

COLLEGIAN

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SSC RECEIVES \$250,000 IN FEDERAL MONEY

Seminole State College's received a boost from Washington, D.C. in February.

Congressman Ernest Istook announced that the College would receive \$250,000 in special appropriates for the advancement of the College's "Fast-Track" Nursing Program and the Enoch Kelly Haney Center.

The grant requested by Istook for Seminole State College includes \$50,000 to upgrade several of its nursing technology and service facilities, including the upgrading of software, hardware and web-based instruction. The remaining \$200,000 of the appropriation will fund not only nursing, but also business and industry training and retraining needs through the Haney Center.

Dr. James W. Utterback, President of Seminole State College, said the funding comes at a critical time for the institution and the field of nursing.

"I am excited about this award. This special federal appropriation will enable Seminole State College to continue to expand vital services," Utterback said.

Utterback stated that the College recently hosted Congressmen and Mrs. Istook on campus. The couple had the opportunity to tour the Enoch Kelly Haney Center and Nursing Division, as well as visit with SSC faculty, staff and students.

The \$50,000 for the "Fast-Track" Nursing Program will enable the College to offer state-of-the-technology, web-based instruction and assist in transporting low-income nursing students to their clinical assignments, Utterback said.

The College's "Fast-Track" program is an accelerated transitional nursing program enabling Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) to become Registered Nurses (RNs).

"The nursing shortage has become a crisis across the state of Oklahoma as well as the nation," noted Utterback.



U.S. Congressman Ernest Istook, shown above at a Town Hall Meeting held at Seminole State College, announced in February that SSC would receive \$250,000 in funding for the College's "Fast Track" Nursing Program and the Enoch Kelly Haney Center.

"The College's 'Fast-Track' program allows our students to expedite the advancement of their careers, which is imperative in order to respond to this crisis. The appropriation will help increase the number of qualified registered nurses in rural Oklahoma," he said.

"We appreciate the continuing dedication and commitment the entire Oklahoma Congressional Delegation in supporting Seminole State College and rural education. We also appreciate the leadership Congressman Istook has provided in acquiring funding for the crucial field of nursing."

Utterback also commented that the part of the appropriation that will go to the College's Haney Center will help advance the local economy.

"The part of this special appropriation targeted to support the Enoch Kelly Haney Center is vital to the growth of the economy

in this area," Utterback said.

"This award will enable us to offer special courses for the training and retraining needs for a variety of companies. We are looking forward to working with local businesses and industries to help stimulate and enhance the economy of the entire area.

The leadership of Congressman Istook in this process is greatly appreciated by all of us associated with Seminole State College," he said.

In 2002, Seminole State College held the official opening of the Enoch Kelly Haney Center, a 43,000 square-foot facility to house the SSC business and industry training program and nursing division.

The Haney Center is designed to meet the instructional needs of specific businesses and industries in the areas of management, sales, computer operations, technical service, industrial skills development, and other specialized training as requested.

Local Veterans Organization Raises Scholarships for Nursing Students

Every Friday and Saturday evening from 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., you can find members of the "40 et 8" organization playing Bingo. The fraternal organization of Veterans organizes Bingo games at their headquarters on 45th street in Shawnee to help raise money for various charities, including scholarships for Seminole State College nursing students.

The small organization, made up of only 29 members, donates \$20,000 each year to provide ten \$2,000 scholarships for SSC nursing students.

"We wanted to help nurses," noted Frank McCalla, Chair of the "40 et 8" Nursing Training Program. "Many of our members were injured during their time in the service. We were taken care of by compassionate and dedicated nurses. We wanted to give something back to them."

Once a month the nursing scholarship recipients eat dinner with members of the organization to share about their studies in the program.

"We take an interest in the student as a whole," McCalla said. "We kind of adopt the students to make sure they are doing OK."

Seminole State College Nursing Division Chair Nina Kirk said the "40 et 8" organization's scholarships have had a positive impact on the program.

"We are very appreciative the '40 et 8's' generous contribution to our program," Kirk said. "Many of our students are from rural Oklahoma and lack a lot of financial resources. The scholarships provided by the '40 et 8' help offset the cost of attending school on a full-time basis."

During commencement, members of the "40 et 8" attend the Nurses Pinning Ceremony and present each scholarship recipient who graduates with a special pin with the organization's insignia.

"I've seen many of our graduates wearing the '40 et 8' pins they received at graduation in the workplace," noted Kirk. "Upon entering the workforce, our graduates wear the pin with a lot of pride. They feel apart of the organization that has given them the opportunity to fulfill their dream of being a nurse."

Eleven of Shawnee's "40 et 8" organization serve as leaders in the organization. They help organize fundraisers and distribute contributions. They are: McCalla of Cromwell; his son Rob Roy McCalla of Tecumseh; Leo Lassiter of Henryetta; H.L. Ledford of Shawnee; Dr. Michael Salvin of Earlsboro; Woody Lockhart of Shawnee; Larry Smith of Shawnee; Tom Combs of Shawnee; Bill Simpson of Shawnee; Richard Bohuslavicky of Shawnee and Jessy Smith of Shawnee.

In addition to the SSC nursing scholarships, the organization donates to child welfare charities and little league programs.

The National "40 et 8" organization was organized in 1921 and is composed of Veterans from both World Wars and the Korean and Vietnam conflicts.

The organizations is officially known by its French name the "LaSociete des Quarante Hommes et Huit Chevaux."

It draws its origin from World War I when young Americans were sent to France and traveled in railroad box cars. The box cars

would hold 40 men and eight horses.

Membership in the "40 et 8" is by invitation only for recognition of service to the American Legion and/or its programs.

Seminole State College's nursing curriculum is based on a two-year program that has received both state and national accreditation. In 1998, the Oklahoma Board of Nursing gave the school the maximum accreditation of five years, and in 1995, the National League of Nursing awarded the school its maximum accreditation of eight years.

SSC's nursing faculty members teach many specialized areas of nursing.

In addition to serving as the program Chair, Kirk instructs medical and surgical nursing and is the coordinator of Career Ladder, a program for students making the transition from License Practical Nursing (LPN) to Registered Nursing. Dr. Jorge Neuhaus teaches mental health nursing and pathophysiology. Donna Chambers teaches pediatric and nursing management. Susan McLaughlin specializes in maternity and women's health nursing. Pam Jackson and Valerie Watts teach medical and surgical nursing. Jackson also instructs critical care nursing and Watts also teaches oncology. Cathy Buchanan instructs students in the fundamentals of nursing and maternal/child nursing care.

For more information regarding the "40 et 8" organization, contact McCalla at (405) 944-5821.

For more information about the SSC nursing program, contact the nursing department at (405) 382-9205.

Seminole State College COLLEGIAN

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SSC Delegation Meets With Law Makers at State Capitol

Several dozen administrators, professors, regents, community leaders and other supporters of Seminole State College traveled to the State Capitol on Tuesday to take part in "Higher Education Day." The annual event is aimed at bringing attention to higher education throughout the state as well as giving higher education supporters the opportunity to meet with their local legislators.

"Seminole State College is truly the crown jewel of this district. It's gone from very humble beginnings in the basement of the Presbyterian Church to a booming campus helping thousands of men and women attain their dreams. Many prominent Oklahomans began their education at our campus. I'm extremely proud to represent SSC here at the State Capitol," said Senator Harry Coates, R-Seminole.

SSC President Dr. James Utterback led the delegation to the Capitol. He said the college has continued to see enrollment climb.

"We set records for enrollment for both the fall and spring semesters; we're literally growing by leaps and bounds. We just received a federal appropriation of \$250 thousand dollars to assist us with a program to help LPN nurses attain the level of RN. Part of that funding will also boost our business and industry education program," said Utterback.

"We've got to remember how important higher education is to economic development. It's a fact that cities with the highest numbers of college graduates have the highest per capita incomes. Local higher education institutions like SSC mean even more people are able to earn a degree; that's key to building a better future not just for the students and local communities, but for our entire state," said Representative Dan Boren, D-Seminole.



A large delegation of campus and community leaders represented Seminole State College for "Higher Education Day" at the State Capitol on Tuesday, Feb. 25. Those attending Higher Ed Day included: (Bottom row, left to right) Karrie Utterback, Dr. James Utterback, Laura Good, Autumn Surface, Ellinda McKinney-Jones, Roberta Kelly, Liz Robertson, Donna Syth, Rep. Dan Boren, Rep. Kris Stelle; (Second row) Cynthia Yerby, Cindy Guinn, Richard Walcott, Blake Hargrove, Sen. Harry Coates, Betty Coates, Alexis Johnson; (Third row) Beau Sullivan, Michael Condry, Katherine Benton, Jim Hardin, Philip Landers, Dorothy Forth, Holly Moore; (Top row) Dr. Rebecca Kennedy, Josh Yerby, Dr. Sean Fox, Russell Daniels, Lisa Friden, Lana Reynolds

House member Danny Morgan was also on hand to meet with the delegation from SSC.

"The excellence represented by Seminole State College is something everyone from this part of the state should be proud of. I also think the fact that SSC had one of the largest groups of supporters at the Capitol for Higher Education Day of any institute represented. That says

a lot about how much this school is valued. I think without a doubt it is one of the finest in our state," said Representative Morgan, D-Prague.

Other lawmakers meeting with the SSC delegation included State Senator Charlie Laster, D-Shawnee, State Representative Kris Steele, R-Shawnee and Representative Richard Lerblance, D-Hartshorne.

Reason For Living

Toni Wittmann's cancer taught her about the important things in life

*Reprinted with Permission from the
Seminole Producer*

By **KAREN ANSON**
Managing Editor - *Seminole Producer*

Nothing in Toni Wittman's life prepared her for cancer.

Wittman is the secretary for Seminole State College's Business and Computer Science and Language Arts and Humanities Divisions.

Born and raised in Seminole, daughter of the happy family of Barbara and Delbert Aldridge, SHS grad, wife, mother...

"It was Christmas 1999," she said.

"I found a lump in my breast, but I was very busy, working, getting my bachelor's degree."

The 35-year-old mother of two small boys is a division secretary at Seminole State College.

"I got a little scared when it began to grow rapidly so finally I decided to check it out," Wittmann said.

She went for a mammogram and it was clean.

"I said, 'but look right here, there's a lump the size of a walnut,'" Wittmann said.

"They said, 'Omigod!'"

She sought opinions and second opinions.

"They wanted to know if I had any more spots," she said.

After tests, doctors found three tumors.

"I said, 'Okay, where do we go from here?'" Wittmann said.

She had a biopsy and had to wait through an entire weekend to hear the results.

"What do you do? You tell your family: 'I got a call, I have cancer,'" she said.

"Everybody gets real quiet; your mom cries.

"You call your ex-husband, he cries. You don't tell the kids.

"I had a class that night, was doing the presentation that my bachelor's degree depended on.

"I'd worked on this for 18 months and now it's just another paper.

"I told them I had just found I had cancer and my teacher told me not to worry about this presentation, just do what I could.

"The class supported me so much," Wittmann said. "They put me on prayer lists and I had calls all weekend."

On Monday, Wittmann's doctors told her the tumor close to her arm required a complete mastectomy.

Her doctor was scheduled to be out of town and asked to see another doctor so the surgery could be done as soon as possible.

"They're going to cut my breast off, okay," Wittmann said.

"I'd like a few days to deal with this."

She opted to wait for her doctor to return and the surgery was done on a Friday.

"I woke up with a lot fewer body parts," she said.

"I couldn't move my arm. There are a lot of things involved with a mastectomy that women don't know.

"It affects your sense of balance, it lowers your self esteem.

"Not that I was vain. They said it was a good thing I was small-breasted; the lump would have been a lot harder to find in a large-breasted woman."

She began work with a "feisty woman" oncologist, Aleta Toma, who works out of Baptist Hospital in Oklahoma City, but comes also to Shawnee for cancer care once a week.

"She's a go-getter and she perks you up," Wittmann said.

She encouraged Wittmann to take the chemo treatments.

"She said, 'Without them, you might have three years. I'll try to get you five to 10,'" Wittmann said.

"My kids were five and three; they're my reason for fighting.

"Three years isn't very long. If I can get five or 10, maybe I can get 10 or 15... maybe I'll see one of them walk down the aisle."

But four months of chemo and four months of radiation were "eight months of hell," she said.

"All my hair fell out. I had no nose hair or eyebrows. Eyelashes filter dust out of your eyes... it was the little things that you never realized mattered."

The children "had a very hard time" with their mother's tiredness and illness.

"What my kids saw me go through, they won't forget the rest of their lives," Wittmann said.

"How do you explain to a three-year-old



Toni Wittmann

why you have scars all over your body?"

Through the horrible months of pain, weakness and nausea, Wittmann said Seminole supported her completely.

"This town was wonderful," she said.

"I was on every prayer list from here to Arkansas.

"They brought food to us, especially broccoli casserole because they heard broccoli was good for cancer.

"Students at the college were beating my family to the churches to ask for prayers.

"I still have a big cardboard box of cards; I don't even know who some of them came from."

When she had healed from the radiation, her doctors recommended she have her second breast removed.

"I never wanted to go through that again, but they were afraid the cancer would come back," Wittmann said.

And so she did it all a second time, and followed it with reconstruction and implants — in all, nine surgeries, eight months of chemo and eight and a half weeks of daily radiation.

Her plastic surgeon coaxed her through physical therapy — "not fun" she said.

See Survivor, Page 8

Seminole State Student Chosen as 'Best Male Vocalist of the Year'

Seminole State College student Stephen Hickerson had never sung publicly seven years ago, but no one would be able to tell that by listening to him today.

In fact, Hickerson has recently belted out tunes that have won him "Best Male Vocalist of the Year" for the second year in a row at McSwain Theatre in Ada.

To receive the opportunity to perform at the McSwain, singers have to audition. Once selected, they perform in front of an audience. At the end of the year, the audience votes for performers who they believe are up-and-coming stars.

Hickerson has won the "Best Male Vocalist" award back-to-back, in 2000-2001 and 2001-2002.

"I feel really blessed to be able to sing," Hickerson, a Secondary English Education major, said. "I tend to be selective with my songs. I enjoy singing country and gospel music. So, to win this award for two years in a row is quite an honor."

Hickerson said he started singing in public after a friend encouraged him to join his church's quartet.

"My friend told me the group needed a bass singer," Hickerson said. "It wasn't

long after I met with them that the quartet turned into a quintet."

Later, Hickerson joined a small band named "Day Star." The group performed together in for two years.

"We sang at the Hog Wild Festival, Lion Club functions, family reunions, and youth ministries at churches," Hickerson said. "It was a great learning experience for me."

Next year, Hickerson plans to continue his education at East Central University and receive a Bachelor's Degree in Education.

He also plans to continue singing and would welcome the opportunity to sing professionally. This year alone, he has had the opportunity to sing the National Anthem in front of former Governor Frank Keating, current Governor Brad Henry and state legislators.

"I really enjoy singing and putting on a great show for the audience, but I also value my family and I plan to stay close to them."

Hickerson has a wife, Mona, who is a second grade teacher at Holdenville Public Schools.

They have three children, Ryan, 7, Gabie, 6, and Colten, 19 months. They make their home in Holdenville, Okla.



**Steven Hickerson
Male Vocalist
of the Year**

'Relay For Life' Event Scheduled

The Seminole Area American Cancer Society 2003 "Relay for Life" event is scheduled to take place on April 25-26 at the Northwood Elementary School Track in Seminole from 7 p.m. to 7 a.m.. The Seminole State College planning committee is looking for teams to participate in the event.

Community members from businesses, schools, churches and organizations, in addition to cancer survivors, their families and friends, are encouraged to form teams of eight to 15 people each for the "Relay for Life" event.

During the overnight event, one member from each team is on the track at all times. Team members walk or run around the track relay-style, symbolizing the refusal to stop fighting until cancer has been stopped.

Registration is \$10 per team participant. Each participant is encouraged to raise \$100 or more in donations prior to the event to fight cancer. The team registration deadline is March 24.

For more information, or to register a team, contact SSC Social Sciences Instructor Pam Koenig at (405) 382-9202 or SSC Business and Computer Science/Language Arts and Humanities Division Secretary Toni Wittmann at (405) 382-9252.

SSC Men's and Women's Tennis Teams Beat Pratt Community College

The Seminole State College Men's and Women's Tennis teams overwhelmingly defeated Pratt Community College of Kansas during their first competition of the season.

The SSC Men's team defeated Pratt with a final score of 8-1 by winning all three of their double matches and five-out-of-six single matches. The Women's team had a decisive victory over Pratt with a final score of 4-0.

SSC men's partners Peter Davis, a freshman from Seminole, and Shane Conroy, a sophomore from Ashford, Kent, England, defeated Mehdi Bahbaz and Rafeal Delgado of Pratt by 5-7, 6-2, 6-3.

Josue Paz, a freshman from El Paso, Texas, and Jesus Ramirez, a freshman from Venezuela, defeated Pratt partners Stephen Cross and Carlos Aguirre by 6-4, 6-3.

SSC teammates Jared Haley, a freshman from Shawnee, and Steve Bajema, a freshman from Purcell, defeated Brandon Epp and Andy Herndon of Pratt by 6-2, 7-5.

In the singles' competition, Davis lost to Bahbaz by 1-6, 6-4, 6-4; Conroy defeated Epp by 6-1, 6-1; Paz defeated Cross by 6-4, 7-6, 7-4; Ramirez beat Delgado by 6-3, 7-6, 7-1; Haley beat Aguirre by 7-5, 6-2 and Bajema defeated Herndon by 6-4, 6-2.

The SSC Women's team won their doubles match by 8-4 when teammates Rachel Wisner, a sophomore from Shawnee, and Lisa Jackson, a freshman from Okmulgee, defeated Shayla Watson and Mary Taushanova of Pratt.

In the singles' competition, Wisner beat Watson by 8-2; Jackson defeated Taushanova by 8-6 and Charity Johnson, a freshman from Byng, beat Pratt's Lisa Sneary by 8-2.

For a complete listing of the Seminole State College Men's and Women's Tennis Schedule, see opposite page.



The SSC Men's Tennis team defeated Pratt Community College of Kansas 8-1 by winning all three of their doubles matches and five-out-of-six singles matches. Kneeling (l-r): Jesus Ramirez, a freshman from Venezuela; Shane Conroy, a sophomore from Ashford, Kent, England; Josue Paz, a freshman from El Paso, Texas; and Michael Motley, a freshman from Corsicana, Texas. Standing (l-r): Brian Nelson, Assistant Coach; Bobby Howard, a freshman from Shawnee; Peter Davis, a freshman from Seminole; Steve Bajema, a freshman from Purcell; Jared Haley, a freshman from Shawnee; and SSC Men's Tennis Team Head Coach Bill Davis.



The SSC Women's Tennis team had a decisive victory over Pratt Community College of Kansas with a score of 4-0. Kneeling (l-r) Lisa Jackson, a freshman from Okmulgee; Rachel Wisner, a sophomore from Shawnee; and Angela Shaw, a sophomore from Seminole. Standing: Student Assistant Coach Jennifer Peoples; Charity Johnson, a freshman from Byng; Ashley Neighbors, a freshman from Sapulpa; and SSC Women's Tennis Team Head Coach Lynne Davis.

Nationally-Ranked Trojans Defeat DCCC

On Saturday, Feb. 21, the Seminole State College Trojan Baseball Team began their 2003 season ranked seventh in the nation by the National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA).

The Seminole State Trojans are the only Oklahoma team ranked in the top ten. Connors State College of Warner came in at a distant second in the 20th spot.

"I'm excited about the NJCAA ranking and the upcoming season," said SSC Head Coach Eric Myers. "But I expect us to be playing our best ball in May."

The Trojans' win against Dodge City Community College of Dodge City, Kansas, was a good start to the season. The Trojans defeated DCCC, 11-5 and 5-4 on Saturday, Feb. 21, and 10-2, 8-3, Sunday, Feb. 22.

The Trojans are in their second year under Myers. During his first year, the Trojans took the Region II Championship and he was named Region II Coach of the

Year. They finished the season with a 46-14 record and produced two Academic All-Americans and one First Team All-American catcher.

His 2002 ball club as a whole excelled academically as well. His team had a combined Grade Point Average of 3.02, ranking them seventh in the nation among 189 Division I NJCAA teams.

Myers said he is expecting a lot more out of the 2003 club.

"We are building on last year's experience," he said. "The majority of our players are sophomores who are returning with more maturity, strength and wisdom. We've also added several talented freshmen to the roster."

Myers attributes some of his success to his strategy of matching his players' strengths against the opposing team's weaknesses.

"Many coaches will play their best pitcher first, then work their way down

the roster," Myers said. "I don't necessarily do that. Instead, I see what the other team is bringing to the plate and put in the pitcher who is best for the job. My best pitcher may not necessarily start and this keeps the other teams guessing."

In addition to a fierce line-up, SSC fans can look forward to more "First-Pitch" home games. Myers started the tradition last year. Members of the Seminole community are invited to participate in a drawing to throw the "first-pitch" at a home game by dropping business cards or filling out forms with their contact information at Western Sizzlin' in Seminole.

Admission to SSC home baseball games is \$2 for adults and \$1 for students. Children under the age of five and SSC students with their college ID are admitted without charge.

For a limited time, Seminole State season tickets are available at \$10 each.



Seminole State College Men's and Women's Tennis Schedule

Mar. 10	Pratt Community College	Seminole	2:00 p.m.	Men
Mar. 25	Cowley County	Seminole	TBA	Women
Apr. 4	Barton County	Seminole	2 p.m.	Men
Apr. 5	Collin County	Seminole	10:00 a.m.	Both
Apr. 5	Cowley County	Seminole	3:00 p.m.	Men
Apr. 8	ECU	Seminole	1:30 p.m.	Both
Apr. 11-13	SW Juco Regional	Temple, TX	TBA	Both
Apr. 15	Southern Nazarene	Seminole	2 p.m.	Women
May 3	Women's Nationals	College Station, TX		
May 11	Men's Nationals	Plano, TX		

SSC Crowns Homecoming Queen

Amy Caffrey of Moore, Okla. was crowned the 2003 Seminole State College homecoming queen during the half-time of the men's basketball game against Northern-Enid Saturday.

Six candidates were vying for the title. Jeri Culley of Mason, Okla., was named first runner-up.

Caffrey is a freshman majoring in psychology. A member of the SSC Lady Trojan Softball Team, she is the daughter of Richard and Susie Caffrey. Corey Hall of Broken Arrow, Okla., escorted her during the ceremony. Hall, the son of David and Paula Hall, is a business major at SSC.

Culley is a sophomore general education major. She is a member of the SSC Belles Basketball Team and is the daughter of Farron and Irene Culley. She was escorted by Justin Berst, a general education major from Sulpher, Okla. He is the son of Dale and Lois Berst.

The remaining four members of the homecoming court were Leah Bowman, Shantele Le'Nae Graham, Adriana Martin and Marty Swinney.

Bowman is a sophomore general studies major from Sperry, Okla. She is a member of the Belles Basketball Team and is the daughter of Bill and Susan Bowman. She was escorted by Michael Neal of Dallas, Texas. Neal, an undeclared major, is the son of Elizabeth Neal.

Graham, a sophomore Physical Education major from Oklahoma City, Okla., is the daughter of Ron and Priscilla Graham. She is also a member of the Belles Basketball Team. Anthony Antonio Smith, Jr., a Criminal Justice major from Tulsa, Okla., escorted her during the ceremony. He is the son of Juanita Kaynard.



SSC Homecoming Queen Amy Caffrey of Moore, Okla., (seated) is pictured with the SSC 2003 Homecoming Court. They include (from left) Jeri Culey of Mason, Okla., Leah Bowman of Sperry, Okla., Adriana Martin of Oklahoma City, Okla., Marty Swinney of Wanette, Okla., and Shantele Graham of Oklahoma City, Okla. Five-year-old Tia Jones of Shawnee, Okla., was the flower girl, and three-year-old Brandon Jones of Seminole, Okla., was the crown bearer.

Martin is a freshman Accounting major from Oklahoma City, Okla. The daughter of Gwen Martin, she is a member of the Belles Basketball Team. She was escorted by Ryan McIntyre, a Criminal Justice major from Lafayette, Ind. He is the son of Stew and Denise McIntyre.

Swinney, a sophomore Physical Education major from Wanette, Okla., is the daughter of Marty and Candie Swinney. Swinney is a member of the Belles Basketball Team and the College's Astronomy Club. She was escorted by Matt Stufflebeam, a Communi-

cations major from Shawnee, Okla. Stufflebeam is the son of Mike and Mindy Stufflebeam.

The queen was presented her crown and plaque by Student Government Association President Ellinda Jones, a sophomore from Shawnee, Okla.

Flower girl for the homecoming ceremony was Tia Jones, the five-year-old daughter of Chris and Ellinda Jones of Shawnee, Okla.

Crown bearer for the ceremony was Brandon Jones, the three-year-old son of Brent and Tina Jones of Seminole, Okla.

Survivor, from Page 4

Last month, she had a one-year check-up and the lab worked showed she was clear of cancer.

She's come a long way from the person she described – sick, bald, weak.

Nowadays her dark curly hair has grown back, and she's fun and funny and full of spirit.

But she's learned a lot about cancer and how people react to it...both victims and the people around them.

"People are scared of people with can-

cer," she said.

"It's like they think it's contagious."

She pantomimed an encounter in which she admitted having had cancer and the person she's talking to pulls back from her.

"This is life; you have to see the humor. You could cry every day, that's human. But if I die tomorrow, I enjoyed it and I didn't give up."

To give back to the community after their support during her illness, Wittmann has agreed this year to serve as the local organizer for the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life, slated for April 25.

"Two years ago they asked me to walk the first lap with the survivors, but I said no," she said.

"I'll walk with a team, but I'm not a survivor yet. I'm still fighting my battle every day." So she walked as much as she could, with no hair and no eyebrows. But this year she'll walk with the survivors.

"I'm going to help with the relay because I hope if, in the future, my kids have cancer, they can go in and get cancer shot because research has come that far," she said.

"The cure saved me, but sometimes it's as bad as the cancer."