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**The Education Focus**  
OEA's all-member publication

## High enthusiasm earns big title

### OKC's Robyn Hilger named State Teacher of the Year

By Doug Folks

Lifting her arms in triumph like a boxer who had just knocked out an opponent, Robyn Hilger's eyes and mouth were wide open in surprise and disbelief.

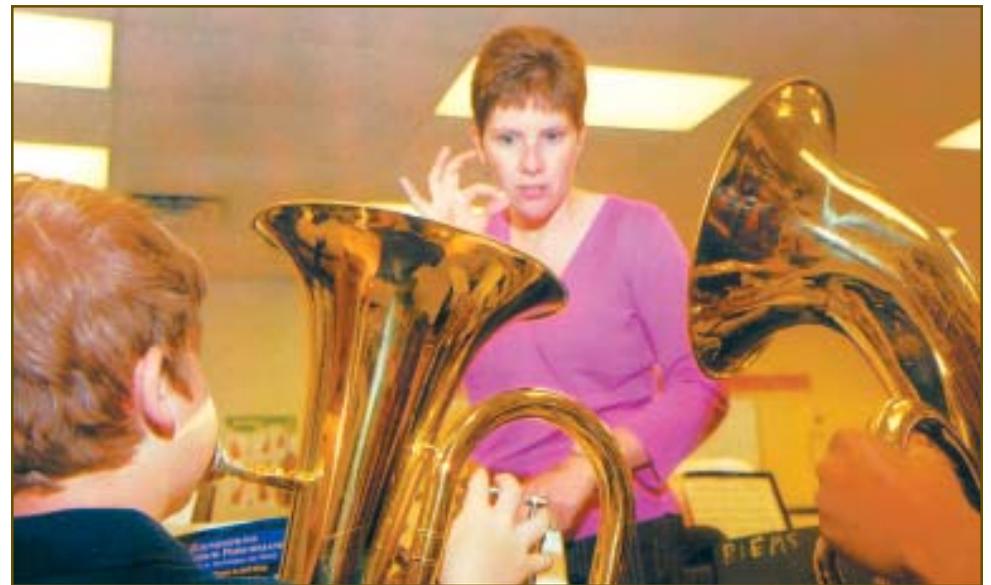
After hearing her name called as Oklahoma's next State Teacher of the Year during a September ceremony at the State Fairgrounds, she ran down the line of her fellow finalists, high-fiving each one before taking her place next to State Superintendent Sandy Garrett at center stage.

The reaction may not have been what most would expect of Oklahoma's Ambassador of Education, but it was pure Robyn Hilger. It was an honest display of excitement and not all that different from how she approaches her duties as a middle school band and orchestra teacher at Oklahoma City's Belle Isle Enterprise School.

In fact, it just may have been that exuberance that earned her the title as the state's top teacher.

"I think the judges like my enthusiasm," said Hilger when asked why she thinks she won the title.

"(Teaching) is something I've



State Teacher of the Year Robin Hilger instructs students during band class at Oklahoma City's Belle Isle Enterprise School. Hilger will spend the next year as Oklahoma's Education Ambassador.

known I was going to do since the 6th grade."

For the next year, Hilger will travel the state to promote public education. She'll make speeches to a variety of education and civic groups and visit with teachers in most every county. While that is very different from what she has ever done, it doesn't scare her.

"Leaving the kids, that's my number one fear," Hilger said. "I'm not nervous at all about being Teacher of the Year and all the public speaking that comes with it. Not being in the classroom is what scares me to

death. This must be what it's like sending a child to college.

"I'm afraid of what's going to happen to me without my students. The classroom is where I get my energy."

Kathleen Reynolds was Hilger's fifth grade music teacher at Wiley Post Elementary in Putnam City. After seeing the results of Hilger's musical aptitude test, Reynolds encouraged her to take up an instrument. With that first experience of playing the clarinet, Hilger saw the path she would follow into adulthood.

See "Teaching" on Page 3

## In search of a few good award nominees

Local Associations and individual members have until January 31 to complete official nominations for OEA's annual awards program.

The Association recognizes a full range of individuals and outside organizations for their contributions to public education as well as to the OEA. Winners of this year's awards

will be feted at the Awards Banquet, April 28, at the Meridian Conference Center in Oklahoma City. The event annually takes place during Delegate Assembly, which runs April 28-29.

Awards are presented for outstanding teaching, professional and student media coverage of education, and human and civil rights. There are also awards for

outstanding legislators, businesses and private citizens who work to enhance and improve public education.

See Page 13 for a complete list of awards. For more information, call OEA Headquarters at 800/522-8091, or 405/528-7785. Nomination forms and award criteria can be found at [www.oeka.org/Awards/](http://www.oeka.org/Awards/).

# Beware of strangers offering candy

*By Roy Bishop  
OEA President*

Virtually every parent has told his or her child not to take candy from a stranger. The consequences can be deadly. As we near the next session of the legislature, there are strangers trying to entice our citizens with what sounds like a batch of sweet deals. In reality, these pieces of candy are poison to public education.

These people say they are trying to do the right thing for education. All they really want to do is run over public education. They seek to influence by promoting bad public policy programs with catchy, misleading names. In reality, these programs would destroy public education by placing funding strangleholds on state revenue.

What makes fighting these programs so difficult is that there are so many, and they come from different angles. Let me warn you about three of them.

The first is a so-called Taxpayers Bill of Rights, or TABOR. First of all, the program has nothing to do with the rights of taxpayers. A more apropos name would be **Take Away Basic Oklahoma Resources**.

A group sponsored by out-of-state money is collecting signatures for a constitutional amendment that would establish TABOR in our state. The program worked so poorly in Colorado that the governor who once praised its virtues is now asking the voters to support a five-year moratorium on the program.

Under TABOR, growth of our state would be greatly curtailed. Children will have higher class sizes when teacher layoffs occur. Police and fire departments will suffer cutbacks as well. We will risk losing health care professionals who provide services for

our elderly parents.

I think you get the message; TABOR will negatively impact the infrastructure of Oklahoma. We can't afford and we don't deserve a weak and ineffective infrastructure.

Besides, we already have watchdog legislation for revenue. Thanks to State Question 640, we cannot receive a tax increase without a vote of the people or three-fourths approval in the legislature.

Don't be fooled into signing the TABOR petition.

The second program that would hurt education is the 65 Percent Solution, which would require 65 cents of every education dollar be spent in the classroom.

That sounds great, but what does it mean for schools?

The organizers of this neat little program don't define librarians, counselors, food services or transportation as part of the classroom.

Can you imagine trying to get through a school year without a library? Have you ever had a student with personal problems so great that school is the least of his worries? How many kids will not get to school because bus routes are cut? How chaotic would lunch be without a full cafeteria staff?

The 65 Percent Solution is the product of Patrick Byrne, an official with First Class Education. When asked if he had a silver bullet, what competitor would he shoot and why, Byrne said he would shoot the National Education Association. He's talking about you and me. Our agenda of quality public schools for every child stands in his way of vouchers, privatization and weakening our influence.

The third effort deals directly with our Adequacy and Equity Project. We believe that evidence provided by our



*OEA President Roy Bishop*

Legal Liaisons, along with an expert study of state funding, will show that Oklahoma does not adequately fund education.

In an effort to sway public opinion, the group recently released a study that says we have a higher per pupil expenditure than any other study has reported. In the same breath, it promotes private schools.

What is the real motive behind this study? The organization releasing the study constantly promotes vouchers. Does it surprise you that they would come out with a study like this?

People who espouse this point of view are some of the "haves" of a very exclusive group. The last thing that they want is a competitive business environment that adequately funded schools would bring to Oklahoma.

By pitting teachers, administrators and parents against each other, these groups think they can muddy the waters and get us off message. We won't fall for that. We know what's best for our students. We can't let them divide us and privatize us.

If this were Halloween, the trick would be on us for accepting these treats. Beware of strangers offering candy.

## *The Education Focus*

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### *Need Help?*

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

**Oklahoma City Metro  
and Southwest Teams**

800/522-8091 or 405/528-7785

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800/331-5143 or 918/665-2282

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

*Visit [www.okea.org](http://www.okea.org) for more information, and call 800/522-8091 to find out how to join today.*

**OEA**

Oklahoma Education Association

# Teaching has been Hilger's goal since 6th grade



Robyn Hilger has been teaching in one form or another since she was a high school student in Reeds Spring, Mo.

## Continued from Page 1

Reynolds, who was state Teacher of the Year in 1982, attended the Teacher of the Year ceremony. She went without knowing that one of her former students was a finalist, let alone one who would win the prestigious title.

At an OEA-sponsored luncheon after the ceremony, the two renewed acquaintances.

"To be in the same club (as Reynolds) is really an honor," Hilger said. "She absolutely changed my life."

Most of Hilger's life has been intertwined with music. She met her future husband, David, when they sat next to

each other in seventh grade band at Putnam City's Hefner Junior High.

But they lost touch with one another after ninth grade when she moved with her family to Reeds Spring, Mo. She was the best musician in the tiny little school – so good that she was teaching clarinet to other students at age 16.

Hilger came back to Oklahoma City University (OCU) for college on a music scholarship. David was attending the University of Oklahoma, but taking clarinet lessons from an OCU professor. The professor mentioned he had a very talented new clarinet player – a young lady named Robyn Srejma.



OEA President Roy Bishop presents Robyn Hilger with a certificate and a year's membership in the Association at Teacher of the Year ceremonies.

David later called Robyn, they got re-acquainted, and the rest is history. Today, David is band director at Purcell High School.

At 21 years old and still attending OCU, Hilger got a part-time job at the Belle Isle 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Center teaching band 45 minutes every other day. The school wanted to start a fine arts program and asked Hilger to take it on.

With that wild enthusiasm for teaching, she said yes. In her second year, she started an orchestra and coordinated the purchase of \$40,000 in musical instruments. Today, Belle Isle has three bands, three orchestras, three choirs, musical theater, speech, drama, debate, visual arts and a fine arts team of four full-time teachers.

"Fine art is in the culture of our school," Hilger said. "I don't feel like an elective teacher in this building and I'm not treated like one."

Every sixth grader at Belle Isle is required to take a music class. Hilger has designed a program that introduces students to music and encourages them to enjoy the experience. And it's working – the program has a dropout rate of less than two percent.

"We're not training for Carnegie Hall here," she said. "We want them to appreciate music. If they love it, the musical ability will come."

Sprinkle in some of Robyn Hilger's enthusiasm, and there's no doubt many of Belle Isle's students are finding their musical ability.

## Random questions with Robyn Hilger

**Education Focus:** You and your husband met in junior high band and today you are both band directors. Do you two ever pull out the clarinets and jam?

**Robyn Hilger:** Absolutely not, because we argue too much.



**EF:** What's in your CD player?

**RH:** The Eagles; James Taylor; Missy Elliot, the censored version; and Dvorak's Symphony No. 9.

**EF:** What three people would you like to invite to dinner?

**RH:** After winning this award, I'm really interested to know how I got here. So, I'd invite Kathleen Reynolds, who introduced me to music, and Lynn Kellert, my principal. She is the wisest

person I know, my friend, my mentor and an excellent teacher. Also, I'd invite Mother Teresa because of her lifelong sacrifice for the good of others.

**EF:** What's the most important skill one needs to be a middle school band teacher?

**RH:** Patience. Lots and lots of patience.

**EF:** What's your favorite musical piece to teach?

**RH:** I really like Boogie-Man Blues for orchestra. It's jazzy, improvisational and students love to play it.

**EF:** The piano: percussion instrument or string instrument.

**RH:** Ah, the great debate. I'd have to say both, to tell you the truth.

## State Teacher of the Year Finalists

# Calaway's grant writing benefits all of Lawton

By Doug Folks

Students of Jim Calaway can give you 1.5 million reasons why he is the most valuable resource in Lawton Public Schools.

Over the last 10 years, the high

school science teacher has won \$1.5 million in grants and awards for his classroom, students and colleagues.

The laundry list of tangible items he's won could fill this newspaper.

Want an example? How about the

\$100,000, five-acre outdoor classroom complete with a greenhouse, a two-acre pond stocked by the state, and cement pathways that make the entire area handicapped-accessible?

"Writing grants is easy and there's

money for everyone out there. You just have to be creative and go get it," said Calaway, a state Teacher of the Year finalist who is in his 25th year in Lawton Public Schools.

"My students set the tone for me. It is their creativeness, their power, their inquisitiveness, that drives me," he said.

For every grant or award, Calaway produces a project in

which his students have an active role. He then documents the project and shares that documentation with everyone even remotely interested in the project.

Calaway says schools depend too much on fund-raising, and don't receive near the return they deserve. He spends two hours a week writing grants, and points out that a \$10,000 grant can bring \$100,000 of in-kind gifts with it.

Best of all, Calaway keeps no grant writing secrets. He has written a book, teaches a class at Cameron University, and has given workshops on the subject all over Oklahoma.

"The more teachers I talk to, the more money we bring into the state," he said.

If you'd like Calaway's help writing grants, write to him at [jcalaway@lcisp.com](mailto:jcalaway@lcisp.com).



Teacher of the Year Finalist Jim Calaway discusses the features of a dinosaur bone with Theo Fells and Madelyn Shepherd, who is dressed for Spirit Week at Lawton's MacArthur High School. The bone was found in 2000 during a class trip to Texas sponsored by a grant Calaway had won.

## Hamilton's goal is to provide a caring, loving classroom environment

By Patti Razien

For Mary Hamilton, it's not only the love of teaching, but the love of children that shines through in her classroom.

Hamilton was a finalist for State Teacher of the Year, and has taught in Alva Public Schools for over 30 years. She is the computer and 6th grade social studies teacher at Alva Middle School, and is also the *Alva (High School) Goldbug Yearbook* instructor.

A former member of the Oklahoma Education Association Board of Directors, Hamilton has a long history of activity in the Association. She has held various offices in the Alva Education

Association over the years, currently serving as treasurer and the Adequacy and Equity contact.

As a teacher, Hamilton is there for her students when they fail and when they succeed. She gives them opportunities to learn and to grow from their experiences. Hamilton's classroom is a safe place where students want to come each day and where students can excel in their own abilities.

"My goal has always been to provide a caring and loving environment for all my students. I realize that my believing in my students could mean the difference in whether or not they succeed not only in my classroom, but

also in life," she said.

Two of Hamilton's three children are teachers and she has instilled in them the same caring and loving traits that her grandmother, also a teacher, taught her.

"They are making sure that all students are given the chance to talk, to participate in class discussion, and to know they are surrounded with Christian love," says Hamilton.



Teacher of the Year finalist Mary Hamilton, a former OEA director, teaches sixth grade social studies and computers at Alva Middle School, and also serves as advisor for the high school yearbook.

# Dutton cherishes her work as a teacher

By Doug Folks

Jeni Dutton may not have had that one eureka moment when she knew she absolutely must become a teacher.

In fact, getting into teaching was actually just a means to an end for her.

“I changed my major like 50 times while I was in college, but I wanted to do some kind of a missionary oriented thing. For some reason teaching just did that,” said Dutton, an 8<sup>th</sup> grade English teacher at Moore’s Central Junior High and a recent state Teacher of the Year finalist.

“If there is a way to save the world it is through the public education classroom,” she said. “Because I look at these kids in my class and I see myself – all the choices that I could have made, and where I could be now. And I get to do something about helping

them make the right choices.”

Colleagues and administrators have encouraged and inspired her throughout her career. More than any one person, though, she is motivated every day by her students. Dutton clearly cherishes what she does for a living. Obviously, teaching is more of a calling to her than a job.

“These students walk in here and whether they want to learn or not, they want to be somebody and do something different than this,” said Dutton, now in her 11<sup>th</sup> year in Moore. “Having a writing classroom makes it so easy because these students get to sit in here and dream these enormous dreams. And they get to give those dreams reality in words.

“I get to help them do that, and that is really what gets me through the day.”



Moore’s Jeni Dutton, a state Teacher of the Year finalist, wanted to do missionary type work, and found it as an 8<sup>th</sup> grade English teacher.

# Tahlequah’s Pack finds his calling in high school classroom

By Jeff Savage

Chuck Pack believes there is much more to his job than just teaching math.

The Tahlequah High School (THS)

teacher was enjoying his time teaching math at Northeastern State University (NSU) when he realized God had another plan for him. Pack was working at Falls Creek where he

found he had a genuine rapport with high school age students.

He loved working at NSU, where you walk into a classroom, share your knowledge and students “lap it

up.” But a college professor may only have a student for one semester and never again.

“At the high school level, I may have 100 students,” Pack said, “but I get to see them next year and the year after, and when they graduate I get to see their brothers and sisters creating the community environment that I missed at the university.”

Pack was a finalist for State Teacher of the Year and is president of the Tahl-

equah Education Association. A six-year veteran at THS, he teaches geometry, pre-AP geometry, algebra II and AP statistics. Pack has a bachelor’s degree in mathematics and physics from Southeastern Oklahoma State University and a master’s in statistics from Oklahoma State University.

Many of Pack’s high school students are unmotivated to learn, so he says he relies on God’s guidance to help him meet the needs of all students. He frequently reminds himself that, “I am teaching kids first and math second.”

The message Pack would share with all teachers is, “...to get involved in your kids’ lives, get involved in your school, get involved in your colleagues’ lives, get involved in your Association, and get involved in your church.”



Chuck Pack, a Teacher of the Year finalist, talks with Rebekah Martin during a pre-Advanced Placement Geometry class at Tahlequah High School.

# Everyday things inspire Varnell

By Patti Razien

Will Rogers Elementary School in Stillwater is home to an exceptional kindergarten teacher and Teacher of the Year finalist – Terry Varnell.

“It is my home away from home, my support and my community,” says Varnell who has taught there for the past 26 years. “The faculty and the staff, along with my students and their parents, have truly become a part of my world, not just for a year, but for a lifetime.”

Varnell credits Ann Lane, now retired

after 30 years of teaching, as inspiring and influencing her teaching career. It was not only Lane’s invaluable words of wisdom, but by the example she set as she taught with love and compassion.

“She not only taught her students how to read, write and do arithmetic, but also how to share, believe in themselves and love learning. I have embraced her style and have tried to live up to the example she set for me,” said Varnell.

When asked what she most loves about teaching, Varnell responds with the

everyday things: hearing her students’ questions, answers, reflections and laughter; when she feels their warmth, acceptance and trust; that “ah-ha” gleam in their eyes; smiles on their faces; and tight hugs around her legs.

“That’s why I love going to work everyday,” beams Varnell. “These are the true expressions of my most important contributions to the world!”

The care, the concern, the ability to spark each child’s imagination and inspire them to be their best is exemplified in this remarkable teacher.



Stillwater’s Terry Varnell

## Former principal now finds inspiration in class

David Shouse finds teaching inspiration in those “ah-ha!” moments.

“When I can take a kid that I know is struggling in math and show him different ways to do it until that “ah-ha”

moment, learning becomes more of a fun thing and they want to learn more and the desire grows,” said Shouse, a State Teacher of the Year finalist.

Before coming to Muskogee,

Shouse was a teacher and principal in California schools from 1986 to 1995. He served as a middle school principal for two years in Muskogee before moving to the classroom. Now in his sixth year, Shouse teaches mathematics, social studies and language arts to 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade students at Cherokee Elementary School.

Shouse holds a bachelor’s degree in education from the University of Tulsa, a master’s in educational administration from National University, in San Diego, Calif., and an educational administration degree from California State University.

Working with students from low socioeconomic backgrounds is most rewarding to Shouse. He believes math is like a second language for many students. What really gets him excited is when students show the excitement and eagerness to learn because they suddenly “get it.”

Perhaps the biggest inspiration for Shouse came when a former student, who had struggled with math, was named winner of the “Overall Math Award of Excellence” in middle school.

“That was ‘ah-inspiring,’” said Shouse.



Muskogee’s David Shouse finds his inspiration those “ah-ha” moments when a student suddenly understands the concept and finds enjoyment in learning.

### TOY finalists honored at OEA luncheon

Each year, the Oklahoma Education Association president makes a presentation to the State Teacher of the Year during ceremonies at the State Fairgrounds. The winner is given a framed certificate and a year’s worth of dues in the Association.

In addition, the OEA sponsors a luncheon at its Oklahoma City headquarters building for all Teacher of the Year finalists and their families. The honorees are all given a red,

acrylic apple on a base that includes their name and the year.

Nearly 85 people attended this year’s luncheon, including former State Teachers of the Year Mike Adkins, Mitsuye Conover, Talita DeNigri, Eugene Earsom, Susan Illgen, Kay Long, Sherry Morgan, Stephen Smallwood, Nancy O’Donnell, Lynn Peacher, Kathleen Reynolds and Eve Williamson.

# Howard knew at an early age what she wanted to be

*By Bruce Treadaway*

Few individuals can say that they know what they wanted to do with their lives at a young age.

Starla Howard, Title I Reading teacher at Shawnee's Will Rogers Elementary and Oklahoma Teacher of the Year finalist, felt the call to teach as early as second grade in Tecumseh. Her teacher, Mrs. Prince, helped her realize that she wanted to teach, to read stories, and to drink chocolate milk.

With a bachelor's from the University of Central Oklahoma, a master's from the University of

Oklahoma, and National Board Certification, Howard has realized her dream many times over. She is now a seven-year veteran of teaching first grade and three years teaching Title I Reading. She has been an OEA member every year, and also works with her church choir and the Junior Service League.

Howard felt greatly honored when she found out that she was one of the 12 finalists for Teacher of the Year. In typical fashion, when State Superintendent Sandy Garrett called to let her know, Howard at first thought Garrett was talking about fellow Title I

teacher Wanda Hadley.

Howard teaches to make a difference in her students' lives and the world. That's always been her goal.

The wisdom that she would like to impart to public education colleagues is, "It is more important what children take home in their hearts and minds than what they take home in their hands. If we can touch our children's hearts, we can teach their minds. I want to know everything I can about my students. It's better when I know them and they know me."



*Shawnee's Starla Howard teaches to make a difference in her students' lives, as well as in the world.*

# Lancaster credits national certification for her success

*By Bruce Treadaway*

Linda Lancaster says the Teacher of the Year process is a strenuous one, but she learned an important fact about Oklahoma teachers along the way.

"After you go through (the process), you're glad that you did. I also learned there's a tremendous amount of talent in Oklahoma's teaching ranks," she said. "When you get to the Teacher of the Year ceremony you ask yourself, 'Why am I here?' If 12 of us have that much talent, how much is in the entire state?"

Lancaster and Shawnee finalist Starla Howard are both from Tecumseh, marking the first time two finalists have come from the same home town.

A third grade teacher in Byng, Lancaster offers sage advice for her colleagues.

"Children are always learning, and we should always be aware of that. Even when we don't think we're teaching them, we are. Teachers make a difference," she said. "They don't see it until maybe years later, and newer teachers haven't had that experience yet. Ex-

perience is a teacher."

Deborah Cornelison, a former Oklahoma Medal of Excellence winner from Byng, encouraged Lancaster to earn National Board Certification, and Lancaster thinks that was an important personal project to tackle.

"I don't think I would have been considered for Teacher of the Year without the skills I learned from the National Board process," she said.

"I've taken a leaf from (Cornelison's) notebook and urged colleagues to pursue National Board certification," Lancaster said. "Out of 18 teachers in our building, 13 are Nationally Board Certified, and soon, we may be the first building in Oklahoma to have a complete staff of Nationally Certified teachers."



*Byng's Linda Lancaster says participating in the Teacher of the Year process taught her that Oklahoma is full of talented teachers.*

## **AEW is November 13-19**

Need help planning for American Education Week? AEW is November 13-19, and the National Education Association has a tool kit full of information, tips and "how-tos" that will help you plan your celebration. Visit [www.nea.org/aew/toolkit.html](http://www.nea.org/aew/toolkit.html) today.

# Teachers, college students both benefit from “Hook Up”

By Patti Razien

Local Associations in and around Oklahoma college towns have a golden opportunity to strengthen not only their organization, but also the teaching profession.

By creating a partnership with a Student Oklahoma Education Association (SOEA) chapter, the local can recruit future members and take part in the development of future teaching professionals.

SOEA is a pre-professional organization of undergraduate and graduate students currently preparing for careers in education. It is one of the largest student organizations in Oklahoma with local student programs at over 25 university and college campuses.

Oklahoma’s student organization is steadily growing, with nearly 800 members as of press time. That figure represents an increase of more than 150 members compared to the same time last year. Helping fuel the increase is Oral Roberts University, a new SOEA chapter that has already registered nearly 200 student members.

In addition, SOEA has established itself nationally as one of the NEA’s most active student organizations. Last summer, SOEA won national recognition for its Outreach to Teach project in which members, OEA staff and other volunteers painted, repaired, landscaped and revitalized an inner-city elementary school in Oklahoma City.

Membership in SOEA provides networking opportunities with professional educators through the “Hook Up” program, in which SOEA and local K-12 Associations work together to host professional development workshops and unite for special projects.

Katy Cook, SOEA president and a student at Langston University’s Tulsa Campus, strongly believes that the

partnership between student chapters and local Associations is a much-needed alliance.

“I think classroom teachers offer our student members good classroom management ideas, tell us what the classroom is really like, and give us tips/strategies for dealing with parents,” she said. “As a college student I was given this information, but having it come from a teacher that is actually practicing these ideas in their classroom would be a great benefit.

“This collaboration needs to happen so that our student members can be excellent teachers in Oklahoma,” said Cook.

SOEA members benefit significantly from the relationships that are forged through Hook Up. Students are able to establish a connection with those locals which will come in handy when they

graduate and seek to enter the teaching profession.

There is mutual benefit from the involvement of these two groups. Student members can help teachers in many ways, including serving at back-to-school functions and preparing and packaging



Members of the new Student OEA chapter at Oral Roberts University look over membership materials at a back to school event. ORU has registered almost 200 members this year.

membership materials for distribution. They can ask a local

school to sponsor a reception honoring staff for American Education Week and use the event to network with teachers.

Floyd Cox, OEA teaching and learning specialist and state student organizer, agrees that the Hook Up program is a win-win situation for both students and teachers.

“Teachers can’t do this forever and

they need to know they are helping to keep that excellence in teaching by offering advice and support,” said Cox. “Today’s college student is driven by a need to serve. Involvement with the local association provides that.”

Locals across Oklahoma have been working with SOEA chapters for several years. For instance, Martha Wissler, president of the Edmond Association of Classroom Teachers, recruited three Edmond principals and the director of personnel to host a panel discussion at a University of Central Oklahoma chapter meeting last April. Students were able to ask questions and voice concerns about teaching today and get feedback on ideas they had for their own classrooms.

In Norman, both Sheri Childress, OEA director for Southwest Zone E, and Bryan Young, president of the Professional Educators of Norman (PEN), have worked with the local University of Oklahoma SOEA chapter. For instance, Childress, a former PEN president, assisted OU SOEA President Sandra Johnson and advisor Frank McQuarrie to hold a day of recruiting at OU’s College of Education.

“While student chapters are great for meeting other students, a Hook Up program is helping us network with people already out there doing what we’re going to be doing, and showing us the other side,” Cook says. “There’s no better education than that.”

## Tips for a successful SOEA/local association Hook Up

Several local Associations have “hooked up” with Student OEA chapters in their communities. Here are a few ideas of activities teachers and students can enjoy together:

- Invite student members to attend your local executive meeting and/or local Association meetings.
- Include the student chapter in local trainings being offered by the local Association or district.
- Provide local members as guest speakers at student meetings. They can share their classroom experiences that will help students prepare for the “real world.”
- Work with university student advisors to plan a membership recruitment drive.
- Actively recruit student teachers working in your dis-

trict to become SOEA members.

- Set up buddy systems where SOEA members can email their questions and concerns to experienced teachers.
- Host a retiring teacher “yard sale” open only to student SOEA members to purchase your used school supplies.
- Organize joint community service projects.
- Ask for help from your student chapter. The experience of working together is beneficial to all.

For more information on the “Hook Up” program, contact Floyd Cox, SOEA state organizer, at fcox@okea.org, 800/522-8091, or 523-4323 in central Oklahoma.

SOEA President Katy Cook can be reached via email at katy.cook@cox.net.

# Renaissance man

## Hall of Famer Tommy Fulton reflects on his career

By Bruce Treadaway

Born in Oklahoma City. Well traveled in his youth. Small West Texas town graduate. Twenty-three year junior high art teacher. OEA president. OEA deputy executive director. Teachers' Retirement System Board member. NEA delegate. Excellent bridge player. Avid OU football fan. Unquenchable thirst for knowledge. Oklahoma Educators Hall of Fame 2005 inductee.

Tommy Fulton has accomplished all this and much more in his life as an educator and as a champion of public school employees. His recent induction into the Oklahoma Educators' Hall of Fame is simply another step in Fulton's life of excellence. Recently he took a few minutes out of his busy schedule to answer a few questions for the *Education Focus*.

**Education Focus:**  
**How small was the Texas town where you graduated?**

**Tommy Fulton:**

Let's just say that it was a hyphenated school district (Grand Falls-Royalty), and that I was in school here in Oklahoma City's Capitol Hill where I had 2,300 kids around me, and then we moved to West Texas where I had 23 in my graduating class.

**EF: Where did you teach?**

**TF:** I taught junior high art for 23 years at Jarman Junior High in the Mid-Del district.

**EF: Did you have a favorite class?**

**TF:** I enjoyed all my classes. Periodically there would be a really creative class. I had four or five that were really creative and independent. They questioned me and it made me a better teacher and caused me to question my teaching methods. They made me better.

**EF: What were the highlights of your teaching career?**

**TF:** The highlight of my career was to be named Teacher of the Year by my Mid-Del colleagues. On the plaque at the Educators' Hall of Fame, the first line reads Mid-Del Teacher of the Year. That was the absolute best! I also had 24 student teachers during my career at Jarman.

**EF: What was the highlight of your OEA career?**

**TF:** Barbara Ware had been President ahead of me, and my year was the

first year of unification with the NEA. It was also the first year of the UniServ staff concept. The OEA Constitution was changed. It was a heady time and a time of great challenge and change. I was proud to be a part of it.

**EF: Who were your role models as educators?**

**TF:** Bill Branam and Carmen Mace. Bill was a coach at Jarman, and Carmen taught biology at Midwest City High School. Bill was a coach who told other coaches that they should join the local association and then go to their meetings, even if they had to miss practice. Carmen and Bill were always there for me, from the classroom to my campaigns for OEA and NEA offices.

**EF: As a former TRS Board**

**member, do you have thoughts you'd like to convey to current OEA members?**

**TF:** The core issue at the TRS is overall funding of the system. I understand all the other issues, but funding has to be done first. If it isn't, there

will come a day when

younger teach-

ers will not

have the re-

retirement

that current

retirees

have. I think

the TRS

battles in the

future will be

fought in

the

courts and not necessarily in the legislature.

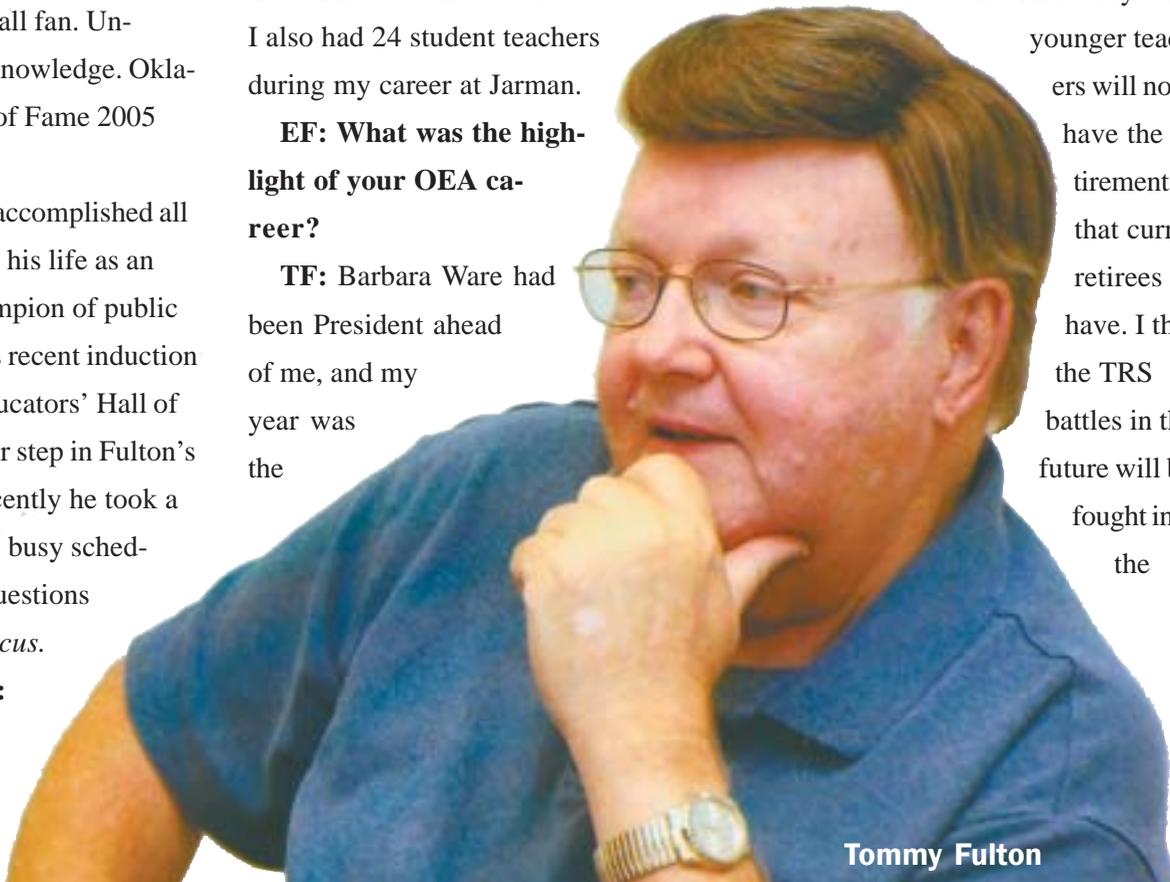
**EF: How did you feel about be-**

**ing selected to the Oklahoma Educator's Hall of Fame?**

**TF:** I was very pleased with my selection. I was totally surprised by the outpouring of letters and calls from current students, former students, and teachers. I even received one from a man who worked with my father over 50 years ago.

**EF: In closing, do you have any words of wisdom for Focus readers?**

**TF:** I have great admiration for today's teachers. They face more problems and difficulties than ever before. When I was teaching, most kids were sent to school and told to behave. Now it seems that parents say, "Call me on your cell phone, and I'll handle your problems." In addition, there's so much paperwork and other activities that take away from teaching. Teachers are asked to be all things to all kids, but we can't be everything. I was interested in students before I had them in class, and I was interested in them after they left my class. Students don't say much to you while you teach, but I get e-mails and calls from former students. I still enjoy it when they refer to me as "Mr. Fulton."



Tommy Fulton



Oklahoma's NEA Directors Greg Johnson (left) and Linda Hampton visit with Congressman Dan Boren during a recent visit to Washington, D.C. Johnson, of Mustang, and Hampton, of Pleasant Grove in Seminole County, lobby Oklahoma's congressional delegation every time they are in D.C. for an NEA board meeting. On this trip, they were joined by former OEA Directors Becky Munholland of Healdton and Cheryl Dowell of Comanche.

# Three OEA members win Career Tech Teacher of the Year honors

By Marty Bull

Three Oklahoma Education Association members – Sandra Babcock, Larry Liston, and Clare Scott – were recently named Teacher of the Year award winners by the Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE).

All three are now automatically



Southern Oklahoma Technology Center Superintendent/CEO Dr. C. R. “Bob” Gragg presents Sandra Babcock with the Career Tech’s Special Needs Teacher of the Year award.

eligible for the regional competition which could lead to one or all being named national teacher of the year in their division.

Every year during the annual Oklahoma Career Tech’s August conference, the ACTE recognizes individuals who have made extraordinary contributions to the programs in their division. Chosen from candidate dossiers and personal interviews, these individuals exemplify the highest standards of career tech education.

Babcock was named ACTE Teacher of the Year in the Special Needs division. As the applied communications instructor at Southern Oklahoma Technology Center (SOTC) since the program’s inception in 1997, she is in the position to work with each student in a positive way.

“To be recognized for a program

you built from the ground up is very satisfying from a professional viewpoint,” said Babcock, a National Board Certified Teacher. “But to have your colleagues recommend you for the honor makes it even more special.”

Babcock began her teaching career

as a language arts instructor in 1986 in Crescent Public Schools. She later taught for seven years in Wilson Public Schools before moving to the Lone Grove area. She has received numerous awards for her creative and innovative approaches to teaching.

Liston, the

2005-06 ACTE Agricultural Education Division Teacher of the Year, was chosen in part for the successful

horticulture program included in his agriculture education curriculum.

Students receive both classroom

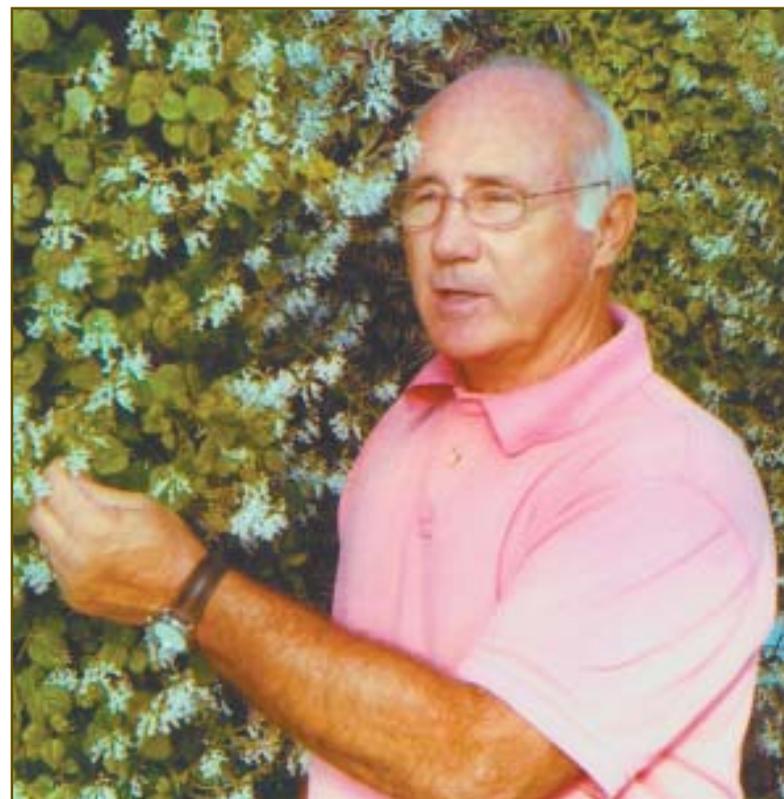
instruction and hands-on opportunities in three 50-foot by 24-foot greenhouses located on school property. Students are responsible not only for ordering products, but they plant seedlings, cultivate and monitor the

growth of the plants under their care, and then market the plants at sales held in the spring and fall.

A few of Liston’s Moore High School graduates have received horticulture degrees, but all leave with a “green thumb” and a sense of accomplishment.

“I have students come by to visit and tell me their lawns and gardens are the envy of the neighborhood,” said Liston. “It’s nice to know that they learned something that they could use throughout their lifetime.”

Being named as the 2005 Teacher of the Year in the Trade and Industrial Education Division is just one way



Larry Liston’s students leave his horticulture class with green thumbs and a sense of accomplishment.

Scott gauges her success as an instructor. Her personal relationship with her students is a guiding barometer.

“I love and respect each of my students,” said Scott, a 16-year veteran who teaches at Northeast Technology Center in Pryor. “In return they are

motivated to work hard and be successful. We help one another be successful.”

Her dedication and encouragement helped 125 cosmetology students place at state and 12 at national competitions. Scott’s own goals included obtaining National Board Certification status. She was the first cosmetology instructor in Oklahoma and one of the first in the nation to gain National Board Certification.

“The process has made me a better instructor,” said the former business owner. “I use what I learned during that time period every day.”



Northeast Technology Center’s Clare Scott (right) instructs two students in her cosmetology class. Scott was named Career Tech’s Teacher of the Year in the Trade and Industrial Education Division.

# Immortalizing a true American hero

## Cleveland teacher keeps the memory of her friend alive

By Doug Folks

Kathie Angelo enjoyed the rare experience of personally knowing a true American hero. Her friend, Fern Holland, died tragically, but Angelo is helping immortalize this amazing Oklahoman.

Holland helped write the Iraqi Constitution, contributing a controversial provision that set a goal of 25 percent female membership in the national assembly. She was assassinated on March 9, 2004; the day after Iraqi leaders approved the document. Holland was just 33 years old. She had worked tirelessly to give Iraqi women a long-awaited voice in their government.

“The transformation in my life came when I met Fern Holland,” said Angelo, who teaches English and Alternative Education at Cleveland High School in Pawnee County. She also teaches a concurrent-enrollment speech class through Tulsa Community College.

“Being in Fern’s presence might have been humbling, but her warmth made everyone feel special. She wasn’t the prototype of someone destined to change the world – yet, she



This painting of Fern Holland is part of an exhibit paying tribute to the Miami, Okla., native who helped give women a voice in Iraq before she was assassinated.

did,” Angelo said.

After graduating from Miami (Okla.) High School, Holland obtained a bachelor’s degree in psychology from the University of Oklahoma. After a trip to Africa, she realized her next path and earned a law degree from the University of Tulsa.

She was working on a second law degree at Georgetown University when she accepted a position with the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA)

in Iraq, helping write the war-torn country’s constitution.

Previously, Holland had interrupted her studies to accept an assignment in Guinea, West Africa, to investigate suspected abuse of women refugees. Civil war had driven these women to seek refuge from their homes in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Cote d’Ivoire. She also spent time in the Peace Corps in Namibia educating the African people about AIDS prevention.

“Fern was not a person to rest upon her laurels and relish her success,” Angelo said. “She knew there was always a deeper challenge ahead, one that would give her greater opportunity to make a difference.”

Angelo hasn’t sat back and kept her memories of Holland to herself. She is working with Holland’s sister, Viola, to film a documentary about Fern’s life. Also, Angelo has teamed up with Viola Holland and Lee Merrifield to create an exhibit celebrating Holland’s life. The exhibit is open through the end of November at Merrifield’s restaurant, Daddy Hinkle’s Steak House, which is located in the historic Kingman Building in Bricktown, just east of downtown Oklahoma City.

The Bill of Rights Institute recently added a curriculum for secondary students titled, “Being an American: Exploring the Ideals that Unite Us.” In the chapter entitled *American Heroes: Past and Present*, Holland was chosen as the contemporary example of a real American hero. Fern shares a chapter with George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, Sacagawea, Harriet Tubman, and a few others.

Angelo is also developing a curriculum based on Fern Holland’s life. For more information on “The Making of a Hero,” visit <http://trackstar.4teachers.org/trackstar/redirect.jsp>, and use access code number 267391.

“Fern led an amazing, inspiring life – a life that an educator can use to teach the qualities, characteristics, deeds and attitudes of a modern day hero,” Angelo said. “My hope is to educate young people about the making of a hero, inspiring them to continue Fern’s work.

“Our hope for our future lies within our youth, and they must be taught values, morals, respect, love and dedication to worthwhile causes.”

## Father follows daughter into the classroom

By Patti Razien

Children often follow in their parents’ footsteps, but this is one case where the opposite is true.

Tammy and David Alliss are both teachers at Enid’s Monroe Elementary School. Tammy Alliss is in her fifth year of teaching and her dad, David, is in his first.

David Alliss has always been a teacher, of sorts, with a career as an electronics technician and trainer in the Air Force, and most importantly with time spent raising his two children alongside his wife Shirley. Now retired from

the Air Force, and his children grown, Alliss pursued another dream of becoming an elementary school teacher.

“My wife and children kept encouraging me to go back to school and become a teacher,” David said. “I finally decided maybe they were right.”

David completed the requirements for elementary certification last spring and received his education degree from Northwestern Oklahoma State University. While obtaining his degree he worked as a teacher’s assistant for two years and as an assistant in a number of libraries across the Enid

Public Schools district.

He gave his time as a coach for youth sports and worked for several years for a local pediatric dentist. Presently, he is working on his master’s degree as a multimedia specialist at Oklahoma State University.

David is teaching fourth grade at Monroe Elementary and Tammy is a pre-kindergarten and kindergarten teacher at the same school.

“My dad and I have a very special relationship,” said Tammy. “He was my first teacher. I was lucky to grow

See “Air Force retiree” on Page 13

# Beware! Big Brother is watching

By Heath Merchen  
Associate General Counsel

**Q — When is the email you read and send while at work considered private?**

A — Never.

**Q — When is information about what websites you visit, what articles you read, or what information you enter on the computer while at work considered private?**

A — Never.

**Q — When is it okay to use the paper in your printer at work, the school's computer or any other school equipment to conduct your own personal business?**

A — You guessed it. Never.

For any who disagree with the above advice, there is long list of teachers, support employees and even administrators throughout Oklahoma who have faced reprimands, suspensions and even terminations for these actions. Sadly, however, many still fail to heed our warnings and are just one click away from the same fate.

In hopes of stemming the flow of these cases, which are extremely difficult to defend since the district usually has caught the staff member red-handed, (and sometimes red-faced for those accessing more provocative websites), we have put together the following list of the four big DON'Ts regarding technology use on the job.

**1. Do not use your district email for personal business.**

a. This includes emailing any OEA staff member or discussing OEA or local business with other staff members.

b. In some districts the local Association has an agreement whereby notices and other generic materials can be sent by Association officials through email or the inner-office mail system and the Association pays a fee for access. Even in those districts, the privilege should be used only by officers of the Association. If you have a need to

## From Your Counsel

interact with others regarding personal matters, use your personal email.

c. If using personal email, access it from home, not school. Once you access it from your school site, the district can review any personal emails you opened. In addition, many emails automatically open suggestive websites that will show up on the district's server records.

**2. Do not access pornography or suggestive materials from work.**

a. *The district knows what you are accessing* and your web access can be tracked with minimal effort.

b. You will get caught and you may get fired. For your sake and ours, don't do it.

**3. Do not forward jokes, inspirational messages, religious messages, political messages or any other type of mass email to other staff members.**

a. What is a seemingly harmless

joke or inspirational quote to you may be considered an insult to someone else, resulting in a complaint, an investigation, discipline, or worse.

b. Once you forward an email, you could be held responsible for anyone the receiving party forwards it to on down the line.

c. The bulk of emails sent regarding sympathetic tales of woe, inspirational "true stories," or warnings of imminent danger are false urban legends that have absolutely no basis in fact. Trust me, nobody in Las Vegas has ever been found unconscious in a bathtub filled with ice after having his kidney stolen (at least not according to the Las Vegas Police Department).

**4. Do not send a criticism, an angry response or any kind of negative information through email, especially to your principal, superintendent or a parent.**

a. Emails come across as cold, and even if you don't mean to offend, offense may be taken. Such concerns



Heath Merchen

are better delivered face to face.

b. If you have a gripe, talk it over with your OEA advocate before proceeding. Sadly, members have emailed some horribly insulting responses to their supervisors, students and even parents.

Please don't simply read these warnings, but heed them, as adhering to these guidelines will help keep you and your fellow staff members out of trouble. If you have questions or concerns, please contact your OEA advocate as soon as possible.

SAVINGS 101

CHAPTER 1

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12

THE SUBJECT OF SAVINGS

13

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# January 31 is deadline for OEA awards nominations

## OEA Board of Directors Awards

Nominations for the following awards must come from a current member of the OEA Board of Directors.

### Friend of Education

OEA's highest award, the Friend of Education honors a person who has made significant contributions to the betterment of public education. Past winners have included Frosty Troy, Henry Zarrow, and Henry Bellmon, to name just three.

### Claude A. Dyer Memorial Award

Given to an Oklahoma educator who has worked to bring about legislative action for equitable salaries and desirable working conditions, and has rendered leadership and direction in efforts to protect and advance the civil and human rights and responsibilities of educators.

### Political Activist Award

Given to an individual or organization who exhibits a willingness and determination to promote the goals of the OEA through activities in the political arena.

### OEA Outstanding Legislator

Presented to legislators for outstanding support of public education and education employees.

### Stan R. Bryant Political Action

Given to the OEA Zone that had the largest per member contribution level for OEA-PAC in the previous year.

### Advocate For Academic Freedom

Honors a person or organization whose contribution to the safeguarding of academic freedom has had a significant impact on the public schools in Oklahoma and the nation.

## Human and Civil Rights Awards

### Kate Frank Award

Presented to the OEA member and/or local Association rendering outstanding and significant service to advancing the cause of member welfare, rights and professionalism.

### Tuskahoma Brown Miller Award

Presented to a business or group which has contributed significantly to the improvement of education.

### F. D. Moon Educational Award

Presented to the person who has contributed significantly to the advancement of education for students.

### Glenn Snider Human Relations Award

Presented to the school district, individual or organization best exemplifying the practice of effective human relations and concerns for human rights.

### OEA Education Support Professional

Honoring an individual ESP member whose activities reflect the contributions of an education support professional to public education.

### OEA Collective Bargaining Award

Presented to an individual or group making a significant contribution to the advancement of education through the collective bargaining process.

### Instructional Excellence in Education: Teachers Teaching Teachers and Teachers Teaching Students

To recognize individual OEA members for outstanding contributions in instructional excellence, both with students and colleagues. The awards acknowledge the fact that the quality of education in this country can rise no higher than the quality of teaching.

### Marshall Gregory Awards

Recognizing Oklahoma reporters and broadcasters and their newspapers, radio and television stations for significant efforts to provide continuing and accurate coverage of the public schools, current education issues and the OEA. Categories for professionals and for high school journalists are offered.

### Golden Apple Awards

Recognizing OEA local Associations for their consistent efforts to provide quality communications to all of their audiences, including members and other education personnel, local school administration, parents and the community in general.

### Five Star Local Awards

The OEA 5 Star Local Program is intended to strengthen local Association programs and to recognize locals who meet the criteria in each program area. Application deadline for recognition at Delegate Assembly will be April 1, 2006. The application deadline is July 1, 2006, for recognition at the Summer Leadership Academy. Five Star Local nomination forms can be found at [www.okea.org/5StarLocal](http://www.okea.org/5StarLocal).

OEA Award nomination forms and criteria can be found at [www.okea.org/Awards/](http://www.okea.org/Awards/).

## Air Force retiree follows in his daughter's footsteps

*Continued from Page 11*

up in a home where the importance of education was so instilled."

Neither Tammy or David have seen any roadblocks to teaching at the same school. After explaining to her young students that they were not married, but were instead father and daughter, the youngsters voiced excitement that she was lucky to get to bring her daddy to school every day!

The two do not see each other as often during the school day as they thought they would, but they continue to provide each other with inspiration.

They get their classes together for DEAR (Drop Everything and Read) and have opportunities to conduct various class projects together such as creating books and helping with letter recognition.

Tammy served as treasurer of her Student OEA

chapter at Oklahoma State University and now serves as Monroe's OEA/EEA building representative. She is working towards her National Board Certification and plans eventually to become an administrator, only lacking a few hours from obtaining her master's degree from Northwestern Oklahoma State University.

"I've always admired her for pursuing her goals," says her dad. "Now I'm kind of following in her footsteps."

Upon meeting these two teachers, one can only surmise they walk side-by-side. The pride they both show for each other is very apparent.



First-year teacher David Alliss (right) obtained his teaching certificate and followed his daughter Tammy into the classroom after a military career. The two both teach at Enid's Monroe Elementary.

# National education campaign spotlights Wal-Mart practices

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

**By Doug Folks**

Wal-Mart employees receive low wages and below industry-standard benefits while its owners funnel millions of dollars into the school voucher movement.

Wal-Mart closed one store when its employees voted to form a union, and relies on low-wage Chinese labor to stock its stores. In fact, if Wal-Mart was a country, it would rank as China's 8<sup>th</sup> largest trading partner, ahead of Russia, Australia and Canada.

In 2001, while more than two-thirds of

## Volunteers of America recruiting mentors for at-risk youth

Oklahoma ranks second in the nation for female incarceration rates and each female inmate has an average of 2.5 children. There are few programs to address this special population and those that do exist are neither comprehensive nor ongoing.

Volunteers of America has established a mentoring program for children of incarcerated parents. The hope is to help these children develop safe and trusting relationships and receive healthy messages about life with the guidance of a positive adult role model.

If you would like to make a difference in a child's life, become a mentor. For more information, Call Volunteers of America at 918/307-3054.

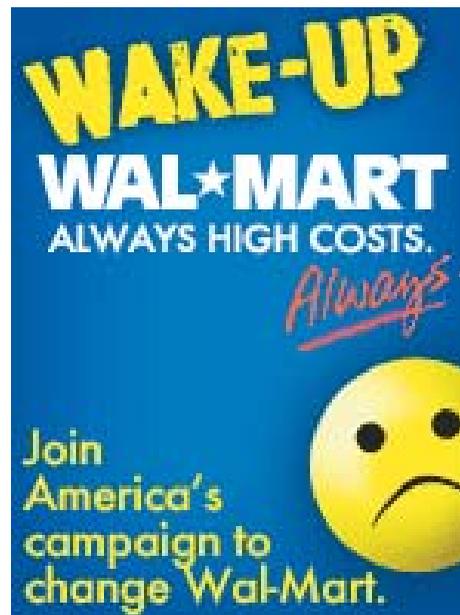
Wal-Mart's hourly workers were female, women held only one-third of managerial positions and constituted less than 15 percent of store managers. This is despite women having had on average longer seniority and higher merit ratings than their male counterparts.

It is because of facts like those listed above – and many, many more like them – that the NEA RA voted to join “Wake Up Wal-Mart,” a nationwide effort to educate its members about the practices of this retail giant.

While some people might wonder how the actions of Wal-Mart are an education issue, Oklahoma Education Association Vice President Becky Felts says the company's activities most certainly have an effect on children and schools.

“Not only are the company's profits helping fund the voucher movement, but it is well documented that taxpayers are providing medical insurance for Wal-Mart employees who are not provided with proper benefits,” Felts said.

Earlier this year, *Harper's Magazine* (March 2005) reported that Wal-Mart employees were eligible for \$2.5 billion in federal assistance



in 2004.

The Committee on Education and the Workforce in the U.S. House of Representatives issued a report in February 2004 that estimated every 200-employee Wal-Mart store costs federal taxpayers \$420,750 a year:

- \$36,000 for free and reduced school lunches,
- \$42,000 for housing assistance,
- \$125,000 for federal tax credits and deductions for low-income families;
- \$100,000 for Title I;
- \$108,000 for the federal government's share of state children's health program costs; and

### Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation (Required by 39 USC 3685)

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• \$9,750 for low income energy assistance.

While some delegates to the RA wanted stronger action, Felts said there was never a vote on a boycott. Instead, a concerted effort to educate members was approved.

“The issue was discussed thoroughly on the floor of the RA, and the education campaign was the action item that passed overwhelmingly. We want people to know the facts and to know they have alternatives when they shop,” she said.

Felts added that the Oklahoma delegation held its own discussion of whether to support the business item.

“Several of our members were very concerned about taking on Wal-Mart because some of the local stores do donate money and supplies to our members and their schools,” Felts said. “But once our delegates were informed with the background and the facts of the situation, they were very supportive of the education effort.”

For more information on the Wake Up Wal-Mart campaign, visit [www.nea.org/topics/walmart.html](http://www.nea.org/topics/walmart.html) or <http://wakeupwalmart.com>.

*In the December/January issue of the Education Focus, read about the effect Wal-Mart has on local businesses from an OEA member's point of view.*

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### Hurricane relief effort

Local OEA affiliates, school districts and individual members have been raising money for those displaced by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. One great success story was the effort of OEA member Carianne Cook's 7<sup>th</sup> grade class (pictured above) at Woodward Middle School South. The students raised almost \$1,000 in just one week for the American Red Cross. If your local Association, district or class held a similar fund-raiser you'd like to share with the Education Focus, send the details to Doug Folks, editor, at [dfolks@okea.org](mailto:dfolks@okea.org).

# Credit reports free for OEA/NEA members

By Liz Picone  
NEA Member Benefits Consultant

As of June 1, 2005, OEA/NEA members are eligible to receive a free credit report based on the schedule set by the new federal law. Monitoring and periodically reviewing your credit report is an effective tool in fighting identity theft.

Visit [www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com) where you can request a free credit report once every 12 months from each of the three consumer credit reporting companies: Equifax, Experian and TransUnion.

You can also request your report by phone at 877/322-8228, or by mail by writing to Annual Credit Report Request Service, P.O. Box 105281, Atlanta, GA 30348-5281.

The report does not include your credit score. However, you can purchase your credit score by contacting one of the credit reporting companies: Equifax, [www.equifax.com](http://www.equifax.com); Experian, [www.experian.com](http://www.experian.com); or TransUnion – [www.transunion.com](http://www.transunion.com).

You can also purchase your credit score for just \$5 when you request your free annual credit report through the above websites.

You are entitled to receive one free credit report every 12 months from each of the credit reporting companies. It is entirely your choice whether you order all three credit reports at the same time or order one now and others later.

The advantage of ordering all three at the same time is that you can compare them; however, you will not be eligible for another free credit report for another 12 months.

On the other hand, the advantage of ordering one now and others later is that you can keep track of any changes or new information that may appear on your report.

*Don't forget, NEA members can register anytime in the "Free Giveaways" area of the NEA Member Benefits website at [neamb.com](http://neamb.com). Prizes change monthly, and no purchase is necessary to enter.*