



# The Gear Up Messenger

December 2002

Preparing Students To Succeed

Volume 1, Issue 4

## GEAR UP forms Advisory Board

**Jim Corley, Durant Middle School** Principal, has been elected as the first Chairperson of the Advisory Board for the Southeastern Oklahoma Enterprise GEAR UP Partnership.

Corley was selected by the 16 voting members who attended the first meeting of the board at Golden Corral in Durant on Wednesday, Nov. 20.

**Roland Smith, Principal at Valliant Middle School**, was elected Vice-Chairperson for the board.

"These two are very good choices to lead this Advisory Board," said Rudy Manley, Executive Director of the Southeastern GEAR UP Partnership. "Mr. Corley does a great job at DMS, and his enthusiasm and leadership have helped the Durant program to soar this year.

"Mr. Smith had a vision for the Valliant program since the very first day of GEAR UP. He and Site Coordinator, Debbie Smith, have set high standards for the Valliant students. His leadership and experiences will be positive influences on programs across

the 17 school Partnership," Manley said.

Advisory Board members were given a GEAR UP overview by Pat Britt, Partnership Coordinator. Britt summarized the opportunities provided to students, parents, teachers and administrators since the inception of the program.

Dr. Jesse Snowden, Vice President for Academic Affairs at SOSU, welcomed the group and thanked them for their willingness to lend their expertise to the GEAR UP project.

Bettye Finnell, Assistant Director, described the components of the GEAR UP program and urged the board members to provide suggestions for ways GEAR UP can better serve students and their communities.

After Rudy Manley explained the role of the board members, the group elected Corley and Smith to the leadership positions.

Schools in Bryan, Choctaw and McCurtain counties are represented on the board. "We feel that it is very important to have each geographic area represented on this advisory board," Manley said.

"My staff and I will depend on their advice

and experience to help us reach every student with the GEAR UP opportunities. The success of this program depends on getting parents, teachers, administrators, and community members involved in the lives of students in a very positive way. We are limited only by our own imaginations." Manley added.

"We want these students to know that a college degree is an option. It is an attainable goal for all who desire to achieve it." Manley said.

Members attending the meeting were: Butch Arnett, Rhonda Collier, Jim Corley, Robert Covert, Joy Culbreath, Bob Gillham, Leslie Hayes, Karen Hughes, Tom Lackey, Rikki Morgan, Janet Neal, Pat Phelps, Gladys Skinner, Roland Smith, Debbie Smith, and Martha Brown.

Schools involved in the program are: Achille, Bennington, Boswell, Broken Bow, Caddo, Calera, Colbert, Durant, Goodland, Forest Grove, Ft. Towson, Hugo, Rock Creek, Silo, Soper, Swink and Valliant.

## Theatre program reaches 17 Partnership schools

During the months of October and November, students across the GEAR UP Partnership attended a musical revue performed by The Chorvettes Stageworks Company from the SOSU Theatre Department.

The Chorvettes performed songs from classic musicals such as *Kiss Me Kate*, *Ain't Misbehavin'*, and *Joseph and the Technicolor Dreamcoat*.

After the rousing final number—*Oklahoma!*—students had the opportunity to meet and talk to the members of the



The Chorvettes Stageworks Company performing "The Benjamin Calypso" from Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat.

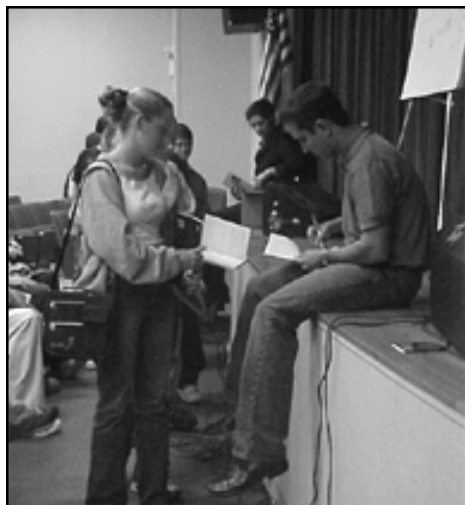
Chorvettes. During the talk-back sessions, the Chorvettes answered questions from the GEAR UP students, addressing issues of college life and being a performer.

"The collaboration between GEAR UP and the Theatre Department has had a positive effect on the students in our Partnership," said Rudy Manley, Director of the GEAR UP Partnership. "It was important for GEAR UP students to interact

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# Success within reach

It starts out as a typical school assembly. Students enter loudly, joking with their friends, pouring into the aisles of an auditorium or gym. Some of them whisper to each other about the guest speaker. One seventh grader asks if the young man talking to the principal is "him", and if he's "boring and stuff". This student has never heard Jason Dorsey.



*Jason Dorsey signing his book for Achilles students.*

From October 22 through October 30, Jason R. Dorsey, author and motivational speaker, addressed students in the 17 GEAR UP Partnership schools.

Dorsey delivered his message with humor and his own personal life stories about growing up in the small town of Brenham, Texas. As he traveled throughout southeastern Oklahoma, he offered a simple yet powerful lesson to GEAR UP students: anyone of them could become successful in life.

Dorsey testified that if students did not let excuses stop them from achieving their goals, found mentors, and responded to challenges with a positive attitude, every single student could attend post-secondary education and become successful.

Dorsey also stressed the importance of OHLAP, stating, "I have spoken in 48 states, and none of them have a program like this one." He explained that the OHLAP program has the ability to remove any monetary barriers for those students seeking higher education.

Dorsey also encouraged students to find mentors. According to Dorsey, mentors are an important component of becoming successful. Dorsey himself has 10 mentors, and believes it is vital for young people to have an adult who will listen to them and offer



*Jason connects with students at an evening session at the SOSU Ballroom*

objective advice.

"Jason's visit was amazing," said Assistant Director Bettye Finnell, "I was watching a student listen to Jason as he told the students they could all go to college, and her eyes just lit up. It was moments like these that made his visit so powerful." After the presentations, every GEAR UP student in the Partnership received an autographed copy of Dorsey's first book, *Graduate to Your Perfect Job*.



**Southeastern Oklahoma  
Enterprise GEAR UP  
Partnership**

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## COMING EVENTS

December 11, 2002

HOSTS Roundtable  
Visual Arts 125  
9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.  
SOSU Campus

January 15, 2003

Curriculum Alignment  
Assignment Due

January 22, 2003

Advisory Board Meeting  
12:00 p.m.  
Hugo, Oklahoma

January 31, 2003

Mid-Year Reports Due

February 10-12, 2003

GEAR UP Capacity Building  
Workshop  
Phoenix, Arizona

March 5-7, 2003

HOSTS Annual Conference,  
Orlando, Florida

April 23, 2003

Advisory Board Meeting  
Broken Bow

**For more information on  
these events, please contact  
the GEAR UP office at  
1-800-435-1327 x3122**

# Children's authors visit Valliant campus

GEAR UP students got a special treat during the month of October—a visit from beloved authors and former Oklahoma educators, Bill Wallace and Anna Myers.

Wallace, a former fourth grade teacher and principal, spoke to GEAR UP students from **Valliant, Swink, Soper and Ft. Towson**. Wallace delivered a message of enthusiasm for his students as he told of the journey he took to begin his career as a children's author.

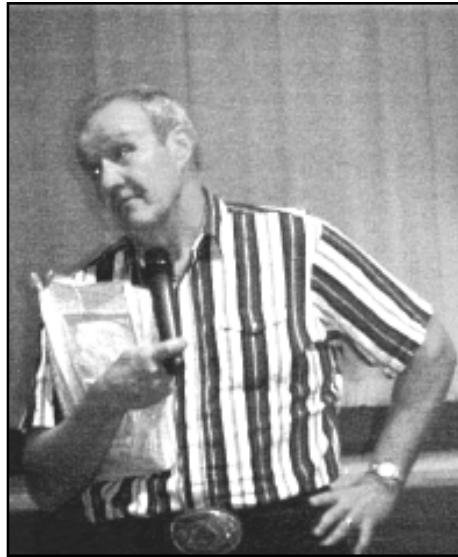
During his first year of teaching fourth grade, the students began to ask if he would read to them. He brought in the classic novel, *Old Yeller*, and the students loved it; he discovered it would be difficult to find another book that would be such a hit with the students.

He began writing his own short stories to read during class. These stories eventually turned into full length manuscripts.

Although his students could not get enough of his tales, Wallace's professional success did not come easily. After ten years of submitting his manuscript for *A Dog Called Kitty*, his dream to publish became a reality in 1993.

Wallace's visit was a result of a mini-grant Valliant wrote to the GEAR UP Partnership this past summer. After the presentation, students were able to bring their own books to be signed by Wallace.

Wallace grew up in Chickasha, a small town outside of Oklahoma City. He published his first children's book, *A Dog Called Kitty* in 1993. He has authored such famous titles as *Beauty, Trapped in Death Cave* and *Snot*



*Bill Wallace holds a copy of the original manuscript for one of his earliest books.*

*Stew*. His books have also won numerous awards, such as the Oklahoma Sequoyah Children's Book Award and the Texas Bluebonnet Award.

He has also published *Bub the Moose* and *Gray the Cat* series with his wife, Carol. The next book featuring Bub the Moose, *Bub, Snow and the Burly Bear Scare*, is due out in 2002.

**Valliant Middle School** welcomed another children's author, Anna Myers on November 13. Myers, also a former Oklahoma educator, resides in Chandler, Oklahoma. Some of her works include: *Red Dirt Jessie*, *Graveyard Girl* and *Fire in the Hills*. She has won the Oklahoma book award twice during her career.

During her presentation, Myers piqued the students' interest by talking to them as characters from her books, detailing the stories' beginnings.

She also spoke of how she got ideas for her books and her own writing process. She discussed the importance of using details and revision in the students' own writing, and the process of having others read their work and make suggestions.

Myers said there has to be truth in fiction or it's not believable; therefore she sets real historical settings for each of her books and uses characteristics of people she knows to make her characters come to life.

In the afternoon she held a writing workshop with a group of 16 Valliant Middle School students, giving the students basic rules of writing creatively. After giving them an assignment to write about a childhood memory, the students then had the opportunity to read aloud and critique their work.

Myers, a former eighth grade English teacher was first published in 1992 with *Red-Dirt Jessie*.



*Anna Myers conducts a writing workshop with Valliant middle schoolers.*

## GEAR UP holds Fall semester curriculum alignment workshop

The Southeastern Oklahoma Enterprise GEAR UP Partnership sponsored a curriculum alignment workshop at **Hugo High School** on Saturday, November 9. Pat Britt, Partnership Coordinator, led representatives from the seventeen Partnership schools in examining data from their schools' state test results over the past several years. The group also examined the new PASS skills for Oklahoma students in grades 5-12 and blueprints for the new tests to be given in 2003.

The alignment coaches will lead their faculties in examining curriculum during this school year as Oklahoma intensifies its school accountability standards under the No Child Left Behind legislation, signed into law by President George W. Bush earlier this

year. Known as API, Oklahoma's Annual Performance Index will assign a score to each school based upon student academic performance on tests, attendance rates, retention rates, Advanced Placement participation, ACT scores, graduation rates, and the college remediation rates of the schools' graduates.

"Alignment of curriculum has always been important to insure that all students master skills at the appropriate grade level. New federal and state accountability standards make alignment even more critical," said Britt.

Over the next three years, Oklahoma will institute further testing based on the PASS skills in each grade, 3-8, in addition to the end-of-instruction exams required to receive

credit in high school core courses. Since test scores will count a minimum of 80% in the API for each school, aligning curriculum to the PASS skills for each grade is vital.

The GEAR UP Partnership strives to improve academic performance by providing professional development opportunities for faculties, sponsoring informative meetings for parents, and by supporting mentoring programs for students in math, language arts, and science.

Britt also stated, "Working with state priority Academic Student Skills and the blueprint for the new state tests, teachers can become more aware of what is expected at each grade level and better prepare students to be successful."

# The Miracle of Mentors

## *Broken Bow mentors share their experience*

The following letter was written by several Learn & Serve students from Broken Bow High School, whom also serve as HOSTS mentors in the GEAR UP Partnership.

The Learn & Serve program at **Broken Bow** was designed to "Help One Student to Succeed". We help students increase their understanding of mathematics and language arts.

We are able to work with the students one-on-one. To some students, just being in a group is not enough. Sometimes a little special attention is needed to see the results that are expected. We hope our efforts help raise scores in both areas of math and language arts.

In the HOSTS class, we assist with worksheets and listen to the students read. We are there to help with every question that may come to mind, whereas in the classroom, there is not time for every question to be answered. A personal friendship has been built between student and mentor. This situation has helped not only the students but the mentors as well.

Being affiliated with the Learn & Serve pro-

gram has helped us to gain a new respect for our teachers, as well as ourselves. We have learned that a great deal of patience, kind-



*The mentor bulletin board at **Broken Bow's Middle School.***

ness, and a sense of responsibility play an important role in the educational process.

We have also participated in other projects. We have helped teachers with decorating the classroom, making bulletin boards, and preparing student materials. All of these things keep the learning atmosphere fun and effective. We hope to see good results at the end of this year. Results in the students, as well as in ourselves.

## Theatre

...Continued from Front Page.

with and learn from the college students here at Southeastern."

Students posed questions about theatrical careers, getting into college, and being successful there. The Chorvettes stressed the importance of staying involved in the GEAR UP Program and taking advantage of college opportunities, such as OHLAP.



*Michael Ruff takes a question after a performance in UC300.*

"It always helps for our students to hear what we tell them everyday from someone closer to their own age," said Katherine Carey, GEAR UP Site Coordinator for Colbert School.

The Chorvettes performed for all 17 Partnership Schools traveling to **Valliant, Hugo and Broken Bow** as well as performances at the SOSU campus. The collaboration between GEAR UP and the



*Amanda Wilson, Emmy Gladney and Mark McClanahan answer questions from Bryan County Students.*

# School Spotlight

## *Goodland students visit KTEN*

On October 1, the **Goodland School** GEAR UP students got a taste of show business. The students went to Sherman, Texas, where Gary Dibello, of KTEN television, was gracious enough to grant a tour of the news studios there.

The 'behind-the-scenes' peek at a television production revealed that more goes into the news than sitting in front of a desk and reading words aloud. 'I think it's interesting how they get the news before everybody else,' said Carrie Gray, a Goodland seventh-grader. She was referring to the computer system by which affiliates of major television networks receive tips, related text, and video images for breaking stories.

'I learned a lot. Now, when you watch, you know what [Mr. Dibello's] doing.' Gray and Frankie Heady experienced what it was like to be part of the news crew when they got a special opportunity to sit behind the news desk as their fellow students watched them on the monitors.

Later in the tour, everyone learned how the weather forecast is projected onto a 'green-screen' behind the meteorologist. 'It looked like he was watching the wall, but now you know there's nothing on the wall,' Carrie said. Dibello showed the students specialized equipment such as teleprompters and sound mixing boards as graphic artists and sound engineers demonstrated the equipment functions.

A graduate of Texas A & M in nearby Commerce, Texas, Dibello emphasized the importance of a college education for job-seekers interested in journalism. He also called attention to various media careers, whether in front of a camera, behind it, or a in related field.

After the tour, the kids were treated by GEAR UP to a lunch at Ken's Pizza Parlor in Durant.

Theatre Department will continue next semester, with the production of *The Time is Out of Joint*, a one act version of the Shakespeare classic, *Hamlet*.