TAXPAYER

INDEPENDENCE

FREEDOM

CAREER

PAYCHECK

EMPLOYMENT

JOB

FUTURE

SELF-RESPECT

ANNUAL REPORT 2017

CAREER

CONFIDENCE

LIVING

LIFE

PAYCHECK

TRAINING

EDUCATION

DRS

Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services

Our mission:

The Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services expands opportunities for employment, independent living and economic self-sufficiency by helping Oklahomans with disabilities bridge barriers to success in the workplace, school and at home.

One in six Oklahomans has a disability, and DRS' Vocational Rehabilitation programs introduce or reinstate people with disabilities back into the workforce, creating taxpayers and reducing dependence on disability benefits and social assistance.

DRS clients exercise informed choice with the goals that each achieves equality of opportunity, full inclusion and integration into society, employment, independent living, and economic and social self-sufficiency.

In Fiscal Year 2017, DRS served more than 99,000 Oklahomans.

DRS has six program divisions

- Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services
- Vocational Rehabilitation
- Visual Services
- Oklahoma School for the Blind
- Oklahoma School for the Deaf
- Disability Determination Services
- Support Services

GOVERNING BOARD FOR DRS

Commission for Rehabilitation Services

Chairman Jack Tucker

Oktaha resident Jack Tucker is a retired teacher and principal from DRS' Oklahoma School for the Deaf.

He is a former DRS client with a visual disability, who spent more than 40 years motivating students.

Tucker designed and developed award-winning OSD programs, including the Occupational Training Opportunities for the Deaf.

Commissioner April Danahy

Vice Commissioner April Danahy is Vice President of Human Resources and Corporate Communications at the Security National Bank of Enid. She has 18 years of experience in corporate communications and human resources and 17 years of radio experience. Danahy is active in the Enid community and holds positions on numerous nonprofit boards. She was appointed to the Commission by the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

Commissioner Emily Cheng

Commissioner Emily Cheng serves as the disability services coordinator and an academic adviser at Oklahoma State University — Oklahoma City.

Gov. Mary Fallin appointed her to the post.

Cheng has a master's degree in rehabilitation counseling from Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center.

DRS committed to seeing Oklahomans reach career goals

Dear Oklahoma Stakeholders,

Every Oklahoman should have a voice in their future and access to all available opportunities no matter their circumstance.

The Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services employees work every day to ensure people with disabilities have the freedom to live independent lives and pursue meaningful careers. We are dedicated to the mission that each client realize the future they want. We do this by providing services including education, training and career counseling.

I am pleased to present the 2017 Annual Report, reflecting our work to support Oklahomans with disabilities who are moving away from government benefit checks and back into the labor force as proud taxpayers.

The cornerstone of DRS' work is informed choice, which requires our staff to provide the information and support needed for clients to make their own decisions about the direction of their lives.

Clients of DRS are active decision makers and full partners in the vocational rehabilitation process, including choosing the employment goal and developing Individualized Plans for Employment.

DRS staff is committed to the idea that true freedom and independence comes through work and earning a paycheck.

Our dedication to our clients is reflected in our 2017 program outcomes including:

- DRS Visual Services and Vocational Rehabilitation divisions served 11,765 Oklahomans on their path to find employment and become taxpayers. This resulted in 203 Visual Services clients and 1,811 Vocational Rehabilitation clients returning to the workforce and once again becoming proud taxpayers.

- Our DRS schools, the Oklahoma School for the Blind and the Oklahoma School for the Deaf, both achieved 100-percent graduation rates for their Classes of 2017. Our students meet the same state requirements all Oklahoma students must achieve for high school graduation and are equipped to pursue lives of independence and employment.

- DRS' Disability Determination Services again performed at an extraordinary level, exceeding the budgeted workload and completing 106.6-percent of its allotted cases.

- DDS continues to be a national resource as one of three Extended Service Team sites that assists other states with their backlog of disability claims. Since its inception, Oklahoma EST has provided assistance to multiple states including Arizona, California, Kansas, Louisiana and New Mexico.

- DRS employees are key to the successes of Oklahomans with disabilities in achieving goals from graduation to becoming proud taxpayers. Each DRS staff member is committed to Empower Oklahomans with disabilities.

Director Noel Tyler

"The cornerstone of DRS' work is informed choice, which requires our staff to provide the information and support needed for our clients to make their own decisions about the direction of their lives.

2017 Total Expenditures

Vocational Rehabilitation/ Visual Services

State:	$12,086,000
Federal:	$49,797,000
Inter-Agency:	$117,000
Other:	$625,000
Total:	$62,625,000

Oklahoma School for the Blind

State:	$5,837,000
Federal:	$113,000
Inter-Agency:	$183,000
Other:	$58,000
Total:	$6,191,000

Oklahoma School for the Deaf

State:	$7,342,000
Federal:	$163,000
Inter-Agency:	$91,000
Other:	$393,000
Total:	$7,989,000

Disability Determination Service

State:	$0
Federal:	$40,086,000
Inter-Agency:	$0
Other:	$0
Total:	$40,086,000

Support Services

State:	$2,126,000
Federal:	$6,077,000
Inter-Agency:	$0
Other:	$7,000
Total:	$8,210,000

Total Expenditures

State:	$27,391,000
Federal:	$96,236,000
Inter-Agency:	$391,000
Other:	$1,083,000
Total:	$125,101,000

FUNDING

Federal support helps DRS empower people with disabilities

DRS draws from state and federal resources in its mission to see Oklahomans live lives of independence through careers and training.

The majority of funding for Vocational Rehabilitation and Visual Services is eligible for a federal/state match of 78.7 percent/21.3 percent. Visual Services' Oklahoma Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped is state funded.

The majority of funding for Oklahoma School for the Blind and Oklahoma School for the Deaf is state appropriations. Other OSD funding is primarily the Equipment Distribution Program, which provides telecommunications and other equipment to deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind and severely speech-impaired individuals.

In the support services divisions, DRS utilizes an indirect cost rate as the standardized method for individual programs to pay a fair share of support service (general administration) costs.

Statistical information is based on State Fiscal Year 2017.

Total VR and VS clients

11,765

served in 2017

READY TO EARN

Norman man building life with career

Malik Wanna-Lawrence is living a life not unlike most other 21-year-olds.

He works a full-time job and is saving up to buy a car and his own place to call home.

None of this would have been possible without the assistance of the DRS Transition program and its vocational rehabilitation counselors.

For videos and additional DRS information:
Go to www.okdrs.gov/AR2017

Wanna-Lawrence is a Norman High School graduate who has Asperger's Syndrome. He said his disability makes communication difficult, and before entering the Transition program, he lacked the confidence to interact with others.

Now, he works for the Embassy Suites Hotel in Norman in the Maintenance and Engineering Department, an opportunity made possible through the Transition Program's Project Search. Project Search provides internships in businesses to help youth with significant disabilities make successful transitions from school to work and into adult life.

"If I had not had the Transition program and Project Search, I would be at home and not confident enough to get a job," Wanna-Lawrence said.

Committed to **Independence**

Transition program empowers youth through jobs

Oklahoma youth with disabilities can prepare for a life of independence and employment with the DRS' Transition: School-to-Work Program.

Transition services available through counselors in the Vocational Rehabilitation and Visual Services assigned to each high school include:

Vocational counseling and guidance: DRS counselors assist teachers, parents and students in developing appropriate career goals.

Vocational assessment and evaluation: DRS work helps determine students' employment-related strengths and interests, and provides recommended career fields to investigate.

School Work Study: Through contracts with the schools, DRS Transition provides job readiness skills training through work experience at the school district or in the community, while students earn a minimum wage and school credits.

Work Adjustment Training: This training is provided through contracts with the schools or from community-based facilities, and provides students with a foundation of employment skills to help them prepare for competitive, integrated employment after high school.

On-the-Job Training: This program provides students the opportunity to obtain community employment in their career of choice with permanent employment as a goal.

Supported Employment: Students in their senior year transition into permanent employment with support from a job coach to search for employment as well as helping apply, prepare for the interview, learn the job and work toward independence.

Job Development and Placement specialists help students make job searches more successful.

After graduation, DRS counselors and students continue to work toward employment goals.

IMPACT ON OKLAHOMANS IN 2017

1,464*	**Oklahoma Transition students served**
$2,463,111*	**Cost of client Transition services**

* Number reflects cases from 10/1/2016 to 9/30/2017

DRS GAVE ME 'INDEPENDENCE'

Woman gets back to work with DRS help

Jennifer Pellat-Finet could have surrendered to her disability and to the depression that all too often comes with it.

Six years ago, complications from a sepsis diagnosis forced Pellat-Finet to undergo a double amputation below her knees while she was living in France. She had always been an active person.

▶ SEE GRATEFUL, PAGE 8

VR programs help clients get to work

Oklahomans with disabilities can pursue their goals for an independent life through employment with the support of the Vocational Rehabilitation staff.

Our mission is to remove barriers that prevent a person from working, to guide and counsel clients on career paths of their choice and network with employers on behalf of people with disabilities.

In Fiscal Year 2017, VR served 10,569 clients. DRS saw 1,811 Oklahomans with physical or mental disabilities become employed with the average yearly earnings reaching an average of $22,121.

These accomplishments are possible because of DRS services including career counseling, vocational education and training and medical services if it is determined it will help a client find employment. They may also receive assistive technology, job placement and coaching.

When DRS clients who are former recipients of Social Security benefits reach their nine-month work anniversary, the Social Security Administration reimburses DRS a portion of the cost of the services to get that person into the workforce.

The SSA reimbursement final totals for the 2017 federal fiscal year were an exceptional $1.5 million from 117 Oklahomans going to work.

IMPACT ON OKLAHOMANS IN 2017

10,569	Job seekers served
5,800	Program applications
2,623	Employment plans completed
1,811	Employment outcomes achieved
$22,121	Vocational Rehabilitation average yearly earnings
$11,272	Average cost of services per VR client
$3,318	Average yearly taxes paid (based on 15% tax rate)

GRATEFUL, FROM PAGE 7

Now all she ever knew about living that life was at risk.

"You are in such a place of shock and disbelief when it happens (the diagnosis)," she said. "You don't think your life will go on, but it does."

It is not easy, though.

Pellat-Finet returned to the United States in 2011 and said her decade of living in Europe meant she did not qualify for many government services. DRS though gave her hope.

She received counseling, tuition to complete her degree at the University of Central Oklahoma, modifications to her car so she could drive again

and bilateral prosthetics for her legs. She now enjoys working in a full-time job.

"Without DRS, I would not have these prosthetics, not finished my degree or been able to afford the hand-held devices for my vehicle," she said. "They gave me independence. I could not have done any of this without Vocational Rehabilitation. I am very grateful."

OFF TO A FAST START

Program gets clients working

Kirstin Tyner had achieved a life ambition, earning her college degree and becoming a registered nurse at Tulsa's Hillcrest Medical Center.

Six months later, she was forced to leave her job after blood clots stole her sight.

"I was six months out of nursing school when I lost my vision," Tyner said. "I had a clotting disorder that allowed pressure to build up. The only way for the pressure to be released was through my eyes and that is how my optic nerves were damaged."

Stuck at home, Tyner said she wanted to do something to better provide for her family. She was led to DRS when her own mother was introduced to the agency by a cousin because of her mom's own vision and hearing impairments.

Tyner was chosen to take part in an apprenticeship program in Tulsa. The program offers clients a chance to work as a receptionist at DRS' downtown Tulsa office and gain work experience that not only builds personal skills but can be listed as practical experience on a resume. The apprenticeship lasts for 10 months.

Fatos Floyd, DRS Field Service

▶SEE INTERNS, PAGE 10

Visual Services helping Oklahomans get into workforce

Visual Services helps people who are blind or visually impaired to live their dreams and reach their employment or life goals.

Clients are provided the opportunity to become employed through the vocational rehabilitation process that can include career counseling, vocational education and training, medical services required to become employable and assistive technology geared to their specific needs and job placement.

Clients are eligible for the vocational rehabilitation program if their disability makes it difficult to work. They must be able to benefit from vocational rehabilitation services, which are required to prepare for and find jobs.

Many clients receive living skills training that allows them to navigate their environments, operate computers, manage money and much more. With these skills, people who are blind or visually impaired often feel ready to compete in the workplace.

The Business Enterprise Program trains and assists people who are blind in establishing and operating food service businesses in public and private facilities across the state. BEP equips locations, provides initial inventory and offers ongoing technical support to licensed BEP entrepreneurs.

Older Blind Independent Living Services gives Oklahomans, aged 55 and older, the ability to remain independent after becoming visually impaired. The program teaches living skills with special magnifying equipment, small appliances with audio and tips on staying safe when performing household duties.

Visual Services' Assistive Technology Labs provides blind or visually impaired clients quality training either individually or in a group setting to assist them in gaining valuable hands on experience on assistive technology. Clients may try operating computers, note taking devices and a variety of other types of equipment that may assist them in gaining quality employment opportunities.

The staff are willing to schedule appointments to allow clients the opportunity to develop in-depth learning skills that are expected from blind or visually impaired professionals. The staff will also demonstrate equipment available and make recommendations based on the client's needs.

Orientation and mobility specialists provide instruction on a one-on-one basis to help individuals with visual impairments learn to travel safely and efficiently through their environment, using white canes and other independent travel techniques. The instruction may include street crossing, bus travel and evaluation of distance mobility aids to ensure safe and independent travel.

IMPACT ON OKLAHOMANS IN 2017

1,196	Job seekers served
412	Program applications
207	Employment plans completed
203	Employment outcomes achieved
$23,078	Visual Services client average yearly earnings
$16,677	Average cost of services per VS client
$3,462	Average yearly taxes paid (based on 15% tax rate)

▶ INTERNS, FROM PAGE 9

Coordinator, said Tyner is the fourth person to be part of the apprenticeship program, and so far, all have been employed after they completed their time.

The latest, client Felicia Jones, started work recently as an office administrator at a Tulsa mental health facility.

"The first person our clients will meet when they come to our offices is a blind person working," Floyd said. "I have seen our receptionists talking with clients who come in and showing them equipment and talking about how they succeeded. So it really works incredibly well on many levels."

EMPLOYMENT

Business Enterprise Program

Aletha Wright went through BEP training program in 2003 and now operates her own business.

PRACTICAL FOUNDATION FOR SUCCESS

BEP puts clients in career driver's seat

Oklahomans who are blind or visually impaired can be on the road to an independent life with the assistance of a DRS' program that offers them the chance to own their own business.

Through the federally enacted Randolph-Sheppard Act of 1936 and Oklahoma State Statute Title 7, Visual Services operates the Business Enterprise Program. BEP's mission is to provide employment opportunities for people who are legally blind by establishing food service operations across the state.

These operations may consist of vending machine routes, cafeterias or a variety of different types of snack bars. To accomplish this, the BEP aids entrepreneurs by providing extensive business training, licensing business owners, locating and equipping locations, securing initial inventory and offering ongoing business consultation services.

BEP entrepreneurs are educated in the areas of food safety, hospitality, marketing and business management. A portion of each business' proceeds is paid to DRS to help support the program.

OSB PART OF STRONG FOUNDATION

School put her on path to 30-year career

Jane Thomas weighed only 2-pounds, 13-ounces, when she was born prematurely and totally blind.

Those barriers though would not hold Thomas back from achieving her dreams with the help from the love of her parents and the education and skills she learned at the Oklahoma School for the Blind in Muskogee.

"My mother was determined that I was going to succeed, and I just didn't have a choice about it," Thomas said.

At age 6, Thomas and her mother moved from rural LeFlore County to Muskogee so that she could attend OSB as a day student in the first year of school.

"Those first few years shaped me in so many ways," she said.

> **"It was like we almost became their children. That is exactly how they taught us. You can't get that anywhere else.**

"One of the ways was learning to intermingle with other children. I was the youngest in my family and my brother had gone into the military when I reached school age. So I was about to be raised as a spoiled and coddled only child. But coming to the school for the blind, I soon met other friends and played with them just as I had interacted with them in my preschool days with friends

▶ SEE JANE, PAGE 14

OSB opens world for students with disabilities

Oklahoma children who are blind or visually impaired have a place where they can paint their futures in vibrant colors whether they love math, literature, music or sports.

The Oklahoma School for the Blind serves students age 3 through 12th-grade, offering superior educational opportunities that will lead to lives of independence, education and a future career. Tuition is free.

OSB students receive specialized education in coordination with their state-mandated educational requirements. They learn valuable independent living skills and how to use specialized accessible technology equipment.

Students excel in their education because school staff set high bars for achievement. All state-mandated education requirements are taught. The school offers a comprehensive curriculum of reading, language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, physical education, music and computer science for residential and day students.

OSB recently began offering a new robotics program that is fully accessible to blind/visually impaired students and introduces the students to the exciting world of math and engineering.

Specialized instruction includes Braille, orientation and mobility, low vision skills, adaptive equipment and technology. These intensive specializations are not readily available at other public schools in the state.

The school serves all 77 Oklahoma counties. Regardless of the hometown, the school will transport students at no cost to the parents or guardians to designated stops throughout the state. OSB is a four-day a week program. Students who live close commute daily. Those who live farther away stay on campus Sunday night through Thursday. Residential students are transported to and from OSB for three-day weekends, summers and holidays at home.

OSB staff is committed to motivating students to build their palette of possibilities so they can overcome whatever challenges they face while working toward lives of independence through, training, education and a career.

OSB staff provides thousands of free outreach services each year for students attending local public schools. Qualified staff offer free student evaluations, in-service training for teachers and recommendations for classroom modifications and special equipment that help students reach their full potential.

IMPACT ON OKLAHOMANS IN 2017

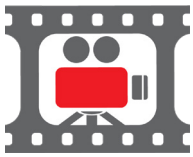
1 to 5	OSB teacher to student ratio
100%	Graduation rate in 2017
1 to 6	Direct care-specialists to students ratio
89	Total students enrolled in 2017
52	Current number of counties receiving services from the OSB
2,487	Outreach program: Direct Services
1,708	Services to other schools

▶ JANE, FROM PAGE 12

in my home community who were sighted."

After the first year, Thomas' mother moved to Tulsa where higher-paying jobs were more abundant. Thomas became a resident student, living in the dorms during the school week.

"It was the best thing ever because I became a resident student at the school," Thomas said. "The school taught me to intermix with all children regardless of race, regardless of their religion, regardless of their social class – it absolutely did not matter. We were all here to learn and all here to be with each other."



For videos and additional DRS information:
Go to www.okdrs.gov/AR2017

One of the greatest benefits of OSB was the "compensatory skills" that were taught alongside the academics. These were the skills such as cooking, sewing, grocery shopping, navigating safely along city streets and across intersections.

"The word compensatory skills means that set of skills that enables you to compensate for the fact that you have a vision loss," she said. "In public school settings, there is just no way they can offer to that student the same degree of intensity for the compensatory skills that we offer."

A student with disabilities may excel in academics in a public school or even be the key player on an academic team, but she said when an honors banquet is held they may lack social graces or even not know how to properly eat in public because those skills were never taught in a public school.

"If you produce a child that graduates and who is highly intelligent but doesn't have the social graces needed, they may not succeed beyond the high school level," Thomas said.

At OSB, she said students blossom because the small class sizes create unique bonds of family between students, and the teachers set a high bar for achievement.

"We had teachers who just assumed we were college-bound if they could just pour all of the knowledge they had into us," Thomas said. "Then we also had vocational teachers who taught us about distributive education and about Future Homemakers of America. Those were leadership clubs. Those clubs were basic instructions in how to sell yourself and your abilities to the world at large."

As a sophomore, Thomas and a fellow student competed in statewide contests. For her, the challenge was a job interview competition where she finished second in the state.

"That would not have happened if it were not for the teachers here who had small classes and took our interests very seriously," she said. "It was like we almost became their children. That is exactly how they taught us. You can't get that anywhere else."

After graduation, she pursued her education, earning a master's degree from the University of Oklahoma.

She joined DRS as a rehabilitation teacher, connecting with clients because of her understanding of the challenges they face and the way to succeed in the face of those challenges. She said for many people with disabilities, the biggest threat is isolation, and DRS helps people break out of that prison and pursue a career.

"I eventually came back to the school to work but not before I had a lot of hard knocks and a lot of rich experiences," she said.

Thomas filled a social worker position that came open in 1986. Thirty-one years later she would retire after a long a fruitful career.

"This school has been, next to my parents, my whole foundation," she said. "I learned such basic things here at the school. I learned to type. I learned to cut out fabric and to make a dress. I learned to clean. I learned to compose term papers. They taught me so many concrete specific things they taught that I needed to know. I could not have attended a college."

OSB musicians set high bar

A legacy of excellence is being built in the Oklahoma School for the Blind's jazz band, which for the second time in a row is the 2A state champions.

Chris Ferrell is the OSB band director.

Last spring, his students earned superior ratings from all the judges in the Oklahoma Secondary School Activities Association competition at the University of Central Oklahoma in Edmond.

The OSB jazz band earned the highest score of bands in class 2A competition. They earned the second highest score of all bands in class 2A and 3A and the 4th highest score competing against 27 other bands in class 2A, 3A and 4A.

"These kids are super-talented and did a great job under pressure at the competition," Ferrell said. "They come in every day at 7:15 a.m. for extra rehearsal time before school starts."

LIFE SKILLS SHARPENED

Oklahoman on cutting edge of craft, work

Two jobs are not enough for Tulsa native Norman "Buddy" Thomas, who is a graduate of the Oklahoma School for the Deaf.

Someday, he said hopes to add a third job helping others who are deaf "chase their own passions and dreams."

Thomas is shop manager at Metal Fab Trophy and Screen Printing in Miami. He also owns Tree of Liberty Bladecraft and Forge, a professional grade knife-making business recently featured in national Blade magazine.

He has made 200 knives or other weapons, but Thomas considers himself an apprentice.

It's already a hot day when Thomas fires up his forge in the driveway of his Quapaw

▶ SEE BUDDY, PAGE 16

For videos and additional DRS information:
Go to www.okdrs.gov/AR2017

OSD immersion offers chance for students to blossom

Staff for the Oklahoma School for the Deaf strives to offer a top-notch learning environment for deaf and hard-of-hearing students without any barriers to communication.

Staff and students communicate directly with each other using American Sign Language, voice or any other communication mode preferred by the students. Many students utilize cochlear implants or hearing aids.

OSD is a deaf education immersion school, while other schools, public or private are often only able to make basic accommodations. Sign language classes are provided for all students and staff. Classes for parents and the community are also offered. Staff members are required to obtain sign language proficiency that is measured by the Sign Language Proficiency Interview.

Students who attend OSD must meet all graduation requirements set forth by the Oklahoma Department of Education. All classes are taught in consideration of each student's unique communication and education needs. This includes not only the use of American Sign Language, but also the use of other beneficial adaptive technology.

Students receive full educational and social experiences. They perform in school programs and dramas. They have prom and homecoming events for all sports. They compete with other schools on sports teams, leadership programs and academic teams.

OSD has a strong vocational program that offers business technology, family and consumer sciences and welding classes on site. OSD also offers a school-to-work program, Occupational Training Opportunities for the Deaf. Students gain valuable work experience and a paycheck at various businesses in the community, which gives them a competitive resume after graduation.

OSD is a four-day a week program. Students attend classes Monday through Thursday. Those who live close to campus commute back and forth to school. Students from greater distances live at the school Sunday through Thursday, free of charge, and go home for three-day weekends, summers and holidays. OSD serves any Oklahoma student from pre-kindergarten through 12th grade.

IMPACT ON OKLAHOMANS IN 2017

1 to 5	OSD teacher to students ratio
100%	Graduation rate in 2017
1 to 4	Direct care-specialist to students ratio
145	Total students enrolled in 2017
69	Current number of counties receiving services from the OSD
32,606	Outreach program: Direct Services
10,998	Services to other schools

▶ BUDDY, FROM PAGE 15

home to demonstrate the first stage in the knife-making process. He wears a heavy welder's glove and expertly uses tongs to insert a mechanic's box end wrench purchased at a flea market into the flames.

Thomas, who uses a hearing aid, also communicates effectively with speech.

Thomas first attended public school in his hometown.

"It was very tough being in that mainstream environment, trying to find your bearings ... around people that were not always understanding and aware of my deaf culture." he said. "It was a challenge, but when I moved to OSD, things greatly improved."

Thomas plans to earn Journeyman Smith and Master Smith ratings established by the American Bladesmith Society, which require passing a set of stringent tests to document that the knife-maker's ability is among the best in the world.

Thomas was valedictorian of his 1999 graduating class and a successful vocational rehabilitation client.

SERVICE

Oklahoma Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped

ACCESS FOR ALL

OLBPH opens up new worlds

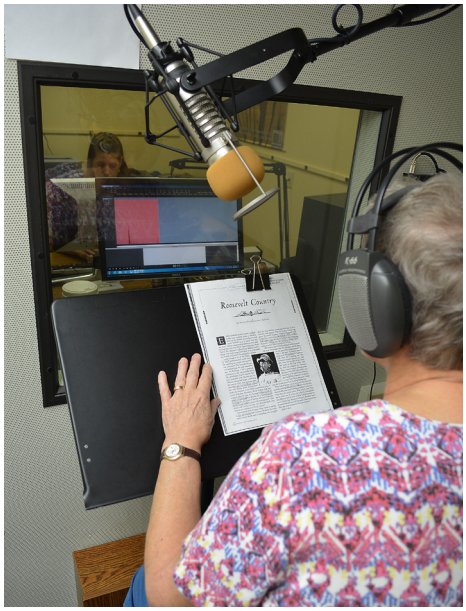
The Oklahoma Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped regularly receives thank you messages from patrons, their family members and caregivers.

Cindy Webb from Tulsa recently wrote about her 87-year-old father who has macular degeneration. While requesting an increase in the number of books checked out to him (because he spends the majority of his days listening to them), she said. "Your players are perfect for him – so easy to operate," and thanked the library for "helping add meaning and pleasure" to his life.

For videos and additional DRS information:
Go to www.okdrs.gov/AR2017

With more than 27,000 titles on digital cartridges and more than 90,000 titles available for download, the library provides audio books, magazines and players to Oklahomans who can't use regular print materials, all at no charge to the users. There are

▶SEE OLBPH, PAGE 18



IMPACT ON OKLAHOMANS IN 2017

4,945	OLBPH patrons	924	Accessible Instructional Materials Center: Children served
797	Number of books circulated daily	13,148	AIM center total collection (books/items)
3,664	Number of books received weekly by patrons	27,185	Audio book titles in OLBPH collection
120	Average number of daily inquiries from patrons	100,488	Book titles available for download

Program keeps seniors independent

Daily living skills such as dialing a phone or cooking a meal can be challenging for Oklahomans who are blind or visually impaired and need to live independently.

DRS' Older Blind Independent Living Program assists people who are 55 years old or older and legally blind in learning those skills. Rehabilitation teachers are located in Visual Services offices across the state and provide one-on-one assistance to clients in adjusting to blindness and regaining or maintaining maximum independence.

Examples of daily living training include dialing the phone, signing your name, cooking, identifying money, time telling and matching your clothing.

The Older Blind Program staff also present training for businesses, organizations and others to develop greater awareness of the abilities and needs of older Oklahomans who are blind.

▶ OLBPH, FROM PAGE 17

also nearly 25,000 Braille titles available.

Because OLBPH is Oklahoma's regional library in the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, which is part of the Library of Congress, patrons have access to the extensive national collection of fiction and non-fiction, including best-sellers, westerns, religion, biographies, mysteries, and dozens of other categories.

The library features a state-of-the-art recording studio that produces audio versions of two monthly magazines for the national collection. OLBPH is also home to the Accessible Instructional Materials (Center, which provides Braille and large-print textbooks plus other learning materials and assistive devices to 924 students in 426 schools across Oklahoma. Patrons who want to hear state and local newspaper content have access to daily recordings on the volunteer-driven Oklahoma Telephone Reader program. Through outreach and relationships with disability and senior organizations, civic groups, schools, and public libraries across the state, OLBPH is always encouraging more Oklahomans to take advantage of its free services.

PRIDE IN THEIR WORK

DDS exceeds goals

Exceeding goals is a hallmark of DRS' Disability Determination Services.

DDS processes applications made to the Social Security Administration for Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income.

For each disability claim, a team of para-professionals, disability specialists and medical/psychological consultants review each applicant's medical and work history. The team determines whether applicants meet federal medical eligibility criteria for disability or blindness.

In the federal fiscal year that ended Sept. 30, DDS exceeded their budgeted workload, processing 54,952 initial claims. That was 1,413 additional disability decisions over the budgeted initial claims workload of 53,539. In the past fiscal year, DDS cleared almost 80,920 total cases and 18,053 cases for other states. That brings the total to 98,000 cleared cases.

The clearing of cases for other states is a particular point of pride for DRS. DDS continues to be a national resource as one of three Extended Service Team sites that assists other states with their backlog of disability claims. Since its inception, Oklahoma EST has provided assistance to multiple states including Arizona, California, Kansas, Louisiana and New Mexico.

IMPACT ON OKLAHOMANS IN 2017

106.6%	Percentage of processed budgeted workload
87.3	Processing time (days of receipt)
$17,332,274	Fraud unit savings to taxpayers

The Cooperative Disability Investigations unit investigates individual disability claims and identifies third parties to prevent fraud in SSA's SSDI and SSI disability programs and related federal and state programs.

The fraud savings this year through the CDI Unit totaling more than $17.3 million. That included $8,746,970 in SSA savings and $8,585,304 in non-SSA savings (Medicare/Medicaid). One case was criminally prosecuted resulting in conviction.

DDS is 100-percent federally funded with a budget of $51.57 million and employs 331 Oklahomans.

DRS is a proud partner to Oklahoma Works

The Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services is an official State Workforce Partner to Oklahoma Works, the state's employment-focused initiative launched by Gov. Mary Fallin in 2015.

The mission of Oklahoma Works is to increase the wealth of all Oklahomans through opening doors to quality employment. Oklahoma Works is a proud partner of the American Job Center Network

OKLAHOMA WORKS

Empower Oklahomans with Disabilities

Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services

3535 NW 58th Street, Suite 500, Oklahoma City, OK 73112

800-845-8476 | 405-951-3400 | info@okdrs.gov | www.okdrs.gov

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