



# Community Action Solutions

September-October 2007

## Bridges Out of Poverty

Cookson Hills Community Action Foundation has launched a new program to provide tools and training to help people cross bridges leading them out of poverty.

Specific training in survival skills, life skills, and budgeting along with case management helps move individuals from generational or situational poverty to a way in which they can do better, explained Executive Director Cleon Harrell.

They live in travel trailers called “Lab Facilities” for 48 months while completing the program. If they complete the program, Cookson Hills will sign over to them, free of charge, the title to their trailer, Harrell added.

Participants pay a \$175 monthly educational fee to participate in the program.

Each month they receive packets of information that require responses. As they cross each bridge by responding, additional material is provided.

For example, one packet focuses on distinguishing between “wants” and

“needs.”

Harrell wants participants to think about where they spend the family money and to see how minor changes in habits can lead to savings.

Mistaking “wants” for “needs” can put you into poverty quickly.

They are required to keep a list of their daily expenditures for a week. They must list their expenditures and their solutions for living within their means.

There are tips for saving money when purchasing clothes and food.

Another packet focuses on improving literacy as a tool for increasing employment opportunities.

After reviewing basic grammar and spelling, participants must write a 200 word essay on their life’s ambitions.

There are sample job interview questions that must be answered. Another exercise takes participants through the process of preparing for a job interview.

Building better human relationships is the focus of another packet.

Anger is a natural human emotion. They learn the problem is not anger, rather it is the mismanagement of anger.

They must identify what situations cause their anger and explore techniques for dealing with angry feelings.

Participants learn how to improve their decision-making skills. They learn how to recognize a problem, analyze it, consider their goals, look for and then select the best alternative, and put their decision into action.

Household income is normally used to determine eligibility, although persons may qualify to participate based on their specific situation.

If they fail to pay their monthly educational fee or don’t participate in the training programs, the lab facility will be picked up by Cookson Hills.

The agency acquired the lab facilities through the Oklahoma Department of Central Services Property Distribution office.

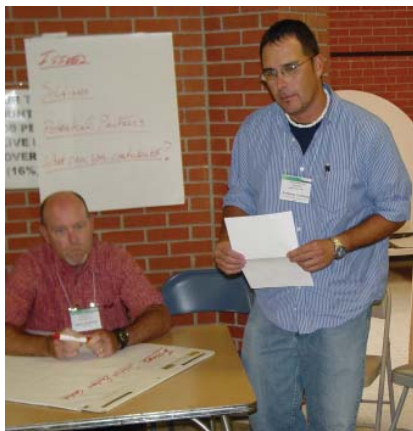
A consultant helped develop the training packets.

# Partnerships for Prosperity Conference

More than 100 community leaders, social workers, public officials, and state and federal agency staff members participated in the Partnerships for Prosperity Conference hosted by Northeast Oklahoma Community Action Agency (NEOCAA) in Miami on September 26.



*State Rep. John Auffet participates in a Poverty Simulation held during the Partnerships for Prosperity Conference.*



*Northeast Housing Manager Anthony Cochran (standing) and Bryon DeBruler from DeBruler, Inc. facilitate a discussion on housing issues.*

NEOCAA Executive Director Jean Cooper said the event was a kickoff for the agency's community assessment process. She said the event would get more people involved in what the agency does.

The day-long conference opened with a Poverty Simulation facilitated by Oklahoma Department of Commerce (ODOC) staff members.

During the simulation, participants role-played the lives of low-income families. The goal was to help sensitize participants to the challenges faced by a half-million Oklahomans living in poverty.

Karen Edwards, Principal of KME Consulting, told attendees that assets are equally important to income during her luncheon presentation. She mentioned that Individual Development Accounts and financial literacy programs are among the ways to encourage savings.

During the afternoon, attendees participated in facilitated discussions on adult education, early childhood education, economic development, health and housing.

The discussions were designed to collect information on each topic and



*Tamara Brickey from Booz, Allen, Hamilton lists recommendations from the Early Childhood discussion group.*

seek solution ideas from the participants.

Conference sponsors included area state legislators, ODOC, the Federal Reserve Bank and NEOCAA.



*Karen Edwards from KME Consulting discusses the importance of asset building during the luncheon.*



*Northeast Executive Director Jean Cooper listens as Steven Shepelwich from the Federal Reserve Bank (left) and Carl Metcalf representing Rotary discuss financial capacity issues.*



## Cookson Hills Obtains Computers from State Surplus and Non-Profit Group

Cookson Hills Community Action Foundation Executive Director Cleon Harrell's name badge lists his title as "Mover and Shaker."

So when he learned the state had 25 surplus computers, Harrell saw an opportunity to offer a new program and snapped them up for only \$75. He obtained another 30 computers from a non-profit relief organization.

After volunteers wiped the hard drives clean and installed software, Harrell placed computers in the agency's county offices and apartment complexes.

Several seniors living in agency managed apartment complexes use the computers to look up recipes on the In-

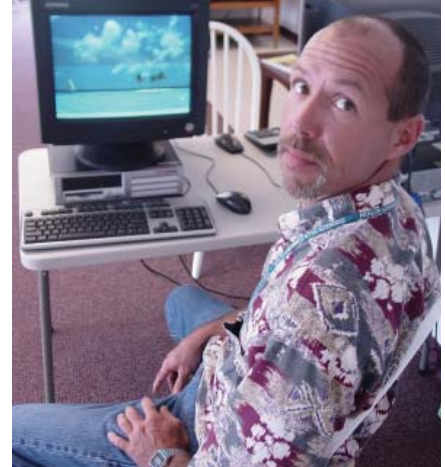
ternet or write letters to their children, according to Harrell.

Staff members at Cookson Hills provides assistance when someone wants to use one of the computers in the office. Harrell will even allow someone to take a laptop home for 90 days to improve their skills.

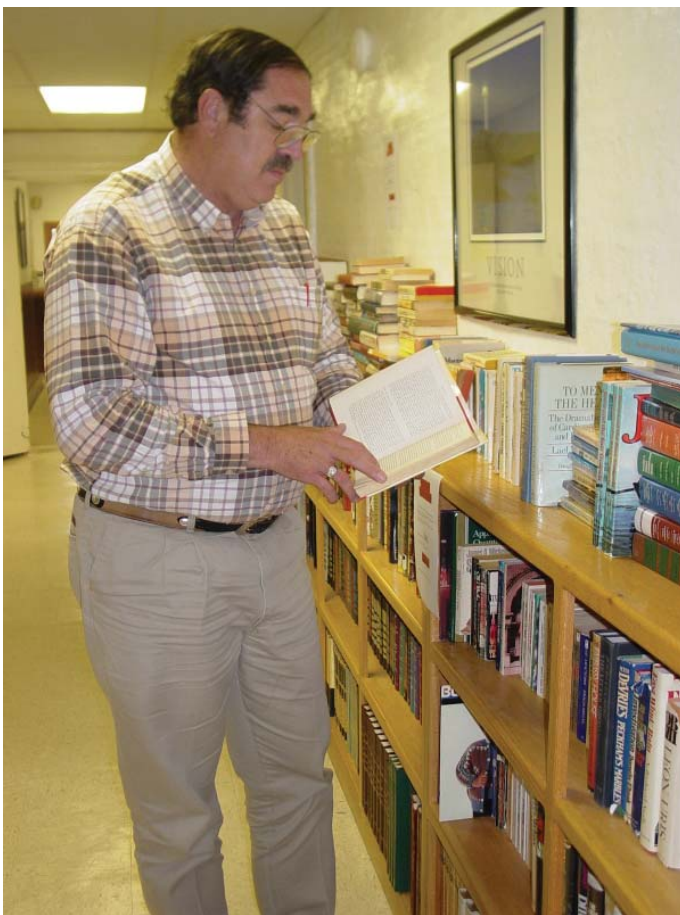
If they are not needed in the community, some of the computers will likely be placed in Head Start classrooms.

For Harrell, it's all about finding creative ways to provide new services and opportunities to help low-income families.

You can't move if you don't try, Harrell says.



*Cookson Hills Apartment Coordinator Mark Graham powers up a pair of computers in a senior housing complex in Tahlequah.*



*Cookson Hills Community Action Foundation Executive Director Cleon Harrell looks at part of the 70,000 pounds of books donated to the agency.*

## Donation of Books Enhances Agency's Literacy Program

When the Feed the Children relief organization offered Cookson Hills Community Action Foundation a truckload of books, Executive Director Cleon Harrell jumped at the chance to enhance the agency's family literacy program.

Then they arrived in Tahlequah -- 47 pallets loaded with 70,000 pounds of books.

Harrell says staff members have been sorting the books by category. There are adult, children and even college text books. There are both new and used books.

Harrell has posted signs "Let's Get Acquainted" in communities inviting residents to take a book home with them to share with their family, friends and neighbors.

Clients who come to a Cookson Hills office for other services such as food or clothing can also get books to read.

Harrell estimates the agency has given out 2,000 - 2,500 books. The agency also gave some to the local public library.

Harrell wants to expand outreach efforts to smaller communities. He plans to fill a trailer with books and information about other programs offered by Cookson Hills.

He intends to send the trailer to every small town in the counties the agency serves in hopes of reaching rural families who may only come into town on Saturdays.

They'll be able to learn about prescription assistance, weatherization, tax return preparation assistance, Foster Grandparents and Head Start plus pick up a book to read, Harrell explained.

# CARD and Catoosa Schools Partner on Pre-K Program

The Catoosa Public School's pre-kindergarten program that was cancelled this spring because of a financial crisis is now running again because of a partnership with the Community Action Resource & Development (CARD) Head Start program.

CARD Head Start Director Barbara Hankins and Catoosa Public Schools Superintendent Rick Kibbe agree the

partnership is a "win-win" for both groups.

The school district provides classroom space, room furnishings and bus service. CARD is providing certified teachers, basic supplies and funding.

The program has 80 children enrolled in four half-day blended classes. The classes follow the school system schedule.

Debbie Burgett and Julie Keefover, both 10 year veterans of CARD, teach

the classes located in Cherokee School.

A group of parents that had organized a grassroots fund raising effort to save the pre-kindergarten program donated money to provide playground equipment and school supplies.

Kibbe, who took over as superintendent in July, said he was sold on partnerships after a successful collaboration with United Community Action Program at his previous school district in Coyle.

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## Shelter From Abuse

KI BOIS Community Action Foundation provides a temporary safe haven for women escaping abusive situations at its Women's Shelter.

The shelter has room for 36 clients (adults and children) and usually stays 80 percent full. A client's typical stay is 30 days, according to Shelter Director Sandra Bourne.

One of the first things clients establish is a safety plan. They need to keep important documents such as birth certificates, shot records, social security cards and important numbers in a safe place. This allows them to make a fast exit, if needed.

They also set goals at two week increments that allow them to start functioning and reestablishing their lives.

Bourne says it's very rewarding to see a victim start to live again. Sometimes very small steps are taken such as starting to attend church and integrating back into the community. Finding a job and a house are also steps that need to be taken.

Bourne says there are times when the staff does not see immediate results of their efforts. Victims return to their abuser seven to ten times before the cycle is broken.

But that doesn't keep Bourne and her staff from doing their jobs.

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*Source: Based on an article in the September 2007 issue of KI BOIS News published by KI BOIS Community Action Foundation.*



*Community Action Resource & Development Head Start Director Barbara Hankins and Catoosa Public Schools Superintendent Rick Kibbe meet to discuss progress with the Pre-K/Head Start programs collaboration.*



*Debbie Burgett and Julie Keefover teach the blended Pre-K/Head Start classes at Cherokee Elementary School in Catoosa.*



## Deep Fork Buys Watches for Teens

Each year Deep Fork Community Action Foundation gives watches to needy teens through the schools in its four county service area.

This year Deep Fork's accounting staff took up the challenge to raise funds to purchase the watches.

Through a combination of fund raising events and donations from businesses and foundations raised through a letter writing campaign, the agency collected over \$2,650.

Deep Fork purchased 500 watches that will be distributed at Christmas.



*Deep Fork staffers pictured with the watches are, from left, Lisa Woodard, Linda Beshear, Renea Dugger, Jean Makinson, Crystal Craig, Pam McGuire, Kim Carter and Denise Robison.*

## OWHAC Seeking Scholarship Applicants

The Oklahoma Weatherization & Housing Advisory Council is accepting applications until January 11, 2008, for the \$1,000 Ted Allen/David Walker Scholarship.

Applicants must be high school seniors with a minimum 3.0 grade point average planning to attend an accredited four year college or university, or an accredited junior college with plans to complete a degree.

Applicants must also be a direct relative (2nd degree) of an employee of the

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Oklahoma Department of Commerce, Oklahoma Housing Finance Agency or a Community Action Agency.

Applicants must submit a 500 word essay entitled: "The Importance of Affordable Housing for the Low Income."

For an application, contact: Ted Allen/David Walker Scholarship, Attn: John Jones, KI BOIS Community Action Foundation, P.O. Box 727, Stigler, OK 74462. Phone: 918-967-3325.



*Washita Valley Community Action Council RX Coordinator Jan Blevins (left) is pictured with Lt. Gov. Jari Askins at a Rush Springs Health Fair. State Rep. Joe Dorman is in the background.*

## Contact Us

Oklahoma Association of  
Community Action Agencies  
2800 N.W. 36th St., Suite 221  
Oklahoma City, OK 73112  
(405) 949-1495  
Fax: (405) 949-0955  
Email: okacaa@yahoo.com  
Web: www.okacaa.org

Michael E. Jones  
Executive Director

Patty Laub  
Director of Operations

Kay C. Floyd  
Head Start State Collaboration  
Office Director

Tricia Auberle  
Director of Homebuyer  
Education Programs

Bob Brandenburg  
Communication Director

Wanda Welters  
Executive Assistant

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# Weatherization Cuts Energy Costs for Low-Income Families

The night air nips at your nose. Leaves are falling from the trees. There's no doubt about it. Winter is near. Most families across Oklahoma are turning up their thermostats to combat the dropping temperatures.

For low-income families, however, cranking up the heat is not always an option. These households pay 14% of their annual income for energy compared with 3.5% for other households.

The Weatherization Assistance Program, funded by the U.S. Department of Energy, enables low-income families to reduce their average annual energy bills by improving home energy efficiency. The Oklahoma Department of Commerce distributes funds to 19 local Community Action Agencies that weatherize about 1,400 homes throughout the state annually.

In addition to the Department of Energy funding, a portion of the Low-Income Housing Energy Assistance Program funds received by the Oklahoma Department of Human Services is used for weatherization assistance. Other funds come from donations to the Energy Conservation Assistance Fund.

The Oklahoma Energy Resources Board and Oklahoma Gas & Electric have provided additional funds for weatherization services.

Total funding for the program tops \$4.2 million.

On Weatherization Day 2007, a crew from the Community Action Agency of Oklahoma City and Oklahoma/Canadian Counties was working on one of about 160 homes weatherized each year by the agency.

This home was scheduled to get nine inches of attic insulation, roof vents, weather stripping around the doors, an insulation blanket for the water heater, energy efficient light bulbs and a carbon monoxide detector.

Other energy-efficient measures installed may include caulking, heating and cooling adjustments and a more energy efficient refrigerator.

Weatherization typically saves a homeowner about \$300 annually in utility costs.

The dollar savings alone make a big difference for the families. In addition, weatherization makes the home warmer and safer.

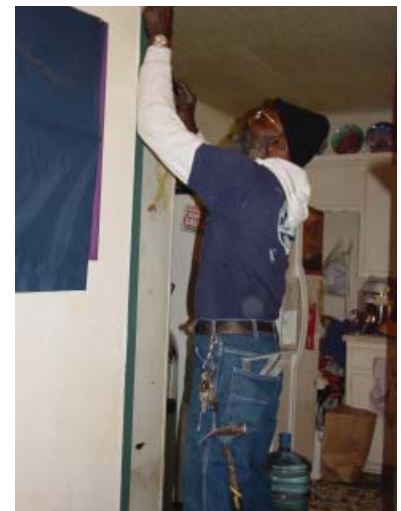
Community Action weatherization technicians use computerized energy audits and advanced diagnostic technologies to determine the most cost-effective measures for each home. They also assess related health and safety conditions.

An average of \$2,800 is spent on materials and labor for each home weatherized in Oklahoma. Weatherization services are provided without charge to eligible persons.



*Matt Van Horn, Weatherization Coordinator for the Community Action Agency of Oklahoma City and Oklahoma/Canadian Counties, checks the supply of insulation to be added in the attic.*

**OCTOBER 30 IS  
NATIONAL  
WEATHERIZATION  
DAY**



*Foreman Charles Vickers prepares to replace a door.*



*Gary Wirtz adds a door bottom to the front door of the home that will help seal out the cold weather.*



*Trayler Pitts installs ventilators in the roof.*

## Community Action Staff Recognized for Years of Service at Banquet

The following were recognized during OKACAA awards banquet on September 20.

### **BIG FIVE COMMUNITY SERVICES**

#### **10 years**

LaQuita Cobb  
Debbie Craddock  
Paul Hallum  
Yvon Hays  
Ronda Mefford  
Carla Trail

#### **15 years**

Thelma Jo Clark  
Ron Clay  
Sherri Cooper  
Christy Taylor  
Carol Wingo

#### **20 years**

Sandra Dillingham  
Donna Marie Hicks  
James Lance  
Allen Leaird  
Brenda McCurry  
Charles Powell  
Crystal Roppel

**25 years**  
Cheryl Frederick  
Linda Holloway  
Cindy Rainwater

### **CENTRAL OKLAHOMA COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY**

#### **10 years**

Ernest Carter  
Virginia Corson  
Amber Davis  
Vicki Hodges  
Dorothy Johnson

#### **20 years**

Carol Himle

#### **30 years**

Martha Young

### **COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY OF OKLAHOMA CITY AND OKLAHOMA/CANADIAN COUNTIES**

#### **10 years**

Diana Blanton  
Reva Coby  
Jacqueline Crenshaw

Val Curry  
Markita Edwards  
Debbie Evans  
Regina Hamilton  
Jason Lindley  
Kevin Logan  
Delores Smith

#### **15 years**

Otis Anderson  
Margaret Baustert  
Kevin Jackson  
Lisa Morris  
Wanda Thomas  
Linda Vega  
Willie Watley

#### **25 years**

Robert Roberson  
Charles Vickers  
Gwendlyon Wright

#### **30 years**

Senories Jean Rogers

#### **40 years**

Mary Jones  
Ethel Robinson

### **COMMUNITY ACTION DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**

#### **10 years**

Michelle Beckham  
Terri Fleming  
Lisa Griffith  
Janie Rameriz  
Tracie Rippetoe  
Pam Ruiz

#### **15 years**

Elma Clift  
Betty Leighton  
Patty Wright

#### **20 years**

Connie Evetts  
Colleen Gordon  
Dale Rambo  
Peggy Subia

#### **25 years**

Jereada Bowers  
Susie Hooker

#### **30 years**

Kathy Willis

#### **35 years**

Sophia Perez

### **COMMUNITY ACTION RESOURCE & DEVELOPMENT**

#### **10 years**

Margaret Dickerson  
Betty Duncan  
Pam Green  
Judy Jenkins  
Charlotte Kerr  
Shonna Massey  
Sandy Mizer

#### **15 years**

Melva Gordon  
Diana Harris  
Lisa McCabe  
Dennis McCollum  
Debbie Ragsdale

#### **25 years**

Bill Sturdivant

#### **30 years**

Karol May

### **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT ASSOCIATION**

#### **10 years**

Linda Harvey

### **COOKSON HILLS COMMUNITY ACTION FOUNDATION**

#### **10 years**

Jeanetta Anderson  
Christy Christie  
Mary Collins  
Deanna Hall  
Barbara Hardin  
Patricia Ramirez  
Zora Wheeler

#### **15 years**

Rosemary Howell  
Bruce Killer  
Betty Maher  
Evelyn Petree  
Virginia Revas

#### **20 years**

Jane Canady  
Terry Hearn  
Leslie Musgrove  
Linda Phillips  
Sharon Scott

### **DEEP FORK COMMUNITY ACTION FOUNDATION**

#### **10 years**

Brenda Robison

#### **20 years**

Thelma Souders

#### **25 years**

Carolyn Glazier  
Agnes Morris

### **DELTA COMMUNITY ACTION FOUNDATION**

#### **15 years**

Sue Evans  
Anna M. Kirk

#### **25 years**

Pat Harlan  
Dorothy Holt  
Marjorie Shults

### **GREAT PLAINS IMPROVEMENT FOUNDATION**

#### **10 years**

Trecia Franklin  
Patricia Jackson  
Beatrice Perez

#### **15 years**

Odell Gunter  
Myra Patterson  
Rosai Williams

#### **20 years**

Betty Caldwell

#### **30 years**

Jackie Green

### **INCA COMMUNITY SERVICES**

#### **10 years**

Peggy Gilbreath

#### **20 years**

Nelda Cobb

Joy York

*Continued on next page*



# Community Action Staff Recognized for Years of Service

Continued from previous page

## KI BOIS COMMUNITY ACTION FOUNDATION

**10 years**  
 Penny Baxter  
 Thelma Christopher  
 Billy Fazekas  
 Nita Gills  
 Pam Hall  
 Magdalana Hastings  
 Lisa Montgomery  
 Earl Shockley  
 Carol Upchurch  
 Gwendolyn Walker  
**15 years**  
 Wanda Cooke  
 Kathy Crase  
 Linda Love  
 Mitzie Mathis  
 Sandra Oliver  
 Shirley Pittman  
 Charles Regan  
 Susan Sorrels  
 Sherri Washburn  
**20 years**  
 Nancy Marlow  
 Nedra McCoy  
 Linda Montgomery  
**25 years**  
 Claudette Davis  
 John Jones  
 Jerry Vail  
**30 years**  
 Jerry Barlow  
 Lavon Coyle  
 Alice Walker  
**35 years**  
 Julie Kendall

## LITTLE DIXIE COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY

**10 years**  
 Tammie Fewell  
 Andy Starrett  
 Wendi Sumner  
**15 years**  
 Windell Cayton  
 Joan Edge  
 Carolyn Hampton  
 Sharon Pennell  
**20 years**  
 Bonnie Sims

## NORTHEAST OKLAHOMA COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY

**10 years**  
 Helen Adams  
 Mellisa Barnes  
 Jannell Burnett  
 Madeleyne English  
 Kristen Helsel  
 Rita Pickup  
 Kathleen Smith  
**15 years**  
 Erma Cook  
 Linda Reno  
**25 years**  
 Marilyn Southard  
**30 years**  
 Ruth Rathjen

## OPPORTUNITIES, INC.

**10 years**  
 Beth Baird  
 Mary Brack  
 Heather Gilley  
 Sally Jantz  
 Tammie Johnson  
 Mary Seelke  
 Bruce Smith  
 Kimberly Smith  
 Donnette Watson  
**15 years**  
 Mary Bohnen  
 Vickie Felder  
 Karen Trindle  
 Gwenette Williams

## SOUTHWEST OKLAHOMA COMMUNITY ACTION GROUP

**10 years**  
 Mary Ann Allen  
 Linda Allison  
 Cynthia Bryant  
 Sue Burkhalter  
 Keith Jones  
 Carl Thomason  
**15 years**  
 D. June Billington  
 Gloria Parker  
 Linda Sloan  
**20 years**  
 Claudette Bowen  
 Shelia Clark  
 Ingrid Gifford  
 Mary Mingura

**25 years**  
 Mary E. Campos  
 Ethel High  
 Pedro Soliz  
**40 years**  
 Willie Byrd

## TWIN RIVERS HEAD START

**10 years**  
 Tammy Griffin  
 Monica VanWinkle  
**15 years**  
 Cathy Gorden

## UNITED COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAM

**10 years**  
 Tari Brewer  
 Debra Dicus  
 Julia Frazier  
 Kathy Frazier  
 Lea Godsey  
 Deborah Purcell  
 Karen Vickers  
 Pam Wood  
**30 years**  
 Pauline Hudson

## WASHITA VALLEY COMMUNITY ACTION COUNCIL

**10 years**  
 Ann King  
 Tammie Payne  
**20 years**  
 Sharon Flugge  
 Sally Spivey  
**30 years**  
 Charlotte Key  
 Genavie Pendarvis  
 Diana Watson  
**40 years**  
 Betty Lentz



*Little Dixie Community Action Associate Director Becky Reynolds was presented the Fred Tucker Service Award and the Ted Allen Memorial Award during the OKACAA Annual Conference banquet.*



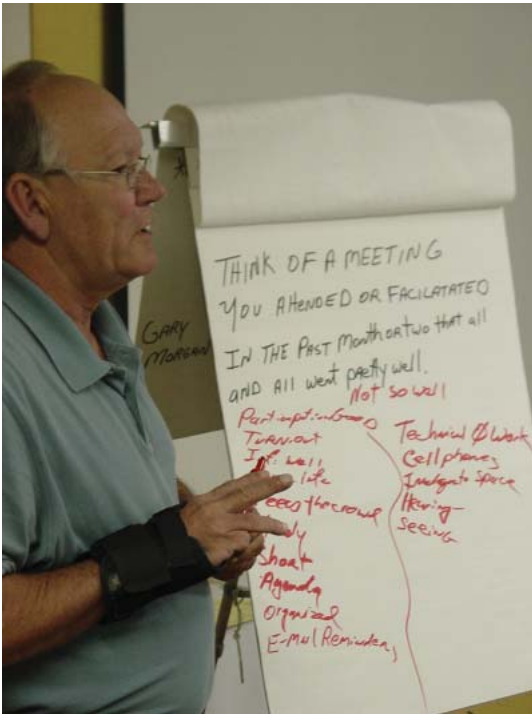
*Deep Fork Community Action Executive Director Jeff Schuman was presented the Guy Davis Leadership Award during the OKACAA Annual Conference banquet*



*John Osmer was recognized as the Volunter of the Year for his work in Little Dixie's Head Start program.*



# OKACAA 2007 Annual Conference



East Central University Training Specialist Gary Morgan discusses techniques for effectively facilitating meetings.



Evan Henderson from Booz, Allen, Hamilton leads a session on incorporating inclusion into all curriculum for Head Start staff members.



Bill Havron from Great Plains Improvement Foundation (r) reviews his presentation on indoor air pollution with Robert Meador from Community Action Development Corporation.



Jeannie Clinton and Pat Gower from Cookson Hills Community Action Foundation were among the 175 people who attended the conference.



The atmosphere was festive as conference attendees celebrated Oklahoma's Centennial.