

OEA

An affiliate of the
National Education Association

In this issue

**TABOR's impact
on Colorado**

Page 3

**Hennessey adopts dual
language program**

Page 4

**Diabetic child presents
challenges**

Page 5

**Milken winners
Rumbaugh and Self**

Pages 6

**Rising Stars Gilbert
and Crabtree**

Page 7

NBPTS Class of 2005

Page 8-9

Periodical
Post Paid at
Okla. City, OK

The Education Focus

OEA's all-member publication

The Education Focus

For the membership of the Oklahoma Education Association

December/January 2005-06

Out-of-state money pushes TABOR

OEA works to educate would-be petition signers

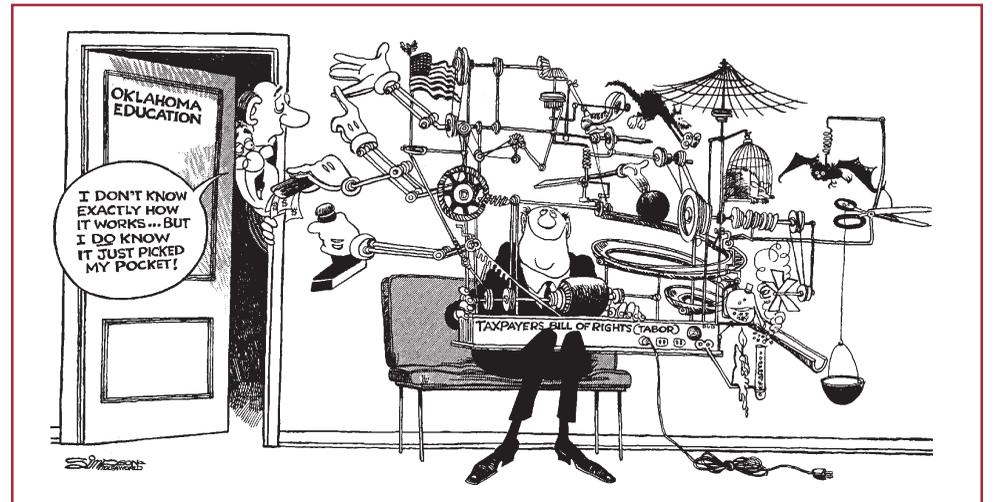
By Doug Folks

Forces pushing a petition to get Oklahomans a chance to vote on a so-called Taxpayers Bill of Rights (TABOR) took some nasty turns during the 90 days of signature gathering.

At press time, TABOR organizers were nearing a December 19 deadline to collect and turn in nearly 220,000 required signatures. A successful collection of that many signatures from registered voters would place State Question 726 on a general election ballot as early as 2006.

TABOR is a misguided attempt to drastically reduce state government through a constitutional amendment. It is designed to reduce state revenue through a formula that considers the state's Consumer Price Index (CPI) and changes in population. In Colorado, the only state to implement TABOR, the measure's cost to higher education, health services, local and county governments and common education has been devastating.

According to the Associated Press, the Oklahoma TABOR petition drive is being spearheaded by Oklahomans for Action, a group formed just for this purpose. It has had input from the Illinois-based Americans for Limited Government and the Washington, D.C.-based Americans for Prosperity. Local supporters of the TABOR drive have included the Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs and Sen. Randy Brogdon (R, Owasso). Documents obtained from the Oklahoma Ethics Commission show that the entire \$690,000 price tag for the petition drive has been financed by out-of-state money.



In addition, OEA has been able to determine that several of the signature gatherers are not resident Oklahomans. At least one petition circulator was arrested, a 16-year-old boy from Massachusetts who was wanted on a felony warrant for violating parole. It is

illegal for people under 18 years of age and for nonresidents to pass petitions.

"Supporters of this measure keep trying to say TABOR is something Oklahomans want to see happen," said Roy Bishop, OEA president. "But the

See "Petition" on Page 3

Discovering the real prize

Slawson cherishes knowledge gained in NBPTS process

By Doug Folks

Obtaining National Board Certification is an incredible accomplishment and a prestigious honor.

After all, finding out you've successfully completed a process more demanding than a master's degree and that you'll earn \$5,000 more a year for the next 10 years is beyond huge.

Ask any of Oklahoma's nearly 1,300 National Board Certified Teachers (NBCT) and with few exceptions they can tell you exactly how many times they tried to log onto the Internet to find their scores.

One of those exceptions is Rhonda

Slawson, a 7th grade science, English and reading teacher in Cyril. Slawson banked her scores and finally, after three years, passed all the required tests and submitted a winning portfolio. But it was three days after scores were released to candidates for this Class of 2005 before she took time to find she earned the certification.

The scores were released on Friday, November 18, but she was at a conference at Quartz Mountain. The lodge had no Internet access and her family wasn't home either to look up her scores.

"I got home on Sunday after lunch, but I wanted to spend some time with my daughters," Slawson said. "So it was probably 7 o'clock that night before I had time to look up my scores."

Slawson is a 20-year veteran of
See "National certification" on Page 8

This holiday, be the change you wish to see

By Roy Bishop
OEA President

Recently, while shopping at a local mall, I overheard a young lady talking about her holiday experience. She was extremely worried about what she was going to get her boyfriend for Christmas. After all, “he has already gotten me six more gifts than what I’ve gotten him.”

In a few days, many of us will be celebrating the holiday season with friends and loved ones. For me that special time is Christmas. For others it is Hanukkah; and for even others it’s Kwanza.

No matter what is being celebrated,

it will be a time of love, laughter and fellowship. However, as a classroom teacher, I know that there are many children, many families, who will not be able to celebrate as many of us do because of financial hardship.

For many, feeding their children and finding shelter on a cold night take precedent over presents and lavish meals that so many of us have come to enjoy.

As a former Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA) sponsor in Stillwater, many of the members of our “Huddle” would find a program in a local store that sponsored children and their families. Depending on the type of store, we encouraged people to sponsor



President Roy Bishop

families by purchasing food, clothes, toys and books.

A few hundred additional gifts were bought each year by the students of Stillwater Junior High and while I never got to see the faces of the people who received those gifts, I did see the smiles of those who were sponsoring the program as they accepted the gifts on behalf of others. Their reactions have made this a yearly part of my Christmas season.

With so many different world events drawing our attention, I would love to see all of us focus on those who will not have the type of holiday season that they would like to have.

Find a business that sponsors a program and make a purchase for someone you may never meet. Volunteer to serve meals at a soup kitchen. Visit an assisted living center and engage the residents in conversation. Go to the children’s hospital and talk to the parents and find out how you can help. Invite people into your homes for dinner.

Overhearing the conversation by that young lady I mentioned at the first of this column made me realize that we still have an opportunity to show people what the true essence of the holiday season is all about.

Gandhi said “Be the change you wish to see in the world.” As people watch us, they can learn by example. And as we become the change we wish to see, the seeds have been planted for future generations as well.

Have a great holiday season.

ACE Task Force will wait to make final recommendations

The governor’s Achieving Classroom Excellence (ACE) Task Force has postponed the release of its final recommendations on high school testing.

Senate Bill 982 created the ACE Task Force to study the testing requirements for eighth-grade students and high school students established in state law. The law required the task force to present a written report of findings and recommendations to the Legislature and Gov. Brad Henry by December 31.

The task force had formulated a list of recommendations prior to holding two open hearings in late November; one for teachers and community members and another for administrators and business people. After those meetings, the task force voted to postpone its final report.

Edmond ACT’s Martha Wissler serves on the task force along with Tulsa CTA’s Lynn Stockley. Wissler said the task force heard several good ideas on the issues of high school test-

ing and graduation requirements.

“The input was greatly appreciated and it brought several more questions to mind,” said Wissler, a high school math teacher at Edmond Memorial High School and an OEA board member. “I feel that we need to consider this input before we make our final decision.”

OEA President Roy Bishop, several OEA members and OEA staff attended the open hearing set for teachers and parents.

“As we raise the standards and the stakes for students and schools, we have to provide them with the resources to reach success,” Bishop said.

The task force was to meet on December 16, and Wissler said the outcome of that meeting would determine the task force’s next steps. She said a preliminary report may be written with final recommendations made by March. Wissler added that she anticipated changes in the recommendations the group had already put together.

The Education Focus

Volume 23, No. 3
A production of OEA’s
Communications Center

Roy Bishop, President
Becky Felts, Vice President
Lela Odom, Executive Director
Dr. Dottie Caldwell, Assoc. Exec. Dir.

Doug Folks, Editor
Contributing Editors
Marty Bull
Jeff Savage
Bruce Treadaway
Patti Razien
Pam Westbrook, Proofing
Maureen Peters, Center Assistant

The Education Focus (ISSN 1542-1678) is published nine times annually with issues in September/October, November, December/January, February, March, April, May, June/July and August for \$5 by the Oklahoma Education Association, 323 E. Madison, Oklahoma City, OK 73105. Periodicals postage paid at Oklahoma City, OK, and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *The Education Focus*, PO Box 18485, Oklahoma City, OK 73154

Need Help?

Do you need assistance with a personnel matter? Would you like to invite an OEA Teaching and Learning Specialist to provide a training in your building? Does your local Association need organizing help? Call your regional office and ask for help.

Oklahoma City Metro and Southwest Teams

800/522-8091 or 405/528-7785

Northeast and Tulsa Metro Teams

800/331-5143 or 918/665-2282

Northwest Team

800/439-0393 or 580/256-0071

Southeast Team

800/563-4230 or 405/275-4060

Join today!

Membership in the OEA provides security, symbolizes professionalism and brings with it a wealth of benefits.

Visit www.okea.org for more information, and call 800/522-8091 to find out how to join today.

OEA

Oklahoma Education Association

Petition circulators know little about TABOR

Continued from Page 1

facts show otherwise. If it's such a wonderful thing, why aren't Oklahomans funding the cause?"

In a December 7 editorial, the *Daily Oklahoman* accused OEA and other TABOR opponents of "encouraging intimidation of petition circulators ... We understand the intensity with which the (OEA) opposes TABOR, but shouldn't that opposition be expressed after the petition is certified and an election is called, if one ever is? ... What kind of example is the OEA setting for Oklahoma's schoolchildren when teachers instruct them in civics class on direct democracy and then go looking for a petition circulator to harass?"

"Our volunteers have done nothing illegal. It was our volunteers that suffered verbal attacks and intimidation by the out-of-state petitioners."
OEA President Roy Bishop

The editorial went on to blast the OEA, saying, "This isn't politics. It's gutless, gonzo garbage. No Oklahoma public school teacher should participate in this."

The editorial was written without talking to any OEA official or officer to hear the Association's side of the story.

"Our volunteers have done nothing illegal," Bishop said. "In fact, it was our volunteers that suffered verbal attacks and intimidation by the out-of-state petitioners. We have just as much right to challenge an idea as its

supporters have the right to advance that idea."

Bishop went on to explain that anti-TABOR volunteers have engaged in a "Think Before You Ink" educational campaign to encourage people to know what they were about to sign.

"We didn't tell people not to sign, but we did encourage them to ask questions and asked them to read the measure. The flyers we handed out had some basic information about TABOR and its impact on Colorado," he said.

When asked, most petition circulators knew very little if anything about TABOR or its possible impact on Oklahoma. Also, they didn't have copies of the measure to share with potential signers.

The next steps to fight the TABOR movement will depend on the results of the petition effort, Bishop said. If they don't collect the required number of signatures, the battle is over for now. It is expected that the legislature will take up TABOR at some point in the future.

If the pro-TABOR group collects more than 220,000 signatures, OEA will likely challenge the petition's language and/or the validity of the signatures because of the large amount of irregularities occurring during the petition drive.

Devastating

Colorado school funding dropped drastically under TABOR

By Doug Folks

Only Colorado has implemented TABOR, the so-called Taxpayers Bill of Rights. While supporters of Oklahoma's version claim they've found the flaws in Colorado's version and fixed them in the measure they are promoting, a reading of the proposal reveals only slight differences.

TABOR shrinks the state's ability to provide vital services for its citizens by placing a cap on revenues. The cap is determined by a formula based on population growth and the Consumer Price Index, which measures the cost of retail items that a state government normally doesn't buy, like toasters, televisions and clothing.

The carrot dangled before voters to approve TABOR is the promise

that state revenue above the cap will go back to taxpayers, but Coloradans have received tax refunds only some years. When refunds were sent, they averaged about \$200.

Meanwhile, fees for things such as hunting and fishing licenses, court fees and contractors fees skyrocketed by as much as 300-400 percent.

Colorado voters passed TABOR in 1992, but this fall those same voters passed a measure to suspend the law for five years to help the state get back on its feet financially. After 12 years of TABOR, here are some areas in which Colorado has suffered:

- The ratio of teacher salaries to average private-sector earnings is lower in Colorado than any other state.
- Colorado ranks 47th in K-12 education funding as a share of state income.

- Colorado ranks 50th in the nation in on-time childhood immunization rates.

- The high school graduation rate in Colorado fell from 76 percent in 1990 to 70 percent in 2004.

- From 1991 to 2005, total state support to colleges and universities in Colorado grew at the second-slowest rate in the nation – averaging 1 percent annually, far below rates of inflation and growth in college-age population.

- Colorado ranks 48th in the nation for state funds for higher education per \$1,000 of personal income. Colorado now invests \$3.96 per \$1,000 of personal income, compared to \$8.89 in 1992. If this trend continues, it is estimated that there will be no state support for higher education by 2010.

- Colorado's TABOR includes a mechanism that allows voters at any

government level to allow government to keep and spend surplus revenue. Most school districts, towns and cities, and many counties in Colorado, have asked voters to approve such measures over the 12 years of TABOR.

There are several places to get more information on TABOR. The OEA website (www.okea.org/LPO/TABOR/) has information and links. Other sources include The Community Action Project (www.okpolicy.org) and The Citizens Policy Center (www.citizenspolicycenter.org).

Also, the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities (www.cbpp.org/ssl-series.htm) has a 13-minute video that outlines how TABOR impacted Colorado called "The Real Story Behind TABOR."

Cline family returns to find exciting dual language program at Hennessey Elementary

By Patti Razien

Stacy Cline and her husband, Perry, both grew up in Hennessey. But after graduating from college and marrying, they moved off to raise a family in Colorado.

Ten years later, they found themselves coming home to a town jumping into a bold new adventure. The oil field and agricultural businesses were booming around their little hometown in Kingfisher County. The changes in a new population have the Hennessey school system facing many new challenges of educating a diversified student population.

While in Colorado, Perry operated a ranch and Stacy worked several jobs, including photographer, Sunday school teacher, baby-sitter, swim instructor, and interior designer. Their children, 9-year-old son Tyrel and 7-year-old daughter Charlie, were avid horseback riders and often had friends over for horseback riding excursions. After deciding that her love for children was first and foremost in her heart, Stacy decided to earn her master's in counseling from Adams State College in Alamosa, Colo.

As luck would have it in 2004, and after receiving her master's, Stacy received a phone call from a friend saying there was a counseling position open back home. When Stacy called to check on the job, she discovered Hennessey Elementary had just embarked on a cutting-edge, dual-language program that allows every student to become bilingual by graduation.

It was exactly where the Cline family needed to be.

Perry spoke fluent Spanish and Tyrel was picking up on the language. Stacy and Charlie knew very little, but



Stacy Cline and her daughter Charlie are excited to be back in Hennessey and part of a cutting-edge, dual-language program that teaches every child to be bilingual in English and Spanish.

the chance to be part of the program was exciting to Stacy.

The program, "Dos Amigos: A Dual Language Project," is designed to meet the linguistic and academic needs of all students by implementing a model language enrichment program. The project invites and empowers parents to become active partners in the education of their children.

Hennessey has 361 students in grades pre-K through 4th and almost 45 percent are Hispanic. This program is designed to keep native cultures alive while teaching students to be bi-

lingual. In addition, studies have shown that when students are learning two languages their test scores go up.

"It's a much easier transition for all of the kids," Stacy said. "It breaks down the barriers between the two groups, both language and socialization, and lets students learn from each other, as well as from their teachers."

Patrick Marc-Charles, Dos Amigos project director, said the voluntary program begins when the students enter first grade. Currently, the program is not offered after fourth grade, but there is a parent committee exploring

the feasibility of continuing the program into middle school.

Students in the dual language classes spend the first half of their day speaking only Spanish. Instructors wear blue aprons signifying that only Spanish is spoken. After lunch, the aprons come off and English becomes the spoken language.

Instructors do not speak anything but the language being taught at that time. If a student has a question but can't find the words in the proper language, the teacher will do everything possible to help them understand, aside from using the other language. This is where the students become the "experts" and help each other to understand, Stacy says.

In kindergarten and 1st grade, the languages are divided by subject: language arts and social studies in Spanish, and math and science in English. Second and third grades are slightly different because of scheduling. The self contained classrooms eventually are taught solely in Spanish.

After completing her second year in the program, Charlie has now surpassed her brother in her mastery of the Spanish language.

"Charlie's friends will call and they speak both English and Spanish to communicate," said Stacy. "They piece things together very well and they're first graders!"

Teachers of this dual language program include Chana Winkle, Samuel Anaya, Ryan Schenk, Lezlie Hardin and Renu Sahai. Lissette Orozco serves as a parent liaison. However, all teachers benefit from the program through a resource center that is provided for English Language Learners.

A grant is allowing Hardin, Schenk, Lexy Jobe and Denise Shimenck to work toward master's degrees in English as a second language (ESL).

One Hispanic parent involved in the program received her GED, graduated from college, and is now a teacher in a nearby community.

See "Dos Amigos" on Page 13

Diabetic child presents new challenges

By Doug Folks

Teach long enough and you'll see just about everything.

At least that's what Annette Williams thought. A first grade teacher in Harrah for 21 years, she had done her share of cleaning up after sick kids and kids who had accidents in the restroom. It just comes with the territory, she figures, especially with the younger students she teaches.

But earlier this fall, Williams was jolted by an entirely new responsibility. One of her students, 7-year-old Marie (not her real name), was diagnosed with Type 1, Level 1 diabetes. That meant Williams would not only have to closely monitor the child visually, but also check her blood sugar and give her daily insulin shots.

Needless to say, Williams was shocked and worried at the possibilities.

"It was a panicky type of feeling that it would be my responsibility," Williams said.

After fretting about the situation and wondering exactly what her rights were, Williams called her Oklahoma Education Association advocate. What she found out was, yes, she would have to monitor the child. But she also found good advice and strong support.

"Oh my gosh. I don't know what I would have done without the OEA," she said.

"I've never had to use OEA in 21 years, and now I know how vital they are. I've been on negotiations teams, and I know they are vital to that process. But as an individual who has to use them, never."

The first thing she was told to do was send an email to the district's special education director and the superintendent and request a written directive to check the child's blood sugar and administer insulin shots as prescribed by a doctor.

The administration did direct her to monitor Marie's health and give injections as required by Marie's



Harrah first grade teacher Annette Williams called the OEA when she found out she would have to check a student's blood sugar several times a day and administer insulin injections.

doctor. Williams also eventually received proper training, and she now has a plan to handle the day-to-day care of Marie, as well as any emergencies that may crop up.

Marie was diagnosed with diabetes in October. She is still in what doctors call the "honeymoon period" in which they are trying to find the correct medication levels to properly regulate the disease.

Because Marie is a special needs student, it is expected that school personnel will always have to closely monitor her health.

Throughout the day, Williams keeps a close eye out for signs that Marie's blood sugar is too low or too high. The other students in the class have also learned a great deal about Marie's disease and the symptoms of potential danger.

Williams checks Marie's blood at least two or three times a day and has checked it as many as 12 times before the final bell rang.

Everyday before lunch, Williams or aide Dawn Lanham gives Marie an insulin injection. The young girl's grandmother, who is raising her, packs a lunch that includes the proper number of car-

bohydrates for the amount of insulin the child will receive before eating. Williams or an aide must make sure Marie eats everything in her lunch box because it's packed to match the amount of insulin she received before lunch.

It has been a roller-coaster ride for Marie and her teacher. There was even an episode

when Marie's blood sugar dropped so low Williams nearly had to administer an emergency glucose injection. Williams and her class have a plan that includes students going to the office and to other classrooms to get help for their teacher should Marie have a serious problem.

"When I went to school to be a teacher, I wasn't told I would be giving shots or that I might have to catheterize a child. But the reality of it is sometimes they get sick," Williams said.

"Sometimes you're going to clean up vomit and sometimes they're going to have accidents in the bathroom.

You don't get used to it, but you know that's part of it."

As her condition has progressed, monitoring Marie becomes a heavier responsibility. In early December Williams was told she would have to check Marie's urine throughout the day, a process that would take Williams out of the classroom for 20 minutes at a time. She drew the line at this task and said no, and her principal agreed.

"It's nothing against Marie; I love her dearly," she said. "I love her as much as I do any of my other kids. She just needs more of my attention and that's not fair to the other kids."

There are two other diabetic students at Harrah's Virginia Smith Elementary. Williams says all three girls would be better served by having a full-time nurse in the building. Sadly, Harrah laid off two full-time nurses a few years ago during a financial crunch.

That leaves Williams, other faculty and staff, and even her classmates to



Annette Williams holds some of the devices she uses to test the blood sugar of her diabetic student and the injector pen (left) she uses to give insulin shots once a day to the student.

Can they make me do that?

You've just been asked to check a diabetic child's blood sugar several times a day and administer insulin injections as needed. Do you have to follow the directive or can you refuse without losing your job? Unfortunately, there is no black and white answer to that question. If your principal asks you to do something you don't think is in your job description, call your OEA advocacy specialist immediately. He or she will make sure your rights are protected and you are treated properly.

Edmond's Rumbaugh humbled by winning prestigious prize

By Doug Folks

No one in the Cheyenne Middle School gymnasium was more surprised to hear Jill Rumbaugh's name announced as a winner of the Milken Award than Rumbaugh herself.

And even now, several weeks after learning she had won the \$25,000 prize, Rumbaugh still can't believe she was chosen and continues to wonder why it fell her way.

"It was like ... Miss America, when they call her name? She's shocked, but she at least knew she was in the pageant. I didn't even know I was in the pageant," said the sixth-grade math teacher from Edmond. "I had no idea I had been nominated for such a thing."

Rumbaugh and Coweta's Shelley Self are Oklahoma's 2005 winners of the Milken Family Foundation National Educator Award. The award is given annually to education professionals for showing a dedication to further educational excellence. Winners are allowed to use the \$25,000 award in any way they choose.

While Rumbaugh insists she isn't worthy of the prestigious award, one need only spend a few minutes in her classroom to see she is a natural teacher.

"The most important (characteristic) to me is she is the perfect example of a teacher leader," said Debbie



Jill Rumbaugh reviews a math lesson with student Desiree Thompson at Edmond's Cheyenne Middle School.

Bendick, Cheyenne principal. "She is a creative thinker and a problem solver. And she goes about problem solving without a lot of fanfare, (but) with a lot of reflection."

Rumbaugh reads a good deal of professional journals and books and is a

great thinker, Bendick says. Any thoughts or ideas are always shared.

"Jill sends me a lot of emails that begin, 'I've been thinking, dot, dot, dot.'" Bendick said.

The emails cover a variety of topics, from common problems such as how much homework should be assigned to complex issues like trying to under-

See "Milken winner" on Page 16

Milken Award Winners

Self's parents cultivated her love for the arts

By Jeff Savage

The arts have been rewarded through the dedication of Shelley Self, and now the Coweta art teacher has been honored for her dedication to her students.

Self recently received the prestigious Milken Family Foundation National Educator Award. She and Edmond's Jill Rumbaugh were Oklahoma's winner's of the Milken award for 2005.

The award is given to education professionals for showing their dedication to further educational excellence. Self, like Rumbaugh, was awarded an unrestricted monetary award of \$25,000.

Self received her Milken award in a surprise announcement in front of faculty, students and community leaders.

"I was overjoyed, yet I felt guilty because there are so many other deserving teachers," she said.

Self teaches numerous and various



Milken Award winner Shelly Self is credited with implementing Coweta's first Advanced Placement (AP) course in Studio Art.

art classes in Coweta Public Schools. She is credited with implementing the first Advanced Placement course in Studio Art for Coweta High School. Also, she has taken her passion for art into the community by sponsoring an Art Club. Its members get to display their talent by painting windows in the community during the holiday season.

Self credits her parents for cultivating her love of the arts.

"They provided a few lessons and

were very influential taking me to concerts and exhibitions, instilling in me how to appreciate what was around," she said.

Self believes art gives a person the edge of not absolute right or absolute wrong.

"It is this gray area which is what a person needs to solve problems," she said.

Self is a proponent of integrating the arts throughout the entire school. She thinks teachers should understand that the more creativity that is integrated throughout a school's various curriculums, the stronger the overall curriculum will be.

Self believes you have to inspire students to want knowledge, which is difficult because if a student can't think past today then how do they know what they want for tomorrow. Self inspires students to do just that.

Our Rising Stars

Gilbert finds ways to deal with variety of abilities

By Bruce Treadaway

It is becoming commonplace for teachers to have grown up and come back to teach in the schools that they attended.

Sonya Gilbert, a product of Idabel and McCurtain County, is a prime example. She is on her own mission to help educate the students at Idabel's Primary South.

Gilbert was named one of four Rising Stars by the State Department of Education last September. She taught first grade for two years at Denison, Texas, and is now in her fourth year at Idabel. Just like so many other OEA members, she has a strong commitment and dedication to her teaching.

"I love it. It's so nice when you can come to school and look forward to it," the second grade teacher said. "It's great to know that I'm making a difference in my students' lives."

Her greatest challenge is what she calls "differentiated instruction." She has students on all levels of ability, and meeting the needs of every one of them is a tremendous challenge.

"I fully believe in high expectations," Gilbert said. "I've seen remarkable things occur. Just recently, I had a student not ready for second grade. Even though I thought she wasn't ready, she read 80 words a minute. That's outstanding for second grade."

Every day she meets with each of her groups and discusses the skills they need to work on. Twenty minutes are spent with each group while the other two groups are

rotating in their work stations. She does this without the use of a classroom assistant. Each student has his or her own schedule, and they are remarkable about following the schedule.

"It's never been an issue that they've been in different groups. They're not labeled; they're just in work station Number 1, Number 2 or Number 3. They cannot all be taught the same."

Gilbert's best advice for beginning teachers is, "Love what you do. Believe what you do. Value every student for the individual he or she is. Reaching a child is no mystery; it's just the love of doing it," she said.

"You have to figure out each
See "Gilbert represents" on Page 16



Idabel's Sonya Gilbert was named a Rising Star by the State Department of Education in September. Her best advice for new teachers is, "Love what you do. Believe what you do."



Durant fifth grade reading teacher Valerie Crabtree was recently named one of Oklahoma's Rising Stars by the State Department of Education. Here, she shares a laugh with students (from left) Kinsley Schiebe, Brianna Teel and Henry Tietz.

Crabtree says Oklahoma is a great place to teach

By Doug Folks

Valerie Crabtree faced a good amount of pressure to take her teaching skills to another state after she graduated from Southeastern Oklahoma State University. But Oklahoma and Bryan County is home and that's where Crabtree feels she belongs.

In fact, she advises new teachers to realize everything Oklahoma has to offer.

In September, Crabtree was one of four young teachers named Rising Stars by the State Department of Education. She is a fifth grade reading teacher at Durant Intermediate School, and she and her husband Zac are expecting twin girls in February. Zac is also an OEA member. He is Durant's Truancy Prevention Coordinator and the high school baseball coach.

Following is a brief interview with this fifth year teacher:

Education Focus: What were your thoughts when you heard your name called as a Rising Star?

Valerie Crabtree: "I had no idea. I was in complete shock. One of the

best honors of my life was when I was chosen Northwest Heights Teacher of the Year, because I have so much respect for the teachers I worked with there. After I was selected as Durant Teacher of the Year ... one of the goals I had was to win the Rising Star award, not for me, but for my school and my district."

EF: Who or what inspired you to become a teacher?

VC: "My third grade teacher, Mrs. Wood, was a special lady that stands out. I don't remember learning (anything specific) from her, but I remember how I felt around her. Everybody in her class felt respected and felt loved. I wanted to be that type of influence on kids."

EF: Is there a single piece of advice that you found helpful as a teacher?

VC: "One thing that my dad always told me, he said 'Valerie, we'll support anything that you do, just make sure you love doing it.' I love to teach, and I love to help kids, and I love to give them a pat on the back when they

See "OEA membership" on Page 11

National certification process identifies strengths, weaknesses



Rhonda Slawson (second from left) explains a science exercise with flowers to Cyril seventh graders (from left) Hannah Chambliss, Kymber Smith and Chelsie Wooten. Slawson recently earned her National Board Certification. She is the second Nationally Board Certified Teacher in this Caddo County school district.

Continued from Page 1

Cyril Public Schools where she taught first and third grades before moving to seventh grade last year. She is one of 212 Oklahomans to earn National Board Certification this year.

The National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) ranks Oklahoma 9th in the number of NBCTs with 1,289 counting this year's class. As a percentage of total teachers, Oklahoma ranks 5th in national board credentials.

In 1998, the Oklahoma Education Association was instrumental in creating state law that established the state's NBCT program. Funding for the program provides a \$5,000 annual bonus for 10 years for NBCTs and pays a stipend to cover the application fees for approximately 400 candidates each year.

Slawson admits that the \$5,000 is a great enticement to start the process, but for her it was the process itself that paid the most dividends.

"Once you get started, the learning experience was just unreal," Slawson said. "After I didn't pass the first year, a lot of teachers asked me, 'Well what do you think? Is it worth it?'"

"I told them even if I don't pass I've learned so much. It is unreal at how you can learn to critique your own teaching abilities. If that's all I ever get out of it, then it was worth it."

Going through the NBPTS process has made Slawson more objective, she says.

"(Teaching) is not a personal issue about me, it's an academic issue about the child," she said. "You have to remove yourself and stand outside of the globe and look in."

"You try to find where you're flawed or what can be improved. The process shows you how to develop your strengths and improve your weaknesses."

Third grade teacher Joanna McGuire is Cyril's only other NBCT. She served as Slawson's mentor and main supporter throughout the process.

Slawson says her family was also very instrumental in helping her earn the certification. She and her husband Jerry have two daughters at Cyril High School. One is a freshman, the other a senior. Jerry is in his first year as a geography teacher and coach at Central Junior High in Law-

ton after 19 years in Cyril.

Both he and Rhonda are OEA members. They graduated together from Cameron University, and started their first teaching jobs at Cyril, a school of less than 400 students in the southeast corner of Caddo County, about 30 minutes northeast of Lawton.

While Jerry always knew what he wanted to do, Rhonda found teaching as a natural fit during her college days. Now, she can't imagine doing anything else. Teaching is just who she is.

Rhonda Slawson hopes that her success will inspire her students to

achieve great things, too.

"(Since Cyril is) a small rural school, kids a lot of times set their expectations at mediocre. They go through the rut because most of the families are from the town, and their parents grew up here," she said. "Hopefully, I can show them that you don't have to live in a big city to continue to advance yourself. You can have higher expectations of yourself. You don't have to settle for mediocre."

Slawson doesn't plan to sit back and get comfortable with where she is just because she's now Nationally Board Certified.

"I've taught 20 years and I hope that I'm not through improving," she said. "And I don't want to quit learning and growing. If I give up on myself, how can I encourage my kids?"

The Class of 2005

The following OEA members earned National Board Certification in the Class of 2005. Each one will receive a \$5,000 stipend each year for the next 10 years as nationally certified teachers.

Allen-Bowden
Melinda Plummer
Allen-Bowden Elementary

Ardmore
Sharie Blankenship
Ardmore High

Barnsdall
Sayra Bryant
Barnsdall Elementary

Bartlesville
Patricia Anduss
Madison Middle School
Susan Beisley
Woodrow Wilson Elementary
Linda Dean
Richard Kane Elementary
Dedra Landon
Richard Kane Elementary
Monta Reynolds
Woodrow Wilson Elementary
Kari Sawatzky
Wayside Elementary
Sheila Stephenson
Wayside Elementary

Bixby
Jamie Morrison
Bixby North Elementary

Blair
Brenda Mahan
Blair Elementary

Broken Arrow
Jennifer Deal
Broken Arrow North High

Byng
Beverly Rinehart
Homer Elementary
Theresa Sanders
Byng High
Lisa Shores
Homer Elementary

Cache
Dixie Collins
Cache High School

Catoosa
Patti Yohe
J. W. Sam Elementary

Claremore
Jennifer Esau
Claremont Elementary

Comanche
Carla Thomas
Comanche Elementary

Cyril
Rhonda Slawson
Cyril Elementary

Deer Creek (Edmond)
Shawn Blankenship
Prairie Vale Elementary

Lisa Stroble
Deer Creek Elementary

Dewar

Vickie Tiger
Dewar Elementary

Dewey

Lola Imhoff
Dewey Middle School

Durant

Stacey Miles
Northwest Heights Elementary
Lisa Whitley
Northwest Heights Elementary

Edmond

Jinni Fields
Will Rogers Elementary
Donna Greenberg
Northern Hills Elementary
Sarah Holbrook
Washington Irving Elementary
Linda Hood
Santa Fe High
Sarah McClure
Ida Freeman Elementary
Sandra Wilson
Santa Fe High

El Reno

Janet Crider
El Reno High

Enid

Gayla Brakhage
Emerson Jr. High
Marie Pierce
Glenwood Elementary

Jenks

Suzanne Cyrus
West Elementary
Lori Hicks
Southeast Elementary
Todd Humphrey
Freshman Academy
Melanie Moody
Jenks High

Keys

Sherry Yount
Keys Elementary

Meeker

Gina Howard
Meeker Middle School

Midwest City/Del City

Linda Hinton
Soldier Creek Elementary
Michele Reinke
Sooner-Rose Elementary
Becki Thompson
Sooner-Rose Elementary

Moore

Rennie Brewer
Central Elementary
Aimee Edwards
Bryant Elementary

Tina Grooms
Winding Creek Elementary

Lisa Hunt
Apple Creek Elementary
Judy King
Central Elementary
Adam Mewhorter
Highland West Jr. High

Muldrow

Summer Thomas
Muldrow Elementary
Amy White
Muldrow High

Muskogee

Sarah McWilliams
Tony Goetz Elementary

Mustang

Barbara Bingham
Mustang Education Center
Roberta Combs
Mustang Valley Elementary
Nancy Matheson
Mustang Trails Elementary

Newkirk

Troylen Harris
Newkirk High

Noble

Tami Bush
Pioneer Elementary

Norman

Lorraine Carlton
Norman High North
Janet Feldt
Kennedy Elementary
Audrey Gramling
Monroe Elementary
Twyla Hart
Norman High North
Johnna Hartsook
Jefferson Elementary
Martha Rogers
Norman High
Carmi Scheller
Lincoln Elementary
Melanie Wilkinson
Irving Middle School

Norwood

Diana Garnatz
Norwood Elementary

Nowata

Rex Norris
Nowata Middle School

Okemah

Amy Duncan
Okemah High

Oklahoma City

Jennifer Lynch
Jackson Middle School

Okmulgee

Deborah Jennings
Okmulgee High

Oologah-Talala

Crystal Greer
Oologah-Talala Lower Elementary

Owasso

Melody Sixkiller
Ator Elementary

Perry

Joan Hubble
Perry Middle School

Ponca City

Deborah Short
Ponca City High
Teri Voge
Woodlands Elementary

Prague

Kimberly Riggs
Prague Middle School

Putnam City

Lorraine Bradley
Alternative Center
Joel Illgen
Western Oaks Middle School
Ingrid May
Overholser Elementary
Debra Shirley
Windsor Hills Elementary
Dolly Thomas
Western Oaks Middle School

Salina

Linda Bales
Salina Elementary
Margie Gardner
Salina Elementary

Sapulpa

Cecelia Cameron
Freedom Elementary

Stillwater

Tandi Memmott
Stillwater Jr. High

Stratford

Teresia Harrison
Stratford Jr-Sr High

Tahlequah

Sunne Dowling
Tahlequah High
Kathryn Kilpatrick
Sequoyah Elementary

Tecumseh

Gina Payne
Tecumseh High

Tulsa

Stefani Bartholomew
Park Elementary
Catherine Bercher
Carnegie Elementary
Lana Brown
Carver Middle School
Jill Davis
Kendall-Whittier Elementary

Leonardo De Andrade
Eisenhower International Elementary
Michael Easter

Thomas Edison Preparatory High
Ramona Gestland
Key Elementary
Dala Gober-Reeves
Will Rogers High
Carol Hughes
Academy Central Elementary
Jennifer McMillan
Kendall-Whittier Elementary

Tulsa Area Vo-Tech

Cynthia Ingram

Union

Jill Fitts
Jarman Elementary
Linda McGinnis
8th Grade Center
Kathleen Paige
Andersen Elementary
Kendall Roberts
Grove Elementary
Linda Snowbarger
Andersen Elementary

Vinita

Kelli McDaniel
Hall-Halsell Elementary

Waurika

Angela Rouse
Waurika Elementary

Waynoka

Kandee Almgren
Waynoka High

Woodward

Kenni Fewin
Early Childhood Center

Every effort was made to include every OEA member who earned National Board Certification this fall. However, the OEA does not generate the list and sometimes we cannot verify people on the official list as OEA members. If you are an OEA member and we left you off this list, we apologize and promise to run your name in the February issue of The Education Focus. Contact Editor Doug Folks at dfolks@okea.org, 800/522-8091 or 405/528-7785.

Oklahoma's National Board Certified Teachers, school and district administrators, and policy makers will take part in the NBCT Summit, March 30, 2006, in Oklahoma City. Let us know of your intent to attend by sending an RSVP by January 6, 2006 to Cindy Manning at cmanning@okea.org

HCR Committee takes minority recruitment to college campuses

By Marty Bull

Last year, when OEA President Roy Bishop asked the members of the Human and Civil Rights Committee to concentrate their efforts on recruiting minority teachers, they brainstormed ideas, developed a plan and moved from the meeting room to Oklahoma's college campuses.

"It's so important that all students have positive role models, but especially for our minority population," said Bishop. "I am so pleased that this committee has taken such an active role in recruiting teachers who can fill those roles."



Debbie Hogue-Downing

After much discussion, a plan that included publishing brochures outlining the importance of diversity in the teaching profession and recruitment activities on college campuses was designed. However, before it could be set into action, funding for implementation had to be secured. But committee members refused to let any roadblocks stand in their way.

While Student OEA member Melissa Honeycutt, from Northeastern State University (NSU), and Tahlequah EA's Jeanne VanVeen worked with NSU to secure funds to help defray printing costs, then-OEA Associate Executive Director Lela Odom found grant money that could be used for the project.

"Our hard work would have never

become a reality without Lela's assistance," said Chickasha's Phyllis Jefferson, HCR committee chair. "We're exceptionally grateful for her interest in this project."

To date, various committee members have distributed brochures and held recruitment activities at NSU, University of Central Oklahoma and Cameron University. Committee members and other volunteers staffed booths, handed out informational brochures, and encouraged students to consider teaching as a profession.

Debbie Hogue-Downing, an OEA-Retired member and VanVeen and Honeycutt took their message to college students at UCO and NSU respectively. Pam Ramey, a member of the Professional Educator's of Lawton (PEAL), had an opportunity to visit with over 600 high school students and their parents at Cameron's Preview Day.

The UCO event helped the committee fine tune their efforts. Hogue-Downing reported that some sort of giveaway was needed that would attract students to the booth. Because of her experience, a postcard was added to the materials that said – You Were 'Mint' to be a Teacher. The cards, with a piece of candy attached, were then used at other events.

VanVeen recruited Tahlequah teachers Lisa Yahola and Cindy Horsechief and retired teachers Carman Rich and Shirley Nero to assist at two recruitment opportunities held this fall.

"Having a diverse group of teachers in our booth helped attract a more diverse group of students," said VanVeen. "It was great to talk to so



Cindy Horsechief (second from right) and Lisa Yahola (right) volunteered to help Human and Civil Rights Committee members Melissa Honeycutt (left) and Jeanne VanVeen recruit minority students into the teaching profession at Northeastern State University.

many potential teachers."

Ramey was encouraged by the number of young men who expressed an interest in teaching.

"I was thrilled that several young African American men plan to be teachers," Ramey said. "I believe it was important for them to have someone who looked like them to talk to. The day was very successful."

Ramey and PEAL member Jeanne Wilson have already been contacted to work with Cameron's SOEA chapter to participate in a program that targets at-risk high school students.

When the committee meets again in

February there will be many positive stories to share and more events to schedule. Plans include visits at several more campuses before the end of the school year.

"Roy did an excellent job in selecting such a diverse committee," said Jefferson. "Every member contributed to the planning and did the job they said they would do. It was truly a group effort."



PEAL members Pam Ramey (left) and Jeanne Wilson display the banner used by members of the Human and Civil Rights Committee during campus recruiting visits.

Human and Civil Rights Committee Members

- Phyllis Jefferson, Chair,**
Chickasha UTA
- Jan Sands, Board Liaison**
Putnam City ACT
- Frank Brazwell**
Tulsa Union SPA
- Euva Dill**
Tulsa CTA (Retired)
- Debbie Hogue-Downing**
Shawnee ACT (Retired)
- Melissa Honeycutt**
SOEA Northeastern State Univ.
- Michelle Nuckolls**
Vinita CTA
- Pam Ramey**
Prof. Educators' Assoc. of Lawton
- Jennifer Seal**
Putnam City ACT
- Jeanne VanVeen**
Tahlequah EA
- Anne Witte**
OEA-Oklahoma City

NEA Member Benefits shifts gears to assist hurricane victims

By Liz Picone
NEA Member Benefits Consultant

NEA Member Benefits representatives this fall fielded a stream of calls from public school employees who contacted the NEA Hurricane Relief Helpline with reports of personal loss due to the two catastrophic storms, Katrina and Rita.

Member calls to the NEA Helpline were rerouted to the NEA MB Member Service Center in Gaithersburg, Md., to take advantage of the telephone capabilities of the Center which was already geared to handle a high volume of incoming calls.

To organize details gleaned from the personal reports, the NEA MB Service Center created an electronic database capturing information including the individual's name, contact numbers, uninsured loss, employment status, health care expenses, and any relocation details.

Prior to the closing of NEA's special relief telephone line on November 1, some 16,000 applications for grants were received from education employ-

ees in Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas.

NEA has noted that while the national fund-raising efforts were successful in meeting the goal of \$1 million, the needs were greater than anyone could have anticipated. Applications for assistance received prior to November 1 are now being reviewed by the appropriate NEA state affiliate based on the level of need and the date the request was received.

NEA Member Benefits and the NEA Members Insurance Trust have created special relief programs to help thousands of members and their families affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. A chart showing how NEA MB, the Trust, and suppliers are implementing the member assistance program for product participants from the affected areas can be viewed at www.neamb.com.

In total, 27 different programs set up provisions to help members cope with financial decisions in the aftermath of the two catastrophic storms. Those assistance efforts included:

- Waiving premiums for life insur-

president at the time. I saw how dedicated she was to help teachers who were in need. She really encouraged me to be a member, so immediately when I started teaching I signed up. It was one of the best decisions I ever made."

EF: What are your long-term goals in education?

VC: "I need to gain some more experience (in the classroom), but I want to become a principal because I want to support teachers. I think teachers need principals who support them and their cause. I've had wonderful principals at both schools I taught at and I've learned so much from both of them."

OEA membership is important

Continued from Page 7

need it. I think I'm like that because I was surrounded by so many wonderful teachers growing up."

EF: What advice would you give to college students who are thinking about becoming teachers?

VC: "I would tell young teachers to really think about what Oklahoma has to offer. There are a lot of good things going on in Oklahoma. It's a good thing to be a teacher here."

EF: Why is it important to be a member of OEA.

VC: "I did my student teaching under Nancy Johnson, who was the DEA



El Reno's Rose Witcher Elementary Student Council led a school-wide effort to collect bottled water for victims of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Students filled a school bus half-full of water and delivered it all to the Canadian County Red Cross which dispensed the water to hurricane victims. OEA member Chandi Epperley (far right) is a fourth grade teacher and Student Council sponsor at Rose Witcher.

ance plans until Sept. 1, 2006;

- Assisting in obtaining temporary supplies of medications in the pharmacy benefit program;
- Extending payment periods for casualty insurance premiums;
- Prioritizing calls from specific zip codes for faster service on questions about investments and credit;
- Extending the payment period in home financing loans;
- Offering a loan for eligible mem-

bers up to \$15,000 with the first 12 months interest-free; and

- Waiving withdrawal penalties for holders of NEA-sponsored certificates of deposit.

Employees of NEA Member Benefits and the Corporation jointly contributed more than \$72,000 to the NEA Hurricane Relief Fund. The amount included individual contributions and donations of employee leave days that were converted into cash.

OEA's 2004-05 Audit Report

The financial statements of the Oklahoma Education Association for fiscal year ended August 31, 2005, were audited by Luton and Co. An unqualified opinion was issued by the accounting firm stating that the financial statements present fairly the financial position of the OEA. A brief summary of the 2004-05 General Operating Fund follows:

Current Assets		\$2,363,319
Other Assets		1,900
TOTAL ASSETS		\$2,365,219
Current Liabilities		\$588,181
Long-Term Obligations		
Accrued Pension Obligation		777,431
Additional Min. Pension Liability		735,222
Net Assets:		
Unrestricted		
Undesignated		618,560
Designated for building and related expenses		381,047
Accumulated other comprehensive income (loss)		(735,222)
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS		\$2,365,219
Revenue:		
Memberships	\$5,315,295	
NEA Support	1,062,795	
Other	243,099	
Total Revenue	6,621,189	
Expenses	6,284,524	
Transfers for Fixed Assets	366,423	
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	(\$29,758)	

Fighting the monster

Former OEA board member and her husband try to hold their own against Wal-Mart

Delegates to last July's National Education Association Representative Assembly overwhelmingly approved a new business item that supports a national campaign to educate members on actions by Wal-Mart that are damaging to public schools. This is the second in a series of articles that will outline those issues.

By Doug Folks

When Randy and Mary Hamilton opened their grocery store, all they wanted was to own a family business and to provide Alva's citizens with a choice of where to buy groceries.

While they have been able to do that, the Hamiltons never expected the constant presence of, and quasi-harassment by, Wal-Mart employees.

At one time, Alva had four full-service grocery stores. But for one reason or another, each one closed, leaving a real void in the community. For three



When Mary and Randy Hamilton opened Alva's first supermarket after a three-year absence, Wal-Mart employees were some of the first people in the store, checking prices, the width of the aisles, how products were stocked, and every other detail of the store. Ten months later, Wal-Mart still sends people into Alva's Market at least twice a week to check prices.

years, Alva was without a full service grocery and the townspeople found themselves paying high prices at Wal-Mart or driving an hour and 45 minutes to Enid to shop.

ness for nearly 30 years, and he took it upon himself to try and bring it back. He contacted three chains and five independent grocery companies, and every company showed a genuine

market was needed badly in Alva. Not only did the community crave a better and cheaper place to shop, research showed a grocery was needed to attract other businesses.

Like a true entrepreneur, Randy recruited a handful of investors and built his own grocery store in the building that formerly housed Homeland.

"Wal-Mart employees were some of the first people in the store after we opened," Mary said. "They were checking prices, how we laid out the store, how wide our aisles were. They looked at everything."

Most of the people checking out the new Alva's Market were former employees of Randy's. He understood they were only doing what they had been directed to do by Wal-Mart bosses. But he made two requests of them while they were in his store: no hand-held scanners and no paper and pencil.

That didn't stop Wal-Mart employees. They took photos of merchandise

prices with cell phone cameras or walked through the store talking on their cell phones, reporting to someone on the other end what prices the Hamiltons placed on their products.

Just comparing prices wasn't enough for Wal-Mart.

"Two men who worked in produce at Wal-Mart told us, and this is a direct

quote, 'We're going to give you three months, and then we're going to kick you're a-- out of town,'" Mary said. "They said we could never compete with Wal-Mart because their pockets were deeper than ours will ever be."

Alva's Market has been open about 10 months, and the business is holding its own. It offers several benefits that Wal-Mart won't, such as a fresh-cut meat department, a fresh

deli/bakery, carryout and Saturday home delivery.

As you might guess, the Hamiltons work closely with local schools. Each month, classes decorate the store for the appropriate holiday; schools, restaurants and churches receive a 10 percent discount; and the store helps with teacher meetings when asked. Before Thanksgiving, all teachers were given a two-day, no-tax holiday at Alva's Market.

Still, Wal-Mart keeps a close eye on the Hamiltons.

"Wal-Mart sends employees once or twice a week to check out our prices," Mary said. "And that's just people we know. There may be others coming in that we don't know."

Since the Hamiltons opened Alva's Market, Wal-Mart prices have dropped. The Hamiltons advertise weekly on radio and in local newspapers. But the big box store doesn't advertise. It checks the Hamiltons' ads and prices in the store and adjusts their own prices accordingly.

Mary was encouraged when the

See "Hamiltons" on the next page

According to Wal-Mart's own annual report, the large chain receives 84 percent of its business from existing stores in the area.

years, Alva was without a full service grocery and the townspeople found themselves paying high prices at Wal-Mart or driving an hour and 45 minutes to Enid to shop.

"Once Homeland closed, Wal-Mart prices went way up," said Mary, a former member of the Oklahoma Education Association Board of Directors. "We would have people in the community tell us that it was cheaper to go to Enid and pay the gas to buy groceries because Wal-Mart prices were so high."

Randy Hamilton had worked in the Woods County town's grocery busi-

interest in opening a store in Alva. That is until they found out that Wal-Mart had a SuperCenter on the east edge of town. One by one, they all backed out, most because of Wal-Mart's presence.

Randy and Mary, who teaches computers and 6th grade social studies at Alva Middle School, refused to give up on the idea of Alva having a true grocery store. Randy talked with the local Small Business Administration and economic development leaders. What he found from conducting community research was that a full-service super-

Hamiltons just want to be left alone to run their grocery

Continued from previous page

National Education Association took a stand at last summer's Representative Assembly to educate its members about Wal-Mart. In fact, it was her story that helped convince the Oklahoma delegation to vote in favor of the "Wake Up Wal-Mart" campaign.

"I'm not in favor of boycotts myself, so I never wanted anybody to be boycotted," Mary said. "But I think people need to be aware of what Wal-Mart is doing to small businesses. As teachers, we need to know what they are doing to us."

Randy and Mary attribute Wal-Mart's tactics to the loss of several Alva businesses, including a pharmacy, variety stores, and even a lumber yard. According to Wal-Mart's own annual report, the large chain receives 84 percent of its business from existing stores in the area. *Business Week* magazine reported in October 2003 that two local super-

markets will close for every Wal-Mart SuperCenter that opens.

Mary said the NEA discussion on Wal-Mart "... needed to happen. It's an education issue when they give support to vouchers."

The Walton family, which owns Wal-Mart and Sam's Club stores around the country, are huge supporters of the voucher movement. According to *USA Today*, the family gave at least \$250 million to voucher efforts between 1998 and 2004.

Randy and Mary Hamilton are working hard to improve Alva's Market and provide something for shoppers they can't find anywhere else in town. They just have one request of Wal-Mart:

"Leave us alone. Let us run our store," Mary said. "We need to keep quality teachers in the classroom, and if teachers have to pick up a separate job or put in a business to survive, we shouldn't have to worry about Wal-Mart trying to close us down."

Dos Amigos involves parents, too

Continued from Page 4

The entire community benefits from the program. A Dos Amigos grant pays for night classes for English and Spanish. Anyone in Hennessey can check out materials through the Dual Language Resource Center. Parents may come in and have access to the computers and Internet. Stacy teaches a parents' workshop in English while Orozco translates it to Spanish. Marc-Charles offers a parenting class spoken only in Spanish.

All school notes are sent home in both English and Spanish. Translators are used to speak to parents, write letters home and interpret them when they are sent back.

"Three or four years ago when we had meetings, everyone sat on opposite sides," said Stacy. "Now everyone intermingles. We may still have a lan-

guage barrier, but everyone is working hard to change that.

"In Mexico, teachers are considered the top authority, they don't question anything. Here, those parents are part of the team ... (they're) volunteering as substitutes, aides and party helpers."

Stacy also teaches multicultural counseling through her classes in an effort to keep native cultures alive.

"Fifty years ago, English and Czech could be heard all over (Hennessey)," she said. "Now it's just English. Dual language will keep all cultures alive."

Hennessey boasts a unique school system where administrators, teachers, support professionals and parents have united together to bridge the gaps often caused by diversity. The marquee outside the Hennessey Public Schools says it all, "The best way to see the future is to create it."

OEA Advocacy Conference

February 24-25, Waterford Marriott Hotel

6300 Waterford Boulevard, Oklahoma City, OK
(East of Pennsylvania Ave. and South of 63rd Street)

Conference Agenda

Friday, Feb. 24

Registration – 6:30 p.m.
Opening Session – 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, Feb. 25

Registration and Continental Breakfast – 8 a.m.
Keynote Session – 9 a.m.
Breakout Session Times
10:30 a.m., 1 p.m., and 2:30 p.m.

Registrations are due by Friday, February 17, 2006

Register online at www.okea.org/AdvocacyConference, or complete this form and mail it to Advocacy Conference, c/o Melanie Engh, Oklahoma Education Association, PO Box 18485, Oklahoma City, OK, 73154. Cost is \$25 per person for certified employees, \$10 per person for support professionals, with the third person from the same local attending free. Registration includes continental breakfast and lunch on Saturday, February 25, and all conference materials.

Lodging

Conference participants are expected to make their own lodging reservations directly with the Waterford Hotel at a special rate of \$67, single or double occupancy, by calling 800/992-2009 or 405/848-4782.

The special rate is good only for reservations made prior to February 10. Space is limited, so call today.

For more information about the OEA Advocacy Conference, contact Melanie Engh at OEA Headquarters, 800/522-8091, 405/528-7785, or via email at mengh@okea.org.

Registration Form

Name _____

Home Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Home Phone () _____ School Phone () _____

Home Email address _____

Local Association _____

OEA Region _____

Handling violent students requires calm, preparedness



Heath Merchen

By Heath Merchen
Associate General Counsel

Our office receives numerous calls every year from teachers who are unsure of how to handle dangerous and violent students in their classrooms. In response, we have developed some general guidelines to help ensure your safety and the safety of other students in the classroom.

First, make sure you aren't in any way instigating the assault. Avoid any type of physical intervention with a student unless absolutely necessary to protect yourself or others from serious bodily harm. Never physically intervene to protect property, yours or the district's, from a student's violent outburst – simply get the other students out of the area.

Additionally, avoid grabbing things like pencils, pens or paper wads away from a student; don't stand in the student's way to prevent them from leaving; and keep a comfortable distance between you and your students at all times, respecting their personal space. Above all, avoid even a light touch when you are angry or agitated. A student will often interpret a light touch as an aggressive act if accompanied by a raised voice or angry look.

Second, if you are assaulted by a junior high or high school student, call

Contracts on disk earn local rebates

Bargaining locals that send their negotiated agreements electronically to the OEA are eligible for a \$1-per-member rebate. The contracts will be placed in a searchable data base for bargaining teams to access. Email your contract or send it on disk to Debbie Moore at dmoore@okea.org, or to OEA, PO Box 18485, Oklahoma City, OK, 73154.

the police. It is a crime and shouldn't be overlooked – even for special education students.

Granted, if a student is autistic or severely disabled to the point that the assault was not intentional, no charges can be pursued. However, if the student knows right from wrong and in-

From Your Counsel

tentionally attacked you, call the police. If you don't call first, there is a good chance that the student or the student's parent will call the police and accuse you of assault.

If you are assaulted by an elementary age student, whether or not the police will respond depends on the facts of the case, the severity of the assault, and the student's mental state. Be aware that many jurisdictions will

not charge or prosecute elementary age students.

Third, if you are dealing with a student who you believe is likely to present a danger to you or other students, interact with your principal and staff to develop a building response plan. Arrange for other staff members

to respond if you are in trouble, plan out

interventions that will help avoid violent behavior, and work on a disciplinary progression designed to protect yourself and your students.

Additionally, especially for students with a history of sexual offenses, make arrangements with your staff so the student is monitored closely throughout the day. Try to make sure the student is never left unattended.

Finally, if your administration is not

cooperative and directs you to interact with a dangerous student without any support or training, draft a letter to the district stating your concerns objectively. An OEA advocate can assist you so you avoid using any emotion-laden language. The letter should simply put the district on notice of the danger posed to you and your students and should request interventions on behalf of the district to provide a safe working and learning environment.

If the above steps don't help to resolve the problem, contact your OEA Advocate Specialist. We can often work with staff members and even resistant administrators to find other solutions in even the most extreme cases.



Discover the Savings at www.okea.org.





American Fidelity Assurance Company

Providing Quality Products and Services to the

OKLAHOMA EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

American Fidelity Assurance Company has been providing financial security solutions to the Oklahoma Education Association since 1969. With insurance products and services developed specifically for the education employee, our commitment to the members of the Oklahoma Education Association is to continue to provide quality products and services.

- **Disability Income Insurance** • **Accident Only Insurance**
- **Tax-Deferred Annuities**
- **Life Insurance** • **Section 125 “Cafeteria” Plans**

 **American Fidelity Assurance Company**

A member of the American Fidelity Group®

Oklahoma City Branch Office

7510 Broadway Ext., Ste. 202 • OKC, OK 73116
(405) 416-2116 / (800) 933-1853

Tulsa Branch Office

4606 S. Garnett, Ste. 100 • Tulsa, OK 74146
(918) 622-6994 / (800) 365-2782

Lawton Branch Office

1 S.W. 11th Street, Ste. 195 • Lawton, OK 73501
(580) 248-0011 / (800) 288-1239

Visit the enhanced
neamb.com
for exclusive benefits
and services.

Home | About NEAMB | OWL | NEA | Member Services | Contact Us | Privacy Policy

neamb.com Member Benefits

Log In | Register Now | My Account | Express Finder

Insurance Programs | Financial Services | Member Discounts | Tools and Tips | Free Giveaways | Featured Offers

Helping make members' lives better

For all you do, you deserve a world of benefits, from your first day as a member to the day you retire, and beyond. Thanks to the buying power of 2.7 million members, you enjoy exclusive access to special savings on insurance, loans, car rentals, mortgages, credit cards and more...

Whether you need help making your money go further, providing for your loved ones, or taking advantage of the special discounts and giveaways available exclusively to you—we're here to serve you.

It's all part of the NEA Member Benefits commitment to meeting the needs of you and your family.

neamb.com

(Plus, enter to win our
FREE giveaway to boot.)

Check out the exclusive www.neamb.com Web Site today. It is easy to find out about all of the great products and services, giveaways, and information available to NEA members.

Log on to the Site today for:

- Faster and easier navigation with better access to information
- **Tools & Tips** section with many different financial calculators and a wealth of consumer information developed exclusively for members
- Enhanced pages for Insurance, Financial Services and Member Discount Programs
- Expanded **Free for Members** section featuring the popular monthly giveaway and other free member-only offers
- Online account access, online quotes and more

Visit www.neamb.com and register to win our monthly giveaway.

neamb.com Member Benefits
www.neamb.com

HELPING MAKE MEMBERS' LIVES BETTER

For more information, call 1-800-637-4636, Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. (or Saturday, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.) ET



Good Tunes

Karen Stevens was the winner of the Bose stereo giveaway at the 2005 OEA Convention. In her fourth year as a teacher, Karen began her first year at Broken Arrow this past August. She teaches English to students with learning disabilities for half a day at Childers Middle School and the other half at Broken Arrow High School. Stevens is a member of the Broken Arrow Education Association.

Milken winner always wanted to be a teacher

Continued from Page 6

stand a child whose problems aren't easily defined.

Rumbaugh attended Oklahoma State University after graduating from John Marshall High School in Oklahoma City. She says she always wanted to be a teacher, and graduated from OSU with a bachelor's in elementary education and a middle school/junior high math endorsement.

While she calls herself a "math geek," she probably doesn't fit the stereotype of a math teacher. Colleagues tease her about a chaotic classroom, but Bendick defines Rumbaugh's class as just "looser" than others.

"I don't know that I have any one approach that I use on a given day," Rumbaugh said of her teaching style. "I'm very hungry for new ways, new methods, new approaches. I don't want to be rigid."

Rumbaugh has heard that winning the Milken Award opens a lot of new doors. But for now, at least, she has no plans of doing anything different.

"It is so humbling, because I think I'm so undeserving. I'm not anywhere near the teacher I'd like to be," she said. "Everyday I walk out of here knowing that there's so much more that I want to do, so much more I could be doing, should be doing."

Gilbert represents bright future students of McCurtain County

Continued from Page 7

child's needs. It's disheartening to realize the home lives they come from, and they'll tell you all about it. When they come here, this is their safe haven. I may be the only positive thing they see each year."

As an OEA member, she enjoys every publication that she gets. She knows that she has protection, and feels that she has a community of pro-

fessionals backing her.

"The OEA is on our side, and the OEA is constantly doing things to improve public education."

With Rising Stars like Sonya Gilbert, the future of public education in McCurtain County is bright and promising for the challenging mixture of ethnic and socioeconomic students she works with each day.