

# STATE NEWS WEEKLY SUMMARY CONTINUED

homa in 1988. Funded through the Oklahoma Department of Human Services, it helped Oklahoma achieve a record number of adoptions last year. Through the program, 109 African-American children were given permanent homes. During that time, DHS placed 417 children in adoptive homes, an increase of 49 percent over the previous year.

DHS Programs Field Representative, Deborah Goodman, said, "We are very excited about receiving this award and the real credit goes to the dedicated child welfare specialists and volunteers who worked hard to find and encourage African-American families to come forward and share their lives with an adoptive child. As a result, One Church, One Child of Oklahoma was given this prestigious national tribute."

—OKLA. DEPT. OF HUMAN SERVICES  
10/30/96

## REPRESENTATIVE CALLS FOR HEALTH CHIEF'S RESIGNATION

■(GIT) Wednesday, Rep. Jim Reese, R-Nardin, called for the resignation of Dr. Jerry Nida, commissioner of the Oklahoma State Department of Health, in the wake of allegations that Nida authorized spending state funds to buy condoms and distribute them free to homosexual men.

Reese said Nida's office is using state funds to buy condoms for free distribution, and renting a motel room at the Habana Inn to distribute the condoms and safe-sex literature, a practice acknowledged by William Pierson, chief of the HIV/STD Service of the Health Department, but paid for, Nida said, "from taxpayer-funded federal grants to the Health Department."

"According to our records," Nida said, "no state funds were or have been utilized for the purpose of purchasing condoms during fiscal years 1994, 1995 or 1996 or to this date during 1997. Further," he continued in a letter to House Majority Leader Loyd Benson, "this agency has no plans to use state funds to purchase such items."

Pierson confirmed expenditures for condoms from 1994 through 1996, Reese said, and they are included in the 1997 budget.

Not only did the state buy condoms, Reese said, but also was picky about what kind officials bought, referring to a letter from Merritt D. Scales, director of the procurement division, in which he declined a type of condom. "We have experienced in

the past that the category of individuals this product is purchased for will not use a product that does not have a 'fancy' label or one they can identify with," the letter stated.

"Bottom line," Reese said, "is we only distribute the Cadillac of condoms to stop AIDS. . . That's outrageous and Jerry Nida ought to be held accountable for this irresponsible use of taxpayer money.

"Equally important, he should be removed from his position for trying to cover up the department's activities. . ." Reese concluded.

The requisition enclosed with Reese's statement shows a date of October 10, 1996 and a quantity ordered of 256,380 condoms, priced at \$14,685, a cost of 17 cents each.

—GERRY CHERRY  
10/31/96

## CHRISTIAN COALITION CHALLENGES CONDOM DISTRIBUTION PROGRAM

■(GIT) The Oklahoma Christian Coalition called for a halt Wednesday to a State Health Department program that includes the distribution of free condoms, lubricants and what the group called "pornographic literature," a safe-sex comic, to homosexual men.

The state's Commissioner of Health, Dr. J.R. Nida, disputed some of the coalition's claims in an Oct. 25 letter to Rep. Loyd Benson, D-Frederick, and some other lawmakers, however.

Citing documents obtained from the Department of Health and the Office of Public Affairs, Christian Coalition executive director Kenneth Woods said the health department distributed 2.5 million condoms and nearly 100,000 lubricants to homosexual and bisexual men in 1991 and 1992. To help with distribution, Wood added, hotel rooms were rented at an Oklahoma City hotel and staffed with so-called out-reach workers.

"The State Department of Health has no business using the tax dollars from the people of Oklahoma to purchase condoms, lubricants and homoerotic literature to aid gay men in their homosexual activity," said

Wood. "Scientific studies have shown the AIDS virus, HIV, to be 40 times smaller than the holes found in the porous material of which condoms are made. This fact renders a condom virtually useless against the AIDS virus. Additionally, if these men can afford to pay for a hotel room at the Habana Inn, then they can also afford to pay for their own condoms should they decide to use them."

Funding for the program, which is ongoing, comes from federal funds not state funds, according to health department officials.

William Pierson, who oversees the health department's HIV/STD Services division, announced during a meeting of the House interim study committee on funding for AIDS research, 96H-69, Sept. 25, that the department plans to ask the legislature for more money for its drug assistance program education and treatment efforts.

The Christian Coalition's complaint became an issue earlier this month in a series of campaign ads. The ads, which target Democrats, say that the targeted candidates voted against an amendment that would have diverted funds from the condom distribution program and to breast cancer research. Such an amendment was proposed in 1994 by Rep. Tim Pope, R-Mustang. The amendment failed.

The ads drew the criticism of Debbie Clark, Oklahoma chair of the National Breast Cancer Coalition, who said, "Voters must not be fooled by this offensive use of a very serious women's issue."

—SHAWN ASHLEY  
10/31/96

## SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

### OSU TO RECEIVE GRANT TO EXPAND AGRICULTURE COMPUTER NETWORKS

■(WASHINGTON) Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman Wednesday announced \$1.1 million in grants to help Oklahoma State University and 12 other universities build or expand telecommunications networks for agricultural information.

USDA received 55 proposals for the telecommunications grants, from universities across the country. These are competitive matching grants for projects including formal and non-formal courses, faculty and staff education, program delivery, and community-based access to education.

*Continued on next page*

*"One of the uses of our system of justice is to warn others . . . We are reforming, not the hanged man, but everyone else."*

*Michel de Montaigne  
'De l'art de conferer'  
Essais  
1580-88*