

# The Assessment Files

Volume 1

December 2006

## From the President's Desk...

**Happy New Year to Everyone**, I hope you survived the Christmas Holidays. We really need the week off after Christmas to recoup.

The last week of December seems as though it gets crazier and crazier, the last minute folks paying their taxes wait until the pressure builds up then comes and unloads on us. Almost nothing is more helpful in dealing with people than a sense of humor. This doesn't mean laughing in their face, rather it means the ability to let them see that the world hasn't come to an end and if there is a mistake anything can be corrected. If you can keep from taking a situation or yourself too seriously, you'll get much better results. A smile or being cheerful can always help a situation.

I have attended a few of the retirement receptions, it is really hard to say good-bye to some great Assessors that we have learned from and looked up to these past years. They all will be missed, but hopefully we will see them again. We will also miss William Mack at the Tax Commission. William has helped us greatly. Maybe he won't get too far away.

I attended the New County Officer orientation at ACCO a few weeks ago, it was good to meet our New Assessors and finally put a name with a face, even though some of them have been around awhile. I'm looking forward to our new Assessor training with OTC in a couple weeks. Spending quality time and learning about each of them individually. Any Assessor is welcome to attend if you like. It is January 17-19, 2007 at the Country Inns & Suites located at 3141 NW Expressway, Oklahoma City.

We have had a request from one of our Assessors to put a short bio of each of us in our new directory. So please give to Wade a short 5 or 6 line bio of yourself. For example, if you are married, how many kids, grandkids, how long you've been an Assessor, etc. We are trying to gather all of this by February. If you have a picture get that to Wade also, if not we will take one at the breakout session at the Coda conference in February. It will be on February the 14<sup>th</sup> at the Biltmore. Hope to see you there.

God Bless,

**Cathy Hokit**, [chokit@texoma.net](mailto:chokit@texoma.net)

Stephens County Assessor

President, County Assessor's Association

# Vice-President's Blurb

Happy holidays, everyone, and best wishes for a great year in 2007! As we close out the last few days of this calendar year and get ready for another run on homestead exemptions and personal property renditions (yes, we still have household personal property here in Washington County), may each of you stop and reflect on the accomplishments of the past year...whether they were big or small.

I have taken on some new responsibilities this past year, as my wife and I adopted four girls (yes, girls!) this month. The four sisters have been living in our home the past year or so while the adoption went through the proper channels and the proverbial government red tape. At last, the adoption was finalized on December 11<sup>th</sup>. Thank you for all your prayers and well wishes for me and my family. As I have always said, I have more than one group I call "family." The assessors around this state are just as much family to me.

Speaking of this state, I hear that a certain Oklahoma football team has a big bowl game scheduled for January 1<sup>st</sup>. Good luck to the Sooners in the Fiesta Bowl, and good luck to all the new assessors coming on board for 2007. If you ever need anything, the rest of us will always be there to lend a helping hand. Best wishes to all.

Happy New Year!

Your Vice-President,  
*Todd Mathes*

[tmathes@countycourthouse.org](mailto:tmathes@countycourthouse.org)

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The soul of conversation is sympathy.  
**Thomas Campbell**

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## January Birthdays

Birthstone: Garnet. Meaning: Constancy  
Flower: Carnation, snowdrop

<b>Ruth Darneal</b> (Leflore)	January 1
<b>Kathi Mask</b> (Hughes)	January 4
<b>Sandra White</b> (Mayes)	January 4
<b>Regina Mengers</b> (Okmulgee)	January 7
<b>Cherry Hefley</b> (Coal)	January 14
<b>Denise Heavner</b> (Cleveland)	January 20
<b>Lennet Pisacka</b> (Dewey)	January 22
<b>Shelly Sehrt</b> (Cotton)	January 28

# **The Ad Valorem Division**

## **Merry Christmas, Happy New Year, and Best Wishes**

It's been quite a year—some excellent memories, lots of accomplishments in the ad valorem world, but also some very difficult challenges for county assessors and their families, particularly those involved during the year in the stress of the election process.

Cathy Hokit wanted me to remind everyone to keep Teresa Tallon in your thoughts and prayers as she continues her treatments. As a neighbor from the county next door, Cathy drove down and visited with her a few weeks ago. I know that Teresa has appreciated the calls, cards, and letters, even those from Randy Wintz, who was her Vice President, the year she was President of the County Assessors' Association.

December has been a busy month. The State Board of Equalization, as it did last year, postponed its meeting until later in the month and will combine its agenda with the revenue project meeting. We've been looking forward to that meeting.

We've published our Business Personal Property Valuation Guide for 2007 and our Business Personal Property Valuation Schedule. It will be a full document this year again, as it was in 2006, rather than just updated pages. We felt this will make the manual easier to use and keep current. We hope to have this on CD or on the web in the next year.

We've met with the County Assessors' Association under our new President Cathy Hokit to discuss the information that we'll be providing counties on their information from their equalization and annual valuation study. I thought we had a good discussion.

Our biggest event coming up after the first of the year will be our new Assessors' Orientation January 17, 18, and 19, 2007 at the Country Inns and Suites in Oklahoma City. We expect to have all the new assessors and key staff that they want to attend. It should be a good session. Cathy Hokit and some of the officers are going to help welcome the "rookies," as well as Gary Snyder and Doug Warr from ATAP with Oklahoma State University's county assessor training program. It should be an excellent session as our new assessors take over a very important job.

Last week we attended the new county officers orientation put on by the Association of County Commissioners. They did an excellent job, and we appreciated being invited to the sessions. They were well attended and had some good information on hiring, firing, and purchasing.

We're still in the process of finalizing a move of our offices sometime in the early spring. It hasn't been all finalized, but we've been working with a building owner, as well as furniture and telephone plans. It is amazing all the details that are involved. We'll keep everyone informed.

As the year ends, we're reminded that it's about the people, not the other stuff. County assessors and deputies, county treasurers, company representatives, State Auditor and Inspector (SA&I), Center for Local Government Technology (CLGT), Cooperative Extension, the County Assessors' Association, and the Oklahoma Tax Commission have all continued a solid working relationship in the last few years. We're looking forward to more of the same in 2007. Thanks to everyone for helping us complete all the year-end reports to the Legislature.

We appreciate the hard work of all county assessors and deputies working to improve the Oklahoma ad valorem system. We've accomplished some good things this year, but we can always do better and achieve more. That's the challenge for the coming year. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Sincerely,

**Jeff Spelman, CAE**  
Ad Valorem Division  
[jspelman@tax.ok.gov](mailto:jspelman@tax.ok.gov)

P.S. On a personal note, I want to wish William Mack the best of luck on his retirement. He has done an excellent job during his years with the Oklahoma Tax Commission, Ad Valorem Division. He's stayed unfailingly cheerful, constantly supportive of everyone in the Division, consummately professional, and consistently seeking the best in others. We'll also miss his brainpower, and all of us in the Ad Valorem Division consider him a good friend. I know we'll be seeing him in the future in some capacity.

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The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains.  
The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher  
inspires.

***William Arthur Ward***

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## **Special Note:**

Harmon County Assessor Lavinda Smith's daughter-in-law has cancer and has been given only two weeks to live. They live in Elk City and have a 9-year-old daughter. Please put her and her family in your prayers. A card to Lavinda would help with all she is going through at this time.

**Donna Giddens**  
[greercoassr@cableone.net](mailto:greercoassr@cableone.net)

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Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that.  
Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.

***Martin Luther King, Jr.***

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## Legislative News

We are beginning to see some of the legislative issues introduced by the legislature. Senator Lerblance has introduced SB 44 to implement the filing dates for the Freeport exemption. We are working on the exact language needed.

Senator Anderson has introduced SB 54 to create a 21 member task force to study the taxation of Oil & Gas Production property.

There has been another Home Rule bill introduced and we have promises there will be legislation to lower the cap rate and add additional veteran exemptions, etc.

Oklahoma is close to the lowest taxed state in the nation, yet it appears that some elected officials think we need to be lower and that state and local governments can survive without taxes.

I believe we are headed for another busy year of legislation.

Your legislative committee for the year is: Jim Kelley, Gail Hedgcoth, Wade Patterson, Ken Yazel and Denise Heavner. Please call with any questions or thoughts you may have concerning legislation.

**Jim**

[Jimkelly46@yahoo.com](mailto:Jimkelly46@yahoo.com)

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## County Training Program Report

Happy New Year to everyone from those of us at the County Training Program. We have some classes coming up that are applicable to your office and we invite you to enroll. Go to our website, <http://www.agecon.okstate.edu/ctp> to enroll on line.

Budget Process	January 11 and 12
Title VII	January 23
County Purchasing	February 8 and 9
Grammar Skills	February 20
Supervisory Skills II	February 22 and 23
Documentation and File Building	February 27

If you have any questions about these classes, please contact us at 405-744-6555 or email [ctp@okstate.edu](mailto:ctp@okstate.edu). We will have class descriptions on the web site in a few days.

## **ATAP (Assessor Training and Accreditation Program)**

Dear County Assessors and Deputies:

We hope everybody enjoyed their Christmas break and is looking forward to a great New Year. The New Year always means great things are happening in the Assessors office, like the assessment period, finalizing values, and best of all; protests. Is life good or what?

We have finalized part of the 2007 class schedule in February and March will have the full schedule available soon.

<b>Course Schedule Through March 31, 2007</b>		
Unit 1 (Introduction to the Assessor's Office)	February 6-9	Tulsa
Board of Equalization Training	February 28	OKC
Unit 2 (Real Property Appraisal)	March 6-9	Tulsa
Board of Equalization Training	March 21	Tulsa
Unit 3 (Mass Appraisal)	March 27-30	Tulsa

You will receive a course schedule in the mail and our website is being updated. You may enroll at: <http://clgt.okstate.edu/> or fax in your registration at 405-744-7268. If you have any questions you can call us at 405-744-6049 or e-mail us at [doug.warr@okstate.edu](mailto:doug.warr@okstate.edu) or [gary.snyder@okstate.edu](mailto:gary.snyder@okstate.edu).

We still consider it a privilege to work with you all.

Sincerely,

The thing always happens that you really believe in; and  
the belief in a thing makes it happen.

***Frank Lloyd Wright***

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## Reporter's Corner

As we begin the New Year, I would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a very Happy New Year with hopes that everyone had a Merry Christmas. As much as I enjoy the Christmas season, it is usually about this time I am ready to get back into a regular routine which includes returning to normal food.

This next year is going to continue to be a challenge from a legislative standpoint as the newly elected House and Senate begins to build their agenda for bills for the upcoming year. Part of our responsibility is to ensure that we provide our legislators with information on how proposed bills affect our county, both positively or negatively, whatever the case may be. Hopefully, the information we provide will enable them to hear both sides of an issue so they can make wise decisions for the good of our county and the citizens we represent. Make it a priority to get to know all your legislators by name, and begin building a relationship with them.

If you know of any information, which you think might be relevant for our newsletter, please relay that information to any of the county officers. Communication is a key in any good organization and it is our desire to keep everyone informed concerning relevant issues. Again have a Happy New Year.

**Ronnie Funck**

Reporter

[funckr@canadiancounty.org](mailto:funckr@canadiancounty.org)

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Failures do what is tension relieving,  
while winners do what is goal achieving.

***Dennis Waitley***

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# Cleveland County's Assessor's Office Moves into New Home

Denise Heavner, Cleveland County Assessor, sent in photos from their open house last November for the new Cleveland County Office Building (see the following page for photos). We are very jealous here at Canadian County!







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Please send your comments, suggestions, and submissions for the newsletter to Amy Brandley, [brandleya@canadiancounty.org](mailto:brandleya@canadiancounty.org)