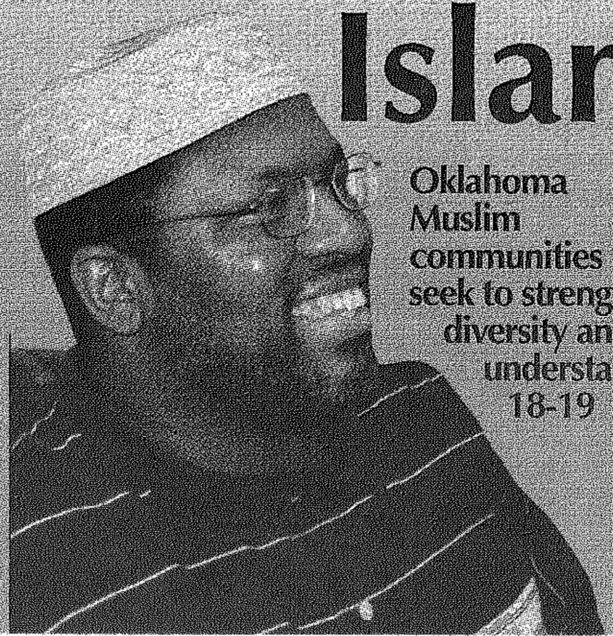
RED Dirt Journal

In touch with Islam



Oklahoma Muslim communities seek to strengthen diversity and understanding, 18-19

Wonderfully Made

Special night, special parents, 10-11

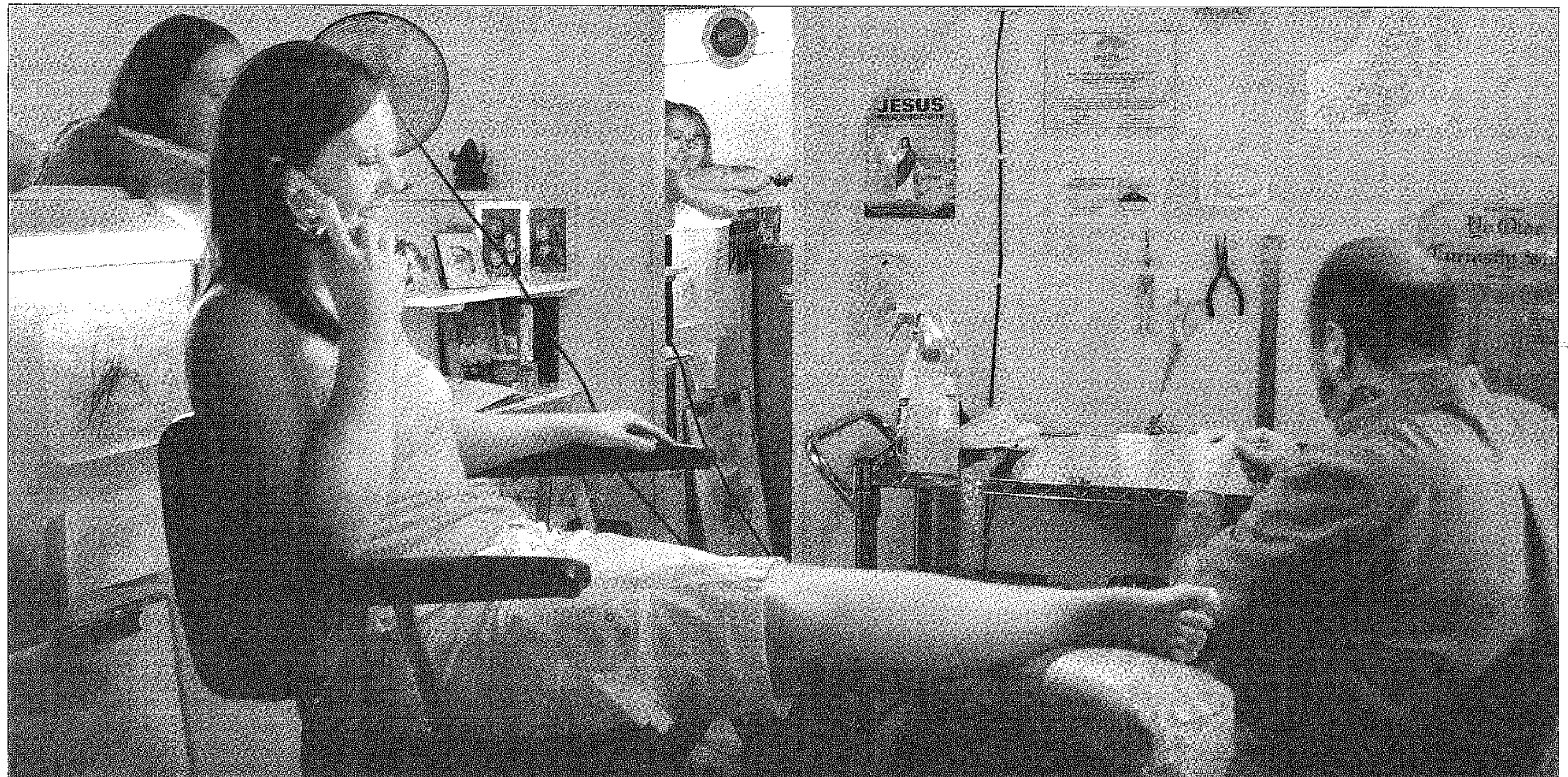


Photo of Laura Carter by Phillip Hemphill

Illegal Ink

Tattoo parlors get a jump on new law in Oklahoma, 16-17

Oklahoma Institute for Diversity in Journalism

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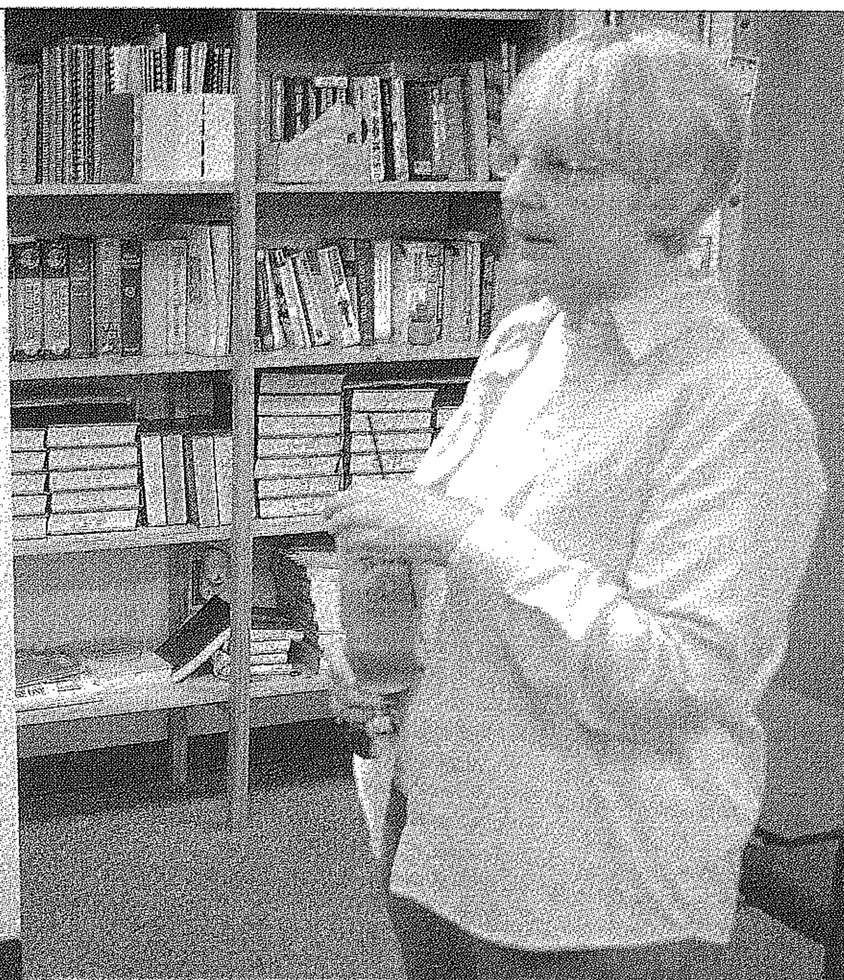


PRESS FREEDOM: Future Edmond Nort Ruff Draft Editor Reneé Selanders, left, listens as her journal-ism adviser Judy Ack-erman disscusses the censorship of student newspapers in the school's journalism room.

Phillip Hemphill

Training out the trouble

Certified teachers act as buffers between students and principals

JAMIE HUGHES
Red Dirt Journal

Reneé Selanders knew the principal was angry when he sent a harsh message to her high school newspaper adviser at Edmond North High School.

Selanders had written an editorial in the Ruff Draft, the newspaper for Edmond's three public high schools, criticizing the rowdy behavior of students at school assemblies.

Her principal told her he saw it as an attack on him.

"I got very upset that he was giving it that much attention," Selanders said. "I didn't expect it to be a big deal. I realized my writing gets read, and it can change things."

She observed at the next assembly that students were quieter and more respectful.

Selanders learned first hand the power of the press because her high school, unlike most others, offers a relatively free environment for expression. She works under the supervision of a certified journalism teacher, Judy Ackerman, and her newspaper is not reviewed by the principal.

Kathryn Jenson White, executive director of Oklahoma Scholastic Media/OIPA, a network of high school journalism programs, said the best-trained journalism teachers have the best high school newspapers.

"Our stance is that the best world has a principal that does not censor before print and circulation," Jenson White said. "Common sense tells us that if a school's adviser is untrained, the students most likely are, and the principal had better look it over for his own protection."

The 1988 U.S. Supreme Court case of Hazelwood School District vs. Kuhlemeier granted principals the right to prior review.

Jenson White said she'd like to see more training for advisers through OSM/OIPA.

"Our goal is to provide support, education and inspiration to media students and their teachers," she said.

Ackerman agreed that many high school advisers are not well-trained.

"To teach basic journalism in Oklahoma, one has to pass a certification test, but to be an adviser, one doesn't," Ackerman said. "Kids this age do need an adviser."

For new advisers, not knowing what their rights are and being tossed in so often withou any experience is a challenge, she said.

Margie Watters, a certified adviser whos Westmoore JAGWire is a frequent award win ner, sees her role as being a buffer between ad ministration and students.

Watters said her principal does not practic prior review, a fact that she attributes to hi confidence in her judgment.

When covering a controversial topic, sh alerts him in advance.

Administrators she has worked with hav even come to her to ask that the students cove topics such as teen pregnancy and drug anc alcohol abuse.

Her photographers have been everywher from the local football game to the deliver room with teen mothers.

"I think we need a free press," Watters said "As journalism teachers we need to choose ou battles."

Jamie Ann Hughes is a hard working "coffee girl" who dreams of one day being the editor of Vogue magazine. In the fall, she will be a senior at Enid High School and the editor of her school newspaper. Hughes really wants to attend St. Gregory's University in Shawnee to study journalism. She has won a journalism award from the Enid News and Eagle as well as from Oklahoma Scholastic Media/OIPA. Hughes, an Enid native, is an only child who lives with her mother and has an allergy to bananas. Her favorite movies are "Pretty in Pink" and "Clueless." Hughes is a fan of Dawson's Creek and the Gilmore Girls. She has no pets and loves the color purple.

— Corey Davidson

Poor lack ACT prep access

Cost hurts those who cannot afford programs, review tutors say

ANGELA NERO
Red Dirt Journal

Edmond Memorial High School and Millwood High School are only 7.52 miles away from each other geographically. Academically, however, they are 433 points apart.

While Edmond Memorial ranks No. 1 in Oklahoma for its student ACT scores, Millwood ranks No. 434.

A factor in such disparities may be in whether districts offer good preparation courses for the three-hour, four-part college entrance exam that helps decide which college a student can attend.

The exam tests students in math, English, science reasoning and reading.

Wendy Pratt, communications director for the Oklahoma Department of Education, said the state does not fund ACT preparatory courses, but many schools do have them.

Options range from semester classes — with some schools having one semester for verbal and one for math — to Saturday or summer programs.

"Individual schools take it out of local money to provide those courses," Pratt said. "It may be foundation money, as well. In 2003, the state graduation requirements closely require what ACT recommends as the college bound curriculum."

Pratt said that one in five Oklahoma students lives in poverty and that is important in how they do on the ACT.

According to a 2002 ACT National Report, students in families with an income less than $18,000 annually averaged a 17.8 composite score, while families with an income more than $100,000 a year averaged 23.5.

The University of Oklahoma requires a 24 for admission, and Oklahoma State University requires a 22. Oklahoma regional universities require a 20.

If a school does not offer free ACT prep, students have other options, but those may be too expensive for low-income students. ACT prep courses like those offered by Kaplan, Princeton Review and Sylvan Learning Center cost as little as $19, but the charge for extensive help can be $2,899, according to the test prep services Web site.

"I think that it's undeniable it's less accessible to kids in lower income families," said Kaplan employee Nick Robinson, a Norman High School graduate now attending Willamette University in Oregon.

The Princeton Review, a for-profit organization that offers private instruction, charges between $1,000 and $1,500, said Ashiq Zaman, a Princeton Review tutor who attends OU.

"It absolutely excludes people who can't afford the program," Zaman said. "You pretty much have to be super rich to afford our program."

However, Zaman said a prep test course is not the only possibility.

Books like "ACT Exam Prep," "The Real ACT Prep Guide" and "Master the ACT Assessment" cost from $20 to $50. Online services like TutorVista and Test-Masters charge between $15 and $80 an hour for private tutoring. ACT and other Web sites offer free sample tests and some guidance.

Norman High School offers ACT preparatory classes and is ranked No. 8 in the state.

"I got a 15 the first time, which is pretty bad," said Turner Troup, a student at Norman High. "So I took the prep class, and I made a 19, which is a four points difference."

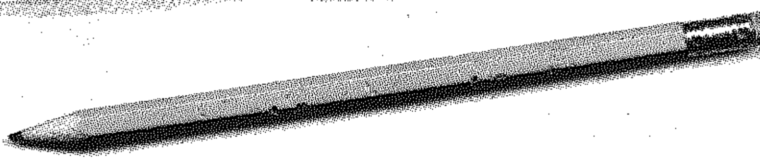
Cindy Brown, senior coordinator for student preparation at the Okla-h o m a State Regents for Higher Education, said she did not know how many schools offer ACT prep.

Although Oklahoma doesn't provide funding for ACT preparatory courses, Brown said the state has distributed 25,000 of ACT, Inc.'s ACTive Prep CDs to state high schools.

She said the state paid "significantly less" than the $500 list price for each CD.

Some schools bring speakers or use different kinds of software, but Brown said she does not think those are the best uses of funds.

"I think the main thing is a rigorous curriculum and diligent studying," she said.



Test Your ACT Knowledge

1 What is the percent of Oklahoma students who take the ACT compared to the national average?
- A. 72
- B. 98
- C. 13
- D. 69
- E. 36

2 What is Oklahoma's average composite score (out of 36 possible points)?
- A. 20.4
- B. 29.2
- C. 19.5
- D. 30.1
- E. 33.0

3 What is the national average composite score (out of 36 possible points)?
- A. 28.6
- B. 32.8
- C. 20.5
- D. 25.7
- E. 20.9

4 Oklahoma has 465 high schools. 441 schools had five or more students take the test. Among these schools, what is the range of average scores?
- A. 11.2 to 25.7
- B. 15 to 23.8
- C. 12 to 30.2
- D. 17.8 to 32.1
- E. 14.7 to 27.9

Answers:
1. D 2. A 3. E 4. B

Photo illustration by Ashley Adriance

For her first trip without her family, Angela Cherelle Nero, 17, chose — with no experience — to pursue her dream in journalism by spending two weeks at the Oklahoma Institute for Diversity in Journalism. Nero said she hopes to start her college career in fall 2007 at the University of Oklahoma after completing her senior year at Ardmore High School. As a two-year member of the National Honor Society, she said she expects her last year will be no challenge. Aside from maintaining her 3.8 grade-point average, she is actively involved in her Baptist church and is president of its youth group. On weekends, she reads romance novels and listens to music — "anything but country." One of her hobbies is eating, although the slim, 5-foot-3-incher said, "I don't know where I put it." —*Lindsey Russell*

Freedom lures newcomers

Range of choices in education, jobs spurs immigrants to achieve goals

SERENA PRAMMANASUDH
Red Dirt Journal

At age 17, Ruben Valdez arrived in Ysleta, Texas, as a migrant worker from Villa Lopez in Mexico.

In Villa Lopez, his family was so poor he had to walk the streets to sell bread and vegetables as their only source of income.

Now, Valdez, 75, said he has found the American dream in Seminole, Texas. He said through an interpreter that he is very happy with his family, his house and his nice community.

"I consider myself a very religious man, and I'm thankful to God [for my good fortune]," Valdez said.

While working in the United States, Valdez sent money to his parents and other family members in Mexico until he could afford to have them join him.

"My primary reason was to give opportunities to my children," he said. All seven have earned college degrees.

Immigrants who have come to the United States say the recipe for the American dream boils down to two key ingredients: education and hard work.

Inhabiting the melting pot are 300 million people, and about 10 percent were born outside the United States, according to statistics from the Pew Hispanic Center.

More than a million new immigrants have been arriving each year since the early 1990s, bringing hopes and dreams for a better life.

Some immigrants come to America for college or post-graduate education.

Dr. Fayyaz Hashmi, a 55-year-old cardiovascular and thoracic surgeon, said an opportunity to get the best medical education was the most compelling reason he came to America.

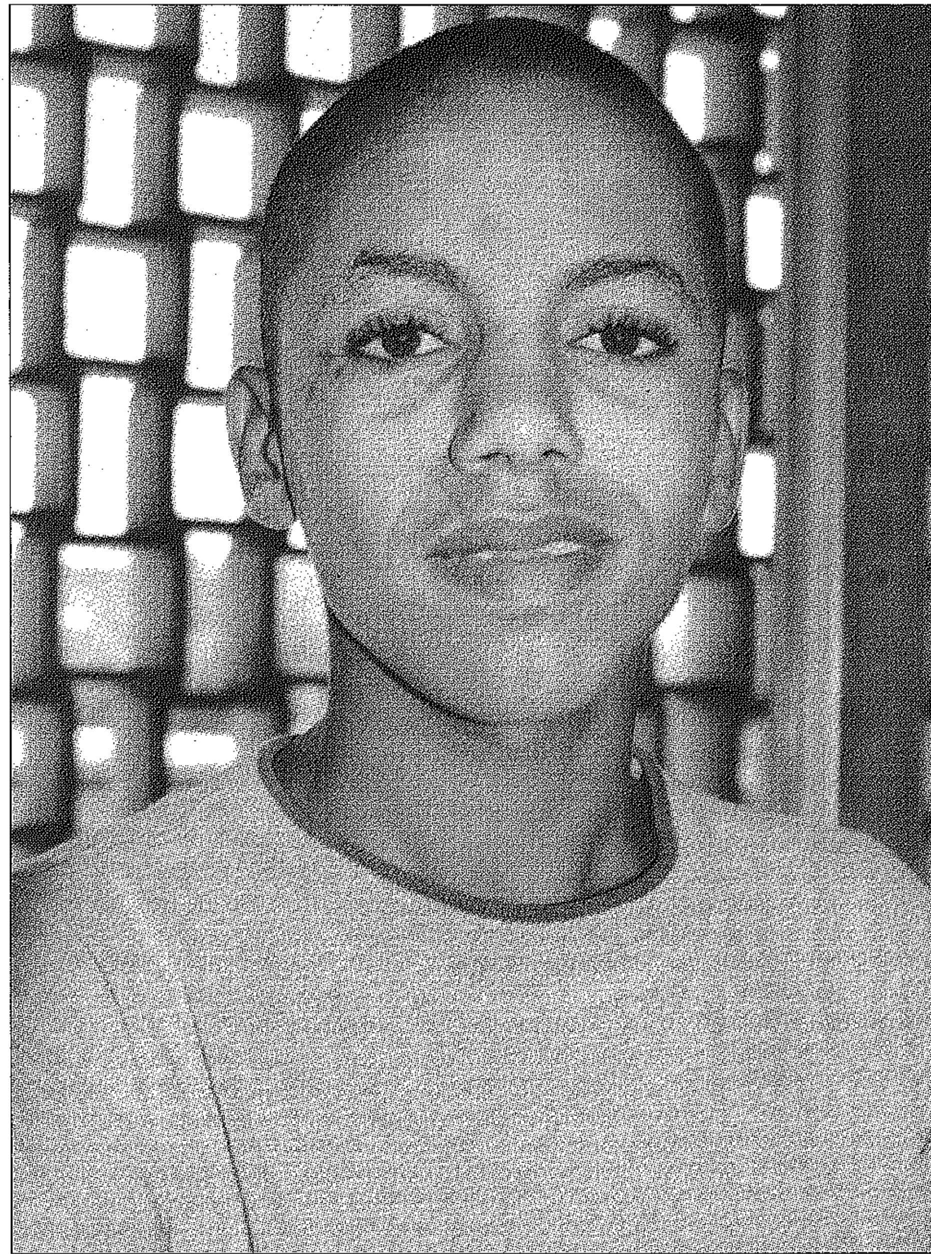
Growing up in Lahore, Pakistan, Hashmi was one of nine children in a middle-class farming family. While attending a local medical school, he continued to do chores such as milking the cows.

In 1974, Hashmi started seven years of post-graduate study at the University of Connecticut and the University of Kentucky.

"Hard work really pays," Hashmi said. Today he is a heart surgeon at the Midwest City Regional Medical Center.

"I think I've achieved everything I've set out to do in the United States," Hashmi said. His success in America allowed him to go back to Pakistan for eight years to build a hospital and work as a medical volunteer.

"I have enjoyed the freedom of work, worship and expressing myself," Hashmi said. "Americans are very generous people."



Serena Prammanasudh

AMERICAN DREAM: Mohamed Ahmed Jined, a Somali refugee from Kenya, wants to become a mechanical engineer. Immigrants keep the American dream alive when they come to the United States with their hopes of a better future.

Women account for about 50 percent of all immigrants to the United States. Included in this group is 19-year-old Sheila Jagannadi from Andhra Pradash, India.

Jagannadi and her family were sponsored by her uncle, Jay Ramanjulu, a librarian at Oklahoma City Community College.

On arrival at JFK airport in New York, Jagannadi was surprised by the thousands of cars in the parking lot. Her uncle said he had the same impression when his plane landed 30 years before.

Jagannadi, who is a sophomore at OCCC, said she is studying biotechnology. Because she has more free time than when she was studying in India, she can get a part-time job.

"America is a great country," she said.

Loyd Bickford, a volunteer at Catholic Charities who works with refugees, said he has gained respect for them.

"Many do not have the basic necessities for life," Bickford said, noting that those people come to the relief center for mere survival.

At the center, Bickford spoke with a Mexican woman who joined her husband in the United States after he had been working here for two years. Bickford said he asked if she was sad to have been away from her husband for so long. She said it was no sadder than not having food to feed their children.

Although about a third of immigrants are from Mexico or other Latin American countries, the American dream is sought by people around the world.

Just a month after arriving in America from Kenya, Mohamed Ahmed Jined, an 18-year-old Somalian refugee, explained his fondness of libraries, reading and playing soccer.

Jined, who learned English in Kenya, said he did not know how his family was able to afford the trip, completed with his mother and 10 siblings.

His father, whom he does not remember, was killed during the Somalian war.

"I think I can get [a] good education, good life and be self-sufficient," Jined said.

He said he aspires to become a mechanical engineer, a profession he could have never pursued in Kenya.

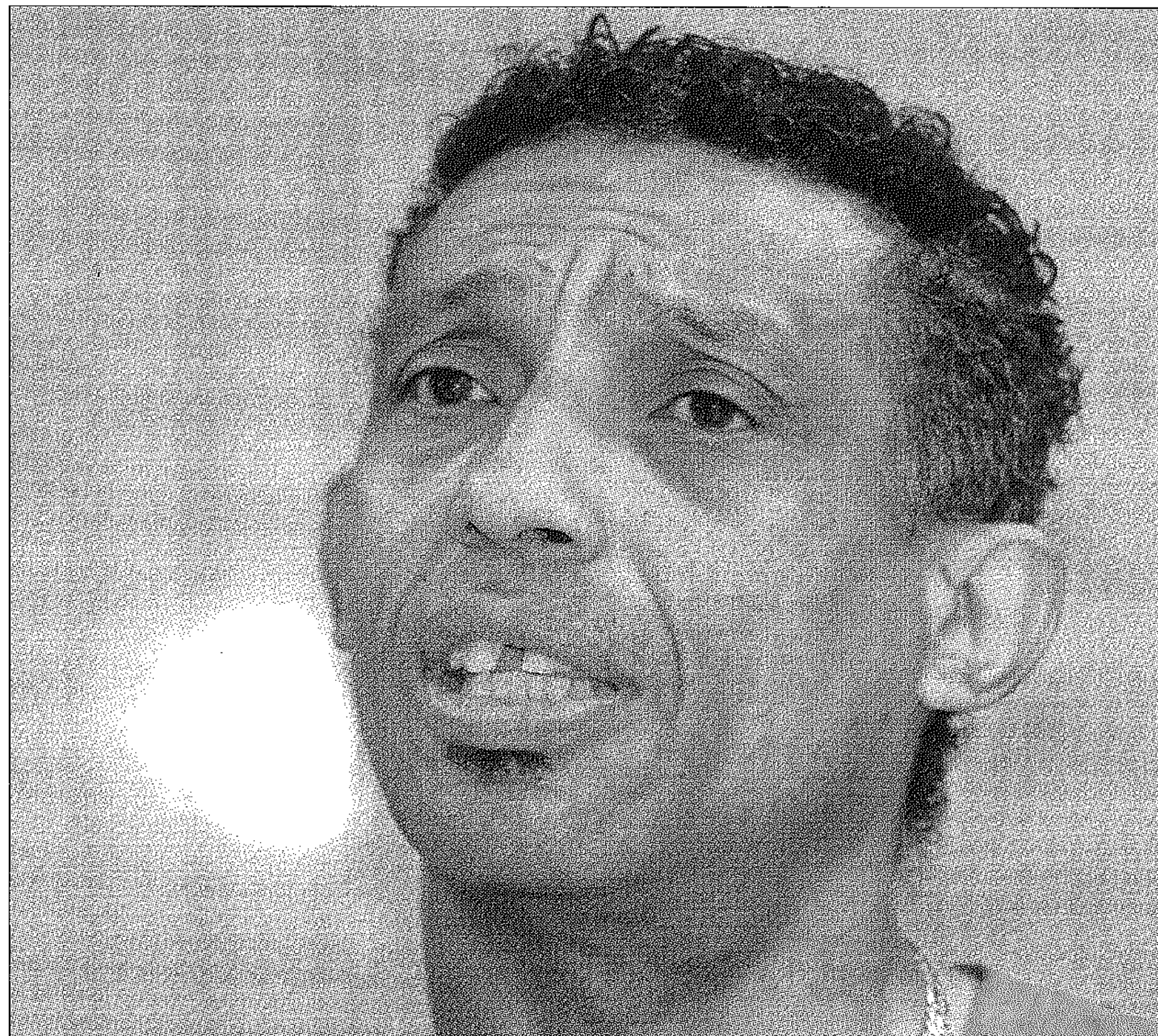
Craig St. John, professor and chair of sociology at the University of Oklahoma, said "Most immigrants pretty much want the same thing Americans want…a high quality living standard."

Serena Prammanasudh has lived in a small town her entire life, but has always wanted to live in a big city. Born in Enid, the 18-year-old senior has traveled to Bangkok, Thailand, and enjoys visiting Chicago. "Living in a small town is OK, but I've always thought of myself as more of a big-city girl," she said. Prammanasudh's father immigrated to the United States from Thailand, and her mother's parents are from China. For 14 years, she has been devoted to tap and ballet. She has also played piano, trumpet, violin and French horn. At Enid High, she has been involved in Young Democrats and Circle of Friends and will be a reporter on the newspaper staff next year. Prammanasudh said she is interested in attending the University of Illinois-Chicago or the University of Oklahoma. — *Khadeeja Elyazgi*

Heartbreaking choices

Families divided when immigrants seek opportunity in new country

MARILYSE DIAZ
Red Dirt Journal


Lindsey Russell

REMEMBERING: Frank Connell shares his story about leaving his three children in Trinidad in order to come to the United States for greater opportunites.

Frank Connell left his home in Trinidad to build a better life in America. However, he had to leave behind three precious treasures, his children.

"One of the most difficult decisions I had to make in my life was to leave my kids behind," said Connell, an immigrant who came to the United States in 1990 to get an education in Oklahoma. He left his children, ages 13, 11 and 2, in the care of their mother, his ex-wife.

Like Connell, many of the 31.1 million immigrants living in the United States face this dilemma. According to the March 2005 Current Population Survey, there are 1.8 million undocumented children in the United States, while another 3.1 million children are U.S. citizens by birth, living in families where the head of the family is undocumented.

Connell, 52, a survey technician in Oklahoma City, had been a police officer in Trinidad for 15 years, but when he stopped getting promotions he decided, at 37, to study engineering at Oklahoma City Community College. Connell said he entered the country legally and could have brought his three children. However, limited finances and ties to their mother made the choice impossible.

"I cried sometimes," Connell said. "I was alone. I didn't have anybody here. The only regret I had was to leave my kids."

Connell kept in contact with his children, but it was hard for all of them.

"I think it had some impact on them," Connell said. "I tried to explain, but how can you explain to an 11-year-old you may never see your dad again?"

Five years after Connell came to the United States, his son Kevin came to live with him as a U.S. resident.

"He came because he needed to be closer to me," Connell said.

Many immigrants are not as fortunate as Connell. Legalization can take a long time, if not forever, for undocumented immigrants.

"Even if someone applies for citizenship or a visa, the wait would be seven to 23 years due to priority lists that immigration has to follow," said Irma Chajeki, director of Immigration Counseling Services for Catholic Charities in Tulsa.

Carlos, who did not want his last name revealed, is an undocumented immigrant from Colombia. The 20-year-old construction worker came to the United States on a five-year visa when he was 9. Although his parents are now residents of the United States, Carlos' visa was not renewed and he lost legal status.

"The first years I went to school and I didn't know that when the five years passed, I had to ask for more permission," Carlos said. "If I would have known, I would have done it. I can't get a driver's license. I can't buy a car. I can't do anything. I'm stuck."

Carlos lives with his girlfriend of two years but is on his own financially. A lot of the time Carlos is working two jobs.

"At first my family in Colombia tried to help me, but there's no way. " Carlos said, "They worry about me."

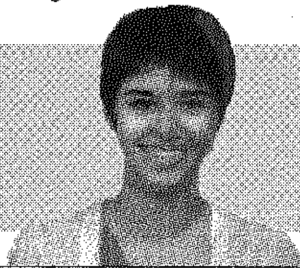
Family members and friends will tell Carlos to stay out of sight if they hear that immigration authorities are somewhere near. Being caught by immigration authorities is a never-ending fear for people in Carlos' position.

"It's something we have to go through every day," he said. "I don't go out. I used to go to the Latino clubs but Immigration went there too. They will go to Wal-Mart and stop anyone that looks Latino."

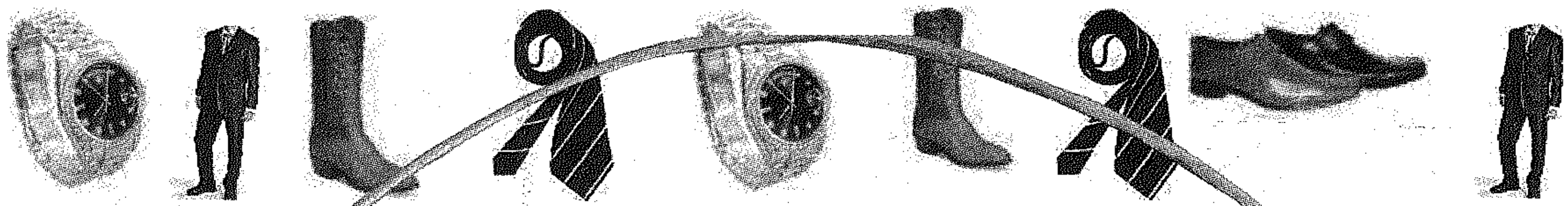
In Tulsa and Oklahoma City, immigration officials have been conducting deportation raids of undocumented immigrants, Chajeki said. Many "mixed status" families, which consist of both documented and undocumented family members, can be further fragmented when one or more members are deported.

Recently, an undocumented mother of three whose husband had been deported, came in for consultation, Chajeki said. The children were born U.S. citizens, but if their mother is deported, the children will have to return to Mexico with her because they have no legal guardian, she said.

Many immigrants say their sacrifices, although tough, are worth it because of what is achieved. Looking back, Connell said, "Sometimes I get up in the morning and say 'man, you've walked a long road.'"

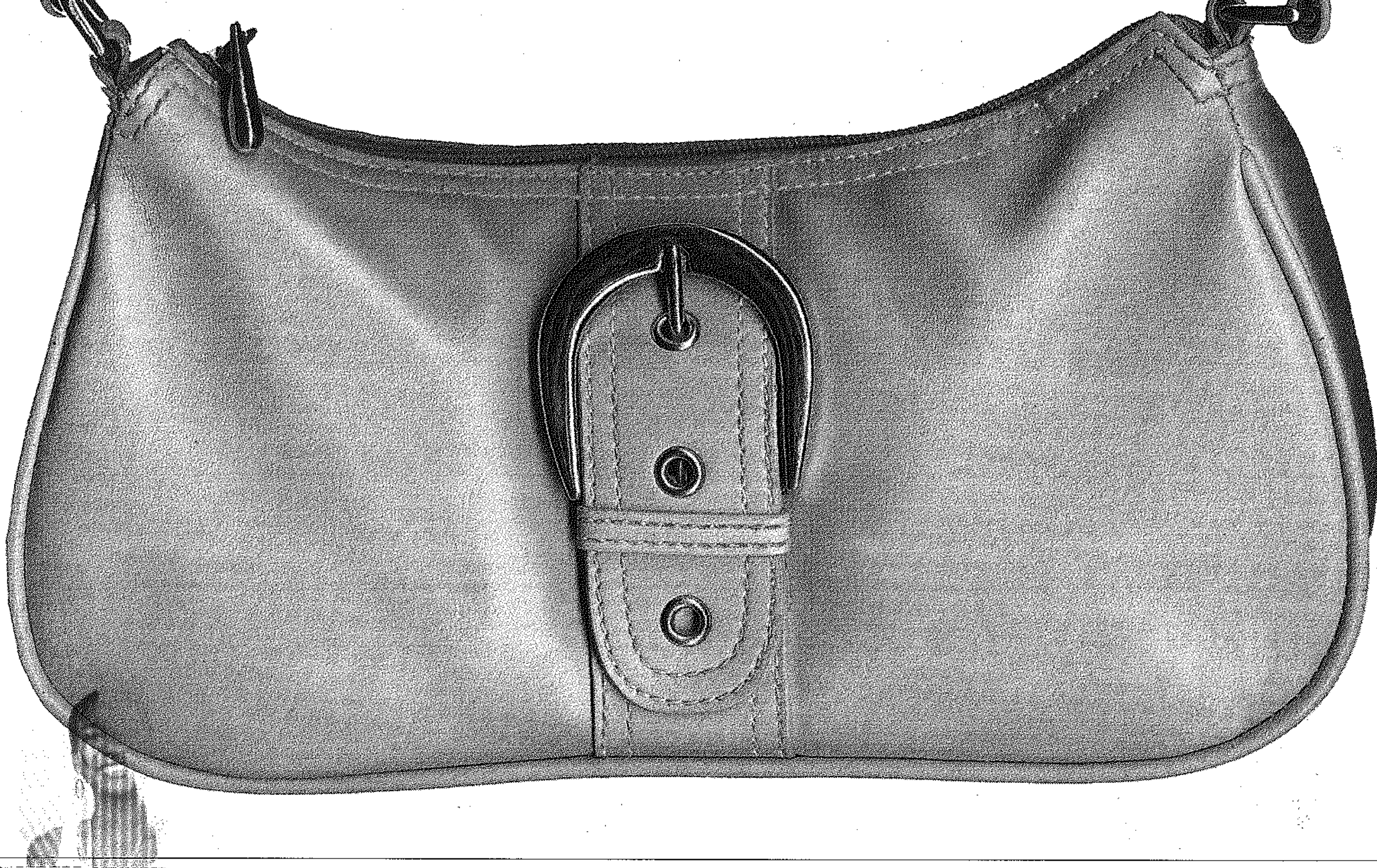


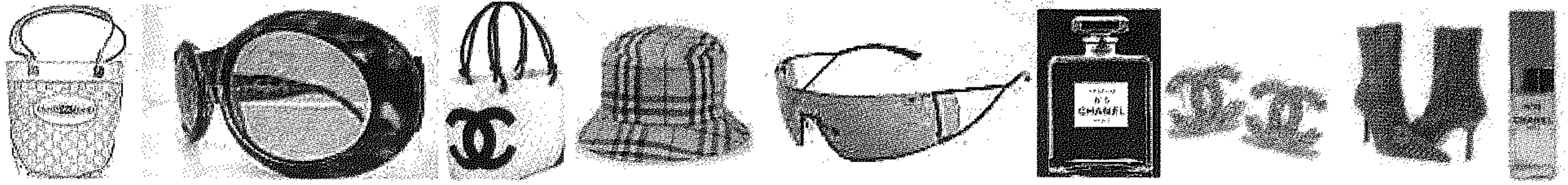
Although Marilyse Diaz lives in Tulsa, she's not only an Oklahoman. She was born in Germany, has lived in Texas and Michigan and plans to attend college out of state. The 17-year-old aspiring journalist said her passion for writing led her to the OIDJ workshop. Diaz said that her two years' writing for the Tulsa World's Satellite, a section by, for and about teens, will help her in the future. She plans to major in journalism and minor in creative writing. "I see myself writing all my life," Diaz said. The senior at Tulsa Memorial High School is a member of the tennis team, school newspaper, Spanish Club and Future Educators Association. She loves to read and is disciplined because she wants to do her best. "I have overcome the stereotype placed upon Hispanics every day, and that's what I'm proud of." *— Breanna Fabrizio*



Fashionistas

chic style or social values





Price of teens trying to fit in may be too high to pay

GABRIELLE ANDERSON
Red Dirt Journal

Designer clothing lines that rapper Jay-Z flaunts in his song, "Excuse Me Miss Again (Remix)," include Manolo, Madden, Armani, Chanel, Vuitton and Burberry, brands in which a purse can cost more than $1,000 and dress shirts more than $600.

On the other side of the music world is India.Arie. In "Acoustic Soul," she writes, "I'm not the average girl from your video/ My worth is not determined by the price of my clothes/ No matter what I'm wearing I will always be India."

Most teenagers fall between these two extremes, trying to fit into social groups and define personalities through their clothes.

Much of fashion behavior is "herd instinct," Cynthia Nellis, an About.com guide to women's fashion, said in an e-mail interview.

"It's human (and animal) nature to want to belong to a group," she wrote. "Nothing is more immediately defining as to which group you belong to as clothing choices (i.e. the cowboy hat, the rapper in gold chains, etc.) Fashion not only gives you the opportunity to reflect your true identity, it offers you the ability to create a completely new one."

Natasha Kotey, a sophomore at Edmond Santa Fe High School, supports that statement.

"When you have friends who have money for designers, you feel like you have to just fit in with them," she said. "Everyone else was trying to buy Louis Vuitton, and I was kind of pulled into the whole designer stuff."

Gabrielle Anderson

FUN WITH FASHION: Linda Miller, fashion editor for The Oklahoman said, "Fashion should be fun; it should not be something people stress about daily."

Kotey said she cares what people think of her but doesn't judge others on the way they dress. She said that shouldn't matter to her, but does, and that she's working on not worrying about people's opinions of her.

Robin Givhan, a 2006 Pulitzer Prize-winning fashion editor for The Washington Post, warned that too much concern with fitting in could harm a person's individuality.

"You can lose your identity if you become too obsessed with specific labels or trends that are out of sync with who you really are," she said. "But sometimes showing your allegiance through clothing can be comforting or empowering."

Tyler Pankratz, a sales associate at Ralph Lauren's Madison Avenue store and a 2005 University of Oklahoma advertising graduate, empathizes with teenagers.

"Middle school and high school cliques will dress in a certain way because they think it's cool," he said. "That's the point in a person's life where stress can be created. It's such an awkward time in life. You're trying to belong to something.

"We talk about our brand as being aspirational. We're doing a Polo shirt with a five-inch Polo pony on it. . . . Those who buy it will spend money they might not even have to have emblazoned right there on the front of their knit shirt that they are part of this."

Whether keeping up appearances for herself or others, Kotey spends from $50 to $75 monthly, while Callie Frazee, 17, an Okeene High School senior, said she spends as much as $1,000.

Even teens who say they dress only for themselves purchase labels. Linda Miller, Oklahoman fashion editor, said teenagers also want to gain acceptance by following trends that celebrities flaunt in movies.

"Everything is branded," she said. "You read about celebrities in magazines wearing certain brands. You read about Britney Spears wearing XXX, and it becomes the brand. So many teens want to dress like celebrities."

Frazee agreed

"If you see a movie star wearing a certain kind of jean, then you'll try to copy it," she said. "They're famous. They know what's in style. They set the trends."

Gabrielle Anderson moved four times before age 6 because of her father's career in the Navy. She lived in Mississippi, Maryland and Virginia before settling down in Edmond. Anderson wants to move to New York to attend graduate school at Columbia after completing college at Oklahoma City University. At Edmond Santa Fe High School, Anderson participated in several activities such as Project Promise, summer camps, French Club, multi-cultural Club and was a member of National Honor Society. Newsroom 101 at The Oklahoman gave her journalistic career a jump-start and later opened the door to opportunities. OIDJ was an opportunity that Anderson was not going to pass up. "Broadcast journalism sounds great, and nothing beats first-hand experience when deciding your career," Anderson said. *—Ashley Adriance*

Diplomat's long road for equality

Perkins' new book tells the world about his fight for global justice

COREY DAVIDSON
Red Dirt Journal

Sitting in his 1940s history class listening to Foreign Service officers, Edward Perkins dreamed about a career that at that time seemed impossible for a black man.

"I kind of got hooked," Perkins said, reflecting on his learning about diplomacy and the path that landed him as academic director of the International Programs Center at the University of Oklahoma.

This year Perkins, 78, has published his memoirs, which detail how he overcame several obstacles to achieve his dreams, including the scrutiny of black rebel leaders in South Africa.

"Mr. Ambassador: Warrior for Peace," tells of Perkins' path to becoming the first black U.S. Ambassador to South Africa and his 38 years in the Foreign Service.

"I thought I had a story to tell myself, and maybe tell the international world in terms of managing foreign policy," Perkins said. "(This book is a) good blueprint for how diplomacy is managed by our country."

The subtitle to Perkins' book, "Warrior for Peace," best describes him, said Ed Corr, former U.S. ambassador to Peru, Bolivia and El Salvador and now a research fellow at IPC.

"His experience in South Africa where he played a very important role in the ending of apartheid is that which most merits the name of warrior for peace," Corr said.

Apartheid was a political structure in South Africa, lasting from the late 1940s until the mid 1990s, which legally oppressed black South Africans. They were often restricted to certain residential areas, confined to certain jobs and denied the right to own land.

Perkins' journey to peace wasn't easy. After arriving in South Africa in 1986, opposition to Perkins arose from black rebel leaders who thought of him as the "white man's lackey." The rebels were skeptical of Perkins because he had to work with white South African leaders and represented the United States, which before hadn't shown much interest in the political structure of South Africa.

Perkins eventually confronted the rebels and explained to them that he was there to help make changes.

"Any diplomat in the world should be a warrior for peace," Perkins said. "That is the role of diplomacy."

Perkins was successful as an ambassador because of his tremendous personal courage, said Tibor Nagy, a former ambassador to Ethiopia and Guinea who now teaches at Texas Tech University.

On his first day in South Africa, Perkins had his limousine driver roll down all the windows and drive through the upper class white neighborhood to show its residents that there was change on the horizon, Corr said.

"[Perkins] represents the best in diplomatic stature," Nagy said.

Perkins has been a U.S. ambassador to Australia, Liberia, South Africa and the United Nations.

Even though Perkins retired from Foreign Service in 1996, he is still a warrior for peace in the way he teaches his students at OU on the making of American policy.

David Boren, president of the University of Oklahoma, said Perkins is an excellent addition to the faculty.

"Ambassador Perkins is a man who holds many titles, including ambassador, diplomat, author and educator. I am pleased to have known Ambassador Perkins for many years as not only a friend, but an individual of incredible courage and conviction, intelligence and gentle humor," Boren said. "Ambassador Perkins is truly a man who has turned the page of history."

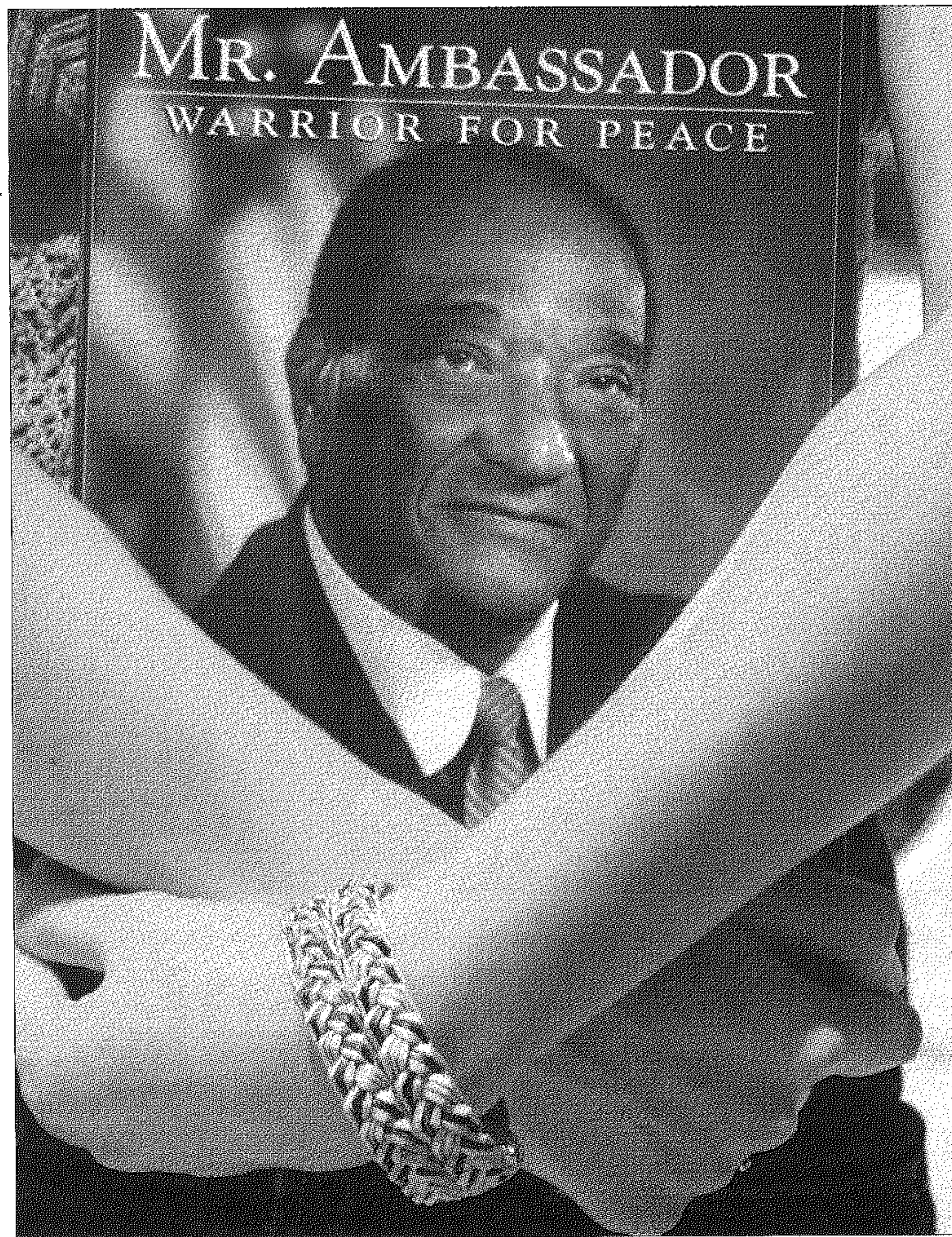


Photo illustration by Corey Davidson

DIPLOMATIC PAPERS: "Mr.Ambassador: Warrior for Peace" are the memoirs of Ambassador Ed Perkins. The book was released by University of Oklahoma Press in 2006.

At 6 feet 5 inches, Corey James Davidson might seem quite intimidating if it weren't for his hair and his unusual sense of humor. Davidson, 18, was born in Denton, Texas. As a junior at Norman High School, Davidson became interested in film and television production. He appeared on five local television shows, one of which he created. Davidson has visited 10 countries. Spain and Scotland are his favorites. He has long-standing ties to the University of Oklahoma, where both parents are professors. His father teaches human relations, and his mother is the director of African and African-American Studies. He lived on campus with his parents for five years. He is coming back in the fall of 2006 for another view of the campus, the student view.
— *Jamie Hughes*

Immigrants' futures in question

Proposed bills could turn undocumented workers into either citizens or criminals

MICHAEL YANG
Red Dirt Journal

The immigration issue reappeared on the nation's radar on Jan. 7, 2004, when President Bush proposed a temporary worker program that would eventually allow undocumented workers to become citizens.

The debate has never stopped raging.

At the heart of the matter is a political fight that could determine the future of millions of undocumented workers.

Late last year, the House passed a bill very different from what Bush had in mind, calling for 700 miles of fence along the U.S.-Mexican border, complete elimination of the Diversity Immigrant Visa lottery and labeling of all undocumented workers as felons.

Victor, Ramón and Rafael, who provide lawn service at Norman area businesses, said classifying undocumented workers as criminals would be extremely unfair because they contribute to the economy by doing honest labor.

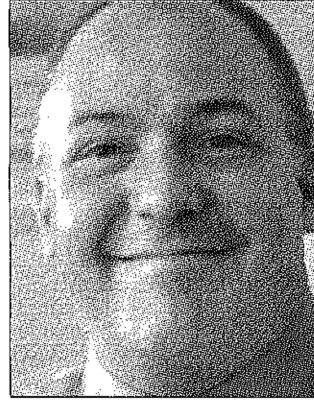
None of the six workers interviewed for this story possessed immigrant documents. For that reason, they asked that they not be identified by their last names.

"I think that it is very insulting to call us criminals when all we are doing is working hard to provide a living for our families," Rafael said through a translator.

Just after its approval, the House bill was the subject of intense backlash in the Latino community, culminating in a nationwide day of protest on May 1. In Oklahoma, on April 1, more than 5,000 immigration bill protestors congregated in front of the state Capitol.

Though Rafael said he is insulted by the idea of his people being characterized as illegal, he and other immigrants do not particularly care if the bill is passed because they do not need amnesty to survive in the United States. He and his coworkers said one way or another, the flow of undocumented workers would not stop.

"People assimilate into the culture. The children learn the culture that they grow up in. What we do is exclude people because we won't legalize them."
— Shirley Cox



"They look to reap the fruit of the system, but they don't want to contribute to it. . . . That sort of separatism is not what the American Dream is all about."
— Randy Terrill

The immigration debate has hit close to home for Margie Solis, director of the Immigration Assistance Program at Catholic Charities in Oklahoma City. The daughter of a Mexican immigrant, Solis works as an attorney to help newcomers find a life in the land of opportunity.

"Immigrants feel like they are American, and yet they are on the outside looking in," Solis said. "They're not from here, and they're not from there."

Gay Hellman, a fellow attorney at Catholic Charities, said undocumented immigration is nothing new, but the political climate has changed.

"Our country has just become really anti-immigrant," Hellman said, "It has become a very racist situation."

Solis and Hellman instead believe that another bill just approved by the Senate would be more successful in containing the stream of workers.

The Senate bill closely resembles Bush's idea of comprehensive reform. At its core is the temporary worker program for undocumented workers who have lived in the United States for at least five years to apply for permanent residency – after paying back taxes and a registration fee. Those that have not lived in the country as long would have to work for a few more years before applying.

The proposed system would not simply grant random amnesty. The immigrants who apply would have to work for legalization.

"It's not amnesty, and that's where people are confused," Solis said. "They're here to work, they have to pay taxes and they're not hurting the economy. They're earning their right to remain in the country."

Contrary to public belief, if the Senate bill were to become law, workers who come in after its confirmation would not be able to register for citizenship. It only allows undocumented workers who have already been living in the United States to have a chance at legalization. News reports estimate that the bill would allow 11 million to 12 million workers to become legal Americans.

Another group of workers – Eduardo, Pablo and Martín – have been in the United States longer than Rafael and his coworkers. The three build houses in a Norman neighborhood. Although citizenship was not uppermost in their minds (in fact, they doubt a chance at amnesty will exist) they said it would be the best reward possible for all of their hard work and they would apply for it at the first opportunity.

Both bills passed their respective chambers – the House in December, the Senate in May – but since then they have been left in legislative limbo. Upon seeing the federal government's indecision, many state governments took matters into their own hands, including Oklahoma.

State Rep. Randy Terrill, R-Moore, authored the most restrictive immigration bill at the state level earlier this year. Terrill said the purpose of the bill was to curb undocumented workers' abuse of public benefits by requiring citizenship when applying for programs. It would also cut off their in-state tuition for going to college.

"They look to reap the fruit of the system, but they don't want to contribute to it," Terrill said. "They don't want to remain here, they don't want to assimilate, they don't want to learn anything about our history, our culture, our tradition. In fact, they very much remain in separate enclaves without fully integrating into the rest of society. That sort of separatism is not what the American Dream is all about."

However, Catholic Charities attorney Shirley Cox said that Terrill's bill, which was killed by its author in the Senate, rode on a "false assumption" about public benefits.

"They are not eligible for Medicaid, except for emergency assistance in the hospital," Cox said. "They're not eligible for food stamps, they're not eligible for childcare subsidies – they're not eligible for any of those programs. His bill is based on the assumption that undocumented workers are getting public benefits, but they're not."

Cox also disagrees with Terrill's view of how much workers give back to their new country.

"People assimilate into the culture," Cox said. "The children learn the culture that they grow up in. What we do is exclude people because we won't legalize them."

No matter which bills are passed, millions of undocumented workers across the United States will be impacted.

Yang Yijun became Michael Yang in 1996. As a six-year-old boy, he moved to Chicago from Beijing at the peak of Chicago Bulls player Michael Jordan's popularity. This name change made him Chinese-American. He moved with his parents to Edmond at 12 when his father took a position as a doctor at the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center. He will attend the Oklahoma School of Science and Mathematics in the fall of 2006 as a junior to possibly pursue a medical career. However, he is currently interested in pursuing journalism. "It doesn't deal with tissue samples from mice," Yang said. With a straight face, he says he enjoys the writing style and the level of honesty. With a variety of interests, it appears he does not have a lack of options.
— Jacquelyn Sparks

Breanna Fabrizio

HELPING HANDS: Volunteer Kat Roberts plays with Samuel Latham, 10 months, at Wonderfully Made, a community service program allowing parents of special needs children to leave their children in supervised care while they spend time together.

Special families, special challenges

Parents, siblings coping with stress of raising children with disabilities

BREANNA FABRIZIO
Red Dirt Journal

Norman residents Mandy and David Latham, married for 14 years, recently had a night out alone for only the second time in 10 months.

Wonderfully Made, a community service program that cares for children with special needs, made their second date possible. Their son, Samuel, 10 months, was born with Pierre Robin Sequence, a disorder that causes a petite lower jaw, a crushed palette and the tongue blocking the airway. Samuel, one of five children in the Latham household, requires constant care.

Added stress and responsibilities are two reasons parents of special needs children experience a higher level of divorce than the general population, said Janice Navins, case management supervisor in the Developmental Disabilities Services Division of Cleveland County Department of Human Services.

Finding service providers and caregivers, keeping a job while caring for the child and providing health care are a few of the challenges parents face. Navins said siblings of special needs children get less attention, a situation that can create resentment.

Accepting the challenges can take a toll on some families.

"I can tell you that families are devastated," Navins said. "They're frantic to try to get the assistance that they need."

DDSD cannot serve all the special needs of individuals who have applied for help. Navins said there were about 4,000 special needs individuals waiting for services in Oklahoma.

Finding caregivers can be expensive, so the Lathams and other families often shoulder most of the work.

The Oklahoma DHS provides help through DDSD, but family support services receives only $3.6 million of DDSD's $266.5 million 2006 budget. That support includes habilitation training specialists, family training, adaptive equipment, respite, specialized medical supplies and environmental accessibility adaptations.

The funds do not include money for family counseling, Navins said. Of the 247 families Navins serves, just one mother is working with a psychologist under special circumstances. The program hopes that by supporting the individual, the family situation will improve, she said.

There is never going to be enough money, Navins said, so communities need to embrace

Marilyse Diaz

FAMILY MATTERS: Norman residents Janet Prince, right, and daughter Chelsea, 18, talk about their experiences as mother and sister to Sarah, 25 (and not in picture), who was born with Down Syndrome. Chelsea said when she and Sarah were younger, they were playmates, but as they grew older, she became the older sister.

these families.

Norman's new Wonderfully Made at Crosspointe Church and Oklahoma City's three-year-old Hannah's Promise at Church of the Servant allow parents to take a night out each month and leave their children with experienced volunteers.

Norman residents Phil and Lisa Scowden and Brian and Stacy Berglan helped found the Wonderfully Made program. On its first night, the program served 17 children, Lisa Scowden said.

Hannah's Promise averages 50 children on the second Saturday of every month and has a waiting list, Brian Berglan said. Wonderfully Made and Hannah's Promise take special needs children and their siblings.

Some of the stresses faced by these families are challenges that a family without a special needs child may never face.

"I think the biggest stress is wondering what will happen when we're gone," said Norman resident Janet Prince, mother of Sarah, 25, who has Down Syndrome. "I've always said that if I could have one wish, it would be to live one day longer than Sarah just to make sure she's OK."

Families cope with stress in therapy groups by becoming part of associations and through finding friends in the community.

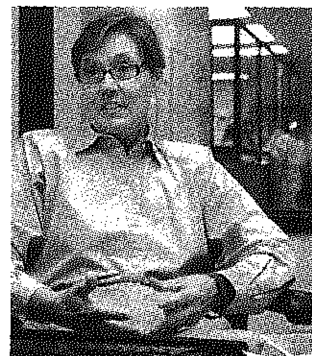
"The biggest blessing was finding people with children who have the same disabilities," Prince said. "You have to take it one day at a time and keep a sense of humor about things."

Breanna Fabrizio

LEARNING EARLY: An unidentified volunteer and her child listen intently to instructions on how to interact with children at Wonderfully Made.

Breanna Fabrizio

FINAL PREP: Brian Berglan, left, listens as Lisa Scowden explains procedures to the volunteers. Berglan said 25 people came to help at Wonderfully Made on its inaugural night.

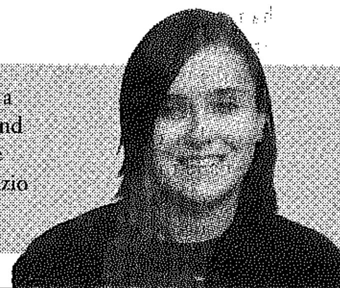


Phillip Hemphill

NEVER ENOUGH: Developmental Disabilities Services Division case management supervisor Janice Navins explains DDSD funding. The state provides little money specifically helping families manage stress.

Breanna Fabrizio refuses to take the easy way out and that has made her a stronger and better person. "I have four brothers and four sisters," Fabrizio said. Even with a cramped house, Fabrizio has never strayed from her studies and has always made good grades look easy. From the first to the eighth grade Fabrizio was in the gifted and talented classes. By the end of the first grade she was reading at a ninth grade level. While a senior at McAlester High School, she received her acceptance letter to the University of Oklahoma, where she will join the Honors College. Time and again she has pushed herself to take the harder classes, which is evident in the work Fabrizio takes on. "I'm a nerd and proud," Fabrizio said.

— *Marilyse Diaz*



The world is not 'right'

Society forces left-handers to adapt, causes complications

LINDSEY RUSSELL
Red Dirt Journal

Samantha Diaz, a born lefty, encountered problems when she attended a Catholic school in kindergarten and first grade.

By second grade, she was a right-hander attending another school.

While studies show that most children are aware of their dominant hand by ages 5 to 7, some have been forced to write and do other tasks in accordance with society's preference for right-handedness.

"The teachers would take the crayon or pencil or whatever from my left hand and place it in my right," Diaz said.

Often viewed as clumsy and lacking natural ability, left-handers must conform to a right-handed world of tools, spiral notebooks, sewing machines and cars. Even doors are designed for right-handers, about 85 percent of the population.

"Saws can become very dangerous," said Geoff Hinton, 35, who works for a Norman homebuilder.

While holding a saw in the left hand, for instance, he must let go of the wood to release the guard on the right side of the saw "and the wood pops up."

Left-handers are more prone to mishaps while using right-handed products, professor M.K. Holder of Indiana University said in an e-mail interview. About 2,500 lefties die annually in accidents involving products designed for right-handers, according to Axiom Media, an information technology consulting firm.

Diaz, 20, a student at Brooks Institute of Photography in Ventura, Calif., recalled being scared most when nuns slapped her left hand and yelled, "Left-handed is evil."

Changing a child's dominant hand can cause severe emotional and physical distress, according to the late Bryng Bryngleson, a University of Minnesota psychology professor and speech pathologist.

Doing so, Bryngleson wrote, can result in stuttering or stammering, difficulty reading and writing, constant headaches, problems with mathematics, behavioral disorders, decreased commonsense, confusion about left/right and reversing letters and numbers.

Diaz, for example, suffers occasional stuttering and mild dyslexia.

Methods to switch a child's dexterity include using an oven mitt, tying the hand down or taking things from the left hand – even verbal criticism.

Mary McMahan, 67, a retired factory worker in Tecumseh, Okla., quilts as a hobby.

"A fellow quilter told me if I would quit using the wrong hand, I would get the job done right," she said.

For left-handers, making cursive writing slant rightward is virtually impossible. To write easily, left-handers must position paper almost 90 degrees to the right.

Carson Taylor, 15, a sophomore at Chickasha High School, is annoyed because "I had to adjust the way I write" and "things are made for right-handed people." Especially irksome are pens that twist open and close near the ballpoint.

Scientists are studying long-term physical effects. Research suggests that lefties are more susceptible to wide-ranging problems, including allergies, drug abuse, epilepsy, schizophrenia, depression, autoimmune diseases and sleeping disorders.

Clare Porac, a psychology professor at Pennsylvania State University, theorizes that genetics determine hand preference, citing the dominant D gene (for dextral, meaning "right") and the recessive C gene (for "chance"). "D" individuals will always be right-handed, while those with the C gene could become right- or left-handed.

Stephen Williams, a British psychologist, explains that the human brain has left and right cerebral hemispheres. The left is the center for speech, science, mathematics, writing, logic and words and their meanings.

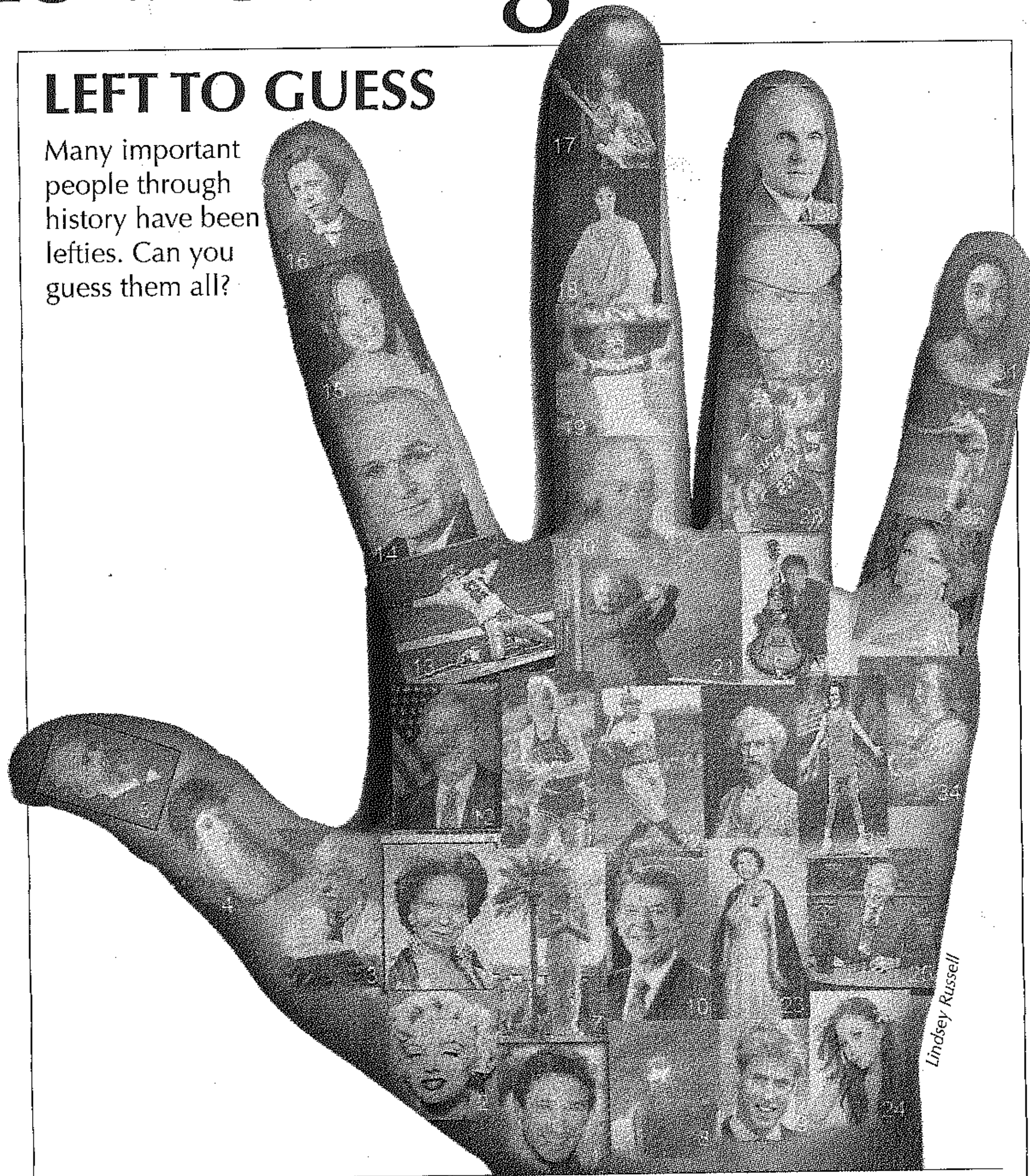
In left-handed individuals, the right hemisphere dominates and is the source of dreams, art, music, perception, creative thinking and emotions. Among actors, musicians, artists, athletes and architects, left-handers dominate.

Being a lefty has *not* fazed Hinton.

"It's different but feels special," he says.

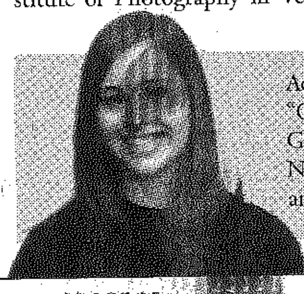
LEFT TO GUESS

Many important people through history have been lefties. Can you guess them all?



Lindsey Russell

ANSWERS: 1. Tim Allen 2. Marilyn Monroe 3. Dick Van Dyke 4. Leonardo da Vinci 5. James Garfield 6. Whoopie Goldberg 7. Ramses II 8. Aristotle 9. Prince William 10. Ronald Reagan 11. Larry Bird 12. George Bush 13. Deion Sanders 14. Harry Truman 15. Julia Roberts 16. Lewis Carroll 17. Jimi Hendrix 18. Joan of Arc 19. John McEnroe 20. Johan Sebastian Bach 21. Albert Einstein 22. Babe Ruth 23. Queen Elizabeth II 24. Mary-Kate Olsen 25. David Letterman 26. Mark Twain 27. Paul McCartney 28. Waymen Tisdale 29. Nicole Kidman 30. Henry Ford 31. Raphael 32. Randy Johnson 33. Oprah Winfrey 34. Benjamin Franklin



Ada High School junior Lindsey Russell, 16, plans a future with many things that matter to her. "I would like to be a pediatrician and go into the mission field," she said. "Once I do that, I want to begin writing books about the missions and whatever God leads me to write about. My favorite quote that I live by is 'Life is your gift from God, but what you do with it is your gift to God.'" Russell is the daughter of a pastor who was once in the military and a mother who teaches elementary school. The National Honor Society member was an exchange student in Japan in spring 2006. Her GPA is 4.429. When she's not taking care of her five dogs, cockatiel, fish, reptiles and amphibians, Russell likes to swim, quilt and travel. She has been a dancer for almost 15 years and an oboe player for six.
—Angela Nero

Building a brighter future

Tribes offer scholarship opportunities for American Indians

ASHLEY ADRIANCE
Red Dirt Journal

College tuition. Low-income family. Single mother at 20. Four-year-old twins. Christina Good Voice faces all of these obstacles. But she is making life work.

"It helped a lot receiving money from my tribe because if I hadn't received that, then I would have had to take out more student loans," said Good Voice, who has also received about $3,000 each semester from her Muscogee (Creek) tribe.

She is the Native American Journalists Association's first student board member and works as a six-month news intern for the Associated Press in Oklahoma City.

In-state tuition for the University of Oklahoma's upcoming academic year is about $5,709. Combining federal financial aid, tribal funding and about $2,000 each semester in student loans, Good Voice is within three credit hours of a bachelor's degree in journalism at OU.

Tribal education aid such as hers is available to many American Indians. Depending on tribal affiliation, those who can present a Certificate of Degree of Indian Blood card may be eligible for college aid.

All Choctaws "who apply for a scholarship receive one," said Joy Culbreath, the tribe's executive education director. "It has nothing to do with where they live or income."

The same is true for Osages. Ted Moore, the tribe's compliance officer, said a recipient "may live anywhere to be eligible for the Osage scholarship."

Cherokees, however, also require students to fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid form and to qualify for a federal Pell grant, which does not have to be repaid. The maximum Pell grant for academic 2006-07 is $4,050.

Ashley Adriance

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES: Christina Good Voice, news intern at the Associated Press for six months in Oklahoma City, is on an internship from the University of Oklahoma.

Funding for Choctaws can continue through completion of master's degrees and doctoral programs.

Cherokee funding for graduate programs is limited, and students with undergraduate aid must reapply. Dale Miller, manager of the Cherokee Higher Education Program, said renewal is not automatic.

The three tribes receive most of their funding from tribal businesses such as casinos and travel plazas.

The Cherokees and Osages receive federal money for scholarship funding, and the Osages also have trust funds.

Choctaws and Osages award scholarships completely based on grade-point average, while Cherokees heavily emphasize financial need. Cherokee recipients are also required to volunteer one hour of service to the tribe or community for every $100 received in scholarship funding.

Craig Henry, 23, an English major planning to graduate from the University of Oklahoma in December 2006, has a $1,600 Pell grant, a $100 award from the OU English Department and is awaiting word on whether his $500 Cherokee stipend will be continued for the fall semester.

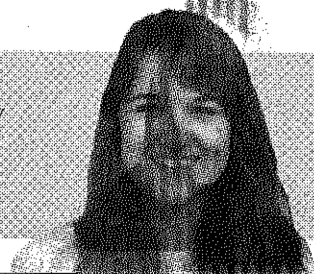
"This year, I received a $4,000 scholarship from the Native American Journalists Association, so that's a huge help," he said. A reporting intern at the Lincoln (Neb.) Journal Star this summer, he works during the school year as assistant to the project director of reznetnews.org, an online newspaper about American Indians.

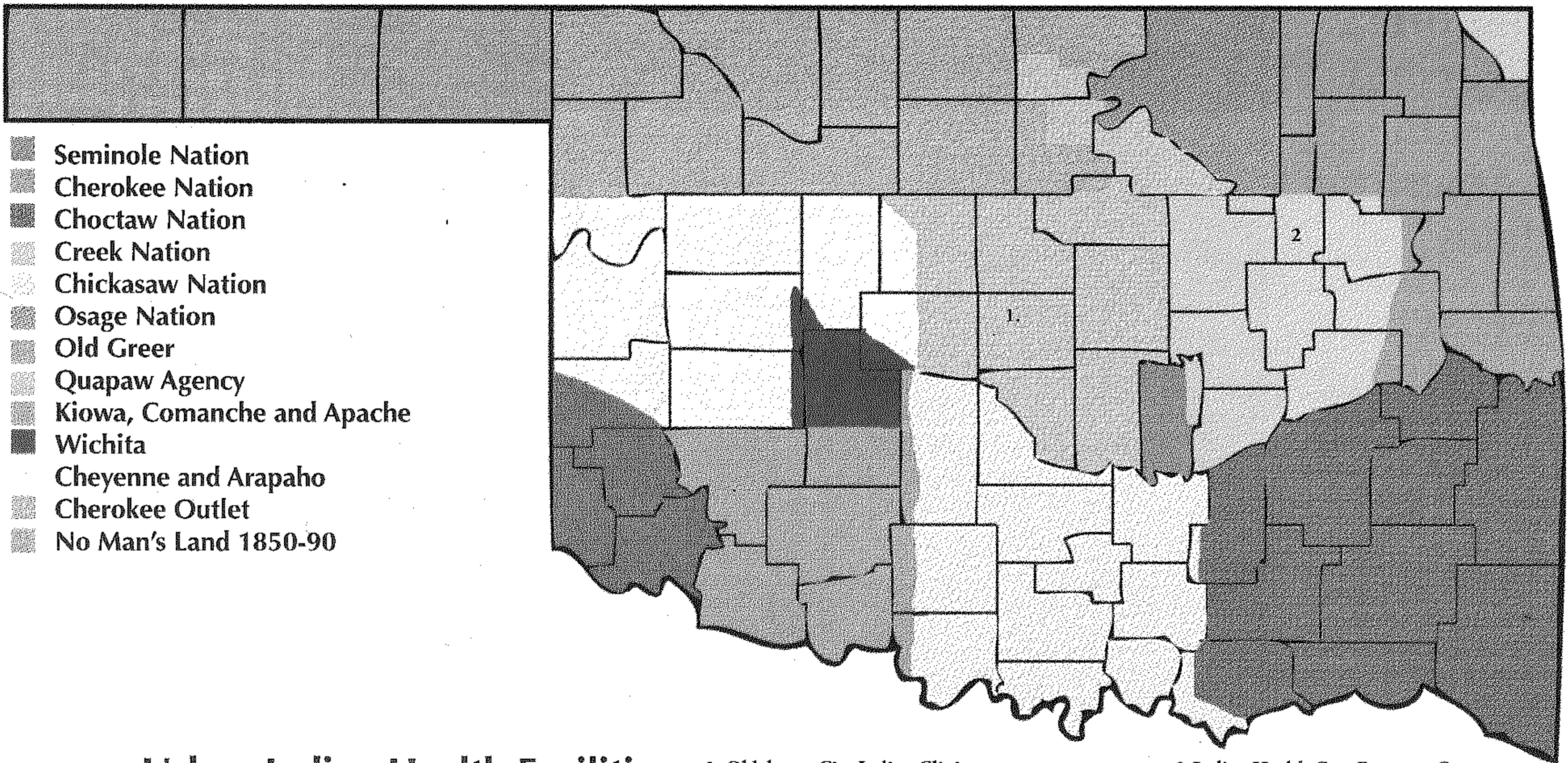
"The difficult thing is keeping your grade-point average high enough to be eligible for that money," Henry said.

One drawback? Filling out paperwork.

"It gets a little tedious at times with the scholarships," he said. "But in the long run, it's worth it."

Getting big air plays a part of this teenage skier's life. "I think water sports has brought my family closer together," said Ashley Adriance, 17, a senior at Houston Christian High School. Adriance skis at nearby Lake Conroe every weekend with her mother, father, brother and her dogs Shelley and You Dog. "My dogs don't ski, but they stay on the boat," Adriance said, smiling. Skiing has long been a key part of her life, but her love of skiing could never overshadow her love of journalism. "I've always had a passion for writing," she said. Her dream job is as a record label's public relations officer or as a music writer for a newspaper or magazine. Adriance will major in journalism at OU. She won't give up her skis for the keyboard, however. "I want to ski until I'm not physically able," she said. — *Gabrielle Anderson*





Urban Indian Health Facilities

1. Oklahoma City Indian Clinic
4913 West Reno Avenue
Oklahoma City, OK 73127
Phone - (405) 948-4900 x286

2. Indian Health Care Resource Center
550 S. Peoria
Tulsa, OK 74120
Phone- (918)588-1900

Health clinics face hurdles

Cutbacks in federal budget threaten level of medical care among Indians

JACQUELYN SPARKS
Red Dirt Journal

On a sweltering July morning, Phoebe Carson sat in the healing circle in the lobby of the Oklahoma City Indian Clinic. The circle is constructed about 6 inches below floor level, about 15 feet wide and surrounded by glass.

Mothers and grandmothers sit on the green-carpeted step, chatting about community issues, holding their sick children and letting the others play. When Carson was waiting to be seen, nearly 50 other people were doing the same.

Carson, a member of the Iowa tribal nation, said she relies on the clinic – an urban center that provides routine health care – because she has no insurance.

Any of the 4 million members of tribal nations in the United States may receive health care at this clinic or the other 33 urban clinic locations across the country. Only two of these clinics are in Oklahoma, the other is in Tulsa.

"If I could easily drive to my nation's clinic, I would," said Carson, whose tribe is headquartered in Perkins, about 60 miles from Oklahoma City. Many would seek treatment from their tribal facilities but can't because of distance. Oklahoma is home to about 300,000 American Indians; the clinic serves about 15,000.

Nationally, about 66 percent of all American Indians are urban, said Joe Swalwell, a grant writer for the Oklahoma City Indian Clinic.

Recently, President Bush proposed cutting $33 million from appropriations that support clinics and tribal health facilities of the Indian Health Service.

Such a cut would have eliminated funds for the Urban Indian Health Programs. Congress restored the funds, but only for 2007. In addition, the Indian Health Care Improvement Act of 1976 expired in the year 2000 and has yet to be renewed.

Historically, this act has secured annual funding for all Indian Health Service programs, said Russell Burkhart, director of planning and development of the Indian Health Care Resource Center in Tulsa.

Urban Indian health care is especially vulnerable, Swalwell said, because the clinics serve members of all tribes and have no specific tribal affiliation.

"There is no reason why the federal government should abandon its charge," Swalwell said. Many tribal nations could continue to run a scaled-back clinic if the Indian Health System is dissolved, but urban clinics with no tribal affiliation would face extinction.

"Indian health care is a savior for a lot of people," said Janie Witleworth, a patient of the Absentee Shawnee clinic outside the community of Little Axe near Norman. Everyday doctors in these hospitals and clinics deal with common American-Indian conditions like diabetes and high blood pressure. Dentistry, optometry and other essential medical services are also offered.

Many patients feel more comfortable in these clinics because Indian doctors under-

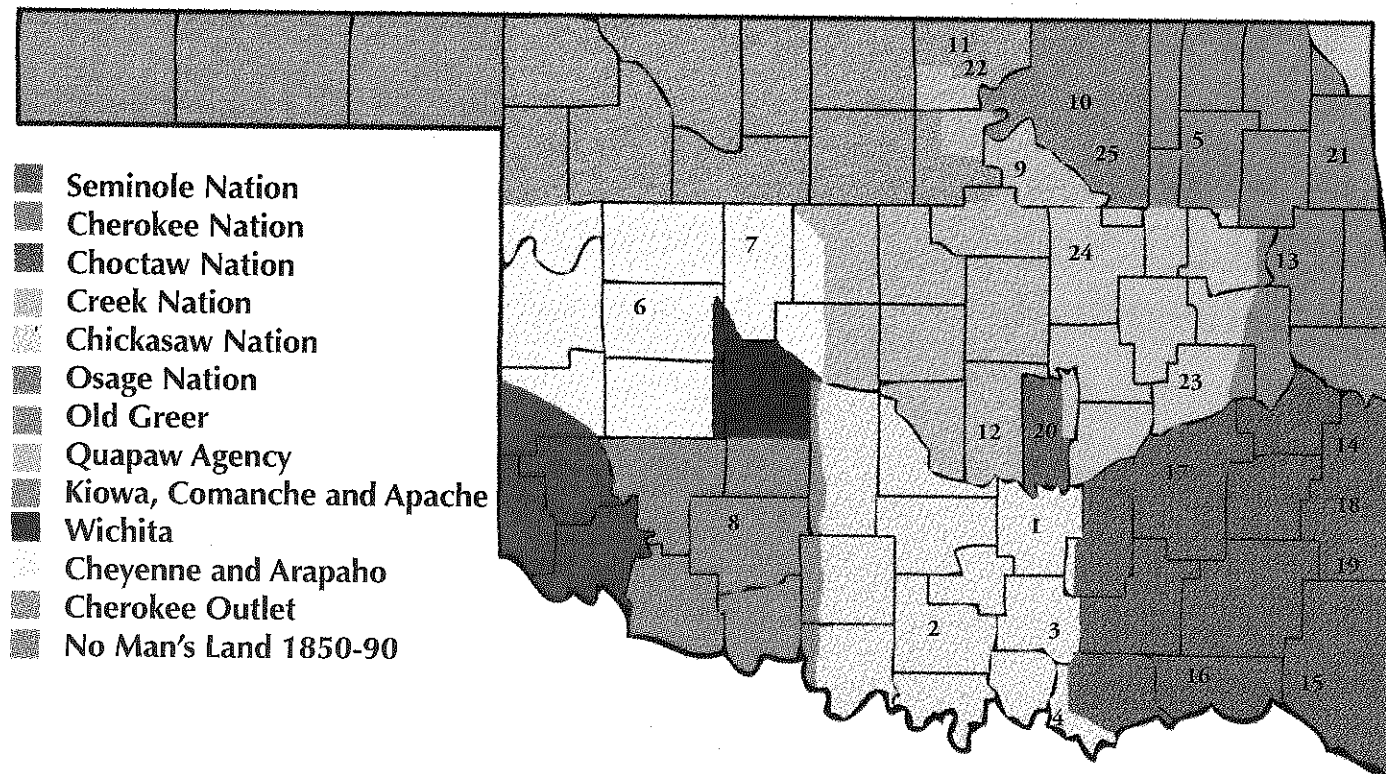
stand more than just the physical, said Susan Shannon, an Osage broadcast journalist for KGOU.

It is estimated that of 4 million American Indians, only about 500 are doctors, said Jerry Tahsequah, associate director of the Native American Center for Excellence. Organizations like NACE recruit Native American high school and undergraduate students to the medical profession.

Indian health services are divided into two major categories. One is IHS facilities, which receive federal and tribal funding and are on a reservation or tribal nation property. The second is urban clinics, which receive only 1.09 percent of IHS funding and are non-tribally affiliated.

Urban or tribal, many facilities like the Oklahoma City clinic would love to expand in the next 10 years to bring service to even more tribal citizens.

"A hospital is always what we are dreaming for, but not within 10 years," Swalwell said. "It's hard to see anything beyond the Indian Health Care Improvement Act being renewed."



Indian Health Service Tribal Health Facilities

1. Carl Albert Indian Hospital
1001 N. Country Club Drive
Ada, OK 74820
580.436.3980

2. Ardmore Chickasaw Health Clinic
2510 Chickasaw Blvd.
Ardmore, OK 73401
580.226.8181

3. Chickasaw Health Center
Tishomingo, OK 73460
580.371.2392

4. Chickasaw/Durant Health Center
1702 W. Elm
Durant, OK 74701
580.920.2100

5. Claremore Indian Hospital
101 S Moore Ave, Claremore, OK
(918) 342-6200

6. Clinton Indian Hospital
Clinton, OK
(580) 323-2884

7. Watonga Indian Health Center
204 W Main St, Watonga, OK
(580) 623-4991

8. Lawton Indian Hospital
1515 NE Lawrie Tatum Rd, Lawton, OK
(580) 353-0350

9. Pawnee Indian Health Center
1201 Herritage Circle
Pawnee, OK 74058
(918) 762-2517

10. Pawhuska Indian Health Center
715 Grandview Ave
Pawhuska, OK 74056
(918) 287-4491

11. White Eagle Health Center
20 White Eagle Drive
Ponca City, OK 74601
(580) 765-2501

12. Citizen Totawtati Health Services
2307 S Gordon Cooper Dr.
Shawnee , OK 74801
(405) 273-5236

13. W.W. Hasting Indian Hospital
100 S BLISS
Talequah, OK 74464

14. Choctaw Nation Health Care Center
One Choctaw Way
Talihina, OK 74571
(800) 349-7026

15. Choctoaw Nation Health Clinic Broken Bow
205 East 3rd Street
Broken Bow, OK 74728
(580)584-2766
(580)584-2740

16. Choctaw Nation Health Clinic
410 North M Street
P.O. Box 340
Hugo, OK 74743
(580) 326-7561

17. Choctaw Nation Health Center
903 East Monroe
McAlester, OK 74501
(918) 423-8440

18. Rubin White Health Clinic
109 Kerr Avenue
Poteau, OK 74953
(918) 649-1100

19. Choctaw Nation Diabetes Wellness Center
One Choctaw Way
Talihina, OK 74571
(918) 567-7000 ext. 6673 (appointments)

20. Wewoka Indian Health Center
P.O. Box 1475
Wewoka, OK 74884
405.257.6281

21. Sam Harder Community Clinic
1015 Washburn St. PO Box 350
Jay, OK 74346
(918) 253-4271
(877) 293-4271

22. Okemah Hospital
Creek Nation Community Hospital
309 North 14th Street
Okemah, OK 74859

23. Eufaula Indian Health Center
800 Forest Avenue
Eufaula, OK 74432
(918)689-2547

24. Salpulpa Indian Health Center
1125 E. Cleveland
Sapulpa, OK 74460
(918)224-9310

25. Pawhuska Indian Health Clinic
715 Grandview
Pawhuska, OK 74056
(918) 287-4491

Jacquelyn Sparks has wanted to be a photojournalist like her father since she was 7, and now she pursues the career with a passion. After one visit to a darkroom, she was hooked. "The darkroom was what originally led me to my current career," Sparks said. "Now photography is the way I communicate with people." Immediately after her darkroom experience, Sparks had her father mentor her. She went to high school at the Classen School of Advanced Studies, where she majored in visual arts. Sparks attended the Oklahoma Summer Arts Institute three times and plans to return to the program as a liaison when she turns 21. Sparks is a "semi-professional" photographer at the age of 18; she is rarely without her trusty Nikon D70S camera. At Oklahoma City University, she will major in photography. *—Michael Yang*

A sea of bureaucratic ink

Tattoo parlors skirt regulations in period before law takes effect

PHILLIP HEMPHILL
Red Dirt Journal

Ten weeks after Oklahoma became the last state to legalize tattoo parlors and about three months before tattooing becomes a state-sanctioned industry, such facilities are multiplying without state regulation or supervision.

The parlors are thriving under the tacit approval of county prosecutors while state health officials prepare the documentation and infrastructure necessary to regulate the industry.

Under the new law, the Oklahoma State Department of Health is charged with inspecting parlors twice annually. But Tressa Madden, its director of consumer protection, said that would not begin until the law takes effect on Nov. 1.

Parlors in the state, such as two operating for more than a year in Oklahoma City and two others in Norman, are "technically illegal," said Debra Forshee, spokeswoman for the Oklahoma County district attorney's office.

State Attorney General Drew Edmondson said his office has no enforcement over tattoo parlors and that "it is up to the district attorney to prosecute them." Forshee noted that law enforcement agencies must press charges before the district attorney can act.

"I'm going to assume that [parlors] are being safe," said Tulsa County District Attorney Timothy Harris. "They will want repeat customers so they will have internal regulations."

Charges of illegal tattooing have been sporadic.

Early this year, three men were arrested in Oklahoma City for tattooing illegally, said Rep. Al Lindley (D-Oklahoma City), who co-sponsored the tattoo legislation. "Once the bill passed," he said, "charges against the three were dropped."

The law, which overturns a 1963 ban, mandates that no one can buy or keep tattoo equipment without certification as a micropigmentologist or Oklahoma tattoo artist. Parlors cannot locate within 1,000 feet of a church, school or playground.

Body piercing and tattoo artists must be licensed. Violations can result in 90 days in jail and/or fines of up to $5,000. Those applying for a license must advertise in a newspaper.

Madden said the health department "got more active on educating the House and Senate about the dangers of unregulated tattooing. . . .We have been backing legislation like this for a year and a half."

The new law came after the health department reported that 14 percent of the state's Hepatitis C cases in 2005 involved people with tattoos. Hepatitis C is a liver disease caused by a virus and spread by contact with the blood of an infected person.

"It has been a health issue," said Sen. Frank Shurden (D-Henryetta), another co-sponsor. "The health department has been trying to pass a law like this due to the spread of Hepatitis C and maybe even AIDS. People were getting tattoos anyway. We had to regulate the back-alley parlors."

Establishing a clean and sterile environment is a priority at Sunset Tattoos in downtown Norman, said Jon Cagle, 33, a tattoo artist who said he has been in the tattoo industry for 16 years.

"People won't come if a place isn't practicing proper procedures," he said. "People are going to have to meet and exceed the regulations set forth to maintain a safe setting."

Heidi Puckett, associate director of admissions at the Oklahoma City University law school, has five tattoos, each from a state other than Oklahoma.

"There are people who just assume a place is clean," she said, "but even when it's regulated in Oklahoma, you should ask questions. I think that now, with the regulations, it will be a lot safer and cleaner."

Manny, who asked not be identified further, is a tattoo artist in Oklahoma City who is self taught and said he has a bachelor's degree in art education.

"I'm happy it's become legalized," he said. "I feel like a lot of bad ink is coming out of the local shops."

Among those with mixed feelings about the new law is Sam Ingle, owner of Ink Pit Tattoo Studio seven miles across the Oklahoma line in tiny Gainesville, Texas.

"It's about time Oklahoma got on the bandwagon and got it passed," he said. But, he added, "we're gonna lose business. The majority of business was from Oklahoma."

Red Dirt Journal writers Breanna Fabrizio, Anisah Hashmi, Serena Prammanasudh and Jacquelyn Sparks contributed to this report.

Phillip Hemphill

NORMAN INK: Tattoo artist Jon Cagle fashions a palm tree on a client. On Nov. 1, a new law will allow anyone 18 and older to get tattoos in Oklahoma.

RULES OF THE PARLOR

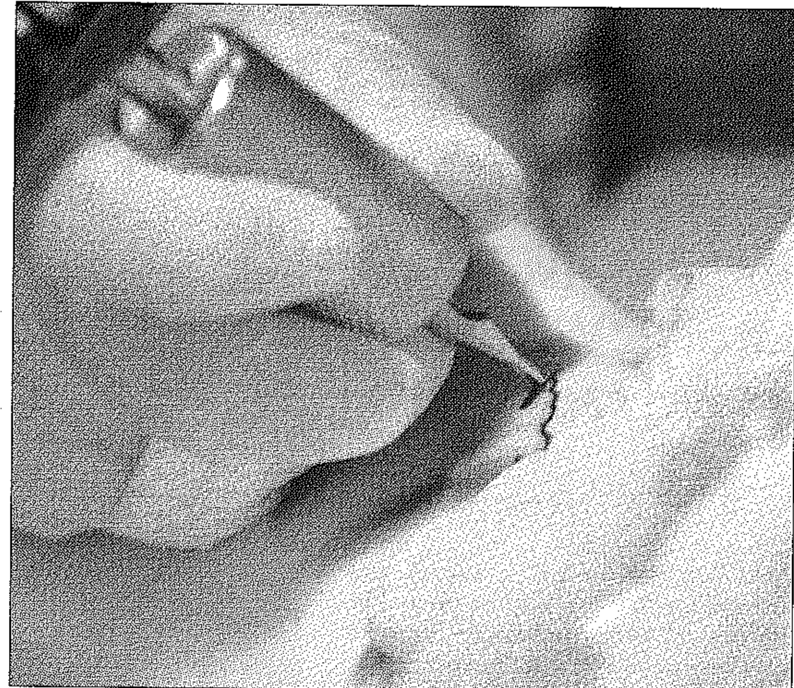
Although Oklahoma health officials have yet to begin inspecting tattoo parlors, here are some questions inspectors ask when checking parlors in Iowa.

- Is there a sink for handwashing with hot and cold running water available in the tattoo area?
- Are records for monthly biological monitoring of sterilizers available?
- Is the skin area to be tattoed cleaned with soap using single use towels or sponges?
- Are ink cups and dyes or inks for single patron use?
- Is smoking and consumption of food or drink prohibited in the area where the actual tatttoo procedure is performed?
- Are instruments and dyes, pigments, stencils, tattoo machines and equipment stored in closed cabinets?
- Are razors single-patron use and disposable?
- Are toilet facilities available?

Source: Iowa Department of Public Health

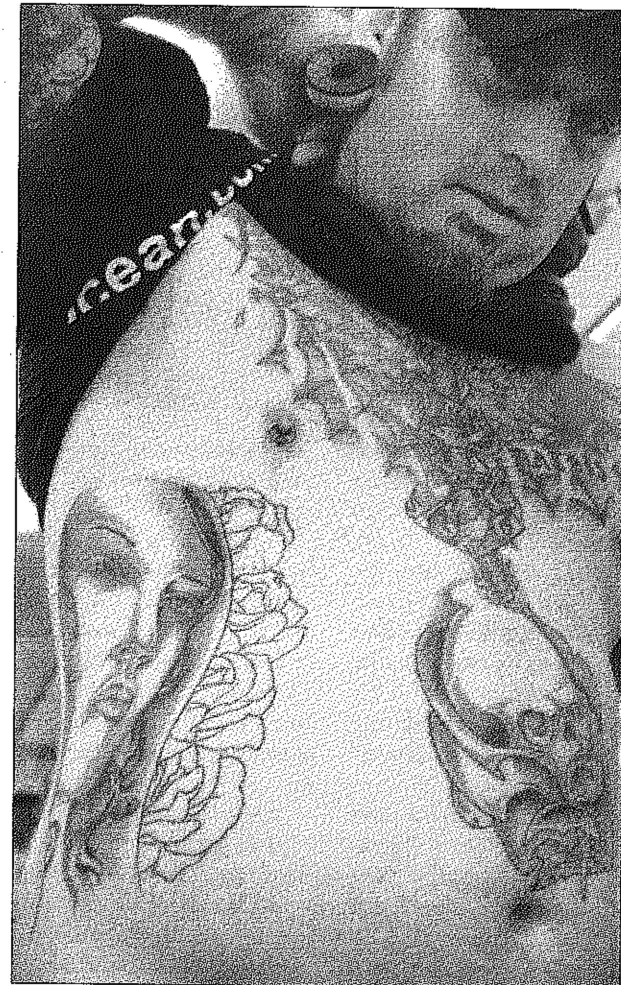
Phillip Hemphill

WRAPPED AND READY: Laura Carter displays her new tattoo after being bandaged. The bandaging is necessary to prevent bleeding after the procedure, but there is still some on her ankle, as shown by the pink spot.



Corey Davidson

DYEING FOR IT: Tattoo artist Jon Cagle uses a needle to outline his customer's tattoo of choice.



Corey Davidson

TAT-A-TAT-TAT: Dustin Mathis, a body piercing operator at Mystical Illusions in Oklahoma City, shows off his various tattoos.

Phillip Hemphill, 18, of Yukon, hopes to become a freelance photojournalist before he opens his own publishing company. Hemphill finds his inspiration from Oregonian layout designer Tim Harrower, who taught him everything about design. He said Harrower's book helped Yukon High win several awards and inspired him to take first place at a Cameron University journalism contest. His passion for photography, he said, sparked his interest in journalism. Hemphill said the newspaper writing class he took in high school encouraged him to pursue a career in journalism. "One day I want to own and operate a publishing company with everything from news and entertainment to fashion," he said. Phillip plans to follow his dreams at the University of Oklahoma in the fall.

— Anisah Hashmi

Poor lack ACT prep access

Cost hurts those who cannot afford programs, review tutors say

ANGELA NERO
Red Dirt Journal

Edmond Memorial High School and Millwood High School are only 7.52 miles away from each other geographically. Academically, however, they are 433 points apart.

While Edmond Memorial ranks No. 1 in Oklahoma for its student ACT scores, Millwood ranks No. 434.

A factor in such disparities may be in whether districts offer good preparation courses for the three-hour, four-part college entrance exam that helps decide which college a student can attend.

The exam tests students in math, English, science reasoning and reading.

Wendy Pratt, communications director for the Oklahoma Department of Education, said the state does not fund ACT preparatory courses, but many schools do have them.

Options range from semester classes — with some schools having one semester for verbal and one for math — to Saturday or summer programs.

"Individual schools take it out of local money to provide those courses," Pratt said. "It may be foundation money, as well. In 2003, the state graduation requirements closely require what ACT recommends as the college bound curriculum."

Pratt said that one in five Oklahoma students lives in poverty and that is important in how they do on the ACT.

According to a 2002 ACT National Report, students in families with an income less than $18,000 annually averaged a 17.8 composite score, while families with an income more than $100,000 a year averaged 23.5.

The University of Oklahoma requires a 24 for admission, and Oklahoma State University requires a 22. Oklahoma regional universities require a 20.

If a school does not offer free ACT prep, students have other options, but those may be too expensive for low-income students. ACT prep courses like those offered by Kaplan, Princeton Review and Sylvan Learning Center cost as little as $19, but the charge for extensive help can be $2,899, according to the test prep services Web site.

"I think that it's undeniable it's less accessible to kids in lower income families," said Kaplan employee Nick Robinson, a Norman High School graduate now attending Willamette University in Oregon.

The Princeton Review, a for-profit organization that offers private instruction, charges between $1,000 and $1,500, said Ashiq Zaman, a Princeton Review tutor who attends OU.

"It absolutely excludes people who can't afford the program," Zaman said. "You pretty much have to be super rich to afford our program."

However, Zaman said a prep test course is not the only possibility.

Books like "ACT Exam Prep," "The Real ACT Prep Guide" and "Master the ACT Assessment" cost from $20 to $50. Online services like TutorVista and Test-Masters charge between $15 and $80 an hour for private tutoring. ACT and other Web sites offer free sample tests and some guidance.

Norman High School offers ACT preparatory classes and is ranked No. 8 in the state.

"I got a 15 the first time, which is pretty bad," said Turner Troup, a student at Norman High. "So I took the prep class, and I made a 19, which is a four points difference."

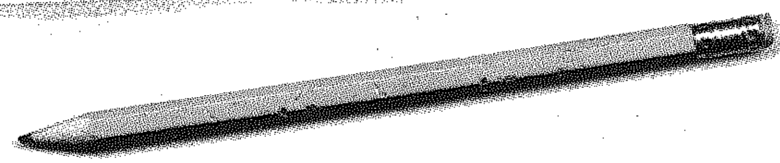
Cindy Brown, senior coordinator for student preparation at the Okla-h o m a State Regents for Higher Education, said she did not know how many schools offer ACT prep.

Although Oklahoma doesn't provide funding for ACT preparatory courses, Brown said the state has distributed 25,000 of ACT, Inc.'s ACTive Prep CDs to state high schools.

She said the state paid "significantly less" than the $500 list price for each CD.

Some schools bring speakers or use different kinds of software, but Brown said she does not think those are the best uses of funds.

"I think the main thing is a rigorous curriculum and diligent studying," she said.



Test Your ACT Knowledge

1 What is the percent of Oklahoma students who take the ACT compared to the national average?
A. 72
B. 98
C. 13
D. 69
E. 36

2 What is Oklahoma's average composite score (out of 36 possible points)?
A. 20.4
B. 29.2
C. 19.5
D. 30.1
E. 33.0

3 What is the national average composite score (out of 36 possible points)?
A. 28.6
B. 32.8
C. 20.5
D. 25.7
E. 20.9

4 Oklahoma has 465 high schools. 441 schools had five or more students take the test. Among these schools, what is the range of average scores?
A. 11.2 to 25.7
B. 15 to 23.8
C. 12 to 30.2
D. 17.8 to 32.1
E. 14.7 to 27.9

Answers:
1. D 2. A 3. E 4. B

Photo illustration by Ashley Adriance

For her first trip without her family, Angela Cherelle Nero, 17, chose — with no experience — to pursue her dream in journalism by spending two weeks at the Oklahoma Institute for Diversity in Journalism. Nero said she hopes to start her college career in fall 2007 at the University of Oklahoma after completing her senior year at Ardmore High School. As a two-year member of the National Honor Society, she said she expects her last year will be no challenge. Aside from maintaining her 3.8 grade-point average, she is actively involved in her Baptist church and is president of its youth group. On weekends, she reads romance novels and listens to music — "anything but country." One of her hobbies is eating, although the slim, 5-foot-3-incher said, "I don't know where I put it." *–Lindsey Russell*

Fighting misrepresentation

Muslims strive to promote positive image of their faith

ANISAH HASHMI
Red Dirt Journal

By his 13th birthday, Imad Enchassi had seen more death and destruction than most people would see in a lifetime. Enchassi, 41, grew up in a Beirut refugee camp for Palestinians, where war was a staple.

"When I came to America as a 17-year-old, I couldn't sleep at night because there weren't bullets and bombs going off," said Enchassi, an imam of the Islamic Society of Greater Oklahoma City.

Most Muslims who have come to the United States from Islamic countries lived under abusive governments. Non-Muslims have to understand the sensitivities of different cultures and backgrounds.

"We have to go to the FBI and tell them it's not okay to kick down their door if they don't answer in the middle of the night," Enchassi said. "They didn't answer because they were scared to death and you make it worse. It reminds them of the governments they lived under."

Since 9/11, Muslims have been identified as one group, the extremists who commit terrorist acts in the name of their religion. However, Enchassi and other Muslims want to differentiate themselves from those groups and condemn their actions.

"We don't like being racially profiled," he said. "When people stand in front of the plane for me when I get off, it's embarrassing. But I try to remember to keep my Muslim manners, no matter how upset or angry I am."

The Quran does not justify the acts of extremists, Enchassi said.

Khadeeja Elyazgi

SETTING IT STRAIGHT: Imam Imad Enchassi discusses the different aspects of Islam and preconceived images of Muslims. Great diversity exists among the backgrounds of Muslims and the way they practice their religion.

"I always tell people that what terrorism is to Islam, KKK is to Christianity," he said, "No one thinks the KKK is Christian, even though they have the biggest cross I've ever seen."

Those attending a recent Friday prayer service where Enchassi presides illustrated Muslim diversity. There were African, Arab, Caucasian, Asian and Native Americans. Enchassi said people do not see this diversity.

"Not all Muslims look like me, so there are misconceptions about race, intentions, etcetera," said Enchassi, whose wife is Native American and Hispanic. "We don't wake up in the morning and think, 'Oh, who are we going to terrorize next?'"

"There's the misconception that all Muslims are Arabs and all Arabs are Muslims. It's actually about 18 percent of Arabs that are Muslim. People think this because the Quran is in Arabic. The Bible was too; Jesus Christ was my neighbor," Enchassi said.

Francisco Villanueva, a Mexican-American convert, said the diversity of Islam includes different sects and segregation within the different cultural groups, but these are not differences the prophet Muhammad established.

Muslims should not focus on their differences, but work to battle misperceptions, he said.

Ayesha Sehgal, a Pakistani-American Muslim, said there are also differences in the way the religion is practiced.

"In my heart I'm the same as a woman who wears hijab. There are religious people or not very religious people. But if I don't wear a scarf it doesn't mean I'm not Muslim," said Sehgal.

Malaka Elyazgi, a Palestinian-American Muslim who immigrated to the United States, said some Americans do not understand how difficult it is to adapt to a new culture.

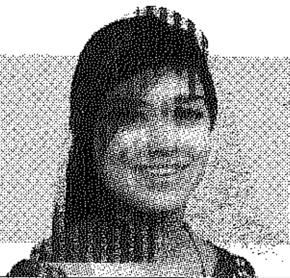
Elyazgi said she is a moderate Muslim who chooses to wear a hijab and is willing to deal with the possible discrimination and misperceptions.

"I wear my scarf out of conviction; this is part of me and I couldn't be anything other than that," Elyazgi said.

Elyazgi, a mother of six and currently working on a degree in women's studies, said her children's generation would change the perception of Muslims in America. They will be the bridge between their immigrant parents and their non- Muslim neighbors.

"I believe that they best represent Islam in this country," she said. "This generation is part of the old world, but brought up in the new one. They should be well educated in their faith. They are the ones that will spread knowledge."

A senior at Casady High School, 17-year-old Anisah Hashmi has wanted to set the world right about her culture. "I signed up for this diversity workshop after a great deal of consideration on whether or not to pursue a career in journalism," Hashmi said. Hashmi, a contemporary Muslim, spent her childhood growing up in two nations, Pakistan and the United States. "Comparing the two countries has really opened up my eyes. The United States is a First World country, while Pakistan is a Third World country when it comes to their level of poverty. Living in Pakistan was a great character builder for me," Hashmi said. She constantly moved back and forth between her two homes in opposite halves of the world. "I don't feel like any nation is my home," she said. "My home is wherever I go." —*Phillip Hemphill*



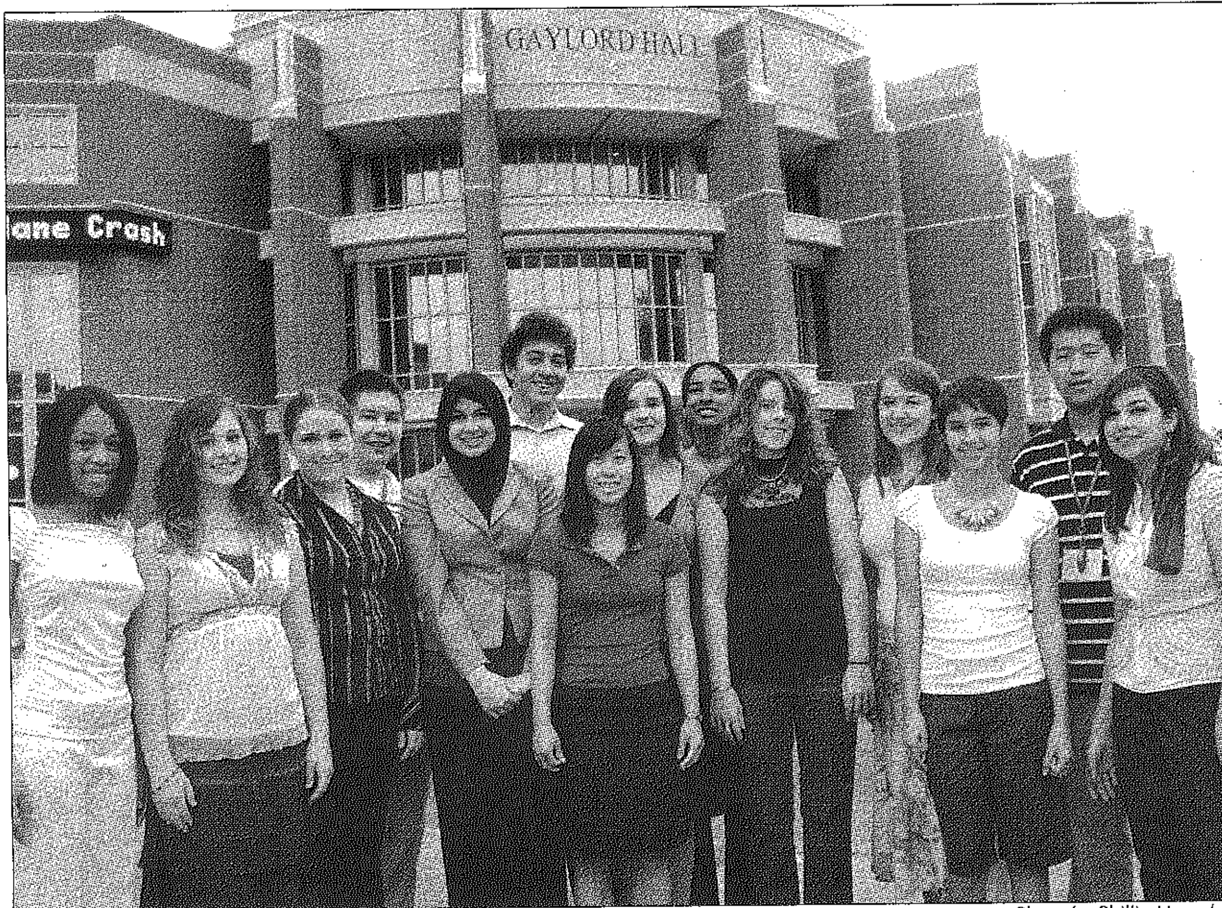


Photo by Phillip Hemphill

THE HEADLINERS: Oklahoma Insititute for Diversity in Journalism students stand in front of Gaylord Hall, where they did most of their work on The Red Dirt Journal.

Participants get first-hand look at the news business

High schoolers learn more than just journalism

JAMIE HUGHES
Red Dirt Journal

For 12 days, students at the third annual Oklahoma Institute for Diversity in Journalism lived, worked and played together. On the 13th day, this newspaper appeared.

Thirteen high school students from Oklahoma and one from Texas met at the University of Oklahoma July 9 through 21 and spent countless hours reporting, writing and taking photographs. They heard from experienced journalists and shadowed reporters and photographers at The Oklahoman for an afternoon.

The students also learned much about each other's cultures. The workshop included students whose heritage is Chinese, Thai, Hispanic, African, Native and Arab American.

"The best part about living in the dorms was being in such close quarters with everyone," said senior Serena Prammanasudh of Enid High. "That can be said as the worst part, too."

Workshop Director Fred Blevens is leaving OU in August to become associate dean and professor of journalism at Florida International University in North Miami.

"I'm going to miss the challenge of the students and the thrill this gives me," he said. "I've learned a lot about the complexities of running a workshop like this. There's always something to do year round to prepare. I've learned about high school students and unit relationships."

Breanca Thomas, one of four college student counselors, told students that the workshop would help them decide whether journalism is what they want to do. Thomas, a sophomore OU journalism student, attended the first OIDJ.

"It helped me make the decision that I want to do this," said senior Marilyse Diaz of Tulsa Memorial High.

"I learned what makes something worthy of being on the front page," said senior Angela Nero of Ardmore High. "The next day, before I read the paper, I already had an idea of what would be on the front page."

Prammanasudh said she learned that "it's very important to love what you do and keep doing it."

While not in class, students went bowling, participated in organized water-balloon fights and popped quarters into the dorm's laundry and Tetris machines. They also visited the Frontier City amusement park and saw the movie "An Inconvenient Truth."

"I learned who The Beatles were," said Lindsey Russell, a junior at Ada High, recalling a card game in the dorm when someone mentioned the Fab Four.

RED Dirt Journal
Oklahoma Institute for Diversity in Journalism • 2006

Students

Ashley Adriance, Houston Christian High School 13
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Corey Davidson, Norman High School 8
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Jacquelyn Sparks, Classen High School 14-15
Michael Yang, Edmond North High School 9

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Ramón Chávez, University of Oklahoma
Rob Collins, Oklahoma Gazette
Ace Cuervo, Tulsa World
Bill Elsen, reznetnews.org
Jim Fisher, University of Utah
Ashley Gibson, The Associated Press
Joe Hight, The Oklahoman
Mick Hinton, Tulsa World
Sue Hinton, Oklahoma City Community College
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Dedication
This issue is dedicated to Gaylord College Associate Dean Fred Blevens whose vision and dedication made OIDJ possible.