

# OEA

An affiliate of the  
National Education Association

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# The Education Focus

For the membership of the Oklahoma Education Association

February 2005

## Ready to keep the promise

*OEA prepares for 2005  
legislative session  
with \$245 million agenda*

By Stacy Martin

There is little doubt that the Oklahoma Education Association's 2004 Legislative results were among the best, if not the best in decades. The session's highlights included passage of fully-paid individual health insurance followed closely by a four-year plan to raise Oklahoma teacher pay to the regional average salary.

To make those two initiatives a reality involves a little more effort, however. The state must earmark approximately \$250 million in the next few years to fully implement those two commitments made to every Oklahoma educator. When the salary bill passed, funding was not formally attached. That means that three little words will carry great importance:

*Keep the promise.*

"It seems simple enough," said Roy Bishop, OEA President. "But OEA doesn't intend to leave anything to chance, which is why urging lawmakers to keep their promise will be a top priority for us.

See "OEA's agenda" on Page 5



## OEA's most loyal fan takes up the challenge

By Doug Folks

There may be no one more dedicated to the success of the Oklahoma Education Association than Lela Odom.

Just like fans that are so fiercely loyal to their college alma maters that their blood runs in school colors, OEA's new executive director bleeds the colors of the Association.

When Odom was named to the top administrative post of the National Education Association's Oklahoma affiliate

in December,

it was the next logical step in her career. She has spent her entire professional life working for the OEA,

whether it was as a member while teaching in Moore or during a 27-year



Lela Odom

career on the OEA staff.

And Odom can't fathom doing anything else.

As executive director she now has, in her words, the awesome responsibility of leading the state's largest organization dedicated to promoting and protecting public education employees. Her appointment comes at a time when schools are facing their toughest challenges from a federal government determined to enforce the so-called No Child Left Behind Act. In state, education will be learning to work with perhaps the most conservative state legislature ever as the Republican party now makes up

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The Education Focus

OEA's all-member publication

# OEA will maintain its focus

*By Roy Bishop  
OEA President*

With the changing of the majority party in the Oklahoma House of Representatives, many of you have asked how OEA will change its legislative agenda now that the Republicans are in the majority.

The answer is we won't.

The Oklahoma Education Association is committed to teacher quality, high standards and respect for the profession. We will not back down from our commitment to those ideals. We will continue to support programs that are successful for

kids, teachers and schools. That's what core values are all about.

During the last legislative session, commitments were made for salary and insurance benefits. We will work diligently to see that these commitments are carried out. Adequately funding education so that every child has access to a constitutionally adequate education is what we are about. Kids fall through the cracks when games are played with funding.

We've said for a long time that early childhood education, class size and

teacher quality make a difference in the lives of children. People from a variety of different venues are starting to promote these areas as well – from *Education Week* to newspapers all across our state – the issues are out there and they need to be addressed. These are not partisan issues.

We must also realize that there will be all types of ideas to address education's needs. Some of them will be more positive than others, but we must be prepared to discuss all of them. By sitting quietly, without input, we help bad ideas



*OEA President Roy Bishop*

become bills, and then those bad bills become law. Providing input to prevent a bad law is better than having to implement a bad law.

We do recognize that this is a new era in Oklahoma government. Not only will we be working with new leaders in the majority party, we will also be working with a number of new legislators in both parties of both Houses.

Many of you will have new senators and representatives, some of you may have both. There will be new Republicans and new Democrats who don't know who you are and what you do. It's important that we build new relationships with all of our legislators. These men and women need to hear from you.

I want to challenge all of our OEA members to become actively involved with the members of the legislature. Refusing to get involved because your representatives are Republican and you're Democrat or they're Democrat and you're Republican is inexcusable. Schools have always been the great equalizer in a democratic society. Oklahoma's kids and schools depend on us to be the leaders in education. After all, we are their teachers.

## American Fidelity revises disability plans

American Fidelity's Disability Plan, as offered to members through the Oklahoma Education Association, will avoid a rate increase in 2005 by offering a slightly longer elimination period.

OEA and American Fidelity

### NEA Member Benefits to give away DC trip

NEA members can register anytime during the month of February 2005 in the "Free Giveaways" area of the NEA Member Benefits Web Site ([www.neamb.com](http://www.neamb.com)) for a chance to win a four-day trip for two to the nation's capital.

The Washington, D.C., vacation package includes a three-night stay at a conveniently located hotel; a complimentary dinner for the winner and guest; two tickets to a Smithsonian IMAX presentation; the Official Guide to the Smithsonian and reading list; and two, two-day Tourmobile passes that offer narrated sightseeing to 25 sites along the National Mall. (Air travel and ground transportation – other than the Tourmobile – are not included.)

Giveaway entry begins on February 1, 2005, and ends on February 28, 2005. No purchase is necessary to enter.

agreed to increase the elimination period for illness from three to seven days on its most popular Disability Plan. The first-day coverage for accidents or hospitalization will remain unchanged, and the plan will continue to pay benefits to age 65.

Disability plans feature an elimination period, or in other words the number of consecutive days of disability before benefits are payable.

"The decision to make this change was based on the amount of available sick leave most Oklahoma education employees have," said Charles McCauley, OEA associate executive director. "Also, both the OEA and American Fidelity wanted to avoid a rate increase based on current elevated claims."

McCauley added that American Fidelity has also agreed to enhance and

more actively market less expensive plans to members, including plans with elimination periods of 14, 30 and 60 days. These plans may be more appropriate to meet the needs of members with larger accumulated sick leave balances, he said.

The less expensive plans also feature increased coverage amounts for their Accident Physicians Expense Benefit and Accidental Death Benefit.

The OEA and American Fidelity meet annually to review member plans for financial adequacy, claims experience and to assure that the plans are meeting the needs of OEA members, McCauley said.

For more details on the new enhanced plans, please contact the American Fidelity state sales office at 800/933-1853 or speak with your local American Fidelity representative.

# OEA

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# McAlester ACT takes uncommon approach to low reading scores

By Bruce Treadaway

William Gay Elementary in McAlester has not been able to meet its Academic Performance Index for two years, due to lower than required reading scores.

While this may seem to be a common story among Oklahoma public schools, the effort to correct the prob-

lem was anything but common. The situation became very personal for the McAlester Association of Classroom Teachers (McACT) and its members, especially those at William Gay. Upon finding that their school had

come up short for the second year, OEA members at William Gay asked the McACT for assistance. The local Association's executive committee met with several William Gay teachers and a plan was developed that combines the efforts of McACT, McAlester school administration and the community.

The McAlester Super Council was created, comprised of McACT building representatives and officers, and Superintendent Dr. Lucy Smith. The Super Council began taking steps to address William Gay's low reading scores. McACT provided books to the school, solicited

donations from the community, spoke to civic groups and churches about assisting, enlisted volunteers, and asked Sheri Burden's Advanced Placement English class at McAlester High School to write tests that went along

with the donated books.

Volunteers for the program completed training provided by the school system.

This short-term project is expected to end with the school year, but it is hoped the results will be long-lasting.

If successful, it could be used at other schools in the McAlester system that might wind up in the same situation as William Gay.

Positive side effects of this project have been:

- Extra books for William Gay Elementary provided by OEA's Read Across America program;
- Increased school contacts in the community;
- A recommended reading program



McAlester ACT executive committee member Bonnie Strickland (left) and President Debbie Williams are helping lead an uncommon approach to low reading scores in McAlester.

for the district; and

- Increased motivation for William Gay students to read.

The McACT heard its members, made a plan, worked the plan and continues to do so. For some time now, community organizing has been a focus of the OEA/NEA, and this McAlester project is an example of how a local can work with a school and community to improve the situation for both students and members.



William Gay Elementary principal Pat Gaines (left) and Stephanie Giddings-Waller, McAlester ACT's building representative at the school, are part of a team comprised of school administrators, ACT members and community members working to improve reading scores at William Gay.

## *Tsunami relief to benefit affected teachers, students*

Education International (EI) has established the Tsunami Relief Program, which will provide assistance directly to teachers, students and schools in areas of South Asia that were devastated by the December earthquake and tsunami.

Members and their friends and families who are looking for a way to help victims of the tsunami disaster may send checks in any amount, made out to NEA with "EI Relief Program" written in the memo line. The NEA will forward all donations to EI.

Mail your checks to NEA International Relations, 1201 Sixteenth Street,

NW, Washington, DC 20036.

All the money will go directly to affected teachers, students and schools. This a unique opportunity for NEA to provide assistance directly to colleagues and education infrastructures in the affected region.

Education International is the largest global teacher organization representing over 29 million education personnel from all education sectors – preschool to university – through 345 member organizations in 165 countries and territories.

Donations are not tax-deductible. Inquiries may be sent to oir@nea.org.

## NEA launches enhanced website

The National Education Association recently launched a greatly enhanced website with the best professional resources for educators and their communities.

Since 2002, NEA has maintained a public website and a member-only, professional resource site. The new site – [www.nea.org](http://www.nea.org) – combines and expands upon the best features of both sites.

In keeping with NEA's commitment to educators and students, the new site includes resources for teachers and education support professionals, as well as for parents, the press and the public.

NEA members will be able to take advantage of member-only discounts ranging from online professional development to long distance service discounts and other special offers.

# The name game

## Potential harm far outweighs the good of Taxpayer Bill of Rights

By Stacy Martin

A wolf in sheep's clothing is lurking among the many issues that the 50th Oklahoma Legislature will tackle during this spring's session.

Like an ugly monster hiding behind a pretty mask, this bill will appeal to the masses by calling itself something that it is not. It has the potential to fool those who remain uninformed of this bill's true personality, said Oklahoma Education Association President Roy Bishop.

The Taxpayer Bill of Rights, known as TABOR, is an issue that will be considered soon by the state Legislature.

"The so-called Taxpayer Bill of Rights will probably go down as one of the worst euphemisms ever conceived," said Bishop. "What this will actually do is lock Oklahoma's public education system in the cellar."

Oklahoma currently ranks 50th nationally in teacher pay and 44<sup>th</sup> in the country in per pupil spending.

The Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs and the Americans for Prosperity Foundation, a pair of ultraconservative think tanks, recently released a study that questions the growth of state spending over the last 10 years. Sen. Randy Brogdon, R-Owasso, has said he plans to introduce legislation proposing a constitutional amendment that would implement a TABOR plan similar to one in place in Colorado. However, TABOR could take other legislative forms.

What's particularly dangerous about TABOR is that its supporters have given it a catchy name to appeal to voters. The idea is to paint TABOR opponents as opposing taxpayers' rights. Nothing could be further from the truth, Bishop says.

"Taxpayers have come to expect adequate government services. They

have the right to know this issue will mean drastic and painful reductions in government services," he said.

TABOR puts a strict cap on state taxation and spending. Any revenues the government holds beyond those limits must be rebated to taxpayers. The amounts vary but typically average a few hundred dollars per citizen.

While the idea of receiving some unexpected cash is certainly appealing to everyone, the actual cost of those rebates is a stranglehold on government services at every level – city, county and state. The state of Colorado enacted a TABOR in 1992. After a short honeymoon period, the truth began to emerge.

In recent years, Colorado has seen many government services become paralyzed or fall to unacceptable levels.

TABOR can have the following consequences:

- Make it difficult or nearly impossible for the state to meet the critical needs of the state's citizens, including public education, public health services, roads and

### Staying connected

During the Legislative session, the OEA provides a weekly legislative hotline message and publishes a weekly update on its website. Both messages are normally changed every Friday by 4 p.m.

Visit [www.okea.org](http://www.okea.org) for the weekly legislative update, call 800/522-8092 for the weekly hotline message, or, call your regional Legislative and Political Organizing Specialist.

highways, fire, police and other emergency services. City, county and state services at all levels are affected.

- Make it nearly impossible for the state to react appropriately to fluctuations or unusual needs in the state economy.
- Make it virtually impossible to save for a rainy day.
- Make it difficult to have any fiscal flexibility.

The state of Colorado is now struggling with the inflexibility and restrictive spending limits imposed by TABOR, according to Wade Buchanan, of the Bell Policy Institute, a nonpartisan Colorado

institute that advocates for the fiscal health of government.

Colorado's elected leaders are seeking to modify TABOR to restore funding relief and flexibility to the state's budget, according to Buchanan, and now face the difficult task of trying to work against a Constitutional Amendment to do so.

"Our plan is for OEA and its members to convince the Oklahoma State Legislature not to make the mistakes that go along with TABOR," said Bishop. "It would be very difficult to undo the harm it would place on our state."



## Make sure they know how you feel

It is important for teachers and support professionals – the people in the trenches of education – to maintain a continual dialog with their local legislators. Politicians work hardest for the constituency groups that maintain the highest level of communications, so it is vital they hear from you on a regular basis.

The OEA website includes a number of links to local, state and national elected leaders. You can even find out who your state representative or senator is by typing in your nine-digit zip code or your street address and zip code.

From [www.okea.org/LPO/index.htm](http://www.okea.org/LPO/index.htm), you can access websites for the Oklahoma House of Representatives or Senate and send email to legislators and the governor as well as other state elected officials.

### Phone numbers

State Senate, 405/524-0126

State House of Representatives, 405/521-2711, or 800/522-8502

### Email

Visit [www.okea.org/LPO/index.htm](http://www.okea.org/LPO/index.htm) and click on "Contact your legislators and the governor" for access to the directory.

### Important websites

[www.okea.org](http://www.okea.org)

House – [www.lsb.state.ok.us/house/ohorpage.htm](http://www.lsb.state.ok.us/house/ohorpage.htm)

Senate – [www.oksenate.gov/](http://www.oksenate.gov/)

Governor Brad Henry – [www.governor.state.ok.us](http://www.governor.state.ok.us)

# OEA's agenda seeks to keep the promises of past legislation

*Continued from Page 1*

“There is no doubt that honoring these commitments will help achieve OEA's core values of teacher quality, high standards and respect for the profession.”

Overall, the \$245 million OEA legislative agenda seeks to keep past promises as well as create new ones to forge a better education system for Oklahoma teachers.

As always, the organization's efforts will focus on increasing common education's share of the state budget. Further, it seeks to fortify teacher and

support professional ranks to levels that existed before the state's budget crisis.

Other priorities will include replenishing the ad valorem reimbursement fund, maintaining mentor teacher stipends, National Board Certification incentives, and strengthening the Oklahoma Teacher Retirement System.

Also, the OEA supports creation of a task force to study a healthy student lifestyle incentive to encourage better choices among school children.

*Following is a complete overview of the 2005 OEA Legislative Agenda:*

## Respect for the profession

**OEA recommends:**

- ▶ Funding the first year of the four-year plan to reach the regional average salary for teachers. Cost: \$55 million.
- ▶ Honoring the commitment to pay educators' increased individual health insurance premiums. Cost: \$27 million.
- ▶ Making teaching competitive with other professions by introducing state coverage of dependent health insurance premiums at 25 percent. Cost: \$32 million.
- ▶ Restoring smaller class sizes by reinstating 1,000 teaching positions to meet state class size mandates. Cost: \$36 million.
- ▶ Beginning a three-year phase-in of blended individual insurance premiums. Cost: \$10 million.

## High standards

**OEA recommends:**

- ▶ Providing bilingual education funds to help students meet federal performance benchmarks. Cost: \$2 million.
- ▶ Implementing Gov. Brad Henry's 2004 Math Initiative. Cost: \$2 million.
- ▶ Replenishing the ad valorem reimbursement fund to maintain high standards in our schools. Cost: \$40 million.
- ▶ Funding mentor teacher stipends to assure a strong start for new teachers. Cost: \$1 million.

## Teacher quality

**OEA recommends:**

- ▶ Continued funding of financial incentives that have distinguished our state for its high level of nationally board certified teachers. Cost: \$2 million.
- ▶ Raising support professional pay and restoring 500 support jobs so classrooms can return to normal. Cost: \$38 million.

## Other priorities

- ▶ The Oklahoma Education Association will continue working to increase common education's share of the state's general revenue budget and that of any newly enacted revenue sources.
- ▶ A strong tax base is vital. OEA will oppose schemes to divert money schools need.

# Republicans get their turn at leadership

## *Salary bill funding will be a priority*

*By Stacy Martin*

For the first time in over 80 years, the Republicans have assumed leadership of the Oklahoma House of Representatives. Recently, new House Speaker Todd Hiett laid out his priorities to *The Education Focus* for the 2005 legislative session.

The Kellyville Republican said his agenda will focus on several issues, including funding the four-year salary plan for teachers, tort reform, income tax cuts and reducing the size of state government, a proposition that could include public education.

He said he believes these initiatives will help economic growth.

“My mission here as a state leader is to try to put in place a set of policies that will strengthen our economy, attract better jobs, better wages, raise the water so that all ships will rise, including Oklahoma's educators,” said Hiett.

Hiett suggested that the size of state government can be reduced, but declined to cite examples.

He counts public education among the state government services that should be streamlined. He did not suggest any specific reductions.

“I want to assure that the dollars we do invest in common education in Oklahoma do go to the classroom,” he said. “I feel very strongly that that is the key factor in terms of generating well-educated youth for future success of the state of Oklahoma.

“That is where the action is. We'll be looking at all issues that will take the level of excellence that we already have to even greater levels.”

Hiett, whose wife Bridget is a



*Speaker Todd Hiett (R, Kellyville)*

third grade teacher in Kellyville, said there are stereotypes placed on teachers by some legislators at the State Capitol.

“But I know that (those labels) are not accurate. Teachers are very practical people. Most simply have a desire to do a good job. They truly care for the children they are shepherding through the education process.

“They are not that caught up in Democrat versus Republican, liberal versus conservative, or any of the catch phrases that come with politics. They simply want a good environment in which to do their jobs and they want to be appreciated for their job performance.”

Hiett, who reaches term limits in 2007, intends to make the most of his final term as a state legislator. He holds the distinction of being the first Republican Speaker in the State House in over 80 years.

“We all want to invest in quality education,” said Hiett. “But we must have the resources to invest. As we become a more prosperous state, we'll have the revenue to invest in education that we would like to.”

# Odom brings long history of success

*Continued from Page 1*

the majority in the State House of Representatives.

Ask anyone who has worked with Odom and they'll say she is not only up to the task, but it is her time to take the spotlight.

"Lela is in many ways a mentor to me," said David DuVall, whom Odom is replacing. DuVall left the OEA to take the executive director's position of the Colorado Education Association. Odom was DuVall's first UniServ Director when he became active in the Professional Educators of Norman (PEN) and the OEA during the late 1970s. The two of them grew up together, professionally, while working on the OEA staff.

"Lela is one of the best organizers I

*"Lela Odom is uncompromisingly ethical and holds herself to the highest professional standards."*

David DuVall  
former OEA Executive Director

have ever known," DuVall said. "She also has a deep love of the Association and commitment to its members. I am comforted to know that Lela has assumed the role of executive director.

"She is uncompromisingly ethical and holds herself to the highest professional standards."

OEA President Roy Bishop says Odom has a long history of success in the Association, as illustrated by the trust and admiration she enjoys among other leaders in the education community.

"Lela has the ability to bring about discussion and insight to all issues our Association faces. She will work tirelessly to make sure the Association is heading in the right direction," Bishop said.

"We're going to do good things as an Association because she will be heading up an organization with a great staff and dedicated members."

The pride and conviction Odom has



*As the new executive director, Lela Odom says the OEA has the staff, elected leaders and committed membership to serve as the main voice of public education.*

for the OEA is immediately clear when she talks about the Association and the job she faces.

"I love this organization and what it stands for," she said. "I couldn't be happier to get to work with our leaders and our staff. It's the best I could hope for."

At the same time, the magnitude of the position is not lost on Odom.

"It's a big responsibility," she said of leading OEA, which is comprised of nearly 40,000 members and a staff of 60. "I feel a real obligation to our membership, and I promise that I won't let them down."

Odom's immediate goals for the Association reflect the legislative agenda

of the organization. She wants to ensure funding is secured to pay for individual health insurance premiums for education employees, and then start working to add family coverage. Funding the governor's plan to take Oklahoma teacher pay to the regional average is also high on her list.

Long-range, Odom is committed to helping the state find permanent funding for adequate and equitable education funding.

"Membership in our Association is always a priority," she said. "With strong membership, we have power at the bargaining table, power at the legislature and power with everyone we

*"I love this organization and what it stands for. I couldn't be happier to get to work with our leaders and our staff. It's the best I could hope for."*

Lela Odom  
OEA Executive Director

deal with. What we say has a whole lot more impact when we have high membership."

Odom is planning no changes to OEA's current system of service delivery. She believes the Association is on the right track and just needs to continue following through on the programs in place.

"I want OEA to be *the* voice in Oklahoma education," she said. "I want OEA to offer the best legal advice. I want OEA to be the best at advocating for individuals and their rights. I want OEA to be known for not only offering the best professional development, but also for helping schools be the very best that they can be."

Odom says the pieces are in place to provide that reality.

"I think we are good enough to do all those things," she said. "We have the staff, the elected leaders and the membership to help us be the best."

## *From member to executive director*

Lela Odom has spent her entire professional life working for the Oklahoma Education Association. Whether as a dedicated member or in a variety of positions on the OEA staff, she brings a wealth of experience to the position of executive director.

Odom was born and raised in Oklahoma City. After graduating from Southeast High School, she obtained a bachelor's degree in elementary education in 1971 from Central State University (now known as University of Central Oklahoma).

After graduating from CSU, she taught second and third grades at Kelly Elementary in Moore. Odom was a very active OEA member, serving as building rep and in various leadership positions in the Moore ACT, including president.

Odom joined the OEA staff in November 1977 as a UniServ director, working with local Associations in Oklahoma, Cleveland, Garvin, Grady and McLain Counties. In 1987, she was promoted to UniServ manager. As a manager, she supervised all areas of

OEA services except Legislative and Political Organizing.

Lela was widowed in September 2004 when her husband Bob passed away after a short illness. She has close family ties to her sister, Linda Scott, who is an eighth grade math teacher at Brink Junior High in Moore; her niece, Jennifer White, who is a second grade teacher at Harvest Hills in Putnam City; and her nephew, Derrick Scott, who runs an insurance business in Tulsa and is married to a former teacher.

# Lightning strikes twice

By Bruce Treadaway

Latta Schools has long been known for its high school athletic teams, but it is rapidly becoming known for its quality of teachers, too.

This year, longtime OEA/NEA member Stephen Stevens joined his wife, Susie Stevens, in the honored ranks of National Board Certified Teachers (NBCT).

Stephen has been honored in the past as Oklahoma's inaugural James Madison fellow, a federal program that paid up to \$24,000 towards a master's degree in history, political science or education.

In 2003-04, he was named the Golden-Lehrman Oklahoma History teacher of the year, a federal program sponsored by the White House that's equivalent to the Presidential Award for History Teaching. That had a \$1,000 award attached to it.

All the other awards can't top the national certification. Stephen says that the main thing NBC does is to help him reflect on what he was actually doing in the classroom and what methods he was using. The process helped him

evaluate the relative successes of certain approaches compared to others.

"There was so much documentation that I was able to really sit down and evaluate a student's individual progress and focus on ways to improve my own practice," Stephen said.

He required students to do more writing, more analysis of cause/effect relationships, more comparing of statistics and recognizing trends in history, and he helps them more in determining what's really important vs. what was considered to be factual.

Stephen said, "While this is really a reflective process and a self-analysis, looking at what I'm doing for the students' benefit became more important."

Stephen was helped through the NBCT process by the trainings that the OEA professional staff offered and by those who had already achieved national certification.

"The trainings were especially helpful in establishing a network of successful NBCTs to help edit writings," he said. "Fellow NBCT Rita Barnett particularly gave a lot of help, but my



Latta's Stephen Stevens (right) recently joined his wife Susie as a Nationally Board Certified teacher.

wife Susie helped me as I had helped her when she became nationally certified in 1999."

Stephen has been at Latta for 18 years. Before that, he was at Lindsay for three years. He teaches American History, Government, Geography, Advanced Placement (AP) History and AP Government.

His NBCT success has opened a lot of doors for him. He's made contacts that have given him the opportunity to make presentations and given him status as a public school educator. When

asked if he would recommend the NBCT process for others, his response was, "Absolutely! It's designed as a two-year process, but it can be done in one, and you have three years to complete it. In the long run, it will mean much more to me than my master's degree. It's not about money, but about professional growth."

## 5 quick questions with Lela Odom

**Education Focus — If you hadn't gone into teaching, what would you have done?**

Lela Odom – "I probably would have been a nurse."

**EF – What is your favorite OEA memory (so far)?**

LO – "Bar none, it was the Four Days in April in 1990 when our members put on plastic garbage bags and walked around the Capitol in the rain

(in support of the historic education reform bill HB 1017). I have never felt more successful in this job than during those four days. It was my job to get people there to walk. I was hoping 500 would show up, and we had 10,000 that first day."

**EF – If you didn't work for OEA, where would you be?**

LO – "I can't imagine myself being anywhere else."

**EF – What do you do to relax?**

LO – "I read for pleasure, and I enjoy a wide range of genres. I don't feel settled unless I have a book waiting for me while I'm finishing another."

**EF – What was the best advice your parents ever gave you?**

LO – "You can do anything you set your mind to do. They were both of that mind-set."

### Portion of dues is tax deductible

Members who itemize their tax returns can deduct most of their membership dues when they file income taxes this spring.

All but that portion of membership dues spent on lobbying are deductible. Members should also check with their local Association to determine how much of their local dues are tax deductible.

#### Tax deductible portion of 2003-04 dues

Full-time Active Certified	\$355.21
Halftime Active Certified	\$182.40
Full-Time Active Support	\$187.92
Halftime Active Support	\$98.99
Substitute	\$124.10
Reserve Certified	\$175.10
Reserve Support	\$90.55

# Mexican teaching stint proves to be great learning experience

By Stacy Martin

Del City High School Spanish teacher Judith Starr recently spent time as an exchange educator in Mexico doing what great teachers do best:

Learning.

She learned to speak Spanish more fluently and confidently. Best of all, she learned that teaching in the United States has its blessings compared with many circumstances of her peers in Mexico.

As part of a teacher exchange program, Starr taught in Tuxtla-Gutiérrez, Chiapas, Mexico, where the families are often poor but warm and kind; the parents care but most aren't able to support their students academically; and the huge student population means all but the most dedicated students probably fall through the cracks.

Starr was the recipient of a Fulbright Teacher Exchange grant to teach in Mexico for the 2004 fall semester. Recipients are selected on the basis of academic and professional achievement as well as language ability.

"My Spanish and my fluency really increased in the five months I was there," said Starr. "That's what I wanted to do — learn, and share my culture."

Starr has taught 10 years with stints in Texas and in the Midwest City-Del City school system. She has a teaching degree in elementary education, a minor in Spanish and a master's degree in pedagogy and curriculum. Though she planned an elementary education career, she quickly found a niche as an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher. She has taught the last four

years at Del City High School.

Her teacher exchange partner took her place at Del City High School while she was gone.

The Del City educator was selected from among 700 applicants nationwide for the honor. In all, 200 teachers became Fulbright exchange educators with 15 of them going to Mexico.

One aspect of Starr's experience would shock most American educators. She taught over 400 children per week, which was a light load in contrast to her Mexican, counterpart's typical class rolls which list as many as 600 students. Accustomed to these large classes, Starr's Mexican colleagues were often forced to place the burden of learning on the students rather than spending hours



Del City High School's Judith Starr spent most of the first semester teaching in Mexico as part of the Fulbright Teacher Exchange Program. She found she learned as much as the students she had in her classroom.

correcting papers.

Not Starr. She worked long hours to carefully check students' work, something that took a little getting used to for her students and for her as she learned to adapt to the new conditions.

Starr found the experience enriching in a myriad of ways. What would she tell another teacher considering the program?

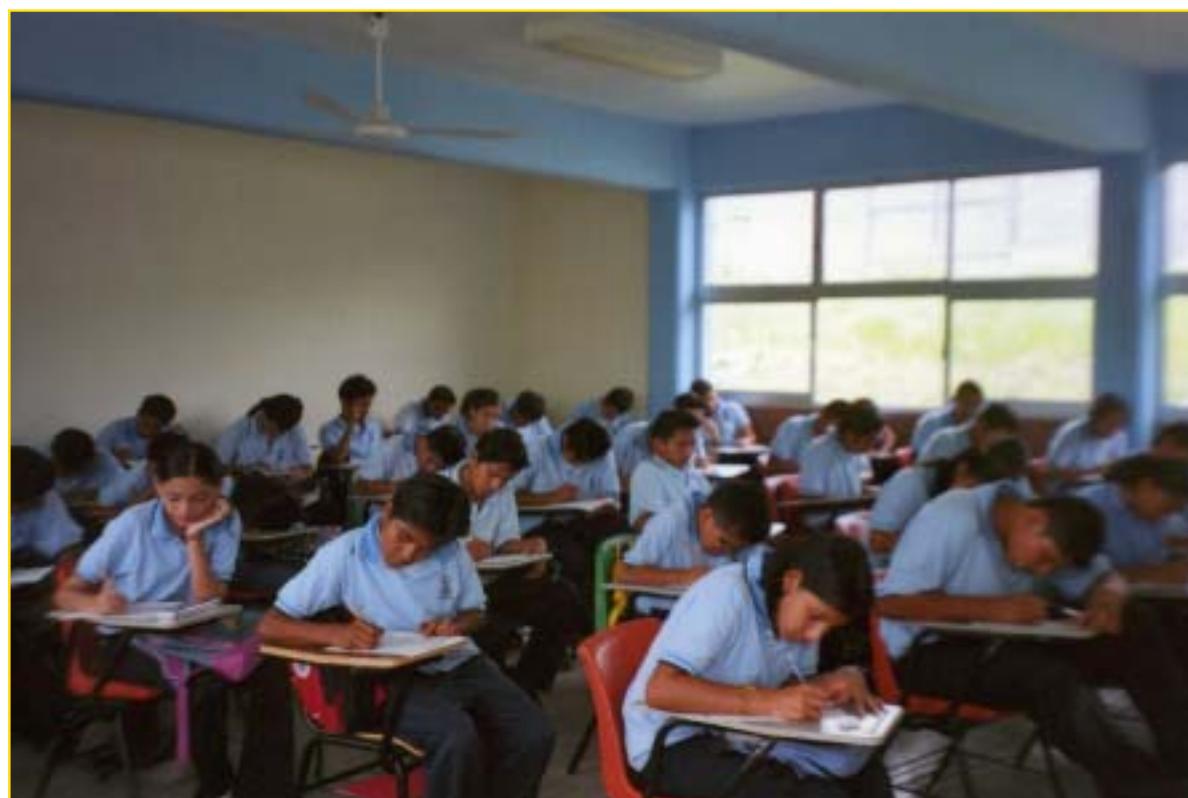
"I'd tell them to go for it," Starr said. "It's a life-changing experience."

The Fulbright program is America's flagship international educational ex-

change program. It was established by Congress and is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.

The program's goal is to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the rest of the world.

For more information about the Fulbright Teacher and Administrator Exchange program, contact Roberta Cross 202/314-3527 or log on to [www.fulbrightexchnge.org](http://www.fulbrightexchnge.org).



Students work on an assignment in one of Judith Starr's classrooms in Tuxtla-Gutiérrez, Chiapas, Mexico. She taught over 400 children per week, about 200 fewer students than Mexican teachers typically have on their rolls.

# OU quarterback joins RAA tradition

## Former Heisman Trophy winner serves as '05 Honorary Chair

By Bruce Treadaway

OEA's Read Across America (RAA) has long been a program that OEA members can take pride in, not only for the obvious initiative to encourage reading in Oklahoma's public schools, but also for the tradition that it has created.

University of Oklahoma quarterback Jason White, winner of the 2003 Heisman Trophy, is this year's honorary RAA chair for OEA's program. Past chairs have included OU Football Coach Bob Stoops, Oklahoma State basketball coach Eddie Sutton, OU women's basketball coach Sherri Coale, and Governor Brad Henry and First Lady Kim Henry.

Over 200,000 Oklahoma public school students have enjoyed visits by OEA's RAA Catavans. Every area of

the state has experienced the thrill of the Cat In The Hat and the other Dr. Seuss characters.

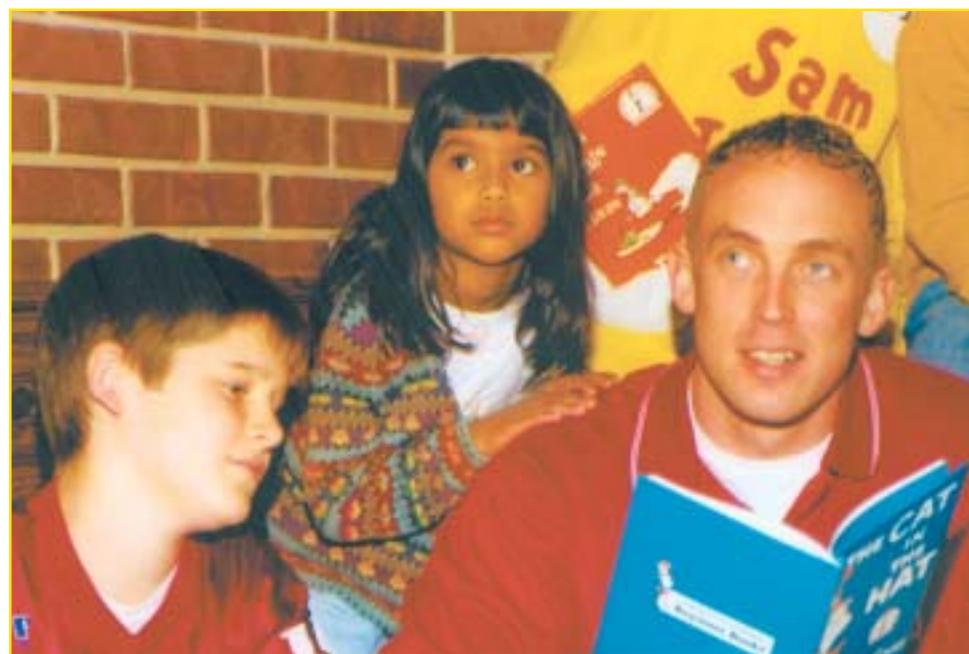
This year is no different. The Reading Challenge is in full swing in Moore, Midwest City-Del City, Putnam City and Tulsa. Last year over 122,000 books were read during the Challenge, and an increase in those numbers is expected this year.

For the second consecutive year, OEA's RAA program is kicking off with a blood drive sponsored by the OEA, the Oklahoma Blood Institute and Saturn of Oklahoma City. Coaches Stoops, Eddie Sutton, OSU's Sean Sutton, Coale, Trey Schwab from Marquette, OU basketball coach Kelvin Sampson and the Governor and Mrs. Henry have already thrown their support behind the drive.

Major stops for the Catavan have

been scheduled at Arnett, Watonga, Geary, Kingfisher, El Reno, Bethany, Tulsa, Sand Springs, Tahlequah, Hulbert, Hilldale, Jenks, Norman, Duncan, Empire, Oklahoma City, Ada, Tannehill, and Sallisaw. On March 2, the Seuss characters will host a culminating event at a site to be announced.

Sponsors who make RAA possible for the OEA and its members are Staples, Saturn of OKC, Blunck's Studio, The Christmas Connection and Dillard's. Over 25,000 books have been given away through the RAA program as a result of the Christmas Connection and its cooperation.



University of Oklahoma quarterback Jason White (left) poses for the OEA's 2005 Read Across America poster with Hunter Holley (left) and Jordan Davis (center). White, an All-American at OU who led the Sooners to two consecutive national championship games, is the honorary chair for Oklahoma's 2005 RAA events.

# Celebrities, politicians join national reading celebration

WASHINGTON, D.C. – From coast to coast, readers all over the country are revving up for the national kick-off of America's largest reading event.

Attracting some of the biggest celebrities in entertainment and sports, the NEA's Read Across America (RAA) Program expects millions of Americans, young and old, to open a book and celebrate reading on March 2, NEA's Read Across America Day.

"Where it's Hat" is this year's theme for RAA, which is sponsored by the 2.7-million-member NEA and Dr. Seuss Enterprises along with 45 national partner organizations.

RAA, a yearlong program designed to get kids excited about reading, culminates every year on Dr. Theodore "Ted" Geisel's birthday on March 2. Last year, reading events in all 50 states attracted more than 45 million

*Last year, Read Across America reading events in all 50 states attracted more than 45 million readers of all ages.*

readers of all ages. In celebration of the growing diversity of America's public schools, March 2 will also launch "Lea con NEA," a new program designed to reach out to Spanish speaking students.

In its eighth year, politicians from both sides of the aisle will join the NEA's Read Across America team with celebrities, sports athletes, recording artists, actors and actresses, firefighters, police officers, teachers,

school professionals and librarians to help celebrate America's dedication to reading and learning.

The NEA's Read Across America Team will be led by two co-captains, National Football League (NFL) superstars Tiki Barber, a running back of the New York Giants, and his twin brother, Ronde Barber, starting cornerback of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, last year's National Football Conference champions. The Barbers will help deliver the reading message, "Kids who read – and are read to – do better in school and help build great public schools."

"Nothing is more important to the future of America than our children," said NEA President Reg Weaver. "We are pleased to have two NFL All-Star football players take the time to lead and guide our children so that we can all come together and embrace our com-

mon goal of educating for the future."

Reading with kids is not something new for the Barber twins. Long before they became record-breaking NFL stars, Tiki and Ronde partnered up with Scholastic Book Clubs to pilot the "It Should Be Me" Writing Contest, designed to motivate students to read and write. In August 2004, Tiki and Ronde published "By My Brother's Side" (Simon & Schuster), a children's book illustrating their values of hard work and the importance of never giving up.

As co-captains of NEA's RAA 2005, Tiki and Ronde will kick off the events by being featured in radio, public service announcements, act as spokesmen and provide outreach to encourage participation. On NEA's Read Across America Day, Tiki and Ronde will be having fun while reading with kids in Washington, D.C.

# SOEA president finds her way back to the classroom

By Marty Bull

Student OEA President Katy Cook remembers when she first realized she wanted to be a teacher.

“I thought my third grade teacher was the neatest person,” said the elementary education major. “I knew even then that I wanted to be just like Mrs. Ritchie when I grew up.”

Little did the young girl sitting in that Graham, Texas, classroom know how far her dreams would take her. Come this spring – with just a few minor detours in her career path – the Langston University at Tulsa senior will not only earn her teaching degree but will have served on one of the most important NEA committees ever convened.

After a decision to join the military was sidelined by an injury, the 1996 Broken Arrow High School graduate explored her “wilder” side through her work in a zoo animal commissary. She prepared meals and guided the nutritional needs of zoo animals at the Tulsa Zoo before relocating to Seattle where she spent several years at a private zoo in the same capacity.

Upon her return to the Tulsa area, Cook was hired as an assistant teacher in a private school and over the next three years her aspiration to become a teacher reemerged. Initially enrolling as a part-time student, she soon began the process of meeting the requirements to fulfill her lifelong dream.

Along the way, Cook’s commitment to the teaching profession expanded from college coed to student leader. After attending several Student OEA campus meetings, SOEA Advisor Emily Porter encouraged Cook to attend the 2003 SOEA Fall Conference.

Her leadership skills were immediately recognized, and later that same year she was appointed to complete the term of SOEA Vice President. She was elected SOEA President in 2004.

“I’ve always thought it was important for people to be members of their professional organizations, no matter what they did, and SOEA was the best fit for me,” said Cook. “I’m convinced that SOEA and OEA are the only organizations who have teachers’ and kids’ best interests at heart.”

As SOEA President, Cook serves on the OEA Board of Directors and last fall was appointed by NEA President Reg Weaver to serve on the NEA Professional Standards and Practice Committee. The committee, which will make recommendations to the 2005 NEA-RA, is examining such issues as merit pay, school climate and student discipline. In both capacities Cook has the opportunity to help shape the future of the teaching profession and the direction that teachers new to the profession believe the Association should be heading.

“Being active in SOEA has given me opportunities I would have never had on my own,” said Cook. “I not only have grown personally through these activities, but I’m convinced that what I’ve learned will help me be a better teacher.”



Katy Cook, a senior at Langston University’s Tulsa campus, always knew she wanted to be a teacher. After a short detour as a zoo employee, she’s back in school and readying herself for the teaching profession.

## SOEA Convention will include work day at Willow Brook Elementary

It won’t be Christmas time, but Student OEA (SOEA) members who participate in March’s state student convention will both give and receive.

The State SOEA Convention is set for March 4-5 in Oklahoma City. On the 4th, for the first time at this state conference, student attendees will give of their time during a work day at a local elementary school, sprucing up both inside and outside of the building. On the second day, students will receive quality professional development during a traditional day of workshops.

SOEA President Katy Cook has pat-

terned Oklahoma’s work day after “Outreach to Teach,” an event sponsored by the National Education Association Student program prior to summer’s Representative Assembly. She and other chapter officers have worked with officials at Oklahoma City’s Willow Brook Elementary School to develop a list of repairs that need attention.

The student program has teamed up with Tinker Air Force Base to tackle the project. A \$900 grant from the NEA will help fund the repairs, as will donations from local businesses.

During the second day of the confer-

ence, students will hear presentations on “Teaching on a Shoestring Budget,” “Communicating with Parents,” “Working with Families from Poverty,” the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), and President Bush’s so-called No Child Left Behind education reform act.

Convention registration and meals are provided free to SOEA members, who must cover lodging expenses themselves.

Students who are interested in attending the conference should talk with their local chapter advisors or student officers, or visit [www.okea.org](http://www.okea.org) for registration information.

### Wanted: Legal Liaisons

The OEA is still taking volunteers to serve as Legal Liaisons for the Adequacy and Equity Project. If you are willing to help us make the case for secure, long-term education funding, send your name, home address, local Association, school building you work in, home phone number and home email address to Debbie Moore at [dmoore@okea.org](mailto:dmoore@okea.org).



# NFIE grant improves filmmaking project

## *Okmulgee students explore history through "Time Travel" unit*

*By Bruce Treadaway*

Shae Factory has always tried to challenge her students with new and interesting projects.

She thought she had maybe taken her students about as far as she could, but she wanted to move them to another level. With the help of a National Foundation for the Improvement of Education (NFIE) Innovation grant, Factory and two of her colleagues have been able to raise the bar for their students.

When she began looking for something to help her move her students to a higher level, Factory, a drama and speech teacher at Okmulgee Middle School, found that filming student projects was a tremendous motivator. The students were already involved with the dramatic characters that they were portraying, writing their own scripts, and feeling a sense of accomplishment with each project they completed. When the filming aspect was added, the effect was increased dramatically.

The students were enjoying their work, but Factory was not satisfied. The quality of the finished films her students were producing was just not what she wanted, so she began

searching for a way to improve the film quality to match the level of her students' accomplishments.

She heard about a software program called Studio 9, and found that it could help with the film quality. Then she surfed the Internet until she found an interesting result. The NEA website ([www.nea.org](http://www.nea.org)) turned up along with Arts Power in her search for drama grants. That website has now become one of her favorites.

"The (NFIE grant) process was extremely simple," said Factory, who is in her fifth year at Okmulgee M.S. "Everything was spelled out clearly, and I knew exactly what I wanted to do, and that helped. I had help from two other teachers – Janet Taylor and Keri Swyden."

The three teachers received a \$5,000 grant from NFIE. With the money, they were able to purchase a Dell computer program that produces better film quality, three computers, printers, camcorders and other accessories for filming student projects.

The equipment supports "Time Travel with a Theatrical and Technological Twist," a multidisciplinary project developed by Factory, Swyden and Taylor. Through the project, stu-



*Shae Factory (center) joined forces with Janet Taylor (left) and Keri Swyden to create a project that allows students to explore historical characters through filmmaking. The three Okmulgee Middle School teachers received a \$5,000 grant from the National Foundation for the Improvement of Education to fund the project.*

dents use digital film to explore a historical theme. After researching an historical era, students write a script, design a screenplay and stage an historically accurate depiction of that era.

Okmulgee students also host a Shakespeare Festival, in which they perform two plays for the school and community.

Factory, a five-year OEA/NEA member, has found a world of help at her fingertips through the NEA website and the NFIE grant programs. More importantly, she's helped her students find a new understanding of what they can accomplish as long as they challenge themselves to be better.

## Riley Award nominations due March 4

The Christopher Columbus Fellowship Foundation, along with the Partnership for America's Future Inc., are seeking applicants for the sixth annual Frieda J. Riley Teacher Award.

The \$10,000 award is named for a science and math teacher from Coalwood, W.Va., who for most of her career, taught while suffering from Hodgkin's disease.

Her impact upon her students was captured in the 1999 film "October Sky." The movie was based on the book "The

Rocket Boys," by Homer Hickam, one of Riley's students. Riley inspired her students to overcome the limited opportunities of their era and environment to aspire to fulfill their dreams.

For more information and an application, interested teachers should contact the Partnership for America's Future Inc. at 330/376-8300, or visit [www.pafinc.com/Riley.htm](http://www.pafinc.com/Riley.htm) to download an application.

Deadline for application is March 4.

## *NFIE grant applications are accepted year-round*

Since 2000, NEA's National Foundation for the Improvement of Education (NFIE) has funded hundreds of Innovation Grants to support creative projects that significantly improve achievement for underserved students.

Applications for Innovation Grants and Learning & Leadership Grants are accepted on an ongoing, year-round basis and reviewed three times per year in September, February and June. These grants are available for all subjects, including the arts, literature, science, mathematics, social sciences, and technology. All practicing U.S. public school K-12 teachers, education support professionals and higher education faculty and staff are eligible to apply for grants of up to \$5,000.

Visit the foundation's website, [www.neafoundation.org](http://www.neafoundation.org), for application details.

NFIE grants are supported in part by Staples Recycle for Education, a program designed to raise funds nationwide for public education. Staples donates \$1 for every eligible used inkjet and laser toner cartridge recycled at any of its 1,100 stores nationwide. Since the program began in July 2003, Staples has raised more than \$1 million and the program is continuing through 2004. Each dollar raised supports public education in the state where the cartridge was recycled. For more information on this program, visit [www.neafoundation.org/staples.htm](http://www.neafoundation.org/staples.htm).

# Elections set for 11 OEA board seats

Elections will be held in March for 11 seats on the OEA Board of Directors. Also, at-large positions are open for the 2005 OEA Delegate Assembly (DA) and this summer's NEA Representative Assembly (RA), announced OEA Vice President Becky Felts.

The filing period for all positions is open February 1-25. Ballots for the 2005 elections will be distributed no later than the third week of March. Newly elected board members will take office on July 15.

Only official filing forms are accepted, and completed forms must be received by 5 p.m. February 25 at OEA Headquarters, PO Box 18485, Oklahoma City, OK, 73154.

Each local president or primary contact will receive a packet in late January announcing the positions and including official filing forms. Candidates may download filing forms from the OEA website,

[www.okea.org/Elections](http://www.okea.org/Elections).

Board positions are open to active OEA members who work at a school within the geographic region of the board seat. One director represents approximately 1,000 Association members.

Elections will be held for the following board seats:

**Northeast B**, 3-year term expires 2008, NEA Delegate 2006, 2007 (Muskogee and Wagoner Counties).

**Tulsa Metro B**, 3-year term expires 2008, NEA Delegate 2006, 2007 (Tulsa CTA).

**Tulsa Metro D**, 3-year term expires 2008, NEA Delegate 2006, 2007 (Oral Roberts University, Tulsa Community College, Tulsa Tech., Union CTA, Union ESP, University of Tulsa, OSU-Tulsa/Langston).

**Tulsa Metro E**, 1-year unexpired term expires 2006 (Berryill, Bixby, Broken Arrow, Glenool, Jenks CTA,

Jenks ESP, Leonard and Liberty Mounds).

**Southwest E**, 3-year term expires 2008, NEA Delegate 2006, 2007 (Cleveland and McClain Counties).

**Northwest B**, 3-year term expires 2008, NEA Delegate 2006, 2007 (Lincoln, Logan, Noble and Payne Counties).

**Northwest D**, 3-year term expires 2008, NEA Delegate 2006, 2007 (Canton EA; Alfalfa, Beaver, Cimarron, Custer, Dewey, Ellis, Harper, Major, Roger Mills, Texas, Woods and Woodward Counties).

**Southeast B**, 3-year term expires 2008, NEA Delegate 2006, 2007 (Haskell, Hughes, McIntosh, Okfuskee, Okmulgee and Sequoyah Counties).

**Southeast C**, 3-year term expires 2008, NEA Delegate 2006, 2007 (Atoka, Choctaw, Coal, Latimer, LeFlore, McCurtain, Pittsburg and Pushmataha Counties).

**OKC Metro B**, 3-year term expires 2008, NEA Delegate 2006, 2007 (Bethany, Oklahoma City University, Putnam City ACT, Putnam City ESP, Southern Nazarene, Western Heights).

**OKC Metro D**, 3-year term expires 2008, NEA Delegate 2006, 2007 (Choctaw/Nicomma Park, Crutch, Deer Creek, Jones, Luther, Mid-Del ACT, Mid-Del SEMD, Mid-Del AVT, Millwood, Rose State College).

Four statewide at-large positions for OEA Delegate Assembly and the NEA Representative Assembly are open for

filing beginning February 1. Candidates must be members in good standing and meet the specific criteria for the position.

**Delegate openings** for the 2005 DA (April 22-23 in Oklahoma City) are:

OEA/NEA Retired Delegate(s)-at-Large,

OEA Administrator Delegate(s)-at-Large to OEA/DA, and

OEA Ethnic Minority Delegate(s)-at-Large to OEA/DA

An NEA Retired Delegate(s)-at-Large position is open for the 2005 NEA Representative Assembly, July 1-6 in Los Angeles.

Also, active certified teachers elections may run for Category I Delegates At-Large positions for the 2005 NEA RA in all OEA geographic regions.

There will also be Category II races for RA. Candidates for Category II are defined as active administrators and supervisors, active ESP supervisors, retired OEA/NEA Life Members, and nonunified NEA Life Members.

The OEA Constitution requires local affiliates to elect ethnic minorities and administrator delegates to the OEA DA in proportion to the membership of those demographics in the local. The number of At-Large delegates elected at the state level to be seated at the OEA DA will be determined after local election results are reported.

For more information, contact Janice Dealy at 800/522-8091, or by email at [jdealy@okea.org](mailto:jdealy@okea.org).

## NEA Home Financing Program makes donations to your charity

The Community Sharing Program for NEA members lets you support a worthy cause at no cost to you.

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- Financing for new construction

and renovation loans,

- Reverse mortgages for seniors,
- Finance a vacation or investment property.

Participating in the Community Sharing Program benefits you by meeting your specific needs. It helps others when you designate to a school or charity in your community. Donations are made by the Wells Fargo Housing Foundation.

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After you close on a new home purchase or refinance through the NEA Home Financing Program, you will receive a complimentary three-day/two-night hotel stay at one of over 300 locations in the U.S., Canada, Mexico, Bahamas and the U.S. Virgin Islands (transportation not included).

For more information, contact Gena Mitchell toll free at 877/406-0710, ext. 1190.

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# Why we do what we do



Heath Merchen

By Heath Merchen  
Associate General Counsel

Joann Harding is a 22-year veteran teacher, a multiple sclerosis survivor, sole custodian of two grandchildren, and care provider for her mother. She loves teaching and doesn't mind living meagerly on a teacher's salary because she provides her grandchildren a home, her mother medical care, and herself a fulfilling career.

However, the trials she faced over the last three years almost cost her everything.

It began with a complaint that she improperly administered the state test from parents whose child had been recently disciplined. Before she knew what was happening, the State Department of Education sought to revoke her teaching certificate with a number of specious allegations. Joann contacted OEA and our Legal Department intervened. We represented Joann during a nine-hour hearing, after which the Hearing Officer ruled in Joann's favor, holding she did not intentionally violate regulations. Joann was relieved and hoped her ordeal was over. Unfortunately, it was far from finished.

The State Board overturned the Hearing Officer's ruling, without ex-

## From Your Counsel

planation, and suspended her certificate into the school year, ensuring termination. Our office sued the Board and obtained an injunction so Joann could continue working until trial. The matter was ultimately tried in July 2002, and the court ruled for Joann, ordering the Board to provide her with a new hearing.

After the Board held the "new" hearing, however, they took the exact same action again, suspending her certificate into the school year. At this point, the anxiety of the roller coaster case would have overcome even the most resilient, but Joann simply stated that "Jesus will take care of me," keeping her faith that all would be well.

## An added challenge

Our Legal Department also resolved to fight on, and again filed suit, obtaining yet another injunction. The second case was set to be tried in September 2004, over three years since the allegations originated. Shortly before the trial, however, Joann was to face yet another, more threatening test.

Joann was injured while working and needed surgery. The injury coupled with the stress of litigation resulted in pulmonary problems and potentially fatal blood clots, which delayed the surgery. Joann's life and career were literally hanging in the balance.

While Joann was hospitalized, our office asked the court to declare the Board's action invalid as a matter of law. After extensive argument, the

court ruled in our favor, nullifying the suspension and holding that the Board

acted unlawfully and unconstitutionally. The victory was complete and the Board did not appeal.

## Lessons learned

Joann has recovered from surgery and is starting back to work. Her life is back on track and she no longer has to worry about losing her ability to provide for her family. That is not to say that the experience hasn't taken its toll. Joann will not soon forget the stress and worry which haunted her over the past three years.

*The first moral to this story is teachers must be extremely careful to comply with every testing rule and regulation. The State Department will not hesitate to seek certificate revocation even for technical violations of the obscure regulations; being innocent won't help avoid a revocation hearing.*

The first moral to this story is teachers must be extremely careful to comply with every testing rule and regulation. The State Department will not hesitate to seek certificate revoca-

tion even for technical violations of the obscure regulations; being innocent won't help avoid a revocation hearing. While we are thrilled with Joann's victory, we don't want anyone to have to go through the misery of the hearing process if it can be avoided.

The second moral is that OEA membership matters. Joann's victory took the combined efforts of OEA's attorneys and advocates. If Joann had not been an OEA member, her legal fees over the course of the past three years would have topped \$100,000 – far beyond her means. As it stands, Joann paid only her OEA dues.

Many who don't join OEA cite disagreement with our political stances or candidate choices. However, they overlook an incredibly important aspect of membership – ensuring individuals who otherwise would not be able to afford quality legal services have effective attorneys experienced in education law fighting to ensure justice is done.

Joann's case is a victory we wear with pride, as should every OEA member; it is your dues dollars which help ensure protection for school employees across the state. And just as importantly, those dues dollars may one day help protect you.

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# Joyner Foundation partners with NEA to boost minority teachers in urban, rural areas

Tom Joyner, the nationally syndicated radio personality and philanthropist, and the National Education Association (NEA) have formed a partnership to distribute more than \$700,000 to encourage minority teachers to complete their certification and ultimately teach minority children in urban, suburban and rural public schools.

The unprecedented program is designed to increase the number of fully certified minority teachers around the country. The teachers will be able to take classes on the campuses of seven Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs): Clark Atlanta University, Atlanta, Ga.; Bowie State University, Bowie, Md.; Jackson State University, Jackson, Miss.; Johnson C. Smith University, Charlotte, N.C.; Cheyney State University, Cheyney, Pa.; Tennessee State University, Nashville, Tenn.; and Harris Stowe State



NEA President Reg Weaver cuts one of his monthly radio spots for the Tom Joyner Radio Show. Joyner and the NEA have joined forces to recruit minority teachers through more than \$700,000 in scholarship money.

College, St. Louis, Mo.

“We’re excited to be working with the NEA,” said Joyner, the Foundation’s chairman, whose daily,

four-hour morning drive-time show is nationally syndicated in 115 markets, reaching nearly 8 million listeners.

“What we’re trying to do is to make

sure there are plenty of minority teachers out there. Over the years, we’ve learned that many teachers don’t go on to complete their certification and they end up missing out on opportunities or leave the teaching profession completely. This partnership with NEA is a big step in making a difference in these teachers’ lives, and the lives of the children they teach.”

Reg Weaver, president of the 2.7-million member NEA, said partnering with the Foundation would go a long way toward supporting minority teachers by providing sorely needed resources to assist them in completing their certification.

“Fewer than 50 percent of African Americans pass teacher entrance exams,” said Weaver. “To its credit, the Tom Joyner Foundation recognized this disparity and is stepping up to help more minority teachers reach their goal while also assisting public schools by providing them with licensed teachers in the urban, suburban and rural classrooms where they are needed most. NEA is inspired and grateful to be a part of this venture. By investing in our teachers, the Foundation will help us create great public schools for every child.”

The program will be promoted on the Tom Joyner Morning Show and extensively by the NEA through its magazine, *NEA Today*. Additional correspondence will be distributed to public schools and state boards of education around the country.

Teachers will be able to download applications from the Foundation website, <http://blackamericaweb.com>.

To qualify for the program the teachers must be currently working in an urban, suburban or rural public school with a high percentage of minority students. The NEA will review applications and will refer them to the certification program at the closest participating HBCU. All applicants must commit to teach a minimum of three years in an affected urban, suburban or rural community as a condition of admission to the program.

## *OEA committee starts minority recruitment effort*

While the NEA has joined forces with the nationally syndicated Tom Joyner Morning Show to recruit more minority teachers, the Oklahoma Education Association is producing a brochure designed to recruit more minority college students into the profession, said OEA President Roy Bishop.

The brochure will be funded by grant money obtained from the National Education Association.

Oklahoma’s project was conceived by the Human and Civil Rights (HCR) Committee. The OEA brochure will invite minority college students to consider making a difference by becoming teachers.

The HCR committee, which is appointed by Bishop to recommend strate-

gic programs to meet OEA objectives, is chaired by Chickasha’s Phyllis Jefferson. Committee members include Euva Dill, Coweta; Jean Vanveen, Tahlequah; Debbie Hogue-Downing, retired; Melissa Honeycutt, Student OEA member at Northeastern State University (NSU); Anne Witte, Oklahoma City; Jennifer Seal, Putnam City; Pam Ramey, Lawton; and Michelle Nuckolls, Wyandotte. Ted Auwen, Union (Tulsa), is the board liaison and Stacy Martin, Oklahoma City Metro communications specialist, is the staff liaison.

The minority recruitment publication lists statistics that show minorities are under-represented in classrooms, pointing out that:

- There is not a single teacher of

color in over 38 percent of American classrooms;

- About 17 percent of public school students are African American, while only 6 percent of educators are;
- About 17 percent of public school students are Hispanic, while only 5 percent of their teachers are; and
- Research shows students of color perform better – academically, socially and personally – when they are taught by teachers of their own ethnic groups.

Once completed, the recruitment brochure will be distributed through Student OEA chapters at state colleges and universities which offer teaching degrees. NSU in Tahlequah already has plans to use the brochure during Fall 2005 student orientation sessions.



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## Help stamp out your debt with the NEA Personal Loan.

With rates as low as 6.99% APR† your debt†† could be gone before you know it. By making a modest monthly payment of \$319, if approved for our lowest APR of 6.99%, you could stamp out \$10,000 of debt after just 36 months. It's that simple with the NEA Personal Loan®. So why not apply today?

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How much time does it take to apply to help stamp out your debt? Just ten minutes. Call MBNA at 1-866-266-0211 and mention priority code K01T-QW-513-7E for a loan decision right over the phone.

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(TDD users, call 1-800-833-6262)

Priority code: **K01T-QW-513-7E**

Monday-Thursday, 8am-10pm; Friday, 8am-8pm; and Saturday, 8am-5pm ET

NEA Personal Loan Estimated Monthly Payment Chart						
Loan Amount	Term:					
	24 months	36 months	48 months	60 months	72 months	84 months
\$3,000	\$140	\$96	\$75	\$62	N/A	N/A
\$10,000	\$463	\$319	\$248	\$205	\$177	N/A
\$15,000	\$694	\$479	\$371	\$307	\$265	\$234
\$25,000	N/A	\$797	\$618	\$512	\$441	\$390

All payment amounts and terms are estimates based on an APR of 6.99%†. Your APR may be higher. See below for important APR disclosures.



Students in Barbara Jackson's (inset) class pick up a treat during Mathical Chairs, an assignment-completing game that can be played in any class.

## Mathical Chairs – a fun way to complete an assignment

By Barbara Jackson

Will Rogers Jr. High, Claremore

Ever had one of those days when you didn't want to do the worksheet any more than the students did?

I had one of those days about eight years ago and decided there must be a fun way get the worksheet done. Now, each year, my students quickly discover they love playing "Mathical Chairs!"

The students get so many questions answered in a class period by doing one at a time. They don't even realize they are doing a whole worksheet or assignment out of the book!

The game can be used by any teacher and in *any* subject area.

Mathical Chairs consists of numbered cards in five different colors. The same card colors are used for Risk Cards that say "go ahead one," "go back one," or "get a piece of candy."

A numbered card should be placed on every classroom desk. Each student starts the game by standing behind or sitting at one of the desks.

The game starts when the teacher asks a question. When sufficient time has been given to write the answer, the teacher gives the correct answer. Students who have the correct answer move to the next desk/next higher number. Students who miss or don't



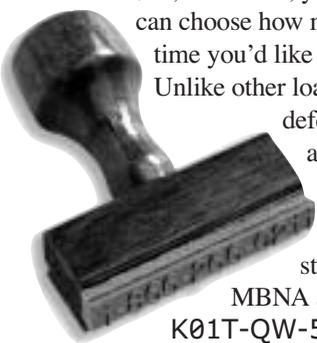
finish the question remain where they are and wait for the next question. (It is possible for two or more students to be at the same desk.)

After two questions, the teacher draws a color card out of a bag. Students at a desk with that color card move accordingly or get a piece of candy, depending on what the card says.

This game helps the teacher visually see who is having trouble when students do not move for a while. I try to make sure a real easy problem comes up during those times so they don't get too discouraged. The answer sheets can be turned in for a grade or kept as a study guide.

I have made this game complete with directions, 35 color/number cards, and Risk Cards in a drawstring bag. To get a game for your classroom, send \$6 to: Barbara Jackson, 16490 S. 4220 Rd., Claremore, OK 74017. Phone: 918-341-0079, Email: [bjackson@claremore.k12.ok.us](mailto:bjackson@claremore.k12.ok.us). Visa, MasterCard and Discover cards accepted.

If you have a favorite lesson plan or activity you'd like to share, send your ideas to Patti Razien at [prazien@okea.org](mailto:prazien@okea.org).



†MBNA will set your Annual Percentage Rate (APR) between 6.99% and 17.99%, based on your creditworthiness. The APR is not guaranteed and may change; however, any APR change will not affect any balance on your account at the time of the change. In most cases, a change in the APR will restart your repayment term and change your minimum monthly payment. There is a 1% transaction fee for all advances on the account, including access checks, direct deposits and balance transfers (fee: min \$2; max \$10).

††MBNA may prohibit use of an NEA Personal Loan account to pay off or pay down another MBNA® account.

\*Receipt of maximum credit line is subject to creditworthiness standards.

\*\*This account offers a 4-month payment deferral feature if you take an advance within the first four months. During the deferral period, no payment will be due. Finance charges will accrue. Your repayment term will start after the deferral period. You may pre-pay at any time without penalty.

The NEA is not involved in the credit decision process. All applications will be subject to a confidential standard review by MBNA America. The account is issued and administered by MBNA America Bank, N.A.

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