day has become a hot topic in recent years. This is really a simple issue. If athletics is beneficial to kids, then it should be offered during the school day. If not, schools should not offer it at all.

Numerous studies have shown that

kids involved in extracurricular activities lead a better quality of life, both in school and after graduation. These students are less inclined to do drugs, be in gangs, get pregnant or drop out of school. These studies



obviously show that you want as many kids as possible involved in activities, yet after school athletics produces the exact opposite result. Every school that has moved athletics after school had fewer kids involved than

when it was offered as a class. This occurs for different reasons, including the student needing to work. Kids with less than strong parental support at home find it easier to get on the bus and go home, and these are the kids that really need to be involved.

Some say that kids should spend

that time in an academic class instead of athletics. However students often take an extra art class, P.E., office aide or other elective instead of a core class. This does nothing to further academics. The reality is that kids involved in athletics still have to pass to play so they have an incentive to perform in the classroom. Other extracurricular activities are offered during the school day and athletes should be given the same chance to participate. Athletics has a positive impact on a great number of kids, and they should be encouraged to participate, not be given a reason not to participate.

Academics Come First, Sports After School

By Judy Runnells

Tomlinson Junior High, Lawton

In the past 18 years as a math teacher at Tomlinson Junior High in Lawton, I've had lots of experience working with students that participate in competitive sports. Fortunately, I've worked with some outstanding coaches that share my philosophy that academics come first.

Coming from a person that participated in basketball, volleyball, softball, and track and field events, and now as a teacher, I feel athletics should be moved outside the regular class day.

At Tomlinson, we have fifty minute class periods. By the time students get to the gym, change clothes, participate in sports, shower and get dressed to return to their next class, they are lucky if they have thirty-five minutes of good workout time. For most kids, that's just enough exercise to make them sluggish in their classes

afterwards. Students are constantly being asked to sit up and pay attention.

Students are motivated by sports. If both the teachers and coaches let the students know that academics is the number one priority, students will stay focused on their core subjects because they do not want to miss out on practice after school. Students will actually be more productive during their time in class, allowing them extra time to spend on sports after school.

After all, sports are an extracurricular activity and should be moved outside the regular class day.



Next Issue's Question:

"Should schools open after September 1?"

Columns should be 250-300 words. E-mail your responses to

Patti Razien at prazien@okea.org or mail them to her at OEA Northwest Office, 2315 Downs Ave., Woodward, OK, 73801. The deadline is May 30.



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Niblack Wins A Pair of History Awards



Claremore High School's Tracy Niblack and Allen Dotson.

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Elementary School, is a 16-year veteran of the classroom. She is very active in curriculum development, mentoring nontenured teachers and hands-on learning techniques.

“It was Mrs. Ferrell's influence that enhanced and encouraged me to apply and succeed in my mathematical studies,” said one of Ferrell's former students, Kenneth Ross. “My mathematical foundation has provided me the ability to understand and apply principles in technology education, visual design, advanced mathematics and science classes.

Claremore's Niblack Lands History Awards

Tracy Niblack was the recipient of two Stuart & Lorton Indian Territory awards for Excellence in Teaching Oklahoma History. The two honors bring \$5,000 in collective cash awards for classroom use. She said she intends to purchase an LCD projector, a classroom computer and wall paint with the funds.

The awards are given by the Okla-

homa Heritage Association. Their purpose is to emphasize the importance of Oklahoma history by recognizing teaching excellence.

Niblack, who teaches Oklahoma History and geography at Claremore High School, credits the history teachers she had when she was young for inspiring her. In particular, while in high school, she had a teacher who made history come alive for her. Niblack said that if students learn just one important concept from her class, she wants it to be that history is everywhere, every single day.

Norman's Loeffler Wins Medal of Excellence

Norman educator **Ruth Loeffler** won the Medal for Excellence in Secondary Teaching, given by the Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence.

Loeffler, a 32-year educator, teaches English and Western Civilization at Norman High School. She specializes in remedial reading. While teaching, she continued her own education, earning both a second master's degree and a doctoral degree in reading education.

She championed reading education through the Norman Arts and Humanities Council, greatly expanding two programs, “Arts in Education” and “Readers and Writers.” She also helped her students start a literary magazine, “SOUPSTONE.”

“There is a bond of trust that evolves among students who write poetry or journals together and read to each other,” Loeffler said. “Our young people need that experience.”

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