

INSIDE



Stracke Gift To Help Oklahoma's Independent Living Youth



Director Howard Hendrick looks on as Jeanne and Robert Stracke address the Human Services Commission.

Robert and Jeanne Stracke were honored during the Oklahoma Commission for Human Services meeting Feb. 25 for their generous gift to the Independent Living program administered through the OKDHS Children and Family Services Division.

The Strackes deeded a valuable property to the Department to help the program that prepares youth in state custody for adult life. These children have no family to provide support after they leave custody at age 18.

OKDHS Director Howard H. Hendrick said, "We are thankful

for the kindness and generosity of Robert and Jeanne Stracke. Their gift will be valued for years to come as it helps youth succeed in areas where government funding is not used."

Each year approximately 170 youth in OKDHS custody graduate from high school, turn 18 and can no longer be supported through the state foster care program. For many of them, it becomes their emancipation into adult life.

"With limited resources, we do what we can across the state to prepare these youth to meet everyday challenges of being an adult," said Claudia Hunter, OKDHS

Independent Living program coordinator. "When private resources become available, we can help them start jobs, set up apartments and start training in career technology centers or working toward degrees from colleges or universities.

"With more than 2,000 youth in our program, we are always needing additional financial resources to help in areas where we can't use state or federal dollars. We are excited to know there are families like the Strackes who are willing to support a program that helps Oklahoma youth become better-educated and productive citizens."



Flutist Angela Monson, who also serves as an Oklahoma State Senator from District 48, is accompanied by Calvin Drake, during the 2003 Black Heritage Celebration. See related story and photos on pages 6-7.



OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

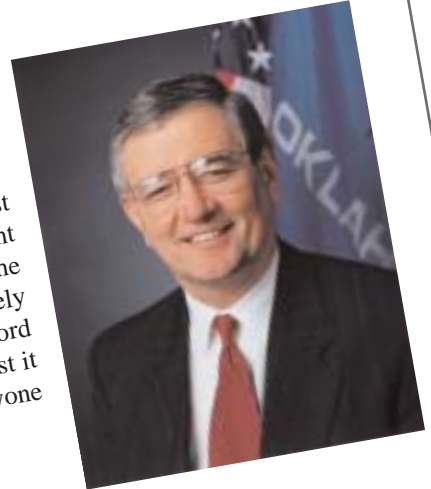
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March 13, 2003

Dear OKDHS Employees:

We continue to balance our commitment to the best service possible against the reality that we are struggling with the worst budget situation in recent memory. We continue to stretch ourselves to find creative solutions to the complex and challenging issues facing our agency without adversely affecting program objectives. Every program is performing at near record levels and our accuracy, timeliness, contacts and case activity is the best it has ever been. I could not be more proud of the incredible job everyone throughout the agency is doing every day.



I have asked the OKDHS Certified Public Managers' Steering Committee to collect ideas employees may generate to even further improve our performance while maximizing our cost effectiveness. These managers possess valuable management and organizational skills and will be working with us to implement ideas employees generate to improve the well-being of the families we serve and increase our fiscal accountability. Once an idea is submitted, reviewed and determined to be viable, you may be contacted by your Division Administrator and a member of the CPM Steering Committee to determine how you would envision implementing your proposed improvement.

Your input and participation is vital! Every worker has a different view from every other worker. Your perspective is important. How each of us performs determines whether how all of us appear in the public's eye. Every smile, every kind word, every encouragement is important. Every idea for improvement is also important. Not all of them can be implemented for one reason or another. However, new ideas are greatly encouraged. I am urging you to contact the OKDHS.ShareIdeas.CPM Mailbox with any cost saving measures and process improvement opportunities that would benefit your unit, your division, or our agency as a whole.

I applaud your initiative, dedication and determination exhibited in these difficult times. I know that many of you have ideas and strategies that will improve our agency and our service to the families for whom we work and care. Thank you in advance for your help. Together, we can continue to improve our service and minimize our costs.

Warm Regards,

Arroyo Receives Community Service Award



Maria Arroyo accepts the UniCare Community Services Award.

Maria Arroyo, an Oklahoma County 55-A social services specialist, received a 2003 Community Services Award from UniCare, Inc., at an awards dinner in Oklahoma City March 13.

Arroyo received the honor for her energy and efforts that went above and beyond the call of duty to meet the needs of citizens in south central and southwest Oklahoma City during the last year.

She has made significant contributions in Oklahoma City's Hispanic community. Many of the documents, letters and other communications used in the Department have been translated by Arroyo to Spanish.

Arroyo is currently out-stationed to the Variety Health Center in Oklahoma City, where she serves as the Kids and Families Project coordinator.

Budget Cuts Cancel Full-Time MSW Scholarship Program

It was announced in March that the full-time Master's of Social Work (MSW) scholarship program being funded through OKDHS for Child Welfare staff will be cancelled, effective July 1, due to budget cuts. This is one of many actions being taken throughout the Department to balance the OKDHS budget due to state revenue shortfalls.

OKDHS will continue to partner with the University of Oklahoma to support employee education through the Child Welfare Professional Enhancement Program (CWPEP). This program provides tuition, fees and required textbooks for participants.

Employees also may request authorization for up to 20 days of paid Educational Leave per calendar year through OKDHS. Annual

leave may be approved when needed for additional classroom days.

Mileage, lodging and per-diem related to class work will not be available to employees effective July 1, 2003, as a result of budget limitations.

Employees wishing to participate in the CWPEP must submit an application to CWPEP at the University of Oklahoma and request Educational Leave. Staff are encouraged to remain committed to professional growth and development and to consider the opportunities and support available through CWPEP.

Please contact Rebecca Bogard, Child Welfare Training Section, at (405) 521-4366 or e-mail her for additional information.

Excuse of the Month

Just when you thought you've heard it all, Tulsa Child Support gets a new one. A non-custodial parent goes to the custodial parent's attorney's office dressed from head to toe in dark ninja-style clothing and hiding his face. He advises the attorney that he now has a top-secret job with the government and cannot disclose where he works. He says they could no longer take child support payments from his checks.

He then disappears as quickly as he appeared. He did not identify for whose government he was working...



If you have heard a really good excuse related to OKDHS business, please share it. Email it to: Excuse of the Month at:

Communications@okdhs.org

Remember, You're Driving for the Other Guy

By George Earl Johnson, Jr.
Director of Communications

Last August I purchased a new car after putting 208,000 miles on the 1994 model vehicle I was driving. The first week I had the car, one of my co-workers was rushing through the state office parking lot to get an empty parking space and tagged my car on the rear fender. There was very little damage, but it really gave her a scare.

In March, another co-worker running late for a meeting quickly pulled out of a parking space in the state office parking lot, back-

ing into my car. The small fender bender made nearly a thousand dollars in damage on the driver's side.

Best Foot Forward



Both accidents occurred when my friends and co-workers failed to be cautious and attentive. I've been in that chair once or twice myself. We are in a rush and many times, we are rushing toward things that will have little

or no effect in our lives an hour, day, week or year from now.

My mother, Estelle, used to tell me, "Be careful out there, and remember, you're driving for the other guy." This saying can apply in a lot of ways whether we are in a car, on the sidelines waiting for our children or grandchildren at sporting events or even at the office interacting with co-workers, partners or clients.

Putting our Best Foot Forward by being cautious and attentive the next time we are in a hurry can save us time, money and, just maybe, our lives.

Debbie Smith Named National President-Elect

Debbie J. Smith, Data Services Division chief technology officer, has been named President-Elect of the American Academy of Certified Public Managers.

"I am really excited about this new role with the American Academy," Smith said. "My education and experience has prepared me for this time and I am looking forward to the challenge. I will do my very best to represent Oklahoma and the Department well in these duties."



After completing the Oklahoma CPM certification in 1991, Smith was encouraged and went on to complete a bachelor's and master's degree in Business Administration. She openly states her accreditation as a Certified Public Manager continues to push her onward and upward.

Smith began her OKDHS career 31 years ago at age 16, working as a tabulation operator in DSD, which at the time was located on the third floor of the Sequoyah Memorial Office Building. Today she's DSD's Deputy Division Administrator and Chief Technology Officer.

She is a founding member and past president of the Oklahoma Society of Certified Public Managers and was honored as Oklahoma Society of Certified Public Manager of the Year in 1997.



Are you concerned about your child's development?
SoonerStart may be the answer.



SoonerStart is Oklahoma's early intervention program for infants and toddlers with developmental delays from birth to 36 months.

For information call 1-800-426-2747 or click on www.okdhs.org/soonerstart/.

The Web Slingsers.....Making Navigation Easier



Data Services Division Web Slingsers include (from left) Terry Girton, Clint Hutchison, Mark Arambula, Randy McKee, and Rod Davidson.

By Dustin Pyeatt
Public Information Officer

Anyone who's logged onto the OKDHS web sites lately has noticed some redesigning taking place, but behind those web pages, something else is changing. "We're redesigning the way we do things at Data Services," said Mark Arambula, Information Systems Manager III and head of the DSD Web Team. "We're more customer oriented. Whatever it takes to make things happen, we'll do it."

"Though we operate here at Data Services in Oklahoma City, behind lots of wires and monitors, we haven't lost sight of who we are working for, the folks on the front lines in the county offices," said Clint Hutchison, I.S. Applications Specialist IV. "We

listen to our customers, visualize what they need and work with them to meet those needs so that they can better serve the people of Oklahoma."

Added Arambula, "If a county office needs a web site, within an hour, we can drop their content into a very professional web design and give them a great presence on the Internet. You don't have to worry about graphics or mapping or navigation, we'll take care of everything and make sure you're happy."

The DSD Web Team has also focused their customer-oriented approach on the future of OKDHS web functions. "In the future, your browser will have everything you'll need, e-mail, news and applications like OASIS or EBT," said Rod Davidson, I.S.

Applications Specialist IV. "You'll be able to personalize it to your needs, just like many commercial browsers already do. Everything you need to do your job will be at your fingertips."

"We're also working on ways to make it easier for everyone to maintain their own web sites," said Arambula. "In the future, we'll work with you to build your web site and give you a professional look and feel, but also give you the technology to make the updates you'll need on a daily, weekly or monthly basis."

"We have a real passion for what we do and how we can make the Internet work for OKDHS," said Terry Girton, I.S. Applications Specialist III. "We're a small enough team that we can react quickly to our customers' needs, and we also build on each other's strengths because we all have a different expertise."

"But we're just part of a larger DSD team," said Arambula. "This not only gives us the resources we need to do our best, but the positive attitude of the management of DSD allows us the freedom and support we need to push the OKDHS web presence forward and strive for excellence, both for ourselves and our customers."

To find out what the DSD Web Team can do for you, contact Mark Arambula at (405) 522-0728, or e-mail the team at YourWebTeam@okdhs.org.

Partner's Conference for Families A Success

Operating under its new name, the 2003 Partner's Conference for Oklahoma Families treated its 424 registered participants to two keynote speakers and 30 power-packed workshops that brought new life and energy to their audiences in Oklahoma City March 27-28.

Chuck Jackson, Ph.D., of String, Okla., used down-home humor and a bathroom scale to get the audience to weigh into his message about what they should get from the conference.

Jackson told the crowd, while missing his grandfather's sage lessons and thoughts on life, he came back to him saying, "Chuck, it's your turn. It's your turn to give." Jackson said, coming to the conference meant it's now "our turn to give."

Disney's American Teacher of the Year Ron Clark bounced from one end of the room to the other while the lights kept going on and off during his remarks. He told stories about how he has been privileged to be a change agent in the lives of young children as a teacher, both in North Carolina and New York City.

Clark highlighted *The Essential 55*, a book with 55 expectations he demands of his students and others. Armed with his 55 essentials and a heart for making a difference, he took a 5th grade class of 37 so-called "under-achievers" with discipline problems to levels of much higher self worth and a thirst for learning, where they obtained the highest across the board test scores in the school district.

Oklahoma Human Services Director Howard Hendrick and

Oklahoma State Health Commissioner Leslie Bietsch, MD, thanked the health and human services professionals for all the work they have done to make the state a better place to live.

They also challenged participants to remain vigilant in the fight to build community partnerships to serve families.

More than \$2,900 raised from this year's Partner's Silent Auction was given to the Energy Conservation Assistance Fund to help the elderly and people with disabilities with home weatherization needs and the Lou Hartpence Scholarship Trust, which helps custody youth attending post secondary educational programs. This year's conference partners included: Oklahoma Department of Health, Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, Oklahoma

Department of Education, Oklahoma Career Technology Centers, Oklahoma Department of Corrections, Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth, Oklahoma Community Action, Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education and OKDHS.



Reginald O'Neal, Sequoyah County, gives Linda Hughes, Family Support Services Division, a needed shoulder massage. Kathy Quinn, State Regents for Higher Education, waits her turn.



Keynote speaker, teacher and author Ron Clark received attention from Teresa Bryant-Leffew, Debra Winn, and Teresa Harelson, all of Okfuskee County.

2003 Community Partners Award Winners

Each received a check for \$1,000

- Mayes County Truancy Program
- Hidden Dangers of Osage County
- Cushing One Stop of Payne County
 - The Ties That Bind... Building a Community Coalition, McIntosh County
- It DOES Take a Village: Providing Resources to Benefit Deprived Children, The P.R.I.D.E. Committee of Canadian County

Play on a Winning Team

OKDHS State Games

May 30-31

Bowling
Darts
Golf
Horseshoes
Running
Softball

3-on-3 Basketball
Dominoes
Skipbo
Spades
Volleyball
Trivial Pursuit

McAlester, OK

For registration information contact:

Shawna Perry, (918)684-5389

Crystal Johnson, (918) 421-6101

Deana Pilgrim, (918)421-6101

OKDHS Mission

The mission of the Oklahoma Department of Human Services is to help individuals and families in need help themselves lead safer, healthier, more independent and productive lives.



OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

OKDHS Values and Guiding Principles

Respect

We believe in the human dignity of every person and that each person has a purpose for living. *We will* treat all people with dignity, promote mutual respect and maximize the personal potential of each person we serve.

Family

We believe the family unit is the basic foundation of our society. *We will* strengthen each family we serve.

Accountability

We believe responsible actions enhance all relationships. *We will* be fiscally responsible in the administration of public resources and hold ourselves to high moral and ethical standards.

**Stronger Families Grow
Brighter Futures**

Quick Action of 3 Workers Saves Life; Earns Honors

Three Choctaw County employees of the Oklahoma Department of Human Services have been honored by the department for quick action in saving the life of a foster child.

Each of the three employees was presented an OKDHS Certificate of Commendation, the department's highest award, at the March meeting of the Oklahoma Commission for Human Services in Oklahoma City.

Receiving commendations were Vicki Bell, Child Welfare Specialist IV; Jerri Griffin, Child Welfare Specialist I; and Jessie McDaniel, Child Welfare Specialist I.

At the OKDHS office in Hugo last spring, an 18-month-old boy aspirated on jelly beans given to him by his mother. Griffin was with the mother and child and immediately called Bell and McDaniel for help. Both Bell and



Children and Family Services Division Director Linda Smith (left) congratulates Choctaw County Child Welfare Specialists Jerri Griffin, Vickie Bell, and Jessie McDaniel. Field Operations Division Director Jean Derry and Deputy Director Judith Atkinson join in the celebration.

McDaniel attempted the Heimlich maneuver and did seem to loosen the obstruction. A call had been made to 911, but there was no sound of an ambulance siren.

The hospital was a short distance away, and the child had begun to show respiratory stress

and signs of cyanosis, so the mother carried the child and McDaniel drove them to the emergency room.

The mother told the workers later that her child is alive because of them.



Brand new sidewalks outside Director Howard Hendrick's office at the Sequoyah Building were left under six inches of water following heavy March rains where several passing ducks found a new home.

Office for Civil Rights Breaks Down Barriers

By Dustin Pyeatt
Public Information Officer

In an effort to improve communication and promote respect and dignity, the Office for Civil Rights has created a new tool for county staff. The office created business-size cards that can be given to clients to tell service providers that the client needs an interpreter.

“In the past we’ve seen people come into county offices with notes pinned to their shirts that say, ‘I don’t speak English,’” said Office for Civil Rights Administrator Sherleen Jackson, Ph.D. “This is embarrassing for the client to be treated this way. We were sure there was a more dignified way of helping them. We got the idea from the state of Minnesota at a USDA Civil Rights Conference.”

County office staff will also receive a booklet of sheets that allow clients to circle what kind of interpreter they need, including Arabic, Hmong, Khmer, Lao, Oromiffa, Serbo-Croatian, Somali, Spanish, Vietnamese or sign language. The worker can then include this sheet with the client’s file.

“This way clients can also take their cards with them to our community partners when they need services from them as well,” said Jackson. “Whether it’s the health

department, the housing authority or even the hospital, they’ll be one step closer to understanding each other.”

The OKDHS Office for Civil Rights received a commendation from the Southwest Regional USDA Civil Rights Conference for their pro-active response to

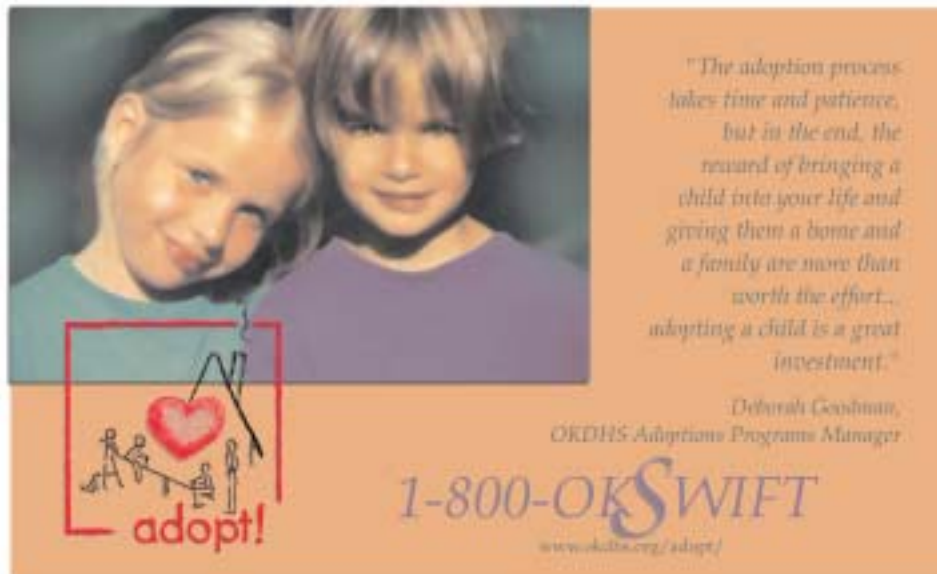
client’s language challenges. The project is also being adopted by Texas, Arkansas and Louisiana.

For information on the interpreter cards, a list of interpreters in your area or for any questions regarding civil rights, contact the Office for Civil Rights at 1-800-214-3529.

<p>انا احتاج مترجم عربي</p> <p>I need an Arabic interpreter</p>	<p>Kuv xav tau ib tug Hmoob pab txhais lus rau kuv.</p> <p>I need a Hmong interpreter</p>
<p>ខ្ញុំត្រូវការអ្នកបកប្រែភាសាខ្មែរ</p> <p>I need a Khmer interpreter.</p>	<p>ຂ້າພະເຈົ້າ ຕ້ອງການ ລ່າມແປພາສາລາວ</p> <p>I need a Lao interpreter</p>
<p>Turjumana afan Oromiffa enbarbana.</p> <p>I need an Oromiffa interpreter.</p>	<p>Trebam prevodioca srpsko-hrvatskog jezika.</p> <p>I need a Serbo-Croatian interpreter.</p>
<p>Waxaan u baahnahay turjubaan Somali ah.</p> <p>I need a Somali interpreter.</p>	<p>Necesito servicios de intérprete en español.</p> <p>I need a Spanish interpreter.</p>
<p>Tôi cần thông dịch viên tiếng Việt.</p> <p>I need a Vietnamese interpreter.</p>	<p>I need a sign language interpreter</p>

*When there is no rule in place, try
to do something intelligent...*

— Ancient Proverb,
That Still Applies Today



"The adoption process takes time and patience, but in the end, the reward of bringing a child into your life and giving them a home and a family are more than worth the effort... adopting a child is a great investment."

Deborah Goodman,
OKDHS Adoptions Programs Manager

1-800-OKSWIFT
www.okdhs.org/adopt/

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