

Benson announces plans to end term as Oklahoma CareerTech director

State CareerTech Director Dr. Ann Benson announced May 14 she will retire, clearing the way for the State Board of Career and Technology Education to begin the process of searching for a successor.

Benson planned to officially retire June 30, 2003. However, at

their May meeting state CareerTech board members moved the date forward to Dec. 31, 2002. They will begin a search for a

new director immediately.

Benson will leave after serving nearly four years as director.

"When I accepted this position, I made it very clear that I was not interested in serving as state director for a lengthy amount of time," Benson said.

"Prior to me, the average tenure of the three previous state directors was more than 20 years. I told the board that when my tenure was added, the average would decline dramatically."

Benson's husband, Gene, is retiring as superintendent of Dover

Public Schools at the end of this school year.

She said that when she leaves, Oklahoma's system of career and technology education will have

accomplished a number of milestones during her tenure. Those include the development of a system-wide strategic plan, implementation of a new virtual learning system (CareerTech Learning Network), leading the national career clusters project, implementation of an on-line job placement system, completion of a name change from vo-tech to CareerTech and coordination of a statewide marketing campaign.

I will forever cherish the experiences and love given me by the people with whom I've worked and the opportunity to have been a part of this wonderful system.

— Dr. Ann Benson



Ann Benson

Other accomplishments included new research and development initiatives, restructuring of the agency's internal and external computer systems' activities, development of a new Instructional Services division to help instructors hone teaching skills and implementation of measures that assess the system's effectiveness.

"I will forever cherish the experiences and love given me by the people with whom I've worked and the opportunity to have been a part of this wonderful system," Benson said.

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New Partnering for Employment program links Del City High School students to workplace mentors

Figuring out what to do after high school is often confusing for young people, especially those with disabilities.

Providing help with that dilemma is the purpose of a new project, undertaken by the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education and Del City High School. Its aim is to help students with disabilities make the right career and educational decisions.

"Partnering for Employment is a planned program of work-site learning experiences that relate to the student's career goals," said Melanie Eick, disabilities services specialist with the state CareerTech agency. "These experiences are also coordinated with the academic curriculum."

Barbara Dooley at Del City High School is coordinating the pilot project. The project, which started last fall, currently has nine students, all of whom have learning disabilities.



Jeremy Koos, a student at Del City High School, is also in the Partnering for Employment program. He is interning with Del City Fire Department. Koos has also job shadowed the fire chief and helps the firefighters write reports.

The project is the brainchild of the state CareerTech agency's School-to-Work and Guidance divisions. The program recently received the agency's Quality Team Award.

"The goal is to match students with disabilities with a mentor so they can learn more about a career they have an interest in," Eick said.

She added that most of the students in the program are junior and seniors who are already thinking about making the transition to employment or further education.

Local partners in the project include the Del City Chamber, Del City Youth and Family Services and the Oklahoma City Zoo.

"The Del City Chamber recommended businesses to serve as mentors," Eick said.

Students in the project are currently working alongside staff at the Del City Fire Department and the Oklahoma City Zoo. St. Anthony's Hospital plans to host students during the summer, Eick said. Jeremy Koos, a student in the Partnering for Employment program,

works closely with Del City Fire Chief Jerry Bower and Z. Williams, Koos' mentor. He goes on ride-alongs with the fire chief, helps officers write reports and has shadowed the department's 911 dispatcher.

Dooley said Koos has also gone to training classes with the firefighters where they learn subjects such as math and physical fitness. She said his internship has also helped him realize how concepts he learned in school are used in the real world.

"After he has finished this program he can be a volunteer firefighter with the Forest Park Fire Department," Dooley said.

Before the students sign up for the program, they complete a career interest inventory with Dooley. She also does some preparatory training with the mentors. Eick said students who have gone through Partnering for Employment will have a better understanding of the education required for jobs they are interested in.

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Association lauds Pipal for CareerTech support

The National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium has presented Tom Pipal, WorldCom's director of corporate training and development, with the Outstanding Business/Industry/Organization Contribution award.

The association represents the chief executives of career and technology education systems from all 50 states.

Pipal has been instrumental in establishing training programs in Oracle certification, Cisco certification, Microsoft certification, and Norton Internet/Telephony Switching at Oklahoma's network of technology centers. These training programs allow both current and potential telecom employees to expand their professional knowledge in areas not available in the *CareerTech* system several years ago. Last year, the



Tom Pipal

Department of Education recognized WorldCom for the company's role as a founding partner of the *CareerTech* telecommunications program and helping create one of the three outstanding adult educational programs in the nation.

Dr. Ann Benson, state director of the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education, nominated Pipal for the award.

"Tom has been a longtime supporter, and beneficiary, of the Oklahoma career and technology education system."

"WorldCom's training partnership with the *CareerTech* system has resulted in hundreds of Oklahomans landing high-paying jobs in

the telecommunications industry," Benson said.

The telecommunications program has grown in recent years to also include training at the high school level.

The first such program in Oklahoma, operating at Central Technology Center in Drumright, was recognized in 2001 as one of the nation's outstanding career and technology education programs by the National Dissemination Center for Career and Technical Education.

"Because he has seen firsthand the quality of *CareerTech* training, Tom is an unabashed admirer of the entire system and sings its praises whenever given the opportunity," Benson said.

"We're fortunate to be able to benefit from Tom's ongoing efforts to improve educational opportunities for *CareerTech* students all over Oklahoma."

Tri County, OU partner on dental degree program

An innovative partnership between Tri County Technology Center, Bartlesville, and the University of Oklahoma is hoping to help alleviate the shortage of dental hygienists in rural parts of the state.

The two entities recently celebrated the opening of a new Dental Hygiene clinic. Tri County is the first technology center in Oklahoma to establish an agreement with a higher education institution to provide a bachelor's degree in dental hygiene.

Students in the dental program, which is a satellite campus of the University of Oklahoma, College of Dentistry, will receive lectures delivered to Tri County using interactive videoconferencing technology. The clinical work will be conducted on site under the supervision of dental hygiene faculty and local dentists.

Elaine Dettle, director of TCTC's dental programs, hopes the new partnership will increase the supply of dental hygienists in the Bartlesville area.

"By providing the education in a distance learning format, it allows students to attend classes closer to home," she said. "Local residents will have the opportunity to receive low-cost dental hygiene services provided by students under the direction of dental hygiene faculty and a supervising dentist."

The dental hygiene program meets American Dental Association accreditation requirements as followed by the University of Oklahoma College of Dentistry, Department of Dental Hygiene. Prospective students are required to meet the Department's admission requirements, which include 60 hours of prerequisite course

work including human anatomy and physiology, microbiology, nutrition, an introduction to statistics, and several other general education and social science courses.

Dettle said the *CareerTech* training includes rigorous course work including subjects such as embryology, oral pathology, pharmacology and oral radiology.

"Graduating students will receive a bachelor of science degree and be eligible to take the national board and clinical licensure examinations," she said.

"There are currently eight students enrolled in the program," Dettle said.

"Dental hygiene shortages are a reality, and the economic impact of this training will be very beneficial to our area," said Lindel Fields, assistant superintendent at Tri County.

Reynolds hosts new CareerTech video

The Oklahoma CareerTech system has enlisted the help of Jenifer Reynolds, former KWTW news anchor, to educate Oklahomans about its diversity and the role it plays in Oklahoma's economic development.

Reynolds is the system's spokesperson in a new video titled "CareerTech Is Good for Oklahoma." She was chosen for that role to give the video a news magazine look and feel, and because she is a person that most Oklahomans trust.

The video presents an overview of the history and structure of the system and also features testimonies from nine Oklahomans who have benefited from CareerTech programs,

said Dr. Ann Benson, state CareerTech director.

"They speak from the heart about the good things the Oklahoma CareerTech system has done for them and their futures," she said. "Jenifer does a wonderful job of weaving the history and facts about the system around the successes of these nine Oklahomans."

"This is something we've needed for a long time," Benson said. "It explains to people what we do and why we matter."

Plans are for the video to be presented by CareerTech supporters to community groups across the state.

Presenters will use a Speaker's Kit containing fact sheets and brochures, Benson said. The

"CareerTech Is Good for Oklahoma" video is also available on the Internet at www.okcareertech.org/whoweare/whowe.htm

For more information about the video, contact Ann Houston at 405-743-5112.



Jenifer Reynolds