

# Expressions!

OF OKLAHOMA VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

## *Peters concludes 13 years as director; Benson takes over as interim head*

Dr. Roy Peters ended a 13-year stint as state vo-tech director in February, when he resigned to accept the post of president and chief executive officer of the Oklahoma Alliance for Manufacturing Excellence.



*Roy Peters*

The Alliance was established in 1992 to help Oklahoma's small- and medium-sized manufacturers compete successfully on both a national and international basis. It provides help to manufacturers in five specific areas: markets, financing, technology, human resources, and interfirm collaboration. It is a non-profit private/public partnership with a small central office staff and about 20 broker agents in the field.

Peters was replaced by Dr. Ann Benson, who was named interim state vo-tech director by the State Board for Vocational and Technical Education.

She officially took over from Peters on Feb. 11. Benson, a Coyle native, joined the state vo-tech department in 1973. She had worked as a curriculum specialist in home economics and health occupations before becoming an assistant director in 1985. She started her career in education as a teacher in Coyle and Mulhall-Orlando.

Benson is the first woman to hold Oklahoma's top vocational education post. She becomes only the fourth state vo-tech director in the last 60 years. Others were Dr. Francis Tuttle and J.B. Perky, both deceased.

Peters, who replaced Tuttle after his retirement in 1986, presided over a system that includes nearly 2,500 vocational programs in comprehensive schools, area vo-tech schools, and vo-tech skills centers.

During Peters' years at the helm, enrollment in the vo-tech system nearly doubled. This year, vo-tech enrollments totaled 459,684 compared to 240,733 when Peters was named director.

The number of area vo-tech schools also increased dramatically. In 1986, the network consisted of 24 area vo-tech school districts, operating 41 campuses statewide. Today, that network includes 29 area vo-tech school districts with 54 campuses.

About 97 percent of all Oklahomans now have access to an area vo-tech school campus.

"My memories of that growth and progress will always be treasured," Peters said. "However, I leave it to a new director to take the vo-tech system to an even higher level."



*Ann Benson*

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## *Tulsa Tech graduate credits vocational education, VICA skills for helping him succeed at West Point*

Whether he builds skyscrapers or protects freedom in some distant part of the world, Timothy Meadors, a cadet at the United States Military Academy at West Point, will be using skills he learned at Tulsa Technology Center.

Meadors is currently a third-year cadet at West Point, where he takes civil engineering courses. At Tulsa Tech, he graduated with a certification in carpentry and also served as vice president for the Oklahoma chapter of Vocational Industrial Clubs of America (VICA). Meadors said his vocational education gave him both employment and leadership skills.

Vocational education is a family thing for Meadors, a Tulsa native.

All of Meadors' four brothers and sisters graduated from Tulsa Tech and his father, Keenan Meadors, a Tulsa Police officer, once served on the school's board of education.

Meadors has sincere praise for Tulsa Tech, Lemley Campus staffers John Rosell, carpentry instructor; Diane Moore, counselor; and Dr. David Holmes, director, who were his mentors while he was there.

He said the best thing about being in Rosell's carpentry class was being able to see practical uses for the skills he was learning. "Mr. Rosell would show us how to lay out 16-inch studs, and then we would go out into the shop and do it," he said. At 18, Meadors had both a high school diploma and certification in carpentry. This gave him better employment prospects than many of his peers.



*Timothy Meadors, a third-year cadet at the United States Military Academy at West Point, is pictured here outside his home in Tulsa. Meadors graduated from Tulsa Tech with a certification in carpentry.*

"If you can graduate with a high school diploma and a skill, you put yourself ahead of the game," he said.

Meadors said Moore and Marsha Daves, VICA state adviser, introduced him to the many benefits of being involved with a vocational student organization. Moore suggested that Meadors attend VICA's Summer Leadership Institute at Oklahoma State University.

Meadors enjoyed his experience so much that he later successfully ran for state VICA vice president. Another Tulsa Tech staffer, Paul King, advertising design instructor, helped Meadors by designing the fliers for his campaign.

After graduation Meadors chose a military career. He was attracted to the military after hearing stories from his grandfather, who is a World War II veteran.

Meadors says the skills he gained from Tulsa Tech and the leadership training he received from VICA will come in handy. After graduating from West Point, Meadors plans on becoming an officer in the infantry. And his carpentry experience will prove useful in his civil engineering work.

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# *Students in High Schools That Work project show improved test scores in three areas*

Soaring test scores from seniors at 20 state high schools is solid evidence that improving the way existing courses are taught is one of the keys to improving Oklahoma high schools, state education officials say.

Results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) exam, which was given to 571 seniors at the 20 schools, show dramatic increases in reading, mathematics, and science scores over the 1996 NAEP test, said Dr. Ann Benson, interim state director of vocational and technical education.

All of the 20 state high schools are participating in a Southern Region Educational Board (SREB) project called "High Schools That Work," which targets students in general and vocational education programs. Nationwide, about 40,000 students in 800 schools from 22 states are participating in the High Schools That Work (HSTW) project.

Benson said the project aims to create high expectations for all students, change what and how students are taught, and improve how academic and vocational teachers work together to integrate their curriculum.

SREB's recently released test results show a significant increase in reading test scores and an

even higher increase in the math and science test results, the state vo-tech director said.

"Math scores increased from 288.7 to 300.2 and science scores rose from 284.6 to 296.9," said Benson. Both of the 1998 scores were five points over SREB's goals.

"Our reading scores also improved, rising from 275.1 in 1996 to 276.8 this year, although it is still shy of our goal of 279.0," she said.

The state vo-tech director said the test scores of Oklahoma's students far exceeded the national average. Oklahoma students bested their counterparts by 10.2 points in reading, 23.5 points in math, and 30.2 points in science.

Dr. Gene Bottoms, senior vice president of the SREB, said HSTW sites focus on raising standards for all students, concentrate on how students learn as well as what they learn, and integrate academic skills into work-related projects.

High schools participating in the effort are located in Altus, Buffalo, Choctaw, Clayton, Drumright, Durant, Fort Gibson, Grove, Lawton, Lexington, Lindsay, Little Axe, Maysville, Medford, Pauls Valley, Purcell, Oklahoma City, Stratford, Wayne, and Tulsa.

## *FBLA state officer wins trip to British Isles*

Jack Hedrick, state Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) secretary/treasurer and a member of the School-to-Work Student Advisory committee, has won the Young Columbus Award after competing in the *Daily Oklahoman's* Trip of a Lifetime competition.

The competition is sponsored by the *Daily Oklahoman's* Newspapers in Education program and *Parade/React* magazines. From April 7-15, Hedrick, a Coalgate High senior, will join 150 other winners from across the nation as they visit historical sites in the United Kingdom and meet with British and U.S. dignitaries.

Hedrick learned of the competition through Karla

Chapman, a Coalgate High School teacher.

Contestants in the competition wrote essays on how they have made an impact on their school, community or state.

Hedrick's article focused on his work organizing a Career Day at his school, which featured professionals from the community and around the state who talked to students about their occupations.



*Jack Hedrick*

## Groundhog job shadow day matches students, mentors

More than 7,000 Oklahoma students entered the workforce on Groundhog Job Shadow Day to “shadow” adult mentors in careers that they might one day decide to work in themselves.



Patty Crabbe, School-to-Work marketing specialist, said that School-to-Work partnerships partnered 7,108 students with 3,987 businesses statewide.

This was the nation's second Groundhog Job Shadow Day. America's Promise, the youth development organization headed by Gen. Colin Powell, joined with the national School-to-Work Office, Junior Achievement and the American Society of Association Executives to spearhead the effort. This year's goal was to match half a million young people with job shadow volunteers.

Students across Oklahoma spent the day shadowing scientists, firefighters, graphic designers, mechanics, doctors, architects, teachers, government employees and workers from several other professions in order to experience the workplace firsthand.

“Job Shadow Day is a unique opportunity for youth to see their dreams are within reach in Oklahoma City,” said Nathan Powell, team leader of

the Oklahoma School-to-Work office. “Youth get to see how skills they learn in school are used in the workplace.”

In the Oklahoma City area, students from the School-to-Work Student Advisory Committee, America's Promise Youth Leadership Exchange and Junior Achievement scholarship winners shadowed state legislators, Secretary of Education Floyd Coppedge, State Superintendent of Education Sandy Garrett, members of the Oklahoma congressional delegation, the Oklahoma City mayor, members of Oklahoma City's city council and members of the Capitol press corps.



Speaker of the Oklahoma House of Representatives Lloyd Benson, center, showed Kasey Cabeka, Lawton, left, and Brandy Fullbright, Frederick, how the Oklahoma State Legislature works during Groundhog Job Shadow Day.

## Virginia educators look to emulate Oklahoma vo-tech system

An 11-member study group from Danville, Va., toured northeastern Oklahoma in February to study how three vo-tech schools in that area serve their customers.

“They are in the process of building a new regional vo-tech center from the ground up, so they are very interested in how our area vo-tech schools operate,” said Dr. Ann Benson, interim state vo-tech director.

The Virginia delegation was composed of three public school superintendents, a community college president, an architect, and seven executives from the Danville area business community.

The Virginians began their whirlwind tour with

presentations at Tulsa Technology Center's Southeast campus. They then proceeded to Indian Capital Technology Center, Muskogee, and ended their visit at Tri-County Technology Center, Bartlesville.

Bruce DeMuth, assistant state director of the state vo-tech agency and one of the hosts of the delegation, said the visitors were interested specifically in the local vo-tech schools' relationships with sending high schools and higher education institutions, student recruitment and selection, economic development and business and industry services, system funding and governance, career education and middle school outreach programs.

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## *FACS adapts to changing society, technology*

Balancing family life and work, budgeting money and learning how to eat right are vital skills that parents have taught their children for generations.

But teaching these skills today is becoming more difficult. With more single parents and Americans working longer hours, many parents simply don't have the time to pass on these skills.

Across Oklahoma — and America — Family and Consumer Sciences (FACS) educators, like Cheryl Smiley of Lone Grove High School, are filling this need.

Many of the practices students learn in FACS classes are basic life skills. Smiley said these are lessons parents used to share with their children.

In her three decades in the FACS field, Edna Mahaffey, state program administrator in the Family and Consumer Sciences Education (FACSED) division of the Oklahoma Department of Vo-Tech Education, has witnessed how trends are changing.

She said one of the most important changes in that time has been the increasing number of male students who are taking FACS classes.

In the 1981-82 school year, 5,012 male students in Oklahoma were enrolled in FACS classes. By the 1997-98 school year, that number had tripled to 15,293.

Mahaffey said more male students started to take FACS classes after adult and family living courses were added to the curriculum. The six other areas of FACS are career orientation, consumer education, food science and personal nutrition, housing and home furnishings, parenting and child development, and personal clothing management.

Mahaffey said male students are just as important to FACS classes as female students.

"We are all in a home of some kind," she said. "These are skills that all individuals need, not just females."

FACS classes have also changed in other significant ways. Mahaffey said there is now more emphasis on balancing career and family and less emphasis on food preparation and sewing skills.

FACS educators have also had to adjust their teaching to fit major changes in society, such as two career families, she said.

FHA/HERO, the vocational student organization for FACS students, has also changed to keep up with the times. FHA/HERO programs such as Financial Fitness (a program that teaches students to manage finances) and Families First (a program that teaches students the concepts and skills necessary for a strong family), are geared towards issues that families in the 1990s face.

Smiley said FACS also deals with new technology, both in the classroom and the household.

Her classroom has five computers, and students often get on the Internet to research classroom assignments. Smiley's students also are working with new household products such as the convection ovens used in restaurants and cafeterias, which cook faster than regular ovens.

Smiley said that one of her students' recent projects was restoring a recovered futon. "It helps them see they can get something at a garage sale and make it look good until they can afford a new couch."



*Family Living students from Fairview High School are pictured here working with youngsters. A growing number of male students are taking Family and Consumer Sciences courses.*

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## Oklahoma workforce training programs praised

*Expansion Management* magazine has ranked Oklahoma fourth in the nation in terms of the states with the best workforce training programs.

The magazine asked the nation's top site selection consultants to list the states with the best training programs. In selecting their favorite states, consultants cited factors including minimal red tape and the flexibility of companies to choose how their employee training is conducted. The magazine said Oklahoma was one of the states listed as having training that helps companies get results on a consistent basis.

One Oklahoma Department of Vo-Tech Education program that has made a significant difference in helping companies decide to expand or locate in the state is the Training for Industry Program (TIP).

TIP is designed to provide start-up workforce training for new or expanding industries. Each program is customized to meet the specific needs for each industry.

Vikki Dearing, economic development specialist at the state vo-tech, said Oklahoma's TIP program has earned an international reputation by providing more than 1,100 businesses with a trained workforce of more than 100,000 people.

"Our goal is to make sure employers have a productive workforce on day one of operation. Companies that have used the Training for Industry Program say they've experienced lower turnover, absenteeism and downtime," Dearing said.

"We help with job profiles and training needs assessments, as well as the design and delivery of customized employee training programs, at no cost to the employer," she said.

Training programs range from basic skills, through Total Quality Management (TQM) and ISO 9000 (an international standard for quality management and quality assurance), to the latest in interpersonal skills, management, and team training.

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