



DAVID CRENSHAW/Tulsa World

## New home, new little friend

Natasha Betta feeds peanuts to a squirrel in Woodward Park on Wednesday. Betta recently moved to Tulsa from Russia to be married, and she said squirrels are rare in her hometown, which is about 350 miles northeast of Moscow.

# Candidates find little in common

Runoff election choices for Union's school board have several strong opposing views.

By **KIM BROWN**  
World Staff Writer

Candidates for the April 5 runoff election in Union's school board District No. 5 seat expressed opposing views on several issues during a public forum this week.

Ed Payton and Tom Seng answered questions from an audience of about 60 on Tuesday night at Darnaby Elementary School in a public forum sponsored by the district's PTA Council.

Payton and Seng received about 46 percent and 27 percent of the vote, respectively, in the Feb. 8 election. They received the highest number of votes out of four candidates on the ballot, but neither earned the necessary 50 percent, plus one vote, to win.

While Payton said he would not "rock the boat" if elected, Seng said repeatedly that if elected he would challenge some existing ideas on the board.

Payton said being a school board member was "not just to represent our own viewpoint. I

can work with anybody who's been elected within the other zones."

Seng said he would have no problems expressing his opinion as a member.

"Diversity is what this country is all about," Seng said. "I represent a different opinion of the board."

Asked to describe the district's strengths and weaknesses, Seng said he would challenge the school board to pass bond issues with only operational and maintenance items and eliminate "pet projects."

But some school officials later questioned the legality of funding operations and maintenance items with a bond issue.

Seng also said there was a lack of communication between the school board, the district Web site and patrons. He offered later to be more available to patrons by installing a separate phone line in his home specifically to accommodate their calls.

Payton identified the district's growing population of students classified as English-language



Payton



Seng

learners as its biggest challenge.

"It's the largest growing population in our district, and those students are the hardest to teach," he said.

Payton said he supported a Bedlam Community Health Partnerships clinic that opened in January at Roy Clark Elementary, and the possibility of opening clinics at other sites if the district needed them.

But Seng said he was "very critical" of the clinic and did not fully trust that students would be getting the best care.

"What if there's a wrong diagnosis?" he asked.

The clinic provides at least one full-time physician's assistant or a resident physician, and a pediatrician visits on a rotating schedule.

Candidates also clashed when the district's \$22 million Union

Multipurpose Activity Center came up.

Seng said he believed that the center should offer more activities for students only.

Payton said he supported the UMAC's use for both students and the general public.

Both candidates agreed that the district would benefit from an alternative middle school and that it did not need a second high school.

The District No. 5 seat was vacated by 10-year school board member Bill Bruner in October.

State law mandates that a school board has 60 days after it declares a vacancy to either appoint a replacement or call for a special election.

Instead, the Union board waited until December to declare the seat vacant at its regular meeting.

Union Superintendent Cathy Burden said on Tuesday that state law dictates no time limit for a board to declare a vacant seat. "(Bruner) was willing to resign and let the board reassign his seat. Because it was so close to election time, the board didn't," she said.

Kim Brown 581-8474

kim.brown@tulsaworld.com

# Arkansas Senate endorses immigrant college funding

The bill allows undocumented children of illegal immigrants to receive scholarships.

By **MELISSA NELSON**  
Associated Press

LITTLE ROCK — A bill that would allow the undocumented children of illegal immigrants to receive college scholarships was endorsed Wednesday by a Senate committee that previously had rejected the measure.

The bill by Rep. Joyce Elliott, D-Little Rock, cleared the Senate Education Committee on a voice vote. Earlier, a version of the bill had passed in the House.

Gov. Mike Huckabee has defended the measure, saying that children of illegal immigrants should be allowed to further their education and shouldn't be punished for something their parents did.

The bill also would allow for in-state tuition to anyone who has been in the state for at least three years.

Elliott brought the bill back up in the Senate committee after adjusting language to address equal protection con-

cerns. Also, Sen. Hank Wilkins, D-Pine Bluff, who supports the measure, was in attendance for Wednesday's vote. He had been out previously because of back surgery.

"I'm ecstatic this has finally gotten out of committee," Elliott said. "This allows undocumented children to pay their own way to state colleges and universities and those very few students who qualify to receive scholarships. This isn't giving anyone anything," she said.

Elliott said she planned to wait and gather support for the legislation before running it in the Senate.

"I have a great deal of work to do," she said.

In her presentation to the committee, Elliott shared the story of four undocumented Arizona high school students who defeated Massachusetts Institute of Technology students in an engineering competition.

Elliott said the students have no hope of going to college in

the United States because Arizona law prohibits them from attending a university in that state.

"Let's not create the same circumstance for children in Arkansas," she said.

Sen. Dave Bisbee, R-Rogers and an opponent of the bill, questioned whether Elliott's amendment to the bill would prohibit some colleges and universities that are currently opening their doors to undocumented students from doing so if the students have not been in the state for three years.

But Elliott said the bill would provide cover for all colleges and universities to allow the students to attend.

Sen. Steve Bryles, D-Blytheville, then moved to cut off debate, saying the committee had sufficiently covered the issue in a daylong hearing earlier this month.

"I move for immediate consideration. This has been debated and debated and debated in here," he said.

## Judge grants probation for teen

A Tulsa County judge has granted probation to a teen who originally was sentenced to two years in an adult prison for assaulting a staff member at the L.E. Rader Center.

Jacquita Jordan, now 16, pleaded guilty in July to a felony charge of assault and battery upon an employee of the Office of Juvenile Affairs.

District Judge Rebecca Nightingale imposed a two-year prison term on Aug. 26.

On Wednesday, Nightingale vacated that sentence and granted Jordan a deferred sentence, meaning she can have the case dismissed if she completes a two-year probation.

The employee at the Sand Springs juvenile detention facility needed medical treatment after being punched three times and struck in the face, ear and neck by Jordan, a prosecutor has said.

# Spelman president honored in Tulsa

She received an excellence in education award and \$40,000.

WORLD CAPITOL BUREAU

OKLAHOMA CITY — The president of the nation's oldest historically black college for women was honored this week as the 2005 winner of the Brock Symposium on Excellence in Education.

Beverly Daniel Tatum, president of Spelman College in Atlanta, received a \$40,000 prize sponsored by Tulsa businessman John A. Brock and the Brock Family Community Foundation.

Tatum said a judge's decision to end a major busing case in Oklahoma during the late 1980s signaled a turning point for the nation.



Tatum

"Indeed the Oklahoma City v. Dowell decision had the ripple effect of federal judges releasing other school districts from their court-ordered desegregation plan," she said.

Seven years ago, Tatum was recognized nationally for her book, "Why Are All the Black Kids Still Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? And Other Conversations About Race."

She was chosen for the symposium honor by representatives of the University of Tulsa, Oklahoma State University, the University of Oklahoma and the Brock Foundation.

# Portrait of state's first female lawmaker shown

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — A portrait of Amelia Elizabeth "Bessie" McColgin, Oklahoma's first female state representative, was unveiled during a state Capitol ceremony Wednesday.

The portrait was displayed in the House one day before McColgin, who was elected to the Legislature in 1920, was scheduled to be inducted into the Oklahoma Women's Hall of Fame.

McColgin came to Oklahoma in 1901 and helped her husband stake claim to property in Roger Mills County in 1903.

Although the 19th Amendment, which gave women the right to vote, was ratified in 1920, it was not enacted in time for McColgin to vote in her own

election. Her election paved the way for three women who were elected to the House in 1923.

"Representative McColgin set the standard for women across the state that they, too, can be part of the Oklahoma Legislature," said former Sen. Charles Ford, who presided over the ceremony.

The painting, by Mike Wimmer of Norman, was a gift from the family of Bessie McColgin and U.S. Rep. Frank Lucas, who lives in Roger Mills County.

Several of McColgin's family members, including her daughter, Octavia DeBerry, and great-granddaughter, Lisa Coffee, were at the ceremony. Coffee is the wife of Senate Minority Leader Glenn Coffee, R-Oklahoma City.

# Third robbery suspect guilty on 19 counts

By **DAVID HARPER**  
World Staff Writer

A 26-year-old man is facing life in prison after being convicted Wednesday of four armed robberies, two attempted robberies and 12 firearm crimes.

James Lee Watson of Tulsa was also convicted of conspiring with Kenneth Antonio Butler, 21, and Nicole Cassares, 22, in a plot to commit a string of robberies in Tulsa last October.

A federal jury deliberated on Wednesday for almost 90 minutes after a 1½-day trial before finding Watson guilty of taking part in armed robberies that occurred at three Subway sandwich shops, as well as an Oct. 7 heist at an O'Reilly Auto Parts, 7694 E. 46th St.

Watson was also found guilty of participating in attempted armed robberies Oct. 6 at a Priscilla's location at 11344 E. 11th St. and Oct. 11 at Auto Zone, 4261 Southwest Blvd.

All three defendants were captured in the aftermath of the attempted AutoZone heist after employees thwarted the robbery and called 911.

Butler pleaded guilty Jan. 18 to firearm charges connected to his part in the Oct. 1 armed robbery of the Subway at 8155 E. 21st St. and another holdup that happened Oct. 4 at the sandwich shop's store at 7004-A E. Admiral Place.

Cassares pleaded guilty Jan. 13 to a gun count connected to the first Subway robbery. She confessed to driving Watson and Butler to the store and admitted knowing they were armed.

Watson was convicted Wednesday of brandishing a firearm in the four robberies and the two attempted heists. He also was found guilty of six counts of possessing a gun despite a felony record.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Steve Sewell said it appears Watson will receive life in prison based solely on the firearm convictions when he is sentenced July 6 by U.S. District Judge Terence Kern. First Assistant U.S. Attorney Scott Woodward and defense attorney James Fatigante agreed with the assessment.

David Harper 581-8359  
david.harper@tulsaworld.com

# COOLING COSTS



Are you sweating over the cost of cooling your home this summer? Purchase a High-Efficiency **LENNOX** Cooling System and lower your cooling costs up to 50%

Rebates up to \$1125

OR

18 mo. No Payments/No Interest

- Heating
- Cooling
- Electric
- Plumbing

On select **LENNOX** equipment/W.A.C. Limited Time Offer / Call Airco For Details

**Airco** Service, inc. SINCE 1961



"The Company You Know"

252-5667



# Share Your Opinions With the World

Letters to the Editor

Send to: Letters to the Editor, Tulsa World, Box 1770, Tulsa, OK, 74102 or e-mail: letters@tulsaworld.com fax: (918) 581-8353

TULSA WORLD

Each letter must be signed and include a full name, an address and a telephone number where the writer can be reached during business hours. Addresses and phone numbers will not be published. Letters should be a maximum of 200 words to be considered for publication and may be edited for length, style and grammar.