

# INSIDE



Major Mike Tamez, 10 FLTS, Tinker AFB, (above left) accepts a bag from Jack Smith, Oklahoma County Child Welfare worker. Tamez coordinated the donations at Tinker AFB for OKDHS custody children. (Photos right) Service members and family members helped load the trucks that supplied Christmas to more than 300 children.

## **OK County Child Welfare, Donors Bring Christmas to Custody Kids**

Oklahoma County Child Welfare helped bring about a successful Christmas for the custody children of the county. Melissa Beaver, the Volunteer Coordinator serving all of Oklahoma County Child Welfare, received 1,764 wish lists from children . . . and donors were found for all. Another 280 children received gifts from the "Toy Store," making a total of 2,044 children receiving Christmas gifts.

Donations were received from large corporations, civic

groups, churches and individual donors, and great thanks go to each one for making Christmas 2002 memorable for the children.

Donors, workers and volunteers helped load and unload five large trucks full of Christmas gifts. Child Welfare workers delivered the gifts to their children. It took a great deal of energy and hard work, but in the end it was a wonderful Christmas for the children of Oklahoma County Child Welfare.

## **SoonerStart Numbers Up**

by Dustin Pyeatt  
Public Information Officer

For the seventh straight year the number of Oklahoma families receiving help through the SoonerStart program has increased. In fiscal year 2002, there were 8,510 children benefiting from the program, a seven percent increase from fiscal year 2001 and a 47 percent

*Continued on page 3*

# OKDHS Receives Letter of Appreciation

*Last Christmas, Melissa Beaver, volunteer coordinator for Oklahoma County, received this e-mail message a couple of days after picking up a truck-load of Christmas gifts donated by*

*military and civilian workers at Tinker Air Force Base and bound for children in OKDHS custody.*

Melissa,

While I was putting this year's toy drive paperwork back in my file cabinet, I came across an old stack of paperwork left over from years prior, long before I was assigned to Tinker AFB. One of the papers I came across was a history of our involvement with DHS. According to that letter, our squadron (Flight Test) started participating in this toy drive in 1982.

Our involvement has since grown to include the Aircraft Production Division, plus a few more Tinker agencies. I had no idea that this year was our 20th anniversary of doing this DHS drive! I only had records for about 10 year's worth of toy drives, mostly from the late 80s and 90s, but I was especially proud to discover that this was the first year on record that we sponsored over 300 kids! Our final tally was 325 wish lists for DHS (plus another 40 to 50 kids for Child S.H.A.R.E foster families), and we still had folks asking for more, so yes, it was a great year for us.

Every January for the past 20 years, we have always received a nice thank you note from DHS for the gifts that we donate, and we do appreciate the recognition. But last night as I was tucking in our foster daughter, I realized that she's going to have a terrific Christmas this year, in part thanks to all that you and the caseworkers at DHS do for the children and their foster families. People are always thanking us for what we do, but in all honesty our jobs are probably much easier than what you folks do on a daily basis at DHS.

The generosity of the people here at Tinker is heartwarming and much appreciated by me, both as a foster dad and as the project officer for this annual toy drive. But as gift donors, we only have to worry about one or two kids for a few weeks until the gifts are purchased, then our job is done. As foster parents, we only worry about one additional child in our family, and she brings so much joy and love into our home that we're thankful for the chance to care for her.

On the other hand, you have your hands full worrying about 1,750+ kids almost non-stop, year-round! And all the caseworkers have dozens of kids to worry about every day of the year. Lisa and I have sat in those courtrooms several times and listened to the steady stream of cases involving neglected, abused, and abandoned children, and we realize that this is just a small fraction of what the case workers have to deal with day in and day out. I honestly don't know how they do it!

So this year, I just wanted to say thank YOU for all that DHS does every day for our children. Thank you for giving us the chance to be a part of what you do for the children each Christmas. Thank you for the kind words of encouragement we get for being foster parents. Thank you for doing the jobs that you do. You are all very special people, and you'll never know just how much you're appreciated by us, and especially by the thousands of children whose lives you save!

Maj. Michael A Tamez , 10 FLTS, Tinker AFB

# Are You the Staple Holding Government Together?

By George Earl Johnson, Jr.  
Director of Communications

In the Oct. 15, 1988, issue of Inside DHS, I wrote a Best Foot Forward column on staples, telling how staples held our government together. The column recounted how on Oct. 6, 1980, long-time

## Best Foot Forward



DHS employee Dorothy Prudy came to me with my initial issue of office supplies, which included one box of staples. Attempting to be frugal and accountable with these supplies, eight years later, I was using up the last row of staples from the box. It's 22 years later, and I'm still using the same stapler...

Then, as now, it's not really the staples that hold our government together. It's the quality of the work we put on the pages that holds our government together. This year, we will run more than 150 million sheets of paper through our printers and copying machines to generate forms, memorandums, letters, reports and other communications vital to our mission. This does not count all the millions of sheets of paper we receive through incoming mail.

At a cost of 50 cents a box (25 cents in 1980), staples are small and almost insignificant in the mix of what we do; however, they are invaluable in the way they hold important papers of vital documents together. The work you do today is more important than it has ever been. While our economy appears to be slow, more of our friends, relatives and neighbors are finding

their way to our Human Services Centers. Director Howard Hendrick says the work we do is counter-cyclical, i.e., the more people face personal, family and financial challenges in our communities, the more they need the help we offer through health and human services programs.

The next action you take may be the staple that holds a family together long enough to overcome the challenges before them. The next kind and compassionate thing you say to a client, friends, co-worker or family member may be the staple that gets them through a tough and trying day. So, show our strength of character by being a staple in someone's life.



## SoonerStart Numbers Continue Increase

*Continued from page 1*

increase from 1996.

SoonerStart is Oklahoma's early childhood intervention program for infants and toddlers from birth to 36 months who have developmental delays or have a physical condition such as Down syndrome or cerebral palsy.

"Every year SoonerStart is making a positive difference in the lives of more and more families," said Cyd Roberts, SoonerStart Early Intervention Coordinator. "SoonerStart helps families with special needs children at a critical time in their child's development by providing resources and working with the family to help their child reach its potential."

SoonerStart services include evaluation, case management, family training and counseling, nursing and nutrition services, special instruction and occupational, physical and speech-language therapy.

"One of the biggest benefits of SoonerStart is that it's not an income-based program," said Roberts. "There is no direct cost to the family regardless of their income. SoonerStart staff will also provide services in the family's home, daycare or other locations in their community."

SoonerStart is a joint effort of the Oklahoma State Departments of Education, Human Services, Health, Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, Oklahoma Health Care Authority, Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth and the Oklahoma Health Sciences Tolbert Center.

For more information on SoonerStart, call 1-800-426-2747 or click on [www.okdhs.org/soonerstart/](http://www.okdhs.org/soonerstart/).

# Director Spreads Christmas Cheer

(Below) Director Hendrick tried his hand with a belt sander at the Trim Shop at NE 30th St. He ended up with dust all over his suit!



The Director was one of many voices singing carols at the Sequoyah Building Party.



The Director greets Rosa Gibson (right), child care supervisor, and Anne Baker, shelter director, at the Pauline E. Mayer Shelter.



(Above) The Director unleashed his inner chicken by performing the "Chicken Dance" at Oklahoma County 55H.

(Right) Director Hendrick joined the Print Shop. (From left) Monica Young, Tina Gray, Darrell Robinson, John Pickett, Ray Robison, Jeff Dees and Bob Ferguson.



# Adult Abuse Problem Bigger Than It Seems

by *Dustin Pyeatt*  
*Public Information Officer*

In fiscal year 2002 the state's Adult Protective Services received 3,433 referrals alleging physical abuse of elderly and disabled Oklahomans. That number includes sexual and psychological abuse as well as caretaker neglect. But according to the National Committee for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, a Washington D.C.-based research, education and prevention organization, it's estimated that nationally, for every case that is reported, there are five that go unreported.

"If you apply this to Oklahoma, it translates to around 14,000 unreported cases of adult abuse last fiscal year alone," said Barbara Kidder, Adult Protective Services Director, Oklahoma Department of Human Services. "If that number is correct, we're looking at a problem that is equivalent to child abuse in the number of victims."

The majority of physical abuse comes at the hands of caretakers and accounts for 23 percent of all abuse referrals. Signs of physical abuse include broken bones, burns from cigarettes or hot water, malnutrition or dehydration, bruises, visible pain from internal injuries and loss of hair or teeth. There are also behavioral signs that could signal physical abuse, such as implausible explanations for injuries, suspicious hospitalizations, victims being taken to different medical facilities for each injury and a long delay between the time of an injury and when medical care is sought.

"A lot of caretaker mistreatment is due to neglect," said

Kidder. "The people they are supposed to be caring for are simply ignored and left alone without food or medication. They often develop bed sores and the equipment they rely on, such as oxygen or feeding tubes, go unchecked."

Tragically, caregivers and family members are usually the main perpetrators of psychological abuse as well. Signs of psychological abuse include significant weight loss, stress-related conditions such as high blood pressure, problems sleeping, depression or confusion. Victims of psychological abuse may also be emotionally upset, withdrawn or exhibit unusual behavior such as biting or sucking thumbs.

"Psychological abuse can take many forms," said Kidder. "The victims can be subject to humiliating and derogatory comments in public, belittled in private or simply isolated emotionally and not spoken to, touched or comforted in any way."

And finally, though it accounts for only one percent of all referrals, sexual abuse is the most violent form of abuse investigators deal with. Victims of sexual abuse are often women or persons with cognitive or physical disabilities. The warning signs can include difficulty walking or sitting, sexually transmitted diseases, inappropriate relationships between the victim and suspected abuser and unusual or aggressive sexual behavior by the victim.

"Sexual abuse is the most under-reported form of abuse we deal with," said Kidder. "Much like sexual abuse in the general population, the small numbers of

cases we deal with are, sadly, probably just the tip of the iceberg."

Compounding the problem of adult abuse is the fact that Oklahoma's elderly population is large and continuing to grow. According to the U.S. Census, Oklahoma ranks 19th in the nation in percentage of its population that is age 65 and older. The Oklahoma Department of Commerce projects that the number of Oklahomans age 85 and older will almost double by the year 2030.

"The common thread in all forms of abuse is isolation and if people don't get involved and pay attention to their elderly and disabled neighbors, we are possibly looking at something that could turn into a huge epidemic for our state," said Kidder. "With a staff of only 150 people statewide, we're already stretched pretty thin. Without everyone showing some good old fashioned care and concern for others, it won't be long before we're overwhelmed."

Added Kidder, "All it takes is a few minutes to ask someone how they are doing and if they need any help. If people would just take that simple step, we could easily prevent a lot of this abuse from ever happening. And if it is happening, a simple 'how are you today' could tip you off to report suspected abuse. That is the first step in making sure these folks are safe, protected and able to get a fresh start."

To report suspected abuse, contact the Adult Abuse Hotline at 1-800-522-3511, or, your local OKDHS County office.

# OSCPM Plays Santa Angel

by Barbara Taft  
Developmental Disabilities  
Services Division

Oklahoma Society of Certified Public Managers (OSCPM) conducts a silent auction each year at the annual conference. The society voted to use the profit from the auction to purchase gifts for children participating in the Christmas Angel Project. This year's conference was held in September and the auction netted \$1,588. Seven families were selected and each child received \$150 in gifts.

Barbara Taft, Kay Hagerman, Brenda Sullivan, Phyllis Taylor and Mary Brewington shopped for and wrapped gifts. David Brown, Mary Wilson and Joyce Smith delivered the gifts to the families.

On the day of delivery, December 23, the first snowstorm of the season hit the state. It may have slowed the delivery, but Santa's helpers were not to be deterred. The bright eyes and happy smiles more than compensated for the inclement weather.

OSCP officers for 2003 are Judy Dennis, Department of Transportation, President; **Kay Hagerman**, OKDHS, President-Elect; Bill Winters, Oklahoma Tax Commission, Past-President; **Paula Green**, OKDHS, Secretary; and Gloria Rennels, Commissioners of the

## The Village of 100....

Being at the center of delivering Oklahoma Human Services, we are always looking at reports and trends of our citizens and their needs. Here's a little bigger set of numbers for one to ponder. The story of the Earth's population being shrunk to a village of 100 people has been circulating in e-mails and newsletters for quite some time. People seem intrigued by the comparisons and contrasts reported.

But not everyone agrees with the numbers presented below. The Urban Legends References Pages at [www.snope.com](http://www.snope.com) questions some of the information in what has become known as "The Village of 100." It's something to think about...

If we could shrink the earth's population to a village of precisely 100 people, with all the existing human ratios remaining the same, it would look something like the following.

There would be:  
57 Asians  
21 Europeans  
14 from the Western Hemisphere, both north and south  
8 Africans  
52 would be female  
48 would be male  
70 would be non-white  
30 would be white  
70 would be non-Christian  
30 would be Christian  
89 would be heterosexual  
11 would be homosexual  
6 people would possess 59 percent of the entire world's wealth and all 6 would be from the United States.  
80 would live in substandard housing  
70 would be unable to read  
50 would suffer from malnutrition  
1 would be near death; 1 would be near birth  
1 (yes, only 1) would have a college education  
1 would own a computer

Land Office, Treasurer.

Board members include Joyce Smith, Office of Personnel Management; Mary Brewington, Department of Transportation; Robert Shepherd, Office of State Finance; **Cheryl Crawford**, OKDHS; Patricia Klein, Department of Commerce; Jane Lake, Department of Transportation; **Sherri Moore**, OKDHS; **Elizabeth Fine**,

**OKDHS**; and Mary Wilson, Oklahoma Tax Commission.

Committee Chair appointments are Pat Hernandez, Awards Committee; Cathy Gibson, Election Committee; Brenda Sullivan, Finance Committee; **Barbara Taft**, Public Relations; Joyce Smith, Publications Committee; Susan Bohl, Publications Committee; and **Paula Green**, Membership Committee.

## McCurtain County Gets in the Spirit

by Teresa Tapley,  
McCurtain County Office

Karen Hopson, Adult Protective Service worker in McCurtain County, is an active member of the McCurtain County Christmas Council, which provides food boxes to needy families in the county. The council receives more than 1,000 referrals for Christmas food boxes. Hopson screens referrals and, based on household sizes, income and special circumstances, sends 250 of the referrals to the council chairman to begin the packing process and distribution. This year the county received extra boxes from Feed the Children so an additional 50 families received food boxes.

McCurtain County OKDHS teamed up with radio station KKBI, Broken Bow, for the Adopt-An-Angel program this year. Because of the generosity of the community, 195 children were blessed with a very merry Christmas.

Referrals were made by caseworkers who knew of children who would have little or no Christmas. These referrals were screened by Chris Robberson, Family Support worker, and then sent to the radio station and placed on a tree to be adopted by individuals in the community. Weyerhaeuser Company also donated money to be used in this program.



*COMPREHENSIVE ANGELS — Members of Comprehensive Caseload Unit 43 at Tulsa County 72H bypassed a unit Christmas Party in favor of picking names off an Angel Tree and providing presents for youngsters who needed a brighter holiday. Unit members are, from left, Erica Graham, comprehensive caseworker; Connie Miller, administrative technician; Matthew Vianes, comprehensive caseworker; J.R. Dillard, unit supervisor; Inez Fontaine, comprehensive caseworker, and Stephanie Morris, comprehensive caseworker.*



*The Office of Planning, Policy and Research celebrated the Chinese New Year in February with a Chinese buffet lunch. Participants include (from left) Nickla Peer, Pat McCracken, Dena Thayer, Marilyn Knott, Robert Bentley, Yuzhou Fan, Angela Harnden, Rose Cao, Cheryl Willie and Cecilia Tannehill.*



Former Gov. George Nigh spoke to Employee Recognition Committee members Jan. 28 about the importance of recognizing excellence in the workplace at OKDHS. He said recognizing a job well done and inspiring staff is more important than ever during the current budget challenges.

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