



The Oklahoma Department of Human Services

Okmulgee County Program Provides Emergency Links

A new program at the Okmulgee County Office provides emergency phone contacts for older persons and persons with disabilities who do not have phone service.

The program is based on the fact that a cell phone with a charged battery will dial 911 even if phone service is not activated.

The county office staff is collecting those extra cell phones and chargers that get tossed in a drawer when changing to a new phone service provider.

Jana Gildon, Adult Protective Services at the county office, said phones and chargers are distributed to those who have no phone and can benefit from being able to contact police or ambulance services.

She said cell phones have been provided to several people and more phones and chargers are coming in.

Gildon asked participants to donate a charger with a cell phone and to disable security codes.

Advocacy Leadership Academy Seeks Participants in Fourth Class

The future for many older Oklahomans rests with those who advocate on behalf of the people who helped build the Sooner state. Many advocates are being formed with the help of the Oklahoma Aging Advocacy Leadership Academy (OALA).

The academy is sponsored by the DHS Aging Services Division, and has received national attention as a model program for developing advocates.



The academy's fourth class begins in September. **Slots are now open for enrollment.** Sessions are held one Friday evening and the following Saturday for 10 of the next 12 months.

Graduates of the first three classes ranged in age from 24 to 72 with an average age of 50. Class members came from 35 of the state's 77 counties and included a variety of vocations: teaching, Red Cross, social work, DHS and other state agencies, church leadership, hotel management, housewife, management of housing for older persons, caregiving, adult day services, hospice pro-

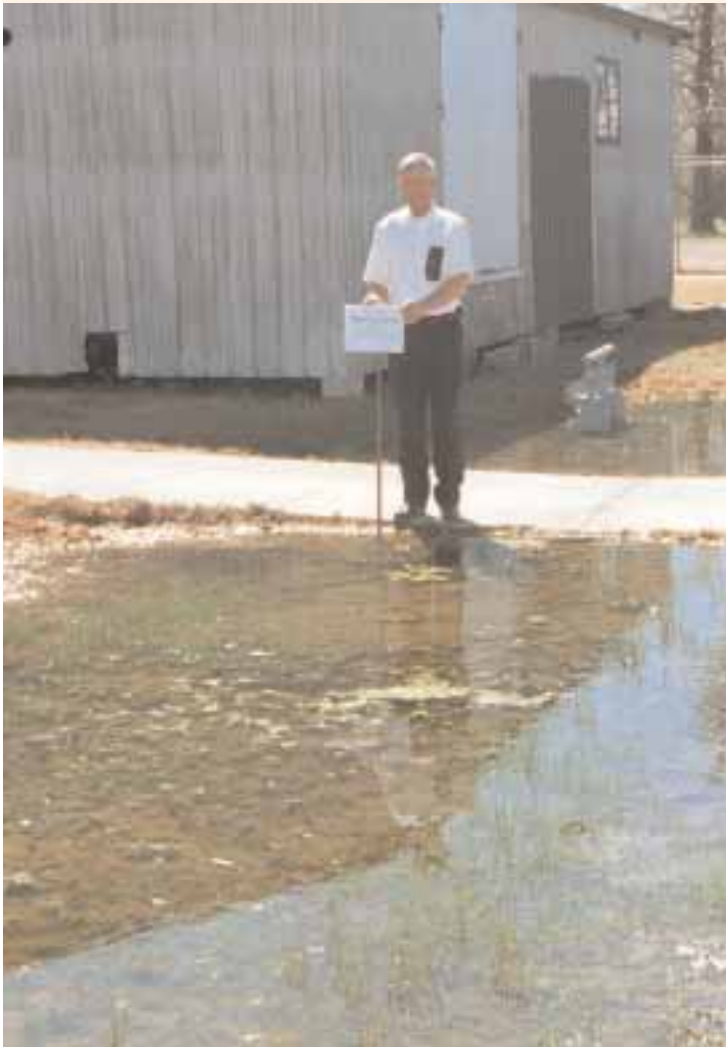
gram administration, nursing and a city official.

Graduates have accepted appointments to government boards and advisory committees; have run for the legislature; have successfully fought to retain a hospital in a rural community; have established low-cost or no-cost health care programs in rural areas; have made speeches and presentations; visited the capitol to meet with legislators, and in many ways helped make things better for others.

Instructors at the academy include nationally and regionally recognized experts in areas important to the field of aging. The curriculum includes a mix of classroom presentations and hands-on, real-world opportunities. Topics include advocating with legislative bodies and with the media; finding and utilizing community-based resources; the changing health care system; safety and security issues; inter-generational caregiving; aging in different cultures; ageism, and healthy aging.

See Advocacy Leadership Page 2

Waterfront Property



*Haskell County Director Gale Sipes stands on the low-water sidewalk by the newly named Sipes Creek. The "creek" stands behind the county office building and between the building and the employee parking lot. It served as an ice skating pond during the December 2000 ice storms. Sipes said it would turn into a mosquito resort this spring and summer until there is some drainage relief. Sipes said it's just one of the small challenges the staff overcomes in providing first-class service for Haskell County residents. (For the record: The building behind Sipes is **not** the county office.)*

Advocacy Leadership from Page 1

All classes are held in Oklahoma City. Tuition, books and materials are free. Expenses are paid within provisions of state law, including mileage, meals and hotel accommodations.

For more information, or to request an application, contact Darlene Sapp, Aging Services Division, (405) 522-6240, or darlene.sapp@okdhs.org.

Mentoring by Mail Provides Support

Being a foster child is tough. Anyone who works in Child Welfare can tell you that. Or anyone who has been a foster child.

Regardless of the care and compassion shown to foster children, the state is not the best parent a kid can have. But a new program hopes to give these kids some extra support and encouragement.

The Mentor by Mail Program, sponsored by Citizens Caring for Children (CCC), matches foster youth with volunteers willing to share their experiences, advice and support.

This program is a great way to help our kids with emotional support since they have no family to turn to for advice, said Claudia Hunter, DHS Independent Living Coordinator. It also helps them build relationships outside the child welfare system. This will help them better deal with the world when they age out of the system.



Tracy Boring

Potential Mentors by Mail submit an application to CCC, which then conducts an interview and criminal background check. All correspondence between mentor and foster child is screened through the CCC office. Mentors and teens use only their first names to ensure privacy.

Foster youth must be 16 or older and participating in the Independent Living Program

The Mentor by Mail program is ideal for those teens in group homes, college dorms and isolated areas because these kids are often in need of unconditional positive regard, said Tracy Boring, CCC. Our mentor volunteers enable teens to open up and resolve problems. Teens need someone who is neutral to confide in and who will share their own life experiences. That can make a foster child feel less alone.

If you are interested in becoming a Mentor by Mail, contact Tracy Boring at (405) 348-9034, or e-mail her at citizenscaringforchildren@juno.com.

Caught Reflecting at the Roosevelt Memorial



DHS Director Howard H. Hendrick, in a candid shot, views the sculpture "Breadline" depicting conditions in the Depression years of the 1930s as part of the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial in Washington, D.C. Director Hendrick attended the Winter/Spring Conference of the American Public Human Services Association, at which reauthorization of several human services programs was being discussed, including food stamps, child support, child care and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families.

The inscription seen in part at the left of the Breadline is from Roosevelt's Second Inaugural Address, Washington, D.C., January 20, 1937:

"I see one-third of a nation ill-housed, ill-clad, and ill-nourished. The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little."

DHS Partnerships Break Down Barrier of Illiteracy

As many as 400,000 Oklahomans would either struggle to read this story, or not be able to read it at all.

Inability to read is one of the challenges faced by many Temporary Assistance for Needy Families clients. A DHS partnership with the State Department of Education and the State Department of Libraries is working with TANF clients to break down the barrier of illiteracy.

Since 1989 the Oklahoma Department of Education's

Lifelong Learning Section has worked with DHS to help prepare TANF clients for the work force.

In fiscal year 2000, the Lifelong Learning Section provided 865 TANF clients with help in literacy, basic and coping skills, GED preparation and support for adults with learning disabilities.

Coursework also includes job readiness, which teaches TANF clients how to look for a job, write resumes, interview and dress for a job. Classes are six hours a day for

five weeks and are taught by licensed educators.

The Department of Education's GED program is the best activity we have for our TANF clients, said Kevin Ballinger, Family Support Supervisor, Sequoyah County. The Sallisaw schools have worked with us to find not just a great licensed educator, but someone who cares about people, gets close to the clients and acts as a role model.

In 1998 the Oklahoma
See DHS Partnerships Page 4

**Partnerships
At Work**

Trudgeon Named to Advisory Council

Ann Trudgeon, director of the Oklahoma Developmental Disabilities Council, has been named by Gov. Frank Keating to the Statewide Independent Living Council for a term ending in September 2003.

The independent living council is a federally mandated advisory committee to the Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services. It is the second time



Ann Trudgeon

Trudgeon has been appointed to the council.

She has served as director of the developmental disabilities council for eight years. The council promotes quality services and programs, which enable persons with developmental disabilities to fully realize their maximum potential through increased independence, productivity and inclusion in the community.

The council is a federally required body with funding from the Administration on Developmental Disabilities and DHS as the administering agency.

Child Support Enforcement's CARE Call Center Rolls Out

The Child Support Enforcement Division has begun roll out of its new Customer Assistance Response Effort (CARE) Call Center.

CARE Call Center staff will answer customer questions, process information, mail out publications and documents, give the status of child support cases and take general comments. Because the local offices previously handled these calls, the new center will free field staff to concentrate on enforcement actions and improve services.

The CARE Call Center is now serving Canadian County and Oklahoma County. Statewide roll-out is to be completed by the end of the year.

The two counties work about 35,000 child support cases, 24 percent of the state total. The CARE Call Center receives about 500 calls per day.

DHS Partnerships Break Down Barrier from Page 3

Department of Libraries Literacy Resource Office joined with DHS to establish the TANF Literacy Initiative. In Pottawatomie County, the Department of Libraries has partnered with St. Gregory's University to offer literacy classes for TANF clients.

Judith Means, TANF Supervisor for Pottawatomie County, said, The Social Science Department at St. Gregory's offers its students credit for teaching these classes, which is a win-win situation for everyone. The college students receive course credit, and the TANF clients get attention from young, energetic people.

Through paid instructors and volunteers, the Department of Libraries Literacy Initiative provides TANF clients statewide with an average of 7,000 hours of instruction each month in reading, writing, math and basic skills.

For more information about either of these programs, contact

Karen Rynearson, Family Support Services Division, at (405) 521-4278.

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