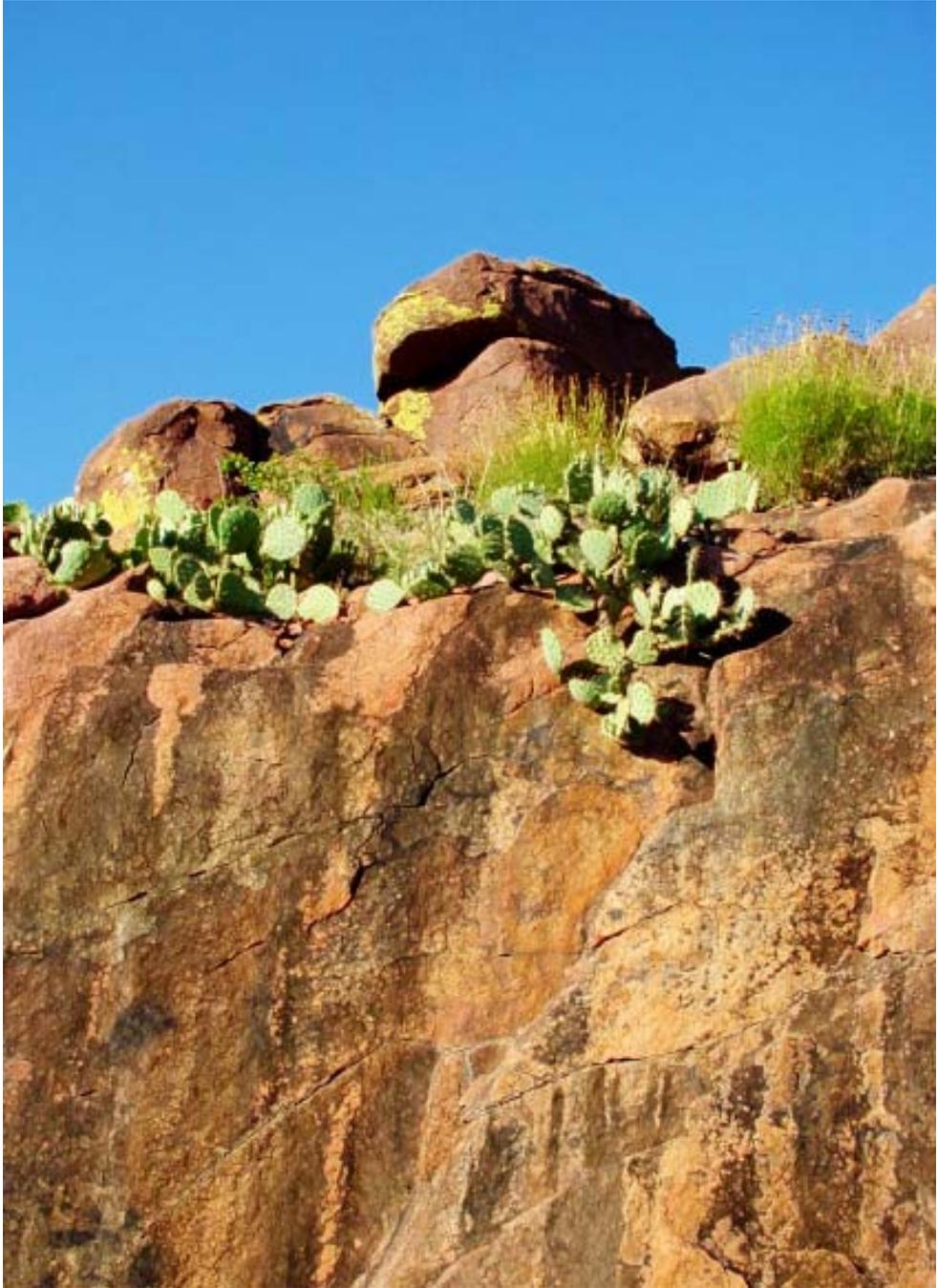


# Local Services



# Environmental Complaints and Local Services

**T**he Environmental Complaints and Local Services Division (Local Services) is the local arm of the DEQ, maintaining 29 field offices located throughout the state. These offices house 70 local environmental specialists who are knowledgeable in all programs administered by the DEQ.

These local environmental specialists provide technical assistance to citizens, investigate environmental complaints, conduct inspections of regulated facilities, and serve as a local point of contact for response personnel during emergency situations. Local Services' staff also promote cooperation and compliance with the state's environmental regulations by providing a lo-

cal presence and a friendly, familiar face for the regulated community and citizens in each county.

Local Services has also created an outstanding, nationally recognized Complaints Program featuring 24-hour complaint hotline intake, a two-day response by a local environmental specialist, written updates to complainants, meaningful resolution, consistent enforcement when necessary, and survey follow-up to ensure more personable customer service by DEQ.

Local Services also works cooperatively with other DEQ divisions and both state and federal agencies in the investigation and resolution of multi-jurisdictional environmental concerns. ■



*Oologah Lake*

# Southgate Recycling

**S**outhgate Recycling was located east of Altus on Highway 62 at the east entrance to Altus Air Force Base, with recycling activities that primarily consisted of recycling old asphalt shingles into road base material.

While in operation, the amount of material brought into the facility by far outweighed what was being recycled into road base material, creating a large surplus of old asphalt shingles at the facility. The property was abandoned after the death of the owner, leaving thirteen acres of concrete, asphalt shingles, and other material to be cleaned up.

The City of Altus purchased the property and entered into a Consent Agreement with DEQ to clean up the site, alleviate any adverse environmental impact and improve the appearance of the entrance to the Air Force Base. The Consent Agreement allowed certain items to be removed from the site for recycling or disposal at the municipal landfill; and the remaining material was buried on site, with Local Services monitoring the project. The project that began in June 2003 and ended in Decem-

ber 2003 cost over \$350,000 dollars to complete.

From that single facility, an estimated 158,000 cubic yards of material (or the equivalent of 1,200 railcars or 3,600 semi-trailers) was buried in a nine-acre area. The Consent Agreement entered into between the City of Altus and DEQ not only provided an avenue to clean up an abandoned site, it also allowed the City of Altus to save approximately \$900,000 in hauling fees. Additionally, the cleanup allowed for the saving of needed landfill space. Altus Municipal Landfill currently has approximately 777,000 cubic yards of remaining fill area available for disposal. The 158,000 cubic yards of material that was buried at the site would have taken up 20 percent of this available space and shortened the life of the landfill.

The property is currently being considered for several uses by the City of Altus. One proposed use, which is still under review, is for an aircraft from Altus Air Force Base to be put on static display on the southwest corner of the site to welcome visitors to the City of Altus and to Altus Air Force Base. ■



*Southgate property (before).*



*Southgate property (after).*

*More photos on next page*



*Southgate property (before).*



*Southgate property (after).*



*Southgate property (before).*



*Southgate property (after).*

## Saving Clean Air and Blue Sky

In January 2004, Local Services responded to a citizen's complaint of open burning at a lodge on Grand Lake. When our local environmental specialist arrived on site, a major portion of the old lodge was being demolished to make room for new construction and the waste was being burned at the site of the demolition.

After the fires were extinguished, DEQ determined that the demolition debris needed to be disposed of at an approved landfill. Due to the concern of one citizen and immediate response by local services, over 35,000 cubic yards of waste was removed to a landfill for proper disposal instead of being burned or buried on site. In response to the Environmental

Complaints and Local Services customer satisfaction survey, the citizen replied, "Thank you for your efforts. We saved a little clean air and blue sky." ■



*Debris being readied for disposal.*

# Coming Together – State and Private Sector Join Forces



*Robert Huber conducting an on-site training course.*

**L**ocal Services created the On-Site Education and Training Task Force, a joint effort between DEQ and professionals in the private sector. The task force was created for the purpose of improving our on-site training and education programs. Local Services asked private sector professionals to participate with the task force to ensure all program improvements are viewed by both the regulated community and DEQ before approval.

The on-site education and training program currently provides professional certification for on-site sewage

treatment system installers, but will be expanding to include certification for septic pumpers and soil profilers. The program also currently provides consistent training and professional educational materials for professionals, staff, homeowners, lending institutions, and real estate professionals.

The task force will be improving the program by addressing technology concerns, certification concerns, and implementing new and/or improved training programs. Web pages are also in development for the DEQ web site and will include links to fact sheets and forms used in the program. ■

# Stormwater Changes for Local Services

**L**ocal Services' role in the stormwater program has been the review of permits, investigating stormwater complaints, and documenting and initiating correction of improper sediment controls or discharges from construction sites. This year, Local Services expanded its role to include conducting routine stormwater inspections at permitted sites.

Phase II of the federal Stormwater Program was also implemented at the beginning of this year. Phase II required storm water permits for construction sites of one acre or more where formerly it applied only to

sites five acres or more. This change increased the number of permits reviewed by Local Services and the number of inspections that are performed yearly.

There were initial workload concerns due to the expected increase in permits due to the reduction in acreage size. However, Local Services implemented all of these changes and the environmental specialists never skipped a beat. Due to their training and abilities, Local Services didn't even have to hire additional personnel to help accommodate the new program and additional requirements. ■



*Silt runoff into a creek.*



*Silt runoff into drainage area.*



*Silt run-off onto a street.*



*Good stormwater controls.*



*Good stormwater controls.*



*Good stormwater controls.*

# Local Services Granting Oklahoma a Cleaner Environment



*Sewage surfacing from a failing septic system.*

**L**ocal Services has established a grant program, using penalty funds to help citizens who are unable to correct surfacing sewage violations due to financial constraints. This process ensures that the surfacing sewage problem is corrected and contaminants are kept out of our environment.

One such grant program applicant received a grant from Local Services for the installation of an on-site sewage treatment system. Ms. Douglas\* purchased a home and shortly after moving in discovered that the property had a failing septic system. She had intended to repair the system herself, but a fire in the kitchen of her home put a

strain on her available income. To make matters worse, Ms. Douglas was notified a short time later that she was going to lose her job when the business where she worked closed.

Ms. Douglas lives with her mother and two children, and her salary was the only source of earned income for the family. She could not afford to repair the septic system. Once her need was determined, the grant application process was started and Local Services was able to pay the entire cost to install a new septic system for the Douglas'.

\*The name of this individual has been changed. ■

# Local Services Promotes Annual Poster Contest Program

The Annual Trash Poster Contest was established in 1990 as a cooperative effort among DEQ and other environmentally conscious organizations to raise awareness concerning litter among students in grades Kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Local Services' staff work with educators in each county to provide a fun and educational experience while promoting responsible solid waste management.

Each year, all interested students are invited to submit entries to their lo-

cal ECLS offices in late January or early February. Certificates are awarded to the most artistic and creative posters in four age categories: K – 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, 3<sup>rd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> grade, 6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grade, and 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

Posters are first judged on a county level, with winners receiving certificates and advancing to the statewide contest. At the state level, the students compete for cash prizes, and winning entries are presented in a calendar published the following year and distributed statewide. ■

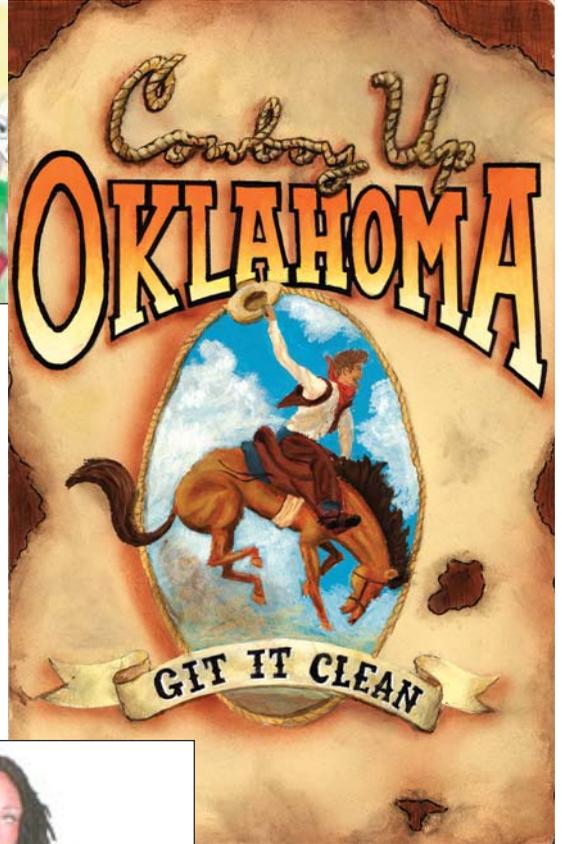


Award presentation to Oklahoma County 2<sup>nd</sup> Place winner Jeremy Teel (left center). From left to right: Silvy Kirk, Carl Albert High School Principal; Jeremy Teel, winner; Mrs. Zurmehly, Carl Albert High School teacher; Jennifer Robbins, ECLS employee.

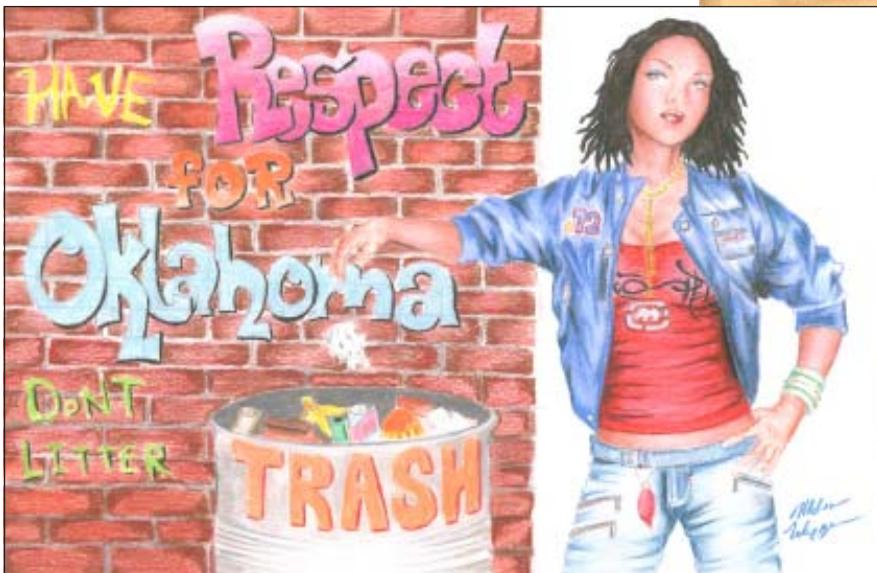


Poster judging by ECLS employees Traci Martin and Brandon Bowman.

*A few posters from the 2004 Oklahoma Annual Trash Poster Contest are on the next page*



Pictured are just three of the winning posters for the Trash Poster Contest.



# Complaints Office Goes “Public”

**T**he Environmental Complaints Hotline receives over 6,000 citizen complaints each year. With the public's help, Local Services is able to address these situations to ensure that they no longer pose a threat to our environment.

In spite of the Hotline's long existence, Complaints Office staff have noticed that numerous callers are just now finding out about it and how DEQ can help. To raise public awareness, Local Services has been working to bring statewide citizen recognition to the Complaints Hotline.

Several “public service announcement” display advertisements have been developed and approved for use. Local

Services is working to get them published in a wide range of media and in the most cost effective ways possible. Pikepass has published our advertisements in its newsletters. The advertisements have been sent to local newspapers statewide for their use and are available through Local Services for use in other newsletters, web pages, church bulletins, etc.

For more information on using the advertisements for your publications and to find out what types of advertisements are available, please contact Local Services at 405-702-6100. And as always, to report environmental problems in Oklahoma, contact the DEQ's Environmental Complaints Hotline number at 1-800-522-0206. ■

## Is This Really What You Had In Mind When You Sent Us Out To Play?

**We Can Help**



**1-800-522-0206**

24 Hour Environmental Complaints Hotline



*More public service announcements on next two pages*

# I'm Sick Of Looking At It

Illegal Dumping Is A Problem

We Can Help



O K L A H O M A  
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY  
*...for a clean, attractive, prosperous Oklahoma*

1 - 800 - 522 - 0206  
24 Hour Environmental Complaints Hotline



# Surfacing Sewage ?

We Can Help



O K L A H O M A  
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY  
*...for a clean, attractive, prosperous Oklahoma*

1-800-522-0206  
24 Hour Environmental Complaints Hotline



# I Can Help.

Surfacing Sewage  
Illegal Dumping  
Burning Trash



O K L A H O M A  
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY  
*...for a clean, attractive, prosperous Oklahoma*

**1 - 800 - 522 - 0206**

24 Hour Environmental Complaints Hotline



# For Problems Big and Small

Surfacing Sewage  
Illegal Dumping  
Unauthorized Burning  
Fish or Wildlife Kills  
Industrial Wastewater Issues



O K L A H O M A  
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY  
*...for a clean, attractive, prosperous Oklahoma*

**1-800-522-0206**  
24 Hour Environmental Complaints Hotline



# Local Services Experiences Great Responses

**L**ocal Services sends out over 3,200 customer satisfaction surveys by mail to complainants and responsible parties each year, allowing them to rate their experience in dealing with DEQ and DEQ employees.

The return rate for surveys averages between two percent and six percent. However, Local Services has a 27 percent return rate for responses from complainants and responsible parties. We believe that, because there is already a vested interest in the complaint resolution, both parties welcome the opportunity to share their opinion of how their complaint was handled.

Of the surveys returned, only three percent of the responses are negative, indicating that almost all respondents are satis-

fied with the results of their complaint resolution and with their interaction with DEQ employees.

Responses received include one from an individual that stated, "We want to keep our environment clean and DEQ has done a professional job working with us and our property owners. Thanks." Another respondent said, "With the workload put upon you, you all do an excellent job." An elderly woman replied, "I was worried about telling on my neighbor, but David Golden was so kind and fixed the problem right away, that I am looking forward to telling him about my other neighbors." Local Services strives to excel in complaint investigation satisfaction and public interaction satisfaction and our survey responses show we certainly do. ■

## Environmental Complaints and Local Services Survey Responses

