

Expressions!

OF OKLAHOMA VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

HSTW conference expected to attract educators from eight states

More than 2,500 high school teachers and administrators from eight states will participate in the 12th Annual High Schools That Work (HSTW) Staff Development Conference.

The conference, which is sponsored by the Southern Regional Education Board and hosted by the Oklahoma Department of Vo-Tech Education, is scheduled for June 28 - July 1 at the Tulsa Convention Center.

HSTW is the largest concerted effort in America to improve high schools for career-bound students. It is supported, in part, by grants from the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund, The Pew Charitable Trust, the BellSouth Foundation and the Novartis US Foundation.

The goal of this year's HSTW conference is to support educators in improving student learning by creating and carrying out a comprehensive school

improvement effort involving both academic and vocational studies.

"More than 800 school sites in 22 states—including Oklahoma—are involved in implementing the High Schools That Work framework for improving school

and classroom practices and raising student achievement," said Gene Bottoms, senior vice president of the Southern Regional Education Board and HSTW director.

"Leaders and teachers at these schools are demonstrating that schools can make a difference in preparing youth for the workplace and further education."

Bottoms also said that Oklahoma has supported the HSTW initiative since it began in 1987.

"Some of our strongest school sites and most outspoken advocates of high educational standards are from this state," he said.

"We are very pleased that Oklahoma is hosting the national staff development conference this year."

The conference will also include state breakout meetings for educators from Alabama, Arkansas, Hawaii, Indiana, Oklahoma, Kansas, Louisiana and Texas.

Keynote speakers include Jeannie Oakes, assistant dean of the University of California, Los Angeles Graduate School of Education and Information Studies; Douglas Reeves, president of the Center for Performance Assessment, Denver, Colo.; and Lorraine Monroe, executive director of the School Leadership Academy at the Center for Educational Innovation, New York, N.Y.

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"Some of our strongest school sites and most outspoken advocates are from this state."

*— Gene Bottoms,
vice president SREB and
HSTW director*

Skills Center prepares inmates for work

At age 43, Harold Lewis has had enough of prison. One year ago, he did something about it.

That's when he enrolled in the building maintenance technology program at the Jess Dunn Correctional Center, Taft. That program is one of 50 vocational programs offered through 16 different Vo-Tech Skills Centers located behind Oklahoma's prison walls.

On Feb. 13, Lewis completed the training program. On April 10, he was scheduled for release from prison. And although many of Oklahoma's once-incarcerated eventually return to prison, Lewis swears he won't be one of them.

Lewis has mastered basic fundamentals of heating and air conditioning, carpentry, electricity, and plumbing, said Steve Vardell, one of two instructors in the training program.

Because of those skills, because of his initiative and determination, and because of a booming state economy, Lewis's job prospects are extremely bright—if history is an indicator.

In its three years of existence, more than 100 inmates have completed the training program. Almost all of them have landed good jobs . . . and not one has yet returned to prison.

One of the employers is Unarco, the shopping cart manufacturer in Wagoner. Nearly two years ago, the company hired its first graduate from Jess Dunn's building maintenance technology program. Supervisors have been so impressed they may hire others, said Kenneth Bailey, a Unarco maintenance supervisor.

Most of the program's graduates work in industries like Unarco, in apartment maintenance, in appliance repair shops or in the construction industry. Pay ranges from minimum wage to more than \$17 per hour.

Program instructors do the little things required to help inmates in their job search—like visiting potential employers and helping graduates find places to live. When each inmate completes the program, he leaves with a "portfolio," a personally compiled snapshot of skills. It includes a typed resume, a cover letter, photographs of the graduate actually performing various skills, certificates of skill competency, certificates of achievement, letters of recommendation, and a list of references.

Oklahoma's taxpayers also have a big stake in what those students are learning at Jess Dunn and at the 15 other state vo-tech skills centers, said Jim Meek, regional director.

"For each of these guys that we can keep out of prison, we save our taxpayers about \$14,000 or more each year," he said. "That makes education a whole lot cheaper than incarceration."



Building maintenance technology instructor Keith Goodin, right, and new graduate Harold Lewis inspect the pressure of an oxygen/acetylene tank before beginning a metal cutting project at the Jess Dunn Skills Center, Taft.

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Toolbox creates partnership between schools, businesses

For years, businesses have complained about the shortage of qualified applicants to fill positions. But few did anything about it.

That's all changing now. More than 900 state businesses and industries are playing leading roles in implementing Oklahoma's School-to-Work initiative through their local partnerships.

For an example, one has to look no further than the small northern Oklahoma town of Perry, home of internationally known Charles Machine Works. This well-known manufacturing company is helping develop a "toolbox" with practical ideas and examples that will make classroom teaching relevant to the "real" world of work through teacher and student internships in local businesses.

This is one of four toolboxes that will launch a series of toolbox train-the-trainer workshops for classroom teachers, explained Karen Warner, professional development specialist for the Oklahoma Department of Vo-Tech Education.

The toolboxes are being designed by teams of "experts" comprised of representatives from businesses and schools.

"Each toolbox team member has expertise in the area of that toolbox topic," said Warner, who is coordinating the toolbox training series.

The first toolbox training workshop, held at Charles Machine Works' corporate headquarters, highlighted internships. The workshop was for local School-to-Work partnership teams of teachers, school administrators, business executives and human resource personnel from across the state.

"Charles Machine Works readily accepted the business expert's role necessary to create this toolbox, which will help teachers blend 'real life' classroom applications into their curriculum," said Janet Hawkins, internship toolbox team coordinator. Hawkins is a career specialist at the state department of vo-tech. "For the past three years, this company



Applause

Tri-County Instructor Honored

Larry Walden, an instructor in Plastics Manufacturing Technology at Tri-County Technology Center, has been selected as winner of the School Lab Safety Award. The award is sponsored by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, and the American Vocational Association.

Mid-Del AVTS Wins Award

Mid-Del Area Vo-Tech School was recently honored at the Journal Record's inaugural Innovator of the Year Award luncheon. The ceremony honored 10 Oklahoma companies for their innovations in 1997. Mid-Del was honored for its development of an electric vehicle program.

DeMuth Receives Jaycees Award

Bruce DeMuth, assistant state director for Area Schools and Business and Industry Services at the Oklahoma Department of Vo-Tech Education, has been honored with the Outstanding Young Oklahoman award from the Oklahoma Junior Chamber of Commerce (Jaycees).

has 'pioneered' mentoring, job shadowing and internship programs for teachers and high school students."

Once teachers complete the training, they will become the "experts," Warner said. They will then teach other teachers in their schools how to implement those activities in their classrooms.

This summer three more toolbox training workshops will be offered to Oklahoma teachers. These will focus on use of the Internet in the classroom, integration of curriculum and the development of using the newspaper as a career-discovery tool for students.

STAR program helps students shine

They come from diverse backgrounds. Some have no parental guidance or influence. Some are teenagers rebelling against authority. Some are highly intelligent, creative and curious.

As diverse as their backgrounds are, they have a common thread — a place where they feel important and their self-esteem is lifted. This is the place some call “home” for the day — Tri-County Technology Center’s (TCTC) Student Training and Re-entry Program, known as STAR for short.

For the past nine years, at-risk high school students from Nowata, parts of Osage, and Washington counties have had the STAR program available to them at TCTC. This alternative education program is for students identified as at-risk for not completing high school. Instructors teach not only core curriculum classes but also the importance of volunteering. Instructors teach the students the importance of making a difference in other people’s lives.

The difference these students are making happens every Friday at Bartlesville’s Bluestem Therapeutic Riding Program. For the past three months, morning and afternoon, STAR students and their three instructors have been volunteering their time to help clean up and provide general maintenance to the area.

This relationship began before Christmas when Sissy Miner, STAR instructor, mentioned to her friend, Carol Swango, that STAR students were looking for a community service project. Swango, a member of the Bluestem Board and the STAR Advisory Board, said Bluestem could use their help. And thus began a two-way relationship that provides valuable life lessons and benefits to both parties involved.

Miner said at first some of the students had to get used to the idea that community service meant more than just serving time. “This is an all-volunteer effort. Once it sank in what they were doing, their experience really made a big impression,” Miner said.

Miner, who is assisted by STAR instructors Kendall Baker and Tom Groves, said the STAR

program is one of the best things that has ever happened to her during 24 years of teaching.

“I think about the years that I have been teaching and the number of students I have known that could have benefited from a program such as STAR, and it makes me proud to be making a difference in these students’ lives,” she said.

— by Tonda Ames, Tri-County Technology Center



Mending a fence for the Bluestem Therapeutic Riding Program are Tri-County Technology Center STAR students (from left) Willy Bennett, Donnie Carman and Eldon Price. Students volunteer their time once a week at Bluestem.

AVA wants your stories about vocational education

The American Vocational Association wants to compile a book of short inspirational stories and humorous anecdotes from the field — all designed to highlight the positive experiences of vocational educators and to shine a light on the impact vocational education has had on people’s lives.

“What we need are your stories and anecdotes — about particularly rewarding experiences you’ve had in your career, about colleagues who’ve inspired you or teachers who influenced your life choices, or perhaps simply funny things students have said,” said editor Eric Ries.

Pieces should not exceed 1,500 words, and shorter submissions are welcome. Send submissions, either by mail (in both hard copy and disk forms, noting the software used) or by e-mail (as an attachment), by May 22 to AVA Book/Acquisitions, 1410 King Street, Alexandria, VA 22314 (eries@avaonline.org).

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Eastern Oklahoma County Vo-Tech Auto Team Wins National Honor

Two students from Eastern Oklahoma County Vo-Tech Center won the National Automotive Technology Competition held at the New York International Auto Show on April 8 and posted the highest score ever achieved in the contest. The students and their coach, Jim LaFevers, Automotive Technology instructor, were recently honored at a banquet in Oklahoma City hosted by the Metropolitan Auto Dealers Association.

Automotive Technology students Zac Goode and Brian Thomas, both seniors, competed against 28 other two-person teams from automotive programs across the nation and scored 184 points out of a possible 200. This score is the highest ever, according to Bill Roby, executive director of the co-sponsoring Metropolitan Auto Dealers Association in Oklahoma City.

The Goode/Thomas team qualified for the national competition by winning the Oklahoma State Automotive Technology Competition. As a result, they and LaFevers received an expense-paid trip to the national competition in New York.

Each student team was assigned a new automobile that was rigged to malfunction in a number of

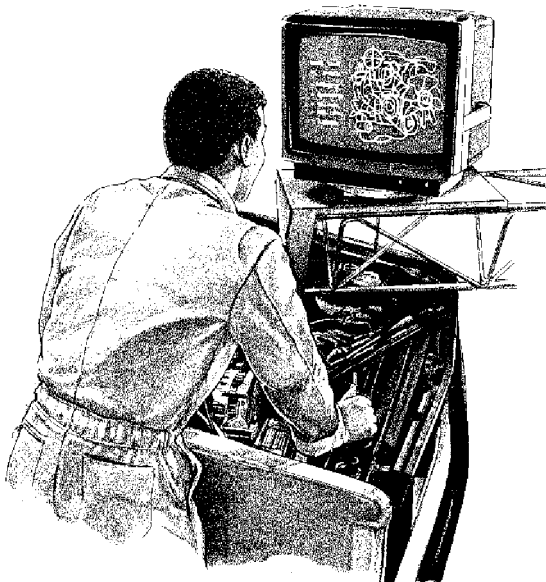


Two students and an instructor from Eastern Oklahoma Vo-Tech Center were recently honored by the Metropolitan Auto Dealers Association in Oklahoma City. They were honored for winning the National Automotive Technology Competition in New York. Pictured left to right are Steve Rankin, executive vice president, Oklahoma Automobile Dealers Association; Jim LaFevers, Automotive Technology instructor EOCVTC; Zac Goode, EOCVTC student; Brian Thomas, EOCVTC student; and Bill Roby, executive director, Metropolitan Auto Dealers Association.

ways. The student teams were asked to diagnose the problem and correct it within an allotted time. Each “bug” correctly diagnosed and repaired is worth a number of points, assigned according to the level of difficulty. In addition, the student’s knowledge is tested through a challenging written exam prepared by Automotive Service Excellence (ASE).

Goode and Thomas will each receive a Mitsubishi Mirage coupe (awarded upon completion of planned studies at OSU/Okmulgee), multiple college scholarships, tools and trophies. LaFevers will receive the prestigious Valvoline Teacher of the Year Award. Eastern Oklahoma County Vo-Tech Center will receive the Mitsubishi Motors Vo-Tech School of the Year Award, which provides \$5,000 to enhance automotive instruction; Popular Mechanics tools valued at \$1,000; a Snap-On tool box and a 1997 Buick Regal.

— by Paula Gower, Eastern Oklahoma County Vo-Tech Center



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Technology training now underway

Sixty Oklahoma educators have been selected to be state "master trainers" for a massive effort to prepare more than 48,000 Oklahoma educators in the most effective use of telecommunications and distance learning technology.

Recent state legislation requires technology training be offered to all educators from common education, higher education and vo-tech education. That legislation has designated the vo-tech department as the lead state agency for the technology preparation effort.

Thirty master trainers underwent an initial five-day intensive training workshop March 30 - April 13 at the Teletraining Institute in Stillwater. An additional 30 master trainers were trained earlier. All 60 trainers returned to Stillwater in April for another week-long workshop.

Of the 60 initial participants, 16 came from the state's higher education system, 28 from common education and 16 from vo-tech education.

During the initial workshop, the master trainers learned how to use distance education, how to develop web pages and use other Internet applications, and how to best use technology in classroom instruction.

The master trainers also began developing their plans on how to "cascade" the training by preparing other teachers as trainers or lead technology teachers.

The 60 master trainers come from six training regions. These regions include the four quadrants of the state, Tulsa County and Oklahoma/Cleveland Counties. Each of these regional training sites are operated by a partnership of schools within the region.

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