Can You Help the Children?

Toys for Tots

By Rob Ellis

Have you noticed the cardboard boxes in some of the hallways on campus? They have been placed there by Michelle Vincent, a student here at SWOSU and the mother of a child with cancer.

She would like anybody with an ounce of kindness to stop and drop a toy in those boxes. It doesn't have to be an expensive toy. Just a toy. You see, these toys are for ALLEY'S HOUSE, an organization sponsored by the Oklahoma Children's Cancer Association. These toys collected in the boxes will go to children who are dying from cancer and other life threatening illnesses.

These kids know about pain, suffering, and death. But how much do they know about caring and giving from strangers? We all know this is the whole basis behind Christmas. O.C.C.A. also gives financial support to families of children with chronic or terminal illnesses. It takes much of their time and financial resources to be with their children. I know, and you know, that a one or two dollar toy isn't going to heal their illness, but it will bring a smile to their faces and take their minds off the pain. When these children have yet another trip to the hospital, one of the things they look forward to is getting to pick out a toy from the toy box. This means so much to the moms and dads to see that smile. If only for a moment, it is remembered for a lifetime for them and their families. Just ask Michelle.

So please, the next time you’re standing in line at the dollar store with your arms loaded down with goodies, just make your way over to the toy section and grab something and bring it to class to put in the toy box. Who knows? You may even feel good about it.

I know that the children who receive the gift you so unselfishly gave are certain to feel great, if only for a moment. For more information, see www.helpkidsfightcancer.org or ask Michelle Vincent, who volunteers to drive the toys collected to Oklahoma City every semester.

Turkey Dinner Winner

By Melissa Gilliland

SGA announces Jennie Early as the winner of the Turkey Dinner Giveaway. Jennie lives in Sayre and couldn’t make it this year to spend Thanksgiving with her family that lives in Arizona. She was nominated by the faculty to receive the dinner so she could enjoy a thanksgiving feast of her own. She received a turkey with all the fixings and pumpkin pie.
State health officials announced that all Oklahomans who want to reduce their risk of H1N1 infection are now eligible to receive H1N1 influenza vaccine. While vaccine supplies remain limited, demand from priority groups has dipped to a point where all Oklahomans can begin to receive vaccine.

“While we continue to emphasize the importance of vaccination for the priority groups, especially children and pregnant women, we are going to begin to vaccinate the general population today,” said State Epidemiologist Dr. Kristy Bradley. “Vaccination continues to be the best way to protect yourself from the H1N1 flu and slow the spread of this pandemic. H1N1 influenza activity has been widespread in Oklahoma since early September and even though statewide monitoring has recently shown a decline in influenza-linked hospitalizations, this virus is expected to circulate throughout the winter months. The possibility also exists that another surge of H1N1 flu may follow the current one.”

Since September 1, 890 Oklahomans have been hospitalized due to complications from influenza and 27 persons have died. Ninety percent of the H1N1-related deaths have been persons less than 65 years old. This finding contrasts significantly with seasonal flu which tends to cause the greatest proportion of deaths among persons older than 65 years. The best protection against getting the flu is to receive both the vaccine for H1N1 flu and seasonal flu.

Oklahomans seeking the H1N1 vaccine are encouraged to check with their physician’s office or county health department. The Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH) expects an additional 90,000 doses of the H1N1 vaccine to be delivered to the state this week. The doses include both nasal spray and injectable vaccines. Supplies remain limited and the state expects to continue to receive vaccine through January.

For more information about the availability of H1N1 influenza vaccine in your area, call your local county health department or visit www.health.ok.gov. The Oklahoma State Department of Health toll-free H1N1 hotline is 1-866-278-7134. Phones are answered Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Southwestern Oklahoma State University at Sayre’s spring schedule includes night classes at both the SWOSU-Sayre campus and at Elk City High School.

Students can choose among night classes offered at the Sayre campus on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays. Most classes begin at 6 p.m. Night classes meet one night a week from January until May and enrollment is underway for the spring classes.

In addition, three classes—Introduction to Literature, Seminar in Bookkeeping and College Algebra—are offered at Elk City High School. Literature will meet Monday evenings, Bookkeeping Tuesday evenings, and College Algebra Thursday evenings. All three classes begin at 6 p.m.

“Night classes are ideal for busy adults who want a college education but must juggle work and home responsibilities,” said SWOSU-Sayre instructor Landry Brewer. “But the classes are also available for eligible high school juniors and seniors who want to earn college credit before graduating.”

High school seniors who qualify do not have to pay tuition, because Oklahoma high school seniors with a minimum ACT score may take college courses tuition-free at SWOSU-Sayre.

For more information about SWOSU-Sayre spring classes, call the Registrar’s Office at (580) 928-5533.

The spring semester begins January 6.
Guest Speaker Warns of Tobacco Danger

Gruen Von Behrens was a powerful speaker on Monday, December 7th as he addressed over 30 people who attended at 10:00 in the gymnasium. Behrens, a victim of mouth cancer, presented the touching story of his struggle with this condition and the removal of his jaw. In addition to some enlightenment of the risks of tobacco, such as one dip is worth 3 to 5 cigarettes as far as toxins, he also talked about bullying and acceptance. He was sponsored by the SGA.

Gruen was just thirteen and on a camp-out with friends when one pulled out a can of snuff he’d stolen from his father’s dresser drawer. “I thought, ‘Why not?’” he said. “I was 13. I had not a care in the world. So I took a dip.” “At first it made me kind of sick and real dizzy. Next thing I knew I was addicted.”

By age 14 Gruen Von Behrens was seriously hooked on nicotine. At his peak he was consuming more than half a can a day. Then it happened, at 16 he noticed a small white spot on his tongue, a spot that would gradually start to grow.

“As a teenager, [Gruen] was a handsome lad who hit .400 for the local Comets and wanted to play for the Chicago Cubs. Ryne Sandberg was his hero. ‘The only things I cared about were baseball, food, and women, in that order,’ he said. At the high school field he still can point out the houses in the neighborhood beyond the center-field fence that he hit with home runs.”

But now something was gradually eating away at his tongue and Gruen was slowly beginning to realize that he likely had cancer. He decided to hide it from his mother, a nurse. The 5’10” ball-player recalls sitting in the bathroom asking God why this was happening to him.

When his mother kept asking why he was slurring his speech, drooling, and why he couldn’t seem to keep food in his mouth he’d tell her that it was his wisdom teeth.

His mom would discover the truth when she surprised him with a visit to the dentist’s office. According to the Gazette story, “once in the dentist’s chair and about to be put under anesthesia, [Gruen] admitted the truth. ‘It’s not my wisdom teeth, I have cancer,’ he said, as the dentist peeked into his mouth. The dentist nodded to his mother.” Gruen had squamous cell carcinoma.

“I’ve never seen my mom cry like that,” Gruen recalls. “It ripped her heart out.” Doctors gave him a 25% chance of survival going into his first surgery. “At 17, you’re not supposed to think about life and death issues,” he said.

One week later a 17-year-old boy would undergo 13 hours of surgery followed by a month of recovery in the hospital. Then came the radiation treatments. Within six weeks he’d lose 70 pounds, lose the skin on his face, his mouth would become a blisterly white mess, and his teeth would rot.

At 19 “doctors transplanted three inches of bone from his back to his face to give him a jaw. The transplant lasted two days. Then his body rejected it.”

Now 40 operations later at age 27, his lower face severely disfigured, his lower teeth and jawbone gone, half his tongue and neck muscle missing, his face patched with skin and muscle from his leg, Gruen pleads with all who’ll listen, “Don’t do it, it ruined my life.”

In slurred speech in crowded school gymnasiums across the nation he tells students, “I know I’m a little hard to understand, so you’re going to have to bear with me and listen.” “This isn’t a mask I can take off and throw in the closet. I’m like this 365 days a year.”

“I’m not here to preach to you,” he tells them. “I’m not saying all of you will get cancer, but a few of you will.”

Gruen tells students that “the inside of [my] mouth is grayish, like hamburger that’s spent too much time in the sun.”

Doctors have cut skin from his leg to cover his face wounds and extracted muscles from his chest to rebuild the floor of his mouth.

“I have a beautiful fiancee I can’t marry because I look like this,” he said. “I walk into Wal-Mart and I hear kids say, ‘Mommy, Mommy, look at him. Why does he look so funny, why does he look so scary?’”

Gruen is working hard with the National Spit Tobacco Education Program to correct the false belief that smokeless tobacco is a safe alternative to smoking. Tobacco causes cancer, no matter how it is absorbed by the body.

“I wish someone came to me when I was experimenting and using it and I saw how he or she looked and talked,” he added. “I don’t want to toot my own horn, but I used to be good looking. I was the guy all the girls wanted to date. I was a good baseball player, but I can’t play now.”

“If I had known then what I know now, I never would have put a dip in my mouth,” said Gruen. “Spit tobacco seemed harmless, but it has ruined my life.”
By Shannon Eslinger

The holidays are upon us and soon it will be time for Christmas. This is a time families all come together and give thanks for everything that they are thankful for in their lives and think about giving to others. Surely all of us out there have many things that we are thankful for, whether it is your family, friends, financial situation, graduating from college, a new baby, the list could go on and on. Each one of us have one major thing that we should all be thankful for and that is the troops that fight each and every day for the freedom that all of us enjoy. So, as Christmas gets closer and we all gather and enjoy our family fellowship, let us all take a second to remember those who are fighting for us away from their families, their friends, and everything familiar to them and remember to never take for granted the right that we have to sit with our loved ones and enjoy this holiday season, and let us also remember the rights that these brave men and women have given us to celebrate this holiday and remember its true meaning. My thanks goes out to each and every man and woman who has given his or her life and those who are still there fighting to make sure that we are all able to remain free.

Get Weather Info on Your Cell Phone

By Kylie Franklin

Those who signed up for the free Emergency Notification System will receive a text message whenever classes are canceled.

If you have not signed up for it, perhaps you should. Sign up today at www.swosu.edu/resources/alert.asp or click on the “SWOSU Alert” logo under “Current Students” at the Sayre web site.

In addition to weather, this also notifies you of any potential campus emergency, such as a homeland security threat, via SMS text message. The service is free, but you may be charged a normal fee by your carrier, depending on your cell phone plan.

You will need to have your cell phone with you when you go on-line to sign up. Also you will need to know your SWOSU user name to make your account. This is usually your last name and first initial, unless someone already has that one. In that case, go to swosu.edu and click on “Directory” at the top to find your user name. One option is to add a family member’s cell phone number to the emergency alert system, so have that ready if you choose.

Of course, you can also call the campus weather hotline at 774-3225 and select option 4.

It’s a good idea to save this number to your cell, because you know you don’t want to have to look it up on some cold, snowy, wintry morning when you’re wondering if you can just stay in bed!

SHANNON THANKFUL FOR HOLIDAY GIVING

Students Honored

Recently four SWOSU students traveled to Indianapolis, Indiana, to be awarded their National FFA Degree. This is the highest honor conferred upon an FFA student. From left Ridge Lowrance, Lauren Givens, Caleb Dixon, and Spencer Smith.
By Jessica Egner

On November 18th, Mrs. Ford’s Introduction to Public Speaking class attended the District Four University Interscholastic League (UIL) in Wheeler, Texas. They had the chance to put their speech abilities to the test by judging grades 2-12. The contests consisted of Oral Reading, Story Telling and Impromptu Speeches. The SWOSU students were given the opportunity to judge both preliminaries and finals, looking at criteria such as eye contact, volume, appropriate pausing, introductions that aroused interest, gestures, facial expression, enthusiasm, voice quality, and much more.

Their volunteer work and contribution to the community qualifies their field trip as a Service Learning Project. The SWOSU students were amazed by the way the Texas school system introduces students to public speaking at a very early age. They reflected on the importance of public speaking, the feeling they get from volunteering, and how their critiques and constructive comments as judges can affect the youths.

The SWOSU students judging were Joseph Hough, Alyssa Brandon, Rick Duran, Carrie Myers, Dee Dee Owens, Shelby Coats, Dayna Hicks and Jessica Egner.

UIL Competition events include Math, Sciences, Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Spelling. Students may compete in more than one event. Some events overlap, restricting a student from competing in every event he or she may desire.

The University Interscholastic League was created by the University of Texas in Austin, and “the UIL serves to provide leadership and guidance to public schools’ debate and athletic teachers” (www.uil.utexas.edu). Started in 1909, the UIL has grown into the largest organization of its kind in the world.

It was amazing to take part in such a historic Texas event. As SWOSU freshman Dayna Hicks said, “It was scary at first, but when you got used to the idea, it became exciting.”

At left, two students in the contest, Cade Means and Lindi Hernandez, 6th graders from Wheeler, meet their judges at right, Rick Duran and Dee Dee Owens. Photos by Terry Ford.

Between rounds, eating in the Judges’ Lounge are (from left) Jessica Egner, Alyssa Brandon, Dayna Hicks, and Rick Duran.

Barry McLeod is a Psychology major living in Sayre. His hobbies include fishing and tinkering with anything he can get his hands on. If he could spend Christmas anywhere, Barry would spend it in Montana. He loves the snow and the thought of being out in the middle of nowhere. Barry spent all of 2004 in Iraq with Army contractors. This is Barry’s favorite quote: “He who fails to learn from History is doomed to repeat it.”

Barry McLeod, Photo by Deneile Nash

Meet These Dawgs

Brian Atteberry is a Computer Science major living in Erick. When he's not working or working on school, he's catching up on some much needed beauty sleep. If Brian could spend Christmas anywhere he wanted, he would have to travel to Italy, mainly because of the food and culture! In ten years, Brian plans to have a successful law firm anywhere near an ocean. When asked what he wanted for Christmas, Brian replied, “A flask!”

Between rounds, eating in the Judges’ Lounge are (from left) Jessica Egner, Alyssa Brandon, Dayna Hicks, and Rick Duran.
By Carrie Myers

Darrell Royal was born July 6, 1924, in Hollis, Oklahoma. If you happened to ever live in Texas, you’d know his name. They worship their Friday Night Football down there, and he is a god among men in Longhorn Country!

He attended Hollis schools and played football for the Hollis Tigers. Royal also played basketball and worked for Hall and Berry Motor Company. Royal was named Quarterback All State his senior year 1943. Royal met his wife Edith and where married in 1944. Edith Thomason was born in Gould, Oklahoma, to A.M. (Cub) and Addie Mae Thomason. The couple have been married for 65 years. They also have three children.

Right out of high school, Royal joined the air force. After his service, he attended Oklahoma University and was named All American. After several assistant coaching positions, he landed the head coaching position at the University of Texas in December 1956.

The Longhorns, coached by Royal, went on to claim many championships and he is the winningest coach in Longhorn history! He was twice the recipient of the Bear Bryant Award and was elected to the College Football Hall of Fame and a member of the National Football Hall of Fame.

Royal is currently employed by the University of Texas as Special President. One of Darrell Royal’s famous quotes is “Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity.”

A former classmate of Royal’s that still resides in Hollis is Mrs. Peggy Kite, who had plenty of stories to tell. She recalled, “Darrell was a leader, a well-rounded athlete and was well liked. I don’t think Darrell dated anyone except Edith in high school. It became a tradition that every Thanksgiving we played Oklahoma City, Altus, or Lawton. Talk of the town was if Darrell would go play for Gould, or if Gould would steal him away.”

Coach John Wheat was quoted as saying Darrell had an “educated toe.” Folks in Hollis are still pretty proud of their boy who made it big.
Reflections on My Journalism Experiences at SWOSU

By Carrie Myers

After almost two years, my days on the newspaper staff are coming to a close. I reflect on the memories that have been created, memories that will last a lifetime. As I embark on this journey down memory lane, many emotions will be stirred and many laughs shared. For example, Halloween ’08’ I made my costume—a “one night stand.” I am proud to say that I won first place, but the funniest part is when I asked Dr. James to take a picture with me. He said, “What are you?”

I replied with a big smile, “a one night stand” as the picture was taken. We both laughed, and it was too late for him. It was already taken.

I have not yet finished the first paragraph, and the tears are beginning to stream down my face like Niagara Falls. Most students are happy to be completing a course, but to know this is my final article and my days are ending on this campus makes me very sad. How will I make it through?

Wow, what a journey it has been, from writing stories about student apathy to covering our Dawg Days. From interviewing students to interviewing All American and former Texas Head Couch Darrel Royal. I cannot leave out meeting Bob Stoops, Joe Diffie and the band Ricochet.

It is not what I have put into the paper that makes this goodbye so hard, it is the memories I get to take with me. The memories of Mrs. Ford and me working diligently to make a deadline, only to find out later that the publication didn’t save. From the stuffing of over 30 envelopes with the wrong publication—I thought that one was funny—to the little flower mirror I received as an award at our Annual Awards Banquet, for being so busy I never knew whether I was “coming or going.”

The most rewarding experience I had was when I was an embedded reporter for the Spanish 08’ Trip to OKC. I had gone to the front of LaLunas Mexican restaurant to pay for my lunch, when a man bumped into me.

“Excuse me,” the man replied. When I looked up, I thought I recognized him. Was it really? No way that is Bob Stoops. I looked at Mrs. Haught and said “That is Bob Stoops,” as if I needed to convince myself that yes, it was Bob Stoops. He was doing an interview with ESPN, cameras were everywhere. I asked Mrs. Haught, “Should I ask him to take a picture with the class?”

“You are the reporter; go for it,” she said.

I went over to the table and said “Excuse me, sir,” not knowing that I was interrupting a live interview, “Would you be willing to take a picture with a Spanish class that is from S.W.O.S.U. in Sayre?” He suggested we meet him out front and that he’d be right out. The class met outside and took several pictures. Yes, I am proud to say that I was that student on ESPN, interrupting Mr. Stoops.

(Continued on page 8)

Christmas vs. X-mas?

By Jessica Egner

Busy traffic-filled streets, crowded malls, and overwhelmed sales employees. “X-mas” is the new generation’s Christmas of instant families overwhelmed sales employees. “X’s twist on the classic Bible-centered holiday. It can be bought in moments, used for seconds, and pretended happy holidays. X’s has been thrown away in the blink of an eye. It is likeiben’s Christmas of instant families. The new generation’s Christmas of instant families. It is like

Decades earlier, families cut down their own trees and made their stockings to hang by the fireplace. Christmas was steeped in traditions they understood and passed down, like what the colors of a candy cane mean.

We don’t have to de-modernize and start cutting down our tree and stitching by the fireplace. We don’t have to bake cookies instead of buying them; sometimes we are pressed for time. But, perhaps this Christmas, we can stop and appreciate the holiday more and think of others more.

Christmas doesn’t have to be a rat race of gift buying and cooking. It should be about thinking of the special people in your life and appreciating those with whom you choose to spend your Christmas.

Interesting Fun Facts

By Shannon Eslinger

As each of us wake up in the mornings, a lot of us are scrambling to find our morning caffeine. Some of us like our coffee while others prefer some kind of soft drink or energy drink. It is like

that caffeine motivates us to get up and go, especially on those days we just don’t seem to have the energy. What you might not know is that eating an apple is more efficient than caffeine at waking you up.

Could you imagine how much healthier we would all be if we would choose to eat an apple instead of drink something loaded up with caffeine?

Just something interesting I thought some of you might like to know.
Carrie's Adventures on the Newspaper Staff

Carrie Myers has taken all newspaper classes offered: Student Publications I and II, and News Gathering. You, too, can have exciting adventures on the staff! Enroll in the Registrar’s Office today!

Carrie continues to wax poetic about newspaper . . . .

(Continued from page 7)

The friendships I have made during my last three semesters have also been very rewarding. I have had the opportunity to work with many students, take funny pictures of them eating at every event, working on articles about Oklahoma legends. The one friendship I cherish is the friendship I have formed with Mrs. Ford. Not only has she been an amazing instructor, but an amazing mentor. I will never forget the first time I stepped foot on this campus. The first instructor I met was Mrs. Ford. I will remember her bright smile and her comforting words, “You will do great.” She has taught me to go after the things I want most, even when they seem impossible. She has believed in me, even when I did not believe in myself, and has taught me that no matter what, I have to keep my head held high and my running shoes on, because life throws us curves, and we have to be prepared. Thank you, Mrs. Ford, sincerely.

Therefore, I will wipe the tears, hold my head up high, and hit the ground running as I continue my journey to Weatherford next fall and work as a freelance reporter for The Sayre Record. I will continue to build memories of my college years, but I will never forget the ones I already have. Thank you for making the last two years, great!