

Bright Future

Newsletter of the Oklahoma Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped

Summer Reading about to begin

The OLBPH's annual Summer Reading Program for students who are unable to access standard print will start on May 28 and end on July 31. All students ages 3-17 or who will be in 12th grade in August are invited to participate.

Registration forms and further information about the Summer Reading Program were mailed to students in mid-April. Registration started May 1 and will stay open throughout the program.

To register, either return the registration form you received or contact Lacey: (405) 522-0982 or ldowns@okdrs.gov.

INSIDE: New Regular Feature!

Oklahoma Reads highlights books produced by our digital studio along with some classic Oklahoma titles.

Which "Reads" get the honor of being first? Go to **Page 3** to find out!

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Bright Future is also available in Braille, on Oklahoma Telephone Reader, and on our website.

Director's Column

In my last "Director's Column," I talked about how some outreach opportunities come to us as unplanned fortune, luck, blessing, however one chooses to view such pleasant surprises. One of April's three outreach trips to Tulsa featured mine and Brian King's participation in the annual Oklahoma Library Association conference. This, of course, was planned to include a speaking opportunity for us.

The title of our break out presentation was our mantra "Share Our Vision...That All May Read." We tailored our tag team duo presentation to impact our cohorts in library service delivery. Considering the questions asked during and after our presentation,



Kevin (right) and Brian complete their presentation at the Oklahoma Library Association conference April 24 in Tulsa.

we were successful in reaching out to them. The 15 attendees were very engaged and while that may seem like a small number, these are not only networking professionals but they are also on the front lines in touch with their patrons who may be struggling with reading printed materials and in need

of our services. It's also been our experience that when we visit public libraries, we all share a common goal of simply being in the helping profession.

Librarian Sammie Willis keeps telling us that applications keep coming in, which is the true validation of our efforts. No excessive back patting here, though, as the beat must go on. Thanks to all of our readers and patrons that help us in the effort to spread the good word about our library services.

--Kevin Treese, Library Director

Oklahoma

READS

Showcasing fiction and nonfiction books in our collection that are about Oklahoma, its history and its people.



Books with an asterisk (*) next to the title were produced by our own digital recording studio. Other titles are books produced by The National Library Service, a branch of The Library of Congress.

DB 87767 – *Killers of the Flower Moon* by David Grann

In the 1920s national newspapers were reporting on the “Reign of Terror” and the Osage “Black Curse” after years of murders and suspicious deaths among the Osage Indians.

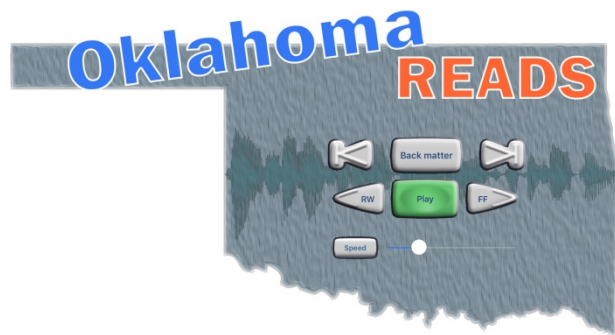
But this wasn’t the first time the tribe had been featured in the national news. The Osage had become the wealthiest people per capita in the world. In the 1870s, they had been driven from ancestral lands to a reservation in Oklahoma described as “broken, rocky, sterile, and utterly unfit for civilization.”

Decades later, the tribe learned the reservation sat on top of some of the biggest oil deposits in the US, yielding more oil money than the combined value of all the Old West gold rushes. To extract the oil, prospectors had to rent leases from the Osage who became fabulously wealthy.

Then the systematic oppression and killing of America’s first people began, facilitated by the U.S. government, which claimed

(Continued on next page)

(Oklahoma Reads, continued...)



that the Osage were incapable of handling their own money and needed “guardians”, usually the most prominent white citizens of Osage County.

The guardians doled out small allowances to their wards and gave themselves fat fees for their business advice. But the headrights to the oil-rich land remained in the tribe; they couldn't be bought or stolen, only inherited. So if white people hoped to inherit the headrights, they had to marry into the tribe, then to wish their rich spouse would die. Or *cause* them to die. While the FBI counted the number of murders at 24, scholars believe the real death toll to be in the hundreds.

This heartbreaking and terrifying account of one of the most shameful chapters in our history is a true crime page turner. It is a testimonial to greed and arrogance, a story both old and new. It's an uncomfortable read for anyone with a conscience, but an important book that should be on the reading list of any student of American history.

--Sammie Willis, Librarian

*** DBC 12202 – *A Letter to America* by David Boren**

In 2008, University of Oklahoma President David Boren penned this rumination on America's future. It boldly faces the question of how long the United States, with only six percent of the world's population, can remain a global superpower. President Boren explains with unsparing clarity why the country is at a crossroads and why decisive action is urgently needed. He draws on his experiences as the longest-serving chair of the U.S. Senate's Select Committee on Intelligence and as a state governor and leader of a major public university. He asserts that major reforms,

such as campaign finance reform, deficit reduction, affordable higher education, universal health care coverage, and a progressive taxation structure, are needed to restore our political system and strengthen the middle class.

*** DBC 1824 – *Oklahoma: A History* by W. David Baird and Danney Goble**

If you are looking for a comprehensive historical survey of Oklahoma's past, this one is for you. Written by two historians, *Oklahoma: A History* is a comprehensive narrative that begins with Oklahoma's geologic origins and ends in the 21st century. The state's familiar and not-so-familiar people, events, and places are included: Sequoyah, the 1889 Land Run, oil booms and busts, and Tulsa's Greenwood District, among many others.

--Andrew Shockley, Librarian

Braille Books

Don't forget we circulate Braille in addition to digital talking books! Our Braille patrons receive their books through the mail; or, they can download Braille files from BARD, to be read via a refreshable Braille display. Are you interested in receiving Braille books? Give us a call at (405) 521-3514 and ask for a librarian or email olbph@okdrs.gov. We will be happy to set you up for this service!

--Andrew Shockley, Librarian

DDS' Lee crosses over to help at library

An employee from the Department of Rehabilitation Services' Disability Determination Services (DDS) is making the agency stronger by helping out at the Library.

Michael Lee, disability determination specialist III, is taking classes at OSU-OKC after work. One of the classes required a community service component, so he asked DRS Executive Director Noel Tyler if she had any ideas. Tyler contacted Kevin Treese, director of the Oklahoma Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, and the seed was planted.



DDS' Michael Lee records articles for the Oklahoma Telephone Reader. *Photo by Brian King*

Under the guidance of program administrator Rebecca Bates and library technician Steve Dowdy, Lee began work on one of the library's services, the Oklahoma Telephone Reader.

The Oklahoma Telephone Reader (OTR) is an on-demand dial-up information service that is owned and operated by the OLBPH. Numerous volunteers pitch in to record from newspapers, magazines, store ads and short stories, as well as devotionals, humor and other content. Listeners can access these using the keypads on their telephone. In Lee's case, he read several sections of "The Daily Oklahoman" on Wednesdays and also handled the Joke of the Day. He said it can be time-consuming to find a clean joke on the internet.

Additional duties have included mailing out the OLBPH's quarterly newsletter, as well as flyers for the library friends group, Oklahomans for Special Library Services.

All OLBPH patrons are eligible for this free service. If you are interested in listening or volunteering, please call (405) 521-3514.

Using Bookshelf to find magazines and book titles

Locating specific magazine or book titles on a cartridge containing multiple titles is easy if you use the **Bookshelf** feature on your digital player. It allows you to navigate back and forth through the cartridge to find the magazine or book title you want to read.

Follow these steps to locate the magazine or book you want:

1. Insert the cartridge into the digital player.
2. Hold down the green Play/Stop button until you hear the word "Bookshelf."
3. Release the Play/Stop button and tap down on the white arrow-shaped Fast Forward button to the right of the Play/Stop button to move through the titles on the cartridge until you hear the title of the magazine or book you want to read.

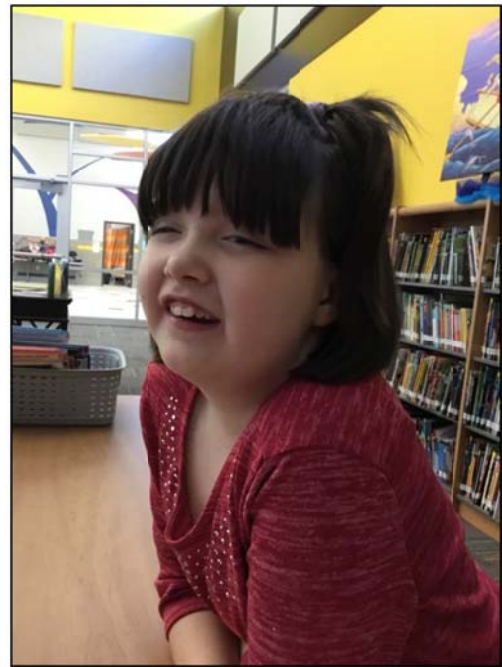
To move back through the titles on the cartridge, hold down the Play/Stop button until you hear "BOOKSHELF" and then tap down on the white arrow-shaped Rewind button until you hear the title you are seeking.

--Sammie Willis, Librarian

Third grader gives AIM Center valuable perspective

On a bright, spring morning I had the opportunity to meet with one of our AIM Center students. Amber is a smiling, easy-going, 9 year-old third grader in Broken Arrow. We sat down in her school library to discuss her experiences as a legally blind student in Oklahoma. I asked Amber what her favorite subject was and she was off and running!

"I love Math because I like numbers. It's important to know numbers because you can add them up to see how much money you have. I also love P.E. because we get to exercise and that is important. I like to exercise after sitting in the classroom. Sometimes I get scared because I want to play soccer but I am afraid I won't see the ball and it will hit me in the face. I really like going to the library because I like to read the Katie Woo books!"



Armed with this information, I asked Amber if it was difficult to be legally blind and keep up with her school work.

"Sometimes it's hard because my eyes get tired. I am learning Braille and that is fun but it is HARD work! I have a Visio Book and I love it because I can use it to see the board and to see my (text) books better." (A Visio Book, provided by the AIM Center, is a light-

weight, portable video magnifier with a distant view camera).

At this point, we were interrupted by a school-wide tornado drill! Amber never missed a beat, taking me by the arm and leading me to the school gym where everyone meets in the event of a tornado.

Finally, back in the library, I asked Amber about the materials she received from the AIM Center and how they helped her in the classroom.

"I have the Visio Book, a Braille writer, braille paper, bold-line paper, (large print) textbooks and I need a ruler! I love my Visio Book the most! I use it for everything. I like being able to see what Miss Hicks writes on the board. And my bold-line paper helps me see what I need to write."

As Director of the AIM Center, it was very interesting to hear Amber talk about her experiences and about the products we are able to provide for her. At times, it was also poignant, especially when Amber talked about her challenges. Although it was difficult for her to articulate exactly what she wanted to say, I understood that she sometimes wishes other students understood her visual impairment and would realize she is just a kid like them. Blind and Visually Impaired students face many challenges and I am thankful that the AIM Center can provide materials that enable our students to overcome obstacles they face on a daily basis.

--Pepper Watson, AIM Center Director



OLBPH finds an 'Open Mic' and speaks up about services

May started with a really good surprise for your library in its outreach efforts. We were asked to be guests on The Open Mic Talk Show on 92.1 FM and 1140 AM in Oklahoma City. Of course, we accepted and were on the air the next morning, May 2.

Hosts Terry Monday, Nikki Nice and Launa West were terrific. They gave Library Director Kevin Treese and me an opportunity to describe the library's free services and asked some insightful questions. We got to demonstrate a talking book by playing a short clip of Ralph Ellison's *Juneteenth*, described the player and discussed downloading books and magazines with BARD.

As another radio host reminded us recently, radio has played an important role for blind and visually-impaired people for many years. It is a reliable and accessible source of news, information, and entertainment. We're grateful to The Open Mic Talk Show, its listeners, and other radio programs around the state for serving the people of Oklahoma. And stations, if you're looking for an on-air guest – even on short notice – give us a call!

--Brian King, Public Information Officer



Kevin (far right) describes OLBPH services during an on-air interview with The Open Mic Talk Show on May 2nd. Photo by Jody Harlan.

Spring Outreach highlights

The Oklahoma Library Association conference Kevin mentioned in his column on Page 2 and the radio interview (Page 10) were only two of the many outreach highlights this spring. The season included health and resource fairs in the Oklahoma City and Tulsa areas, plus big conferences, several public library visits, and a not-to-be-forgotten event at the State Capitol.

Before teachers and their supporters swarmed the Capitol in early April, there was People with Disabilities Awareness Day on March 13. The annual event, organized by the Department of Rehabilitation Services, includes dozens of exhibit tables, awards presentations, and opportunities to meet with state lawmakers about funding and other disability-related issues. More than 750 people attended.

That same week brought a trip north of Tulsa with stops in Pawhuska, Bartlesville, Dewey, and Nowata. Other substantial drives since then have included a return visit to Alva to speak with a group of seniors, plus Medford, Checotah, Sapulpa, and Broken Arrow.

We can't wait for what summer will bring! If you have suggestions for groups, events, or venues in your area, please contact me at (405) 521-3699 or by email: bking@okdrs.gov.

--Brian King, Public Information Officer

Book Corner



DB 88481 – *A Very Expensive Poison* by Luke Harding

This true crime title is an investigation of the 2006 death of Russian dissident Alexander Litvinenko, who was poisoned in London and died twenty-two days later. The cause was found to be polonium, a rare radioactive substance. The author tracks the crime and the preceding events, following the deadly trail all the way back to the Russian government.

DB 36077 – *No Time for Tears* by June Masters Bacher

For nine-year-old Marvel, the beginning of the Great Depression is also the time she begins to feel some responsibility in her family, for disaster is close at hand and no one is prepared. At first the Harringtons think they will be all right, and can even help other relatives. However, a terrible hail storm, a devastating fire, and a drought threaten the close-knit family and test their faith in God.

DB 85548 – *War and Turpentine* by Stefan Hertmans

Urbain Martien, a Belgian World War I veteran, leaves behind two notebooks when he dies in 1981. They contain the whole of his life - experiences as an artist, soldier, and survivor of World War I. His grandson finds them and shares Urbain's experiences, even as he tries to understand his own life.

DB 29171 – *Dragons of Autumn Twilight: Dragonlance Chronicles, Vol. 1* by Margaret Weis

In this first title in the Dragonlance series, dragons have returned to Krynn, and war and destruction threaten to engulf the land. But the

Book Corner



promise of hope appears in the form of a beautiful barbarian woman. Knight, barbarian, warrior, dwarf, and half-elf join forces to search for the legendary Dragonlance.

DB 42441 – *Final Jeopardy* by Linda Fairstein

Ever since assistant D.A. Alex Cooper met film star Isabella Lascar, Isabella has been taking advantage of her. Now, while borrowing Alex's vacation house, Isabella is murdered. Was the bullet meant for Alex, or was the shooting the work of Isabella's stalker? Find out in this, the first book in the Alexandra Cooper series.

DB 88362 – *Darling, Vermont, Books 1-3* by Donna Alward

This one is for the romance fans out there. It contains three contemporary romances set in the small Vermont town of Darling. In *Somebody like You*, two childhood sweethearts are thrown together and find that the spark is still there. Also includes *Someone to Love* and *Somebody's Baby*.

DB 83467 – *Courtships of Lancaster County, Books 1-4* by Leslie Gould

This title provides four Amish romances inspired by Shakespeare's plays. In *Courting Cate*, the eldest daughter must marry before her sister. *Adoring Adele* features feuding families. In *Minding Molly*, a woman must wed to save the family farm. Finally, in *Becoming Bea*, a bickering couple falls in love.

--Andrew Shockley, Librarian

The Back 40

By Jim Kettler



Sammie Willis (photo at left) is a librarian with the Oklahoma Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (OLBPH). Everyone has a story and this is Sammie's.

Sammie has always loved reading. She loved that her mother read to her and loved reading even more when she began reading for herself at four years old. Her first trip to a public library was like heaven to her. She had a hard time believing that the librarians would allow her to check out all the books she wanted! She took home a stack of books every week. The library seemed like a holy place to her; a sanctuary - like being in church, with the high ceilings and windows.

Being involved in writing, editing the school newspaper, being encouraged by her teachers, majoring in English in college, all led to her careers in teaching and then in library science. After teaching elementary school for several years, Sammie had her first opportunity to become a school librarian for a few years. Later she moved back to her home state, Oklahoma, and was a school librarian again before deciding to change directions.

After retiring from teaching, she learned of the OLBPH through her Godmother. Sammie's Godmother was living in a retirement community, had lost much of her sight, and had learned of the OLBPH through a friend there. When she learned about the OLBPH, Sammie applied for a librarian position there and was hired. Having been involved in children's literature, this presented quite a learning curve. Sammie says the library's environment

of helping people as their daily mission made the learning so much easier than it might have been. The individuals at the library each had their own gift to contribute to this endeavor and were generous in their support.

Paul Adams was library director for many years and, as Sammie tells it, he was a great boss who genuinely valued the contributions of the people who serve there. It was under his leadership that the technology advanced to the digital age and became the gold standard for Libraries for the Blind and Physically Handicapped nationally.

As many people have learned, the world of people who are blind is the same world we all live in but is understood and perceived in a totally different way. One of the most rewarding parts of Sammie's job has been that, every week, someone will say "the Library has saved my life." And they mean it, because the talking books are more than just books; they are a presence, a companion, even a friend. So over time and with a lot of help from her colleagues, where Sammie had been working with the reading needs of children, she developed her skills for matching adult readers with books they enjoy. The OLBPH librarians are all reader advisors who skillfully gauge the likes and dislikes of the patrons and select books based on them.

As she looks toward retirement, Sammie counts it a blessing to have contributed to many patrons' quality of living. Although she says it might have been nice to have worked in a higher-paying profession, the pay-back has been much more personally rewarding. While it is true that she has invested so much of herself in serving the patrons, she believes that it is she who has benefitted the most. Sammie is thankful to have worked with two library directors, Paul Adams and Kevin Treese, who truly care about the patrons as well as the staff, for whom she is also grateful.

The next chapter of Sammie's life, retirement, will be filled with volunteering and outdoor activities. For a few years now, Sammie has been spending more time in nature, especially enjoying the beauty of the birds. She encourages all of us to do the same so we can renew our connection with the great outdoors and all it has to offer us.

--Jim Kettler – Contract Monitor, Visual Services

Tax Deductible Donations

Every gift to Oklahomans for Special Library Services (OSLS) benefits thousands. Contributions enable OSLS to provide activities not funded by the annual Library budget. Make checks payable to OSLS and mail to Oklahomans for Special Library Services, P.O. Box 53593, Oklahoma City, OK 73152.

Donations are accepted in memory of a loved one, family member or to honor an individual. When a gift is made, it should include the name of the person being honored and the name and address of the family or family member to be notified of the gift. Please consider naming OSLS as a beneficiary of a life insurance policy or in other estate planning bequests. With the assistance of an estate-planning attorney, significant tax benefits may be possible from this gift.



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