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# Red Dirt Journal



Oklahoma Institute for Diversity in Journalism

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## reflecting for the future

The Chickasaw Nation has been working to ensure its traditions live on

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# Groups struggle with cultural labels

## Identity Is Only a Check-Box Away

JESYKA WARE  
Red Dirt Journal

Ethnicity affects everyone. The identity of one's self completes a person. Native Americans have been struggling with the task of preserving and expanding what's left of their culture.

Their search for roots includes those non-Native peoples who have joined them over the years — including many Americans of African heritage. But that is all part of the mission of the new \$40 million Chickasaw Cultural Center in Sulphur, Okla.

Just don't call it a museum.

"A museum is a place where you can look back at the past," explained Dr. Amanda Cobb-Greetham, the center's history director. "A cultural center is a place to fellowship with the present culture, and also learn about the past."

The center boasts an informational walk-through museum, theater, and replicas of traditional Chickasha houses. In the auditorium, native Chickasha dances are performed. Chickasha, pronounced chick-KAH-sha, is the original tribal name.

After demonstrating some of these dances, Jeremy Wallace spoke directly to the crowd. "It is very important that we learn our native tongue to expand our language. There are only about 75 out of 48,000 Chickasha people that can speak fluently."

It "all starts with the children," he said. Head Start programs are teaching the children to speak the native language through sports and games.

"The mission would be pointless if the children's families weren't involved. They have to have someone to go home and practice to, as well as constantly hear it. These programs are fully family based," said Cobb-Greetham.

While Native American groups like the Chickasaw are working to share their culture, many African Americans are trying to find theirs. One surprising fact, according to information displayed at the center, is that in the 1800s, the Five Civilized Tribes in Oklahoma had African slaves.

After the Civil War, the Cherokee, Creek, Seminole and many other tribes gave former slaves full citizenship in their nations.

African slaves were the messengers be-



photo by Huong Truong

**PRESERVING CULTURE:** The Chickasaw Cultural Center in Sulphur, Okla., preserves the tribe's culture.

tween the natives and the whites. They spoke English as well as learned the tongue of the tribes that enslaved them.

Slaves cared for native children, and most slave children only knew the Native American way of life. Meanwhile, Africans continued to suffer a loss of identity that began with slavery. They were brought to America and were separated from their families as well as their original people so they would not be able to communicate.

They were also forbidden to practice their original customs, and eventually forgot who they originally were. Native Americans intermarried with former slaves, creating a further-mixed background for future generations.

According to geneticist Mark Shriver of

Morehouse College, 60 percent of blacks in America have at least 12.5 percent of European blood, while 5 percent have Native American blood.

By the time of the 1990 U.S. Census, only 26.4 percent of Native Americans were same-race couples, while 70.6 percent of Native Americans had a white partner. Among white families, 95.9 percent of their children were identified as the same race as their parents. Among Native Americans, however, only 46 percent of children were labeled that way.

Technically, if Americans traced their ancestry back, almost everyone would have a mixed background. So, for example, what box do multi-racial Americans choose on the Census? Is there truly a box that would

accommodate all people's races accurately?

In the 2000 census, "Hispanic-Latino" became a language or ethnic designation, and no longer a racial identity. Hispanic Americans were asked to choose a race, such as Hispanic White, Hispanic Black, Hispanic Native American, etc.

Richard Hall, a Norman resident who'd always chosen the Hispanic box in previous years, was now able to choose another box as well. "My mother is fully Mexican and my father is white," Hall explained. "I'd never thought of myself to be anything but Mexican. When the census added the other box, it wasn't a big difference, just a more accurate option."

Hall said that, in previous years, "Hispanic was the most popularly used term." If America correctly had selections for everyone's true race, the pages could go on forever of the different combinations. "They have to stop somewhere. They would never have the correct options for everyone in the United States, unless there was a fill-in-the-blank box," said Hall.

Last year in Sacramento, Calif., questions about race on the 2010 U.S. Census form both offended and confused people in the Latino and African-American communities. The Census Bureau no longer considered Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish to be a race; and in the race option for African-Americans, the term "Negro" was added.

There is a growing number of multi-racial groups and designations in the U.S. "Blasian" is one newer term for people of black and Asian descent. Will we eventually see a box for that group on the census?

"It's just to get a general idea; they will never truly have a box to correctly fit each person," said Robbin Davis, Cowley College instructor of diversity. "It also depends on how far back does the person want to look in their ancestry - and how much they want to claim. For example: Say my mom is white and my dad is black and Mexican. If I classify myself as being black, that does not change the fact that I'm half white, and one fourth Mexican. It's up to the individual to choose the correct box. And who decides what's correct?"

So the question is, whose blood is this? Many people don't know that the Native American experience ties into the African American experience. There were many former slaves who walked the Trail of Tears with their previous slave owners, including the ancestors of today's Chickasaw Nation.

# Nation battles for survival of language

## Chickasaw Nation revives language despite challenges

TYLER BELL

Red Dirt Journal

About 38,000 Chickasaw live in America, but only 75 to 200 can speak their language fluently.

Dr. Amanda Cobb-Greetham, a Chickasaw Cultural Center administrator, said almost every tribe deals with this problem.

The environment that Chickasaw children grow up in makes it harder for them to learn their native language.

“English is just attractive,” said Mary Linn, professor of linguistic anthropology and curator of Native American languages at the Sam Noble Museum of Natural History in Norman

“The pop culture, the music, the movies: you cannot get away from it,” she said. “Little kids just want to fit in. We really are created to socialize, and that is all done in English. It is just really hard to get away from.”

Cobb-Greetham agreed, saying: “We have kids that are growing up in schools surrounded by all English things, like TV and the Internet. It is very difficult to learn a language that is not all around you.”

She said the Chickasaw language also is disappearing because of the gap between the generation who knows the language and the generation that wants to learn.

“Say you have the grandparents who speak fluently,” she said. “Well, there were so many years where assimilation policies were being pressed so hard on the Indians that many parents were worried about teaching their kids their native language. Then you have one generation who does not learn. These days you have the third generation who may want to learn the language but find it difficult because there is a huge age gap between the groups.”

However, the Chickasaw are creating ways to revitalize their native language.

“The true way that people learn a language is through speech,” Cobb-Greetham said. “Parents do not sit their 1-year-old kids down in front of books to teach them to talk, they speak to them. Oral languages lend themselves to be truly learned.”

To reverse this trend, the Chickasaw



photo by Tyler Bell

**DEFENDING:** Jeremy Wallace demonstrates how Chickasaw warriors would defend themselves from an attacker by using clubs.

Culture Center in Sulphur, Okla., has created a program to help teach the language to interested people. This will help to keep the language around for generations to come.

The goal is not just to preserve what the fluent speakers know but also to revitalize the language through the younger generations.

“I think there is a distinction between preservation and revitalization,” Cobb-Greetham said. “It is very easy to ‘preserve’ something, like through dictionaries or recordings. Keeping it maintained and ‘revitalized’ is a much harder task because language is constantly changing and evolving. So first there is trying to hang on to

what you have. Then there is the language having its own life.”

One step was to start a mentor program.

“The program pairs a fluent speaker, usually an elder, and a person who wants to learn the Chickasaw language,” said Valerie Walters, general manager of operations at the Chickasaw Cultural Center and a former apprentice. “They meet every day, or at least five times a week, for about two hours per day,” she said. “They just spend some time together and the elder tries to teach the language to their apprentice.”

Learning a second language can be daunting.

“Sometimes, when people are introduced to the language, they become scared. Just

like any language you learn, you have to continue speaking it,” Walters said. “It is difficult to continue when there are not that many people that you can have a conversation with.”

Walters was among the first to go through the program and said it has found great success in teaching apprentices their native language.

“I think in a few more years the overall success of the program will be amazing,” she said.

Building off the success of the mentor program, the Chickasaw are hoping the technology that helped make their language almost disappear will now help keep it alive.

“We are coming out with a Chickasaw language iPhone app,” Cobb said. “We have all of the different words, phrases, conversations and Chickasaw hymns and songs. All you do is touch it and you hear it. It will probably be coming out in July.”

Cobb said the app will be free because the goal is for people to learn the language.

In October, the cultural center will publish a cookbook of traditional Chickasaw cuisine.

“It is an amazing project,” Walters said. “It will be coming out at our annual meeting and festival. It is broken up into categories like wild game and bread along with other things we make as well.”

“The book is not only a cookbook but a history book. It has beautiful photos of food and older dishes [cookware] that were used. There is [Chickasaw] language throughout the book. We will probably add poems as well.”

Things such as the cookbook will help the Chickasaw carry on their cultural identity even if the language were to disappear.

“We certainly can carry on cultural traditions and have identity if you don’t speak your native language,” Linn said. “Who are we to have to tell a young person from a tribe, who no longer has any [fluent language speakers], that they aren’t fully as much of a tribal member, because they didn’t have access to the language? They identify strongly as that tribal person and there are cultural traditions that get passed on.”

“However, we do know that over time, those traditions are going to become less and less secure in that culture. They may take on more forms that are more related to the English world than the native world.”

# Chickasaws address health issues

## Dancing, stickball, and nutrition could save a nation

LEAH BURGER

Red Dirt Journal

Jeremy Wallace dances.

He does this Tuesdays through Fridays from 11 to 11:30 a.m. as part of a demonstration at the Chickasaw Cultural Center in Sulphur, Okla.

He's usually on the run from morning to night, also showing visitors how to play stickball, make and use bows - and "teaching my son how to do all those things." He says that Chickasaws used to dance from dusk to dawn, and still do on occasion. They also hunt and garden.

Besides helping to keep his culture alive, Wallace may also be bettering his own chances of healthy survival.

Americans of all ethnicities increasingly wrestle with obesity-related health issues attributed to diet and exercise - and Native Americans are not immune.

Diabetes, a growing health problem in the United States, "runs rampant" among American Indians, said Dana Lance, media relations supervisor for the Chickasaw Nation. Dr. Amanda Cobb-Greetham, Administrator of the Division of History and Culture for the Chickasaw Nation, says this is because refined flour and sugar did not belong in the Indian diet when the Spaniards started trading with them during colonial times.

"The Chickasaw were an agricultural people: Planting crops, fishing, hunting deer. They stayed [in one place] for a long time," she said. Later, after they were forcibly removed westward in the 1830s, their only food source was government commodity items - which might have contributed to diabetes. "When your system isn't used to something, it has a tendency to mess you up," said Cobb-Greetham.

In addition to diet, lifestyle changes, such as a shift away from physical labor, contributed to the problem, she said.

There is only "so long before that affects how the body works when you aren't used to it," she said. People who do physical labor for everything they have - from hunting for meat to planting and taking care of crops - have a tendency to be more fit than



photo by Tyler Bell

**CHICKASAW DANCE:** Jeremy Wallace leads a traditional Chickasaw dance.

people who get into a car, drive to the store, buy meat and vegetables, get back into the car and drive home, and sit in an office all day.

In fact, medical experts say that full-blooded Native Americans are at higher risk for diabetes-related death than those of mixed heritage.

However, the American Indian heritage is an inclusive one. A lot of people have some type of Indian in their heritage, if not more than one type. Any amount raises your chances of getting diabetes.

The percentage of people finding out that they have diabetes has grown substantially in the last 20 years. The number of people who die of diabetes-related issues has also gone up. "You don't want nobody to lose their life," Wallace said.

Historically, American Indians have also struggled with European-introduced infec-

tions.

Some historians suggest that, during the French and Indian War, some European nations pulled a Trojan Horse. They most likely knew that smallpox would kill at least a quarter of the native population. The people giving them presented the blankets as gifts.

Jeffrey Amherst, British commander-in-chief of North America at the time, wrote in a letter to Col. Henry Bouquet, "You will do well to try to inoculate the Indians, by means of blankets, as well as to try every other method that can serve to extirpate this execrable race."

The colonel replied that he would do so; and some historians think this actually happened in 1763. Others, however, believe that British colonists accidentally shared the smallpox-infested blankets purely out of goodwill, possibly not even

knowing that they were infected.

Today, Native Americans face a rate of heart disease 20 percent higher than any other race in the country. Along with Alaska natives, they are third-highest in the nation in new HIV infections. They also struggle with kidney and renal cancer.

Native Americans hear the same advice as everyone else: Choose a healthy diet, get plenty of exercise, drink plenty of water.

For his part, Wallace augments his substantial physical activity with some traditional dietary approaches.

If Wallace knows he is going to play stickball the next day, he doesn't drink soda or eat fast food. Instead, he drinks plenty of water and goes to bed early.

And he prays. The next morning, he prays again, eats lots of fruits and vegetables, drinks more water - and then plays. And he dances.

# AACHOMPA'N at the AAIMPA

## Restaurant turns to Chickasaw traditions, history for inspiration

THADDEUS TAYLOR  
Red Dirt Journal

Aachompa' /- (ah chom pah), “a place to buy things”

Aaimpa' /- (eye IMP uh), “a place to eat”

Indian tacos stand out as the most popular dish at the Aaimpa, a restaurant in the Chickasaw Cultural Center, located outside of Sulphur, Okla. Aaimpa literally means, “a place to eat” in Chickasaw.

At this restaurant the food is made fresh daily, from recipes collected by tribal members, said café manager Tomi-Anne Grisham. The restaurant's goal is to use as many organic and locally grown ingredients as possible.

“Every item is made from scratch, except for the bread for the sandwiches,” she said. “Everything else is sliced fresh, even the produce. The only thing that is frozen is the sweet potato fries, corn and chicken strips, and that is just because they cook better that way.”

A tribal farm in nearby Ada supplies some of the organic produce.

“The Chickasaw Farms have been providing us with a lot of lettuce, and sometimes cucumbers,” Grisham said. “Soon, we are going to receive squash, tomatoes, foods that are incorporated into the Chickasaw culture.”

Aaimpa opens for lunch at 10:30 a.m. daily, but the day begins much earlier for the restaurant cooks.

“We have someone get here at 7 o' clock in the morning to start the pashofa, grape dumpling dough, and fry bread because all that has to rise,” Grisham said. “The things that we make fresh every day are things we cannot save. So, at the end of the day, we toss them.”

The menu includes several dozen items.

A favorite is the Chickasaw Special, which costs \$6. This plate included an Indian taco, pashofa and grape dumplings on the day a group of high school students from the Oklahoma Institute for Diversity in Journalism visited the restaurant.

Pashofa is a traditional corn-based stew.



photo provided

**NATIVE NOURISHMENT:** Aaimpa restaurant at the Chickasaw Cultural Center near Sulphur, Okla., offers visitors native dishes like Indian Tacos.

It is rooted deeply into Chickasaw history in the southeastern U.S., before the tribe was forced to relocate to Oklahoma in 1840, said Robert L. Owen, former Oklahoma state senator. Before removal, Chickasaws cultivated corn, beans and squash on farmland in Mississippi, Alabama and Tennessee.

Grisham said pashofa is made of equal parts hominy and pork that is simmered in water for several hours. Hominy is made from dried corn kernels that have been soaked with alkali, which kills the seed germ or the green leaves that come out of the bottom of the corn kernels. Pashofa is flavored with the fat from the pork and salt.

On the other hand, the Indian taco is a modern-day favorite. Fry bread provides the foundation for a filling of beef, beans, onions, lettuce and cheese.

Although fry bread is a food associated with many Native American tribes, its origins date from interaction with the U.S. government that forced Indian people onto reservations and provided them with commodities that included wheat flour and

lard, said Chickasaw historian Richard Green.

Wheat flour had been absent from the diets of most American Indians before this time. Their staple grain beforehand had been corn.

“My favorite dish is the Indian taco,” Grisham admitted. “But when you eat an Indian taco, you need a nap and I have to work the rest of the day. So, I don’t eat a lot of Indian tacos.”

Customers frequently order the dish, but not always by the same name.

“A lot of people come in and ask for the Navajo taco,” Grisham said. “We don’t have Navajo tacos, but Navajo and Indian tacos are the same thing.”

They were a hit with the high school students.

“The Indian tacos were flavorful,” said Tyler Bell, of Bartlesville High School. “The bread is what really brought it all together. It may have been fried, but it was delicious.”

Another classic, grape dumplings, is of Seminole descent. Grisham said they were inspired by the prevalence of possum

grapes, a pea-sized fruit that grows wild throughout Oklahoma.

The cooking process for grape dumplings is very simple. Essentially, the dumplings consist of leavened dough made from flour and water. When this dough has risen for a short time, the next step is to let the dough simmer in grape juice.

Grisham said the juice from other grape varieties is used at Aaimpa, not just possum grapes.

Although this dish has a sweet taste like a dessert, it is served as a side dish.

She also recommends trying other items on the menu.

“I really like the Rock Creek sandwich,” Grisham said. “It has a different twist to it, the honey dijon mustard, the coleslaw, and the ham. It has something different, as far as your regular sandwich goes.”

Aaimpa is open from 10:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Tuesday through Friday, 10:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, and noon to 3 p.m. on Sunday. The cultural center is closed on Mondays. The address is 867 Charles Cooper Memorial Road, Sulphur, OK 73086. The phone number is (580) 622-7130.

# Asian students embrace new media

## South Asians visit Norman to learn technology, culture

**HUONG TRUONG**

Red Dirt Journal

Twenty students from south Asia visited the University of Oklahoma toward the end of May and into June to experience and learn more about new media and leadership at the Gaylord College of Journalism and Mass Communication.

They are part of a U.S. State Department grant program, Study of the United States Institutes for Student Leaders. The Institute's mission is to educate the students about new media and how new media is useful for both journalists and private citizens in their native societies.

The students came from Nepal, India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, and were selected from different universities to be in a five-week New Media Institute program at the Gaylord College.

Not all of the students are seeking a career in journalism, and not all are studying about it at their home universities. But skills they learned in the program will benefit them as citizens in their technologically developing societies.

The workshop taught students about newsgathering, reporting and production of multimedia presentations as well as social media skills such as making and administering a Facebook page and creating their own blogs.

Traveling from half way across the world, the students hope to learn more about new media and leadership while experiencing and learning more about American culture.

The group traveled to several parts of Oklahoma to learn more about the cultures and landmarks of the state. These trips included the Chickasaw Cultural Center, the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum, the Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History, and the Paseo Arts Festival. They also visited the State Capitol where students were given a special tour of the capitol building.

"Now I can see it face to face and learn more instead of just reading it in textbooks. They explain it very good, like every single thing exactly the way it is," said Umme Mahbuba, one of the tour participants.



photo by Huong Truong

**CAPITOL TOUR:** Students who participated in the Oklahoma State Capitol tour listen to a program mentor while in the Capitol rotunda.

Mahbuba is a student from Chittagong, Bangladesh, studying politics, philosophy and economics at the Asian University for Women.

"It was very enlightening for me to find the meaning to the Oklahoma symbol. It was good to learn more about Oklahoma," said Shehreen Khan, another tour participant and a student at the University of Dhaka in Bangladesh.

The students also visited and helped with community services around the area, including the Full Circle Adult Day Care Center in Norman. "It was an awesome experience. I just saw them as my granies," said Sowmiya Purusothamakuru, a student from Sri Lanka, about some of the people they visited with.

Students also experienced cultural activ-

ities such as movies, a musical concert and horseback riding.

"I love horseback riding. It was my first time! It was amazing! After that, the new food and culture - it was just all the flavors of the world," said Amir Joc from Dhulikhel, Nepal.

Online classes were streamed live from the Gaylord College so that others could learn as well. The classes taught students more about, among other things, new media, communications, leadership, and how the U.S. government interacts with journalists. The institute analyzes major issues in journalism, including First Amendment rights, the free press, and the relationship between the media and public.

The students examine many elements of journalism, including researching, writing,

editing and reporting. Students also work with new technologies and learn how to edit photos and videos online. They learned how to use social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter to help them with journalism efforts and blogging.

"Every class is favorite to me because every class we get to know different new things, especially working with the iPads and leadership classes," said Purusothamakuru.

Although there was much for them to adjust to in America, many of the students would love to come back for school or just to visit once again.

"I would come back to OU and every place. I would love to go back to the Oklahoma Memorial. It was so peaceful and serene," said Khan.

# Black is beautiful, no matter the shade

## African-Americans confront attitudes about skin tone

ARTRA RICE

Red Dirt Journal

Chasity Asberry believes “light skin is better than dark skin.”

The 16-year-old African-American isn’t alone in that belief. Research shows that whites and blacks perceive African-Americans with darker skin tone more negatively than those with lighter skin.

A documentary scheduled to be released this fall confronts such opinions.

In “Dark Girls,” African-American women with darker complexions discuss being uncomfortable with their skin tone and explain how it affects their daily lives.

“It takes one person to say ‘you are so beautiful, but you are so dark’ to change your esteem,” said Margaret R. Jamison, the film’s publicist.

“This issue cuts across the country, touching a large number of African-Americans,” she said.

Jamison said open dialogue is needed to solve and eradicate these issues.

Asberry said boys think she is easy to get into bed simply because of her lighter complexion.

“But they got me mixed up because I don’t get down like that,” added the junior at Webster Broadcasting and Digital Media Magnet in Tulsa, Okla.

A recent graduate of Webster says he prefers “light skinned girls because they attract me more, and most of my friends like light skinned girls.”

Keenon Ellis, 18, believes lighter women have prettier hair and better features.

An Oklahoma City Community College professor said that attitude “is more prevalent than it should be our culture.”

“Slave owners would have relations with the slaves and have mixed children,” said Carlotta Hill. “Children of the master got extra privileges and were house slaves instead of field slaves. Long after the days of slavery, we still have issues streaming from slave masters.

“We’re headed in the right direction,” Hill said. “We have to learn to accept ourselves, change society’s standard of beauty, and realize beauty is from within.”



**SKIN TONE:** Whites and blacks perceive African-Americans with darker skin tone more negatively than those with lighter skin. Efforts are under way to change those biases.

photo provided

# Society struggles with large waist size

## Oklahoma teens struggle with body image, acceptance

EMMA WEAVER  
Red Dirt Journal

Amy Ruemping is happy, proud and fat. “I went through a dark time with my weight,” said the 19-year-old Cameron University art student. “I was miserable. I finally got tired of wasting my time on being embarrassed about my body and decided to embrace it.”

At 5 feet 1 inch and 260 pounds, Ruemping is overweight but not alone. More than 31 percent of Oklahomans are obese, according to a 2009 survey by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Though Ruemping struggled with bullying when she was younger, she now finds comfort in a community of bloggers that works to promote a size-friendly outlook on life.

Oklahomans such as Ruemping can find comfort in other ways as well. Organizations such as the National Association to Advance Fat Acceptance work to end size discrimination across the country.

“Discrimination against people of size is unjust,” said Peggy Howell, NAAFA public relations director. “Fat citizens of the United States are just that, citizens of the United States, and as such entitled to equal rights under our constitution.”

Howell said she has struggled with size discrimination.

“I volunteer my time to NAAFA because I was told I had to lose weight or lose my job as a student counselor and school librarian, neither of which require any special physical” attributes,” she said.

But it isn’t just the obese who struggle with their body images. Some people -- typically young women -- feel that being pretty means being dangerously thin.

“There were a lot of issues with my family and love life that hindered my self-worth,” said 19-year-old Caitlin Bear of Lawton, Okla. “I thought if I could change myself, it would fix everything. I figured my imperfections were the problem.”

At age 14, Bear was diagnosed with anorexia.

“When I looked at everyone around me, the people who were happy were thin and



Photo provided by Amy Ruemping

**PRIDE:** The 19-year-old college art student shows off her ‘I’m fat, let’s party’ shirt. Amy Ruemping says the shirt lets people know she accepts her weight.

5 foot 5,” she said. “It didn’t help that the media portrays perfect and happy as being super-model skinny.”

Bear, Ruemping and Howell agree that the media have nearly made being overweight socially unacceptable. Cameron Carter, 23, an advertising graduate of the University of Oklahoma, agreed.

“Inevitably, people will look at advertising and try and emulate the women in the ads,” said Carter, who is now a designer/product developer for RAZ Imports Inc. in Dallas.

But Carter believes there may be a slight shift in the media. She said Dove’s 2004 Campaign for Real Beauty spurred the use of realistic models and images.

“It brought to people’s attention that the

average woman is normal and that’s OK,” she said. “I don’t think the media will ever completely change, but there is and will continue to be some progression.”

Ruemping learned to accept her weight and wishes others could do the same.

“I saw pictures of this shirt floating around on Tumblr and I had to buy it,” Ruemping said. “It says, ‘I’m fat, let’s party.’ People don’t know how to react when I wear it because I’m pointing out something that society likes to ignore.”

Bear said she wishes a weight acceptance program had been at her high school. She believes that such a program would provide the support and courage needed for students to lose weight in a positive way instead of having their weight fluctuate

drastically as hers did.

“I hated for anyone to touch me because they might notice my imperfections,” she said. “Food was the enemy and hunger pains made me feel like I was accomplishing something. I felt ugly, fat and worthless.”

Ruemping understands how Bear feels this pressure from society. To Ruemping, nearly everyone struggles with body image at one time or another.

“I don’t think I’ve met a teenager yet that was proud of her body,” she said. “If someone, even a skinny person, dislikes their body, they are most likely to take it out on someone who may be bigger, whether or not that person’s body and weight is their choice.”

# Student atheists face unequal treatment

## Club members say they were barred from posting fliers

SARAH GEESLIN  
Red Dirt Journal

A Norman High School graduate who had formed a student club for atheists said the principal last year prohibited him and other members from posting fliers and participating in morning announcements.

But the Christians on Campus club was allowed those privileges, said the former student and Josh Flores, the teacher who sponsored the club.

Flores said the discrimination will keep the atheistic students “closeted like me, afraid to share what they think and their philosophies.”

Principal Lynne Chesley did not respond to two telephone messages left at her office and an email requesting an interview regarding the allegations.

Experts say such restrictions would violate the students’ First Amendment rights and a 1984 federal statute intended to prevent unequal treatment or discrimination among non-curricular student clubs in public secondary schools.

But the obstacles in Norman were mild compared with what students and teachers elsewhere have faced when organizing such a club, said the spokesman for a national organization for student atheists.

“We run into these problems depressing-ly often,” said Jesse Galef, communications director for the Secular Student Alliance. “It’s extremely common for administrations to drag their feet on allowing Secular Student Alliance clubs to form or flat out refuse to give secular students equal treatment.”

“Not only is it a violation of the law, but it’s a signal that society still harbors fears and misconceptions of their non-theistic friends, peers, and members of the community,” he said. “Denying secular students the equal treatment they deserve sends the strong message that they’re not a welcome part of the community.”

Some Oklahoma students have given up forming such clubs after being discouraged by teachers and school administrators, Galef said.

The nonprofit has 262 chapters nation-



photo by Sarah Geeslin

**ETHAN YATES:** The recent graduate of Norman High School says administrators barred his student club for atheists from posting fliers and making morning announcements.

wide, including ones at Booker T. Washington High School in Tulsa, Oklahoma State University, the University of Oklahoma, and University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma.

Norman High students began organizing a chapter two years ago. The primary organizer was Ethan Yates, who graduated in May.

Yates said the purpose wasn’t to combat the Christians on Campus club but to provide an alternative for students.

“I felt that freethinkers, nonreligious students and non-Christians needed a forum and a support structure,” said Yates.

“I felt that atheists and freethinkers were a minority that was often invisible and ignored, and that it would be beneficial for us to have an activist organization,” he said.

Galef agreed, saying: “The need for community is a human need, not a religious need. Students of all backgrounds want a place where they feel welcome and accepted as who they are.

“Just as Bible studies meet to discuss their values, secular students meet to discuss and explore what it means to be a good person,” he said.

Yates emphasized that the club was “not an aggressive atheist organization, and though Christians everywhere don’t believe it when I say it, it was never our intention to convert anyone to godlessness.”

Yates and Flores said school administrators tore down the club’s posters and barred the members from posting on bulletin boards designated for student groups.

Flores said Chesley told him that the club could not advertise.

“The students were very frustrated because every single day it felt like they were hearing announcements for other clubs on campus like the Christians on Campus,” Flores said.

Flores stressed that the club was student-led.

“If they really believe in it, they need to do the work to keep it up and alive,” he

said. “And really, teachers are supposed to stay out of it in the first place.”

Flores left Norman High to become the literacy curriculum coordinator for the K20 Center at the University of Oklahoma.

Chesley retires this summer after 40 years as a teacher and school administrator. She became the Norman High principal in 2000. She was named the Secondary Principal of the Year by the Oklahoma Association of Secondary School Principals in 2007.

Her replacement at Norman High has not been selected.

School staff said Chesley was meeting with vice principals when a reporter first called for an interview about the allegations by Yates and Flores.

A staff member said she was in her office with the door closed the second time the reporter called.

The Secular Student Alliance club disbanded when its faculty sponsor, Flores, left the school, said Yates.

Yates said he is an atheist. “I stopped believing in God a long time ago,” said the 18-year-old.

Flores said he was raised as a Catholic but has become what a friend calls a “closet atheist.”

“I don’t have season tickets. I just go to the bowl games,” he said. “I go to the Easter masses and the Christmas masses. But it’s really just for my parents’ sake.”

Flores, 28, said he learned about other religious philosophies as a student at Bishop McGuinness Catholic High School in Oklahoma City.

“We had a really great teacher that everybody loved, who flat-out asked us, ‘Why do you believe what you believe?’ That was really a question no one had ever asked us,” Flores said. “We were Catholic because our parents were Catholic. So that really opened a lot of eyes.”

Flores said that after having had that experience in high school, he had trouble relating to a school in which his students felt too intimidated to express their beliefs.

“Their feelings were real,” Flores said. “They were scared to share their beliefs.”

Flores said the public should care that Yates and the other members of the Secular Student Alliance were treated unfairly.

“If people want to promote equality, freethinking and student-centered education, then they should be concerned,” he said.

“We should be raising kids how to think, not what to think.”

# Cutting art programs affects youth

## Cuts hinder youth's ability to prosper after high school

SEQUOYAH MOORE

Red Dirt Journal

University of Oklahoma studio art major Alicia Smith has a passion for art. But when Smith attended Washington, Okla., High School, she said her artistic ability was inhibited instead of developed.

"My art teacher was a coach," Smith said. "He didn't teach technique. He didn't teach anything."

In the current economic atmosphere, many Oklahoma schools have had to downgrade because of budget cuts and terminate programs, often music and art.

This past fiscal year, the Oklahoma City school board cut \$16.8 million from education, which forced the district to furlough teachers, lay off principals and enlarge class sizes.

Not only did this happen in Oklahoma City, but also across the state and the nation.

Art is not recognized as a class subject in standardized testing authorized by the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act and also the No Child Left Behind act. Yet many consider it an important component of education.

With increased pressure to raise test scores and maintain federal funding, many teachers believe that students need to spend more time studying "necessary" life skills, like reading and math.

According to a 2007 report by the Center of Education on Policy, 44 percent of school districts nationally reported cutting back on art, music and other non-testable subjects. Schools eliminated these artistic subjects in fear of missing the test score targets and losing federal funds.

"If students haven't really had training, they're at a disadvantage," said Susie Broach, coordinator of undergraduate programs for the Weitzenhoffer Family College of Fine Arts at the University of Oklahoma.

"They will not have had the exposure, which is really critical in order to be prepared for (college) auditions and for the college acceptance process," Broach said.

Broach said she believes the arts do so



photo by Sequoyah Moore

**CAST INTO ART:** While smoothing the edges of a cast iron skull in Beginning Casting within the University of Oklahoma's School of Art, studio art major Alicia Smith tells about her personal experiences with art in high school. Over the buzzing of her hand-tool, Smith explained that along with budget cuts comes teens loss of interest in the arts.

much more for youth than just expand creativity.

"The arts build commitment, social skills, relationships and community," she said. "They're seen as frivolous, but they build a lot of other skills and teach responsibility."

In the eyes of some politicians, the arts are perceived as purposeless. In May, California Rep. Duncan Hunter called for the termination of 43 K-12 education and art programs that were deemed unnecessary. Hunter called the programs "fat" and "wasteful."

This viewpoint may be as wrong as the stereotype of the penniless artist. As of 2010, the nonprofit arts and culture in the state of Oklahoma have had a \$314.8 million impact on the economy, as found in a

recent study conducted by the Oklahoma Arts Council in affiliation with Americans for the Arts.

They have also been found to have an impact on inspiring youth to succeed in the classroom, developing communities and cultural centers, creating jobs and conveying the culture of individuals to others.

In previous years, the Oklahoma Arts Council has funded art programs within the state's art organizations, communities and schools; however, for fiscal year 2012 the agency's budget has been cut 9 percent.

The executive director of the Oklahoma Arts Council, Suzanne Tate, said on the agency's website that the cuts were disappointing and that she hopes the legislature and governor will consider art's role in

Oklahoma.

"When you scale back on the arts in grade school, junior high and high school, one of the biggest things compromised is the opportunity for kids to use their imagination," said Rich Taylor, dean of OU's Weitzenhoffer Family College of Fine Arts.

Taylor, himself a graduate of OU and a former vice president of entertainment for The Walt Disney Company, said he believes arts are important in all majors and careers.

"I think creativity and curiosity are not enabled if you do away with arts programs," he said. "Whether you're an engineer or a scientist, you have to be able to think outside the box and be creative. OU's President David Boren once said, 'The arts feed the soul.' If you don't have programs in schools where students are allowed to be creative and adventuresome, great new ideas won't happen."

Professors at the university as well as the dean feel that without the arts, the world would suffer.

"Those guys upstairs (in corporations) that are pushing pens and paper around and looking at budgets will suddenly realize that they don't have many people who have a lot of ideas (when arts education is gone)," said Bernard Roddy, associate professor of media at OU. "They'll realize they need somebody who is out of their minds and say, 'We need an artist.'"

Ultimately, local school districts within the state, not federal officials, make decisions about the contents of curriculum within individual schools.

Some schools, for example Linwood Elementary School in Oklahoma City, use what is known as an integrated arts curriculum. Since 2002, this curriculum, which combines art, music and creativity with essential PASS (Priority Academic Student Skills) skills, has prevailed for the students and staff of this school.

Approaches like that of Linwood Elementary School are rare. In today's society, it is much more common for art programs to lose funding or be cut completely.

For students like studio art major Smith, high school art programs nearly dictate the future of their artistic endeavors. When budget cuts stand between youth and their ability to place their emotions on a canvas, interest tends to fade away, she said.

"Pablo Picasso said that all children are born artists. The problem is to remain an artist as we grow up."

# High tech solutions come to the rescue

## Technology crucial to success as sizes of classrooms grow

CANDACE HINNERGARDT  
Red Dirt Journal

Norman math teacher Bobby Howard had at least 30 students in every class period at the beginning of the 2010 school year. Even though the class size trickled down to 28, it was still too much.

Howard thinks the optimum class size would be 24 students. The teacher said he needs 20 in a class so there are enough students to do group work. But having 28 students in a class is too many to manage, he said.

"Twenty-four, you can get a lot done," Howard said. "It's efficient."

To make teaching his classes easier, Howard uses technology like Interwrite boards, clickers and a device called a Moby.

Interwrite boards are like electronic whiteboards. Clickers look like remote controls that allow students to answer a multiple-choice question displayed on the board.

After all students are done answering a question, the correct answer pops up on the screen. A Moby is an electronic pad that is written on and whatever is written appears on the Interwrite board.

With this technology, Howard saves time from grading papers and gets instant feedback from his students on their understanding of the material.

Proponents say this type of technology connects with the students more than the passive methods such as textbooks.

"With the Moby, I can stand anywhere I want in the room, and anytime I'm standing near students, they tend to pay more attention," Howard said. "They stop doing whatever shenanigans they're doing at the time."

Teachers like Howard are finding themselves swamped with students after recent budget cuts. This led to the elimination of teachers and increases in class sizes, and now technology is coming to the rescue, making the process of teaching the students quicker, easier and more relevant.

For example, a teacher can project the question, "What is seven plus three?" onto the Interwrite board with possible answer choices like (a) 11, (b) 10, (c) 16 or (d) 4. Us-



photo by Candace Hinnergardt

**SELF ESTEEM:** Working together on assignments, the students are learning life skills as well as the material required by the state. According to the government, using technology in the classroom can boost self esteem and teach students to cooperate with their peers.

ing the clickers the students choose what they believe to be the answer. Once all students have answered, the computer projects the correct answer and the percentage of students who got it right onto the board along with other statistics.

"I think that's better than the traditional (printed) study guide because even if you check your answer the teacher might not know where the class is at (with the guide)," said Hayden Demerson, 2011 Duncan, Okla., High School graduate.

Howard said the technology is helpful and fun to have in class. It keeps the students interested, but even that cannot surpass the quality of more teachers and individual attention.

"The No. 1 factor (to successfully educate a student) is the amount of one-on-one

interaction between the student and the teacher," said Lawrence Baines, chairman of the Instructional Leadership and Academic Curriculum English Education Department at the University of Oklahoma.

Baines said technology cannot replace the one-on-one teacher-student experience.

On the other hand, some students who are thoroughly acquainted with technology believe that some uses of technology in the schools is necessary for their success in the future.

"They're going to be the next generation of doctors and if they don't have the technology to learn then they won't be as successful as they could be," said Ashley Bredy, 2011 Mountain View-Gotebo, Okla., High School graduate.

Whether it's advantageous or not, tech-

nology is here to stay with larger class sizes.

Math teacher Howard said using technology in the classroom would eventually be more cost-efficient.

"The simplest solution (to class sizes) is having more teachers," Howard said. "The reason there is a large class size is not because there's a shortage of teachers, there's a shortage of funding to have enough teachers. That's the simplest solution, but it's an economic solution."

Even with the option to incorporate technology into the class, Howard said, teachers would still prefer another teacher over a few technological bells and whistles.

"If you ask teachers, they would rather have another teacher than anything. They would always go with another teacher."

# Historic tornado season explained



**TWISTER DAMAGE:**  
Damage in Oklahoma caused by a tornado on May 5, 2010.

photo by Mike Coniglio

## No trend known for tornado spike that has killed 525

**J. OMAR SALAS**  
Red Dirt Journal

Tornadoes have killed more than 500 people so far this year compared to 45 deaths in 2010, according to the National Weather Center based in Norman.

In addition, the number of killer tornadoes has more than doubled from last year. "We have been in a very active year full of very unusual circumstances," said Greg Carbin, warning coordination meteorologist at the NOAA Storm Prediction Center.

An average of 1,200 tornadoes are reported each year in the United States. Most are weak and cause minor damage, but a small

percentage can actually be fatal.

But on April 27, a string of 30 tornadoes ripped through the South and killed 317 people. The outbreak was the most devastating tornado outbreak since April 1974, when 315 deaths were recorded.

Less than a month later, on May 22 of this year, a massive single tornado killed 141 people in Joplin, Mo., becoming the eighth deadliest tornado in U.S. history.

On June 1, another tornado took three lives in Springfield, Mass., a state that has rare tornadic activity.

This raises the questions of whether tornadic activity will keep increasing and whether climate change has something to do with this.

"There is no evidence that the amount of tornadoes are changing in frequency," said Harold Brooks, research meteorologist at the National Severe Storm Laboratory.

Similarly, Carbin said it's difficult to determine trends for storms because condi-

tions can vary so much from year to year.

"We expect tornadoes during the months of April and May and some years are busier than others," he said. "But there is no discernable trend in the number of tornadoes that we are aware of."

However, there is a trend in the way tornadoes are reported. People can record them from their smartphones or cameras and send the videos to the National Weather Center or local meteorologists.

Technology also allows scientists to keep better records and reports on tornadoes.

"The farther you go to the past, the less likely a tornado would actually get reported and made part of an official record," Carbin said.

According to Carbin, the influence of climate change on tornadic activity is unknown because climate change is a large-scale feature in the global atmosphere, whereas a tornado is extremely small scale in comparison.

But Brooks was more definite, saying, "Climate change is not a significant factor."

Tornadoes are rated by the Enhanced Fujita scale ranging from EF-0 (winds less than 100 mph) to EF-5 (winds over 200 mph). This scale is based on estimated wind speed as calculated by damage.

"There could be an EF-5 tornado going into wheat fields and it doesn't damage anything other than wheat," Carbin said. "You cannot rate a tornado that high because you don't have a structure in the way to produce the damage necessary to produce that rating."

Brooks said the deadliest tornado in U.S. history was the Tri-State tornado that hit Missouri, Indiana, and Illinois in 1925, which killed 695 persons.

"It is possible that a similar tornado could occur but it is unlikely to produce a large toll of deaths," Brooks said. "There is advance tornado warning and people are prepared better on how to act."



photo provided by American Red Cross Heart of Oklahoma Chapter

#### PIZZA DELIVERY:

A tornado relief volunteer in Blanchard holds a pizza donated by Rodney's Pizza. A number of individuals and small businesses donated assistance to victims and volunteers following the May 24 tornado outbreak.

# Compassionate Oklahomans aid In relief

## Oklahomans react to recent storms with compassion

**ANTONIA BELINDO**

Red Dirt Journal

An Oklahoma tornado outbreak on May 24 that killed 11 people and damaged numerous homes and buildings produced a familiar reaction: Neighbors pitching in to help others in need.

"Oklahomans know what it's like to go through a disaster and have developed a natural response," said Rusty Surette, communications director for the American Red Cross of Central Oklahoma.

Organizations such as the Salvation Army, American Red Cross, county offices, churches and other community groups have reached out to tornado victims.

They've organized fundraisers, served meals, gathered clothing and furniture donations, helped with tree removal, and began medical assistance for physical and psychiatric wounds.

Kenneth Bentley, emergency services director for the American Red Cross's Heart of Oklahoma chapter in Norman, said his chapter's volunteers distributed more than 36,000 snacks and about 15,000 meals. They also gave out 652 kits of hygiene products and 22,000 shovels, gloves and other clean-up items.

Surette said the Oklahoma tornadoes caught national attention, which sparked an outpouring of help from states including

Texas, Washington and Wisconsin.

Bentley said local tornado relief efforts often begin before the storms arrive.

When the National Weather Service predicts significant storms in the area, local government officials and volunteer organizations begin preparing their volunteers, mapping out roads that are in the tornado's predicted path, stocking meal trucks, and building up bulk distributions of shovels, rakes and work gloves for clean up.

"After it hit, we had emergency response crews on the ground," said Jerry Smith, Emergency Management Director of Canadian County.

Smith said 130 homes were destroyed and 100 more damaged just within Canadian County.

Many people want to help victims after disaster strikes, but Red Cross officials

prefer people not show up and put themselves in danger without consent from an emergency response organization.

Bentley said people who want to help should call their local Red Cross chapter first. Volunteers sign a formal agreement and go through training to be of greater help.

"It is a good problem to have so many people wanting to help," Surette said. "The problem is that there are rules, protocols, and policies because we are dealing with people's personal lives."

As a former television news reporter, Surette has seen how tragic the damage of a tornado can be, which is why he became involved with the Red Cross.

"Seeing damage on television or pictures does it no justice," he said. "Even seeing it yourself - it's surreal."



photo by Lillie Roney

**BOB DAVIS:**

Little River Marina owner Bob Davis gestures toward two sailboats that survived the May 10, 2010, tornado that demolished the marina.

# Marina recovers after EF-4 tornado

## Little River Marina recovers after direct tornado hit

**LILLIE RONEY**

Red Dirt Journal

Twenty years of memories were swept away in two minutes.

Bob Davis, owner of the Little River Marina on Lake Thunderbird, was in shock as he observed the destruction the EF-4 tornado left behind only one year ago.

"It was 20 years of my life and all of our investments piled up in the middle of the lake," Davis said, recalling May 10, 2010.

The tornado that demolished the marina's 250 boats, store and dock was one of 35 twisters that formed in May 2010, the second largest outbreak of tornados in a single month since May 1999, according to

the National Weather Service.

Davis said a new store and bathrooms are still under construction and are expected to be completed around July 4.

The tornado was on the ground for 27 minutes, which National Weather Service data states is not unusual, but is a little above average.

But the tornado was swift, traveling at 55 miles per hour or so whereas the average speed is 30, said Rick Smith, warning coordination meteorologist at the National Weather Service's Norman Forecast Office.

"It was not your typical severe weather day," Smith said.

Thinking about the tornado and all the damage and pain it left behind, Davis can't believe how much progress the marina has made this past year.

"For about the first two weeks I couldn't even decide whether I should turn left or right," Davis said. "It was chaos, but I had a lot of help from people to get it going again."

Clean-up crews started removing debris from Lake Thunderbird on May 12, 2010, and the last piece wasn't removed until Dec. 4, Davis said.

Today, the new marina has fewer boat slips than before; however, they are wider, and Davis was able to build a bridge directly from the parking lot to the dock, something he has always wanted to do.

But it was an uphill battle throughout the entire process.

Davis encountered problems from the very beginning. He received a letter from the federal Bureau of Reclamation stating that Davis needed to respond with a plan of action for cleanup within 48 hours or crews would be sent to do the job with "no prejudiced charge."

"That set the tone for the entire time," Davis said. "It was adversarial from start to finish. It was just bizarre. Nobody wanted any responsibility so it all fell on us."

Lucky for Davis, a number of boaters who lease space at the marina rallied around

him and helped whenever possible.

"You've got somebody out here that can do anything," Davis said. "One went out and bought a work boat, another called and ordered (portable toilets), another did this, another did that - they just took over. That's how they are. They're unbelievably helpful."

That statement rings true. The Little River Marina has become home for many of its members and is not just a place to dock boats.

Ted and Kandy Chaat have rented a boat slip at the marina for 30 years and they live on their houseboat eight months out of the year.

They bought a new boat October 2010 after the tornado demolished their old one.

"We have some normalcy in our lives again," Ted Chaat said. "We have a home about four miles from here (the marina) and a place on the Gulf Coast, but this marina, this is home."



photo by Hannah Robinson

**PUMPING GAS:**

Arlyn Harris pumps gas in his car at a station on W. Lindsey St. in Norman, Okla.

# Residents adjust to rising gas prices

## Rising gas prices are an issue across the country

**HANNAH ROBINSON**  
Red Dirt Journal

Rising gas prices are an issue across the country, and Oklahomans are being forced to dig deeper into their wallets – making a dent in their budgets.

This means people in Norman and elsewhere are having to seek other means of transportation, or cut back spending in other ways.

Taylor Dunlap, 20, has had to manage her spending habits in order to keep up with the rising prices.

“I just buy gas and food,” she said. “I don’t really shop for clothes.”

Dunlap said she had to start paying for her own gas when she started college.

Some residents have gone beyond just giving up niceties such as shopping. Keil Ortega, 28, said he started riding his bike to and from work.

“I started biking more frequently last year,” he said. “The gas prices are too high.”

In his spare time, Ortega likes to go storm chasing. Although he enjoys it, higher prices for gas and food have caused him to do it less frequently.

His advice to others on saving money – “Don’t drive as much and live closer to work if possible.”

If gas prices continue to stay on the rise, cutting back may be not only an option, but a necessity.

According to AAA, the average price for

gas recently in Oklahoma was \$3.60 per gallon, lower than the U.S. average of \$3.73. Considering prices averaged \$2.55 per gallon this time last year, the prices are increasing rather quickly.

AAA spokesperson Chuck Mai suggests keeping tires well inflated, having a good engine and keeping air filters clean, as three ways to help have good gas mileage. Routine maintenance, as well as how you drive, affect how much gas you use, he said.

“If you drive more gently...avoid speeding, it will stretch your dollar,” Mai said.

Services like public transit busses are also affected by the prices at the pump.

CART, Cleveland Area Rapid Transit, based in Norman, provides a transportation service which transported over 1.3 million passengers last year. Their routes include multiple stops in the Oklahoma City and Norman areas, and in addition, three

routes at the University of Oklahoma.

The CART program has also had to find ways to cut cost on gasoline and at the same time be more Earth-friendly. Fourteen of its busses now run on compressed natural gas.

Vicky Holland, public relations and marketing specialist for OU Parking and Transportation Services, said the switch has helped save money. “Compressed natural gas does cost less than biodiesel,” she said. “We budget our gas costs and, of course, our expenditures rise with the cost of gas. But there isn’t much we can do to offset that.”

Holland said that there has been a slight increase in passengers, and no bus routes have had to be cut and bus fares should stay the same.

“We have no plans to increase rates at this time,” she said.

# Believing in the children is essential

## 'Positive parenting' thought to provide children better life

AMIE THOMISON

Red Dirt Journal

Everybody has a different way of parenting.

Some prefer the "tiger mom" route, taken from Amy Chua's book "Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother," that sets strict limits, is very academically focused and uses harsh punishment.

Another style is positive and encouraging and uses life's consequences rather than punishment to teach lessons. Proponents of this style include many Oklahoma experts in early childhood development.

Sherri Robinson is owner and director of Pumpkin Shell School in Norman, a learning center for children ages 2 to 5 including kindergarten. She said it is important to encourage and praise children through positive parenting rather than always reprimanding them.

"You get children's attention with praise," Robinson said. "They shut down otherwise."

Robinson believes that children do need direction in their lives, but you have to let them be their own individual and make their own choices, unlike Chua, who was intent on controlling most or all aspects of her children's lives.

Positive parenting is a method in which the parent or teacher uses praise, positive thoughts and words rather than always telling children 'no!' or 'don't!' It teaches children what to do instead of what not to do in a way that isn't harsh or damaging to their self esteem.

"For instance, yesterday there was a 2 1/2-year-old squirming around, not listening to the story, not doing what he was supposed to do and then I got quiet and I waited," Robinson said. "So I just kind of waited and he stops and I went 'Oh my gosh! Look! Henry! You look just like a kindergartener!' I just waited until he did it right and then told him 'I love the way you're doing that.'"

A big part of Pumpkin Shell's positive encouragement is teaching a child how to learn.

"If children don't learn how to learn now,



photo by Caitlin Ruemping

**FRIENDS:** Two boys play nicely together on the playground at Pumpkin Shell School on June 9.

they are going to be spending time trying to figure out how to learn instead of learning spelling," Robinson said.

Pumpkin Shell teachers aim to teach children how to equip themselves to handle stressful learning situations, so it's not scary.

The school offers art and science classes as well as other subjects. They also do listening and motor skill development. In each subject, teachers know how to be positive and are teaching the children with an inspiring outlook. Most are former teachers or current college students in early childhood education programs

Another supporter of positive parenting is Diana Horm, director of the Early Childhood Education Institute at the University of Oklahoma-Tulsa campus.

"Positive parenting puts a better approach out there," Horm said. "It's a great teacher for the kids.

"It teaches kids in the long run to handle

situations better with their lives."

She said psychologist Diana Baumrind set the foundation for parent-child behavior studies. She was a clinical and developmental psychologist at the Institute of Human Development at the University of California.

In the 1960s Baumrind published an article explaining her research of three parenting types, authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. They involved different approaches to confrontation, monitoring, consistent discipline, punishment, responsiveness and affection.

"It was groundbreaking," Horm said.

The first group, authoritative, includes parents who are moderately to highly demanding and highly responsive and could connect with their children. Their children tended to be assertive, able to regulate themselves, socially responsible, and respectful to adults. This style most closely matches the positive parenting philosophy.

Next was authoritarian, which included parents who were highly demanding but unresponsive to their children. Children of authoritarian parents tended to be moody, fearful of new situations, and low in self-esteem, Baumrind said in her article. This style most closely correlates with the "tiger mom."

The last group, which is permissive parents, is undemanding and nondirective. They are responsive to their children and avoid confrontation. Their children tend to be creative, sociable, and friendly, but may also be impulsive, aggressive, and resistant to setting limits.

Baumrind's research showed that parents who have higher expectations, like the authoritative and authoritarian parents, have a likelier chance of having better results and outcomes with their children.

Oklahoma City Community College's Child Development Center and Lab School also practices positive guidance of young children. It serves children from birth to age 5.

"Positive guidance helps them problem-solve, grow into young adults and adults that can make good choices," Lab Supervisor Lee Ann Townsend said. "It's used to help children behave because they want to behave, not because they are going to get something out of it."

The lab is a child care center that wants to impart good self esteem, good decision making skills and assertiveness that can be carried on throughout a child's life.

"We start by giving unconditional love," Townsend said. "We supervise the children and learn to set limits where limits are needed and then we give them choices."

On the other hand, there are parents like Chua who rarely gave her children choices in life.

"I don't see how my technique could damage their self esteem," Chua said in an interview with United Kingdom Channel 4. "It's saying I believe in you. I know you can do better."

Chua describes her book as a memoir and not so much as a parenting guide. It goes through many stories of her and her daughters' lives. She said she never meant to damage her children. She tried to build them up and make them the best they could be.

There are multiple ways to parent. Even Chua and early childhood specialists advise parents to listen to children, be firm, and to build children up through guidance.



photo by Aaron Valles

**TREATMENT:**  
Dr. Kreg Griffith performs a chiropractic treatment on his dog Khloe.

# Chiropractor treats four-legged patients

## Doctor provides chiropractic care for people, pets

**AARON VALLES**  
Red Dirt Journal

Denise Carney was able to save about \$3,000 in surgery bills thanks to a referral from her chiropractor in Norman.

But the referral wasn't for her; it was for her dog, Ceasar.

Carney made an appointment for her 10-year-old rat terrier to see Dr. Kreg Griffith – a certified animal chiropractor – after a number of veterinarians couldn't find the cause of her small dog's pain.

"He would lift his leg up and cry horribly," Carney said. "He couldn't move his neck. It was so sad."

Griffith also works with human patients at his office HealthSource Chiropractic & Progressive Rehab in Norman. For his four-legged patients, he makes house calls. No matter the type of patient, Griffith said the reasons for and the benefits of chiropractic treatment are very similar for both.

"I've been getting chiropractic treatments since I was a kid," Griffith said. "I've seen a benefit with having more mobility with my body and my spine and I've just been healthier. It's the same concept with dogs and horses and other animals."

Carney said it took Ceasar a little while to get comfortable with Griffith, but soon he understood the doctor was there to help.

"On the first visit Ceasar took a long time to get used to Dr. Griffith," Carney said. "The second time he was more comfortable. The third and fourth he would run to him. He knew he was there to make him feel better."

Tom Lemons decided to have Griffith

take a look at his horse, Dumas, while being treated by Griffith's brother and business partner, Dr. Kyle Griffith, D.C.

"I went to Kyle Griffith's office to get taken care of myself and I saw Dr. Kreg Griffith's card," Lemons said.

Lemons said he decided to have the animal chiropractor take a look at Dumas.

"He (Dumas) was real touchy," Lemons said. "I thought his rib was out because he would hesitate to run. So we had to take care of it."

After just one visit, Lemons says he saw a major improvement in his horse.

"You could tell he wasn't as touchy," he said.

Griffith said the reactions to the chiropractic care from the animals are similar to humans, and with some, it might take a while to get comfortable. Though he said he has never had an animal he was working on get aggressive, he has had his share of adventures.

"One time I was working on a dog and another dog came from the other room," he said. "It was being protective. It saw me putting my hands on it, so the other dog came and bit me. That's probably been my worse scenario."

While a new concept to some people, according to Griffith, animal chiropractic care is becoming a necessity.

"Some people don't have kids and their animals are their kids," he said. "It's starting to be more of a necessity with animals and people are starting to see the need of it and not just saying 'Hey, he works with animals – that's weird.'"

People like Carney and Lemons both see the need for Griffith and the care he provides.

"It is amazing to find somebody that can help so much," Carney said. "I hope the word gets out about Dr. Griffith because your pet is like your family, and a lot of people need his help."

# Teens adjust to parents' unemployment

## Financial challenges follow from job losses

CAITLIN RUEMPING  
Red Dirt Journal

Most high school girls are demanding Miss Me jeans and Tom's shoes, but one Bartlesville freshman, Amie Thomison, is thankful she can satisfy her basic needs, not her wants.

Thomison is only one of the many Oklahoma teens who have fallen victim to unemployment, a silent villain of the Great Recession. When parents lose their jobs, children suffer.

"Last year, in April 2010, my mom's work laid her off," Thomison said. "She tried to find another job and couldn't."

Washington County, where Bartlesville is located, had an unemployment rate of 5.7 percent in April 2010, with approximately 2,900 people unemployed. Oklahoma as a whole had a 7.2 percent unemployment rate in April 2010, but has managed

to decrease it to 5.6 in May 2011. Though the state average is steadily decreasing, the national average is still at 9.1 percent.

Nevertheless, the workforce is getting increasingly hard to break into, particularly if the person has few job skills to contribute to the workplace. This long-term unemployment causes strain on both the unemployed parents and their children.

After months of no work, Thomison, along with her mother, brother, sister and her mother's boyfriend, were forced to move into Thomison's grandparents' house.

Living off her grandmother's single paycheck and her grandfather's Social Security, Thomison and her family began to feel the financial strain seeping into their relationships, and conflicts arose. This led the Oklahoma Department of Human Services to step in.

"My brother, sister and I were placed in foster care," Thomison said. "My brother's first grade teacher became our foster parent, and we live with him and his wife."

Though Thomison's circumstances are extreme, recently graduated Duncan High School student Caitlyn Gondolf can relate to the consequences of unemployment when it strikes a parent.

Gondolf's father was laid off in February 2009 from Halliburton, the world's second largest oilfield corporation based in Stephens County. He has been receiving unemployment benefits for two years.

Along with Gondolf's father, 200 to 300 other Halliburton employees found themselves without a job, many with only unemployment benefits to turn to and a world of worry ahead. For Gondolf, the insecurity of unemployment is the biggest challenge her family faces.

"You have to reapply all the time [to continue receiving unemployment benefits]" Gondolf said. "Yes, you are guaranteed eight months of unemployment, but what about after those eight months?"

To help relieve the burden from her father's shoulders, Gondolf sacrificed her study time in order to work at Taco Bell.

"It put a lot of pressure on school work versus real work," Gondolf said. "I had to think of what would help me now, and real work won."

Though she admits she is concerned about the present, her primary worry is her father's future if he can't find a job.

"He's about 56 now, and retirement is just around the corner," Gondolf said. "If

he's on unemployment, how is he supposed to save for that? He won't be able to work in his old age because of his medical problems. There's just no security for unemployment."

In an attempt to stand above the sea of job seekers, Gondolf's father, who had open heart surgery two years ago, began attending classes at his local career technology center. Suddenly, Gondolf found herself juggling work and school, plus helping her father with his homework.

"He went to school for machine certification at the vo-tech, hoping it would give him an edge against others who were applying," Gondolf said. "He would come to me with his homework, like trigonometry, asking me questions that I didn't even know how to answer."

For the children of the unemployed, one solution to the situation is prevention through education. Thomison has sought out classes to become financially literate.

Both she and Gondolf have set their sights on quality higher education in order to better their future.

Gondolf will be attending the University of Central Oklahoma in August.

# Freed from parents, many teens struggle

## Making it on their own is harder for emancipated

MEISHA MCDANIEL  
Red Dirt Journal

For teens in the midst of turmoil, the idea of being freed from nagging parents holds a powerful attraction. But the hope for a better life after emancipation often is dashed on the cruel rocks of an existence without the anchor of adult supervision.

Tiffany Wilson knows. The 20-year-old woman has been there. Wilson said being emancipated wasn't the best thing for her.

"I left home when I was 14 years old, and [was] emancipated at 16 years old.

"For a little bit of the time, I was going from friend to friend, and relative to relative. But during the most of that period in my life, I was homeless," Wilson said.

Wilson is one of millions of American teens to be granted emancipation from their parents. Being emancipated gives them all the decision-making rights and responsibilities of an adult.

In Oklahoma this process is called the Procedure to Confer Rights of Majority..

Today there are an estimated 20 million emancipated minors in the U.S. Emancipation is a legal process which allows a minor to be free from any control by parents, and the parents are free from any responsibility for the child.

Debra Krittenbrink, director of Bridges in Norman, Okla., said the legal privileges of adulthood include receiving medical care without parental consent, signing contracts, and making other decisions. Bridges provides housing for homeless teens who are working and attending school.

There are various ways in which a minor can be emancipated. If abuse is a factor in the family situation, the children could be placed in foster care, but not automatically emancipated. In that instance, a parent

might voluntarily request emancipation, or be forced to terminate parental rights.

Termination occurs when the parent loses the right to have custody and control of the child. Emancipation and termination are two completely different things, said Donna Glandon, advocate general of the Oklahoma Office of Juvenile Affairs.

Minors also can go about emancipating themselves. If a minor is married, he or she is considered emancipated. Being enlisted in the military also confers emancipation. Another option is the court system.

Krittenbrink said, "In my four years of experience, I've only had two students at Bridges that have been emancipated. In both cases the parents agreed.

"If the parent does not agree, that's when a court hearing would take place. And when that does happen, it's a very long process."

When a minor is emancipated through the courts, several factors are used to determine whether it is in the child's best interest to stay with the parent or guardian..

"Minors requesting emancipation must prove to the court that they can sustain a job and a home outside of their parents," Glandon said. She said too often minors want to be emancipated because they don't want their parents to tell them what to do."

Within two to four years of emancipation, 51 percent of minors are unemployed and 40 percent will be homeless within 18 months, according to studies by Every Child Foundation, and the John Burton Foundation.

"You can't emancipate a kid when they don't have a job, or aren't even eligible to have a job. They have to be able to support themselves," Glandon said.

Krittenbrink said being self supporting is hard. Bridges is an alternative for high school students that are living independently due to a family crisis,

"Our whole focus is school and education. If a minor is considering being emancipated, I would say come to our facility, and see what a struggle it is for our students to live independently."

# War vet runs successful bookstore



photo by Taryn Peters

**CHECKING OUT:** Susan Townley, an employee at The Book Stall in Norman, Okla., helps customers.

## Bookstore stays successful amid online competition

**TARYN PETERS**  
Red Dirt Journal

While chains like Borders are closing stores across the state, one Norman shop is staying afloat after more than 30 years.

Owner Dale Hall opened The Book Stall in 1972 and the used book store on West Gray Street remains successful among the progressing world of large chains and elec-

tronic literature.

Hall's first inspiration came from a bookstore he visited in London while serving in the United States Air Force. After trying to open in two different locations, Hall found a space available.

In 1985, he re-located one more time to move into his permanent home on West Gray Street. He honored the London bookstore by designing The Book Stall after it.

"It is really neat. I will come back when I have more time on my own," said one customer.

Susan Townley, an employee at The Book Stall, said the store has around 40,000 to 50,000 books of every genre including romance, history and graphic novels.

Townley began working part-time at the bookstore when it opened, but she started to work full-time in 1992. She enjoys working at The Book Stall because of some of the perks that come along with the job.

"I get the first crack at all the books that come through here," Townley said.

Hall doesn't care much for the technology that is being fused into literature or such products as the NOOK or Amazon Kindle.

"If people won't pick up a book and read it, who is going to read one of those things?" Hall said.

He believes that the current generation have pulled away from reading and have turned more toward the Internet. Townley admits that she would never want to own

a tablet even with the decline of reading actual books in this technology-savvy era. "Books are becoming more obsolete," Townley said. "But we have been seeing younger people coming in."

Hall is also not fazed by the big name competitors like Barnes & Noble and Borders. He feels that he still has steady business due to loyal customers that appreciate good literature.

"The Book Stall can compete because we know books," he said. "We know high quality literature."

Townley said she loves her job and thinks it's a great place to shop.

"You never know what kind of treasure you'll find," said Townley.

# GLBT community faces discrimination

## Members fight for basic civil, human rights

**CHRISTINA GIFFORD**  
Red Dirt Journal

Bullied, bashed and beaten, some members of the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered community feel forced to hide their sexual orientation or face discrimination or worse.

They can face several types of discrimination: parental, workplace, social, religious. Members of the GLBT community often feel they are denied the basic rights that heterosexuals enjoy. They cannot serve openly in the military. They cannot adopt children in certain states. They cannot get married in most states. Many are denied jobs because of their sexual orientation.

Julia Jankowski, 17, is a student at the School of Visual Arts in New York City studying illustration.

"I was never fully 'out' in high school be-

cause it was an all girls Catholic school run by nuns and I didn't want the nuns knowing and giving me bad grades or hating me."

She still hides her sexual orientation from her family.

"At home, I'm still not out. Dad is homophobic and mom is a religion teacher." For her, only time will tell whether she will feel comfortable enough to come out to her parents.

"As far as the gay population, I do not believe they should have rights," said Ted Inman, assistant pastor for Southwest Baptist Church in Oklahoma City, who spoke on his own behalf and not the church.

He doesn't support GLBT groups in schools.

"That makes me very nervous. At their age they do not know how to make decisions. They are still kids."

He said his church does not have any openly gay members.

"I'm not saying God hates gays. That is not true. I'm just saying that they are living outside His standards."

Vu Chu is president of the Gay and Straight Alliance at Westmoore High

School. The GSA's purpose is to prevent bullying, not just for those who are gay or lesbian, but for everyone.

"The major issue our group is facing is limitations," Chu said. "We can't make announcements. Technically, we don't really have a sponsor, she is a 'monitor.' Sponsors can be active with their group. Monitors can't even speak at meetings. They can't be involved at all. They basically sit there. That really causes damage to our group."

Caroll Riecke is the president of the Norman chapter of PFLAG, a national organization created to advocate for the acceptance of the GLBT community. He said they are fighting to gain civil rights for the GLBT community.

PFLAG stands for parents, friends and families of lesbians and gays. The group has three main purposes: to educate the public about GLBT people; to support families and friends of GLBT people; and advocating for GLBT rights.

"The GLBT community still does not have the basic civil rights that straights do," Riecke said. "They face discrimination in employment, housing and other areas. I have a friend that was beaten up in high

school because of his sexual orientation.

"I joined the PFLAG organization because I have a gay son. He came out his senior year in high school. His friends accepted him quickly. Now he is attending Macalester." Macalester College is located in St. Paul, Minn.

Melanie Adams is the adviser of the GLBT student group on OU campus.

"OU is a great place for the GLBT group. Here we do not experience as much discrimination. The GLBT community is accepted here. Our group meets Wednesday evenings each week. We schedule social events to promote awareness of the GLBT group. It's great to have a place where you can go and discuss common interests and needs."

Chu believes that discrimination against the GLBT community is wrong.

"I joined the GSA to prevent bullying. Being part of the GLBT community I know what bullying is like. School is tough. Bullying is an everyday thing for me. I don't experience a lot of violence - name calling and teasing mostly. I'm used to it now though. I don't really mind it anymore. But what they are doing is wrong."

# Nutrition and new food plate icon

## New guidelines offer alternative to meals pyramid

**DAKOTA POOLAW**  
Red Dirt Journal

The U.S. Department of Agriculture released a new food guide in June to replace the MyPyramid guide. This new icon is called MyPlate.

Although the new guide has not affected schools yet, it will in the future because the USDA not only created it but also supports it. The new MyPlate icon sends a message that since the government supports it, schools may change their approaches to healthier cafeteria meals.

The new food plate icon, unveiled on June 2, is the eighth food guide the USDA has released.

MyPlate was created to make the aver-

age eater relate to healthy nutrition. Children are more used to seeing a plate at dinnertime than a pyramid, so it is easier for them to relate to a plate of food, said Andrea Sellmeyer, nutrition science graduate student at the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center.

Not everyone agrees on the introduction of the MyPlate icon. Some experts say it is more user friendly, and that it is easier for kids to understand.

Other experts say it doesn't have the proper portion sizes and doesn't include exercise. They say that designs have changed too fast and that Americans don't need a new guide because the MyPyramid design was just as good if not better than MyPlate.

"I have seen four food guidelines in my lifetime," said Diana Polley, an instructor at Pathways Middle College High School and Oklahoma City Community College. "The new food plate icon doesn't incorporate exercise as the food pyramid did, and exercise is just as important."

Polley also said the portion sizes are a bit

off and a little too small. But others think the design's simplicity is its strength.

"The pyramid is harder to understand and the plate is more user friendly," Sellmeyer said, though she also admits the new food plate design "isn't perfect."

According to the plate's supporters there are many advantages to the new design, such as:

- MyPlate catches your eye better than MyPyramid.
- MyPlate is easier for children (and adults) to understand.
- MyPlate targets school nutrition.
- MyPlate is easier to use than MyPyramid.

But critics point out faults, such as:

- MyPlate doesn't incorporate any exercise and doesn't show as much information as MyPyramid.
- Designs have changed so fast that people don't have enough time to get used to them.

• MyPlate doesn't include a band for oil as MyPyramid did. Oils are important

parts of a healthy diet.

Some point out that good diets are also about good food production practices.

The biggest nutrition problem in schools is too much processed food and not enough fresh locally grown food, Sellmeyer said. These ideas have never been incorporated in any of the USDA designs.

The USDA has the food groups of the food plate organized like this:

Grains Group - Any food made from wheat, rice, oats, cornmeal, barley or another cereal grain.

Vegetable Group - Any vegetable or 100 percent vegetable juice.

Fruit Group - Any fruit or 100 percent fruit juice.

Dairy Group - All fluid milk products and many foods made from milk.

Protein Group - All foods made from meat, poultry, seafood, beans and peas, eggs, processed soy products, nuts and seeds.

## Participant profiles



### ANTONIA BELINDO

"In case of fire, take the stairs" reads the warning sign in the elevators of OU's Muldrow Tower, where the OIDJ campers crash at night. Antonia Belindo takes the stairs anyway. Belindo played basketball during all four years of high school; joined the softball team as a freshman and again as a senior; ran track her last two years; and did cheerleading as a senior. She has also studied dance for 15 years, beginning at age 3. This OIDJ camper even has an affinity for powerwalking. When at home in Mountain View, Okla., Belindo walks almost everywhere she goes. "I try to be as healthy as possible," she says. She keeps healthful snacks on hand, eats modestly, does at least one active thing a day, and does not drink soda. Her high school peers called her a health nut.

— by Leah Burger

### TYLER BELL

A soccer ball and a camera are commonplace accessories for Tyler Bell. Bell, 17, has played soccer since he was 5 and he enjoys photography and video. He describes himself as hard-working, quiet and technical. Bell this fall will become the editor-in-chief for Bartlesville High School's newspaper, "The Fourth Estate." He will try to carry on his school's tradition of winning the All-Oklahoman Award, a high school newspaper competition that Bartlesville has won 28 times. The oldest of three siblings, Bell has become a role model for his younger brother and sister. He enjoys cooking and spending time with family. After high school, Bell is contemplating a major in meteorology at the University of Oklahoma -- or he may opt to study media arts or journalism.

— by J. Omar Salas



### LEAH BURGER

A tiny, kind-hearted girl named Micahleah Burger was born in the fall of 1993. Today she goes by the simple yet significant name of "Leah." Born and raised in Oklahoma City, Burger, now 17, has grown into someone who'd rather be her own person than strive to be like someone else. "I have some qualities that others don't," she said. "I want to keep some but exchange for a few." A giant melting pot of cultures and ethnicities abides within her as she derives from German, Irish, Lakota and Dutch ancestry. Burger stays involved with activities at Santa Fe South High School such as choir, student council, the rowing team and her school's newspaper. In college, Burger plans to pursue a double major of photojournalism and criminal justice. The fingerprints that she hopes to place are love for everybody and unabashed charity for all people.

— by Antonia Belindo

### DALIA DIAZ

Oklahoma City native Dalia Diaz, 16, attends Pathways Middle College High School in Oklahoma City and has big hopes and dreams. For a career, Diaz wants to attend the University of Oklahoma and become a doctor. Besides being ambitious, Diaz had two reasons for attending OIDJ. "I like writing and I wanted to get the experience," she said. Not everything for Diaz is all work and no play, however. In her free time, Diaz likes to listen to music, and loves the MTV show "Martin." "He's hilarious and he plays different characters in the show," she said. A couple of her lifelong dreams are to own a pet penguin because she wants to "wake up to it in the refrigerator" and to marry either Justin Bieber or William Levy, who plays Maximiliano Sandoval on "Triunfo del amor."

— by Candace Hinnergardt



### SARAH GEESLIN

Sarah Geeslin, 16, describes herself as open-minded, outgoing and honest. Born and raised in Oklahoma City, Geeslin has lived in the same house all her life with her parents, brother and sister. Though part of a traditional family, Geeslin attends a nontraditional high school on the campus of Oklahoma City Community College. At Pathways Middle College High School, she takes college classes for high school and college credit. Geeslin is involved in community services such as Food Bank and Mobile Meals. She also is a participant in Key Club, which encourages leadership in students. Geeslin has been playing club volleyball since eighth grade and has been a member of Girl Scouts since she was 5. She came to OIDJ to better her knowledge of journalism. She hasn't decided on a college but wants a career in zoology.

— by Meisha McDaniel

### CHRISTINA GIFFORD

Sweet, sociable and outgoing, Christina Gifford, 16, a student at Pathways Middle College High School in Oklahoma City, has a unique passion for the art of writing. "Writing is my strength," Gifford said. "It helps me relax and forget about things." Gifford is Oklahoma born and bred with an exception to her seven-year residency in Rhode Island. She enjoys writing news stories and informing the public about events occurring in her community. An aspiring college graduate in the field of forensic science, Gifford dreams of working in a crime lab like those seen in the popular television series CSI. In her free time, she draws Disney characters and socializes with a diverse network of friends. "I'm not the type of person to stick to one group of people. I can start a conversation with anyone," Gifford said.

— by Sequoyah Moore



### CANDACE HINNERGARDT

Born in Bartlesville, Okla., 16-year-old Candace Hinnergardt will be a junior next year at Bartlesville Senior High. She's an intelligent student who took AP government her sophomore year and will be attending more than one AP class her junior year. She enjoys writing and meeting new people, and hopes to major in public relations or mass communication at the University of Oklahoma. Her hobbies are playing the piano and reading the Hunger Game series. She listens to soft pop music, and one of her favorite musical groups is Lady Antebellum. Hinnergardt's idol is her dad. "My dad has always been the nurturing type. He's always been there for me and he loves kids." She loves cherry limeades from Sonic, the movie "Tangled," the color blue, and strawberries.

— by Dalia Diaz

**MEISHA MCDANIEL**

Meisha Rashun McDaniel might one day be a CIA agent or an investigative reporter. But that day is years away for McDaniel, a 15-year-old sophomore at Daniel Webster High School in Tulsa, Okla. For now, she's a part of the school's dance team, cheerleading team and media club. She's also student council treasurer. McDaniel hopes to attend a college that specializes in criminal justice. She'd also like to try a foreign exchange program. McDaniel came to OIDJ because "it's an experience to see if journalism is a career I'd truly like to pursue one day." Her favorite color is magenta. Her favorite animals are hamsters and guinea pigs. She enjoys hip-hop and R&B. Among her favorite musicians are Sia, Kerli and Adele. Her favorite kinds of movies are dramas, thrillers and comedies. "It' and 'Candyman' are the scariest movies I've ever seen," said McDaniel.

— by Sarah Geeslin

**SEQUOYAH MOORE**

Originally born in Colorado Springs, Colo., Sequoyah Moore is following her dream to become a journalist for National Geographic Magazine. She is usually behind the computer writing stories or out taking pictures. During her free time, Moore enjoys watching the BBC show "Doctor Who," hanging out with her friends, dancing and doodling. She enjoys being outside and loves nature. When asked to describe herself in three words she laughed and said, "Different, creative and fun-sized." She is now living in Edmond, Okla., with her mother and her 6-year-old brother. Moore will be graduating from Edmond Sante Fe High School in 2012.

— by Christina Gifford

**TARYN PETERS**

Eighteen-year-old Taryn Peters has her sights set on the movie industry, and hopes to become a film director in the near future. Aside from video making and editing, she's passionate about basketball and enjoys watching the Oklahoma City Thunder play. Peters played basketball at Keller Central High School in Fort Worth, Texas, but during the 2010-2011 season, she suffered two torn ACLs. "I was really sad because I couldn't play the game with my teammates," she said. Peters graduated from Keller Central in 2011 and plans to attend The University of Oklahoma. Born in Norman, Okla., she was raised in Fort Worth and has two sisters. Her favorite color is lime green because it was the color of her prom dress. She enjoys a wide variety of movies and music. She enjoys watching "90210," "Big Brother" and "Vampire Diaries."

— by Hannah Robinson

**DAKOTA POOLAW**

Thirteen-year-old Dakota Poolaw is a member of the Kiowa tribe and lives with his grandparents in Mountain View, Okla., a town of 795 residents. After graduating from high school, he wants to earn a journalism degree from the University of Oklahoma. But his real career goal is to become a Baptist missionary. "I feel the call to spread the word of God," said Poolaw. Poolaw looks up to his grandparents and the town's other residents. He would like to help with a special fund set up by the townspeople to help students in 4-H and Future Farmers of America who show pigs "because it is really expensive," said Poolaw.

— by Thaddeus Taylor

**ARTRA RICE**

Seventeen-year-old Tulsa native Artra Rice says she loves her outspokenness, her bluntness and her free spirit, even though it sometimes comes with a price. "I know I can hurt people's feelings," Rice said. "I just say what I feel." Rice is a senior at Webster Broadcasting and Digital Media Magnet High School in Tulsa, a school focused specifically on journalism. With a passion for writing and networking, she participates in Media Club, National Honor Society, Honor Choir, Student Government and Future Educators Association. Rice's personality has helped her develop her love of writing. "The best thing that makes me feel alive is writing," Rice said. She plans on joining the Navy immediately after high school. But when her military service is over, Rice hopes to earn a degree in journalism.

— by Caitlin Ruemping

**HANNAH ROBINSON**

On October 4 you can find Hannah Robinson at her birthday party dancing or decorating her own cake. Born and raised in Oklahoma, Robinson is currently texting boys full-time while studying at South Moore High School in Moore, Okla. Even though she loves texting, she finds time for other activities like reading mystery and romance books as well as sewing. Though not a fan of science, she said she loves to watch the television series "Big Bang Theory." Robinson also spends time practicing fighting on Wii Boxing. When she grows up, Robinson hopes to be writing books in a small town in the Italian countryside.

— by Taryn Peters

**LILLIE RONEY**

School is out, so what are you doing? Lillie Roney isn't catching up on her shopping or favorite TV; instead, she's outside hunting the mysteries of the Earth, catching butterflies. "I enjoy being free and independent," says the recent Edmond, Okla., North High School graduate, who will attend OSU. "The only material items with limitless value are books," she said. While reading an intriguing book, she enjoys drinking coffee and snuggling with her cat, Missy, who also rides shotgun in Roney's car. The "plain Jane," straight-cut brunette bangs she's worn since age 4 only camouflage her five ear-and-face piercings. Now 18, she plans to get more, as well as a tattoo.

— by Jesyka Ware

**CAITLIN RUEMPING**

Ruemping, 17, graduated from high school in Duncan, Okla., where she was born and raised. In the fall, she plans to attend the University of Oklahoma. Ruemping's career ambitions are to become either a journalist or a financial adviser. She loves school because there is always something to learn. In her spare time, she enjoys sewing, couponing and playing with her bunny, Cache Bunnaye. Ruemping's favorite music is old school rap, and she would love to see the Beastie Boys in concert. Riding around the Oklahoma countryside in a Jeep Cherokee without doors is her dream. In 10 years, Ruemping envisions herself finished with college and revolutionizing journalism.

— by Artra Rice



### J. OMAR SALAS

J. Omar Salas likes to describe himself in one word: Perseverant. He emigrated from central Mexico in 2002, and lived in Dallas for three years before settling in Oklahoma. Persevering in academics despite these moves, Salas just graduated from Oklahoma City's Santa Fe South High School. Salas says he enjoys writing about almost anything that comes up in his life, and worked for his school newspaper, "Santa Fe South Express", during his junior and senior years. "I like newspaper better than yearbook because it comes out monthly instead of yearly," he said. In the fall, he plans to attend the University of Oklahoma, majoring in construction science, business or journalism. His adviser, Mary Walter, thought OIDJ would be a good opportunity for him to explore and narrow his choice of several different majors.

— by Tyler Bell

### THADDEUS TAYLOR

Seventeen-year-old Thaddeus Taylor will be a senior this year at Bartlesville High School. He looks up to his grandmother whom he calls "Nana." He says he admires her because she always brings the family together to have bonding time. Photography, gardening and cooking are some of his favorite past times. He said he plans on going to Oklahoma State University Institute of Technology for cooking, but is also considering going to the University of Oklahoma for journalism and meteorology. Taylor is a friendly individual who likes to help others. "I don't do it to make myself look good," he said. "I do it because I like to help people." His main goal in life is to be successful.

— by Aaron Valles



### AMIE THOMISON

Amie Thomison was born in Stilwell, Okla., and is currently attending Bartlesville High School at the age of 16. With Cherokee blood flowing in her veins, she has a passion for journalism and is in her school's color guard. Thomison enjoys Canadian bacon pizza and sweet tea while watching the show "Cake Boss." She finds happiness shopping for shoes, and her shoes are often decked out in pink, Thomison's favorite color. Country music jams into her ears just as much as Justin Bieber's voice. She also likes scary, thriller movies. Thomison hopes to go to the University of Oklahoma, learning at Gaylord College of Journalism and Mass Communication, and graduating with a degree in journalism. In 10 years, Thomison hopes to be a great journalist living in England. "With journalism, I love to go behind the scenes and get the bigger picture," she said.

— by Huong Truong

### HUONG TRUONG

Oklahoma native Huong Truong is a 14-year-old girl who knows what she wants in life. Truong is a sophomore at Southmoore High School in Moore who has a strong liking for English and biology classes. In college Truong hopes to major in medicine or journalism — and open her own coffee shop. She is a coffee fanatic and her favorite drink is a vanilla latte. For music Truong indulges in singer-songwriter Jason Mraz, American rock band Maroon 5, and R&B artist Ne-Yo. In her free time, she enjoys her friends, reading and buying pens. A lifelong resident of Oklahoma City, Truong's ethnic roots are Vietnamese and Chinese. She spends Sundays at Giac Quang Buddhist Temple, where she shares her faith. Photography is a way for her to relax. "I like to capture the moment," Truong said. "It gives me a new point of view."

— by Amie Thomison



### AARON VALLES

Aaron Valles, 16, was born and raised in Oklahoma City. He attends Pathways College Middle High School on the campus of Oklahoma City Community College. One of his favorite activities is posting comedic YouTube videos he makes with friends. Valles has made more than 20 videos. "I enjoy making them because people I don't know compliment my videos," he said. Valles is also social outside of YouTube with his family. He said he admires his mother, father and sister, whom he spends a lot of time with. "I look up to them because they have worked hard to support my family," Valles said, even though he doesn't always admit that his sister is one of his role models. Valles one day hopes to attend OU and become YouTube-famous, but he is still open to many things. "I would describe myself as my own individual," Valles said.

— by Dakota Poolaw

### JESYKA WARE

As a 16-year-old, Jesyka Ware gave a nationally televised speech at the NAACP 2010 National Convention, becoming the first youth to deliver a campaign speech for a member seeking one of the organization's top seats. A vice president of the Wichita, Kan., NAACP Youth Council, Ware said she likes "speaking in front of people -- the more the better." "While I was up there, I was just doing my thing," she said. "But afterward, it's only natural I let my butterflies out because there were famous people in there and it was an especially big crowd." Now 17, Ware will be a senior at Wichita Heights High School this fall. Ware is unsure of which major she will pursue in college but attended OIDJ to learn more about journalism. After college though, Ware hopes to become the next "Crocodile Hunter" and keep journals of animals around the world.

— by Emma Weaver



### EMMA WEAVER

Emma Weaver claims to be boring. She is anything but that. The 17-year-old Norman High School senior can be found reading, writing or running her school yearbook as editor-in-chief, that is, when she is not busy traveling to England to visit her family. Weaver and her family have visited England every summer since she was born. "I love being able to walk everywhere," Weaver said. "You can't do that in Oklahoma. But, I don't like that it rains constantly." Though born and raised in Oklahoma, Weaver's life is filled with British culture. She often listens to British music, watches British movies on Netflix including the TV show Dr. Who, and drinks J2O, a juice native to the United Kingdom and Ireland. Weaver aspires to become a professional writer and author fiction books.

— by Lillie Roney





photo by Bryan Pollard

**JOURNALISTS:** Twenty-two students from Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas attended the 2011 Oklahoma Institute for Diversity in Journalism.

# Jumpstart Journalism

## Students from multiple states attend week-long workshop

**LILLIE RONEY**  
Red Dirt Journal

This year 22 students from Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas came to the Oklahoma Institute for Diversity in Journalism to learn more about journalism.

"I didn't know much about journalism so I didn't know what to expect," said Dakota Poolaw, 13, of Mountain View, Okla. "I thought it was going to be more like an English or writing class where we learned how to construct sentences and such."

Poolaw was wrong.

During the workshop, students learned how to conduct interviews, shoot and edit photographs and the basics of videography. Between lectures about basic newsgathering, diversity and open government, the attendees produced a newspaper as well as a website with multimedia components.

Unfortunately, this year the bud-

get for the workshop was cut almost in half, director Ray Chavez said.

"We didn't receive as much funding and donations were down," Chavez said. "So we had to eliminate one week."

As a result, the camp lasted only six days, June 6-11, with a focus on new media compared to previous years when the camp was either longer, or split into two separate weeks with a focus on print during one and broadcasting during the other.

This year the program also accepted a larger number of younger participants than usual—with one eighth grader, one freshman, six sophomores, eight juniors and six seniors.

Students worked close to 12-hour days to ensure they could attend lectures as well as have enough time to work on their projects, but also took timeouts during the week for fun.

This year the group toured the Chickasaw Cultural Center in Sul-

phur, Okla., had a pool party and cookout at Norman Transcript Executive Editor Andy Rieger's house and ate dinner at Chipotle.

"I've never had Chipotle before, and it was like heaven on my taste buds," said Taryn Peters, 18, of Fort Worth, Texas.

Students and instructors were put into teams of three to four students and assigned stories on the second day of camp.

With a deadline approaching, they immediately began researching their topics and contacting sources.

"I was expecting it to be hard, but as we started going through the process and we got closer to deadline things got a whole lot harder," said Huang Truong, 14, of Oklahoma City, Okla.

The effort from the students and the help they receive from their instructors shines through. OIDJ is a nationally recognized workshop — producing a Dow Jones News Fund scholarship recipient for the past eight years. OIDJ participants compete against students from 26 other workshops across the country for the scholarships.

### OIDJ Participants

Aaron Valles  
Amie Thomison  
Antonia Belindo  
Artra Rice  
Caitlin Ruemping  
Candace Hinnergardt  
Christina Gifford  
Dakota Poolaw  
Dalia Diaz  
Emma Weaver  
Hannah Robinson

Huong Truong  
J. Omar Salas  
Jesyka Ware  
Leah Burger  
Lillie Roney  
Meisha McDaniel  
Sarah Geeslin  
Sequoyah Moore  
Taryn Peters  
Thaddeus Taylor  
Tyler Bell

### Administrators

Ray Chávez, OIDJ director  
Sue Hinton, OIDJ co-director  
Emma Wesley-Harjo, administrative assistant

### Faculty & Staff

Sarah Cavanah  
Craig Henry  
Mick Hinton  
Christopher Krug  
Bryan Pollard  
Joey Senat  
Phil Todd  
James Tyree

### Contributors

Chipotle Mexican Grill  
Dow Jones News Fund  
Ethics and Excellence in Journalism Foundation  
Gaylord College of Journalism and Mass Communication  
Native American Journalists Association  
The Cherokee Phoenix  
The Norman Transcript  
The Oklahoman

### About OIDJ

The annual high school journalism workshop is scheduled every June on the OU campus (specific dates will vary). Students wishing to be considered for participation should notify the Oklahoma Institute for Diversity in Journalism. Updated application forms and information on the 2012 workshop will be available during the spring 2012 semester. However, contact the director so you can be placed on the OIDJ mailing list.

Ray Chávez, Director  
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for Diversity in Journalism  
Gaylord College of Journalism  
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