

REACHING THE NEXT LEVEL



2015 Annual
Report

Cover Star

ALEX PIPPINS IS A FORMER CLIENT OF THE DRS VISUAL SERVICES PROGRAM. HE RECEIVED OUR SERVICES HELPING HIM WITH HIS COLLEGE DEGREE AND IS NOW WORKING FULL-TIME AT MCALESTER REGIONAL HEALTH CENTER AND IS A TAX PAYING CITIZEN.

SEE PIPPINS' STORY ON PAGE 16.



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Letter from the Director

Dear Oklahoma Stakeholders,

I hope you find our 2015 Annual Report as interesting as I do. Each year, I look forward to summarizing the great work we do here at the Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services for you and our state's citizens.

If you are not familiar with our services, we help Oklahomans with disabilities reach the next level of life. Whether that is finding employment, graduating to the next grade level or post-secondary education or keeping a job they love — we play a part.

Life is movement. Up or down, left or right – the constant in everyone's life is that it is always in flux. Our staff help clients to direct that movement in the direction they want to go. The next level looks different from person to person. For some individuals, it may be college. For others, it may be a modified vehicle so they can continue to drive to and from work. No two clients are the same. DRS personnel are well trained to assist the clients find their way to their next level and their own personal success.

Again this year, we boast of closing 2,300 cases, which also means 2,300 newly employed Oklahomans from our Vocational Rehabilitation and Visual Services divisions. Our two 2015 senior classes from the Oklahoma School for the Blind and the Oklahoma School for the Deaf graduated their entire classes – 100-percent graduation rate, not many schools can claim that.



Our Disability Determination Division in its partnership with the Oklahoma Cooperative Disability Investigations Unit prevented Social Security fraud and saved taxpayers \$16.9 million. They accurately processed more than 97,190 disability claims, which will benefit Oklahomans with disabilities who will receive needed funds and medical benefits, helping them to reach the next level. Our support services divisions performed quality work that enabled all our divisions to succeed daily. These divisions keep the wheels and engine of the entire agency turning.

As you read through this report, you will see clients succeeding because we are given the opportunity to work with them and provide the support they need to reach their next level.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joe Cordova".

Joe Cordova
DRS Executive Director

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The Oklahoma Commission for Rehabilitation Services meets monthly to discuss agency activities and plan for the future. Commission Chairman Jack Tucker led the meetings and the commission through another successful year.

Tucker is a former client and is a retired principal from the Oklahoma School for the Deaf. From his 40 years of experience in working with children with disabilities, he knows of the importance of services provided by DRS. The Oklahoma State Senate president pro tempore appointed him.

Commissioner Lynda Collins, vice chair, is a former DRS client and employee, who worked her way up through the ranks to Vocational Rehabilitation administrator. She retired after 33 years of service. Her previous DRS positions included field service coordinator, programs manager, vocational rehabilitation counselor and vocational rehabilitation evaluator. Gov. Mary Fallin appointed Collins to the commission.

Commissioner Steve Shelton devotes his time to the agency while working full-time as a senior application programmer and consultant with Fidelity National Information Services. Shelton has great empathy for our clients as a former client himself. The Oklahoma House of Representatives speaker appointed Shelton to the commission.

Executive Director Joe Cordova works directly with the commissioners. He leads approximately 950 employees. In state fiscal year 2015, Cordova's staff assisted 88,383 Oklahomans with disabilities. He directs the agency, which is comprised of six program divisions — Disability Determination, Oklahoma School for the Blind, Oklahoma School for the Deaf, Visual Services, Vocational Rehabilitation, support services. Each division has its own goals along with the collective mission of helping Oklahomans with disabilities find employment and independence.

Oklahoma Commission for Rehabilitation Services



Commissioners Jack Tucker, Steve Shelton and Lynda Collins and
Executive Director Joe Cordova

Commission for Rehabilitation Services



Chair, Comm.
Jack Tucker



Vice Chair, Comm.
Lynda Collins



Comm.
Steve Shelton

Executive Director

Chief Financial
Officer



Kevin Statham



Joe Cordova

Chief of Staff



Cheryl Gray

Disability
Determination



Noel Tyler
Administrator

OK School
for the Blind



Christine Boone
Interim
Superintendent

OK School
for the Deaf



KaAnn Varner
Superintendent

Management
Services



Goli Dunkle
Administrator

Visual Services



Doug Boone
Administrator

Vocational
Rehabilitation



Mark Kinnison
Administrator

The Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services has six divisions, employing approximately 950 employees dedicated to assisting people with disabilities across the state.

Working Together

DRS partners with numerous state groups, organizations and employers to provide enhanced services to Oklahomans with disabilities. These partnerships are, not only critical to our clients' success, but also strengthen DRS as an agency.

In 2015, we had the honor to work with the Project Search program that helps high school students gain employment experience. We worked with the National Federation of the Blind on the TIP summer camp program. We have strong on-going partnerships with the Oklahoma Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation Council, Oklahoma Juvenile Centers, just to name a few.



We are dedicated to the Oklahoma Works initiative and to access for all in overcoming barriers to employment and services for Oklahomans with disabilities.

Specific results from these efforts include:

- DRS commits to Oklahoma Works in bringing state workforce resources together and connecting employers, employees and job seekers to information and programs that help build Oklahoma's workforce.
- DRS is obligated to ensuring an accessible workforce system. Through a partnership with Oklahoma ABLE Tech, we are connecting Oklahomans with disabilities to assistive technology and accessible information and communication technology.
- Local DRS representatives participate in individual Workforce Development Board and Youth Committee activities in their areas. Staff understand their role is a key part of the Workforce system.
- DRS supports career pathways for young people, working-age youth and adults in partnership with employers.
- DRS actively participates by locating staff in Workforce centers around the state.

2015 Actual Expenditures

	VR/VS	OSB	OSD	DDD	Support	Total
State	\$ 14,718,000	\$ 7,145,000	\$ 8,576,000		\$ 2,223,000	\$ 32,662,000
Federal	43,644,000			\$ 39,212,000	5,871,000	\$ 88,727,000
Inter-Agency	73,000	262,000	302,000			637,000
Other	537,000	76,000	665,000			\$ 1,278,000
Total	\$ 58,972,000	\$ 7,483,000	\$ 9,543,000	\$ 39,212,000	\$ 8,094,000	\$ 123,304,000

The majority of funding for Vocational Rehabilitation and Visual Services is eligible for a federal/state match of 78.7 percent / 21.3 percent. VS' 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.

Disability Determination Division is 100-percent federally funded.

In the Support Services division, 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 2015

The Truth About Blindness

Visual Services held a comprehensive conference at East Central University called "The Truth About Blindness: Walk the Walk and Achieve Success." It opened with a welcome by DRS Executive Director Joe Cordova and VS Division Administrator Doug Boone.

More than 100 participants listened intently to the keynote presentation by Adelmo Vigil, retired public school teacher, orientation and mobility specialist and president of National Federation of the Blind of New Mexico. Vigil focused on "The Truth About Blindness" using his own experience to illustrate critical points.

VS scheduled dozens of informative sessions throughout the day in ECU's Chickasaw Business Conference Center, including "Comprehensive Blindness Training Centers: Best Shot for Career Success" by Vigil and Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist Jon Pickup and "Accommodations and Advocacy in College" by VS Field Coordinator Fatos Floyd and ECU Office of Disability Director Kim Rogers.

Vigil closed the conference with his presentation "What Independence Means."

RIGHT: ADELMO VIGIL SPEAKS TO PARTICIPANTS AT THE VISUAL SERVICES "TRUTH ABOUT BLINDNESS" CONFERENCE.



Carter Williams: iJobs and students equals a home run

Carter Williams gets paid to rub dirt on new baseballs for the Oklahoma City Dodgers. Yes, that's his job.

He also fills up buckets of ice for ice baths, scans tickets, ushers, stocks supplies and loads gear on "getaway day" when players head out of town.

Williams, age 18, is tall, blond and immediately likable with a great, big smile. A senior at Edmond Memorial High School, he is a man of action, rather than words, especially around strangers.

He got his dream job through iJobs, a training program for high school students with disabilities operated by DRS.

"iJobs gives high school students the opportunity to possibly have their first paid work experience in an area related to their vocational interest," Kim Osmani, DRS Transition School-to-Work coordinator, said.

"For most, this experience helps solidify what vocational goal they want to work toward, and for a few, it helps them weed out those jobs they thought they wanted to do," Osmani said about the program.

As a Transition client, Williams, who has an intellectual disability, is building good career skills and having a great time at the ballpark.

"I like my job," Williams said. "I love it. I like to stay busy."



WAYNE MOSBY AND CARTER WILLIAMS PASS OUT PROGRAM BOOKS AT AN OKLAHOMA CITY DODGERS GAME.

Wayne Mosby, customer service manager and Williams' supervisor agrees. "He's punctual, and he'll do whatever you ask him to do without raising an eyebrow."

"Wayne is a good man," Williams said softly, wearing that constant smile.

Mosby said, "I think you got to give every kid a chance – no matter disabilities or no disabilities. And I do that out here with people. I think every kid ought to have a chance to work at a ballpark, and other sporting venues should look into hiring these kids too."

When Mosby learned about iJobs, he went to the top to sell the program. He asked DRS vocational rehabilitation counselor Carl Perkins to visit with OKC Dodgers President and General Manager Michael Byrnes and Director of Operations Mitch Stubenhofer. They supported the program and encouraged Mosby to work

with two iJobs students as part of the Dodgers' program.

iJobs expanded this year to four locations: Norman High School, Owasso Mid-High School and Francis Tuttle Career Technology and Classen School of Advanced Studies.

Thirty-three students participated in the summer program, which included half-days of classroom studies each week. That focus is job and social skills, money management, students' workplace experiences – and ultimately building self-confidence. Students took field trips to volunteer at the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma, shopped at the mall and Goodwill Industries for work clothes and visited the Federal Reserve Bank.

The Transition School-to-Work Program helps eligible students with disabilities get vocational rehabilitation services that prepare them for employment and life after high school.

Vocational Rehabilitation

Vocational Rehabilitation staff provide Oklahomans with disabilities the opportunity to become employed members of society. Our job 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 2015, VR had 10,698 cases on the books. That means VR staff were working with these clients in some fashion. Some may be at the beginning of their journeys to employment, and others may be completing their plans. We celebrated with 1,971 Oklahomans with physical or mental disabilities who reached the next level and got jobs.

Our clients receive career counseling, vocational education and training, or medical services if it is determined it will help them find employment. They may also receive assistive technology, job placement and coaching. Our counselors help clients find their own path to employment success and independence.

When our clients become members of the workforce, we help them depend on themselves instead of the government. They support our state by paying income taxes on the wages they now earn. They also begin supporting their hometowns by spending their earnings locally.

In federal fiscal year 2015, the SSA reimbursement program generated more than \$3,194,800 in revenue for DRS from 254 former SSI/SSDI beneficiaries reaching quality employment that will sustain them. These outcomes are derived directly from quality VR services focused on real employment. This is the second-highest revenue total in the history of our agency.

For young adults with disabilities, VR has the Transition: School-to-Work program that prepares high school students for the working world. Transition counselors provide career counseling and training that often includes summer jobs or workshops that teach interview skills and resume writing.

The deaf community benefits not only from our services through the VR process but also through our Interpreter Certification and Resource Center. We help clients find work, and we help the deaf by evaluating and certifying the proficiency of sign language interpreters.

To qualify for VR services, a person must have a physical or mental disability that is a substantial barrier to employment. He or she must be able to benefit from vocational rehabilitation services in ways that lead to finding and obtaining employment.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION JOB-SEEKING CLIENTS SERVED

11,240 CLIENTS SERVED
6,738 PROGRAM APPLICATIONS
4,333 EMPLOYMENT PLANS

VISUAL SERVICES JOB-SEEKING CLIENTS SERVED

1,834 CLIENTS SERVED
439 PROGRAM APPLICATIONS
385 EMPLOYMENT PLANS

TOTAL JOB-SEEKING CLIENTS SERVED

13,074 CLIENTS SERVED
7,177 PROGRAM APPLICATIONS
4,718 EMPLOYMENT PLANS

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION CLIENTS EMPLOYED

1,971 EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES
\$20,667 AVERAGE YEARLY EARNINGS
\$9,979 AVERAGE COST OF SERVICES PER CLIENT EMPLOYED
\$3,100 AVERAGE TAXES PAID
(BASED ON 15 PERCENT TAX RATE)

VISUAL SERVICES CLIENTS EMPLOYED

329 EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES
\$18,842 AVERAGE YEARLY EARNINGS
\$13,453 AVERAGE COST OF SERVICES PER CLIENT EMPLOYED
\$2,826 AVERAGE TAXES PAID
(BASED ON 15 PERCENT TAX RATE)

TOTAL CLIENTS EMPLOYED

2,300 EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES
\$20,406 AVERAGE YEARLY EARNINGS
\$10,476 AVERAGE COST OF SERVICES PER CLIENT EMPLOYED
\$3,061 AVERAGE TAXES PAID
(BASED ON 15 PERCENT TAX RATE)

ALL DATA REPORTED ON THE FEDERAL FY-2015.

The Services We Provide

EVERY YEAR, WE PROVIDE CLIENTS WITH SPECIALIZED TRAINING AND SERVICES DURING THEIR CASEWORK. SOME CLIENTS ONLY NEED A FEW SERVICES AND OTHERS NEED MORE. HERE ARE THE TOP 15 SERVICES PROVIDED TO OUR CLIENTS WHOSE CASES CLOSED DURING THE YEAR.

Service.....	Clients Served
Vocational rehabilitation counseling and guidance.....	5,963
Medical diagnosis and treatment.....	2,577
Assessment	2,273
Transportation.....	2,222
Maintenance:	1,715
Expenses such as food, shelter and clothing are related to services listed in the plan to obtain employment.	
Information and referral services:	1,568
Services from other agencies (e.g., cooperative agreements) not available through the VR program.	
Job readiness training	1,555
Other Services.....	1,453
All VR services that cannot be recorded elsewhere. Included here are occupational licenses, tools and equipment, initial stocks and supplies.	
On-the-job supports – short term	672
Miscellaneous training.....	522
Any training including GED or high school training leading to a diploma, or courses taken at colleges not leading to a certificate or diploma.	
Four-year college or university training.....	674
Job placement assistance.....	496
Referral to a specific job resulting in an interview, whether or not the individual obtained the job.	
Rehabilitation technology	495
On-the-job supports – supported employment.....	449
Occupational or vocational training.....	413
Job search assistance	285
Support and assistance for an individual in searching for an appropriate job and may include help in resume preparation, identifying appropriate job opportunities, developing interview skills and making contacts with companies on behalf of the client.	

Our Clients

	Rehabilitated	Severe Disabilities Rehabilitated
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GENDER

Male	1,199	1,107
Female	1,101	1,009

RACE

White	1,658	1,538
African-American	418	386
Asian	19	18
American Indian or Alaska Native	319	283
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	13	13
Hispanic Ethnicity	101	96

Clients may indicate up to six races/ethnicities.

PRIMARY DISABILITY

Blind/Visual Impairment	225	210
Deaf/Hard of Hearing	296	264
Deaf-Blindness	6	6
Communicative Impairments	31	25
Orthopedic Impairments	238	219
Respiratory Impairments	35	29
General Physical Debilitation	56	55
Other Physical Impairments	246	228
Cognitive Impairments	655	592
Psychosocial Impairments	244	232
Other Mental Impairments	268	256

CHARACTERISTICS OF PERSONS REHABILITATED IN 2015 IN VR AND VS PROGRAMS.

	Rehabilitated	Severe Disabilities Rehabilitated
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EDUCATION LEVEL AT APPLICATION

No formal schooling	2	2
Grades 1 - 8	63	61
Grades 9 - 12, no diploma	691	625
Special education certificate	74	65
High school graduate or GED certificate	730	682
Post-secondary, no degree	344	318
Associate degree	166	157
Bachelor's degree	133	116
Master's degree or higher	39	36
Any degree above a Master's	1	1
Vocational/Technical Certificate or License	57	53
Occupational credential beyond undergraduate degree work	0	0
Occupational credential beyond graduate degree work	0	0

AGE AT APPLICATION

Younger than 20	735	660
20 to 21	102	92
22 to 34	429	400
35 to 44	315	285
45 to 64	620	581
65 and older	99	98

Visual Services

Many clients receive living skills training that allows them to navigate their en-

vironments, operate computers, manage money and much more. When these skills are learned early in the rehabilitation process, persons who are blind or visually impaired become open to the idea that they can compete in the work place.

DRS' Visual Services provides services that make it possible for people who are blind or visually impaired to reach their employment or life goals.

- Clients are provided the opportunity to become employed through the vocational rehabilitation process of:
- Career counseling;
 - Vocational education and training;
 - Medical services required to become employable;
 - 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.

There is no age limitation to become involved in our vocational rehabilitation program, which assists interested persons in returning to work.

The Business Enterprise Program trains and assists people who are blind or visually impaired 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.

BEP entrepreneurs must complete vending facility training courses and must pay a percentage of net proceeds to DRS, which matches federal funds to support the program.

For young adults with disabilities, the Transition: School to Work program helps students prepare for the work world. Transition counselors provide career counseling and training, which often includes summer jobs or workshops that teach interview and resume writing.

The 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, talking small appliances and tips on staying safe when performing household duties.

YOUTH GAIN INDEPENDENCE AND CONFIDENCE FROM TIP



This summer, 14 youth took part in the Visual Services' Transition Independence Program, where they experienced and learned how to rely on themselves. The activities included speakers who were blind or had experience working with the blind, white cane travel, Braille instruction, and fun. The fun included pushing themselves with rock climbing and cooking-out at a picnic.

The program was a huge success with all the students participating and enjoying their new found-freedom.

The TIP program offers a unique opportunity for young blind Oklahomans to gain knowledge of campus life and other experience in the competitive world while at the same time enhancing their skills of independent living.

(RIGHT) STUDENTS ENJOYED PICNIC FOOD THEY MADE THEMSELVES

OKLA. LIBRARY FOR THE BLIND AND PHYSICALLY HANDICAPPED

The Oklahoma Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped is the source for talking books for those who cannot read the written word due to visual impairments or physical disabilities. The library mails thousands of free, recorded books to patrons all across the state. The Accessible Instructional Material Center provides free Braille and large print textbooks and classroom materials to public school students.

VISUAL SERVICES JOB SEEKING CLIENTS SERVED

1,834 CLIENTS SERVED
439 PROGRAM APPLICATIONS
385 EMPLOYMENT PLANS

VISUAL SERVICES CLIENTS EMPLOYED

329 EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES
\$18,842 AVERAGE YEARLY EARNINGS
\$13,456 AVERAGE COST OF SERVICES PER CLIENT EMPLOYED
\$2,826 AVERAGE TAXES PAID (BASED ON 15 PERCENT TAX RATE)

ALL DATA REPORTED ON THE FEDERAL FY-2015.



OKLAHOMA LIBRARY FOR THE BLIND AND PHYSICALLY HANDICAPPED SERVICES CIRCULATION

4,655 library patrons
802 books circulated daily to patrons
4,010 books received weekly by patrons
160 daily inquiries

FEDERAL QUOTA FUNDS (PREVIOUS SCHOOL YEAR)

832 children eligible for textbooks
\$248,310 funding

ACCESSIBLE INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS (AIM) CENTER

595 children served
2 average days for a child to receive an in-house book
14 average days for a child to receive an ordered Braille book
9 average days for a child to receive an ordered large print book
18,298 total books/items in collection
34 new Braille books purchased
414 new large print books purchased
3,745 new instructional aids and equipment*

*Books and instructional aids/equipment, such as talking globes and tactile maps, are ordered during one fiscal/school year and received the next fiscal/school year.

All data reported on the state
FY-2015



Above: Gayle Lee and Alex Pippins at his job near the chillers he works on at McAlester Regional Health Center. Right: David Parish and Pippins go over paperwork and work orders.



“You look at the person. It’s what’s inside that counts. That’s why you need to have a process of interviews and get to know someone. It’s about hiring the right person for the right job and that’s what we do here at MRHC,” David Parish said. “We don’t see the person with a disability any different.”

Alex Pippins, former client of the Visual Services division entered the vocational rehabilitation program because of his diabetes and desire to go to work. He left the program because he is now successfully employed with McAlester Regional Health Center as a heating, ventilation, air conditioning and refrigeration (HVAC/R) tech in the plant operations department.

“When Alex first came to us, he had already decided what he wanted to do. He already had a plan in his mind. He just wanted to know what we could do for him,” Gayle Lee, vocational rehabilitation specialist IV at DRS, said.

“He was a little worried about a couple of classes in the beginning,” Lee said. “He was more worried about how his grades were going to turn out than he needed to be. He did great. He was definitely a dedicated student.”

While working with Lee on his case, he found her to be an inspiration to model his actions after. She is not only his vocational rehabilitation counselor, she is blind.

“When I met Miss Gayle, I sat across from her desk and she was super polite.” Pippins said. “She just firmly told me ‘Just because I’m blind, don’t think

that you can pull the wool over my eyes. Don’t think you can take advantage of me because of my disability.’ Now, I don’t see her with a disability. She’s inspired me to do better at what I do.”

To assist Pippins achieve his goals, DRS provided him with tuition and books, glasses, a computer, gas money for transportation to classes, and tools for his internship. Pippins was required to do an internship in the heat and air job field.

“I found the internship at McAlester Regional Health Center,” Pippins said.

During Pippins' internship where he was supposed to be gaining work experience and skills, he also gained permanent employment.

"We knew what we had in Alex from the time that he did his internship. He was someone we wanted to pursue, and that's what we did," David Parish, plant operations supervisor at McAlister Regional Health Center, said.

"The job has helped me to be with my mother, my son more and that brings me closer to a family life. I see in my future being here, retiring. I dedicate myself to the job I take. I don't jump, jump, jump. I plant my roots and I stay," Pippins said.

"This job has also allowed me to cut back on working on the side or working late hours. I'm able to go home and

Pippins moved his mom, Deloris Hardin, in with him from Florida, and he's raising his 11-year-old-son, Payton. It's also these responsibilities that push him and make him determined to succeed.

He wants people who have disabilities and are afraid that no one will hire them to know that's not true.

Alex Pippins: Reaching the next level required hard work, good advice and a opportunity

"We worked around Alex's college schedule obviously. Alex worked nights, weekends, days he was off from school. We just basically waited till he got out of school and then we brought him on board."

Parish said the reason they hired him was because Pippins had experience in plumbing, electrical and general maintenance. He was getting his journeyman's license and HVAC certification. He had a good work ethic and got along with all the employees in the department.

Pippins graduated with associate degree in applied science.

"We almost had a party when he graduated and came on," Parish said. We kept waiting, we would say 'Alex will be here,' or 'only two more weeks and Alex is here'. Yeah, Alex has been a wonderful asset to our department and we really appreciate him.

Parish wasn't concerned or worried that Pippins had a disability. Being the father of a son with cerebral palsy, he knows people with disabilities can be an asset to any organization.

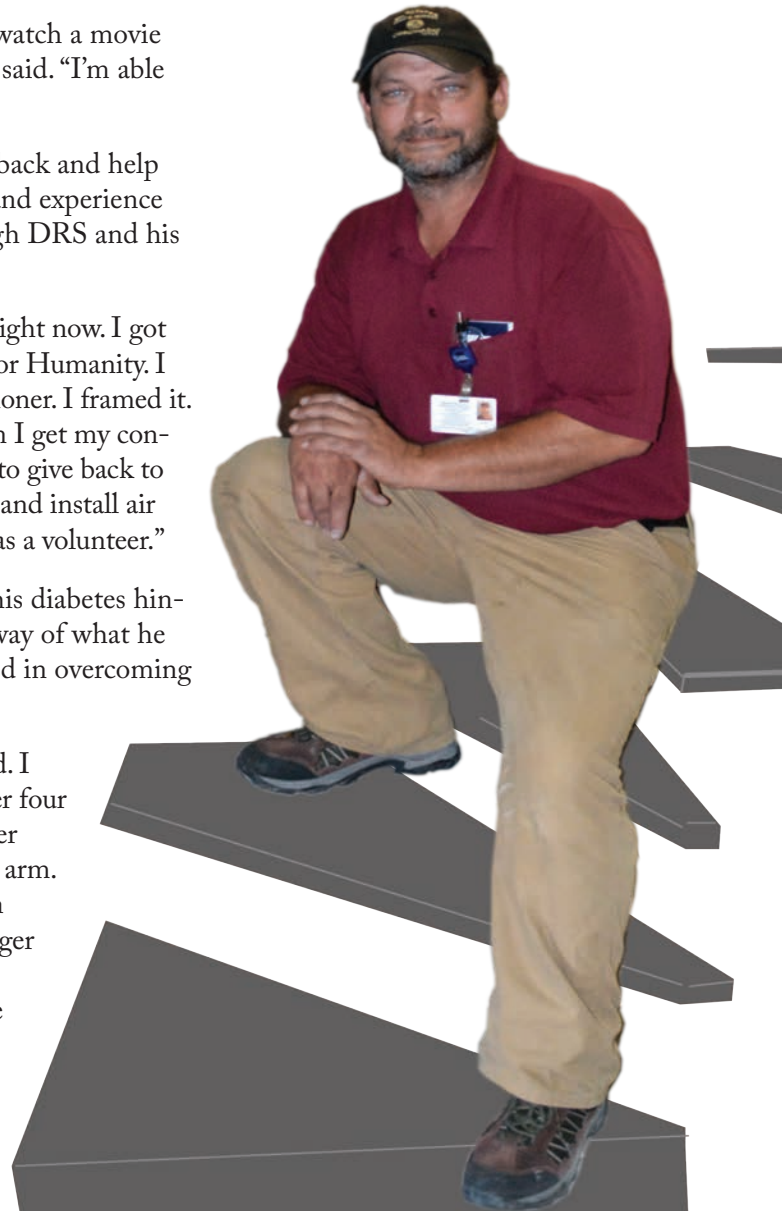
actually sit down and watch a movie with my son," Pippins said. "I'm able to take him to movies.

He also wants to give back and help others with the skills and experience he has acquired through DRS and his job with MRHC.

"I'm building a house right now. I got approved for Habitat for Humanity. I installed the air conditioner. I framed it. I did everything. When I get my contractor's license, I plan to give back to Habitat for Humanity and install air conditioners for them as a volunteer."

Pippins refuses to let his diabetes hinder him or get in the way of what he wants. He's experienced in overcoming disability issues.

"I got my hand crushed. I had seven surgeries over four years. They said I'd never be able to use my right arm. Most people don't even know I'm missing a finger because I do not let it hinder me. I tell people the only thing that can hinder me is myself."



National Social Security Administration commissioner visits DDD staff

Carolyn W. Colvin, Social Security Administration acting commissioner praised the DRS' Disability Determination Division at a town hall meeting on Sept. 28. She visited Oklahoma City SSA offices and DDD, which determines medical eligibility for Social Security benefits.

Colvin, who once attended school in Altus, was warmly received by DDD staff.

She gave a 30-minute town hall at DDD with more than 350 employees in the audience. The commissioner made a short presentation and fielded questions from staff.

Last year, DDD's team of disability examiners, paraprofessionals and medical/psychological physician consultants evaluated 45,085 initial claims by Oklahomans for Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income programs.

The Oklahoma program received a 97.9 percent accuracy rate in determining initial claims in 2015.

"People come to us to find out if they are eligible for disability benefits at a critical time in their lives," Colvin said. "They need to know we are giving their case careful consideration and not sacrificing quality for quantity. I'm glad to see that you have not done that here in Oklahoma."

In addition to processing Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income claims submitted by Oklahomans, DDD's Extended Service Team – one of only four in the United States – provided workload assistance to

Arizona, California, Kansas, Louisiana and New Mexico.

Colvin acknowledged the success of the Oklahoma Cooperative Disability Investigation Program collocated at DDD. The Oklahoma CDI is one of 37 multi-agency units in the United States, which investigates suspected fraudulent activity related to disability claims.

During federal fiscal year 2015, which ended Sept. 30, the CDI Unit opened 200 cases and achieved a total of \$16.9 million in SSA and non-SSA (Medicare and Medicaid) savings.

Partners in the CDI program include the Social Security Administration, DDD, Office of the Oklahoma Attorney General and Social Security Administration Office of the Inspector General.

"I'm very proud of the good work you do in Oklahoma," Colvin told the audience. "We do everything we can to replicate top programs like yours all around the country."

Colvin has managed health care and final needs programs, holding key executive positions at Social Security headquarters including deputy commissioner for policy and external affairs, deputy commissioner for programs and policy, and deputy commissioner for operations.

Her most recent position was deputy commissioner before being named acting commissioner on Feb. 14, 2013. President Barack Obama nominated her to serve as commissioner on a permanent basis. She also serves as a trustee to the Social Security Board of Trustees.



"I'M VERY PROUD OF THE GOOD WORK YOU DO IN OKLAHOMA. WE DO EVERYTHING WE CAN TO REPLICATE TOP PROGRAMS LIKE YOURS ALL AROUND THE COUNTRY."

—SSA ACTING COMMISSIONER CAROLYN W. COLVIN

**SOCIAL SECURITY
ADMINISTRATION ACTING
COMMISSIONER CAROLYN W.
COLVIN VISITED DRS' DISABILITY
DETERMINATION DIVISION,
WHICH DETERMINES MEDICAL
ELIGIBILITY FOR SOCIAL
SECURITY BENEFITS.**

DDD DONATES TO VETERANS' GROUP

DDD employees held a fundraiser for Honoring America's Warriors. The group supports veterans' physical, mental and spiritual wellness through outdoor sporting activities and other wellness programs. They work to increase employment and community awareness of the impact of post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury on veterans.

"Our goal is to reduce suicides in any way, shape or form we can," explained retired Staff Sgt. Mike Harryman, who serves as national spokesman for Honoring America's Warriors.

"It's an epidemic, and it's one of those things that we say 'there are more taking their own lives than were killed in combat,'" said retired Maj. Gen. Rita Aragon, secretary military and veterans affairs.

"We were looking for a way to help veterans through an Oklahoma organization when two of our employees saw a link on KFOR's website about Honoring America's Warriors," Noel Tyler, DDD administrator, said. "We are so appreciative to Scotty Deatherage and Maj. Gen. Rita Aragon, who is a board member and are here to accept the donation from our employees."

PERFORMANCE

In 2015, DDD's performance is based on the five dimensions of quality: accuracy, customer service, processing time, cost and production.

99 percent budgeted workload completed
97.9 percent Oklahoma decision accuracy rate
90.2 days processing time

Based on Federal FY-2015

COOPERATIVE DISABILITY INVESTIGATIONS UNIT

Cooperative Disability Investigations Unit is a joint effort among federal and state agencies to effectively pool resources to prevent fraud in Social Security Administration's disability benefit programs and related federal and state programs. CDI obtained evidence sufficient to resolve questions of fraud and/or similar fault in SSA disability programs.

EXTENDED SERVICE TEAMS

Oklahoma DDD serves as a national resource, and Extended Service Team site. Oklahoma's EST is one of only four in the country that assists other states with their backlog of disability claims.

From left, HAW volunteer and retired Staff Sgt. Paul Smith, Kathleen Adams-Abdelal, Scotty Deatherage, Walt Morris, Rita Aragon, Mike Harryman, and HAW volunteer and retired Staff Sgt. Russell Wolfe.





Oklahoma's Disability Determination Division processes applications made to the Social Security Administration for Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income.

DDD personnel understand each disability claim is a person needing a determination. So, timeliness and accuracy are crucial. Staff receives quality training and mentoring that focus on accuracy, confidentiality, consistency and efficiency.

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. Children may qualify for SSI benefits and are evaluated based on their ability to perform age-appropriate activities as documented in their medical and educational records.

According to SSA's Office of Quality Performance, DDD staff made accurate decisions in 97.9 percent of the initial disability claims application. As result of these determinations, more than \$2.08 billion in disability benefits are paid to the beneficiaries and dependents in Oklahoma.

DDD continues to be a national resource as an Extended Service Team site that assists other states with their backlog of disability claims. It is one of four in the country. With an accuracy rate at 97.9 percent, Oklahoma's EST also included 100-percent accuracy on initial allowance decisions. Since its inception,

Oklahoma EST has given assistance to Arizona, California, Kansas, Louisiana and New Mexico.

DDD is 100-percent federally funded. The division employed 371 Oklahomans with a federal budget of \$43 million. In 2016, DDD's budget is expected to see an approximate 8 percent increase.

The Cooperative Disability Investigations unit investigates individual disability claims and identifies third parties who engage in disability fraud. Claims and post-entitlement actions are referred to the CDI Units by DDD staff, SSA field office personnel and private citizens who suspect fraudulent activity. The investigation results are presented to DDD staff for their use in making disability determinations and to federal and state prosecutors for consideration of prosecution.

The CDI unit has saved \$16.9 million in SSA and Non-SSA savings (Medicare and Medicaid) and opened 200 case investigations.

Even though 2015 brought with it unique challenges, DDD remained steadfast in their mission. Their dedication and commitment led DDD through another remarkable year, providing outstanding service to the disability applicants.

The Oklahoma City CDI unit is a joint effort consisting of staff from DDD, SSA, Office of the Oklahoma Attorney General and SSA Office of Inspector General. This program effectively pools resources to prevent fraud in SSA's SSDI and SSI disability programs and related federal and state programs.

The Oklahoma School for the Blind is a K-12 school, offering superior educational opportunities for students who are blind or visually impaired. Tuition is free, and students are accepted from throughout Oklahoma.

OSB students receive specialized education in coordination with their state-mandated educational requirements. They learn valuable independent living skills and 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.

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

Although located in Muskogee, the school's boundaries are statewide. Regardless of the hometown, the school will transport students at no cost to the parents or guardians. Students who live close commute daily. Those who live farther away stay on campus Monday through Thursday. Residential students are transported to and from OSB for three-day weekends at home.

**OSB STAFF IS COMMITTED TO
MOTIVATING STUDENTS TO
BREAKTHROUGH WHATEVER
CHALLENGES THEY MAY FACE AS
THEY WORK TOWARD LEADING
LIVES OF INDEPENDENCE.**

OSB staff is committed to motivating students to breakthrough whatever challenges they may face as they work toward leading lives of independence.

In the summer of 2015, OSB held its first Summer Reading Program for struggling readers who were going into first- through fourth-grades but were reading at lower levels. A total of 16 students attended the program along with five public school students who were not enrolled at OSB. During the four-week program, many students made significant advances in their reading ability and fluency.

OSB students also competed in the Muskogee-area Spelling Bee. Each year, the event brings together students from 100 schools. In 2015, OSB's Richelle Zampella took first place in this contest,

winning a trophy and a check for \$100.

Zampella's prize also included a \$1,000 check for OSB, which she designated for the "One-to-One Assistive Technology Fund." Zampella also took first place in the Junior Varsity Division at the National Braille Challenge.

The school provides special events and activities to bring the public and students together. In celebrating Veteran's Day, students made individual hand painted cards to honor each veteran in the building. The children delivered the cards personally, while singing a song. Cards were also sent home, to honor family members who have served.

OSB provides thousands of free outreach service hours each year for students attending local public schools, their families and local school systems. 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.

Oklahoma School for the Blind





THE OKLAHOMA SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND JAZZ BAND



CANE QUEST CREW HELPED MAKE THE ANNUAL EVENT SUCCESSFUL.



RICHELLE ZAMPILLA WON THE NATIONAL BRAILLE CHALLENGE



OSB and OSD School Census

We are proud of the education we provide for our students.

OSB Census

100 percent graduation rate
55 residential students
38 day students
93 students attending all or part of the year
31 counties served
15 students with multiple disabilities
1 to 5 teacher-to-student ratio
1 to 6 direct-care specialist-to-student ratio
65 summer school students
24 days for summer school

OSB Outreach Programs

2,036 direct services
288 consultations and evaluations
220 services to families
490 services to schools
1,094 services to organizations

OSD Census

100 percent graduation rate
100 residential students
77 day students
177 students attending all or part of the year
51 counties served
2 students with multiple disabilities
1 to 6 teacher-to-student ratio
1 to 9 direct-care specialist-to-student ratio
72 summer school students
10 days for summer school

OSD Outreach Programs

32,553 direct services
3,229 consultations and evaluations
15,953 services to families
10,767 services to schools
2,604 services to organizations

All data reported on the school year 2014-2015.

OKLAHOMA SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND SENIOR CLASS OF 2015



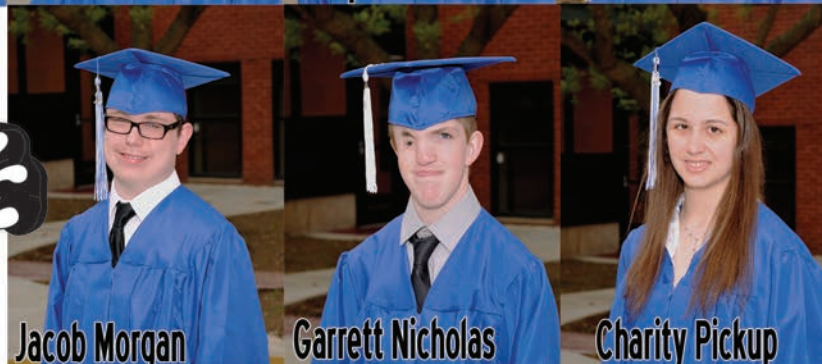
Zane Edwards

Jessie Fausett

Perry Harlan

Tyler Hendricks

Mark Kaitgain



Jacob Morgan

Garrett Nicholas

Charity Pickup



Zach Acuff

Alex Bartlett

Kassandra Clapp

Chase Doyal

Jessica Graham



Mia Johnson

Kentrell McCoy

Dru Senger

Sean Thomas Sledd

Iyanna Webb

Zachariah Wells

OKLAHOMA SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF SENIOR CLASS OF 2015

Oklahoma School for the Deaf is the statewide resource center on deafness. OSD offers the ultimate learning environment for deaf and hard of hearing students because there are no communication barriers.

All staff and students communicate directly with each other using American Sign Language, voice or any other communication mode preferred by students.

Communication at OSD is not limited to only a few people who can sign. OSD is a deaf education immersion school, while other schools, public or private, are usually 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. OSD staff are required to obtain sign language proficiency that according to their job as measured by the Sign Language Proficiency Interview (SLPI).

Students who attend OSD must still meet all graduation requirements that are 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 adaptive technology beneficial to students who are deaf and hard of hearing. Courses such as chemistry, algebra I and U.S. History are offered as in any other school. In May 2015, OSD proudly reached 100-percent graduation rate.

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. The program allows students to work at various places in the community. Students gain valuable work experience, 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. OSD serves any Oklahoma student from age 3 to 12th grade.

Students receive full educational and social experiences that are available to most of Oklahoma's students. They

perform in school programs and dramas. They have prom and homecoming for all sports. They compete with other schools on sports teams, leadership programs and academic teams.

OSD's Academic Team won the Great Plains School for the Deaf academic competition last year. In April, the team went on to have a strong showing at the national academic competition at Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C. placing in the top 16.

Last year marked the first time OSD students participated in the Battle of the Books. The team went on to place fourth-place in the finals at the National Battle of the Books competition, also held at Gallaudet.

OSD has an expanded educational reach with two satellite preschools strategically placed in the state, one at the University of Central Oklahoma in Edmond and

Oklahoma School for the Deaf

one at the University of Arts and Sciences of Oklahoma in Chickasha. These

satellite preschools help to educate children close to home during their early years and provide the needed education in communication that is crucial for young students.

OSD hosted the Oklahoma Educational Interpreter Training Institute for educational interpreters. There were 45 interpreters from 23 school districts at the camp held in June.

WE ALSO SERVE DEAF ADULTS

The school is also active in the community, which includes adults who are deaf or hard of hearing. The Equipment Distribution Program provides adaptive equipment for telephone and communication access for those of any age. Also, the Hearing Aid Program for senior adults provides assistance for those needing hearing aids who meet eligibility guidelines.

OSD hosted a number of events geared to the deaf community or to foster a better understanding of people who are deaf and hard of hearing.



The local level was not enough

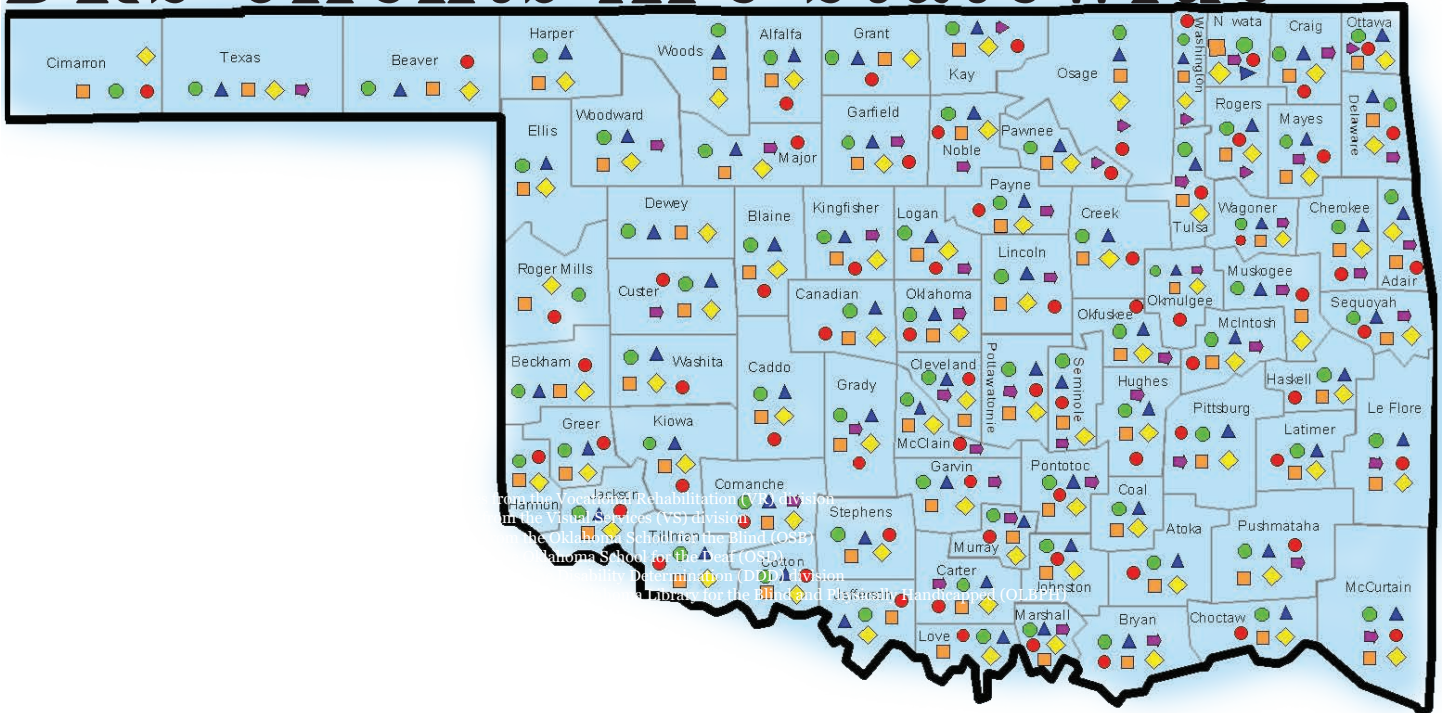
OSD BATTLE OF THE BOOKS TEAM (FROM LEFT): EIGHTH-GRADER DYLAN DICKSON FROM SHAWNEE; SIXTH-GRADER APRIL PENNEL FROM HULBERT; SEVENTH-GRADER KAYLEAH CHEBULTZ FROM SULPHUR; AND OSD READING TEACHER KRISTEN MCCURDY.



Finished in the TOP 16

OSD ACADEMIC TEAM (FROM LEFT): OSD TEACHERS AND ACADEMIC COACHES LAWSON PAIR AND DEB ULERY; JUNIOR VA'LECIA PENNEY FROM HOMINY; SOPHOMORE AARON KELLNER FROM PARK HILL; JUNIOR TY BRADY FROM SULPHUR; AND SENIOR SEAN THOMAS SLEDD FROM ADA.

DRS Clients Are Statewide



**88,383 OKLAHOMANS WERE SERVED BY
DRS FROM JULY 1, 2014, THROUGH
JUNE 30, 2015**

County	Vocational Rehabilitation	Visual Services	School for the Blind	School for the Deaf	Disability Determination	OK Library for the Blind	Total by County
Adair	30	9	8	12	615	19	693
Alfalfa	16	3	0	1	61	19	100
Atoka	77	8	0	5	276	15	381
Beaver	4	5	0	2	51	6	68
Beckham	35	11	0	6	375	30	457
Blaine	16	2	0	5	156	18	197
Bryan	157	53	3	27	904	37	1,181
Caddo	85	22	0	4	696	25	832
Canadian	231	34	0	21	1,092	135	1,513
Carter	107	25	9	63	875	60	1,139
Cherokee	88	35	2	11	878	49	1,063
Choctaw	61	11	0	5	409	22	508
Cimarron	1	0	0	1	27	3	32
Cleveland	484	72	1	59	2,480	248	3,344
Coal	53	7	0	0	107	4	171
Comanche	334	60	6	34	2,420	111	2,965
Cotton	9	2	0	4	59	14	88
Craig	31	3	4	11	413	22	484
Creek	226	24	0	32	1,131	92	1,505
Custer	51	12	5	10	358	47	483
Delaware	58	11	4	11	801	57	942
Dewey	8	1	0	0	47	8	64
Ellis	15	5	0	0	46	8	74
Garfield	168	30	2	40	961	98	1,299
Garvin	103	17	1	24	586	32	763
Grady	107	33	3	27	778	60	1,008
Grant	6	3	0	2	38	8	57
Greer	35	3	0	5	96	13	152
Harmon	15	0	0	2	70	4	91
Harper	7	2	0	0	43	7	59
Haskell	90	6	0	8	325	12	441
Hughes	48	10	1	4	294	12	369
Jackson	75	6	0	9	391	29	510
Jefferson	14	1	0	10	132	8	165
Johnston	24	12	0	10	274	5	325
Kay	159	21	4	17	816	70	1,087
Kingfisher	25	6	2	7	135	30	205
Kiowa	53	5	0	9	206	20	293
Latimer	37	7	0	5	177	19	245
LeFlore	117	22	13	16	1,368	42	1,578

County	Vocational Rehabilitation	Visual Services	School for the Blind	School for the Deaf	Disability Determination	OK Library for the Blind	Total by County
Lincoln	69	8	2	9	644	46	778
Logan	63	7	1	13	466	45	595
Love	14	4	0	12	154	11	195
McClain	51	12	1	9	523	49	645
McCurtain	61	30	3	13	880	46	1,033
McIntosh	60	14	2	14	517	33	640
Major	18	4	2	2	62	9	97
Marshall	61	12	1	12	319	16	421
Mayes	91	25	7	20	866	40	1,049
Murray	58	3	5	76	260	24	426
Muskogee	284	113	32	14	1,946	127	2,516
Noble	25	3	1	3	133	13	178
Nowata	30	3	4	5	191	16	249
Okfuskee	48	3	1	5	280	18	355
Oklahoma	2,421	258	36	221	13,961	926	17,823
Okmulgee	155	24	4	15	923	66	1,187
Osage	96	7	4	20	568	46	741
Ottawa	38	23	4	14	918	49	1,046
Pawnee	67	6	1	6	318	31	429
Payne	125	10	1	28	898	82	1,144
Pittsburg	239	25	1	47	1,192	57	1,561
Pontotoc	160	51	7	27	742	50	1,037
Pottawatomie	234	34	7	38	1,557	87	1,957
Pushmataha	74	5	2	9	284	20	394
Roger Mills	6	0	0	1	31	7	45
Rogers	218	27	4	13	1,116	94	1,472
Seminole	67	17	2	22	573	27	708
Sequoyah	184	40	10	8	1,294	54	1,590
Stephens	50	16	0	69	804	51	990
Texas	19	9	1	0	138	7	174
Tillman	15	2	0	4	159	8	188
Tulsa	2,128	468	38	171	11,624	704	15,133
Wagoner	96	38	5	15	626	47	827
Washington	150	16	1	22	839	77	1,105
Washita	17	9	0	9	157	14	206
Woods	49	9	0	0	84	16	158
Woodward	59	9	2	0	226	27	323
Out of State	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Unknown **			2,036				2,036
Total by Program:	10,861	1,943	2,296	1,485	67,240	4,558	88,383

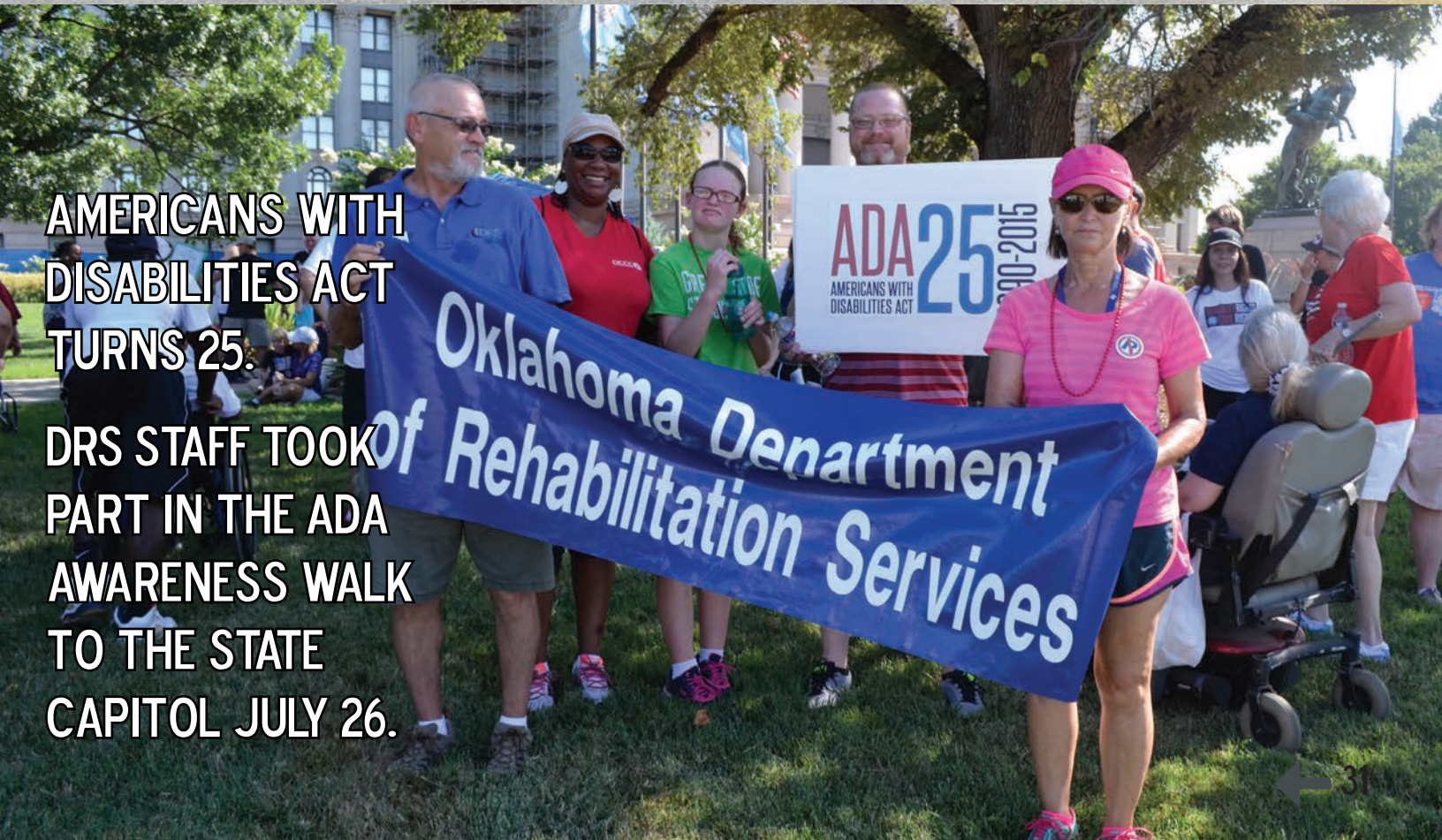
* The data includes school students as well as outreach clients.

** These were services provided to individuals attending events open to the public, such as training and expos, and to other service providers, family members, etc.



Ribbon cutting and open house

THE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION OFFICE AND VISUAL SERVICES OFFICE IN MCALESTER JOINED THE LOCAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE IN JULY.



AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT TURNS 25.

DRS STAFF TOOK PART IN THE ADA AWARENESS WALK TO THE STATE CAPITOL JULY 26.



Rep. Mike Shelton and Rep. John Enns speak with staff and clients at DRS Expo

At the 2014 DRS Expo, Oklahoma lawmakers Rep. John Enns and Rep. Mike Shelton spoke to attendees about issues important to people with disabilities. They fielded questions from the audience and even had some fun.

The sixth annual DRS' Disability Outreach and Education Expo was held at Oklahoma City's Metro Technology

Center. The event was highlighted by addresses from the two lawmakers and state Sen. Constance N. "Connie" Johnson

The Expo offered the chance for dozens of vendors and DRS staff to meet with individuals seeking information about services. The event featured numerous educational workshops and a career success panel.

