

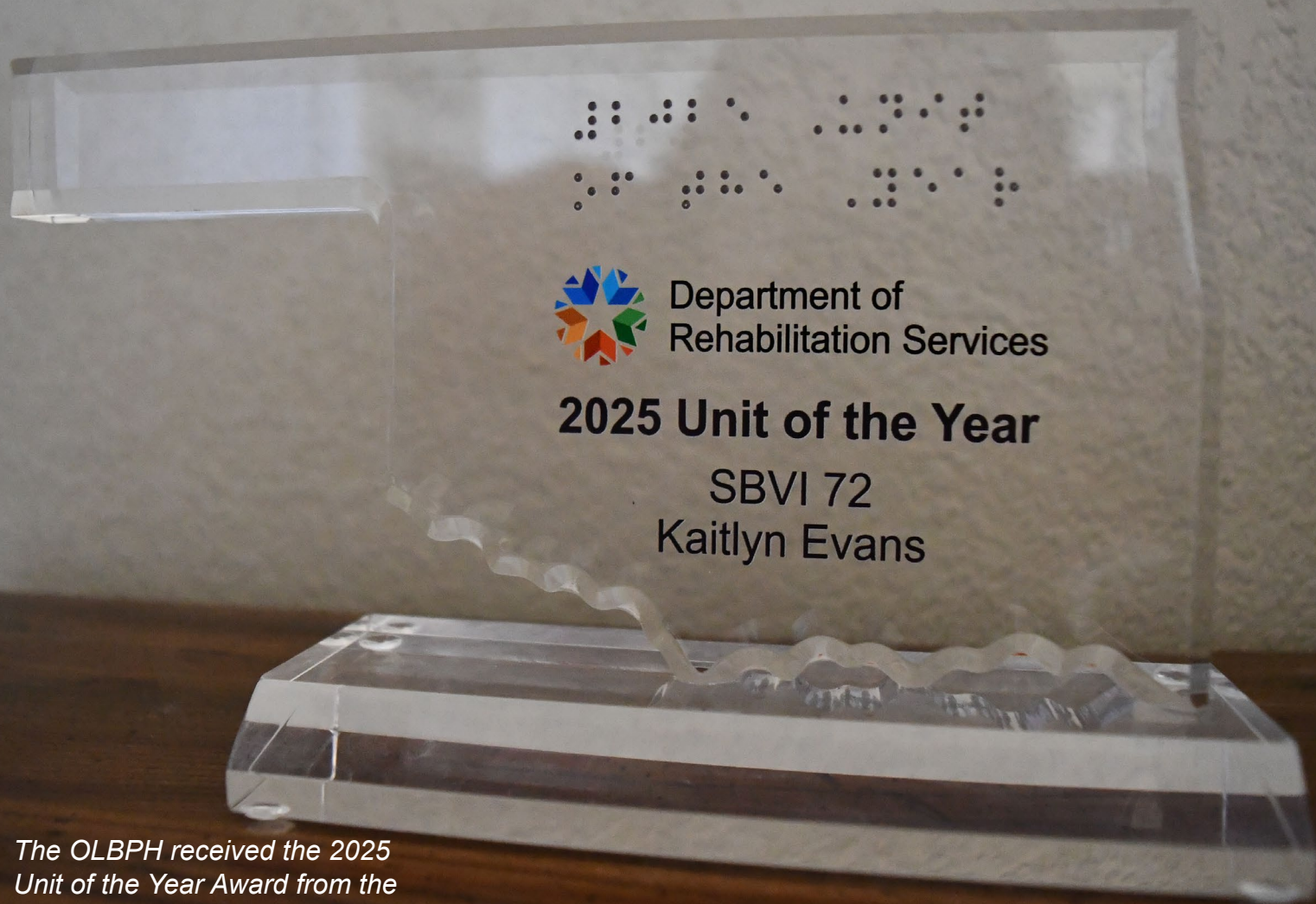
Oklahoma Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped



# BRIGHT FUTURE

SHARE OUR VISION, THAT ALL MAY READ.

Vol. 40, No. 1, Spring 2025



*The OLBPH received the 2025  
Unit of the Year Award from the  
SBVI Awards Celebration.*



**OKLAHOMA  
Rehabilitation Services**  
Oklahoma Library for the Blind and  
Physically Handicapped

Staff Receive SBVI Awards  
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# Letter from the Director

## *Changes & Challenges*

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Dear Patrons and Readers,

Now half way through 2025, the year has already seen several interesting developments. New Digital Talking Book Machines will soon to be released, and patrons are currently piloting the My Talking Books skill on Alexa-enabled devices.

I know many of you may have concerns regarding the OLBPH's continuation of services in light of recent federal reorganization. I want to reassure you that for now, the OLBPH's services are unaffected. The OLBPH is a network library of The National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled. NLS is an extension of the Library of Congress organized under the legislative branch of the federal government, and is not affected by the recent elimination of the Institute of Museum and Library Services, a separate and unaffiliated federal agency. Additionally, the OLBPH is not administered by our state library agency, the Oklahoma Department of Libraries. The OLBPH is organized under the Department of Rehabilitation Services. While some other diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives that receive federal funding have been impacted, DRS's important work with people with disabilities remains intact.

We are nearing the completion of the Library's heating, ventilation and air conditioning system replacement. New boilers are installed. Chillers and air handler units are installed. There is a host of plumbing, ducting, electrical and welding work necessary to complete a total HVAC replacement for a circa-1990, 41,000-square-foot building. The stellar staff at the OLBPH, along with the professionals from other DRS units housed here, deserve a home that is reliably climate controlled. Having grappled with this for a dozen years, I will be overjoyed when this project is complete.

Here's hoping library patrons and partners are springing well into 2025.

- Kevin Treese, OLBPH Director

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# Cover Story

## *OLBPH Staff Receive Accolades*

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In February, the Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services hosted an awards celebration for its Vocational Rehabilitation and Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired divisions. The awards celebration honored the work of VR and SBVI employees. The staff of the Oklahoma Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped received three awards from the celebration: Unit of the Year Award, Leadership Award and Angel Award.

The Unit of Year Award recognizes a team that consistently goes beyond expectations in its efforts in customer service. It consistently displays teamwork, takes initiative, and shares resources. The OLBPH received the award in recognition of its many recent improvements to services. In 2024, the OLBPH began circulating magazines, with over 5,300 magazines being sent to OLBPH patrons. The library's recording studio, with donor support, recently upgraded to newer, more robust equipment and software enabling more efficient audio book production. Additionally, the Accessible Instructional Materials Center has expanded services for early childhood development. They are now well stocked with sensory-enhancing toys and tools for birth through pre-K. An AIM Center collaboration with the Department of Corrections has created a prison braille program to produce twin-vision children's books. Collectively all of our library teams have worked to expand services for the betterment of our patrons.

Kathleen Jensen, director of the Recording Studio, received the Leadership Award. The Leadership Award is awarded to a person who exemplifies servant leadership through their ability to motivate, guide and influence others to achieve common goals. This individual has a clear vision for their team, actively develops others' potential and seeks ways to improve processes.

Kat was recognized for the improvements she's made to the Recording Studio in the past two years, including upgrades to studio equipment, and doubling the Studio's recording capacity. Additionally, Kat was honored for her commitment to her team members and volunteers.



“Kat’s encouraging style of coaching has brought about a more unified approach to recruiting and managing volunteers, as well as benefiting her team. She observes the golden rule of treating people as she would like to be treated,” said the nomination.

Mable Stripling, the OLBPH’s Material Management Officer, was recognized with the Angel Award. The Angel Award recognizes an individual who goes above and beyond their duties to provide extraordinary service and assistance to clients or coworkers. This award is reserved for truly exceptional actions that set a remarkable standard of dedication.

Mable received the award in recognition of her 25 years of service to the OLBPH. During that time, she has gone above and beyond to serve patrons by continuously stepping into the roles where she is needed most. Mable learned braille to better serve circulation, helped with outreach, learned how to repair machines to take on the material management position, and covers reception any time she is needed. She takes on responsibilities outside of her role and is dedicated to the service of patrons.

Congratulations to Mable, Kat and the whole OLBPH Team!



Kat and Mable pose with their awards beside SBVI leadership.  
*Photos courtesy of Renee Briscoe*

## Book Corner

### *Spring Reads*

#### Book and Dagger: How Scholars and Librarians Became the Unlikely Spies of WWII by Elyse Graham, DB126493

At the start of WWII, the US found itself in desperate need of an intelligence agency. The Office of Strategic Services (OSS), a precursor to today's CIA, was quickly formed. In an effort to fill its ranks with experts, the OSS turned to academia for recruits. Suddenly, literature professors, librarians and historians were training to perform undercover operations. These surprising spies would go on to profoundly shape both the course of the war and our cultural institutions with their efforts. *Book and Dagger* is an inspiring and gripping true story about a group of academics who helped beat the Nazis - a tale that reveals the indelible power of humanities to change the world.

#### *The Fury* by Alex Michaelides, DB118438

Lana Farrar is a reclusive ex-movie star. Every year, she invites her closest friends to spend Easter on her private Greek island. You may think you know this story. It caused a real stir in the tabloids. We found ourselves trapped there overnight. Our old friendships concealed hatred and a desire for revenge. What followed was a game of cat and mouse, a battle of wits, full of twists and turns. The night ended in violence and death, as one of us was found murdered. But who am I? My name is Elliot Chase, and I'm going to tell you a story unlike any you've ever heard.

HOW SCHOLARS AND LIBRARIANS  
BECAME THE UNLIKELY SPIES OF  
WORLD WAR II

# BOOK AND DAGGER

ELYSE GRAHAM

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

# JAMES LEE BURKE

A NOVEL

# FLAGS ON THE BAYOU



### The Interestings by Meg Wolitzer, DB076712

In 1974 Julie “Jules” Jacobson goes to art camp on scholarship, where she meets New Yorkers Ash, Goodman, Ethan, Cathy, and Jonah. They remain friends through the next three decades, though Jules leads a middle-class life while the others prosper.

### The Cold, Cold Ground: A Detective Sean Duffy Novel by Adrian McKinty, DB078159

Northern Ireland, 1981. Amid sectarian bombings, riots, and hunger strikes, Detective Sergeant Sean Duffy--the lone Catholic in his squad--gets a case involving two murdered gay men. While searching for the killer, Duffy learns that one victim was in the IRA.

### The Queen of Sugar Hill by ReShonda Tate, DB119485

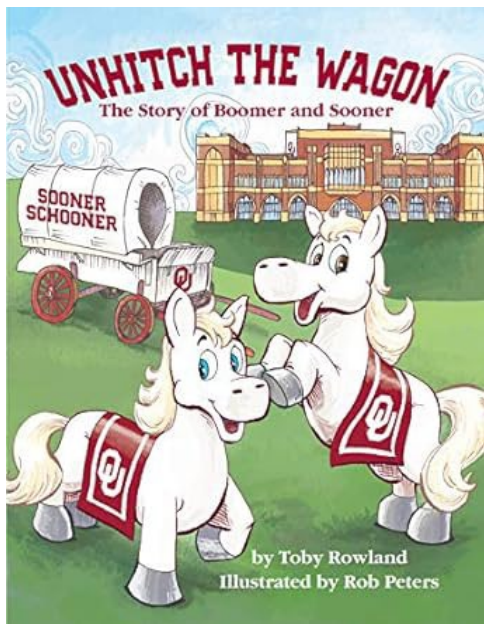
In 1940, Hattie McDaniel became the first African-American woman to win an Academy Award. This historic night of winning best supporting actress for her role as Mammy in the controversial movie *Gone With the Wind* was going to be life-changing. Or so she thought. Months after winning the award, not only was Hattie out of work, but she found herself thrust in the middle of two worlds-Black and White, and not welcome in either. Whites only saw her as Mammy and Blacks detested the demeaning portrayal. As the NAACP waged war against Hattie and actors like her, the emotionally conflicted actress found herself struggling daily.

### Flags on the Bayou by James Lee Burke, DB117205

In the fall of 1863, the Union army is in control of the Mississippi river. Much of Louisiana is occupied. The Confederate army is in disarray, and enslaved men and women are beginning to glimpse freedom. When Hannah Laveau, a formerly enslaved woman working on the Lufkin plantation, is accused of murder, she goes on the run, dodging the local constable and slavecatchers. Wade Lufkin, haunted by what he saw as a surgeon on the battlefield, has returned to his uncle's plantation, where he becomes enraptured by Hannah. *Flags on the Bayou* is an engaging, action-packed narrative that includes a duel that ends in disaster, a brutal encounter with the local Union commander, repeated skirmishes with Confederate irregulars led by a diseased and probably deranged colonel, and a powerful story of love blossoming between an unlikely pair.

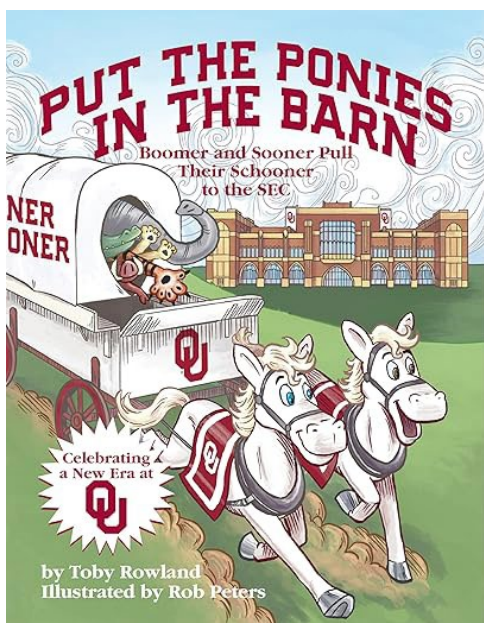
# Oklahoma Reads

## *Showcasing Oklahoma's Stories*



### **Unhitch the Wagon - The Story of Boomer and Sooner by Toby Rowland, DBC18977**

Unhitch the Wagon, The Story of Boomer and Sooner is the rhyming tale of Bennie and Bud, two ponies who have a big dream to one day become Boomer and Sooner, the greatest ponies in all of Oklahoma. When training, they must conquer Sooner archrivals, the Longhorns, Cowboys, Bears, and more on their brave quest to reach “the Palace on the Prairie” and pull the glorious Sooner Schooner. Young Oklahoma Sooner fans will delight in the ponies’ quest and connect to the traditions of the University of Oklahoma. Established OU catchphrases and Sooner landmarks help tell the story of the ponies who dare to dream of greatness.

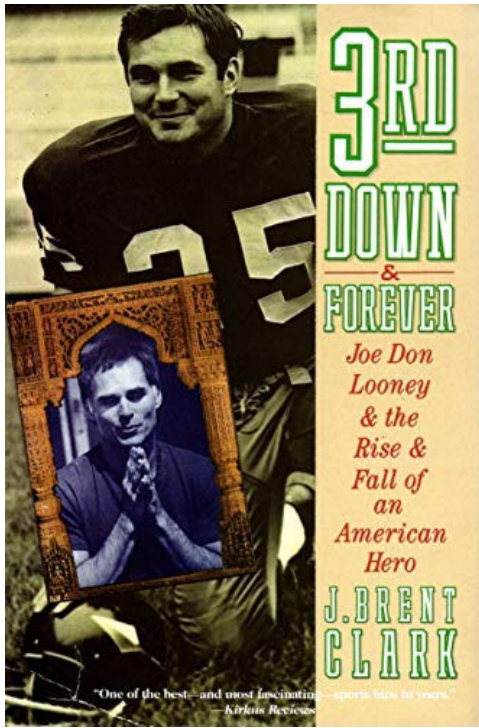


### **Put The Ponies In The Barn: Boomer and Sooner Pull Their Schooner to the SEC by Toby Rowland, DBC18978**

Boomer and Sooner are back! In Put the Ponies in the Barn, Boomer and Sooner Pull Their Schooner to the SEC, the famed ponies have a new mission, to gather all their new friends in their new conference and bring them back to “The Palace on the Prairie”. Sooner fans of all ages will delight in following the ponies’ adventure throughout the South and the East, meeting soon-to-be rivals along the way.

Oklahoma Reads features Oklahoma-related books recently recorded by the OLBPH Recording Studio.





### 3rd Down and Forever: Joe Don Looney and the Rise and Fall of an American Hero By J. Brent Clark, DBC12217

Football star Joe Don Looney had the tools to be the next Jim Brown. He had an extraordinary record as a runner and punter. He was an early advocate for weight training for football and ahead of his time in adopting meditation and yoga. But poor lifestyle choices like drinking and brawling put him in conflict with authorities in both college and professional football, leading to a life of dismissals, trades and strife. Though full of potential, Looney's life story is one of struggle.

## Read for Adventure

Thanks to the OKC Zoo and OG&E and in partnership with the Oklahoma Department of Libraries, children who check out Juniper's Butterfly Garden will receive a voucher for four guests to visit the Oklahoma City Zoo and Botanical Garden for FREE!

Check out Juniper's Butterfly Garden on BARD as DBC18974, or call the OLBPH at 405-521-3514 to request it on cartridge or in braille. Claim your voucher by emailing [olbph@okdrs.gov](mailto:olbph@okdrs.gov).



# Volunteer Spotlight

## *In Loving Memory of Suzanne Parker*

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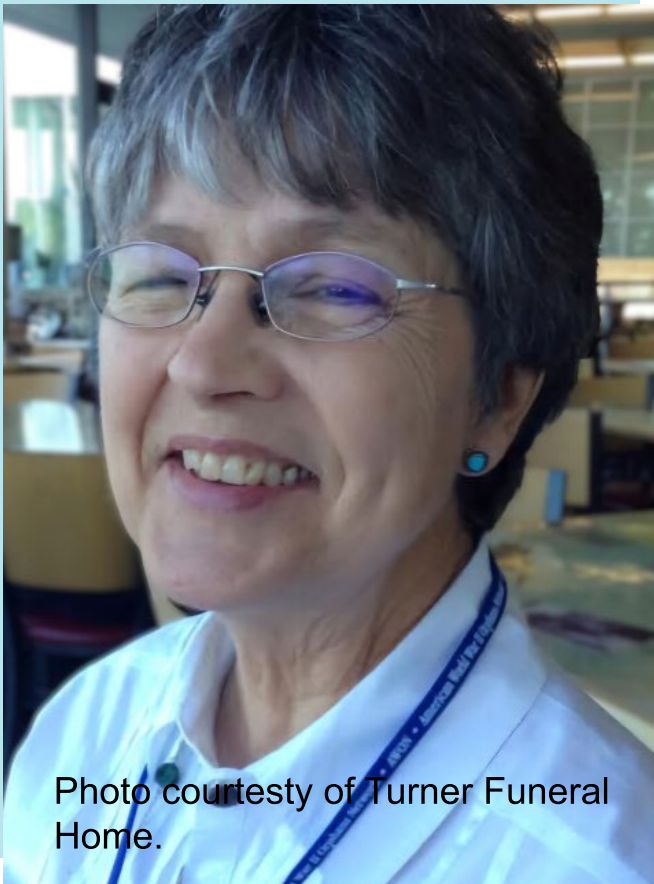


Photo courtesy of Turner Funeral Home.

Once again, with a heavy heart, I am interrupting the Volunteer Spotlight to feature the memory of another long-term, hard-working volunteer. We lost Suzanne Parker on December 27, 2024. Her loss was sudden and unexpected and has been hard on the Oklahoma Library for the Blind's Recording Studio.

Suzanne was an incredible volunteer. She and her friend Fran were the voices of the Muskogee Phoenix on the Oklahoma Telephone Reader each week. Fran has continued to volunteer in memory of her dear friend.

Suzanne started with us in 2011 volunteering for OTIS, the former online radio station, and switched over to OTR when OTIS was closed down. She was very dedicated, rarely ever missing a week of recording. In recent years, she even came in just after having major back surgery. She wanted to make sure our listeners got their news and information. Suzanne chose to focus on recording news that was local and positive. She believed that there was enough negative news out there and enjoyed delivering news on what was going on right in the community. She was always a light in the library, resilient and eager to help the blind and physically handicapped.

Suzanne was an Oklahoma native born in Chickasha. She eventually settled in the town of Minco, OK. She had a master's degree in early childhood education from Oklahoma Christian University and that is where her main passion lay. After meeting and marrying her husband Bill,

Suzanne and Bill immediately knew they shared a passion for community, and this motivated them to join the faculty of the Ecumenical Institute and the Institute of Cultural Affairs. They worked in human development all across the world, from Oklahoma City to Dallas, Miami, Chicago, Indianapolis, then to Paris, France and finally to Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire before returning to Oklahoma City in 1985.

Throughout the years of their journey, Suzanne taught elementary school and used all of her earnings to provide funding for local staff to get running water and other basic essentials to areas in need. They also welcomed two children, Andrew Kennedy Parker and Angela Marie Parker, into their family. Suzanne was also a founding member of the non-profit organization PambeGhana which promoted Montessori-based education for children in remote communities in Northeastern Ghana. Suzanne led an incredible life and was very passionate about promoting education and reading, and this is why she came to volunteer at the library. It was important to her that everyone had access to the written word.

One fond memory I have of Suzanne is her love of plants and gardening. We have two atriums in the library that many of the staff enjoy filling with plants, as well as two planters outside the front doors. Suzanne always kept us motivated to beautify the atriums because when they were looking ragged, we could see the disappointment on her face. She never complained, but we certainly liked keeping the flowers beautiful for her. I blame Suzanne for my ever-expanding orchid collection. She was very sad when the atriums were redone, and some long-time orchids were removed. I thought to brighten her spirits I would get a few potted ones to add to the area. That has now expanded to 14 the last time I counted. It has become a fun hobby all because of Suzanne.

Suzanne had a way of rubbing off on you without trying. Her influence, dedication, and positivity will certainly be missed around the library.

-Kat Jensen Recording Studio Director

To volunteer at the OLBPH, call 405-521-3514 or email [olbph@okdrs.gov](mailto:olbph@okdrs.gov).





Summer Reading Program

# July 1-31

## Read for Prizes!

Juvenile OLBPH patrons who read books from July 1-31 can submit their reading logs by August 4 to be entered for prizes, including a \$100 Amazon gift card.

No sign-up required.  
Simply read, and submit your reading log.

For full rules and details, visit [oklahoma.gov/olbph/summer-reading](http://oklahoma.gov/olbph/summer-reading).

Oklahoma Library for the Blind and  
Physically Handicapped  
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**FREE MATTER  
FOR THE BLIND**