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The Foundation wishes to thank INTEGRIS Health, Inc. for its generosity in printing this publication.



During a visit to the Yorktown Battlefield, a delegation of Oklahoma teachers learns what it was like to be a soldier in Gen. George Washington's Continental Army. Twenty-five teachers received scholarships from the Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence to attend the Colonial Williamsburg Teacher Institute this summer. For more photos and teacher comments, visit www.ofe.org.

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HIGHMARKS

SUMMER 2008

Recognizing and encouraging academic excellence in Oklahoma's public schools.



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Nationally Renowned Educator To Speak at 20th Annual Fall Forum

National award-winning educator and best-selling author Ron Clark will be the keynote speaker for the 20th annual Fall Forum for Local Education Foundations, the state's largest and most comprehensive training and networking event for local education foundation (LEF) volunteers, school administrators and educators.

"Excellence for All: Helping Every Student Shine" is the theme for this year's Forum, slated from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 23, at the Oklahoma Memorial Union, 900 Asp Ave., on the University of Oklahoma's Norman campus. The event is the centerpiece of the Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence LEF Outreach Program. Registration fees are \$50 per person if received by Oct. 6 and \$60 for late registration. Registration materials will be mailed soon and posted online at www.ofe.org.

Clark will kick off the Fall Forum with a presentation focusing on how LEFs, school leaders and educators can work together to create highly effective learning communities. A teacher since 1995, Clark has taught in some of the most challenging schools in the country. He was recently named to *People Magazine's* "Heroes Among Us" and in 2000 received Disney's Teacher of the Year Award in recognition of his innovative teaching.



(Continued on page 2)

Historian Doris Kearns Goodwin Speaks At Banquet, Sharing Lessons from Lincoln

Nearly 1,000 Oklahomans celebrated the achievements of outstanding public school students and educators and were captivated by the story-telling abilities of Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Doris Kearns Goodwin during the Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence 22nd Academic Awards Banquet May 17 in Tulsa.

Not even a surprise power outage could quell the energy of the gala event, which featured Gov. George Nigh as master of ceremonies, Goodwin as keynote speaker and the musical talents of the Oklahoma Arts Institute Orchestra. The real stars of the evening were 100 public high school seniors, who were

honored as Academic All-Staters, and four educators and an alternative education program, which received \$10,000 Medal for Excellence honors.

Medals for Excellence in teaching were presented to Stigler Elementary School teacher Valorie Lewis, Beaver High School English teacher Sheryl Melton and University of Oklahoma professor James J. Yoch Jr. In addition, Steven P. Crawford, superintendent, Byng Public Schools, received the Medal for Excellence in Administration, while the Choctaw Alternative Transitional

(Continued on page 2)

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Fall Forum (continued)

Clark is the author of two best-selling books, *The Essential 55*, which highlights his rules for student success, and *The Excellent 11*, which describes qualities that teachers and parents can use to motivate and inspire students. He recently founded the Ron Clark Academy, an inner-city Atlanta school known for its innovative teaching methods.

Clark's appearance is part of "Ron Clark Day in Oklahoma" co-sponsored by Community Educational Opportunity (CEO) at the University of Central Oklahoma. He will speak to educators and parents later in the day at UCO.

Fall Forum session topics will include "Building a Foundation from the Ground Up," "How to Support Mentoring in Your District," "Planned Giving and the School Foundation," "The Good the Bad and the Ugly: Practical Ideas for Successful Foundations," "Keeping Up With the IRS" and "PR 101: Simple Strategies for Publicizing Your

Banquet (continued)

School was honored in the category of alternative education.

"Leading the Way" was the theme for the banquet, which was co-chaired by OFE trustees Sharon Bartlett and Lucy Barker of Tulsa. OFE founder and chairman David L. Boren, who introduced Goodwin, helped set the stage for her keynote address, stating that if the United States is to remain a great world leader, we must understand the unique ideals and the history that define us as Americans.

Goodwin, who is author of the best-selling book *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln*, told the inspiring story of how an awkward young circuit lawyer from Illinois overcame tragedy, depression and a string of political defeats to become one of America's greatest presidents.

"On the night of his election, Lincoln could not sleep," Goodwin said. "He made the decision that would define his presidency to put each of his political rivals into his cabinet." A less confident man would have surrounded himself with supporters, she said, but Lincoln recognized that his rivals were the strongest and most capable men who could help save a country in peril. She described in detail how Lincoln's good nature and astute political skills helped him "weld

LEF." Presentations are also planned on the Girl Scouts Leadership Program and Watch D.O.G.S., which involves fathers in school safety and academic support.

The Fall Forum will culminate with a luncheon presentation of the Outstanding Program Awards for Local Education Foundations. Awards of \$1,000 each will be presented to the Excellence in Education Program co-sponsored by the Cheyenne Educational Foundation; the Cultural Enrichment Grant Program sponsored by the Okmulgee Education Foundation; Challenge Day sponsored by the Putnam City Public Schools Foundation and the Breakfast and Brown Bag Book Club sponsored by the Stillwater Public Education Foundation.

For more information, visit the foundation's Web site at www.ofe.org or call Karen Rose, director of LEF Outreach, at (918) 743-5533.

this group together into a team that saved the union, won the war and ended slavery forever."

Goodwin described many qualities that made Lincoln an extraordinary leader. "It's important to look back at his leadership strengths, because these are the gold standards that we should be using to judge our current presidential candidates."

Among Lincoln's strengths, Goodwin said, were his ability to listen to differing points of view; his willingness to share credit for success; and, conversely, his willingness to shoulder blame for the failures of his subordinates. Lincoln also possessed an acute awareness of his own weaknesses, which allowed him to compensate for them by appointing those with the complementary skills and knowledge, she said.

Goodwin said Lincoln was a masterful listener and communicator with the American public. He regularly visited the battlefield to bolster troops' morale and would welcome citizens to the White House to share their viewpoints.

DVDs of the Academic Awards Banquet are available for \$12 each. Checks should be made payable to the Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence, 120 N. Robinson, Suite 1420-W, Oklahoma City, OK 73102.



Doris Kearns Goodwin signs a banquet program for an Academic All-Stater.

OFE NEWS BRIEFS

Colonial Williamsburg Electronic Field Trips Available

Applications are available for fifth- and eighth-grade teachers interested in receiving free Colonial Williamsburg Electronic Field Trips subscriptions from the Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence. Applications, which will be accepted through Sept. 8, are available on the foundation's Web site at www.ofe.org.

The Emmy Award-winning Electronic Field Trips, produced by the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, bring early-American history to life through a series of live television broadcasts and interactive online activities. Students also have the opportunity to call toll-free and speak to historians and character interpreters during the live television programs. The broadcasts are presented monthly from October through April on OETA.

George Washington Ambassador To Collaborate With Foundation

Claremore High School teacher Jan McClaren, who earned OFE's Medal for Excellence in Secondary Teaching in 2006, has been named George Washington Teaching Ambassador in Oklahoma by George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate & Gardens.

McClaren will be responsible for establishing and maintaining a statewide network for teaching and learning about George Washington in Oklahoma's public schools. She will be working closely with OFE, Oklahoma A+ Schools, the Oklahoma History Center, the Oklahoma State Department of Education, the Kirkpatrick Foundation and other organizations to promote Mount Vernon teaching resources and programs. The appointment is made possible through a grant from the Donald W. Reynolds Foundation.

"We look forward to partnering with Jan, the Mount Vernon Estate and our Oklahoma partners to promote educational programs about George Washington and colonial American history," said OFE executive director Emily Stratton.

For more information, contact McClaren at (918) 277-4402 or e-mail jmclaren@mountvernon.org.



Jan McClaren (right), Oklahoma's George Washington Teaching Ambassador, meets Journalist Cokie Roberts, a featured speaker at the George Washington Teachers' Institute at Mount Vernon, Va.

DonorsChoose Update

In the last issue of *HighMarks*, we reported on a new online service, DonorsChoose.org, which is helping fund classroom resources for Oklahoma public school teachers by linking them with donors across the country.

Since November, donors from 45 states have contributed over \$180,000 for Oklahoma teacher projects. So far, 562 projects have been funded, with 82 percent from high-need schools. For more information, visit DonorsChoose.org.

You Can Make a Difference!

NEW: Donate online at www.ofe.org

Please help us build a brighter future for Oklahoma students by becoming a member of the Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence. Each gift enhances academic opportunities in Oklahoma public education!

Choose your donor level:

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Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence
120 N. Robinson
Suite 1420-W
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405/236-0006
fax 405/236-8590

www.ofe.org



John W. Nichols, co-founder and chairman emeritus of Devon Energy Corp., died Aug. 3 following a lengthy illness. He was a loyal supporter of the foundation.

OETA stage manager John Olson, who assisted many years with OFE's Academic Awards Banquet, died in April.

Martha "Boo" Roberts, Bixby community leader and longtime OFE supporter, died in March.

Trustees to Vote on Changes to Academic Awards; Nomination Forms to Be Posted Sept. 22

The Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence Board of Trustees will vote Sept. 3 on a proposal to create two new Medals for Excellence in higher education teaching – one at the community college/regional university level and one at the research university level. In the past, a single

award has been presented annually in the overall category of college and university teaching.

In addition, the board will vote on whether to discontinue its Medal for Excellence in Alternative Education and instead present the alternative education prize in a new venue, where the recipients can be honored among their peers in alternative education.

Nomination forms for 2009 Academic All-State and Medal for Excellence Awards will be available on the foundation Web site at www.ofe.org beginning Sept. 22. Winners will be honored at the foundation's Academic Awards Banquet on May 16 at the new Embassy Suites Hotel and Convention Center in Norman.

Medal for Excellence Awards, which include a \$10,000 cash prize, will also be presented in the categories of elementary and secondary teaching and in the category of elementary/secondary administration. Medal for Excellence Award nominations may be submitted by anyone and must be postmarked by Nov. 24.

Principals and superintendents have until Nov. 28 to submit nominations for Academic All-State, which honors 100 outstanding public high school seniors with a \$2,000 scholarship and medallion.

For information on the awards and selection criteria, visit www.ofe.org.

Promoting Corporate Mentoring



Paula Royce, director of *Going to Bat for Tulsa Kids*, speaks to Tulsa business leaders during a workshop on "How to Start a Corporate Mentoring Program." The workshop, held in June, provided information on how businesses can start safe and successful mentoring partnerships with local schools. The event was co-sponsored by the City of Tulsa, the Tulsa Chamber, the Tulsa Community Schools Initiative and OFE's David and Molly Boren Mentoring Initiative.

Teacher Professional Development Funds Available

Applications will be available this fall for professional development scholarships administered by the Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence.

Teacher Scholarships for Professional Development provide funds to teachers to attend top-quality regional and national conferences in their chosen fields. Scholarships help cover the cost of tuition, travel, lodging and hiring substitute teachers. Applications will be posted online at www.ofe.org in early October, with a mid-November deadline. Scholarships are currently offered in Tulsa, Stephens and Carter counties; to an Oklahoma special education teacher; and to math and science educators in the Oklahoma City metro area. Watch the OFE Web site for updates on scholarship categories.

Fund for Teachers-Oklahoma will begin seeking applications for its 2009 summer professional development fellowships beginning Oct. 1. Applications will be available online at www.fundforteachers.org, with a deadline of Jan. 30, 2009. The program provides grants of up to \$5,000 for individuals and \$10,000 for teams of teachers for self-designed, summer professional development opportunities. Fund for Teachers grants give educators the creative freedom to design unique educational journeys that will enhance their teaching and ultimately bring a world of new experiences to their students.

The program is administered by the national Fund for Teachers, OFE and the Tulsa Community Foundation. For information, contact Dayna Rowe, drowe@ofe.org or call (405) 236-0006.



ONE OF THE ADVANTAGES of being president of an organization is that it gives you a unique vantage point from which to view the events and programs of an organization and witness how they are touching people's lives. Serving as president of the Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence has given me a renewed appreciation for the foundation and its important work in recognizing and encouraging academic excellence in our public schools.

As president, I've had the opportunity to attend our Fall Forum for Local Education Foundations and help present Outstanding Program Awards recognizing innovative programs sponsored by school foundations. Their creative ideas in marketing, fundraising and leadership development not only made a difference in their hometowns, but were an inspiration to other foundations across the state.

I also had the chance to witness our Colonial Williamsburg history programs in action when I attended Colonial Day at the State Capitol. What an amazing sight to see school children dressed in 18th-century clothing tapping their toes to the "Bill of Rights Rap" or debating, as young colonists, whether to declare independence from British tyranny. Organized by alumni of the Colonial Williamsburg Teacher Institute, Colonial Day at the Capitol makes learning about history exciting and meaningful.

One of my most satisfying experiences as an OFE officer is to hear from teachers who received our grants to attend Williamsburg's teacher institute, national educator conferences or Fund-for-Teachers learning experiences around the world. Teachers' letters are peppered with phrases like "life-changing experience," "exhilarating," and "it will forever change the way I teach ..."

Another highlight of being OFE president is getting to make the phone calls informing educators that they have been named recipients of our Medal for Excellence Awards. It means so much to them to know that their hard work and dedication are valued and that our foundation will be on their side, promoting excellence in teaching and opportunities for enrichment.

Above all, I am touched by the generosity of donors who believe in the power of education to change lives. Thank you for supporting OFE and Oklahoma's public schools!

— Loyd Benson

From the Executive Director

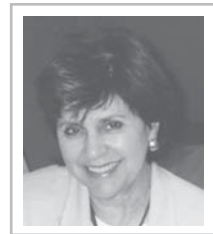
COLLABORATION CAN MAKE THINGS HAPPEN. Two exciting opportunities have developed this year for the Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence.

The Mount Vernon Estate and Gardens is sponsoring a two-year program in Oklahoma to promote the teaching of early-American history in our schools, with a special emphasis on the role that George Washington played. Our association with the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation makes our foundation a perfect partner for this program. Joining together with A+ Schools; the Oklahoma History Center; our network of Colonial Williamsburg teachers; the State Department of Education; and Jan McClaren, Oklahoma's recently-appointed George Washington Ambassador, we look forward to helping enrich Oklahoma's history curriculum.

The second collaboration has to do with the value of the aerospace industry to Oklahoma and the concern for its future work force. The aerospace industry held an Education Training Day in June in conjunction with its annual Aerospace Summit and attracted 100 teachers from across the state to attend as Aerospace Fellows. The purpose was to educate them about Oklahoma's aerospace industry; the future employment opportunities for Oklahoma graduates; and the need for more students to become interested in math, science and technical education—particularly in the elementary years. Industry mentors were paired with Aerospace Fellows to provide curriculum resources for the upcoming school year and to build relationships between the aerospace industry and the teachers and their classrooms.

Since the Foundation for Excellence has experience in teacher selection, we were invited to be a part of the planning committee to promote the program to teachers and help select the Aerospace Fellows. Through our Teacher Scholarship for Professional Development Program, we will continue as collaborators with the aerospace industry and other technical industries. A special emphasis of our program provides grants for math and science teachers to attend regional or national conferences in their curriculum area. It is through professional development that teachers continue to grow and enhance the teaching they bring to their classrooms and their students. We are committed to this program and will work hard to attract additional scholarship funding. What a worthwhile challenge!

— Emily Stratton



KUDOS!

Congratulations to these Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence friends and supporters:

Sherilynn Admire, 2007 Colonial Williamsburg Teacher Institute alumna from Mid-Del Public Schools; Valorie Lewis, 2008 Medal for Excellence recipient from Stigler Public Schools; and Oklahoma City teacher Heather Sparks, 2006 Teacher Scholarship for Professional Development recipient, have been named finalists for 2009 Teacher of the Year by the Oklahoma State Department of Education.

Blanchard trustee Lou Christian, CEO of Cornerstone Financial Strategies, was one of 550 financial professionals nationwide to receive a Certificate in Retirement Planning from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania.

The Tulsa Global Alliance honored trustee Ken Busby, executive director and CEO of the Arts & Humanities Council of Tulsa, for his contributions to citizen diplomacy and international understanding.

Oklahoma City trustee Cheryl Steele, special assistant to the president and executive director for leadership programs at the University of Central Oklahoma, has published a book, *What If...? Questions to Delight and Inspire Children*. The book, which includes a teacher's guide, is designed to nurture creativity in children.

Trustees Sen. Susan Paddock of Ada and Sen. Kathleen Wilcoxson of Oklahoma City were honored in April for their involvement in major policy reform on behalf of Oklahoma children. They were inducted into the Child Advocates Hall of Fame by the Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy.

Leading the Way

2008 Academic Awards Banquet



The 2008 Academic All-Staters begin their grand procession into the ballroom for the academic awards ceremony.



Historian Doris Kearns Goodwin (front, center) and OFE Chairman David L. Boren are pictured with 2008 Medal for Excellence winners Steven P. Crawford (front, left) retired superintendent of Byng Public Schools; James J. Yoch (front, right), OU English professor; (top from left) Dawn Eaves, director, Choctaw Alternative Transitional School; Sheryl Melton, Beaver High School; and Valorie Lewis, Stigler Elementary School.



Former speakers of the Oklahoma House of Representatives Glen D. Johnson Jr. (left), chancellor of the State Regents for Higher Education, and Loyd Benson, president and principal executive officer of Pioneer Telephone Co., visit during a pre-banquet reception. Both men are trustees, and Benson serves as president of the Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence.



Conductor Donald Studebaker salutes the Oklahoma Arts Institute Orchestra, which performed at the awards banquet.



Former Oklahoma Gov. George Nigh serves as master of ceremonies for the gala celebration.



Tulsa trustees and banquet co-chairs Sharon Bartlett (left) and Lucy Barker (right) greet keynote speaker Doris Kearns Goodwin.

Banquet Experience Exceeds Expectations

(Editor's Note: 2008 Academic All-Stater Catherine Roberts of Tulsa is our featured student columnist for this issue of HighMarks, sharing her insights on the Academic Awards Banquet. Roberts will attend the University of Tulsa this fall, majoring in economics and English.)



All-Stater Catherine Roberts

In the spirit of journalistic ethics, I'm going to be completely honest.

I wasn't looking forward to the 2008 Academic Awards Banquet.

Banquets in general tend not to be my thing (not that, as a high school student, I've had a lot of opportunity to attend them. Ah well.). The activities planned for the All-Staters before the banquet scared me too. What would we be doing? Going around in a circle telling OFE Chairman David Boren one fun fact about ourselves? I wasn't sure I was totally comfortable with the idea.

Then, also, I had my doubts about why this banquet was such a big deal anyway. I was (and am) so appreciative of the All-State scholarship. I was (and am) overwhelmed at having been chosen for the award. It was just that I wasn't sure why all the fuss was being made. I don't make the grades I do for any other reason than because I can't stand seeing anything else on my report card.

Whatever my first impressions were, and my misgivings, they were flatly refuted by my experiences that day.

Sensibly (I thought), we were not required to participate in any awkward ice-breakers or introductions. When we arrived at the Renaissance Hotel, we met several of the people responsible for the day's event, as well as leaders in the Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence.

I was impressed by the obvious and continued involvement of past All-State Alumni, an impression that deepened throughout the day. The Foundation is truly an organization worth getting involved in.

It was the breakout session with David Boren and historian Doris Kearns Goodwin that truly brought about a change of heart. I was very interested in listening to such illustrious people, and the session did not disappoint. As if he had read my mind, Mr. Boren directly addressed my question, "Why all the fuss?"

He recalled witnessing a poorly-attended award ceremony for outstanding teachers, and he couldn't understand why such very important people as teachers did not get the kind of recognition they deserved.

He set up the Foundation in order to give outstanding teachers and students a chance to be acknowledged with the same fanfare and honor as sports or movie stars. The simple answer to my question of, "Why all the fuss?" was his equally simple, "Why not all the fuss?"

This realization gave me a completely new perspective on the evening. It was a joy to be able to recognize my teacher and friend, Jan O'Connor, before so many appreciative people, and to be able to have my history-loving dad hear Ms. Goodwin's fascinating speech about Abraham Lincoln.

Above all, it was an honor to have been chosen for the award. I realize now what an honor it was to have my and my peers' achievements celebrated with such humbling enthusiasm.