

OEA

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National Education Association

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The Education Focus
OEA's all-member publication

The Education Focus

June/July 2005

A step in the right direction

State appropriation includes \$57 million for salary increases

By Stacy Martin

The Oklahoma State Legislature approved a record level of education money for 2005-06, funding numerous pro-public education initiatives including all-day kindergarten, teacher raises, and fully-paid individual education employee health insurance premiums.

Funding for 2005-06 is \$2.15 billion, including \$145 million in new money. Besides \$57.7 million for pay raises, the total included \$21.6 million for full-day kindergarten and \$42.8 million for fully-paid, individual health insurance. The legislature also made supplemental appropriations for the current budget year totaling nearly \$51.8 million, bringing common education's total legislative appropriation to nearly \$200 million above last year.



Several OEA members meet with their senators outside the Oklahoma Senate Chamber during the Association's Lobby Day in mid-May. About 150 members spent the day in Oklahoma City, encouraging legislators to guarantee raises for all teachers.

While the first year of the four-year salary bill was funded, legislators stopped short of earmarking the money for salary increases that would have guaranteed every teacher a raise. Instead, "legislative intent" language was inserted in the bill, thereby giving the ap-

proximately 200 districts that now pay above the state minimum salary schedule some degree of latitude in building their pay scales.

About 335 districts pay on the state minimum, and teachers in those dis-

See "Increases" on Page 2

Liberty teacher never expected trouble

By Bruce Treadaway

Growing up and working in eastern Oklahoma, Carolyn Lewis thought she had seen and experienced just about everything that part of the state had to offer. Like so many Oklahoma public school teachers, she thought she would be able to teach her classes at Liberty of Roland and then look back on a long and illustrious career someday.

Two years ago that all changed. Lewis had taught a variety of grades and subjects for 14 years at Liberty when her administrator reassigned her to a new al-

ternative education program. Within a few short weeks, the administrator recommended the elimination of the alternative ed program and, along with it, the reduction of Lewis as an employee at Liberty School.

Just before Lewis received notice of the intended reduction in force (RIF), the Liberty Board of Education adopted a new policy that removed the recall provision. In effect, Lewis was terminated with no hope of regaining a position at Liberty, even if a position that she was certified and qualified to

teach came open.

"I had been a member of the OEA all my career, and I had never had reason to even think about using OEA legal services," said Lewis, "but when this happened, I had no one to turn to but the OEA. My school wouldn't help. My colleagues wouldn't help. The school board wouldn't listen.

"I called the OEA, and the Southeast staff responded quickly and decisively. School employees may think that they can't afford to belong to the

See "Hearing" on Page 6

This session was a dizzying ride

By Roy Bishop
OEA President

When I've been asked how to describe the 2005 legislative session, the thought of a roller coaster ride at Six Flags comes to mind. I'm not a big fan of modern day roller coasters. With the more traditional rides, I knew when I was going up and when I was going down. With the new rides, they spin me, and then they twirl me, and then they turn me upside down. When I get off, I'm dizzy, queasy and glad to be back on solid ground.

The session started with a great deal of hype as many new legislators in both Houses began their work. Along with that work was the promise of meeting their mandate to "Put Edu-

cation First." While the Governor laid out his agenda for schools, which was supported by the Senate, the House spent much of its time trying to find ways to attack our past successes.

Before the new school year even begins, our advocates will be working with our local associations to prepare for the changes in the mentor teacher process and staff development committees. It will be important for our members to understand the changes and how they are affected.

With the last minute addition of a section to the governor's education bill, SB 982, our members are going to have to stand up for the OEA and what this organization has done for them and for Oklahoma's schools. This

section allows all other associations, including anti-OEA associations, to communicate with our members and nonmembers where previously it was up to the administration. We will need you to be advocates for the Association more than ever. The best advocates for the Association and our schools are you – our loyal members.

When you speak, legislators listen. Late in the session, the legislature agreed to fund the first year of the salary promise. However, they refused to earmark the money for every teacher to get a raise. You responded to our "action alert" and flooded legislators with phone calls. Your input made a difference. The legislature added intent language letting districts know that



President Roy Bishop

money had been appropriated for salaries. And while districts above the minimum will have to negotiate increases, the money is there to do that as Oklahoma teachers move one step closer to the regional average. That would not have happened without you. Don't ever underestimate your ability to effect change.

There is a great deal to read about in this issue regarding the legislative session. By the time the roller coaster legislative session had ended, the legislature had passed laws that included \$145 million new dollars to schools for next school year. In addition, education received nearly \$52 million of supplemental appropriations to get us through this year. Common schools will receive almost \$200 million in new funding. The legislative promise to get Oklahoma to the regional average in salaries was the highlight of this 120 day ride.

No matter how dizzy we feel at the end of this ride, we know the direction we're headed. We are moving education forward in Oklahoma. There is no going back and we should never settle for anything less than the best for Oklahoma schools.

Increases are first step toward regional average

Continued from Page 1

districts will receive the raises as defined in legislation (see chart on page 3).

"What the education community must know is that if this money isn't used as intended, Oklahoma's average teacher pay won't reach the regional average in the next few years," warned Oklahoma Education Association president Roy Bishop.

"It is important that we protect our salary schedules across the state. We need to ensure that pay levels keep up with what teachers are supposed to be paid at each experience level so the end result is consistent with the priorities of the legislation."

In 2004, the most recent statistical year available, Oklahoma teachers' average earnings were \$35,061 while their regional counterparts' pay average is \$38,993 – nearly \$4,000 more.

The Oklahoma Legislature closed out its final days by passing the Governor's Achieving Classroom Excellence (ACE) initiative, aimed at raising student accountability and achievement.

The ACE initiative calls for reforms which include additional end of instruc-

"It is important that we protect our salary schedules across the state. We need to ensure that pay levels keep up with what teachers are supposed to be paid at each experience level so the end result is consistent with the priorities of the legislation."
OEA President Roy Bishop

tion tests (EOI) for students.

In other education-related agreements, lawmakers decided that all state-wide professional educator associations will have equal access to school property, including all school meeting rooms, mailboxes and bulletin boards (See "Bargainer's alert" on Page 3).

Also, teacher members of professional development committees of school districts, which oversee the professional development programs for teachers and administrators in a district, will be chosen by the school administration from a list of

teachers who have volunteered their names for consideration.

The Oklahoma Education Association and the Oklahoma Education Coalition led the charge to defeat an oil and gas industry ad valorem tax cut, which would have negatively impacted local school funding.

"Overall, it was a good year for schools and those who work in them," said Bishop. "Oklahoma is making the investment that shows we recognize the inherent value of teachers and education."

OEA

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Bargainer's alert

Legislation changes the responsibilities of bargaining locals

By Doug Folks

While the 50th Oklahoma Legislature appropriated nice pay raises for teachers and record funding for common education, it also passed several laws that removed rights of bargaining locals.

Roy Bishop, OEA president, said some of the changes have been talked about for years.

"To say it plainly, there is a strong contingent in our legislature that wants to cripple organized labor in general and our Association specifically," Bishop said. "You could argue that the changes are only fair, but it's still hard to lose rights we worked so hard to win."

Among the hard-fought gains that were taken away were a bargaining local's right to choose mentor teachers and members of its district's professional development committee. One of the biggest changes to OEA locals is language in the governor's Achieving Classroom Excellence Act (Senate Bill 982) that prohibits bargained language that gives a local exclusive access to teachers.

"While this law will help OEA in some areas, it does create a whole new world for us and for school administrators," Bishop said.

Following is a look at some of the bills that bargaining locals must be familiar with as they go to the table to negotiate contracts this summer. Questions about these and other laws should be directed to regional advocacy specialists.

SB 982, Achieving Classroom Excellence Act and Equal Access – This bill includes several new laws related to curriculum, including stipends for middle school math teachers who complete a professional development institute (PDI) and pass the middle level/intermediate mathematics Oklahoma Subject Area test

Bills online

Want to see a copy of the latest education bills to pass the Oklahoma Legislature? Visit lsb.state.ok.us and click on "text of measures." Enrolled bills are bills that have passed both houses. Signed bills have been signed into law by the governor.

and requirements for students to pass end-of-instruction tests in order to graduate.

The equal access section will change how a district works with local associations to conduct business. It reads:

"No school district, employee of a school district, or employee organization shall deny by any means, including a collective bargaining agreement, a statewide professional educators' association equal access to employees of the school district, to the same extent that access is granted to other educators' associations. For purposes of this section, access shall include, but is not limited to:

"1) Setting up informational tables at in-service or other similar teacher meetings;

"2) Speaking at in-service or other similar teaching meetings;

"3) Distributing information in school mail boxes or through the school email system;

"4) Utilizing school district meeting rooms during nonworking hours;

"5) Representing employees in employment matters, when requested by the employee;

"6) Posting information on school district bulletin boards; and

"7) Utilizing school district printing services."

"Any association which utilizes school district facilities or services

shall reimburse the district for any costs incurred by the district."

What does "equal access" mean for OEA locals?

- It *does not* affect Association meetings that occur outside of school hours.
- The law eliminates any exclusivity language that has been bargained as part of the negotiated agreement.
- Locals should address any exclusivity issues during negotiations this summer.

HB 1235, Mentor Teachers –

This bill removes a local bargaining agent's responsibility of creating a list of teachers from which mentors are chosen and hands that responsibility to the building principal.

The new language reads, "A mentor teacher shall be selected by the principal from a list of qualified teacher volunteers who have submitted their names for that purpose. After compilation of the list, the principal shall provide opportunity for input from the bargaining agent, where one exists.

Membership or nonmembership in a professional teacher organization shall not be considered as a factor in selecting a mentor teacher . . . When possible, a mentor teacher shall have successfully completed a mentor teacher PDI and be assigned to the same school site and have similar certification as the resident teacher."

How should OEA bargaining locals approach the new mentor law?

- 1) Encourage your members to volunteer and get their names on the list;
- 2) Identify any mentor teacher language in your collective bargaining agreement and change it to reflect the new law;
- 3) Bargain procedural items such as forms, timelines, etc.

4) Negotiate the local's input into the process. For instance, maybe your local can verify that all candidates are qualified to serve as mentors.

HB 1457, Staff Professional Development Committee – This bill removes the bargaining agent's responsibility of electing members of the district's professional development committee and hands that responsibility to the administration.

See "Staff development" on Page 4

State Minimum Salary Increases

The following chart shows the salary increases for teachers on the 2004-05 State Minimum Salary Schedule as they move to the 2005-06 Minimum Salary Schedule. Teachers in districts that currently pay above the state minimum are not guaranteed by law to receive the same increases, so their raises could be more or less than the figures listed here.

Raises from '04-05 to '05-06

Step 0 to Step 1	\$1,315
1 to 2	\$529
2 to 3	\$572
3 to 4	\$615
4 to 5	\$683
5 to 6	\$751
6 to 7	\$819
7 to 8	\$887
8 to 9	\$955
9 to 10	\$1,048
10 to 11	\$1,141
11 to 12	\$1,234
12 to 13	\$1,327
13 to 14	\$1,420
14 to 15	\$1,513
15 to 16	\$1,606
16 to 17	\$1,699
17 to 18	\$1,792
18 to 19	\$1,885
19 to 20	\$1,978
20 to 21	\$2,071
21 to 22	\$2,164
22 to 23	\$2,257
23 to 24	\$2,350
24 to 25	\$2,443
25 to off	\$2,111

Some bad ideas just won't vanish

A number of legislative measures did not receive House or Senate approval, including several that OEA was able to defeat in committee. However, that doesn't mean the ideas behind these bills go away for good. Following are some potentially harmful issues that could resurface during the 2006 session. OEA will keep a sharp eye out for bills that could prove to be damaging to teachers and/or schools.

State Revenue Reduction

Everyone enjoys a tax break, but there is a price to be paid in reduced or eliminated state services. Oklahomans are among our country's least taxed, yet the first session of the 50th Legislature considered 260 measures to reduce taxes. Here are the worst of the lot:

TABOR – The so-called Tax Payer's Bill of Rights would place an artificial limitation on the growth of

government spending. Under TABOR, government growth could only equal the rate of inflation plus the state's rate of population growth. If Oklahoma had had a TABOR amendment in place this year, education funding could have grown only 3-4 percent as opposed to the 7 percent it actually grew. That kind of revenue limitation would have placed the salary raise and the individual health insurance payment in jeopardy. TABOR would affect all levels of state government, including local school budgets.

Oil and Gas Taxes – Oil and gas industry representatives claim they are being double taxed by having to pay both gross production and ad valorem taxes in certain cases, but current law and an Oklahoma Supreme Court ruling disagree with that assessment. HB 1715 this session tried to eliminate the

ad valorem tax on certain oil field equipment, but it was defeated. Nonetheless, the issue is expected to come back next session. Ad valorem taxes account for approximately 25 percent of the typical school district's budget.

Property tax restrictions – Expect more discussion next year on freezing or reducing local property taxes. Right now, property taxes are capped at 5 percent growth in any given year, but some legislators want to lower that cap to 3 percent or even 1 percent. Further restrictions on this tax would limit local school district revenues and could harm educational opportunities for students.

Income tax reduction – Speaker Todd Hiett has expressed a desire to lower state income tax to a flat 5 percent, down from the current 6.25 percent. That would result in an estimated \$88 million cut in state revenues, with education's portion of the loss approximately \$32 million.

Anti-teacher legislation

A number of bills sought to eliminate certain rights of teachers and education employees. Here are three ideas

that could return next year:

Elimination of due process – HB 1620 would have eliminated a career teacher's right to trial de novo, which is the district court hearing for terminations. As initially written, the law would have given more rights to a new teacher than what would have been afforded a career teacher. The bill remains alive for next session.

A vote for impasse – OEA killed a proposal that would have required an all-faculty vote on whether a bargaining local could go to impasse. The Association believes this bill would have allowed school administrators and boards of education unfair influence in the bargaining process. This issue could possibly resurface.

Teacher Protection Act – HB 2033 could not be more misnamed. The bill would actually increase teacher liability while shifting liability away from other groups and individuals. Existing law already protects teachers from unnecessary lawsuits, and giving a bill such an inappropriate name only confuses teachers and the public.

Staff development committee put in hands of administrators

Continued from Page 3

The new language reads, "The teacher members (of the professional development committee) shall be selected by a designated administrator of the school district from a list of names submitted by the teachers in the school district. The members selected shall be subject to the approval of a majority vote of the teachers in the district."

How should OEA bargaining locals approach the staff development law?

1) Encourage members to ask that they be considered for inclusion on the slate of candidates.

2) Identify any staff development committee language in your collective bargaining agreement and change it to reflect the new law.

3) Bargain procedural items such as forms, timelines, etc.

4) The local should bargain the de-

tails of the voting process, the counting of votes, what happens if the slate is voted down, etc.

5) HB 1457 also requires the local board of education to determine the number of professional development points needed by teachers each year to maintain employment in the district. Locals should bargain that number.

HB 1622, Payroll deduction and joining or canceling membership in a professional association

– The new law says an employee may request in writing "at any time" to terminate or initiate payroll deductions to a professional organization. The district must meet the request within five business days or by the next pay period, whichever is earlier. And, the district has 15 days to notify the professional organization of the employee's wishes.

It is OEA's position that a signed membership form would constitute a

written request to begin payroll deductions for membership.

Where the money goes

The \$2.16 billion common education funding package provided in HB 1020 includes \$42 million to guarantee continuance of the 100 percent state-paid single premium health insurance benefit for teachers and support employees. In addition, the bill provides more than \$57 million in new money to be allocated to school districts through the state student funding formula for the first of four years of pay raises for public school teachers.

Other funding amounts in HB 1020 include:

- ◆ \$21.6 million to fund full-day kindergarten for districts wishing to offer it;
- ◆ \$3 million for third-grade reading remediation;
- ◆ \$2 million for Governor Henry's middle school math improvement initiative;
- ◆ \$2 million for middle school mathematics laboratories;
- ◆ \$3 million in lottery funds for the Teachers' Retirement System;
- ◆ \$3 million in lottery funds for voluntary school consolidation;
- ◆ \$2.5 million for a new student identification/information system;
- ◆ \$2 million for annual stipends for nationally certified teachers under the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards;
- ◆ \$1.6 million for alternative education; and
- ◆ \$3.7 million for other purposes, including early academic intervention and teacher professional development.

NEA lawsuit seeks full funding of NCLB

The National Education Association has filed a lawsuit against the federal government demanding that President Bush's No Child Left Behind Act receive full funding.

Since the law's enactment in 2002, there has been a \$27 billion funding shortfall in what Congress was supposed to provide schools to meet the law's regulations. That has left the states responsible for the law's requirements, and responsible for a large portion of the funding.

The funding shortage directly conflicts with language in the law, which says states will not suffer an undue financial burden in connection with compliance.

Cost studies in Ohio and Texas estimate that the price of the regulations

to state taxpayers could run as high as \$1.5 billion and \$1.2 billion, respectively, according to the NEA filing.

In addition to the NEA, plaintiffs in the lawsuit include nine school districts from Michigan, Texas and Vermont; nine NEA state affiliates – Connecticut, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, New Hampshire, Ohio, Texas, Utah and Vermont – and the local affiliate in Reading, Penn.

OEA President Roy Bishop said Oklahoma is not part of the lawsuit because the state has already met so many of the standards required by NCLB.

"Our high standards for educators have been in place for some time, making us a pacesetter in that arena," he said. "It comes as no surprise; Oklahoma teachers have a reputation

for excellence and high standards.

"The OEA was out front, laying the groundwork early, and that is helping us meet many of NCLB's challenges."

Still, the law remains sorely underfunded, making it impossible for many states to meet its requirements, he noted. It is expected that Oklahoma will see the effects of underfunding in the next couple of years, particularly lack of funding for increased testing.

There is a growing cadre of critics of the law, including the media, state and national legislators, minority organizations, state legislatures, schools, and parent and community groups. In fact, a diverse alliance of 55 groups have now joined together to develop positive alternatives to the law.

NEA continues to mobilize and moti-

vate its activists and to win allies to the cause. Nearly 20,000 petitions have been sent to Congress opposing the bill in its present form.

The NEA and its members believe in the goals of NCLB, but without proper funding those reforms can't happen without damaging school districts nationwide. The lawsuit seeks to help children by achieving reasonable revisions to NCLB's provisions.

"The education community backs reforms that make sense," said Bishop. "But unfortunately, this law has too many problems to accomplish the reform its architects wanted."

Seal receives Congressional Fellowship

Jennifer Seal, a teacher at Putnam City North High School, has been awarded the 2005 Congressional Fellowship by the James Madison Memorial Fellowship Foundation in Washington, D.C.

Seal, an OEA member who ran for election to the Oklahoma House of Representatives last fall, will work in Congressman Dan Boren's office during July. She will attend congressional hearings, meet and discuss issues with other congressional staff members, and collect information for use in her classroom.

The Congressional Fellowship is awarded and funded by the James Madison Memorial Fellowship Foundation, an agency of the federal government.

"We are thrilled to have Jennifer representing the Foundation on Capitol Hill this summer. She is an outstanding teacher and James Madison Fellow," said Admiral Paul A. Yost, president of the Foundation.

Seal was Oklahoma's 1998 James Madison Fellow.

For more information on the program, visit www.jamesmadison.com.

Black Caucus awards 2 scholarships

The Oklahoma Education Association's Black Caucus recently awarded scholarships to two high school seniors.

Takia Gross of Guthrie High School (GHS) and Emily Green of Tulsa's Daniel Webster High School (WHS) were each awarded \$400.

Gross was a member of the National Honor Society, Drama Club and the Heritage Club at GHS. She was also listed in Who's Who Among High School Students for 2002 and 2003. She will attend Langston University, the state's only Historically Black College or University, where she will major in criminal justice and minor in English. After obtaining her undergraduate degree, Gross plans to attend the Thurgood Marshall School of Law at Texas Southern University where she plans to study to become a lawyer.

Green played three varsity sports and held a job to help provide for her mother and two younger sisters, all while keeping a 3.62 grade point average at Webster High. She plans to major in education.

This year, OEA Black Caucus began playing a more active role in recruiting minorities into the teaching profession. Recruiting brochures have been sent to state college campuses and Caucus members are planning to make recruiting visits to the various campuses.

OEA Black Caucus member and Guthrie High School teacher Joyce Allen (left) talks with scholarship winner Takia Gross.



Tulsa Webster's Emily Green

3 OEA members named DaVinci Scholars

By Patti Razien

Just south of the Oklahoma state line, teachers receive salary equivalents up to 25 percent more than those in our state. The incentive of earning more money so close to home attracts many of our graduating education majors leaving, a void in Oklahoma.

Responding to this problem, the DaVinci Institute created the DaVinci Scholar Program which was designed to help retain Oklahoma educators by offering exceptional new teachers professional and financial incentives to build their careers in Oklahoma.

Three teachers from across the state have been named DaVinci Scholars by the DaVinci Institute, which honors graduates of an Oklahoma institution of higher education who are currently employed as a teacher with one to three years of teaching experience in an Oklahoma public or private



Paige Bergin

PreK-12 school. All three winners, Paige Bergin, Shelley Cook and Elanna Lindenberg, are public school teachers and members of the Oklahoma Education Association.

Bergin, an Oklahoma State University graduate, just completed her third year as a 5th grade math teacher at Jarman Elementary School in Tulsa. She is currently working on her mas-

ters at the University of Oklahoma.

“Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a candle,” and Bergin lives by this philosophy.

Woodward South Middle School art teacher Shelley Cook was nominated for the award by her sister, Carriann Cook, who is also a teacher. Shelley just completed her first year of teaching and believes in helping all students see things in a new or different light. She credits her decision to become an art teacher to her former art teacher, Roxy Merklin.

Putnam North High School teacher Elanna Lindenberg was also one of the three who were honored in April at the DaVinci Banquet.

Recipients of the achievement are selected by a panel of education professionals based on his or her academic excellence, professional commitment, community spirit and

demonstrated promise to excellence in creative education.

Creativity is not limited to the fine arts. The experiences of creative people are very similar even though they may excel in widely different content areas such as mathematics, social studies, music, visual art, English, science or foreign language.

Bergin, Cook and Lindenberg are fine examples of teachers who inspire creativity in their students by collaborating with other teachers and parents to provide an education that is never static, but is an ongoing process.

NEA partnership creates web toolkit for teachers

Teachers have new online tools to help them save time and more easily manage their classrooms and help students reach their highest potential, thanks to a new partnership between the National Education Association (NEA) and Progress Education Corporation.

With the NEA Teacher Toolkit, teachers can build student rosters to track student attendance and performance or access professional development opportunities.

The website includes Basic Tools that are free of charge. Advanced Tools, which can be purchased for a modest subscription fee, include electronic grade books, advanced lesson planning, over 200,000 assessment items, and special teacher training tools from education experts.

“Teachers need access to technology that allows more time with our students,” said NEA President Reg Weaver.

For more information, visit www.nea.org/marketplace/ttk.html.

Hearing held under guise of financial distress

Continued from Page 1

OEA, but the absolute truth of the matter is that a school employee can't afford not to belong to the OEA.”

The Liberty Board conducted the RIF hearing under the guise of financial distress in the district. However, Liberty continued to spend money at a rapid pace during Lewis's two-year ordeal.

She was represented at the board hearing by OEA Southeast staff members Larry Miller and Bruce Treadaway. Once the hearing was over and the board had voted to accept the superintendent's RIF recommendation, OEA Associate General Counsel Brandon Webb took Lewis's case, and filed a lawsuit against the Board for improper dismissal.

“Larry and Bruce had informed me that fighting this might take a long time. When it began, I thought I was tough enough to fight for the rights that had been denied me by the Liberty

Board,” said Lewis. “It wears on you though. It's hard. It's lonely. It seems like it will never end.”

Lewis said she was grateful for the assistance that OEA provided.

“I was in constant contact with Brandon Webb, paralegal Marian Bottoms, or Larry and Bruce,” she said. “They were my strength. OEA respected my decisions and helped my family and me every step of the way.”

After two years, Lewis settled her suit out of court with the Liberty Board. Even though her ordeal is over, she still thinks back on what might have been, and she looks forward to the future.

“I would like to get back into education. I loved teaching and working with the kids, and they enjoyed me. If that happens, I'll have a different look at the day-to-day events at a school and at what the school board does,” she said.



Carolyn Lewis

“I was never concerned before, but now I advise every teacher to be conscious of what goes on at board meetings and the policies that they pass. The RIF policy that I had to live with is still in effect at Liberty and it's still just as unfair as it was with me. I hope no one else has to go through what I did, but if they do, they better have the OEA on their side.”

Federal grant brings summer enrichment to Sand Springs

By Marty Bull

When Sand Springs Schools wanted to take advantage of grants funded by the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), they didn't have to look far for an experienced grant writer. Sand Springs EA member Rita Montgomery not only had the skills to write the grant, she had the vision to help make the project successful.

"As a special ed teacher I'm always concerned about my students maintaining their skills during the summer months," said the Pratt Elementary teacher. "Our program is a great way to combat this situation, not only for my students but for all students."

The 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program (CCLC) is a key component of NCLB. Grant recipients develop programs so students and their families can continue to learn new skills and discover new abilities.

Montgomery spent the summer of 2003 working on the grant. She approached the process as if money were no object.

"I didn't want my thinking to be restrictive," said the 12-year veteran teacher and current Sand Springs Teacher of the Year. "I knew, of course, we couldn't do everything but by expanding our thinking we came up with a very effective program."

Montgomery's time was well spent because Project Summer Spirit (PSS) received full funding from the CCLC for three years and partial funding for an additional two years. The program was launched in 2004.

The focus of the CCLC is to provide expanded academic enrichment opportunities for children attending low performing schools. In Sand Springs,

preference was given to Title I eligible students from Central and Garfield Elementaries, then opened to all elementary students within the district.

The Sand Springs summer program is designed around three basic parameters: the need to provide students a safe place to spend their summers, nutrition and ongoing education opportunities.

After considering several different delivery systems, the idea of a summer camp seemed to best fit the needs of the Sand Springs students.

"Kid's love summer camp, and parents need a safe environment for their children," said Montgomery. "Project Summer Spirit allows us to meet the needs of our students and their parents."

During its first year, 337 students were enrolled in the summer program located at Central in downtown Sand Springs.

"Central was chosen in part because of its downtown location," said Montgomery. "By the end of the summer, the community had become our largest classroom."

Campers can choose as many as three courses in each of the two sessions. Approximately 15 activities were offered in 2004. That number has increased to almost 40 different choices to the more than 600 students already enrolled for 2005.

Offerings include acting classes, computer skills, space exploration, urban hiking, Egyptian hieroglyphics, arts and crafts, Spanish and much more.

"Our teachers had such a great time last summer that they were even more creative this year," said Montgomery. "There is something for every



More than 600 Sand Springs students are taking advantage of a summer enrichment program, thanks to the grant writing of special education teacher Rita Montgomery.

child and every interest."

If the number of students continues to grow, PSS may have to add another campus to the program. Montgomery and co-director Cathy Hula are already looking to the future.

"We are thrilled with the response to Project Summer Spirit," said Montgomery. "With the community's support, we believe this program will be around for a long time."

RedHawks planning OEA night

The Oklahoma RedHawks, the state's Triple A affiliate of the Texas Rangers Baseball Club, will hold an OEA Back-to-School Baseball Bash Saturday, August 6, at the SBC Bricktown Ballpark.

First pitch will be 7:05 p.m. for the RedHawks vs Portland Beavers game. Discounted tickets for OEA Members and their families start at \$6. For more details, call Johnny Walker at (405) 218-1000, ext. 202.



A passion for teaching

Edmond's Ruth Rayner leads her students to new levels

By Stacy Martin

Edmond educator Ruthie Rayner has a passion for teaching. Her classroom practices recently won her national recognition for science teaching.

The John Ross Elementary School 5th grade teacher was one of two Oklahoma winners of a \$10,000 Presidential

Presidential Award for Science

dential Award for Mathematics and Science Teaching prize, recognizing educators for creative teaching practices. Jenks' Lynn Peacher won the Presidential Award for Mathematics (see story on Page 9)

"Students learn best by hands on experience," said Rayner. "I let their imaginations lead us where we go. I don't just gloss over the material."

Rayner is a generalist at John Ross, where educators teach in self-contained classrooms, handling mul-



Presidential Science Award winner Ruthie Rayner (right) shares a laugh with some of her students at Edmond's John Ross Elementary. From left are students Seth Liggins, Shae Bailey and Madison Beck.

iple subjects. But it is her approach in science teaching which attracted national attention.

Rayner revels in helping her students to take science learning to a deeper level.

Her students have dissected a pig's heart and lungs, and have examined the bones from a cow. Human anatomy fascinates them as well.

"One of the nice things about science

is that the kids are just naturally curious, so getting them to take risks and ask questions is not so difficult," she said.

"We have a great community in our classroom, where you're expected to participate and be challenged. 'Science is never perfect,' I tell my kids, 'so you're never wrong.'"

She also leads her students to new levels of thinking by encouraging them to work as teams and by challenging them

to accomplish what they previously thought couldn't be done. In fact, achieving the impossible is well-known at John Ross as Ruthie Rayner's motto.

"I tell them that nothing is impossible," she said. "If you truly want it to happen, it can happen."

In one instance, she challenged her students to use creative thinking to balance nine nails on a single nail. Her students succeeded without resorting to using any other materials to accomplish the task.

Often, her students enjoy themselves so much they hardly realize how much they are really learning.

"I want students questioning and hypothesizing as much as possible," she said. "At times, they don't even realize they're applying what we learn in their science experiments."

Science isn't Rayner's only area of excellence. She was John Ross Elementary Teacher of the Year in 2003 and was named The Oklahoma Council for Social Studies Elementary Teacher of the Year for 2005. She achieved National Board Certification in 2003.

"I truly have a passion for what I do," she said. "You have to be a lifelong learner and really want to perfect your teaching practices. If that's your goal, you will find out what the best practices are."

Shawnee's Janis Young honored by KWTW Channel 9

By Bruce Treadaway

Janis Young, Shawnee Middle School language arts teacher, was recently honored as an "Oklahoma Terrific Teacher" by KWTW Channel 9, the CBS affiliate in Oklahoma City.

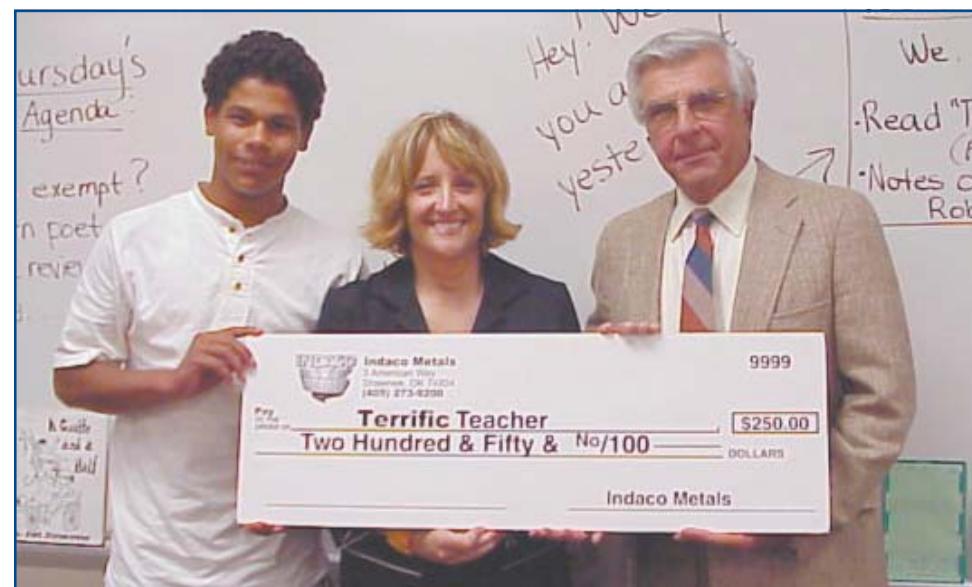
Young was nominated by one of her students, Keldin Choat, who was watching television when he saw a promotion for the "Oklahoma Terrific Teacher" program, sponsored by Channel 9 and Indaco Metals. Choat's mother told him that he should nominate Young. He did, and she was chosen from over 100 nominations.

Choat's recommendation stated, "This is my first year at Shawnee

Schools. Before I came here I struggled in school. Ms. Young has helped me to become a student who is on the honor roll. She supports all her students in academics and sports. She makes reading a lot more fun for me. I just think she is the best teacher I have ever had!!!! She's a single mother and still finds time for her students."

Young had previously taught at other Shawnee schools and at Little Axe east of Norman. She dropped out of teaching for two years and tried other jobs, but she soon realized that teaching was her calling.

This summer, Young will be one of two Shawnee teachers and 14 students



who will go to Shawnee's sister city, Nikaho, Japan. She is also the academic coach and Student Council sponsor at SMS.

Janis Young receives a check from Joe Inda, president of Indaco Metals, as winner of the KWTW Channel 9's "Oklahoma Terrific Teacher." Young was nominated by Keldin Choat (left), who is one of her students.

Commitment to excellence benefits students

By Stacy Martin

Jenks East Elementary school teacher Lynn Peacher says professional development and a commitment to excellence helped her win a national award for teaching creatively.

Peacher is one of two Oklahoma educators who won a \$10,000 Presidential Award for Mathematics and

A favorite is problem-based learning, which utilizes spatial learning concepts to bring math problems to life. This takes the process of solving problems on a blackboard to authentic learning for students.

To that end, Peacher's classroom is adorned with many tools of the trade. For example, there are multifaceted

Presidential Award for Mathematics

Science Teaching. Edmond school teacher Ruthie Rayner of John Ross Elementary School was Oklahoma's other recipient (see story on Page 8).

A commitment to learning the best teaching techniques has helped Peacher achieve national distinction. In addition, the fourth grade math educator is quick to credit both Jenks administrators and her peers for her success.

The district provided what she describes as meaningful professional development with Dr. Grayson Wheatley, Florida State University elementary mathematics professor, a renowned professional development consultant. East's teachers were able to not only attend his professional development sessions, they also were in constant touch with Dr. Wheatley during a seven-year process.

In addition to all that, Peacher learned even more by reading, researching and learning the best practices. Finally, she works closely with her peers, providing all of the school's teachers a chance to share and refine their techniques. She is clearly proud to work in a school filled with so many excellent, committed educators.

Peacher said she has several teaching techniques that work well for her.

cubes the children can manipulate to illustrate equations. The walls of her room are adorned with geometric tapestries that represent mathematical theories which students created.

It's not often students can have opportunities to devour their math problems. Peacher sometimes uses colorful M&M candies, inviting her students to divide them in different ways. One of the by-products of her approach is that she quickly grasps how her students think. This makes her a more effective educator, she said.

She uses a variety of teaching styles to meet individual student needs and concepts. To introduce a new concept, she may start with instructive techniques.

Long-term care coverage soon available nationwide

By midsummer, NEA members in all 54 affiliates will be able to apply for long-term care insurance through the NEA LTC Program. Thanks to the compliance processors at Mutual of Omaha, the product's underwriter, state insurance departments in all required areas have approved the NEA product.

The program provides:

- 10 percent discount for NEA members and their families;



Jenks East Elementary's Lynn Peacher helps fourth grader James C. Hillenbrand with a classroom exercise. Peacher recently won the Presidential Award for Mathematics.

"If they get the right answer and it makes sense to them, it is good mathematics," Peacher said. "They have to be accurate. It has to be efficient. It has to be fluid. They have to be able to manipulate and use math reasoning in different ways.

"Problem-solving, experiential learning is often misunderstood," said Peacher. "You cannot just say, 'Here's a problem – now go discover multiplication.' That's not really what it is. You give them different opportunities to construct mathematics mentally. There

can be several different strategies that you're introducing."

In Peacher's class, creative teaching helps successful students flourish and once-struggling students overcome learning hurdles.

"That's what it's all about," she said.

Excellence is nothing new for Peacher. She was 1999 State Teacher of the Year and was a finalist for National Teacher of the Year. Now that she has a few personal milestones behind her, next she plans to tackle National Board Certification.

- 30 percent spouse/domestic partner discount (10 percent for other household members);
- 15 percent preferred health discount;
- Qualified advisors to help members select the right plan for them and their families; and
- Telephone, Internet and in-person assistance.

NEA Member Benefits recently released the all-new long-term care insur-

ance pages at www.nealtc.com. The pages provide educational materials for members that address the costs of long-term care services, how to assess the need for long-term care insurance, and features of the NEA MemberCare Long-Term Care Insurance Program.

For more information, call NEA Member Benefits at 800/637-4636, or the NEA LTC Service Center at 800/884-2675.

Shawnee camp exposes 7th graders to the great outdoors

By Bruce Treadaway

What began in April 2002 as a way for Shawnee seventh graders to learn more about wildlife, hunter safety, archery and aquatics has blossomed into a much anticipated yearly event.

Recently, Shawnee Middle School (SMS) teacher and OEA member Linda Haselwood celebrated her fourth year as coordinator of the Outdoor Camp. Game wardens and other outdoor experts from across the state offer SMS students a hands-on approach to the outdoors, and lunch provided compliments of Arvest Bank in Shawnee. T-shirts are designed by SMS students each year commemorating the event.

The camp is conducted in "stations." One station has the students using shotguns to shoot at clay pigeons, another station lets students have a hand at catching fish (and there are plenty of fish to catch), and a mountain man explains everything

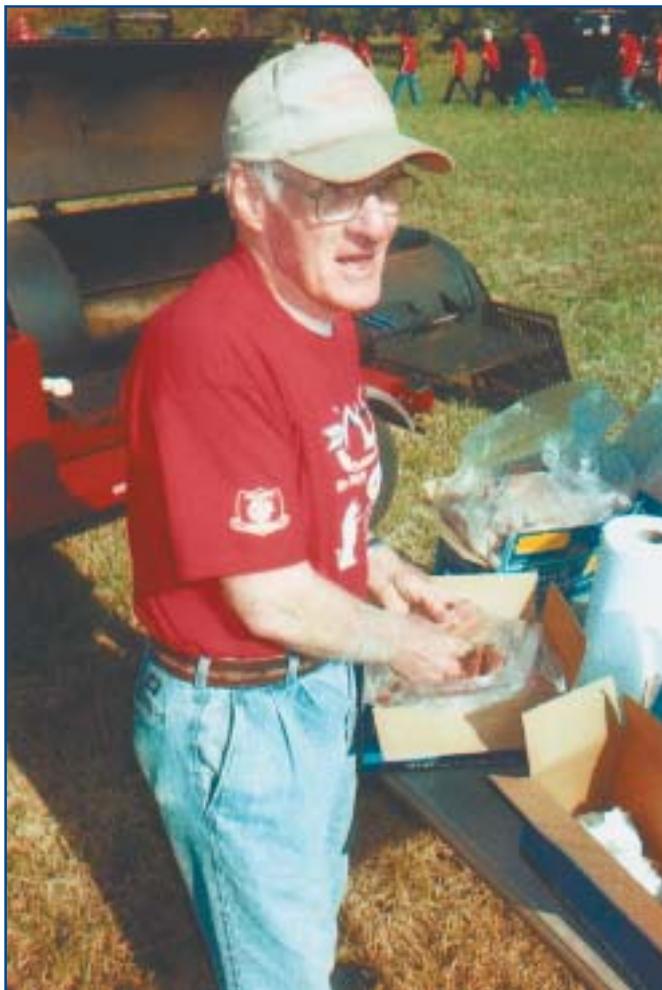
about black powder firearms.

At another, the students are led on a nature walk, and archery is introduced at yet another station. Students rotate stations until they have visited each one.

"Getting ready for the Outdoor Camp each year is now a year-round activity," Haselwood said. "A tremendous amount of effort is put into the day's activities, and the Shawnee community has responded with the financial support that we must have to conduct and continue to conduct the camp.

"I can't say enough about the time and effort that the Wildlife Department puts into the camp, and we also have full support of the Shawnee school administration."

The camp wouldn't happen without the generosity of time, talent and re-



Dr. Joe Taron cooks hotdogs for campers and volunteers at the Outdoor Camp for Shawnee seventh graders. Taron helps coordinate fund-raising for the annual event.



Seventh grade students get instruction in archery, firearms and fishing at Shawnee's Outdoor Camp each spring.

sources of local volunteers. Dr. Joe Taron helps with fund-raising and cooks for the campers and volunteers. Haselwood's husband, Bill, provides as many as 600 apples as snacks.

Dr. Bill Buchanan, who teaches a sports ministry class at Oklahoma Baptist University, brings as many as 20 of his students to help. Also, several teachers and parents pitch in each year.

For many of the Shawnee seventh graders who participate in the Outdoor Camp, this is their first experience with

the outdoors. It is an eye-opening activity that helps broaden their world, and it gives them a different perspective on what nature and outdoor living have to offer.

For some it will spark a lifelong love of the things that they can experience and learn from being outside and away from television sets and video games. Even though preparation for the Camp is difficult and time-consuming, Haselwood always looks back at the end of the day and can see that all the effort and planning is worth the results.

New NEA website focuses on membership

June 2005 is the online start up date for Organizing Team NEA, a new website in the Members Only section of nea.org.

The site will publish stories from across the country about local and state affiliates that have been successful in recruiting new members and energizing current members to do what is necessary to improve the lives of NEA members. Whether it is achieving a first-ever collective bargaining agreement, electing a pro-education school board, or winning a local bond election, Organizing Team NEA will tell the story and share the

tools used in the victory.

The first weeks of Organizing Team NEA will feature a contest where one lucky member will win \$500. Members will also be able to buy the new TEAM NEA t-shirt.

Check for the site's opening at www.nea.org. Once at the site, click on "Members and Educators," then "Members Only," and, finally, click on "Organizing Team NEA."

Members, presidents, committee chairs and staff will all find Organizing Team NEA a great source of information and inspiration to empower members.

HOUSSE ready for special ed teachers

By Doug Folks

Special education teachers now know exactly what they have to do to be considered "highly qualified" in Oklahoma.

The Oklahoma State Department of Education (SDE) recently issued the state's version of the High Objective Uniform Statewide Standard of

Evaluation (HOUSSE) (see the chart below). It is similar to the state's multisubject versions for regular education teachers in early childhood and elementary, and allows special education teachers to earn highly qualified status without taking a test.

"The OEA was heavily involved in every step of the process," said OEA

President Roy Bishop. "No other education Association had as much input in the special ed HOUSSE as OEA provided."

Bishop added that veteran special education teachers should have no problem proving they are highly qualified through the HOUSSE. The National Education Association is making Oklahoma's HOUSSE available to other state affiliates as an excellent example of how to structure a HOUSSE.

According to the SDE, the HOUSSE was specifically designed for teachers with special education certification teaching prior to December 3, 2004. It was developed so that special ed teachers who are teaching two or more core academic subjects can accumulate points through coursework and professional development.

Teachers with special education certification who were teaching prior to December 3, 2004, and who are not able to show highly qualified status

through the HOUSSE have until June 30, 2006, to become highly qualified.

Special education teachers new to the profession – those teachers hired after December 3, 2004 – and teaching multiple subjects, have two additional years after the date of employment to become highly qualified. To build a HOUSSE, those "new" teachers must first hold special education certification and an additional certification in one of the core academic subjects of early childhood education, elementary education, mathematics, language arts or science, and then they may build a multisubject HOUSSE.

The SDE has announced that data collection for highly qualified special education teachers will be done in conjunction with the annual Application for Accreditation completed each October.

For more information about highly qualified status for any teacher, OEA members are encouraged to call their regional Teaching and Learning Specialist.

New membership card brings discounts

When you get your new membership card next fall, it will provide you with a whole new world of benefits.

The OEA Access card will offer members discounts from 123,000 merchants nationwide, including 1,143 in Oklahoma. You'll find discounts on movies, travel services, dining, entertainment and more. The best part is you will be able to add your local favorite businesses to the list.

Access added 67 new Oklahoma merchants to the list in the last month, including 25 percent off at Hastings



bookstores, two-for-one admission to Sun 'n Fun Park in Ponca City, 15 percent off at Red Lion Hotels, and 50 percent off at Hawthorne Suites.

Remember, only OEA members will have access to these discounts.



SPECIAL EDUCATION (Grades PK-12)

Oklahoma's High Objective Uniform State Standard of Evaluation (HOUSSE) Checksheet for Demonstrating Subject Competency
(For teachers with Special Education Certification.)

May 2005

Name: _____ Teacher Number: _____ Subject Area: Special Education

START	BUILD YOUR HOUSSE						100 Points = Highly Qualified				
↓	(Column 1)	AND/OR	(Column 2)	AND/OR	(Column 3)	AND/OR	(Column 4)	AND/OR	(Column 5)	AND/OR	(Column 6)
National Board Certification in any subject	Coursework in the Core Academic Subject Areas for Special Education Teachers on Official Transcript		Years of Satisfactory Teaching Experience in an Accredited School		Service in the Content Area		Awards, Presentations, and Publications in Special Education Content Area		Professional Development		Achievement of Students Taught (Optional)
IN OKLAHOMA IF NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFIED YOU ARE HIGHLY QUALIFIED	Semester hours of coursework with a grade of "C" or better in - English - Reading/Language Arts - Mathematics - Science - Foreign Language - Social Studies - Art - Music An EDUC/CIED or any other education prefix is not acceptable except for reading hours. Credits earned using the College-Level Examination Program (CLEP) are acceptable provided they are reflected on the official transcript. Also Semester hours of content coursework taught in an institution of higher education are acceptable		Must be employed as a full-time teacher or special education teacher, teaching the core academic subjects any portion of the day including co-teaching Rationale: A. State-mandated professional development, 1981 B. State-mandated uniform teacher evaluation system, 1986 C. State-implemented <i>Priority Academic Student Skills (PASS)</i> objectives, 1993		Served as a: - Department chair/team leader - Mentor teacher - Cooperating teacher for intern/student teacher - Academic club sponsor - Academic judge - Membership in a regional, state, or national professional content organization - Officer in a regional, state, or national professional content organization - Committee member on a local, state, or national committee to develop, select, evaluate, or validate content standards, curriculum, or assessments - Other (provide documentation)		- District teacher of the year - State teacher of the year finalist - State teacher of the year - Milken Family Foundation National Educator Award - Present academic content at local, state, regional or national professional meetings - Published a content article in regional, state, or national journal - Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching - Outstanding Educator Awards from content professional organizations		Must be content-specific to core academic subject area (one point per clock hour) - Professional development related to <i>Priority Academic Student Skills (PASS)</i> - 1993		- Documented increase in student test scores - Competed in student academic competition
	STOP HERE 100 Points	• 4 points per semester hour earned or taught ~ ~ ~ If Column 1 is equal to or greater than 100 points, you are Highly Qualified. STOP HERE		A. Fall 1981 - Spring 1986 1 point per year B. Fall 1986 - Spring 1993 2 points per year C. Fall 1993 - To Present 3 points per year Maximum 49 points.		• 10 points for any one item . • 20 points for two or more items . (Documentation required.) Maximum 20 points.		• 10 points for any one item . • 20 points for two or more items . (Documentation required.) Maximum 20 points.		• 1 point per professional development clock hour (Documentation required.) Maximum 30 points.	
	# Hours: _____ X 4 = _____		# Years Experience: A. B. C.						Prof. Dev. Hours: _____		
	TOTAL Points:		TOTAL Points:		TOTAL Points:		TOTAL Points:		TOTAL Points:		TOTAL Points:

HOUSSE options provided by the Oklahoma State Department of Education to help schools comply with the federal mandates of No Child Left Behind.

100 Points = Highly Qualified
Total of columns 1-6: _____

Delegate Assembly reaffirms commitment to Adequacy & Equity

Local representatives to the 2005 Delegate Assembly unanimously approved the 2005-06 budget and reaffirmed OEA commitment to the Adequacy and Equity (A&E) Program.

The annual business meeting, held in late April in Oklahoma City, drew 340 local delegates and 48 guests.

The approved budget includes the second year of a \$5 dues add-on to fund the Association's A&E Project, which will ask the courts to determine if Oklahoma schools are funded adequately. The project also includes an organizing component. A password-protected website that contains a database of negotiated contracts is already available to local leaders and bargaining teams.

By approving next year's budget, delegates also agreed to designate money for an image media campaign that will run at the beginning of the coming school year. It has been two years since OEA ran ads on radio and television statewide.

OEA's budget is based on membership dues, but 15.5 percent of the budget's revenue comes from the National Education Association (NEA). Among NEA dollars is nearly \$691,000 for '05-06 to support OEA delivery of services in the field. The Kate Frank/DuShane Fund will provide \$320,000 reimbursement for legal expense in defense of the rights of OEA members.

NEA will provide \$65,000 to support the OEA/NEA Member Benefit program, and grant additional money for special projects which do not appear in the OEA budget.

In other business, delegates approved a constitutional amendment that changes the way education support professionals are seated on the OEA Board of Directors. Now, the OEA president will appoint ESP representatives to the board while maintaining the current one board member to every 1,000 members.

"This change maintains the same level of ESP presence on our board of directors, but it greatly reduces the



Shirley Nero, a retired delegate at large from Warner, waits for her chance to address the 340 representatives at April's Delegate Assembly.

length of the process to get those members on the board," said OEA President Roy Bishop.

Delegates considered two separate new business items concerning national certification for professionals who receive certification through means other than the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) process. In the end, delegates reaffirmed OEA's commitment to NBPTS and asked for an open meeting at next October's OEA

Convention on the certification and licensure requirements for positions such as counselors, psychometrists and speech pathologists.

In other action, delegates voted to support Carolyn Crowder's candidacy for re-election to the NEA Executive Committee. Crowder, a teacher in Mustang and former OEA president who is in her first term on the NEA Executive Committee, will announce her intent to run for re-election at this summer's NEA Representative Assembly.

School bus drivers must obtain new "S" endorsement

A new federal law requires school bus drivers to obtain an "S" endorsement by September 30 in order to keep transporting students.

For new school employees who have no prior driving experience, an endorsement is obtained by taking a written test and a driving test. For those who have driving experience and current commercial licensing, the requirements are determined by when individuals last obtained their training and testing.

For any school bus driver who was tested and trained prior to September 1, 2002, the driver must submit a DL-

18 form to the Department of Public Safety, filling out all portions, and must pass a written test as well as submit a fingerprint blot. The driver may obtain a waiver of the driving test as long as he or she has a clean driving record.

What constitutes a clean record is determined by the Department of Public Safety, but generally any ticket for 15 mph or over will be considered "unclean" as, of course, will any alcohol related offenses, multiple tickets under 15, etc.

Any school bus driver who was tested and trained after September 1, 2002, needs only to submit the same DL-18 form and only fills out the first

portion (as designated on the form) and must supply a fingerprint blot. No written or driving test is necessary.

The OEA has determined that most school districts around the state have already provided training or are making plans to train drivers in ac-

cordance to the new law. The National Education Association has created training materials and the OEA is prepared to help districts with any training requirements. For more information, call your regional Advocacy Specialist.



Take advantage of your Personal Legal Services

By Joe E. White, Jr.
The White Law Firm

The Personal Legal Services Program (PLSP) was designed and implemented by your OEA General Counsel's Office and the White Law Firm. Great care was taken to ensure PLSP would be easily accessible and offer the type of legal services that would meet the needs of OEA members and their families.

Teachers and Education Support Professionals (ESP) across the state who maintain an active OEA membership receive a variety of valuable legal services, typically at *no charge*. For example, drafting of wills (including amendments), uncontested divorces, uncontested modifications to divorce decrees (including child support), consultation and assistance in creditor disputes, name changes and misdemeanor cases are fully covered and require no out-of-pocket costs to an OEA member, his or her spouse or dependent children.

Other legal services are provided at a substantially reduced rate resulting in a huge savings to OEA members and their families. Reduced rate services include personal injury cases, nursing home negligence and insurance bad faith, just to name a few.

The White Law Firm takes great pride in the legal service we provide to our clientele. We have had the pleasure to represent OEA members and their families through this program for over nine years. Since 1996, we have represented in excess of 6,000 teachers or their loved ones in a wide variety of cases.

The level of service that we provide to all OEA members and their families has led numerous OEA members to recommend us to their friends and other family members. Even with this large volume of cases, the White Law Firm takes the time to provide personal service to each client we help.

The White Law Firm carefully



Joe E. White, Jr.

evaluates each case to ensure that we obtain the maximum compensation for the loss suffered by our client. Our results in helping clients with personal injury, nursing home negligence and insurance bad faith cases by way of judgment or settlement currently exceed \$30 million dollars. We have found that juries across this great state appreciate the teachers and ESPs in their communities who are working hard to educate the next generation of Oklahomans.

Personally speaking, any time I am fortunate enough to represent a teacher who has been injured through someone's negligence, juries appear more willing to fully compensate that person because of who they are and what they represent.

Please familiarize yourself with all of the available benefits that accompany your OEA membership. I particularly encourage you to review the OEA membership benefits associated with the PLSP. The White Law Firm maintains four attorneys and one paralegal who are ready, willing and able to assist at a moment's notice.

In closing, every education employee should know the ABC's of protecting themselves and their loved ones and who to turn to when help is needed. We are proud to be associated with the OEA and the members it represents. Our goal is to keep you informed that we are here for you and to keep PLSP in mind the next time you need help.

PLSP Highlights

The OEA is the only state organization in the NEA family to offer legal assistance to its members for off-the-job legal problems. Through the Personal Legal Services Program, members have access to free legal services, or services at discounted costs.

If you need help for one of the following services, call OEA's Center for Legal and Corporate Services at 800/522-8091, or 528-7785 in central Oklahoma.

Free services include:

- Wills, including amendments;
- Name changes;
- Uncontested modifications to divorce decrees;
- Defense of misdemeanor

charges;

- Paternity support enforcement;
- Powers of attorney;
- Uncontested divorces;
- Uncontested adoptions (stepparent adoptions only); and
- Consultation and assistance in creditor disputes.

Other situations allow a member five hours of free legal service, with any additional time covered at a reduced rate. Those situations include:

- Personal injury;
- Felony charges;
- Contested modifications to divorce decrees;
- Wrongful death;
- Nursing home neglect; and
- Contested divorces

Staples recycling program donates another \$25,000

By Bruce Treadaway

Staples recently donated another \$25,000 to education foundations and kicked off a paper recycling program during a special ceremony in Oklahoma City.

The Oklahoma Education Association Foundation was one of the foundations to receive \$1,000 that day. OEA and Staples began the "Recycling for Education" partnership four years ago, encouraging schools to donate empty computer printer ink cartridges for recycling. So far, Staples has donated \$80,000 to public school foundations across Oklahoma and expects to reach the original goal of \$100,000 in donations in September.

"This has been a tremendously successful project," said Staples regional manager Joe Lada. "Empty printer ink

cartridges continue to come in for recycling, and the new paper recycling effort will not only help with our precious natural resources but also help an effort to plant trees all over Oklahoma."

The day's events were highlighted by a tree planting ceremony at Will Rogers Park. OEA local associations and public school foundations that participated in the event all received Colorado Blue Spruce trees to take home and plant.

In addition to the OEA Foundation, Staples made contributions to school foundations in Ardmore, Choctaw, Deer Creek, Edmond, Enid, Jenks, Lawton, Midwest City-Del City and Moore.

Also, Muskogee, Mustang, Norman, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma State University, Putnam City, Shawnee, Stillwater, Tulsa and Yukon.

RA delegates to tackle key education issues

Educators attending the National Education Association (NEA)'s 2005 Representative Assembly will tackle hot topics that are front and center in education today – improving student achievement, boosting outreach to minority communities, and building stronger bonds between parents and the nation's public schools.

This year's Annual Meeting and Representative Assembly will take place July 1-6 at the Los Angeles Convention Center in California. The theme of the 2005 Annual Meeting is "Team NEA: Fighting for You, Your Schools, Your Students!"

The Oklahoma Education Association will send 96 delegates to Los Angeles, where they will join more than 9,000 delegates to debate pressing issues in education and set policy for the 2.7 million-member Association.

NEA members will deliberate on a host of issues around which the Asso-

ciation has developed strategic initiatives. These include:

- Encouraging a greater role for parents in school improvement;
- Moving all students – including students of color, poor students, rural and urban students, and second-language learners – to even higher levels of achievement;
- Fixing and funding the so-called No Child Left Behind law; and
- Attracting and retaining the best teacher and education support workforce with fair, professional pay.

On July 3, delegates will hear from NEA President Reg Weaver, who will launch NEA's campaign for better schools.

"A coalition of educators and parents and grassroots people of good will – Democrats, Republicans, and independents alike – united by their shared values would be a powerful alliance," said Weaver. "NEA can lead the way,

helping our fellow citizens find the common ground for such an alliance – because that common ground happens to be the higher ground of our nation's shared commitment to children, to public schools and to America's future."

Also addressing the delegates will be Jason Kamras, 2005 National Teacher of the Year; Kathleen Lange, 2005 NEA Education Support Professional of the Year; and Cheryl Brown Henderson, 2005 NEA Friend of Education.

Other highlights will include:

- The 39th Annual Human and Civil Rights Awards Dinner will be held on July 2, where 11 activists and educators will be honored for promoting social justice and dignity in their local communities.

- Student members, retired members, education support professionals and higher education members will gather on June 27 for Outreach to Teach. NEA members will repair,

paint, clean and landscape at Franklin D. Roosevelt Middle School in Compton, Calif.

- NEA's Read Across America will host "Red Carpet Read-In" on July 1 where delegates will treat local youngsters to entertainment, art activities and a good book.

- On July 2, a pre-RA symposium, "Critical Issues in Education," will feature sessions on closing the achievement gaps, reaching out to minority communities, bringing fairness to educator pay and updating schools with 21st century technology.

Exhibits, featuring educational products and services from more than 200 organizations and vendors, will also be on display in the Los Angeles Convention Center.

Further information about NEA's Annual Meeting and Representative Assembly can be found at www.nea.org/annualmeeting/index.html.

Bingo event helps Edmond support local recruit new members

The Support Employees of Edmond (SEE) held a spring bingo event as part of its Great Public Schools program effort, said SEE President Ed Whitson.



The event featured prizes provided by area vendors and cash giveaways to build both member and nonmember participation in local activities.

The local recruited seven new members directly or indirectly as a result of the bingo gathering. SEE was also preparing for its annual end-of-school year golf scramble to be held in June.

These activities allow local members to get together and have fun and

to have the opportunity to build relationships. It has also facilitated SEE's growth pattern, Whitson explained.

SEE is Oklahoma's largest and fastest-growing support local, with a roster of 161 members.

Another step SEE took this spring was to take its communications efforts to the next level with creation of a formal newsletter, logo and other written materials.

Developing a brand helps create a solid identity for the organization, leading to an even greater presence in the Edmond Public School system, Whitson said.

The Great Public Schools program teams the local affiliate, the Oklahoma Education Association and the National Education Association under a comprehensive plan to build local organizing and membership strategies.

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Members find out how well they can work together to build a jigsaw puzzle during a workshop exercise at the OEA's 2004 Summer Leadership Academy.

Summer Leadership Academy will offer a variety of workshops

As OEA and its affiliates gear up for another year of membership growth, local leaders are turning to the 2005 OEA Summer Leadership Academy for new and creative ideas to attract and retain Association members.

The annual event, to be held July 27-28 at the Holiday Inn Select in Tulsa, sets the stage for local leaders to connect with one another, hone their leadership skills and reap the rewards of membership growth.

"Connecting with members and potential members is essential to building strong local Associations," said OEA Vice President Becky Felts. "Our members will leave Tulsa with an arsenal of techniques that will not only attract new members but strengthen their locals organizationally."

OEA staff specialists will guide participants through a series of skill sessions that will bring about positive results.

"Polls indicate that potential members are more likely to join if they have the opportunity to talk one-on-one with a peer," said Felts. "The goal of this year's academy is to provide the information and the skills to help recruiters feel more comfortable during these conversations."

Each participant will get the opportunity to choose different topics that will enhance the local's organizational development before putting the information to practical use. Topics will include "What Do Generations X & Y Want?," "NEA Member Benefits," "Politics R Us," "Talk It Up!," "New Teacher Events and Beyond," and "One-on-One Conversations." Sessions will be upbeat and packed with information participants can use to enhance recruiting in their local association.

"This year's program has a simulation component that will allow our members to practice the skills presented," said Felts. "It's a great opportunity to explore different techniques and expand how we approach membership recruitment and membership retention."

OEA's 2005 SLA runs from 1 p.m. Wednesday, July 27, through 4 p.m. Thursday, July 28. The \$30 registration fee includes all conference materials, breaks and lunch on the 28th. All other meals and lodging are the responsibility of the conferees.

For more information, contact your regional team or Cindy Manning at 800/522-8091.