

OEA

An affiliate of the
National Education Association

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The Education Focus

For the membership of the Oklahoma Education Association

April 2005

A furry flurry of reading

Catavans visit schools statewide

With the Cat in the Hat, Sam I Am and a Thing 1 or 2 crisscrossing the state, Oklahoma was a furry flurry of reading activity in early March.

The Dr. Seuss characters, known in their "normal" lives as members of the Oklahoma Education Association staff, were part of the OEA Catavans that brought the joy of reading to more than 40,000 students.

The performing troupes are part of OEA's celebration of Read Across America (RAA), which encourage students and parents to read in honor of Theodor Geisel, better known as Dr. Seuss. For seven years, OEA staff and elected leaders have read and laughed and sang with children around the Sooner State, all for the joy of reading.

This year was no different!

The Catavans made major stops at Ada, Arnett, Deer Creek, Duncan, El Reno, Empire, Hilldale, Hulbert, Jenks, Marlow, Norman, Sallisaw, Sand Springs, Southern Nazarene University, Tannehill, Tahlequah, Tulsa, Watonga, and Western Heights.

OEA President Roy Bishop and Vice President Becky Felts administered the Reader's Oath during most of the stops. NEA Secretary/Treasurer Lilly Eskelsen was also on hand at Tulsa Union's Boevers Elementary.

In addition to performing at the schools, OEA staff donated more than

See "Reading" on Page 2



Sam I Am and Thing 2 (aka OEA Teaching and Learning Specialists Sharon Moore and Debby Stine, respectively), share a secret during a performance in El Reno. More than 40,000 Oklahoma school children were entertained during OEA's celebration of Read Across America in late February and early March.

"This is the best day of my life!"

By Doug Folks

It may be rare to change another person's life in just one day, but that is just what members of the Student Oklahoma Education Association (SOEA) did in early March.

SOEA adopted Willow Brook Elementary and spent a day cleaning, repairing, painting and landscaping. The day of work, fashioned after the National Education Association's "Outreach to Teach," transformed Willow Brook not only physically but its spirit as well.

"One of our little girls told the principal, 'This is the best day of my life,'" said Terry Crowder, an OEA member and Willow Brook's instructional facilitator. Crowder worked with the SOEA to organize the one-day adoption.

Willow Brook is an inner city school in far east Oklahoma City. It has been on the low-performing list, but made strides last year to improve and hopes to be off the list for good after this spring's tests are graded. Physically, the school had a long list of items

See "SOEA gives" on Page 6

The true nature of OEA members

By Roy Bishop
OEA President

We live in a society where the news centers on the sensational. It's not uncommon to turn on your television or pick up a daily paper and read about all the things that are bad in our lives. However, since our last *Education Focus* issue we've had some tremendous examples of people who have made differences in children's lives. Some of them have received media coverage, others have not. I'd like to share some of their stories with you.

Janice Arrington, an OEA member

Reading challenge wraps up RAA

Continued from Page 1

2,000 books to the schools' libraries. The books were provided by the Christmas Connection, which has now donated more than 20,000 books through the OEA to public schools.

A celebration at the Oklahoma Museum of Natural History on March 2 culminated Oklahoma's RAA where over 300 winners of the Reading Challenge were recognized. Students in the Moore, Midwest City-Del City and Putnam City school districts participated in the Reading Challenge, reading over 101,000 books. Dillard's, Staples and Saturn of Oklahoma City partnered with the OEA to sponsor the event on Dr. Seuss's 101st birthday.

RAA activities were also conducted at Crossroads, Quail Springs, Heritage Park, and Shawnee Malls. The OEA RAA characters were enthusiastically greeted at each of these locations, and the leaders of the Moore ACT, Mid-Del ACT, Edmond ACT and the Shawnee ACT coordinated the events.

at Mark Twain Elementary School in Duncan, and two of her colleagues are credited with saving the life of Trevor Frost. Trevor was having trouble breathing in class. When he came to Arrington and told her that it was getting worse, she took him to the office where he lost consciousness and stopped breathing. Because Janice, Principal JoAnn Pierce and teacher's aide Teresa Benson had received CPR training, they were able to immediately put the measures in practice. Their quick action saved Trevor's life.

Working together, a teacher, an administrator and a support professional saved the life of a student. These educators were paid the highest honor by Trevor's father when he said, "Man, they're heroes; they are absolute heroes."

On Page 11 of this issue, you will get to read about OEA member Tammy Long, an elementary teacher from Bridge Creek, whose class is spearheading efforts to address fitness, health and nutrition in their community.

With health issues becoming a major concern in our schools, Tammy is helping increase her students' awareness of their health needs. She is making a difference in the lives of those around her.

The great news continues with our annual Read Across America Catavans, whose Dr. Seuss characters performed in front of thousands of Oklahoma students. The OEA staff and teacher volunteers from all over

our state shared their love of reading through Dr. Seuss' books. The smiles on kids' faces and the joy we heard in their voices as they told us how much they love to read is the program's true measure of success.

The next exciting story took place on March 5 when I had the pleasure to watch true community service in action at Willow Brook Elementary in Oklahoma City. It was at Willow Brook where members from the Student OEA, Tinker Air Force Base personnel, students from the Classen High School of Advanced Studies, and OEA staff and elected leaders volunteered their time and talents to help beautify a local school.

Future teachers from all over the state of Oklahoma spent their day painting playground equipment and curbs, fixing basketball goals, smoothing out rough spots in the asphalt, planting shrubbery, and painting wonderful murals inside the school.

These college students sought donations of paint, supplies and cash to help pay for new equipment that could be used on the playground. The difference they made at Willow Brook was exemplified by students who commented to their teachers that "someone really



President Roy Bishop

cares about us."

The next day, at the annual SOEA student conference, many of the future teachers were excited about what was happening in their profession as our state has continued to restore respect and pride to the profession in the areas of salaries. These students – who represent the future of our profession – are now looking positively on our state and many of them will be interviewing for jobs here.

These are just a few examples that demonstrate the true nature of OEA members. There are many similar stories that we don't hear about, but they too represent everything that is right with the teaching profession and the OEA.

NEA Secretary/Treasurer visits Sapulpa



NEA Secretary-Treasurer Lily Eskelsen (right) was the keynote speaker at the annual Teacher of the Year Banquet for Sapulpa Schools, which was sponsored by the Sapulpa United Educators (SUE) on March 1. SUE President Del Patterson (left) emceed the event that recognized the district's support person of the year, teacher of the year, building level teacher of the year nominees, and national board certified recipients. Both OEA President Roy Bishop (second from left) and OEA Vice President Becky Felts (second from right) attended the event.

OEA

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Governor appoints Ball to Lottery Commission

By Doug Folks

If the state's new lottery is expected to live up to all of its promises of helping education, it only makes sense that a teacher be part of the initial planning.

Governor Brad Henry agreed and in late February appointed Muskogee's Cindy Ball to the Oklahoma Lottery Commission. It is the Commission's immediate job to hire an executive director and establish rules and guidelines that will create the state's lottery system.

The Education Lottery was overwhelmingly approved by state voters during last November's election. Proceeds from the lottery will benefit common education and provide money for scholarships to state colleges and universities.

"I was very surprised when the governor called during the Christmas holidays and asked me to serve on the

Lottery Commission," said Ball, a teacher at Sadler Arts Academy and a former state teacher of the year.

"I was honored and apprehensive. I know absolutely nothing about putting together a lottery, but few people in Oklahoma do," she said.

Ball said it was no coincidence that a teacher was appointed to the Commission.

"To Governor Henry it was very important that a teacher be on the Commission," she said.

The law requires that the Commission include an attorney, a professional with marketing experience and an accountant. The governor appointed two people with education backgrounds. In addition to Ball, he picked Dr. Linda Dzialo, a former assistant superintendent, principal and classroom teacher

in Lawton Public Schools and former vice president of student affairs at Cameron University.

Other appointees to the commission include:

- Ron Norick, manager of Norick Investment Company and former mayor of Oklahoma City;
- James Orbison, Tulsa attorney and former chair of the Oklahoma Transportation Authority;
- William Paul, Oklahoma City attorney and former director of the Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce;
- George R. Charlton, Jr., owner of Charlton Investments, Charlton Construction Company, Charlton Catering and Tulsa-area Subway Sandwich Shops and a two-time Minority Retailer of the Year; and
- Thomas F. Riley Jr., Stillwater

businessman and CPA, and executive vice president and CEO of Chickasaw Telecommunications.

By mid-March, the Lottery Commission had met twice and divided itself into two committees. One group will serve as the search committee for a full-time executive director. Ball is a member of the Structure and Operations Committee, which must find an office and purchase everything needed to run that office.

"We don't even own a copying machine," Ball said.

"The people on the board are terrific," she added. "We're doing everything that we can think of to ensure this lottery will be run with integrity."

According to the governor's office, the Commission hopes to offer scratch off games by October or November. The traditional electronic lottery, complete with drawings and large cash prizes, will come several months later, with the state ultimately considering participation in multi-state games.

It is estimated that the Education Lottery will raise \$150 million a year for education after prizes have been paid.

Defeat of misnamed HB 1620 is early victory

By Stacy Martin

The high point of the 2005 Legislative session's start was a superb effort by the Oklahoma Education Association and its loyal member lobbyists in striking down House Bill

1620. This bill would have made teachers more vulnerable to firing and severely limited their recourse options.

Had the bill passed, terminated career teachers could not appeal unjust firings to district court for an objective appeal.

"The defeat of HB 1620 reflects just the first step in our strategy to protect teachers' rights during the 2005 Legislature," said OEA President Roy Bishop. "And it is by far one of the most important victories we plan to pursue."

One local that rallied for the cause was the Tulsa Classroom Teachers Association. Across the state, many

of Oklahoma's local affiliates similarly mobilized quickly, recognizing the magnitude of the crisis.

"Obviously, (HB) 1620 was a travesty of justice towards teachers," said TCTA President Steve Stockley. "This was critical. So we tried to do our part.

"Sometimes what you help kill is more important than what you help pass."

TCTA was just one local that marshaled the help of hundreds of members, inundating the Oklahoma Legislature with phone calls, emails and personal visits opposing the bill. TCTA sent legislative liaison Lynn Stockley to the State Capitol in Okla-

homa City to represent their opposition.

While the killing of HB 1620 was a major victory, many challenges remain for OEA staff and member lobbyists.

"We believe that common sense modifications will prevail on this issue," said Bishop. "What we don't want is for our members or the public to be misled regarding protecting teachers. HB 1620 can be more aptly described as assaulting teachers, in the legal sense."

Like a harmful phoenix, an incarnation of the so-called "Educator Protection Act" (HB 2033) has risen from the ashes of the 2004 legislative session (see the *From Your Counsel* column on

"What we don't want is for our members or the public to be misled regarding protecting teachers. HB 1620 can be more aptly described as assaulting teachers, in the legal sense."

OEA President Roy Bishop

Page 4). It is just one of several legislative proposals whose name depicts the opposite of its true effect: It would shift more lawsuit vulnerability onto teachers and off of other groups and individuals.

As is always the case, advancing the OEA legislative agenda is the overarching priority for 2005. A top priority is achieving blended health insurance rates for retired and retiring educators this year without causing hardship for active teachers.

The goal of OEA's legislative agenda in this regard will be to bring health insurance relief to retired educators at minimal additional cost to the state of Oklahoma.

"This would be a victory for both active and retired teachers," said Bishop. "After a long career of dedicated service to Oklahoma, retired

See "Salary increases" on Page 14

Legislative sophistry

By Richard Wilkinson
OEA General Counsel

Once again, some of our elected representatives are suggesting that proposed legislation will “protect teachers from frivolous lawsuits,” and once again, those claims are wholly unsupported by the specific language in the proposed legislation. In fact, the supposed “protections” actually increase the possibility of liability for an education employee.

In response to this legislation and similar proposals, the following email was sent on March 2, 2005, to Randy Beutler, Legislative Liaison for Governor Brad Henry, which sets forth the OEA’s position regarding this issue:

Randy,

Bruce Hunt asked that I contact you regarding inclusion of language in a bill that has been labeled, among other things, the “Teacher Protection Act.” This language has, in some form or another, been introduced in bills starting with the 2003 legislative session and we have serious concerns with some of the language contained in the various bills that we have reviewed since 2003.

Initially, you should be aware that the initial version of the Teacher Protection Act was “boilerplate” legislation recommended by the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) and was introduced in a bill without editing in 2003. Several versions of this bill have since evolved and some of the initial provisions contained in the recommended ALEC legislation remain in the current bills introduced this session.

I am aware of two current bills that have a version of the ALEC language. HB 2033 references the “Educator Protection Act” and HB 2047 references the “Education Quality and Protection Act.” Both of these bills have substantially the same language and our concern about the alleged “protections” applies to both of these bills.

Our primary concern is that we believe these bills create liabilities for educators that do not exist under current law. The Oklahoma Governmental Tort Claims Act (OGTCA) currently governs the personal liability of educators and these bills have the effect of diminishing those protections – and increasing the possibility of liability for an

educator. Specifically, this legislation creates personal liability for “gross negligence” where none currently exists and creates the potential for liability when administering discipline if the action violated an “express law, rule, regulation or clearly articulated policy of the state or educational entity or constituted gross negligence” – conditions for immunity from liability that do not currently exist in the OGTCA as long as the employee is acting within the scope of their employment.

We have other concerns about both of these bills that are too numerous to mention in an email. I have attached copies of two memoranda that were prepared by our office for submission to legislators and which deal with both versions of this issue that have been introduced, both last year and this year.

I am scheduled to meet with Senator Laster next Monday [meeting occurred Monday, March 7, 2005] to express our concerns and opposition to both of these bills. If there is truly a problem that exists and which is not addressed by the OGTCA, I can suggest a very simple solution by amending Section 155 of the OGTCA (Exemptions from Liability) which would address these perceived

problems without diminishing the immunities that currently exist in the OGTCA and in the Oklahoma School Code (Title 70 of the Oklahoma Statutes). I will discuss those alternatives with Senator Laster when I meet with him and would be happy to discuss them further with you.

In summary, our position is that the current versions of the “Teacher Protection Act” that have been introduced in legislation this year do not offer the protections claimed by the bills, diminish the current protections offered by the OGTCA, create ambiguities that

“The ideological zeal for supposed ‘tort reform’ is the genesis for the misnomer ‘Teacher Protection’ legislation. . .”

General Counsel Richard Wilkinson

will need to be litigated, are very poorly drafted, and are simply bad bills. I encourage you to review the above and the attached memoranda and should you have additional questions or wish to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact me ... at your convenience.

Thanks,
Richard Wilkinson
OEA General Counsel

One can only assume that supporters of the proposed legislation have



General Counsel Richard Wilkinson

read just a bill title and not the specific provisions of the proposed legislation. Otherwise, you would have to assume that they lack a complete understanding of the immunities and protections from liability for education employees that exist under current law.

The ideological zeal for supposed “tort reform” is the genesis for the misnomer “Teacher Protection” legislation that has been introduced the last two legislative sessions. Despite criticism from other groups – even those that purport to represent the interests of education employees – we will continue our efforts to ensure that existing statutory protections are not diminished by these misleading proposals.

FMCS acting director to provide keynote

Scot Beckenbaugh, acting director of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS) in Washington, D.C., will provide the keynote address at the OEA’s 2005 Advocacy Conference.

A wide variety of workshops will also be offered at the conference, April 8-9 at the Waterford Marriott Hotel in Oklahoma City. The conference registration deadline is April 1.

The Advocacy Conference is one of the OEA’s most popular events. It provides members with training for bargaining and protecting member rights, and includes sessions for certified and support professionals.

“This conference has a great deal of information for bargaining locals, but the beauty of the Advocacy Con-

ference is that members from all types of local Associations can find something useful,” said Roy Bishop, OEA president.

A presentation by Bishop and Executive Director Lela Odom will open the conference at 7:30 p.m. Friday, April 8, in the Waterford Ballroom.

Also on Friday evening, Susan Kelly, president of Microsearch, will demonstrate the new web-based site for searching collective bargaining agreements that is part of the OEA’s Adequacy and Equity Project.

Beckenbaugh’s keynote address will start Saturday’s slate of events. His presentation will be followed by breakout sessions at 10:30 a.m., 1 p.m.

and 2:30 p.m.

Registration to this OEA members-only conference is \$25 for certified employees and \$10 for support professionals, with the third person from the same local Association attending free. The fee includes all conference materials, continental breakfast and lunch on Saturday the 9th.

Members may register online at www.okea.org/AdvocacyConference.

Lodging reservations are the responsibility of the conferee. Reservations can be made by calling the Waterford at 800/992-2009 or 405/848-4782.

For more information, contact Melanie Engh at 800/522-8091, 405/528-7785 or by email at mengh@okea.org.

Building stronger ties

MACT helps local businesses adopt Moore schools

By Stacy Martin

The Moore Association of Classroom Teachers is building stronger ties among Moore and south Oklahoma City businesses and Moore Public Schools to create better learning opportunities for the school district's teachers and students.

MACT recently received a financial boost to accomplish its mission. The

ACT was among 25 winners nationwide selected for a prestigious \$5,000 National Education Association urban grant award. The local affiliate, along with its leaders and members, will utilize the grant to increase the size and scope of community outreach efforts to better serve the Moore Public School community.

MACT will focus on two initiatives.

First, in partnership with the Moore Schools, MACT will strengthen community outreach through the annual fall Education Extravaganza. The extravaganza serves as an opportunity for teachers, support professionals, administrators and local business partners to come together to discuss ways to restore public confidence in public education and identify community outreach opportunities.

Secondly, MACT will partner with the Moore Chamber of Commerce and Moore Public Schools to build on the success of the community's Adopt-A-School program. The goal will be to attract even greater numbers of organizations adopting Moore schools.

Moore Schools are always looking for more partners to adopt them because the needs are so great. Thus, the goal will be to at least double the ranks of adopting businesses.

NEA selected MACT for the highly competitive grant based on the strength of its proposal to create stronger public, parental and business support for public education.

"We are extremely proud that MACT was chosen for this honor," said Oklahoma Education Association president Roy Bishop. "This local affiliate is known for working tirelessly to support the efforts of its members in providing the best learning opportunities for Moore students.

"Building community ties creates an environment that promotes student achievement and helps teachers become more successful in accomplishing their goals."

Businesses adopting schools can participate in school communities in myriad ways, both large and small. Some efforts involve donations of products, materials or funds. Others involve donations of labor, time, talent, and tutoring, just to name a few.

"There is a misconception that our partners must give large amounts of time or money," said Jill Dudley,

MACT president. "That isn't true. Schools are grateful and appreciative for any assistance. Taken together, the help they give adds up tremendously."

The NEA Urban Initiatives Unit administers the program and looks for proposals that contribute to restoring public confidence in public education by reflecting strategic priorities designed to achieve that goal.

"I would urge other local associations in Oklahoma to boost community outreach through NEA grant programs," said Dudley. "OEA staff members stand ready to help locals through the grant application process.

"It's a great process and it's not hard. Businesses can give what they feel they can give. No gift of time or effort is too small or goes unappreciated."

Southern Financial Group in Moore is just one of many businesses building ties to Moore Schools – an effort that has become a joy for representative Tricia Henderson.

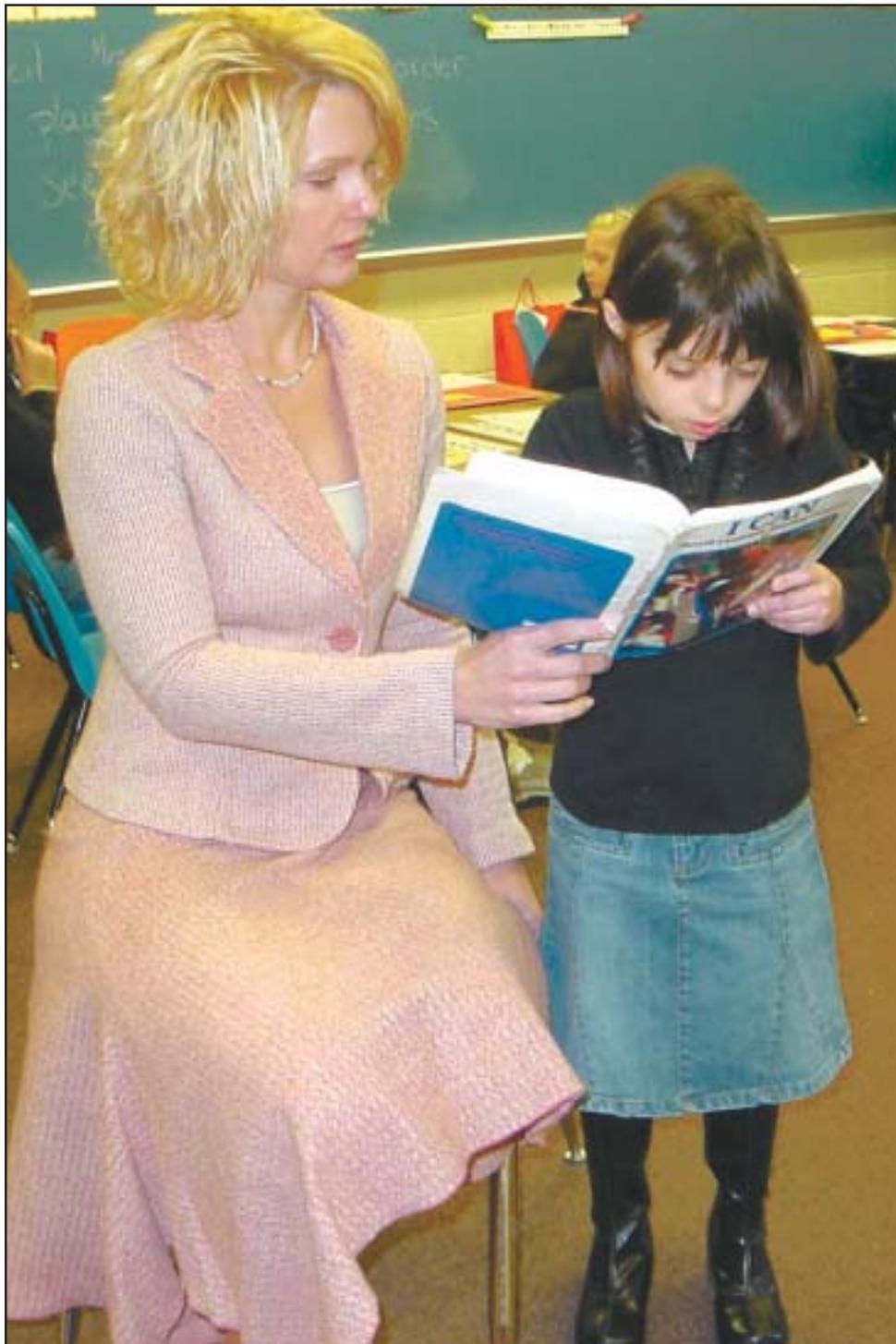
She is involved in organizing teacher appreciation events, plus serving on the education committee and Adopt-A-School programs at the Moore Chamber of Commerce. She also regularly brings food, snacks and refreshments to the school through a family-owned restaurant.

Henderson's favorite project of late has been finding refurbished computers for Central Elementary School patrons to use at home. This is helping parents become more greatly involved in their children's school work and classroom progress. The momentum began with Henderson donating her home computer and the project is growing from there.

"I beg for education, all the time," Henderson said. "Education is my passion. My family is full of educators and I have an education degree. This is my way of giving back.

"But I will tell you this – none of this would be possible without the wonderful

See "Henderson's efforts" on Page 13



Southern Financial Group's Tricia Henderson, shown here reading with Sarah Godwin, a student at Moore's Central Elementary School, finds refurbished computers for Moore parents to use at home with their children. Henderson also helps organize teacher appreciation functions and works on the Moore Chamber of Commerce Education and Adopt-A-School Committees.

SOEA gives Willow Brook Elementary extreme makeover

Continued from Page 1

needing repair or attention.

Crowder admitted he wasn't sure just how the students would perceive more than 100 volunteers descending on their school and completely changing its look. But he was pleasantly surprised at just how appreciative and proud the students were of the work.

"New paint makes such a difference. Everybody (students and faculty) is talking about how nice and clean it is," Crowder said. "It creates such a nice positive environment for our kids."

Oklahoma's Outreach to Teach served as the first day of the annual SOEA State Convention. The work day was the brainchild of SOEA President Katy Cook, a senior at Langston University's Tulsa Campus. She participated in the NEA's version of Outreach at last year's Representative Assembly in Washington, D.C.,

and came away thinking her state should tackle a similar project.

"I'm still at a loss for words. It was more than I ever expected," Cook said of the Oklahoma project's success.

While it was easy to see how important the project was in the eyes of Willow Brook's students and teachers, Cook said the day was just as important to the SOEA members who participated.

"It gave us all a great boost of energy," she said. "It let us see we're all part of a bigger organization. It gave us a sense of belonging."

More than 100 volunteers worked during the Willow Brook Outreach, including 59 SOEA members and their advisors, 14 Air Force members from Tinker Air Force Base, 20 students from Oklahoma City's Classen School of Advanced Studies and OEA staff and elected leaders.

Cook said everything on Willow



Calli Spidell and Megan Lee, students at Northwestern State in Alva, paint the Jack Be Nimble mural in a Willow Brook Elementary hallway.

Brook's "wish list" of tasks – and then some – was completed. Among the jobs tackled were:

- 🔔 Paint a portable building that had graffiti on it;
- 🔔 Install basketball goals and tetherball poles;
- 🔔 Paint playground equipment;
- 🔔 Level the walking track;
- 🔔 Paint parking lot arrows, lines and curbs;
- 🔔 Plant shrubs and flowers in front of school;

🔔 Paint murals on hallway walls; and

🔔 Redecorate the teachers' lounge.

Crowder said the improvements outside not only improved the aesthetics of the Willow Brook campus, but the new and repaired playground equipment helps teachers.

"The tetherball and basketball goals are big," he said. "It just makes our life on (playground) duty so much easier because the kids have something to do now.

"The lines for tether ball are long. If you want to play tetherball, you've got to get there early."

SOEA received \$1,900 in grants from OEA and NEA, and the Midwest City Branch of the First National Bank donated \$400. OEA staff, Board of Directors members and friends contributed additional money. The rest of the materials were donated by local businesses.

Floyd Cox, OEA teaching and learning specialist who serves as state student organizer, said it was the vision and determination of Cook that made the project a success.

"Katy is an awesome student with great organizational skills," Cox said. "It was Katy who had the vision and then put the feet to it to make it all happen.

See "Cook" on next page

SOEA's Outreach to Teach gave Willow Brook Elementary a complete makeover, including planting flowers and shrubs (at left), redecorating the teacher's lounge, painting and replacing playground equipment, and painting a portable building, to name just a few projects. More than 100 volunteers gave their time for the one-day project.





OEA Student Coordinator Floyd Cox (left) presents the outstanding student Chapter of the Year Award to members of the University of Central Oklahoma, including (from left) Danielle Batson, Tanal Davis, Paula Fowler, Advisor Dr. Susan Scott and Megan Wynd.

UCO wins 3rd straight SOEA Chapter of the Year honors

The Student Oklahoma Education Association's Outreach to Teach was just half of the annual student convention. The second half consisted of the traditional professional development speakers and an awards program.

Chapter of the Year honors went to the University of Central Oklahoma for the third consecutive year.

Workshop sessions included presentations by Mandy Plucker, NEA

student program chair, and Maddie Fennell, a former NEA student program chair; Dr. Linda Wilson, a professor at Northeastern State University's Broken Arrow campus; Katherine Bishop, a teacher at Lake Park Elementary in Putnam City and a member of the NEA's Special Education cadre; and Larry Miller, OEA teaching and learning specialist.

Cook was driving force of Outreach

Continued from previous page

"After seeing the school and its needs, she looked into the eyes of those kids and their teachers and said, 'We have to make this happen.'"

SOEA members and other volunteers did make it happen. Now, Cox

says, he doesn't envision another SOEA Convention without an Outreach to Teach project.

Visit www.okea.org/SOEA to download a slide show of SOEA's Outreach to Teach.

We couldn't have done it without you!

Special thanks to the following businesses and organizations for their donations to Outreach to Teach:

ACME T-Shirt Company
City of Broken Arrow
Classen School of Advanced Studies
National Honor Society
The Christmas Connection
Firestone
First National Bank, Midwest City Branch
Forest Lumber Company
Friends of SOEA/OEA

J & B Pipe Supply
NEA Student Program
OEA Board of Directors and Staff
Office Depot, Midwest City
Oklahoma City Public Schools
Oklahoma Educators Credit Union
Sherwin-Williams Company
Sonic Drive-In, Moore
Staples
Strahorn Landscaping Inc.
Tinker Air Force Base
USAO SOEA Books for Tots
Wal-Mart, Midwest City
Westlake Ace Hardware

OEA demonstrates success of Math PDI to Senate Republicans

By Stacy Martin

The Oklahoma Education Association's (OEA) lobbying effort is one of the most important things this organization does for its members – a fact our very hard-working, committed members rarely observe firsthand.

In short, they are in the classroom, tutoring struggling children, planning creative lesson plans, attending meetings and honing their skills through continuous professional development activities, just to name a few. It's no wonder some teachers are not fully aware of OEA's tireless lobbying efforts at the Oklahoma Capitol on their behalf.

"This is precisely the reason why OEA is making concentrated efforts to bring more diverse representation of members into the legislative process," said OEA President Roy Bishop.

"It is crucial that our members see for themselves that lobbying for education is nonpartisan; it's about education issues. We are urging members of all political beliefs to come together like never before."

According to OEA's leadership, the political diversity of members' conviction is the foundation of the organization's strength. This diversity is a direct reflection of the schools and communities in which our members work.

This year, even greater creative approaches are being taken to help increase OEA's legislative success. That includes educating those at the State Capitol about what really goes on in the classroom.

Professional Educators of Norman (PEN) member Gayla Mears was joined by OEA Teaching and Learning Specialists Bonnie Hammock and Floyd Cox for a question and answer session with key Senate Republicans. Topics covered in-

"It is crucial that our members see for themselves that lobbying for education is nonpartisan; it's about education issues."

OEA President Roy Bishop

cluded the success of OEA's Professional Development Institute (PDI) efforts to achieve greater excellence among math teachers. The group also covered OEA's critical role in the mentoring program to help acclimate and support new teachers to their jobs.

Both programs depend on adequate funding and other leadership support to continue their accomplishments.

Republicans attending included Senators Scott Pruitt, R-Tulsa; Owen Laughlin, R-Woodward; Nancy Riley, R-Tulsa; Jonathan Nichols, R-Norman; and Glenn Coffee, R-Oklahoma City.

OEA representatives explained to the lawmakers that while the PDI program's success is typically cumulative, higher math scores are already evident in some of the schools that have been in the program several years. This has been particularly true at Lawton's Tomlinson Junior High, a Title I school.

"What this meeting enabled us to do was show the positive results already evident and how we intend to build upon them in the future," said Mears.

Sen. Coffee was so interested that he asked to visit Mears' classroom at Norman's Whittier Middle School to observe the techniques in action.

"The session heightened the lawmakers' interest and understanding of both programs and that was our goal," said Bishop. "And any time we can attract our elected leaders into our schools to see the great work teachers are doing, that is a tremendous plus."

Where it's hat!

Snapshots from the road



Empire

Read Across America
Sponsors

Blunck's Studio
Dillard's
The Christmas Connection
Saturn of Oklahoma City
Staples



Ada



El Reno



Sand Springs

North Catavan Players
Floyd Cox • Cindy Manning
Sharon Moore • Debby Stine
Becky Felts



Arnett



Kendall Whittier -Tulsa



Tannehill

South Catavan Players

Bonnie Hammock
Maureen Peters • Bruce Treadaway
Pam Westbrook • Roy Bishop



Hilldale



Duncan



Western Heights - OKC



**Sam Noble
Museum
of Natural
History -
Norman**



Marlow



Quail Springs Mall

Roberts, Cornelison win Medals of Excellence

Two Oklahoma Education Association members have been chosen winners of Oklahoma Medal for Excellence awards, which honor the state's top educators and education programs.

Broken Arrow's Evelyn Roberts won the Medal for Excellence in Elementary Teaching while Deborah Cornelison of Byng won the secondary teaching prize. Other winners are Kenneth E. Case, Oklahoma State University, college/university teaching; Marilyn Kellert, principal of Belle Isle Enterprise Middle School in Oklahoma City, administrator award; The VISTA Academy of Moore, alternative education award; and Bixby Educational Endowment Foundation, local education foundation award.

Roberts is an enrichment specialist at Moore Elementary at Tulsa Union Schools. Roberts, who felt called to the teaching profession when she was a young girl, recalls as a fifth-grader reading her mother's teaching guides and watching her mother prepare de-

tailed lesson plans for her own classes.

"There is nothing accidental about good teaching; only the best-planned learning experiences seem to happen effortlessly," she said, recalling the experience. "It became clear then that teachers not only thought about teaching, but they cared about their students deeply, feeling the pain of their failures and the joy of their successes."

Now a 30-year veteran educator, Roberts is recognized as a master teacher in her district where she has received numerous honors, including Teacher of the Year. She has completed two advanced degrees, including a doctorate in educational administration, and is among a handful of Oklahoma educators to earn National Board Certification as a middle childhood generalist.

Cornelison teaches ninth grade physical science at Byng Junior High School.

"If teaching were an Olympic event, Mrs. Cornelison would be a gold medalist," wrote a former student who credits Cornelison with helping her win national

science contests and inspiring her to study biosystems engineering in college.

Cornelison, a National Board Certification science teacher, has received numerous state and national honors for her teaching, including the Presidential Award in Secondary Science presented by George W. Bush.

To help her students comprehend abstract concepts, Cornelison says she provides learning experiences that are "hands-on, minds-on and almost always a lot of fun." Using toys, traditional lab equipment and cutting-edge technology, Cornelison's students collaborate in small groups with design problems, experimental investigations and decision-making activities that develop thinking skills and relate their studies to the real world. She devotes countless after-school hours sponsoring junior high as well as high school student science projects. Her students have won more than 300 awards at regional, state and national science competitions.

Each of the six winners will receive a \$7,500 cash award, with an additional \$1,000 cash award going to the schools of the winning teachers and administrator. The recipients also will receive glass "Roots and Wings" sculptures, created by Oklahoma artist Ron Roberts.

Moore Public Schools' VISTA Academy, which stands for Voyaging Individual Students Through Academics, serves at-risk students in grades six through 12, as well as returning dropouts. VISTA programs combine small class sizes, parent involvement, behavior modification, counseling, arts integration and community service opportunities to increase students' ability to perform academically and socially.

There are six OEA/Moore ACT



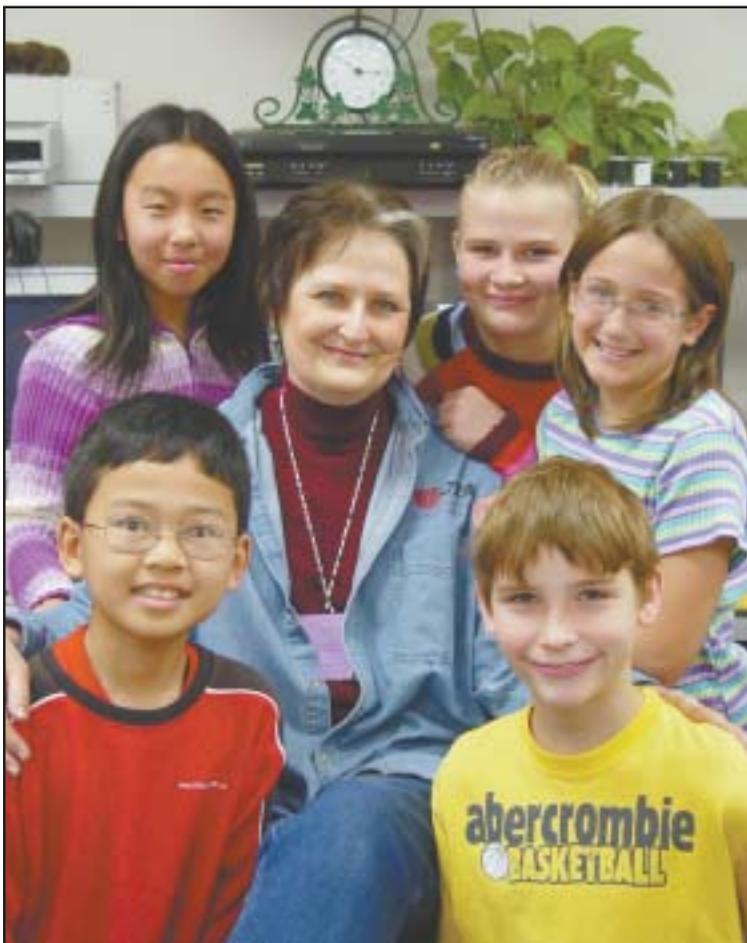
Byng's Deborah Cornelison

members among the faculty, including Jaquetta Glass, vice president-elect for MACT; Hart Brown; Brenda Durrill; Cindy Farquahar; Cheryl Struble; and Dr. Sandra Ludwig, VISTA principal.

Receiving this year's Medal for Excellence for Local Education Foundations is the Bixby Educational Endowment Foundation. The Fund was created in 1969, making it the oldest local education fund in the state.

In August 2000, the fund, which had operated under the Board of Education, began operating as a separate 501(c)(3) charitable foundation. Since then, the foundation has awarded more than \$320,000 to benefit the 4,000 students of Bixby Public Schools and has grown its endowment to more than \$1.4 million.

In addition to presenting the Medal for Excellence awards, the Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence will honor 100 of Oklahoma's top public high school seniors as Academic All-Staters at its May 21 banquet. The Academic Awards Banquet is open to the public, with tickets priced at \$40. For more information, call the Foundation for Excellence office at 405/236-0006 or visit its website at www.ofe.org.



Evelyn Roberts is surrounded by some of her fifth grade students at Moore Elementary in Union Public Schools. Clockwise from lower right are Jacob Plett, Allen Shih, Angela Cai, Taylor Fratzke and Brianne Mobley.

Bridge Creek students lobby for healthier kids

By Doug Folks

Fifth graders in Bridge Creek took a good look at themselves and decided they needed to make some changes.

They are not as healthy as they think they need to be, and have set out to change school policy. But the enthusiasm to create a healthier student body has bubbled over, and now Bridge Creek students are trying to improve student health statewide through the legislature.

would be optional to school districts, not mandatory.

The Kids Fitness Challenge incorporates tenets of the President's Council of Physical Fitness and Sports test. It adds a virtual "walk across Oklahoma" activity which includes geography and history lessons, and asks the DOE to provide resources on its website.

Tammy Long, a fifth grade teacher at Bridge Creek and president of the Bridge Creek Classroom Teachers As-



Rep. Susan Winchester (left) invited Tammy Long's fifth graders to make a presentation to the House Education Committee on the Oklahoma Kids Fitness Challenge Act and lobby House members on the bill. In the photo above, Stefani Mize and Cody Smith prepare to address committee members.

the year, but an older gym was torn down to make room for more classroom space.

"You can't help but be proud of a team of students working to spread a love of learning and healthy living to their peers all across Oklahoma. I'm honored to sponsor their legislation."

Rep. Susan Winchester

Now elementary students only have PE when the weather is nice enough to go outside. Through their service learning project, they hope to convince the Bridge Creek School Board to commit to a PE program.

Several stories on childhood obesity appeared in the media about the same time Long's students began researching ideas for their service learning project.

"We discovered that the obesity index at Bridge Creek is more than double the state average for fifth graders – 32 percent compared to the state's 15 percent," Long said.

Long's fifth graders became so convinced they were on the right track with the Fitness Challenge that they wanted to take their program statewide. The class created a plan they called the Governor's Fitness Challenge, and Long set up a meeting with state Rep. Susan Winchester (R, Chickasha), the House Speaker Pro Tem. Winchester was so impressed with the students and their plan that she agreed to sponsor their bill.

She renamed it the Oklahoma Kids

Fitness Challenge Act in honor of their hard work.

"These students have taken the initiative to promote a program that not only benefits them, but their entire state as well," said Winchester. "You can't help but be proud of a team of students working to spread a love of learning and healthy living to their peers all across Oklahoma. I'm honored to sponsor their legislation."

Winchester invited Long's class to attend the House Common Education Committee meeting at which she introduced the bill. Two of Long's students, Stefani Mize and Cody Smith, spoke to the bill's merits during the meeting. A unanimous vote passed the bill out of committee.

After the committee meeting, the students broke into small groups and lobbied various legislators throughout the Capitol about the bill.

As with any legislation, HB 1647 has its detractors. Some local school administrators don't want another mandate from the legislature, particularly without providing funding to meet the law. But Long

See "Mileage" on Page 12



Bridge Creek fifth graders discovered that on an average week at home and school, they can easily walk 25 miles. Using pedometers donated by Wal-Mart and McDonald's restaurants, they found it takes about 10,000 to 12,000 steps to walk five miles. Showing off the pedometers are (from left) Braedon Shelton, Derrick Taylor, Judge Leiter and Crystal Cowan, who are students of Bridge Creek CTA President Tammy Long.

House Bill 1647, known as the Oklahoma Kids Fitness Challenge Act, passed unanimously out of the Oklahoma House Education Committee in February and was headed for the floor of the House at press time. The bill would require the State Department of Education (DOE) to create a physical activity program for fifth graders that combines physical fitness and core academic learning.

Implementation of the program

sociation (BCCTA), said the Fitness Challenge is part of her class's work as a Youth Action Council for Service Learning. Long; Annette Dake, the school's gifted and talented teacher; and Aaron Smith, a first year PE teacher, are guiding the students through the project.

"We lost our physical education teacher in a RIF (reduction in force) a couple of years ago," Long said. The district hired Smith at the beginning of

Don't get hooked!

Beware of "phishing" scams

Tips from Liz Picone

NEA Member Benefits

"Phishing" is a high-tech scam that uses spam or pop-up messages to deceive you into disclosing your credit card numbers, bank account information, Social Security number, passwords or other sensitive information.

According to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), phishers send an email or pop-up message that claims to be from a business or organization that you deal with – for example, your Internet Service provider (ISP) or your bank. The message usually says that you need to *update* or *validate* your account information. The message directs you to a website that looks just like a legitimate site ... but it isn't!

The purpose of the bogus site? To trick you into divulging your personal information so the thieves can steal your identity and run up bills or commit crimes in your name.

Here are some tips to help you avoid getting hooked by a phishing scam:

- Don't respond to emails or pop-up

messages that request personal or financial information. Legitimate companies don't ask for this type of information via email. If you are concerned about your account, contact

the company by phone

or open a new

Internet browser and enter the company's correct web address.

- Don't email personal or financial information.

Email is not a secure method of transmitting personal information. If you initiate the transaction and want to

provide your personal or financial information through a website, look for indications that the site is secure, like a lock icon on the browser's status bar or a URL for a website that begins with "https" (the "s" stands for "secure"). Unfortunately, no indicator is fool-

proof; some phishers have forged security icons.

- Review credit card and bank account statements as soon as you receive them to determine whether there are any unauthorized charges. Contact the appropriate company ASAP with your questions.

- Use anti-virus software and *keep it up to date!* Some phishing emails contain software that can harm your computer or track your activities on the Internet without your knowledge (spyware). Anti-virus software and a firewall can protect you from inadvertently accepting such unwanted files. Anti-virus software scans incoming communications for troublesome files. A firewall helps make you invisible on

the Internet and

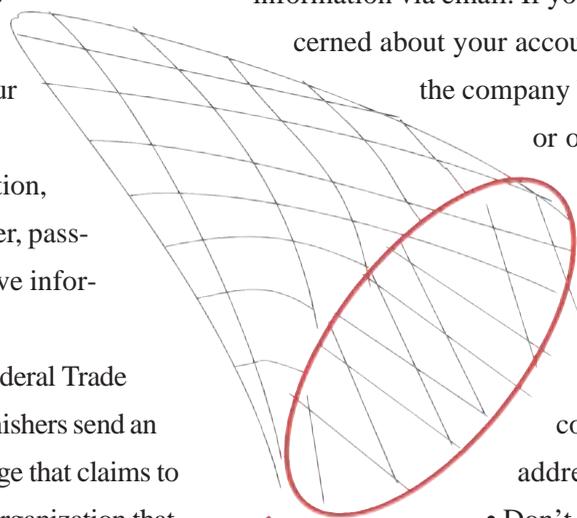
blocks all communications

from unauthorized

sources. It is especially important to run a

firewall if you have a broadband connection.

- Be cautious about



Mileage portion of bill misunderstood

Continued from Page 11

insists the bill is optional as it is written, and the specifics are merely suggestions. Even so, Bridge Creek Superintendent Terry Brown has received a few phone calls from other districts.

"I've had other superintendents calling me and asking, 'How can you let those kids do that?'" said Brown. "I said they don't need my permission. Their teacher has my permission."

One of the misunderstood sections of the bill centers on students walking

25 miles a week to meet the challenge's requirements. But Long's students found it's not that hard to meet the criteria.

Using pedometers donated by Walmart and McDonald's Restaurant, the students found they walked nearly 25 miles during an average week. The Challenge isn't designed to have students walk five miles everyday at school, but to strive to be active enough throughout the week – at school and at home – to walk the 25 miles.

Whether HB 1647 passes both state houses and becomes law is yet to be seen. Long has told her students that just because a group of cute kids is supporting a bill, however worthy, the Kids Fitness Challenge still has an uphill battle.

Regardless of the bill's outcome, students at Bridge Creek have learned a great deal about themselves, their physical fitness, and the legislative process. And they are trying to create healthier lives for themselves and for students across Oklahoma in the process.

opening any attachment or downloading any files from emails you receive, regardless of who sent them.

- If you receive spam that is phishing for information, forward it to spam@uce.gov.

Identity theft is the fastest growing crime in the U.S. If you are interested in scheduling a workshop on *Identity Theft* for your local Association (and/or in partnership with your local PTO/PTA) contact NEA Member Benefits Consultant Liz Picone at Lpicone@neamb.com or 800/609-6580 ... just another example of the benefits of your OEA/NEA membership!

RA credentials deadline is fast approaching

Credentials for the NEA's 143rd Representative Assembly are due April 10 at the Oklahoma Education Association headquarters in Oklahoma City.

This summer's RA is scheduled for July 1-6 in Los Angeles. The Oklahoma delegation's host hotel will be the Crown Plaza LAX.

With nearly 10,000 delegates, the RA is the world's largest democratic, deliberative body.

Local Associations are allowed one delegate to the RA for every 150 active members or a major fraction thereof. Locals with fewer than 76 active members may join together to form membership units known as "clusters" for the purpose of participating in the RA.

Each local in a cluster of two or more must have less than 76 members. The allocation of credentials for such locals is based on a ratio of 1:150 active and life members or a major fraction thereof.

For more information on RA credentials or clustering, contact OEA Associate Executive Director Charles McCauley at 800/522-08091, 405/528-7785 or cmccauley@okea.org.

Training sessions give delegates overview of Association budget

By Marty Bull

Local representatives to the 2005 Delegate Assembly (DA) will soon be attending regional meetings to review the 2005-06 OEA budget and other items of interest such as new business items and the OEA Adequacy and Equity Project.

The 2005 DA will be held April 22-23 at the Clarion Conference Center in Oklahoma City.

“OEA Delegates perform an essential task for the Association,” said OEA President Roy Bishop. “Their active participation is what makes our organization the vital force behind the continuous struggle for improving public education funding, while maintaining high standards, quality schools and evoking respect for the profession.”

The budget process begins in October with Open Hearings at the OEA Convention and continues with hearings in each region. The budget committee, chaired by OEA Vice President Becky Felts, gathers information and builds a balanced budget, then presents it to the OEA Board of Directors for their approval.

“The input of our members is an essential part of the budget process,”

said Felts. “We formulate the budget around those programs that are important to our members while maintaining the fiscal stability of the Association.”

A highlight of this year’s budget is the funding of a media campaign.

“OEA members know the importance of a good public image,” said Bishop. “Their work in recruiting over 700 new members this year has given us the funds to buy TV and radio spots that will highlight our great public schools and the employees that make them great.”

Delegates will also hear an update on the OEA Adequacy and Equity project approved at the 2004 Assembly. OEA Executive Director Lela Odom and OEA General Counsel Richard Wilkinson will present a report on its progress.

In the majority of cases, the need for adequacy and equity in school funding is determined by an education adequacy costing-out study that determines the amount of money actually needed to provide every child an opportunity to meet the applicable state education standards. According to Odom, this type of study is still pending. In the meantime the OEA Center

for Legal and Corporate Services will continue to make the case for adequacy and equity by utilizing up-to-date data from NEA Research and, when the time comes, stories solicited from OEA Legal Liaisons.

“The Legal Liaison Network is vital to our success on this project,” said Odom. “We must continue to recruit Liaisons at every school site.”

At DA, Wilkinson will report on a web-based bargaining tool that will be unveiled at the OEA Advocacy Conference, April 8-9. The website is funded through the A&E Project. It features a searchable data base of local contracts

and links to other information critical to the negotiations process, such as the OEA Green Book and state education law, policy and regulations. Local Associations that submit their contracts for publication will receive a rebate of one dollar per member.

The annual OEA Awards Banquet will be held on Friday, April 22. OEA’s top honor, the Friend of Education, will be awarded, as will awards to OEA members for classroom excellence and community members for their support of public education. Marshall Gregory media awards, in both professional and student categories, will be distributed as will Golden Apple Awards for local Association communications efforts.

Banquet tickets are still available by calling Janice Dealy at OEA Headquarters at 800/522-8091.

2005 Delegate Trainings

(Editor’s note: trainings from some regions had already been held at press time.)

March 30

Southwest C – 5:30 p.m., Duncan Middle School, 601 Chisholm Trail Parkway

Tulsa CTA – 4 p.m., Education Service Center, 3027 South New Haven Avenue

Owasso – 3:45 p.m., Hobson Elementary, 14500 East 86th Street North

March 31

Northeast A – 6:30 p.m., Arvest Bank, 125 W. Canadian Ave., Vinita

April 1

Southeast A – 10:45 a.m., Zone Day at Shawnee Middle School, 4300 N. Union

April 4

Northeast B – 6:30 p.m., 1st Methodist Church, Muskogee, 600 E. Okmulgee

Broken Arrow EA/Jenks – 4:30 p.m., OEA’s Tulsa Regional Office, 10810 E. 45th, Ste. 301

April 5

Northwest B – 5:30 p.m., Stables Café, 223 N. Division, Guthrie

April 6

Southwest D – 5 p.m., Teachers Lounge, Ardmore Middle School, 511 Veteran’s Blvd.

April 7

Northwest D – 6 p.m., Golden Corral, 2400 Williams Avenue, Woodward

April 11

Northeast C – 5 p.m., Carver’s Steak House (formerly Goldie’s, on the Bypass), Tahlequah

Oklahoma City Metro C and D – 5:30 p.m., OEA Headquarters, 323 E. Madison

April 12

Southwest E and Oklahoma City Metro A – 5:30 p.m., Moore ACT Office, 321 N.W. 1st, Moore

April 13

Northeast D – 6:30 p.m., OEA’s Tulsa Regional Office, 10810 E. 45th, Ste. 301

April 14

Northwest A – 6:30 p.m., Enid H.S. Lectorium, 611 W. Wabash
Tulsa Metro C, D & E – 5 p.m., OEA’s Tulsa Regional Office, 10810 E. 45th, Ste. 301

Henderson’s efforts aimed at helping teachers

Continued from Page 6

support of the Moore community.”

Many of her efforts are aimed at helping teachers in one form or another, which has a clear ripple effect.

“If you keep the teachers happy and support their efforts, you are helping the kids,” said Henderson, whose organization is also part of the NEA Valuebuilder Program serving OEA members.

For information regarding adoption

of a Moore school, call MACT at 405/799-7333.

For assistance and information regarding applying for NEA grants, contact an OEA communications specialist at (405) 528-7785 or toll free at 800/522-8091.

Detailed information is available on NEA Urban Grants Program at www.nea.org/teachers/urbangrants.html.

Support Professionals Join NEA Great Public Schools Initiative

By Marty Bull

When introduced at the 2003 NEA Representative Assembly, NEA President Reg Weaver's Great Public Schools Initiative was obviously inclusive of all education employees. When asked to participate, Union Support Personnel Association (USPA) and the Support Employees of Edmond (SEE) immediately recognized the value of the project.

"Education support professionals keep our schools running and make us stronger as an organization," said OEA President Roy Bishop. "We are pleased that these two locals chose to take the time to participate in the OEA-NEA GPS Action Plan."

Since agreeing to participate, SEE and USPA have met with their respective OEA Regional teams, formed membership committees and developed plans that focus within three major areas: developing membership, organization and leadership.

"We were very pleased to be included in the project," said SEE President Ed Whitson. "The support we receive from our OKC Metro team, and now this additional support from

NEA, is very much appreciated."

SEE's GPS Plan will kick off in April with a Family Bingo Night. Prizes donated by local merchants and NEA/OEA Member Benefits will add to the festive mood.

"We want our members and potential



Officers of Support Employees of Edmond are, from left, President Ed Whitson, Vice President Juanita Wallace, Secretary Randy Herring, and Treasurer Joe Pride.

members to have an opportunity to bring their families and meet in an informal setting," said Whitson, a cabinet maker for Edmond Public Schools. "We believe this will give us an opportunity to showcase the benefits of membership in a non-

threatening way."

The GPS planning process helped USPA Executive Committee leaders recognize how to meet the challenges that a diverse membership pool brings.

"We all keep different hours and work at a variety of different work sites," said



Frank Brazwell, vice president for the Union Support Personnel Association.

ifying a Lead Recruiter at each work site. The Lead Recruiters then invited another member from their work site to attend the USPA NEA Great Public Schools Dinner Monday, March 7. Thirty USPA members attended.

Recruiters will now focus on the 40 potential members targeted in the plan.

"It was a great start," said USPA Vice President Frank Brazwell. "Our goal is to encourage our recruiters to make one-on-one contacts at their work sites."

Other aspects of the USPA GPS Action Plan include developing a comprehensive communications system, establishing work site bulletin boards, holding classification meetings at least four times per year, and providing leadership opportunities at the state and national level.

Salary increases expected this session

Continued from Page 3

teachers don't deserve to spend retirement watching their pensions being drained by health insurance."

Optimism is running high for many financial items. Teachers and support professionals should be able to anticipate promised salary increases by session's end.

The Republicans unveiled their education agenda in the weeks after Gov. Brad Henry announced his progressive initiative to raise standards, provide

greater support to educators and increase school funding.

"We support the spirit of Gov. Henry's plan because it empowers teachers and sets the stage for students to achieve greater things," said Bishop. "It proposes remediation where it's needed, which is a very positive, practical approach.

"We're pleased that it doesn't send the message that anyone would consider giving up on teachers, students or schools."

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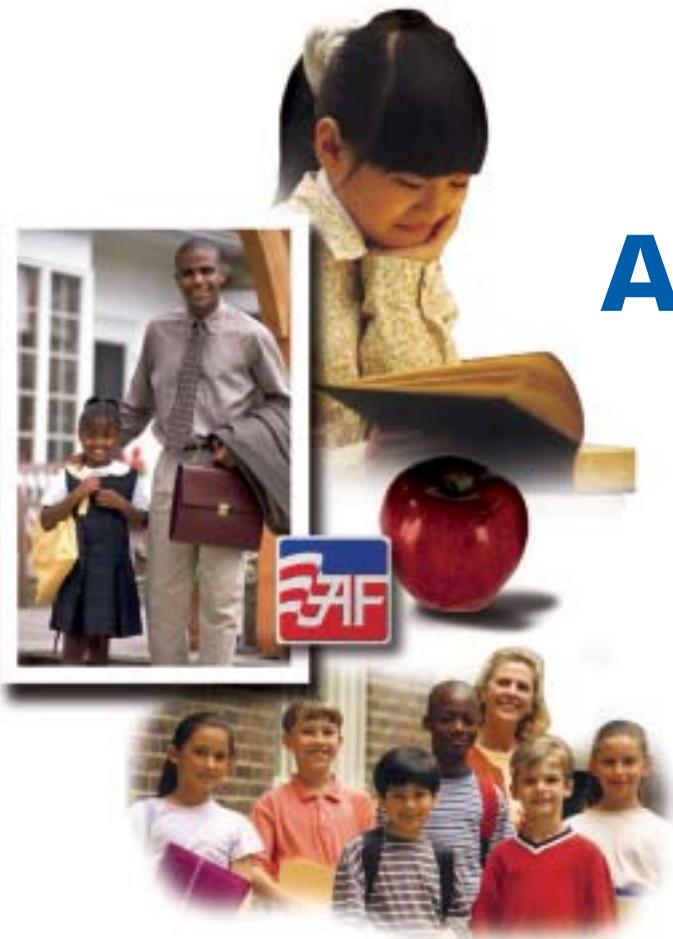
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[†]Eligible NEA family members include parents, spouse (or domestic partner) and children.

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What is Our Next Book? *Book discussion unit brings parents into the classroom*

By Randy Baker
Putnam City North High School

After 30 years in the classroom, I have found a great method of getting parents involved in my classroom.

My Parent Book Discussion not only excites my students, but it's an overwhelming success with their parents as well.

Each semester all of my classes select a work – a novel or play — that we read along with our parents. Often, I recommend some of my favorites. In the past, my students have chosen *The Catcher in the Rye*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Hamlet*, *Corelli's Mandolin*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, and *The Stranger*, to name a few.

The next step for me is to find copies of the work. Sometime I have classroom sets. Other times I have to go to used bookstores or garage sales to find copies, or students and parents purchase their own copies. Once everyone has a copy of the book we set a date for the parent-student discussion. We usually give the parents three or four weeks to read the book and for them to make arrangements to take off work.

That's right! Parents, usually both mother and father, take off work to join our class in a lively discussion of a work of literature.

I guess a teacher could hold the book discussion in the evening or on a weekend, but I want my parents to take an active role in my classroom. I want them to show their children that they are lifelong readers and learners.

A day or two before the designated date, I ask students and parents to write three or four questions that they would like answered in our discussion. These are not lower level questions, but questions that mean something to the writer and questions that are worth our examination and thought.

The day of the discussion is always

lively. Parents come to class nervous and excited; they can't wait to participate and most of the time I have to work hard at seeing that they give their children a chance to talk.

I establish two rules before we begin: 1) We cannot bring up any work that we have read in the past, and 2) We must have our books open and ready to provide evidence to support our views. Our discussion is not a debate where we are ready to defend our ideas, but a dialogue where we are trying to develop human understanding and awareness.

Is it scary to bring those parents into my classroom? Of course, it is. Do they show up? So much so that often I have to find another room so that we have enough room to include everyone.

What is my students' reaction? They are proud of themselves – proud that they were able to maintain a discussion on a highly intellectual level with an adult.

And the parents' reaction? They love it. One father kept one chapter ahead and enticed his family for an entire week when he turned off the television every night and held a family reading with his wife and daughter. One father, in his work clothes, told me that he used to be a reader in high school and stopped once he got out. He just might start reading again.

And, finally, one mother excited about the reading said, "What is our next book?"

If you'd like to share your favorite lesson, submit your column of 400 to 500 words to Patti Razien at prazien@okea.org.

