Grady County
Listening Session Report

http://www.dasnr.okstate.edu/oces/ocls/

November 14, 2002
The mission of the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service is to disseminate information to the people of Oklahoma and encourage the adoption of research-based knowledge relating to agriculture, family and consumer sciences, 4-H youth development, and community development.
Forty-nine (49) individuals interested in a better future for themselves, their families, and their communities participated in the Grady County Listening Session. The Listening Session was an effort to get a broad base of citizen input to identify local issues so a plan can be developed to create a better economic, environmental, and social situation for Grady County. Participants from across the county provided input and identified, discussed, and defined their community’s needs and opportunities while building on the assets that presently exist.

The purpose of this report is to share publicly the process and the information that was collected from the Grady County Listening Session. The report lists the needs and concerns of the county as identified during the open forum process. This report also will be used as a starting point for the upcoming Focus Forum in which an assembled group of stakeholders will define, discuss, and begin to address the needs and concerns identified in the Listening Session. Many of the needs and concerns of Oklahoma can be addressed through partnerships with other groups and organizations. The report can be found on the Oklahoma Community Listening Session web site at http://www.dasnr.okstate.edu/oces/ocls/.

The Listening Session revolved around a single, key question: “Considering the next 3 to 5 years, what are the critical issues in your community and in Oklahoma that need to be addressed to realize a positive future for you, your family, and your community?” The needs and issues identified by participants reflect several broad areas of interest. Available data do not show that any one area is more significant than another, but they do show that all these issues are vitally important to the people of Grady County.
The Listening Session Process

Listening Session participants were divided into small groups, usually not more than 12-15 participants. Small group participants considered the guiding question (see below) and suggested issues that they felt were of most importance to their families and community. With the assistance of a group facilitator, each small group discussed its chosen issues, combined similar issues, and then voted to determine its top five issues.

Following the small group sessions, participants came together in a large group setting to discuss the results of the small group sessions. They combined similar and overlapping issues and voted to determine the top issues for the county.

“Considering the next 3 to 5 years, what are the critical issues in your community and in Oklahoma that need to be addressed to realize a positive future for you, your family, and your community?”
The following issues were discussed in one or more of the small group sessions.

- Increased consistent funding for economic development
  - Community leadership development
  - Employment opportunities
  - Training for at-risk adults
- Assistance for needy families
  - Medical costs (insurance, dental, eye, medication, etc.)
  - Identification of resources/community support
- Survival of rural schools
- Child-care providers
  - Affordable child-care for infants/toddlers
  - More child-care for infants/toddlers
  - Extended hours for child-care
- Community volunteerism
  - Opportunities and agencies
  - Parental responsibility
  - Acceptance
- Health care
  - Restructure state insurance
  - HMO/public and private
  - Reduce the cost of prescription medicine
- Economic development
  - Attract businesses
  - Improve roads
  - Secure long-term water supply
  - Enforce ordinances
  - Improve street lighting to reduce drug abuse
- Public education
  - Reduce school drop-out rate
  - Structure for students in detention
Small Group Discussions

- State funding
  - Access for special education
  - Improve basic education skills (reading and math)
- Funding for law enforcement
  - County funding
  - Training
  - Reduce drug abuse
- Community programs
  - Funding for senior citizens
  - Teach parenting skills
  - Reduce teen pregnancy
  - On-the-job training
- Improve county infrastructure to attract new businesses/jobs
  - Solid waste disposal
  - Potable water sources
  - Roads and bridges
- Community-wide character education (school and business)
  - Increase volunteerism
  - Reduce child abuse
  - Reduce elderly abuse
  - Reduce domestic violence
- Develop age-appropriate recreational activities and employment mentoring relationships for youth
- Increase community involvement with needy children and elderly
  - Services, special occasion “goods”
- Address drug and alcohol problems
  - Prevention
  - Treatment
  - Law enforcement
- Issues related to drug abuse
  - Family breakdown
  - Parental involvement
Small Group Discussions

- Senior citizens raising children
- Out-of-control youth
- Improve life skills and work ethics
- Address rural problems
  - Fire protection
  - Funding for rural law
  - Declining rural medical and emergency services
- Improve public utility, infrastructure of Grady County, visualize economic growth
- Improve services for aging
  - Health
  - Medical
- Loss of agriculture base
  - Avoid dependency on other nations
- Rural school funding
- Job opportunities for young people
- Getting parents to accept responsibility
- Overbuilt infrastructure versus overtaxed economy
- Better cooperation between cities and county
  - Dispatcher facilities
  - Improve access to primary health care
- Develop family development program for incarcerated parents
- Stop outward migration of young people
- Improve availability of library services statewide
- Develop services/support for teen mothers/parents, including prevention
- Improve street lighting in residential areas
- Encourage construction of middle income starter homes
- Breakdown of the family unit
Large Group Discussion

The large group addressed the ideas that were generated during the small group discussions. Those ideas were then used as the basis for defining the five issues of most importance to Grady County.

- **Community programs**
  - Funding for senior citizens
  - Teach parenting skills and responsibility
  - Reduce teen pregnancy
  - On-the-job training
  - Address drug and alcohol problems through prevention and treatment
  - Law enforcement
  - Training for at-risk adults (felony convictions)
  - Identification of health resources and community support

- **Public education**
  - Reduce school drop-out rate
  - Increase state funding
  - Improve basic education skills
  - Funding for rural schools

- **Health care and services for aging**
  - Medical and dental
  - Restructure state insurance
  - HMO/public and private
  - Reduce the cost of prescription medicine

- **Increase consistent funding for economic development**
  - Solid waste
  - Attract businesses and jobs
  - Improve roads and bridges
  - Secure long-term water supply
  - Public utilities

- **Community-wide character education (school and business)**
  - Increase volunteerism
  - Reduce child abuse
Large Group Discussion

- Reduce elderly abuse
- Reduce domestic violence
- Teach work ethics
- Teach life skills

In the months following the Listening Session, Grady County Extension Educators will invite community leaders and representatives from organizations and agencies to a Focus Forum to consider what the people are saying and to devise action plans for Grady County. As Extension begins its long-range strategic planning process, the involvement of citizens in identifying needs and opportunities in the county and community will be extremely valuable. Through the upcoming Focus Forums, education and service providers will learn more about community concerns while forging new partnerships with other groups to address identified issues.
The intent of these data is to provide local perspective and context for discussion. Local circumstances can change the demographic and economic data; the following is the most up-to-date information that is currently available. Please contact us if you see information that needs to be updated.

◆ History
Grady County was created at statehood and named for Henry W. Grady, editor of the *Atlanta Constitution*. Chickasha, the county seat, was named for the Chickasaw Indians and is known as the “Queen City of the Washita.”

Grady County, the site of several Indian battles, was crossed by Camp Supply Road, which was a major thoroughfare to military camps and posts in the Indian Territory.

In addition to the H.E. Bailey Turnpike and other highways, the OKT-MKT and Burlington-Northern railroads serve the transportation needs of the county.

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Facts About Grady County

- Located in the southwestern region
- County population is 45,516
- Labor force within 30 miles is 225,400

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1 County statistics from Oklahoma Department of Commerce, Information Management, May 2000
Industry
According to the 1997 Census of Agriculture, Grady County had 1,625 farms (averaging 375 acres). Average gate receipts were $54,936 in 1997, and the county had 19 farms with gate receipts in excess of $500,000. Agricultural production was divided between livestock (84 percent) and crops (16 percent). Contrasted with the 1992 Census of Agriculture, average gate receipts decreased slightly, from $55,224 in 1992 to $54,936 in 1997; the average farm size decreased 5 percent.

Profile
Grady County is located in southwestern Oklahoma. The county is comprised of 1,105 square miles of level plains in the north to rolling hills in the south. The average annual rainfall is 34.8 inches. Average temperatures range from 42 degrees Fahrenheit in January to 80.8 degrees Fahrenheit in July.

According to the 2000 census, the county seat, Chickasha, had a population of 15,850 residents. The city is located 47 miles southwest of Oklahoma City.

Households
Grady County had 17,341 households in 2000. Statistics regarding those households are included in the table on the final page of this report.

Population Characteristics
The population density of the county is 37.9 persons per square mile. The median age of the population is 36.5 years of age.
Facts About Grady County

◆ County Population - 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>County population</td>
<td>45,516</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male population</td>
<td>22,205</td>
<td>48.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female population</td>
<td>23,311</td>
<td>51.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 5 years</td>
<td>3,110</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 to 9 years</td>
<td>3,205</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 to 14 years</td>
<td>3,593</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 to 19 years</td>
<td>3,710</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 to 24 years</td>
<td>2,760</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 to 34 years</td>
<td>5,391</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 to 44 years</td>
<td>7,226</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 to 54 years</td>
<td>6,046</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 to 59 years</td>
<td>2,475</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 to 64 years</td>
<td>2,042</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 to 74 years</td>
<td>3,167</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75 to 84 years</td>
<td>1,977</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85 years and over</td>
<td>814</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Bureau of Census, Census 2000

◆ Poverty

Poverty in Grady County decreased by 17.4 percent between 1990 to 2000. In 1990 there were 7,516 individuals living below the poverty level. This number decreased to 6,209 by the year 2000. The poverty level for family households with related children under 18 years of age decreased 21.8 percent between 1990 and 2000. In 1990 there were 1,264 such families, but by the year 2000 the number had declined to 989 families. Households headed by women with no husband present and with children under 18 years of age numbered 535 in 1990. By the year 2000 such households had declined to 480, a decrease of 10.3 percent.

◆ Labor Force

The Grady County labor force numbered 19,483 in 2000, with 72.3 percent of the males and 50.5 percent of the females employed. The
county recorded an average annual unemployment rate of 3.4 percent in 2000. The per capita personal income for the county was $18,713 in 2000.

◆ **Tourism and Points of Interest**

The major waterways in Grady County are the Washita and Canadian rivers and tributaries of Beaver Creek. Other points of interest include the Grady County Historical Society and the Antique Car Museum.

Summer rodeos and a swap shop sponsored by the Chickasha Antique Car Club attract visitors to the area, as does the annual Watermelon Festival at Rush Springs, the “Watermelon Capital of the World.” Other annual events include the Festival of Lights, the Grady County Fair, the Firefighters Chili Cook-off, and the Veterans’ Parade.

◆ **Housing**

The county has 17,341 housing units, and 75.7 percent of these are occupied by owners. Statewide, 68.4 percent of housing units are occupied by owners. The median owner-occupied home value in the county is $62,500. Statewide, the median owner-occupied home value is $70,700. The median housing rental contract is $396 per month in Grady County. Statewide, the median housing rental contract is $456 per month.

◆ **Tax Structure**

The average mill levy for ad valorem taxes in Grady County is 87.36 mills. It generated $14,945,121 in 2001-2002. Also, Grady County received $6,895,609 from the state for the county’s proceeds from the gas, diesel, and special fuel tax, as well as from the gross production tax and motor vehicle collections.
Facts About Grady County

Grady County collects sales tax at three levels: state, county, and local. The state sales tax rate is 4.5 percent; the county rate is 0.25 percent, generating $654,172 in 2000-2001. The local sales tax rate varies from city to city, as shown below.

Sales Tax Rates and Revenue, 2001-2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Sales Tax Rate (%)</th>
<th>Revenue ($)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alex</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>52,569</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amber</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>34,138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chickasha</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>6,385,245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minco</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>121,867</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ninnekah</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>72,264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norge</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>19,269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pocasset</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>15,609</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rush Springs</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>193,110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuttle</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>870,766</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verden</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>75,384</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


◆ Education

Grady County is home to the University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma and to the Jane Brooks School, which meets the specialized educational needs of deaf students. Seventy-nine and one-half percent of Grady County residents over 25 years of age are high school graduates, compared to 74.6 percent statewide. College graduates 25 years and older number 14.4 percent, compared to 17.8 percent statewide.
### Primary Employers in the Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Employers</th>
<th>Products/ Services</th>
<th>Number Employed</th>
<th>City/Town</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gabriel Ride Control Prod.</td>
<td>shock absorbers, faucets</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>Chickasha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delta Faucet Company</td>
<td>medical services</td>
<td>510</td>
<td>Chickasha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grady Memorial Hospital</td>
<td></td>
<td>350</td>
<td>Chickasha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chickasha School System</td>
<td>education services, dairy products</td>
<td>328</td>
<td>Chickasha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Braum’s Dairy</td>
<td>medical services</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>Tuttle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Plains Medical Center</td>
<td></td>
<td>205</td>
<td>Chickasha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hermetic Switch Inc.</td>
<td>electronic reed switches</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>Chickasha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Science and Arts</td>
<td>education services, government services</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>Chickasha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Chickasha</td>
<td></td>
<td>167</td>
<td>Chickasha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuttle Public Schools</td>
<td>education services, retail store</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>Tuttle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wal-Mart</td>
<td>dairy products</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>Chickasha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Braum’s Dairy</td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Minco</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rush Springs School</td>
<td>education services, retail store</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>Rush Springs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lightner’s</td>
<td>industrial glasses</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>Chickasha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabot Safety</td>
<td></td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Chickasha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minco Public Schools</td>
<td>education services, dog and cat foods</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Minco</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merrick Pet Foods</td>
<td>faucets</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Rush Springs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delta Faucet</td>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Tuttle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dunn’s</td>
<td>retail store</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Chickasha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Tuttle</td>
<td>government services</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Tuttle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PICO</td>
<td>construction</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Tuttle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A and J Fabricators</td>
<td>welding and fabrication</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Minco</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Oklahoma Department of Commerce, Information Management, May 2000*
## Facts About Grady County

### County Demographics – 1990 vs. 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>County population</td>
<td>41,747</td>
<td>45,516</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino population</td>
<td>728</td>
<td>1,316</td>
<td>80.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White population</td>
<td>37,602</td>
<td>39,742</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>1,537</td>
<td>1,391</td>
<td>-9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian and Alaska</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native population</td>
<td>2,152</td>
<td>2,206</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian population</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>44.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median age of all persons in the county</td>
<td>33.4</td>
<td>36.5</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor force</td>
<td>19,526</td>
<td>19,483</td>
<td>-0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average annual unemployment rate</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County per capita income</td>
<td>13,000</td>
<td>18,713</td>
<td>43.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty - families with related children under age 18</td>
<td>1,264</td>
<td>989</td>
<td>-21.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty - families with female householder with own children under age 18, no husband present</td>
<td>535</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>-10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty - individuals</td>
<td>7,516</td>
<td>6,209</td>
<td>-17.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons over age 25 with a high school diploma</td>
<td>9,019</td>
<td>11,159</td>
<td>23.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of persons over age 25 with high school diploma</td>
<td>69.0%</td>
<td>79.5%</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons over age 25 with a college degree</td>
<td>3,480</td>
<td>4,209</td>
<td>20.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent over age 25 with at least a Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Households - family household with own children under age 18</td>
<td>5,920</td>
<td>6,014</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Households - married couple family with own children under age 18</td>
<td>4,773</td>
<td>4,589</td>
<td>-3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Households - female householder, with own children under age 18, no husband present</td>
<td>928</td>
<td>1,050</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County housing units</td>
<td>17,788</td>
<td>19,444</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner-occupied housing units</td>
<td>11,785</td>
<td>13,123</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Bureau of Census, Census 2000
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