

# Heartfelt gift

It's cliché, but nothing says "I love you" more than a dozen red roses and candy. **Scene D-1**

# Weighing in

OSU basketball coach Sean Sutton discusses his frustrations with a tough season. **Sports B-1**



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**WEDNESDAY**  
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# TULSA WORLD

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## OBAMA, MCCAIN SCORE WINS



Democrat Barack Obama and Republican John McCain won primaries in Virginia, Maryland and Washington, D.C. on Tuesday. The three victories for Obama gave him eight in a row over Hillary Rodham Clinton.



### NATIONAL DELEGATE COUNT

Democrats	Republicans
<b>Barack Obama:</b> 1,210	<b>John McCain:</b> 789
<b>Hillary Clinton:</b> 1,188	<b>Mike Huckabee:</b> 241

► Complete election coverage inside, **A-12**.

# Foreclosures drop

► Tulsa's 2007 foreclosure rate was down, contrary to the trend elsewhere in the U.S.

By **ROBERT EVATT**  
World Staff Writer

Foreclosures in the Tulsa area bucked the national trend and dipped slightly in 2007.

The approximately 5,670 foreclosure filings in the metro area represented a 3.66 percent drop from the year before, according to RealtyTrac, a real estate data service.

Nationally, foreclosures skyrocketed 79.21 percent.

Tulsa was one of only 14 of the 100 largest metro areas to record a drop in 2007, al-

though the city's foreclosure rate of 0.912 percent of all households made it the 56th highest.

Steven Admire, president of Advantage One Mortgage, said Tulsa's strong performance was due to its stability over the past few years.

"We didn't enjoy the bubble, so now we're not going to feel the pain of the bust," he said.

Admire said low housing costs also held down the num-

SEE **DROP** A-4

## Foreclosure activity in 2007

Among 100 U.S. metro areas

	% Households (foreclosure rate)	% change from 2006
<b>HIGHEST</b>		
1. Detroit/Livonia/Dearborn, MI	4.918	68.15
2. Stockton, CA	4.866	271.30
3. Las Vegas/Paradise, NV	4.228	168.11
4. Riverside/San Bernardino, CA	3.826	186.14
5. Sacramento, CA	3.189	272.54
56. Tulsa	0.912	-3.66
62. Oklahoma City	0.801	-15.44
<b>LOWEST</b>		
96. Allentown/Bethlehem/Easton, PA	0.173	12.15
97. Honolulu, HI	0.157	52.96
98. McAllen/Edinburg/Pharr, TX	0.132	-19.74
99. Syracuse, NY	0.128	128.93
100. Greenville, SC	0.082	-73.47

Source: RealtyTrac  
Tulsa World

## COMMUNITY MEDICINE: HEALTHY APPROACH TO EDUCATION



STEPHEN PINGRY / Tulsa World

George Kaiser speaks during a press conference Tuesday to announce a \$50 million gift from the George Kaiser Family Foundation to the University of Oklahoma-Tulsa as medical students listen.

# School to tackle health-care gap

By **GINNIE GRAHAM**  
World Staff Writer

When University of Oklahoma President David Boren was told north Tulsa residents on average lived about 14 fewer years than south Tulsa residents, he was baffled by the health-care disparity.

"It took my breath away," Boren said at a press conference Tuesday. "I could not believe that could be the case."

Study after study confirmed what the OU College of Public Health was finding in its research. Oklahoma ranked last in overall

public health care systems, near last in physicians per capita and top in diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, obesity and infant mortality.

People in poor areas did not have nearby doctors, clinics or access to preventive care. Specialty care often was out of reach financially and geographically. Pregnant women were not getting prenatal care, and children were forgoing regular checkups.

To change the landscape of Oklahoma health care, the George Kaiser Family Foundation

is giving \$50 million to create the nation's first School of Community Medicine, housed at OU-Tulsa.

"No longer can we be accused of being asleep at the wheel and expect things to improve on their own," said Dr. Daniel Duffy, director of the community health track at the OU School of Community Medicine.

"We must intervene."

Philanthropist George Kaiser noted the U.S. spends about one-sixth of the gross domestic prod-

SEE **OU** A-4

## \$50 million George Kaiser Family Foundation gift

Establishes OU School of Community Medicine

► **\$35 million** to endow 35 faculty chairs

► **\$7.5 million** for start-up costs

► **\$7.5 million** for student financial assistance

# Latest forecasts wipe out surplus

► Lawmakers may have to look for places to cut the state budget.

By **MICK HINTON**  
World Capitol Bureau

OKLAHOMA CITY — A prediction that the state will have \$32 million for new spending was wiped out Tuesday, with officials now saying the state's upcoming budget could actually shrink.

Latest projections from the Oklahoma Tax Commission show that expected revenues from corporate and personal income taxes are falling well below estimates.

State Treasurer Scott Meacham said, "This is going to eat that \$32 million real quick."

The new estimates show that roads and bridges will not get a \$50 million boost.

The increase was tied to a 3 percent growth rate. Because the trigger was not reached, the Department of Transportation will only get \$17.5 million.

Meacham said the figures show that Oklahoma's economy is still growing slightly, but economists are saying that "we're going to have to tighten our belts even more than expected."

Economists attribute the growth to increased energy prices.

Over the past three years, individ-



### SLOWDOWN

**Scott Meacham:** Budget-tightening may be needed even if the economy is still growing.

SEE **BUDGET** A-4

# Custody case: dogs in middle

► Blinky and Begonia are the subject of a court fight between their former and current owners.

By **DAVID HARPER**  
World Staff Writer

This is a love story that will not have a happy ending for some.

Tulsa Jennifer Wynn's two dogs, Begonia and Blinky, have become a beloved part of her life since she adopted them from the

Tulsa Animal Shelter in August 2006.

Former Tulsan Karin Willis moved to California two years ago as her marriage was falling apart. Due to the difficult circumstances, she left her dogs, Sandy and Johnny, behind, intending for the sepa-

ration to be temporary.

The problem is that Sandy and Johnny are now Begonia and Blinky.

Barring a settlement that involves sharing — a scenario that seems highly unlikely — either Wynn or Willis will be left without the dogs, who each woman believes are rightfully hers.

SEE **DOGS** A-4



Jennifer Wynn is faced with a court battle over custody of her two dogs, Begonia (left) and Blinky, whom she adopted from the Tulsa Animal Shelter in 2006.

SHERRY BROWN / Tulsa World

High 50, Low 39

Sunny

Complete weather on E-6



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## Who do you love?

The Oklahoma Poll checks the approval ratings of seven state coaches.

Tomorrow in News



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## Storms in South buffet Mississippi River ships

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Tornadoes and other severe weather raked the Deep South on Tuesday, pushing Mississippi River ships around like toys, damaging homes and killing at least one person.

Several river vessels broke loose in the winds, said Port of New Orleans spokeswoman Cynthia Swain. A freighter docked at the Andry Street Wharf was pushed across the river and collided with two vessels downstream.

The river remained open, and there were no reports of injuries, Swain said.

A woman was killed by a tornado after leaving the Lallie Kemp Regional Medical Center in Independence, La., at the height of the storm against

advice, said Sherre Pack-Hookfin, the hospital's acting administrator.

Falling trees damaged more than two dozen vehicles parked at the hospital, and an equipment storage trailer was flipped on its side. The National Weather Service confirmed it was a tornado, one of several reported throughout the afternoon.

Homes were damaged in Hinds County, Miss., said Lea Stokes, spokeswoman for the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency. Thousands of customers lost power at points in Mississippi.

The storms follow catastrophic weather last week that produced the deadliest tornado outbreak in years.

## DROP:

Oklahoma City sees an even steeper drop in foreclosures — 15.44 percent.

FROM A-1

ber of Tulsa-area residents seeking high-risk, subprime mortgages, which have been blamed for the national boom in foreclosures.

Margo Mitchell, executive director of Consumer Credit Counseling Service in Tulsa, welcomed the news, though she expects local foreclosures will start piling up soon.

"We've had a lot of calls in January with people struggling, and we're now seeing a

lot more past-due situations than we did in the fourth quarter of last year," she said.

Metropolitan Oklahoma City experienced an even steeper foreclosure drop of 15.44 percent last year, and its foreclosure rate of 0.8 percent of all households ranked it 62nd on the list.

Nationally, the foreclosure rate was 1.033 percent.

James Saccacio, CEO of RealtyTrac, said national foreclosures were driven by cities that had unsustainable housing sales and pricing growth, or cities undergoing widespread housing downturns, such as Detroit.

Last month, RealtyTrac reported that statewide foreclosures fell 12.8 percent in 2007, with Oklahoma one of only six to report a decline from 2006.

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## OU:

Kaiser's foundation mostly backs efforts to intervene in poverty.

FROM A-1

uct on health care.

"That is twice as much as any other country for the finest medical care in the world, if you are financially able to access it," Kaiser said. "But it is the worst if you are unable to pay."

"That is morally offensive." Part of the gift will go to recruit medical students and offset loans so they can remain in community care and work in Oklahoma's poor areas.

"The key element is the ability to attract idealistic medical school students within and outside Oklahoma committed to quality health care in underserved areas in rural and urban Oklahoma," Kaiser said.

"Most enter idealistic, but it gets ground out of them."

Kaiser's foundation primarily backs efforts to intervene in poverty including establishing the Educare early childhood programs and supporting programs for pregnant women, single mothers, at-risk babies and infants and other social services.

"Once in a while we stray into civic projects, and not always with success," Kaiser joked, referring to his support of the failed Arkansas River development proposal last fall.

To people who doubt the impact and success of the new medical school, Kaiser said, "Yes we can."

Ken Levit, executive director of the foundation, said the gift is tied to benchmarks such as enrollment, state matching funds, endowment chairs and operating of a health clinic in north Tulsa.

"We all have lots of work to do together to realize this ambitious goal," Levit said. "Through it all, we must insist that Oklahoma move up from bottom to a place of pride."

North Carolina recently set a similar goal to improve its health-care access with the state Legislature approving \$240 million toward the effort,

### \$50 million George Kaiser Family Foundation gift

#### OTHER ELEMENTS

► New track begins in fall.  
► Enrollment goal of 70 students per class by fall 2011.

► Overall enrollment goal of 280 students, including 140 third- and fourth-year students.  
► Staff will be 221 full-time faculty, 251 resident and fellow residents and 50 physician assistant students.

► Expected regional economic impact of \$85 million with 1,600 new jobs.

► Goal to increase research grants from \$4.8 million annually to \$14.8 million.

► 80 percent of graduates will work in Oklahoma's underserved areas.

For more information, go to: [www.tulsaworld.com/outulsa](http://www.tulsaworld.com/outulsa)

Boren said.

Oklahoma ranks last in the Big 12 Conference for state funding toward medical schools, Boren said.

"That has to change, too, if we are going to do what we need to do," he said.

Boren pointed out that the OU-Tulsa Schusterman Center at 4502 E. 41st St. did not exist 12 years ago, along with the absence of school-based clinics, OU's early education degree program, diabetes center, cancer institute and Bedlam clinics.

"Those things were only dreams, only hopes and only aspirations," Boren said. "The evidence is there to show we can do it when you look at how far we've come in 12 short years."

"Yes we can. Yes we will. We turn the corner today in Oklahoma."

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## DOGS:

A judge says he's not aware of a legal precedent.

FROM A-1

The dogs' custody is the subject of a lawsuit that is pending before Tulsa County Special Judge Russell Hass.

Hass said he is not aware of any legal precedent that has dealt with a situation quite like this one.

"Hopefully, this is not a trend," the judge said.

According to a court document, Willis' father gave her the two champion Pekingese several years ago. She later brought them with her from Israel to Tulsa, where she settled with her husband.

When she left the marriage in February 2006, she essentially had no choice but to board a flight to San Francisco — where her brother lived — without Sandy and Johnny, Willis said.

"The only thing I wanted was my dogs," Willis, 26, said in a recent interview.

She said her ex-husband didn't follow through on a promise to send Sandy and Johnny to her.

The animals ended up at the Tulsa Animal Shelter, where they caught Wynn's eye on Aug. 17, 2006.

"I wasn't thinking that I would get two dogs that day," Wynn recalls. However, she remembers that the two were obviously a package deal as they clung to each other at the shelter.

Wynn, 25, says the dogs looked "pitiful" — especially the male, whose missing eye led her to brand him Blinky.

She named the female dog Begonia,

### Terms of the visitation order:

► Visitation should occur in a public park or public place.

**Willis:**

► Must give 48 hours written notice of requested dates.

► Must be reasonable in her requests.

**Wynn:**

► May employ an off-duty law enforcement officer, at her expense, for supervision.

► Should accommodate reasonable visitation during lunch hours, after work or on weekends.

► Cannot take the dogs out of Tulsa pending trial.

and it looked like the dogs would live out the second chapter of their lives with her, happily ever after.

But in October 2006, Wynn received a letter from a California law firm in which the attorneys nicely explained some details from the first chapter of the dogs' lives.

Then the letter — perhaps not so nicely — set a deadline for Wynn to call the firm, or "we will have no alternative but to take the steps necessary to have the dogs returned to Karin including getting the Tulsa Police Department involved and possibly filing a civil action."

Normally the Tulsa Animal Shelter does not divulge information about an adopter to outside parties, said Charity Curtis, animal control supervisor.

*'The only thing I wanted was my dogs.'*

Karin Willis, in a recent interview.

*'I wasn't thinking I would get two dogs that day.'*

Jennifer Wynn, remembering that the two were obviously a package deal as they clung to each other at the shelter.

## BUDGET:

Speaker Chris Benge says the state is in a better position than most to weather an economic downturn.

FROM A-1

ual income taxes have been cut by about \$560 million, so that money is no longer increasing the state budget.

"We have known for some time the economy has been slowing nationwide. This is not just an Oklahoma issue," House Speaker Chris Benge said.

Benge, R-Tulsa, said the state is better positioned than most to weather any economic downturn "because we have restrained government growth while also building a robust savings in our rainy day fund."

The state has \$570 million in its rainy day savings account that can be tapped. Meacham said that money was put aside for this kind of slowdown in the economy.

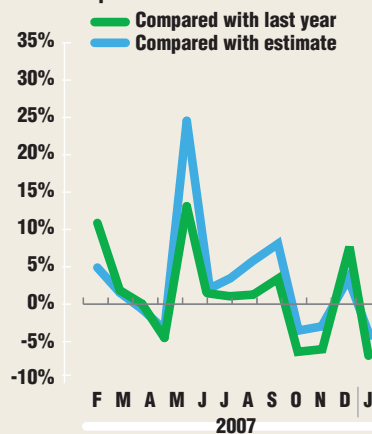
Sen. Mike Johnson, R-Kingfisher, said leaders "must proceed very cautiously, prioritize spending proposals and avoid

### State general fund revenue collections

Amount in millions

Feb. '07 ...	\$304.8	Aug. ....	\$442.5
March.....	\$519.9	Sept. ....	\$612.5
April.....	\$678.2	Oct. ....	\$444.3
May.....	\$435.2	Nov. ....	\$403.6
June.....	\$580.2	Dec. ....	\$529.7
July.....	\$411.2	Jan. '08....	\$538.3

#### Revenue performance



SOURCE: Office of State Finance  
Tulsa World

In this case, however, the shelter was served with a subpoena.

Wynn said city officials told her that once the shelter has possession of animals for three full days, they become the property of the city and not the former owner.

Tulsa attorney Daniel Graves agreed to represent Wynn for free and wrote a letter to the California firm on Oct. 23, 2006, saying Wynn was a "bona fide purchaser for value" of the dogs.

One year went by, and Blinky and Begonia became "very ingrained in my life," Wynn said.

But last October, Willis filed a petition in Tulsa County District Court seeking the dogs' return.

A hearing was held Jan. 30 in Hass' courtroom. No final ruling was made, but on Feb. 4, the judge ordered visitation — the kind you might see in a child-custody case. It gives Willis the right while the case is pending to supervised visitation with the dogs anytime she is in Tulsa, as long as the times are "reasonable."

Hass also ordered that the parties attend a settlement conference.

However, Graves — who normally handles corporate and medical litigation — said this is not the sort of case that would be likely to be settled out of court. Each woman wants to keep both dogs, and no one thinks splitting them up is a desirable option.

Graves said the law looks at animals like property and that the law is clear that in a situation such as this, the dogs belong to Wynn.

Still, the case is not yet decided, and Willis will be allowed to provide the court with information about the circumstances of her 2006 departure for California before a ruling is made.

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nue projections do not automatically mean that the governor's proposed \$1,200 teacher pay hike can't happen. He said the Legislature will have to decide how important the raises are.

The Office of State Finance will examine the new figures from the tax commission showing major sources of tax revenue, then provide a more firm estimate to the State Equalization Board next Tuesday. That board will set the figure that the Legislature and governor have to spend on the upcoming budget.

The state's budget has grown steadily since 2003, so lawmakers accustomed to increased spending will have to find places to trim.

Meanwhile, the monthly revenue report released Tuesday shows that general revenue fund collections for January totaled \$538.3 million.

That's down \$38.5 million, or 6.7 percent, compared with the same month last year. It's also \$25.7 million, or 4.6 percent, below the official estimate.

Income, gross production and sales taxes were all below the official estimate. Income and gross production collections were also less than the previous year, according to the report.

World Capitol Bureau reporter Angel Riggs contributed to this story.

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