

INSIDE



Former Foster Youth's Future Leads Her Home

By Dustin Pyeatt

Public Information Specialist

For all its ups and downs, life has a funny way of working out. And few know this lesson better than Melisa Harris.

At age 16, Harris was placed in foster care in Carter County. She was on the caseload of Regina Benson, a child welfare specialist III, and remained there until she turned 18. Unbeknownst to either of them, Harris was getting a glimpse of her future, while Benson was laying the foundation for one of the next generation of child welfare professionals.

Today, Harris works as a child welfare specialist I in the very office she once came to as a scared teen. And Benson, once her child welfare worker, is now her co-worker.

"She was never really a problem child," Benson said. "She had some of the regular struggles in high school that all teens have – like boys. But I'm good at running off boys like a heat-seeking missile."

Harris, now 26, said Benson was like a "bulldog," but despite her caseworker's protective nature, she always knew she was there for her.

"If you messed up, she'd let you know, but it never changed the way she felt about you," Harris said. "I always knew that if I called her, she'd have an answer."

Benson said she remembers cringing when Harris mentioned going into social work.



Co-workers and friends ...
Regina Benson and Melisa Harris

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Data Services Division Enters The Matrix

By Douglas Doe

Public Information Specialist

The buzzwords may sound simple - matrix, customer centric, efficiency and quality. However, OKDHS' Data Services Division's new restructure and its impact is a little more complicated.

Despite recent changes, OKDHS Chief Information Officer Marq Youngblood said his division's overall "imperative" is ultimately excel-

lent customer service.

"While the changes we're making may not make sense individually," Youngblood said, "as a whole they go back to DSD's maximizing resources to complete our goal of quality service."

During the transition, DSD will add four new units. They include:

- ☞ Research and Strategy (R&S)
- ☞ Architecture and Design (A&D)

☞ Business Quality (BQ)

☞ Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

He said DSD will also restructure existing units. The goal is to create a matrix organizational structure where resources can be shared across the entire division as needed to complete projects that meet customer goals in a timely manner.

R&S and A&D will drive the

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The Chaplain's Corner

Welcome Stress and Tension

By Henry Wright,
Child Welfare Specialist IV
Cherokee County
OKDHS Chaplain



“I’m feeling stressed today” is a common response I receive when asking OKDHS employees the question, “How are you doing?” As a matter of fact, many times if you ask me the same question, I might answer you the same. We tend to think of stress as a negative condition, but in truth, it can be a very positive state of

mind. A synonym of stress is tension. The world in which we live and work needs tension.

A few months ago I drove down to Dallas for a workshop. Like many OKDHS employees, I drive a 1985 vehicle. (Don’t laugh – it’s paid for!) As soon as I arrived at my destination, the throttle spring broke. My engine was racing at high throttle. I was stuck miles from any repair shop. I managed to fix my problem with an old wire I found in the back of my Jeep. In a moment of reflection, I realize that I needed that tension in my life.

We do need some stress in our work and personal lives. A little bit motivates us to get up and get moving. Develop a positive attitude about the stress in your life, and the next time someone asks “How are you?” just smile when you answer “stressed.”



As part of National Recovery Month, OKDHS’ Office of Substance Abuse Services joined hundreds of national, state and local substance abuse recovery partners during the Oklahoma Rally for Recovery on Sept. 26 at the Oklahoma State Capitol. The Oklahoma Citizen Advocates for Recovery & Treatment Association (OCARTA) sponsored the rally. Attendees heard from keynote speaker Lydia Norie, former executive director emeritus, Oklahoma Drug & Alcohol Professional Counselor’s Association. Oklahoma Senator Helen Cole later presented a Lifetime Achievement Award to Norie. Here, Donna Woods, executive director, OCARTA, addresses the crowd. — DP

November 2003 OKDHS Calendar Of Events

Editor’s Note: Details about these events may be found on the OKDHS InfoNet Calendar of Events. Dates are subject to change.

November is National Home Care Month, National Adoption Month (National Adoption Week is Nov. 23 – 29), National Native American Month, National Alzheimer’s Disease Month, National Family Caregiver Month and National Diabetes Month.

Nov. 12

Adult Day Services Association

Nov. 12-14

County Director Academy 7

Nov. 12-15

Partnership for Aging

Nov. 13

Oklahoma Developmental Disabilities Council

Nov. 13

Older Women’s Initiative

Nov. 17

Adult Protective Services Field Liaison Meetings

Nov. 17

Human Services Center Meeting

Nov. 18

OKDHS County Directors and Child Welfare LGC Grievance Training

Nov. 18

Private Facilities Serving OKDHS Custody Children Grievance Training

Nov. 19

FSSD Field Liaison Meeting

Nov. 19

Grandfamilies Housing Task Force

Nov. 27-28

Thanksgiving Holiday (Offices Closed)



OKDHS Director Howard H. Hendrick (center with red tie) surprised the Agency's county and area directors by presenting each of them with an OKDHS Director's Award in honor of the work completed and their outstanding leadership during OKDHS' tough fiscal year 2003. The award is presented for exceptional performance or action that enhances the mission and values of OKDHS. The awards were presented on Oct. 3 during the 2003 Annual County Directors Meeting held at the Embassy Suites in Oklahoma City. During the event, Hendrick said, "You're all to be commended for your special efforts in doing the volumes of work that were required of your staff during this last year. The numbers show we were off the charts in every area."

Start The Year Moving On The Right Track

Will Rogers once said, "Even if you're on the right track, you will get run over if you just sit there." It is evident that as Oklahoma Department of Human Services employees we have not just been sitting there. Collectively, we've been moving on the right track. The OKDHS 2003 Annual Report has countless stories and statistics about the work done during tough economic times last year. In every way we measure outcomes we put our Best Foot Forward. There was growth in areas where growth was needed and there was the appropriate level of reductions in areas where things could be trimmed.

We are involved in an ever-changing landscape of human emotions and conditions in a massive human services arena – first to meet our own needs and then to meet the needs of the citizens we serve. Meeting our own needs is a good thing and should be seen as such. Most of us are not here for fame or fortune. We are here to serve the greater needs of

those in our communities who are needy, vulnerable or disenfranchised. Some of us are on the frontlines everyday facing these human dramas, while others work behind the scenes strengthening the support infrastruc-

Best Foot Forward



tures needed to keep our organization moving forward on the right track.

This is why it is so critically important for all of us to take care of ourselves better than we have in the past. Why? Because our attitudes and behaviors are critical factors in how we respond to life's challenges, whether personal or professional.

I've heard it said on many an occasion that one can tell where a person will be five years from today by spending 24 hours with the person

to see what they read, who they associate with and how they interact with others. For many of us, our parents, grandparents and others who cared for us tried to warn us. They would tell us, "Don't hang around so-and-so ... they're nothing but trouble." Or, "Don't go down there with them. That's not a good place for you to be." Sometimes we listened and sometimes we had to learn the lesson the hard way.

During the coming holiday season, let's not get caught sitting on the tracks Rogers spoke of. We can put our Best Foot Forward by taking much better care of ourselves. Make it a top priority. Doing so will mean we can all look forward to a healthier and more prosperous 2004 and beyond. It also means we will be modeling the way toward healthier lifestyles for our families, friends, co-workers and the clients we serve. Are you up to this putting your "Best Foot Forward" challenge?

- George Earl Johnson Jr.



Gov. Brad Henry, First Lady Kim Henry and Human Services Secretary Howard H. Hendrick joined many adoptive families on Oct. 14 at the State Capitol to celebrate Oklahoma's record setting number of adoptions. During the event, Henry praised OKDHS and Hendrick for the dramatic increase in adoptive placements during the secretary's tenure as OKDHS director. He also recognized the fact that OKDHS SWIFT Adoptions has finalized more than 1,000 adoptions in federal fiscal year 2003 – a first for Oklahoma. Hendrick later presented special awards to state office and area SWIFT Adoptions staff. Those in attendance also enjoyed a poetry reading from a waiting child who is hoping for a family of her own. Thanks also go to the Central Oklahoma Clown Association for providing comic relief to the delight of the children. – DP

OKDHS Gets Direct About Direct Deposit

In an effort to save money and to ensure quicker deposits, beginning with the March 15 payroll all OKDHS employees will receive their payroll by direct deposit.

Direct deposit means that payroll will be directly deposited into the institution and account designated by the employee. This move will allow access to funds quicker than with paper warrants. The March 15, 2004 date has been selected to allow ample time for every employee to accrue at least 24 hours of annual leave. The 24-hour balance is necessary to preclude a payroll adjustment in the event of unexpected leave without pay.

Employees with less than 24 hours of accrued annual leave, those with leave without pay in the current or prior pay period, or those using shared leave in the current or prior pay period will be placed on the sup-

plemental payroll issued on approximately the 23rd of each month. Temporary employees and new hires will continue to remain on the supplemental payroll.

If you are not already on direct deposit, please use the OKDHS InfoNet to link to <http://s99web01/okdhs/opmpayroll.htm> for the OPM-73 Automatic Deposit Transmittal form, complete it and submit it to the Office of Personnel Management. Label your envelope, Attention: Direct Deposit, 2101 N. Lincoln Blvd., Oklahoma City, OK, 73105, or send the completed form to OKDHS Finance Payroll for forwarding to OPM.

Reminders will be sent out monthly through February regarding the 24-hour annual leave requirement for inclusion in the first payroll on the 15th of each month.

— From Payroll and KGP

Director Requests Cost-Of-Living Raise

During a recent meeting of the Oklahoma Commission for Human Services, OKDHS Director Howard H. Hendrick presented a \$1.5 billion budget proposal for fiscal year 2005. For the first time in recent history, the proposal includes a 3 percent cost-of-living raise for OKDHS employees.

Hendrick told the commission that caseloads are at record levels and that employees are underpaid.

"I've come to believe we need to treat the people who work for us better, especially in regard to pay," Hendrick said.

He also requested more child welfare workers and an increase in foster care reimbursements. The budget request also includes a one-time \$11.9 million expense to cover OKDHS' conversion to the PeopleSoft program. The budget request requires legislative approval.

FallFest Food Drive Steers Donations To The Hungry

By Kevan Goff-Parker
Inside OKDHS Editor

The FallFest Food Drive not only allowed state employees at the Oklahoma Capitol Complex to contribute a trailer full of prepackaged foods to the hungry on Oct. 23, it also



Sally White, programs director for the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma, thanked the crowd at FallFest for their contributions.

provided plenty of tasty tidbits and entertainment on the north courtyard outside of the Sequoyah Building in Oklahoma City.



Developmental Disabilities Services Division's Vander Olden said he enjoyed FallFest because "... it is a way to give back to the community."

Sponsored by OKDHS, the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma, Credit Union One of Oklahoma and Enterprise Rent-A-Car Sales, the festival was designed as a fun way to combine employee camaraderie with good deeds. Employees were provided with a free hotdog lunch as they enjoyed music and commentary by Ray "Walters" Opalka of Kickin' Karaoke and DJ Services during the unusually warm fall day.

During the event, 615 pounds of



During FallFest, OKDHS Director Howard H. Hendrick told the crowd prior to dining that OKDHS employees were using their liberty to "extol the virtue of giving."

canned and packaged foods were collected for the food bank and 111 pounds of hot dogs, buns and chips were donated. Overall, the food bank estimates that the 726 pounds of food collected will feed approximately 965 people.

Sally White, Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma programs director, sponsored an informational booth at FallFest. She said she appreciates OKDHS employees because many understand the challenges of feeding



OKDHS' Office of Planning, Policy and Research's Francesca Zahrai chowed down on hotdogs, chips and drinks during the Agency's FallFest Food Drive. Zahrai described the meal as "good stuff."

the less fortunate.

"We're longtime partners with OKDHS in the fight against hunger," White said. "OKDHS employees are a little bit more sensitive because many have been on the frontlines and worked directly with our clients and know their needs."

Walking away with top prize in the pumpkin carving contest, Tony

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Publications' Tony Hennigh won the pumpkin carving contest.

DSD Gets Foster Children Prepared for School Year

By Douglas Doe
Public Information Specialist

Employees at the OKDHS Data Services Division made going back to school a little easier for Oklahoma foster children by donating more than \$3,200 in supplies during a recent collection drive.

Paul Heffley, a DSD data architect, said DSD staff gathered nearly 3,700 items and \$175 for Citizens Caring for Children, an Oklahoma City non-profit group that deals exclusively with foster parents and children. Local businesses including Wal-Mart, Family Dollar Stores, Mardel Christian & Education Supply, Tinker Federal Credit Union and Boise Cascade Office Products chipped in with cash or supplies.

Heffley said that while OKDHS' Employee Relations Committee (ERC) thought about choosing a particular school to which DSD might donate, ERC decided they could help more children if they chose a group instead.

"With the budget crisis in the schools we decided to do this," Heffley said. "We made a decision that foster children would be a better idea."

That's where Citizens Caring for Children came in.



(L-R) Data Services Division employees Paul Heffley and Shamra Noakes unpack a truck containing school supplies collected during the DSD drive. The items were donated to Citizens Caring for Children, a group that assists parents of foster children.

Citizens Caring for Children Resource Center Director Barbara Mohr said the organization has been in existence for nearly 20 years and was started by George and Rose Harper. The Harpers were the foster parents of

24 children and were very aware that what foster parents received from the state didn't begin to cover what was necessary in their lives.

As a result, the Harpers started to assist other foster parents and children by collecting needed items in their home. In 1994, they bought and opened the current location on 50th Street, where they offer toys, clothes and school supplies.

"We saw 2,600 kids last year and our numbers are increasing monthly," Mohr said.

She said the non-profit group partners with the Junior League of Oklahoma City to manage the school supply project each August, Mohr said. The Junior League donates about \$5,000 each year and supplies docents to assist with the school-supply project.

Heffley said he's experienced the group's good work first-hand. On his initial visit, he saw a foster mother come in to the resource center with several children – some that looked uncomfortable even in the rather friendly surroundings of the resource center.

"It melted your heart," Heffley said. "It made me want to do that much more."

News Briefs

Native American Heritage Nov. 17

The Oklahoma State Capitol dome will be filled with the thunderous sounds of ancient drum rhythms during the Sixth Annual Native American Heritage Celebration scheduled Nov. 17. The Celebration will be held from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the Oklahoma Capitol Rotunda. This year's celebration theme is "Breaking Barriers."

Compton Named President-Elect

In August, OKDHS' Sherri Moore-Compton, Office of Inspector



General agent and long time OKDHS employee was named president-elect of the United Council on Welfare Fraud. She will take up the gavel next year in San Diego, Calif., at the annual

UCOWF conference. Congrats!

Group Home For Girls Receives Local Donations

The OKDHS Deborah Rothe Group Home, which provides long-term group home care for girls, recently received two groups of donations totaling nearly \$900.

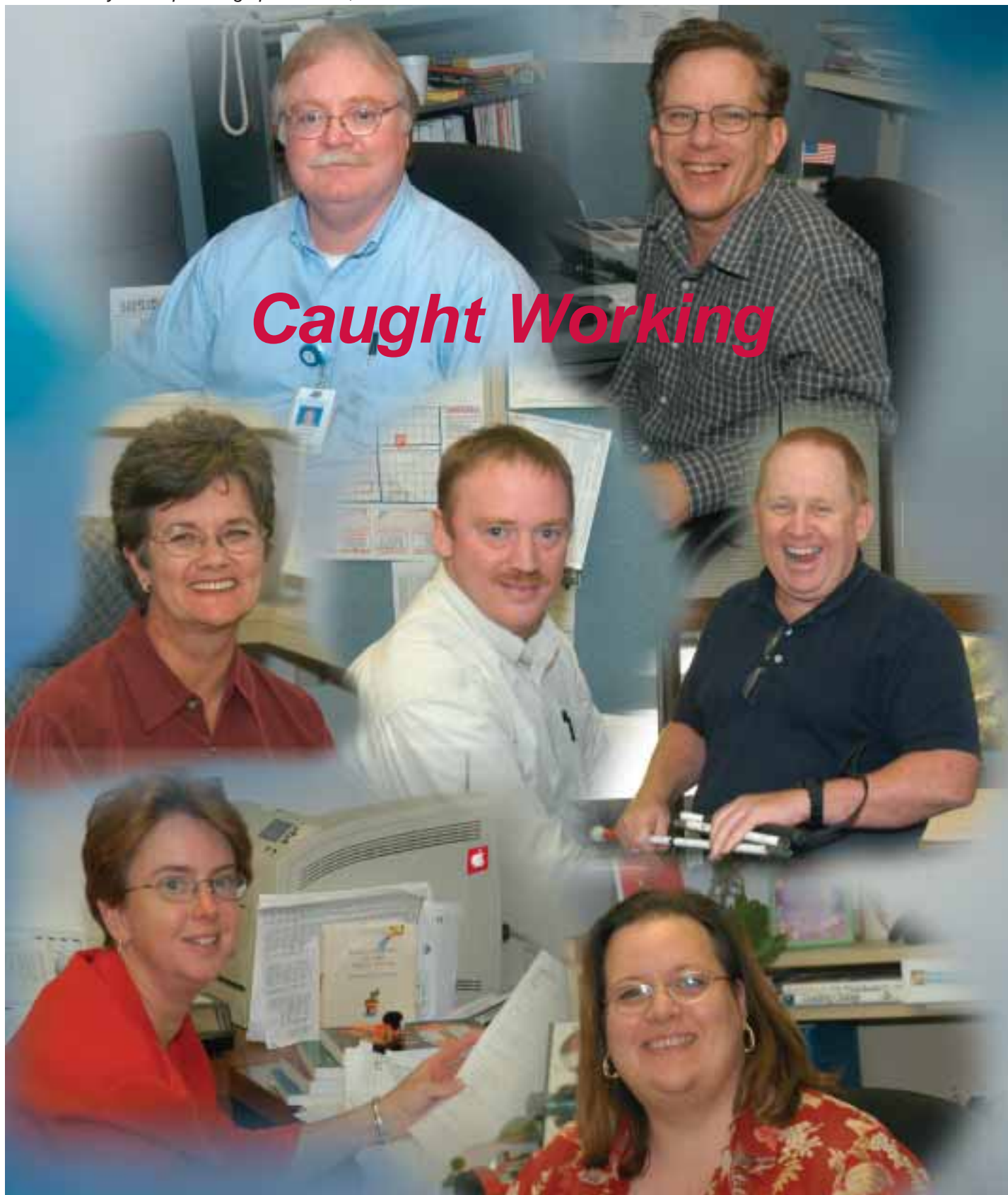
KOCO-TV Channel 5 News Reporter

Terri Watkins said a \$390 donation was made in memory of her mother, Patricia Watkins, who passed away in August. She said her mother, a former teacher, was a longtime friend of Deborah Rothe.

"My mother was a strong believer in what Deborah did and what Deborah believed in," Watkins said. "A tribute to Deborah is a tribute to my mother."

The Seagate Technology Oklahoma City Operations' Employee Federate Fund Board also recently donated \$500 to the group home. The donation was a just a part of the millions that Seagate employees have contributed toward assisting others in the areas of aging, children, crisis, disabilities, food, shelter, research and education.

Employees at the Data Services Division at 1110 N.E. 12th St. in Oklahoma City seemed really plugged into their networks when they were “Caught Working” by Inside OKDHS. Here (from top clockwise) are: Rod Davidson, information systems applications specialist IV, DSD; Terry Girton, information systems application specialist III, DSD; Randel McKee, information systems applications specialist IV, DSD; Michelle Smith, information systems manager, DSD; Fonda Logston, information systems planning specialist IV; Clint R. Hutchison, information systems applications specialist IV, DSD, and Nancy Wilcox, information systems planning specialist IV, DSD. – KGP



OKDHS Celebrates Latino Heritage

By Kevan Goff-Parker
Inside OKDHS Editor

Oklahoma's Sixth Annual Latino Heritage Celebration featured a fiesta of fun that included traditional foods, music and plenty of spirited performances by various artists on Oct. 3 at Riverside Community Center in Oklahoma City.

Sponsored by OKDHS, the heritage celebration's theme this year was "Los Ninos, Our Future" and youngsters from local schools, including Hillcrest and Columbus Elementary schools and Northeast High School, were on hand to perform and enjoy the occasion.

Some of the highlights of the event included patriotic music and songs performed by various Hispanic musicians, a clown skit and salsa, folkloric and flamenco dancing. During the celebration, OKDHS Director Howard H. Hendrick gave a warm introduction to special guest speaker Gov. Brad Henry. Henry then thanked the director and said he was a "true friend of mine and Oklahoma."

During his speech, the governor reaffirmed the state's support for the Latino community and thanked OKDHS for its outreach efforts.

"I appreciate the diversity and culture the Latino community brings to Oklahoma," Henry said. "The Latino community is thriving and is the fastest growing in Oklahoma."

The governor went on to praise achievements by the Latino community and to recognize Oklahomans' accomplishments in the areas of business, technology and the arts. He also asked Latino community leaders to continue to help spread the good word about Oklahoma and its successes.



Congratulations and Best Wishes To Our Retirees!

October

Craig County

Judith L. Whittington, 23 years



Hughes County

Dennis Lee Edwards, 33 years



Muskogee County

Sharon L. Roberts, 18 years



Pottawatomie County

Neal P. Jones, 25 years



Data Services Division

Connie F. Miller, 35 years



Office Support Services

Division – Facilities

Management

Lynn E. Short, 24 years

Work Worth Doing

"Far and away, the best prize that life offers is the chance to work hard as work worth doing."

– Theodore Roosevelt

State Charitable Campaign Features Fun Halftime Show



(From left, front row) SCC Chairman for Oklahoma and OKDHS Director Howard H. Hendrick hammed it up during an entertaining show with the United Way of Central Oklahoma's Erin Brewer, OKDHS' Public Information Specialist Doug Doe, Credit Union One of Oklahoma's Karen Favaloro and William C. Lavin, President and CEO, and OKDHS' Communications Director George Earl Johnson Jr. Back row includes members from the Star Spencer Marching Band who did a great job getting the audience's feet thumping during the event. (L-R) Todd James, Myron Jacobs (son of OKDHS' Karen Jacobs), Steven Crawford, Brandon Maddox and Timothy James.

The State Charitable Campaign drummed up plenty of support on Oct. 8 when state agency leaders and SCC coordinators gathered for a special sports-themed Halftime Show designed drum up support and excitement about the SCC.

The event was held the Concourse Theater in the basement of the Sequoyah Building in the Oklahoma State Capitol Complex.

Scheduled for mid-December is a "Post-Game EndZone Awards Reception."

For more information, please contact Mary Davidson at 405-521-4247 or send her an e-mail message at Mary.Davidson@okdhs.org.

Jeannette Williams, SCC



employee campaign coordinator for the Oklahoma State Education Employees' Group Insurance Board. Williams won a drawing for two tickets to the University of Oklahoma vs. Texas A&M football game. — KGP

DDSD Staff Learn The Art Of 'Staying Alive' At Fall Conference

By Sheree Powell
Director of Public Information and
Provider Relations
DDSD

There were no white polyester suits or disco flashing lights, but "Staying Alive" was an appropriate theme for the Developmental Disabilities Services Division's fall conference held Sept. 24-26 in Oklahoma City.

DDSD Director James Nicholson said that after a year of extreme budget cuts and program service reductions, DDSD staff needed some encouragement and professional advice on how to "stay alive."

"We are all dealing with revenue shortfalls, budget cuts and how to serve the people we currently have in our system more efficiently so we can stretch dollars further," Nicholson said. "I think this was a great conference. We had a lot of non-OKDHS DDSD people attend, so that we had a broad overview of people to hear the same message – that we have to do a better job of allocating our resources."

More than 450 people attended the conference, including DDSD staff from every area of the state. Atten-



Mayes County DDSD Case manager Leann Hill (right) and Hope of Hope program coordinator Julie Grigsba (left) humorously demonstrated "budget cuts" during lunchtime skits.

dees also included the more than 150 service providers that contract with the division to provide community services.

Sarah Kennedy, a DDSD case management supervisor at the Laura Dester Center in Tulsa, said she thought it was very important to get

everyone together in the same place at the same time.

"I enjoy the information from the vendors and speakers," Kennedy said, "but I really like being able to bounce things off of difference case managers from different areas."

This conference drew nationally renowned speakers in the field, including Sue Swenson, executive director of the ARC U.S. and the Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. Foundation.

"Sue's message was one that we all needed to hear and that was that there needs to be equity of service delivery," Nicholson said. "You can't have a group of people who receive all the services they want co-existing at the same time with people on the waiting list. For our system to be truly effective, it has to provide a quick response to people's most significant needs."

Other keynote speakers included Robert Gettings, executive director of the National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services and Al Condeluci, executive director of United Cerebral Palsy of Pittsburgh.

FallFest from page 1

Hennigh, graphic artist, Publications Unit, Office Support Services Division, used his considerable skills to create a monster Cyclops pumpkin that incorporated various artistic mediums to win \$50 for the OSSD Employee Recognition Committee. Credit Union One of Oklahoma provided the coveted prize, provided giveaways and held a \$50 cash drawing.

Administrative Assistant II Sundi Sylvester said FallFest provided a little time for reflection.

"We need to give back to society that which has so graciously been given to us," she said.

News Briefs

Quick Actions By Adult Protective Staff Recognized

It was late in the day on Aug. 29 and the Friday before Labor Day weekend, when the Okfuskee County Adult Protective Services staff received word from the Oklahoma Department of Health about the potential closing of a facility in Boley, Okla.

APS Supervisor Kerry Trammel said the Health Department asked for OKDHS' assistance in moving the residents to

other facilities.

"All of the APS workers in my four county unit responded immediately," Trammel said. "By that evening, all but two of the residents had been relocated. I'm extremely lucky to be involved with a group of such knowledgeable, talented and passionate APS workers — employees who truly made a difference in the lives of these vulnerable adults."

In recognition of their quick response and hard work, the APS staffs

from Pottawatomie, Seminole, Lincoln and Okfuskee counties were treated to a luncheon where OKDHS Director Howard H. Hendrick presented each of them with a Director's Award.

"They did some incredible work," Hendrick said. "They found new places and even coordinated their medication — all in only 16 hours. Because of their hard work, the health and safety of these vulnerable adults was spared. It makes me proud."

Matrix continued from page 1

future planning of the agency, while the Enterprise Support Services (ESS), Enterprise Technical Services (ETS), Central Support Services (CSS), Enterprise Application Services (EAS) and Project Management Office (PMO) units will be more focused on the implementation of the plans. The CRM and BQ units will deal directly with either customers or business processes and functions.

Karen Duncan, director of the Enterprise Technical Services section, said the division's new business philosophy is customer centric.

"We're listening more to our customers and their needs," Duncan said. "Not just OKDHS' customers, but also the citizens of Oklahoma."

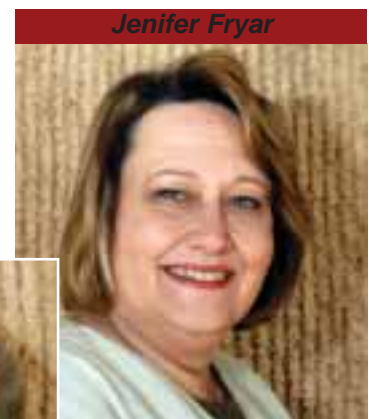
R&S (Interim) Unit Director Robert Eubank said the unit's goal is to achieve customer satisfaction through

research of industry best practices and new technologies.

"Actually, the whole restructure is targeted toward improving the customer experience," Eubank said. "When funding applications, there are many possibilities that need to be researched to ensure that we're conforming to the best practices of the industry and cost-effective options for this state."

He said two sections within the unit – Technology Research and Delivery Research – will play an important role in future technology for OKDHS. The technology group looks at technology options including software, hardware and services strategies. The delivery group studies other options including creative funding and DSD business processes in the hopes of making DSD's approach more competitive and pragmatic. Establishing this unit will also

MATRIX continued on page 13



allow people to focus their full attention on doing the necessary research and not have it fragmented throughout DSD.

Eubank is also the unit director for A&D. He said the A&D unit is important because it fills a missing gap in the organization by addressing “how you get from what you’ve selected for the future to how you want to implement the technology.”

Duties of the new unit will include data modeling (a precursor to database design during which data is checked to ensure it fits with the existing design and direction of the Division); collaborating with the R&S section in the design architecture for hardware and software, including the infrastructure, operational support and third-party products and working with other DSD units on applications and tool design for the Division.

CRM Unit Director Susan Bohl said that with the increased focus on customers, the need for CRM is growing more important. It will be more than customer service in the traditional mold. CRM’s key roles will be to learn more about customer needs and to facilitate the delivery of quality solutions and services. Another important CRM function will be to gather feedback and offer information to ensure that the technology direction supports the business of OKDHS and the business of customers. The unit has already begun to work with area, county and remote offices to help DSD staff work through outstanding issues and gather and share information.

BQ Unit Director O.W. Thomasson said BQ will be integrally involved with all areas of DSD to coach and ensure that quality practices are being followed as a part of the daily routine.

Another recently added unit, Business Quality, strives to improve excellence in all DSD operations.

“This was one of the things that DSD didn’t have and is one of our major issues,” Youngblood said. “Business Quality will work across all avenues of the organization and touch everything that we do to achieve customer service excellence.”

The unit’s tasks include:

- ✔ Creating a rigorous quality assurance program focused on reviewing, testing and documenting results;
- ✔ Designing a quality control plan that establishes and communicates standards and procedures and implements the changes;
- ✔ Ensuring compliance with privacy, policy and federal or state mandates and monitoring security logs

and reports;

- ✔ Looking for ways to improve processes within and between units through evaluation;
- ✔ Planning, testing and coordinating efforts to resume business in the event of a disaster.

ESS Director Jenifer Fryar said the ESS unit is broken into the Service Center, which includes the Help Desk, Problem Determination and Resolution (focused on critical problems statewide) and Operational Services.

The Service Center includes the Help Desk, Webmaster and support for external technical support staff such as ISNTs (Information Systems Network Technicians). While Help Desk calls can range from recording issues to troubleshooting technical problems, the Webmaster’s duties include handling inquiries from the www.OKDHS.org Web site. Inquiries can range from technical concerns to information and referral questions.

Operational Services includes the 24X7 data center, which includes data backup, storage and production services (ensuring that batch processing jobs run on time and correctly).

PMO (Interim) Director and Chief Technology Officer Debbie Smith said the PMO unit didn’t undergo significant change as a part of the restructure.

PMO manages technology projects as directed by the E-Business Steering Committee. This committee is made up of OKDHS Director Howard H. Hendrick, OKDHS officers, division administrators and other key staff who represent the needs of the Department. The lack of change hasn’t left PMO without a key role in the transition. The unit is helping the organization learn to work in an environment where team members may not be specifically assigned in a vertical line of management. Instead, resources and team members are now assigned more horizontally on projects that involve multiple units.

ETS Director Karen Duncan said ETS will continue to play a key role in the implementation of many future technology projects.

Resources from ETS could be pulled into another project as needed and those projects will drive where the resources are needed and allocated.

Duties for ETS include:

- ✔ Database Services support for IMS, DB2, Oracle, Access and SQL server databases;
- ✔ Telecommunication Services provide support for the network of routers, switches, hubs and telephone lines;

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OKDHS employees statewide recently participated in the Walk This Weigh Oklahoma health promotion kick off on Oct. 2. Here, a group of employees gathered outside the Sequoyah Building in Oklahoma City get pumped up before walking around the state capitol complex. Employees across the state participated in similar events designed to promote exercise. Walk This Weigh Oklahoma encourages Oklahomans to walk at least 30 minutes a day three times a week, reduce fat intake by one to three percent and enjoy a healthier life.

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✓ Platform Services focus on hardware and operating systems in all areas of OKDHS.

✓ Infrastructure Software Services focus on all other software and programs used by OKDHS, including the database management system, administrative tools and the report distribution system.

✓ Security Services focus on user management and access control to the network, applications, hardware and databases.

CSS (Interim) Director Susan Bohl said that many of the people assigned to this unit have not changed, but they will have changes in their daily functions and processes. This unit provides support for all of the central operations of the division and is divided into four sections:

Facility Services is responsible for the building, physical safety and

inspections, internal office moves, asset management and mail services for the division;

Human Resource Services handles all personnel services for DSD employees. They also manage and coordinate all technical and non-technical training for employees.

Finance & Purchasing plans, organizes and directs the fiscal operations for the division as well as handles all IT purchases and contracts for OKDHS.

Organizational Support handles all clerical duties, switchboard, payroll, office supplies, meeting minutes, and will be publishing all DSD operating standards and doing technical writing of documents.

EAS Director Sarjoo Shah said some sections of the unit are still under development.

“This includes the Analysis and Design section,” Shah said, “which

will implement guidelines and standards for Web and application development created for the entire unit.”

The EAS unit will be restructured into seven different sections. Five sections will be customer centric and will focus on individual customer applications. However, the entire EAS unit will be available to be matrixed into a project depending upon resource requirements.

The creation of the new sections allows EAS to work toward achieving operational excellence and serving internal and external customers at a higher level.

EAS is tasked with the developing external and internal applications that support OKDHS’ operations. This includes everything from Web-based applications to existing mainframe application to client-server and desktop-based applications.

Foster Youth continued from page 1

“I wanted her to be a doctor or something that made more money,” she said. “Melisa always had a plan. Sometimes our plans for her were the same, sometimes they were different.”

Harris eventually became only the second foster child from Carter County to graduate from college, but the road from foster child to that of child welfare professional was not easy.

“That year we had four foster children graduating from high school,” Benson said. “Two of them had really high grade point averages ... Melisa wasn’t one of them, but her determination to go to college was stronger.”

Harris applied to Southeastern Oklahoma State University in Durant, but was not accepted because of her GPA. Benson said she consoled her by telling Harris that her own grades hadn’t exactly set the curve either and that she should think about attending a junior college. Harris took her advice and enrolled at Tulsa Junior College.

Harris originally wanted to go into teaching, until a college instructor advised her to consider another direction. Lured by the lack of math classes, Harris majored in sociology. During one of her classes, a sociology instructor described the opportunities available with a sociology degree, including social work.

After graduating from college, Harris took a job in Texas at a therapeutic wilderness camp for delinquent teen girls.

“I lived in a tent with no electricity or bathroom for six months with 13 teenage girls,” Harris said. “I loved it until the temperature reached 118-degrees.”

Harris escaped the East Texas heat by moving to Dallas where she worked as a nanny for a wealthy family with a troubled eight-year-old son. Though it paid well, she still felt that it wasn’t what she was meant to do. Harris returned to Oklahoma where she began working as a child welfare aide at the Bryan County OKDHS office. It was



there she took the merit tests and applied for a job as a child welfare worker.

“I never put Carter County on my list of places to work,” Harris said. “There were two things I said I wanted – don’t bury me in a pink dress and don’t bury me in Ardmore.”

However, things changed when Harris’ former foster parents invited her to Ardmore to attend a church function.

“When I crossed the city limits, I instantly felt like I was back home,” Harris said. “I felt like a missing piece I’d been looking for was found.”

She bonded with her former foster family and started going to Ardmore more and more until she realized she was spending more time there than in Durant. She eventually added Carter County to her consideration list and was soon hired.

“I was a little worried when I started here because Regina knew the skeletons in my closet better than anyone,” Harris said, “but she doesn’t treat

me like one of her children. She treats me like a professional.”

Benson said although she does not tell others that Harris used to be a foster child, she still feels like a proud parent.

“Once you’re one of my children, you’ll always be one of my children,” she said.

Today, Harris uses her own foster care experience to help children experiencing similar situations.

“I remember what it was like and what Regina did for me, and I try to do that for the children I work with,” she said. “I’m sensitive to their feelings.”

But experience in the foster care system didn’t prepare Harris for everything ...

“I was surprised at how much work child welfare workers have to do,” Harris said. “I know now that I wasn’t the only child Regina had to deal with. I have 30 on my caseload, and I have a whole new respect for child welfare now.”



OKDHS congratulates our 12 Certified Public Manager graduates who were recently honored during the 16th Certified Public Manager Graduation program on Sept. 11 in the Senate Chamber of the State Capitol Building. OKDHS Director Howard H. Hendrick (end of back row on right) praised all the graduates for their dedication to excellence and for all their hard work. The OKDHS graduates include (first row, L-R): Ginger Blockcolski, Pamela Clark, Pam Jenkins, Lawana Sullivan, Barbara Kidder and Phyllis Schnelle. Second row (L-R) includes: Deborah Fawn, Mike Jackson, Jerry Tomlinson, Lori Crase, Toy O'Brien and Donna Fields. The Gerald D. Wilkins Good Works Award was also presented to Clark for her top-notch work improving the "Developmental Disabilities Service Division Medication Administration" for OKDHS. – KGP

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