

Oklahoma SCS/NRCS Retirees Newsletter

October 2017

The Oklahoma SCS/NRCS Retirees met at the Golden Corral Buffet Restaurant in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma on October 27, 2017. Forty people were in attendance. They were: **Ken Awtrey, Don Bartolina, Tony Boeckman, Jim and Mary Brewer, Lester Brockman, Steve Chessmore, Everett and Helen Cole, Duane Crider, Brad Elder, Wayne Fjeseth, Randy and Bonnie Freeland, Roberta and Jim Frie, Gayle Goforth, Bill and Jan Harney, Sandra and Terry Hough, Otho Lamar, Nick Lambeth, Jim McCampbell, Eunice and Glen Mullen and daughter Marilyn, Gary O'Neill, John and Joy Pewthers, Dan Runnels, Chris Shepherd, Milly and Bob Smith, Betty Todd, Keith and Phyllis Vaughan, Carolyn and Bob Webb, and Jamey Wood.**

Duane Crider introduced himself as the new president of the organization and **Chris Shepherd** as the new vice-president. It was **Keith Vaughan's** birthday and **Carolyn Webb** said she recently celebrated her birthday. The group sang 'Happy Birthday' to them.

Duane Crider



First time attendees introduced themselves: **Brad Elder** is from Hinton, formerly the DC at Hinton and also worked in the Anadarko Field Office until his retirement. Prior to that he served in El Reno, Holdenville, Okmulgee, and Konawa, before his assignment to Hinton. He mostly just works around his home but still gets lots of call from local farmers when they have an erosion problem. **Bill Harney** and his wife **Jan** are from Newkirk where he retired. **Jimmy**

Brewer lives in Chickasha and retired in 1996. He worked mostly in detail planning and construction offices at Clinton, Wilburton, Marlow, Lindsay, Pauls Valley, and the Duncan Area Office. He and his wife enjoy singing and playing guitar at their church and Senior Citizen Center and Nursing Homes. Everyone in attendance introduced themselves and their spouse or guest in attendance.

Ken Awtrey and Brad Elder



Randy Freeland passed around forms for retirees to provide information about their retirement activities (i.e. volunteer work, travel, part-time work, activities, etc.) This information is used for the Oklahoma Retired SCS/NRCS Employees Association newsletter. He also reminded the group that our website www.joepad.com has pictures, minutes and attendees from each of our meetings. **Geri Cutler** recently sent an updated address and shared that she looks at the website to see pictures of those in attendance and reads the minutes. Her health didn't permit her to attend but the website is the next best thing to being present.

Secretary/Treasurer **Sandra Hough** read the minutes of the April 28, 2017, meeting. Correct addresses are needed for **Jim Williams**, Ardmore; and **Dennis Stipe**, Mutual.

Joann Leaverton (widow of **Erwin Leaverton**) sent a note shared with the group thanking everyone for their prayers. She recently lost her son **Mike** to leukemia.

Recent retirees include: **Kirk Schreiner**, DC, Lawton, 6/1/17; **Jim Williams**, DC, Ardmore, 8/1/17; **Joyce Mills**, District Secretary, Ardmore, 8/1/17; **Richard McCarty**, CET, Pauls Valley TSO, 9/1/17, 36 yrs service; and **Randy Johnson**, SCT, Ardmore, 11/3/17, 35 yrs, 1 mo service.

The three retirements from Ardmore 'wiped out' the staff at Ardmore. State Conservationist, **Gary O'Neill**, joking said they are looking for volunteers!

Sandra Hough read a list of retiree deaths since April 2017. They were: **John Harlin**, 75, Muskogee, Retired SCT, 3/25/17, 41 yrs. service; **Carolyn Sue Harper**, 79, Retired Deer Creek CD Secretary, 6/3/17, 34 yrs @ Weatherford, also worked @ Chickasha Watershed Planning and North Caddo CD in Hinton; **Bill Weaver**, 78, Muldrow, Retired SCT, 6/21/17, 40 yrs service; **Tim Mullins**, 93, Arapaho, Core Drill Specialist, 7/18/17, 30 yrs.; **James Hubert Choate**, 91, McAlester, 7/22/17, retired 1/3/85 with 31 ½ yrs service; **Glen Miller**, 70, Guthrie, Geologist, 7/23/17, 35 yrs service; **Paul Burton**, 75, Wynnewood, 7/30/17; **Perry Felkins**, 79, Morris, WS Inspector @ Okmulgee, 8/17; **Mike Leaverton**, 59, Pearland, TX, 9/19/17, son of **Erwin & Joann Leaverton**; **James Alderson**, 70, Plant Materials Specialist Texas & Oklahoma, 10/2/17.

Gary O'Neill, State Conservationist for Oklahoma, was introduced. He shared with the group a little about his background as he is a native Oklahoman. He thanked those who helped trained **Jamey Wood** as he has progressed into a good employee even though some thought he would never amount to anything. He gave an update to what is currently happening in NRCS; 250 people are employed, in three zones, and lots of good conservation and water quality benefits are being put on the ground through the use of cover crops, no-till, equipment and technology improvement. Oklahoma has 2100 watershed structures with the last one being built in 2008. A new watershed structure will be built on the Lower Bayou watershed in McClain County. Watershed rehab is still going strong. Restructuring of the department is being discussed with NRCS, FSA and RMA being put into one mission area. There is concern about this consolidation. There has been no one appointed as head since the presidential election. In Oklahoma, the restructuring is getting close. There will be 21 teams and 21 district conservationists to minimize locations. Hope to implement this plan in 2018. The goal is to get employees back to conservation planning activities in the field even though technology is still going strong. The partnership between conservation districts and the conservation commission is still very strong. **Gary** expressed his appreciation to the group for their past commitment to conservation and enjoyed getting to share an update with the group.

Jamey Wood, Assistant State Conservationist for Management & Strategy, announced the USDA-Health Fair being held Tuesday, October 31st from 9:00 am to 11:00 am in the NRCS Conference Room on the 2nd floor in the USDA Building in Stillwater. Insurance health care representatives will be available. He also had a show and tell 1936 transit not many in attendance knew of its purpose. He also announced there would be a Student Pathways announcement for 7 positions including 2 engineers coming out with only a one week window. This is currently the mechanism being used to recruit new employees. If any retiree has children, grandchildren or great grandchildren wanting to pursue a career with NRCS, they need to make application or contact the State Office staff and they will reach out to the prospective employee.



Wayne Fjeseth, vice-president of the Oklahoma Conservation Historical Society, gave an update on the progress of those trying to establish a conservation museum. **Ben Pollard** will serve as president; **Wayne Fjeseth** as vice-president and **Kim Farber** as secretary-treasurer. The museum will be named The Oklahoma Conservation Historical Society. The Oklahoma Historical Society will accept and display artifacts that are donated but they are not quite ready to accept artifacts. They are in the process of developing a format for curating items. They have submitted a 401c application for non-profit status and are awaiting approval. They are working on by-laws. They are also trying to capture information from individuals who experienced the conservation movement progression. OSU has offered help in this endeavor. **Tom Lucas**, who originally presented this concept, continues to work on this project and can be reached at 580.727.4397 or tom.lucas717@gmail.com

Attendees were asked to fill out a slip of paper telling about their retirement years. Following are those submitted.

Everett and **Helen Cole** were honored by their children and friends at a Route 66 Anniversary (1951-2017) Celebration on October 7th. They had many funny stories to tell about their 66 year adventures and moves brought about from working for SCS and being a Soil Scientist. **Randy Freeland** spends a lot of time with NARFE as the Oklahoma Federation Presidents. He does a little gardening, attending sporting events, and drinking coffee every Friday with some of his retiree buddies.

Randy and Bonnie Freeland



Jim and **Roberta Frie** continue as volunteers at the Stillwater Medical Center and have done so for 9 years. **Roberta** stays busy with two great grand children and **Jim** at OSU athletic events. They also are members of a recreational club at Lake Carl Blackwell. **Ken Awtrey** joined us all the way from Nacogdoches, Texas where he is retired but works part time with a couple of RC&D Councils. He also tries to golf about 3 times a week. **Gayle Goforth** said he isn't able to do much of anything but mow the yard and drink coffee. What's wrong with that?

Don Bartolina still works part time for the Oklahoma County Conservation District and assists with the National Land and Range Judging Contests. He has 3 new great granddaughters and is planning a trip to Italy next year. **Carolyn Webb** retired from the Bristow Office and still tutors four 1st grade students. She also is on the library board, hospital auxiliary, garden club, and church work. She and **Bob** travel some as he continues on the Creek County Conservation District Board. She said she guessed they both need a hearing test. The other day Bob walked through their home and she said "I am proud of you, to which he replied, I am tired of you too"!!!

Tony Boeckman and his wife travel the USA in a small fiberglass camper. His hobbies are gold, gardening, and reading. They still live in Medford, OK where he retired. **Keith Vaughn** plays golf and is now up to 5 holes in one!!! He and his wife travel primarily visiting kids, grandkids, and attending their sporting events. They like to attend church activities and classes and also do volunteer work in the community. **Carolyn Webb** said she taught **Keith** everything

he knows while he was stationed at the Bristow Office. **Phyllis, Keith's** wife, said, "I think he needs a refresher course". **Lester Brockmann** lives on a farm near Ponca City and raises a few cows. He cuts weeds, fixes fence, and generally anything else he wants to do. Every day is Saturday. **Bobby Smith** continues his ministry work as a supply pastor in area churches. He and his wife enjoy following great grandchildren sporting events all over Oklahoma and Texas.

Dan and Sharon Runnels still reside at the Taste of Heaven Farm in Kellyville, OK raising Registered Dexter Cattle and Chickens. **Sharon** expanded the chicken flock this past year requiring an additional chicken castle for the new birds. All their calves were born healthy again this year with two heifers and two bulls, a red and black of each and a horned and polled of each. They have been traveling to close and far off places including escorting their beautiful granddaughter to Las Vegas this past summer for an Invitational Rhythmic Gymnastics event where she took second overall in her age level. They welcome all visitors to their little Taste of Heaven.

By email **Ann Colyer** reported that she hoped to make the next retirees meeting. She had knee replacement on November 4, 2016. She is the owner/publisher of the Big Pasture News in Grandfield, Oklahoma. It is a weekly newspaper.

The next meeting is scheduled for Friday, April 27, 2018, at the Golden Corral on MacArthur Boulevard in Oklahoma City. The Golden Corral now opens at 10:00AM so there is extra time for visiting before the meeting starts at 11:30AM. Put it on your calendar now! Everyone is welcome and no reservations are required.