

STATE NEWS WEEKLY SUMMARY

AWARDS

ADOPTION AWARDS TO BE PRESENTED DURING CEREMONY OCT. 24

■(OKLAHOMA CITY) The co-chairs of the Legislature's Adoption Law Reform Committee, three "created families" and a professional in the field of adoption services will be honored later this month.

The honorees will be recognized during the third annual "Celebration of Created Families." The banquet is scheduled Oct. 24, from 7 to 9 p.m. at the Oklahoma City Marriott Hotel, as a prelude to observance of National Adoption Awareness Month nationwide in November.

The celebration will be sponsored by Mercy Health Center and St. Anthony Hospital in Oklahoma City, with assistance from Associated Catholic Charities and the Oklahoma Adoption Coalition.

Legislative awards will be presented to state Rep. Russ Roach, D-Tulsa, and Sherri Finik, executive director of Adoption Affiliates.

"Created Family Awards" will be presented to adoptive parents Glenda and Sam Ssali of Tulsa, Chris and Caressa Mason of Broken Arrow, and Dr. and Mrs. J. Mark Knox of Edmond.

Nominated for the Hilde Lillegaard Service Award are Julia Reed, director of Family Support Services for Catholic Charities, and Finik, who has worked with Adoption Affiliates for more than 17 years.

The winner of the Hilde Lillegaard Service Award will be announced during the banquet.

Keynote speaker for the event will be Evonne Winhaus, an author, licensed counselor and clinical social worker who is nationally recognized for her expertise in the field of parenting.

—HOUSE MEDIA
10/14/96

"Democratic institutions are never done — they are, like the living tissue, always a-making. It is a strenuous thing this of living the life of a free people: and we cannot escape the burden of our inheritance."

Woodrow Wilson
speech in Middletown, CT
April 30, 1889

HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE TO DISCUSS OKLAHOMA'S BEEF, POULTRY, SWINE INDUSTRY

■(OKLAHOMA CITY) Issues that affect beef, poultry and swine producers in rural Oklahoma will be examined this month by state lawmakers.

The House Appropriations and Budget Subcommittee on Natural Resources will launch the study during a meeting Oct. 24 at Eastern Oklahoma State College in Wilburton, starting at 10 a.m.

The session will be directed by state Rep. Mike Mass, D-Hartshorne, chairman of the subcommittee, and is to include a presentation by state Agriculture Secretary Dennis Howard.

The House subcommittee will review legislative and state initiatives affecting the economic status of Oklahoma livestock producers, Mass said.

Records of the state Agriculture Department indicate that livestock inventories in Oklahoma on Jan. 1 included 5.6 million head of cattle and 5.14 million farm chickens. It also included a million hogs and pigs, a 69 percent increase from the preceding year due to the growth of commercial swine farming in Oklahoma.

—HOUSE MEDIA
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CORRECTIONS

JAIL TASK FORCE HEARS PROBLEMS, LOOKS FOR SOLUTIONS

■(GIT) At the first meeting of the state legislative task force on jails Thursday, county sheriffs willingly discussed their common problems.

A county jail built in 1934, designed to house 15 prisoners, holds 39. Some sleep on the floor.

A multi-million dollar drug dealer is guarded by a minimum wage employee, in county jail.

Checking other counties for outstanding warrants on a suspect involves calls to 76 other counties, because there is no network from county to county.

Some sheriffs' deputies qualify for, and use, food stamps. Others are eligible. One county sheriff takes home \$800 a month.

No one knows how many escapes from county jails happen each year. Records are kept separately, by hand, in most cases.

These are only a few of the problems brought up at the first meeting.

The task force, mandated by Senate Joint Resolution 34, is made up of ten house and senate members and ten county sheriffs, who will study the situation at the county jails and sheriffs' offices and make recommendations to the legislature on the first day of the 46th session.

Legislators listened, sometimes in disbelief, as sheriffs outlined the stumbling blocks to law enforcement that make their day.

Seminole County Sheriff Charles Sisco drives 100 miles to pick up a prisoner at McLoud Correctional Center in Farris and bring him back to Wewoka for a two-minute hearing. Then the prisoner is driven back to Farris — a round trip of 400 miles, and it all comes out of the sheriff's budget.

His story was just one of several. Although legislation is in place to provide for video arraignments and hearings, no funding was appropriated with the legislation to allow counties to buy the equipment.

Technologically, John Walsh Jr., executive director of the Oklahoma Sheriff's Association said, county sheriffs' offices need computers just to "bring us into the 20th century." Along the same line, each county needs a coordinated communications system and a statewide network for checking outstanding warrants.

Other problems listed were unsafe, crumbling facilities; untrained staff, low salaries and small budgets.

Most jails in Oklahoma were built before 1950, Walsh said, and many counties do not have the funds to build a jail. Jail standards cannot be met, he said.

Quality staff is at a critical low in most counties. Salaries are too low to draw top applicants.

Legislators and law enforcement officials at the meeting agreed budgets and funding for county law enforcement needs some fundamental changes. Right now, each county office — court clerk, county clerk, sheriff, appraiser and county treasurer — is apportioned a part of the millage collected in ad valorem taxes. Sheriffs' offices get one-tenth of one-tenth of the taxes collected to run two important offices — investigation and detention.

Compared to 1993, Walsh said, the 51 Oklahoma counties he has studied so far rank

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