

INSIDE



Social Worker Sets Former Client On Life-Saving Path

By Dustin D. Pyeatt
Associate Editor

The door to the meeting room burst open. "Samantha, we have a car wreck," a man whispered urgently.

"I gotta go, wait here," Samantha Robbins said. She rushed out, tying her long red hair into a ponytail as she ran from the room, leaving her large soft drink from a local fast-food place on the table. Within seconds the ambulance was out of the garage and racing through a stop sign, lights flashing and sirens blaring.

Robbins is a registered emergency medical technician and licensed cardio pulmonary resuscitation instructor with the Hughes County Emergency Medical Service. During a recent visit, *Inside OKDHS* found her to be a poised, professional and confident young woman.

Nancy "Jodi" Cotton-Jay, social services specialist II, Pontotoc County, *PATH* continued on page 11



(L-R) Nancy Jodi Cotton-Jay, social services specialist II, Pontotoc County, hugs former TANF client and success story Samantha Robbins, who is now a registered emergency medical technician and licensed cardio pulmonary resuscitation instructor with the Hughes County Emergency Medical Service.

Putting Their Best Foot Forward

Honoring Women In Human Services History

March is National Women in History Month. So *Inside OKDHS* has gone through the OKDHS archives and polled a few active long-term employees to identify some of the thousands of women who have made a difference in the lives of those who have been served through the Oklahoma Department of Public Welfare – known today as the Oklahoma Department of Human Services.

Some of the names are still familiar today, while others had more

impact in the communities where they lived and worked. The thing we

Best Foot Forward



know about each of these women is they were, and some still are, putting their Best Foot Forward to serve

humanity.

Women have added the most to this Department of government during its 68-year history. More than 75 percent of OKDHS' work force today are women – a fact that has been constant for decades. While we most often focus on the person in the leadership position, the Human Services' experience has shown that many of the leaders in this organization led from support staff positions.

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Time To Honor Our Very Important People

Editor's Note: The piece quoted in the story below has been modified for publication.

By Judy Hill, Chaplain Coordinator

As I have shared with you and others many times, I'm so proud of all of our OKDHS family.



And this is the month that we honor some very special people, our social workers.

These special people have dedicated their lives to the service of others. Their job is not always pleasant and often they are given a rough time and undeserved negative publicity. Very rarely are they given a deserved "thank you," but they are always dedicated to the task before them.

When I think of social workers, I'm reminded of an article that I found in a magazine when I was only 16 (so you know it is old). I have kept it all these years. Since social workers are always dedicated to people, they're the kind of people who would have this as their motto:

Women continued from page 1

They were and still are today, the gatekeepers of the organization. They have worked behind the scenes providing the support upon which a healthy living organization grows in good times and survives during lean times.

In the "Weight of Glory," C.S. Lewis wrote, "The load, or weight, or burden of my neighbor's glory should be laid daily on my back, a load so heavy that only humility can carry it, and the backs of the proud will be broken ... There are no ordinary peo-

ple. You have never talked to a mere mortal."

The 12 women briefly highlighted in this article are no ordinary people. They had their flaws of character, as do we all, but one thing they did and did well was to dedicate much of their lives to the improvement of others, especially children.

By no means are they all of the women in Oklahoma Human Services' history —women who have made real-life impacts on the tens of thousands of Oklahomans who have

come through the doors of the OKDHS. However, as a part of our collective history, they made their mark on us all in their special ways.

Putting their Best Foot Forward in their work was a way of life and deeply rooted in their character. One was blessed to know them and could go a long way by following their examples of stewardship.

Inside OKDHS thanks all employees who sent in the more than five-dozen names for inclusion in this

WOMEN continued on page 6

Make Me Aware Of People

God, make me aware of the wonder of people — all kinds of people — old and young, important and humble, neighbor and child, foreigner or stranger on the street.

You have made us all so marvelously varied — outwardly so different in face and form and circumstance, yet basically so much alike. Each going their own way with such private passion locked in this tiny universe of self. However we strive to share, give, communicate, we are bounded by the limited horizons of our own selves.

God, make me more vitally cognizant of these worlds spinning behind all these faces. Such complex, fascinating worlds filled with memories, worries, anxieties, philosophies, ambitions and experiences.

Remind me to listen, really listen, when people open their mouths like small doors to that world and try to share what is inside.

God, make me always aware of the wonder of people.

People who live and think and breathe and feel the same as I do.

People laughing, crying, loving, hurting and touching.

People gazing in store windows, hailing taxis, scrubbing floors.

People holding warm new babies or smelling flowers in a funeral chapel.

People with the sand hot against their feet on a windy beach or a cold sidewalk, bitter through broken shoes.

The sheer wonder of people, in joy or torment or the little acts of every day.

Your people, my people, an extension of you, and so of each of us.

As I identify with other people, taste their tears as well as mine, rejoice in their rejoicing, then I am more completely your creation and more aware of who I am myself.

Office Of Client Advocacy Protects State s Most Vulnerable

By Kevan Goff-Parker
Inside OKDHS Editor

Got a complaint? For the state's most vulnerable residents, OKDHS' and its Office of Client Advocacy's answer is always, "We care."

For more than five years, OCA Advocate General Judith Storandt has led the teams of employees that provide advocacy assistance, conduct investigations and maintain grievance programs. Their work is designed to promote client safety and independence. In keeping with their mission, OCA works hard to ensure the delivery of the Department's services and programs in a fair, effective and professional manner.

OCA came into existence in 1983. The office has 52 employees in five locations around the state. Its programs include investigations, grievances and Ombuds services. After almost 20 years in the Sequoyah building, OCA has moved into its own office space located about one mile north of the State Capitol. The new building includes ample parking and a spacious conference room that are available to OKDHS employees.

OCA administers the grievance system for all children in OKDHS custody, all Developmental Disabilities Services Division service recipients and foster parents. This grievance system serves as an effective and efficient resource for people to resolve problems and concerns. Each county office, DDS area office, DDS provider agency and Child Welfare contracted facility designates a local grievance coordinator (LGC).

Storandt said OCA provides training to approximately 400 LGCs and county directors statewide each year.

"We are in the process of creating e-training to replace classroom instruction," Storandt said. "This will greatly reduce the time and travel to complete this training."

The mission of the investigations unit is to produce professional quality



(L-R) The Office of Client Advocacy's Diana L. Smith, programs administrator; Cheneah Williams, investigator; Anita Eden, advocate and OKDHS Advocate General Judith Storandt discuss various investigations ongoing through the OCA.

investigation reports in a timely manner that accurately identify when caretaker misconduct has or has not occurred.

OCA Intake Supervisor Jan Pitts said the office investigates allegations of caretaker maltreatment of children living outside their homes (except those in foster care), residents of OKDHS-operated facilities and Hissom Class Members (former residents of the Hissom Center that was operated by OKDHS until 1994).

"Our investigative program produces more than 1,200 investigation reports a year," Pitts said. "Receiving referrals and disseminating OCA investigation reports quickly promotes client safety. OCA recently initiated a pilot project to distribute its reports electronically, reducing the time it takes to get them to district attorneys and employers.

"Last year, the investigative program also began receiving referrals electronically from the Statewide Abuse Hotline and Adult Protective Services' intake workers. These initiatives reduce paper, postage and copying costs while promoting more efficient communications."

OCA's Ombuds programs provide advocacy, monitoring and complaint-resolution services to Hissom Class Members and residents of the Southern Oklahoma Resource Center in Pauls Valley, the Northern Oklahoma Resource Center of Enid and the Greer Center in Enid. OCA Programs Administrator Diana Smith said the Ombuds programs provide a valuable service for vulnerable adults with developmental disabilities.

"Our mission is to provide an independent, proactive voice for the client," Smith said, "and to timely identify problems affecting the health, safety or welfare of clients."

She said OCA advocates receive a considerable volume of documents from DDS and others. DDS now transmits much of these materials electronically on a monthly basis.

"In addition to saving paper, postage and copying, OCA receives this information in a more timely manner," Smith said. "We are thankful to DDS for their willingness to do this."

Storandt said the OCA is grateful to OKDHS Director Howard H. Hendrick

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News Briefs

From Staff Reports

March of Dimes Team Leaders Needed

Volunteers are needed to serve as team leaders for OKDHS' "Knock out Prematurity" March of Dimes WalkAmerica team.

Team leaders will recruit walkers for the walkathon scheduled for May 1 in downtown Oklahoma City, distribute March of Dimes' literature and seek donations to help fight birth defects in children.

If you would like to volunteer your time, talents or resources to this cause, please contact Lynna Whiteside in Data Services Division at (405) 522-0238 or e-mail her at Lynna. Whiteside@okdhs.org.

Character First Traits Sought

Inside OKDHS is searching for employees who exemplify the following character traits from "Character First" for possible inclusion in upcoming issues of *Inside OKDHS*. They include:

April 2004

Culture

(also more of an overall concept)

May 2004

Attentiveness

June 2004

Joyfulness

July 2004

Alertness

August 2004

Decisiveness

September 2004

Truthfulness

October 2004

Obedience

November 2004

Gratefulness

December 2004

Generosity

Please contact Kevan Goff-Parker, editor, Inside OKDHS, at kevan.goff-parker@okdhs.org or call (405) 521-3548.

DSD Completes Systems Health Checks For Tech Advantage

While many are still shaking off the winter blues and preparing for spring-cleaning, Data Services Division staff spent much of the winter doing systems health checks across the OKDHS network. It's a continuing process designed to give OKDHS the "Technological Advantage," as described in the OKDHS' Vision statement.

Operating one of the largest information technology systems in the state efficiently and effectively is a planned event. DSD team members are making the investments necessary to keep OKDHS' hardware

and the programs that drive it the best available within the resources allotted.

By the end of March, DSD staffers will have completed first-round health checks on 90 of the 160 servers (56 percent) that network the OKDHS information systems together. So be on the lookout soon for scheduled computer network down-times during a system's health check by "doctor" DSD.



New HRMD Office Opens in Tulsa

Welcome the smiling faces of Human Resources Management Specialists Gwen Trent and Tamara Steele (L-R above). They are now managing Human Resources Management Division's transactions for offices and employees in Area V and VI out of their new location in the Tulsa Regional Office, located in Suite 104, 444 S. Houston in Tulsa. If you need HRMD assistance, you may contact them at (918) 581-2821 or (918) 581-2126.

Congratulations And Best Wishes To Our Retirees!

January

Carter County

Kathryn Ann Wood, 26 years

Cleveland County

James A. Wiley, 16 years

Pittsburg County – Developmental Disabilities Services Division

Velma Louise Wagnon, 19 years

Tulsa County 72-B

Artis C. Phillips, 12 years

Children and Family Services Division

Carol Sue Clabo, 27 years

Child Support Enforcement Division – Administration

Ray L. Weaver, 7 years

OCA continued from page 3



Judith Storandt

for providing the OCA with the equipment, staff and technology to improve services for clients.

"Our staff is better equipped, trained and higher performing than ever before," she said. "OCA is blessed to have energetic, motivated, dedicated and caring staff. I'm fortunate to work with them!"

If you wish to schedule the OCA conference room, please contact Cynthia Brooks, OCA, at (405) 525-4850.

State Charitable Campaign Donations Soar

By Kevan Goff-Parker
Inside OKDHS Editor

Helping Oklahomans may be a state employee's everyday job, but the recent outpouring of charitable giving through the State Charitable Campaign and the ensuing enrichment such donations bring will continue to spread throughout the year and beyond.

Early counts of the donations show that \$400,227.87 has been raised by the SCC – a \$14,722 increase when compared to 2002's donations tally. State employees in certain districts have donated the following:

- ✓ Enid and Northwest Oklahoma – \$4,732
- ✓ Altus and Southwest Oklahoma – report pending
- ✓ Lawton – \$10,713.84
- ✓ Duncan and Stephens County – \$1,740.08
- ✓ Ardmore and South Central Oklahoma – \$371
- ✓ Ada Area – \$425
- ✓ Norman, Cleveland and McClain Counties – \$12,807.23
- ✓ Central Oklahoma – \$302,811
- ✓ Stillwater Area – \$14,639.48
- ✓ Shawnee and Pottawatomie County – \$600
- ✓ Tulsa Area – \$48,378
- ✓ Bartlesville Area – \$305.08
- ✓ Muskogee Area – \$2,705.16

SCC Chairman Howard H. Hendrick, director, OKDHS, led this year's spirited efforts in central Oklahoma by creating a special task force and marketing campaign designed to reach out to all state employees, their public information officers and agency leaders. And, state employees got the message donating a whopping \$302,811 and surpassing 2003's goal

SCC continued on page 11



(L-R) Victory was sweet for those who accepted the State Charitable Campaign's traveling trophy for most donations during the recent Post-Game Endzone Awards celebration held Jan. 23 at the Boy Scouts of America-Last Frontier Council in Oklahoma City. They included: SCC OKDHS coordinator Mary Davidson; Howard H. Hendrick, SCC chair and OKDHS director; Lynn McCloud, SCC division coordinator for Oklahoma County 55-F; Kevan Goff-Parker, public information specialist, Office of Communications, OKDHS; Larry Harmon, OKDHS chief administrative officer, Administrative Services; OKDHS Volunteer Coordinator Karen Jacobs and Lynna Whiteside, SCC division coordinator for OKDHS Data Services Division.

Post-Game Endzone Awards Celebrate Accomplishments

By Kevan Goff-Parker
Inside OKDHS Editor

State Charitable Campaign coordinators whooped it up during a Post-Game Endzone Awards celebration held Jan. 23 at the Boy Scouts of America – Last Frontier Council in Oklahoma City.

SCC Chair and OKDHS Director Howard H. Hendrick distributed awards to various state agencies for their outstanding contributions to the SCC central Oklahoma campaign. Early donation counts show that approximately \$302,811 was raised during the SCC in central Oklahoma. During the festive event, traveling trophies were distributed in the following categories.

Most Contributions:
OKDHS

Highest Per Capita Gift Average:
Governor's Office

Largest Percentage Increase:
Secretary of State's Office

Certificates in three categories were distributed. They included Gold (designating an increase of 10 percent or more), Silver (an increase of 5-10 percent) and Bronze (an increase of 1-5 percent).

Gold winners included:

- Oklahoma Worker's Compensation Court
- Oklahoma Commission on Children & Youth
- Oklahoma School of Science & Math
- Oklahoma State Senate
- CompSource Oklahoma

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Honoring Women In Human Services History Who Always Put Their Best Foot Forward continued from page 2

article; however, limited space would not allow using them all in the newsletter.

OKDHS' Women Of History

Pauline E. Mayer of Child Welfare had the first and last word on children's issues for nearly five decades. She worked throughout southeastern Oklahoma on the development of a social services system for the state beginning in 1934. She was among the first visitors (social workers) hired with a grand salary of \$150 per month after the Department of Public Welfare started in August 1936.

She went wherever the Department needed her. She had time in the Administrative Review Unit, Medical Assistance and Eligibility Control Unit. She served as county director in Bryan, Pontotoc, McCurtain counties and had a short run as acting county director in Seminole County. She served as chief of the Children's Bureau for a number of years. Mayer retired in April 1980; however, special assignments and projects kept bringing her back to the payroll until June 1983.

She was known for being strict and tough and spent the last years of her career as chief operating officer for social services and children's programs. The Pauline E. Mayer Children's Shelter in Oklahoma City was later named in her honor.

Laura E. Dester was considered to be the Mother of Oklahoma Child Welfare. When federal legislation was passed in the 1930s, it was aimed at helping children in rural communities and that is where Oklahoma's children's services efforts were focused. Dester was raised in Deer Creek in northern Oklahoma.

She attended the University of Chicago School of Social Work. Dester, a Mennonite who spoke flu-

ent German, said she learned one of her most valuable lessons from her father and from Jane Addams, the founder of Hull House in Chicago. The lesson was "the art of listening."

Dester said learning to listen closely and carefully to a person proved to be one of her greatest skills as a social worker and supervisor. Dester returned to Oklahoma from her job working for the Shoshone Indian Reservation at Ft. Washakie, Wyo., to become the Oklahoma Children's Services program director in January 1937 for \$225 per month.

Dester, with editorial consultant Kay Boone, wrote "The Halo Girls: The Story of Oklahoma's Child Welfare Division, 1936-1968" (DHS Pub. No. 82-67). The 63-page book provides a number of personal insights into a number of children's services pioneers. Copies of "The Halo Girls" are available upon request from the OKDHS Office of Communications.

OKDHS' Laura Dester Children's Shelter in Tulsa is named in her honor.

Lucille Farris was one of the first Child Welfare workers hired by Laura Dester. Dester called Farris and told her to go to El Reno in Canadian County the following Monday to set up shop as the Child Welfare worker for the county. Farris recalls feeling "so totally unprepared for the responsibility."

When Farris arrived, the local judge had a case waiting for her. A 23-year-old mother dumped her three children and told her, "They're yours!" Farris recalls having to find her first foster home for a young girl. When she did, the woman sent the child in to take a bath and after some time Farris and the foster parent went to check on her. The child had not started to bathe because she had never had a bathroom in a house or a

real tub. The short of this long story is that Farris kept up with the child all the way through school, college and advanced degrees to see her gain a responsible position in America's aerospace program.

Deborah Ann Rothe of Child Welfare and the Developmental Disabilities Services Division came to the Department in 1950 in Washington County as a generic worker, but had to wait five months until she could learn how to drive and get a car; requirements for a social services visitor at the time.

While most of her career was in Child Welfare, OKDHS leadership tapped her strong administrative talents and compassionate heart to help close the Hissom Memorial Center in Sand Springs.

In retirement, she remained a strong advocate for children, serving on the University of Oklahoma School of Social Work Education Committee, Oklahoma County Child Welfare Advisory Committee and served as the Chairperson of the OKDHS Lou Hartpence Scholarship Committee. (P.S. The word is that no one ever passed Deborah Rothe on an Oklahoma highway.)

Carolyn Ziegenhorn moved in 30-plus years from supporting herself and three young children on public welfare to becoming the chief financial officer of OKDHS, overseeing the expenditure of more than \$2 billion in state and federal funds when the Department was at its zenith in numbers of employees, programs and budget.

The 25-year OKDHS veteran started in 1970 as a typist clerk at the Pauls Valley State School for the Mentally Retarded, now the Southern Oklahoma Resource Center.

When budgets were really beginning to get tight in the latter

WOMEN continued on page 8



Just a few of the outstanding women who have contributed to the success of OKDHS: Top row, L-R; Pauline Mayer and Lou Hartpence. Second row, L-R; Prins Ella Anderson, Deborah Rothe, Carolyn Ziegenhorn and Bertha Levy. Bottom row, L-R; Lucille Farris, Laura Dester and Vera Alder with Lloyd E. Rader.

article; however, limited space would not allow using them all in the newsletter.

OKDHS Women Of History

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Honoring Women Today In Human Services History

While conducting research for the Women In Human Services History story, *Inside OKDHS* became keenly aware of the women who are actively making a difference in the organization today. OKDHS records show there are 1,147 women still working with more than 20 years of services. Of the total number, 517 have 25 years or more and 142 have 30 years or more, 28 at 35 years or more and two have crossed the 40-year mark.

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OKDHS' Laura Dester Chil-

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March 2004 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.

March is National Women's History Month; American Red Cross Month; Mental Retardation Awareness Month and National Professional Social Work Month.

March 7

Purim

March 8-26

FSSD New Worker Academy

March 9

DDSD Group Homes For Persons with Developmental or Physical Disabilities Advisory Board

March 9-12

New Supervisor Academy 21

March 10

Child Care Advisory Committee

March 16

Oklahoma Partnership For School Readiness

March 16-19

Experienced Supervisor Academy F

March 17

St. Patrick's Day

March 20

Spring Begins

March 23

Oklahoma Commission for Human Services Meeting

Safetown

March 24

APS Field Liaison Meeting

FSSD Field Liaison Meeting

March 25

Area County Director and Field Liaison Meetings

March 26

Volunteer Services Credit Bank Advisory Council

Women continued from page 8

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The 25-year OKDHS veteran started in 1970 as a typist clerk at the Pauls Valley State School for the Mentally Retarded, now the Southern Oklahoma Resource Center.

When budgets were really beginning to get tight in the latter years of her career, she could always find something to smile about.

Vera Alder, long-time personal secretary to OKDHS Director Lloyd E. Rader, was known for her accuracy in writing, spelling and handling Mr. Rader and all who needed to do business with him.

She was short and to the point in conversation and action. No one saw Mr. Rader unless Vera let him or her. She was the one person who would have high-volume discussions with him and still had a job the next day.

She never knocked the ash off her cigarettes (back when smoking was permitted in government offices) and she typed every memo in ALL CAPS. Under Mr. Rader, all correspondence from the agency was signed Lloyd E. Rader, although a few trusted people like Pauline Mayer signed most of the routine letters and memos.

If you ever got a memo in ALL CAPS, you knew it was from "the man."

Dr. Bertha M. Levy became a practicing physician in 1939 and was known in the central Oklahoma med-

Awards continued from page 5

Oklahoma Civil Emergency Management
State Psychologist Examine Board
Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation
State Human Rights Commission
State Student Loan Authority
Oklahoma Department of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services
State Corporation Commission
State Board of Medical Licensure
State Department of Agriculture
Oklahoma Department of Securities
Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality
Oklahoma Motor Vehicle Commission
State Regents for Higher Education
State Veteran Affairs
State Education Employees Group Insurance Board
Oklahoma Accountancy Board
Oklahoma Department of Commerce
Oklahoma Department of Mines
State Conservation Commission
Oklahoma Firefighters Pension
OSU Board of Regents
Lieutenant Governor's Office
State Office of Personnel Management
State Treasurer's Office
Oklahoma Health Care Authority
Department of Public Safety
Secretary of State

Silver winners included:
Oklahoma Water Resources Board
State Department of Labor
District Attorneys' Council
State Supreme Court

AWARDS continued on page 11

Oklahoma Marriage Initiative Web Site Gets Attention

By Douglas Doe
Associate Editor

As if marriage didn't get a big enough boost in January with the Bush administration's \$1.5 billion election-year initiative to promote marriage, the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative now has a re-vamped Web site intended to better communicate its message.

And it is an important message, too. OMI is a statewide public/private partnership dedicated to strengthening families and helping couples gain access to services and support designed to help them build and sustain healthy marriages.

OMI's initial activities were funded with private foundation monies and discretionary state dollars, but OKDHS Director Howard H. Hendrick pointed out that using Temporary Assistance for Needy Families' monies to fund the initiative fit within the intent of the family formation goals of the 1996 federal welfare reform law. As a result, \$10 million of undedicated TANF funds were set

aside for OMI activities.

The new site, developed under contract by Jump Technology Services in Tulsa, replaces the initial site



that featured static, unchanging content. OKMarriage.org now focuses on many interactive elements, including quizzes and a searchable, database-driven calendar of events.

Kendy Cox, director of Training and Resources for OMI, said a new administration component allows much of the OMI business to be managed through the Web site. Other functionality allows for communication with the public, from the public and with 1,200 marital education workshop leaders. Workshop leaders

can even request materials, submit workshops for approval and input all of their post-workshop data through the Web site.

"The administrative side is something that the public doesn't see," Cox said, "and that's where we now have complete control over the site and the tremendous amount of data that we manage related to the delivery of workshops all across the state. It has streamlined our system immensely, and we just have so much interactive capability."

The Web site, www.okmarriage.org, was re-launched with little fanfare in November 2003, but it has since been the focus of much attention by numerous states and programs across the United States.

Cox said several times at national meetings, the OKMarriage.org Web site has been complimented and used in presentations

"It's kind of been held up as a model, just like the program at large," she said. "We've been so impressed with it."

Celebrate March As Professional Social Work Month

By Dustin D. Pyeatt
Associate Editor

In 1936, the newly formed Department of Public Welfare sent out the first social workers to combat the poverty of the Great Depression in Oklahoma. Since then, social workers have tirelessly worked to lift up people in need, strengthen families and help Oklahomans lead safer, healthier, more independent and productive lives.

In recognition of the achievements of social workers, Gov. Brad Henry has proclaimed March 2004 as "Professional Social Worker Month" in Oklahoma.

Through programs like Adoption, Adult Protective Services,

Foster Care, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families or disaster food stamps, social workers touch the lives of one million Oklahomans each year.

Because of the compassion and hard work of social workers in fiscal year 2003, OKDHS was able to add to the betterment of Oklahoma with an impressive list of accomplishments, including:

A record 14,298 Oklahomans were served through the ADvantage Waiver program.

The total number of licensed child care slots increased to a record 140,175.

A record \$153,443,023 in child support was collected, exceeding

last year's record by seven percent.

Child Welfare staff assured the safety and well-being of children in out-of-home care by visiting 95.5 percent of children placed in foster care statewide on a monthly basis.

A record 553,704 Oklahomans were fed through the use of food stamps, while staff maintained a timeliness rate of 97 percent statewide.

From the lonely stretches of highway in the panhandle to the rolling hills of southeastern Oklahoma, social workers set the standard in public service by reaching out and working for a brighter future for all Oklahomans.

Path continued from page 1

said she is proud of Robbins. And Cotton-Jay should know. Robbins was a much different person almost two years ago when she came to OKDHS after having just left her husband and given birth to her third child.

"I've never seen anyone go through (the system) as fast as she did," Cotton-Jay said. "Some clients want a handout, (but) Samantha wanted a leg up. She wanted to get somewhere in life. I just gave her the ball and she took off and ran with it."

Robbins said she hated her former social worker at first.

"Jodi got all over me and made me cry," she said. "She told me to buck up and do something. I know now looking back, that along with my

desire to become successful, she gave me the incentive."

And do something she has. Since coming to OKDHS for help, Robbins was on Temporary Assistance for Needy Families for only 13 months. She attended Gordon Cooper Vo-Tech in Shawnee where she earned her CPR instructor license and took classes to become an EMT Basic. She is currently studying for her EMT intermediate national registry, as well as attending Seminole State College, where she has a 3.5 grade point average and is working toward becoming a registered nurse.

Despite her success, Robbins admits it is not always easy going to school and working while raising three children alone.

"There are mornings I have to tell myself I'm an adult," she said. "I'm responsible and I have to do it."

As for her future plans, Robbins has those all figured out.

"I want to eventually work with trauma in Oklahoma City with Med-flight or Air Evac," said Robbins. "And then maybe go back to school to become an anesthesiologist."

For all those social workers out there that have moments of frustration or times when they feel they're not making a difference, Robbins has a message.

"You do have people who try," she said. "Help them. If they want to make it, you'll be the one who helps them get there – there's no excuse for them not to."

SCC continued from page 5

of \$300,000 – a significant increase considering the tough economic times faced by all Oklahomans.

The SCC in central Oklahoma featured fierce competition among offices and divisions and sported a bevy of interesting division names, including teams such as OKDHS' Aging Services Division's The Raging Aging, the Finance Division's Money Crunchers, General Counsel's Legal Eagles and Human Resources Management Division's HR Mean Dogs. Others included the Office of Inspector General's Deputy Dawgs, the Executive Office's Howard's Ducks, Oklahoma County 55-C and Oklahoma County 55-E Buffalo Soldiers and Oklahoma County 55-F's Freaks of Nature.

Numerous offices and divisions sponsored special events designed to raise money, including a \$1 donation that allowed employees to wear jeans for the day, "Boo-grams" (candy or other goodies delivered for Halloween) and a special "Galudá" elegant luncheon by the Division of

Child Care.

On Jan. 20, Hendrick praised state employees' fund-raising efforts during a celebration honoring OKDHS SCC team leaders. He said he was proud of OKDHS employees surpassing the goal of \$300,000, especially with the challenges of unanticipated budget reversals and the lack of a legislatively mandated raise for state employees since October 2000.

"People are being as generous as they realistically can be with less employees and no real raise," Hendrick said. "Despite this, everyone has been generous. I really appreciate the innovative ways used to raise money."

Erin Gillogly Brewer, director of SCC, said she greatly enjoyed working with OKDHS and that the money raised for SCC would do much to help Oklahoma's charities.

"Thank you so much for your generous spirit," Gillogly Brewer said.

Awards

continued from page 9

Bronze winners included:

State of Oklahoma
Arts Council
OKDHS
State Board of Nursing
Department of
Rehabilitation Services
Oklahoma Horse Racing
Commission
Oklahoma Transportation
Authority
Oklahoma Centennial
Commission
University Hospital
Authority

Hendrick praised state employees for their outstanding contributions during the SCC.

"Your contributions make a huge statement about really caring for the people we work with," Hendrick said. "It makes me very proud to be an Oklahoman and a state employee."



The bustle of activity at Seminole County OKDHS Caught Working. Featured from top left and then clockwise are Seminole County OKDHS Janie Kenneda, Child Welfare specialist II; Jeranda Byerly, administrative assistant; Diane Chesser, social service specialist IV; LaDonna Sims, Child Welfare specialist IV; Linda Duncan, Child Welfare specialist IV; Loretta Dodd, switchboard operator and Peggy Ellwanger, customer service representative.

Inside OKDHS is published for employees and retirees of the Oklahoma Department of Human Services as a joint effort of the Office of Communications, the Publications Section and the Print Shop.

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OKDHS S04010

Issued 03/2004

Publication of Inside OKDHS is authorized by the Oklahoma Commission for Human Services in accordance with state and federal regulations and printed by the Oklahoma Department of Human Services at a cost of \$2,419.80 for 4,033 copies. Copies have been deposited with the Oklahoma Department of Libraries Publications Clearinghouse. Contents are not copyrighted and may be freely quoted unless otherwise noted.

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