

# FOCUS

## Council helps coordinate myriad of services

► **Community Service**  
Council oversees activities of hundreds of agencies.

By **SARA PLUMMER**  
World Staff Writer

Phil Dessauer, Community Service Council's executive director, said sometimes he has a hard time telling people what the council does.

"We're more of a coordinator," Dessauer said. "We also try to create the infrastructures."

The 65-year-old council deals with community planning, resources and data collection.

Dessauer said when the council first started, the goal was to bring together charitable organizations.

Since then, its focus has shifted to prevention.

"We looked at trends and needs, and the needs were growing dramatically. We really needed to focus our planning on helping people become self-sufficient so we wouldn't need all the programs," he said.

The Community Service Council receives funding from several entities including the Tulsa Area United Way, federal grants and donations from individuals and foundations.

The council has 60 full- and part-time employees and operates on approximately a \$4 million budget.

Dessauer has been with the council for 30 years. Before that, he worked with Project 12, Tulsa's largest alternative school.

"I'm particularly interested in education," he said. "I saw so many people's lives wasted. It couldn't be fixed just by schools."

The Community Service Council has more than 15 initiatives, each with its own programs and sources of funding. Some of those programs include helping youth, young children, resources on who to call for help, or organizing volunteers.

### Building future leaders

The East Tulsa Prevention Coalition started in 1999 to involve the east Tulsa community in drug and alcohol prevention, said Alice Blue, ETPC director.

Seven years later, the coalition maintains a membership of 250 people from different areas, including health-care professionals, clergy, politicians, neighborhood leaders and youth.

"This has been a broad and diverse group because we've invited a large group of people," said Gary Percefull, steering committee member.

Bobbie Henderson, another steering committee member, agreed.

"From the beginning, we worked hard to build relationships with a variety of folks involved," Henderson said.

Percefull said the coalition's focus is on community building and youth involvement.

"Reduce the use of idle hands. We offered them the opportunity to get them involved. A lot of them have taken advantage of that," he said.

Jordan Westbrook, youth development coordinator, said in the two years he has been working with East Central High School students, he has seen quiet teens become leaders.

"The youth involvement has helped us adapt, to see things from their perspective, look at issues that we would never

have thought of," Henderson said.

ETPC has several programs focused on youth and family, including Community Family Club; Across Ages, an intergenerational mentoring program; and Teens in Action, where East Central students mentor Cooper Elementary students.

The coalition also works to bring together people of different ages and ethnicities.

"I think we've been very useful in getting the new and old working together," Percefull said. "It would be easy for the community to split into cliques. There are a lot of Asians, Hispanics. ... There are a lot of retirees in those neighborhoods. Coalition building is hard work. It is not a naturally occurring thing."

### Early preparation

The Child Resource Center is also focused on children, but its goal is getting them ready to enter school by referring them to quality child care centers. The center also helps child care centers become better equipped.

Jan Figart, the resource center's interim director, said last year, the center gave 60,000 referrals to parents to more than 1,000 Department of Human Services approved child care centers in the Tulsa area.

"We try to match up what the parents want with what we have," Figart said.

The Child Resource Center started 20 years ago after a study showed a need for child care in Tulsa.

Melinda Belcher, resource and referral coordinator, said the resource and referral program and the child care food program, which enables child care centers to offer meals to children, are the backbone of the Child Resource Center.

The toy lending and professional library program began in 1993. It provides appropriate toys and books for child care centers. It also has training materials, books and resources for child care workers.

Last year, the Early Childhood Bookstore opened. The bookstore has more than 3,000 books for children under the age of 8 and curriculum for parents and child care workers.

Figart said families have different priorities when looking for a child care center.

"Sometimes its quality, sometimes its cost, sometimes its proximity to their job," she said. "Lots of times the family doesn't know what they're looking for."

Belcher said child care is different than day care.

"Child care is learning ABCs and numbers, getting them ready for school," she said.

Paige Whalen is quality enhancement initiative coordinator. She assists child care centers earn higher quality ratings.

Ratings are based on the three-star status system. To reach the three-star level, the highest quality rating, child care centers must be accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Whalen said training can mean the difference between a low- and high-rated child care center.

"We help subsidize some of the cost (of training)," Whalen said. "Cost is sometimes what keeps them from achieving."

Figart said Tulsa has 1,200 child care centers, and not all are NAEYC accredited.



ROBERT S. CROSS / Tulsa World

**Teens In Action, a Camp Fire USA program, pairs East Central High School student mentors with Cooper Elementary students after school. Kristen Gibson (left) and Rebecca Purkey, seniors at East Central, work with Melissa Potter, a Cooper fifth grader, Dec. 14 after school in the elementary's gymnasium. The topic of the day was Camp Fire ceremonials and how to conduct ceremonies.**

"They come in all levels of quality," she said. "Only 5 percent of those centers are high quality (NAEYC accredited). We still have a ways to go."

"The work we do is to make sure that future generation has everything it needs."

### Make the call

The program 2-1-1 Tulsa Helpline started in January 2005 and launched publicly in July 2005.

The program is a non-emergency helpline that people can call to locate financial assistance, health care, food, clothing, housing assistance and mental health and substance abuse services.

Jim Lyall, 2-1-1 director, said operators do more than transfer callers.

"They're engaging in dialogue with the caller and assessing their needs," Lyall said.

The multilingual helpline is operational 24 hours a day and is staffed by certified operators who have some human services training.

Lyall said the program is still establishing and studying call patterns. In October and November, 2-1-1 had more than 7,000 calls.

"Call volume can be driven by community needs," he said. "This time of year, people are looking for holiday assistance and utility assistance."

### The gift of time

In December, Tulsa Volunteer Central's offices move to Tulsa Promenade, 41st Street and Yale Avenue, where the center's Wrap Shop is located.

The Wrap Shop, in its 11th year, is one of the nonprofit's fundraisers, and the people wrapping and making bows are

volunteers. Volunteer Central operates a database of volunteer opportunities for people to find either by calling the center or logging on to the Web site at [www.tulsavolunteercenter.org](http://www.tulsavolunteercenter.org). The group refers people to more than 350 nonprofit and government agencies.

"A lot of our work is helping people find the most appropriate volunteer opportunity," said Mary Finley, director.

Tulsa Volunteer Central also works with agencies to make better use of volunteers.

Finley said some of the volunteer opportunities are ongoing assignments, such as Big Brothers Big Sisters of Oklahoma. Others are special events at festivals.

"Some are highly organized and require a lot of training," she said, such as the American Red Cross and Domestic Violence Intervention Services volunteers. "There's pretty much something for everyone

to do."

Finley said during the 23 years Tulsa Volunteer Central has been operating, there has been a shift in volunteering.

"I've seen a different attitude toward volunteering over the years," she said. "It's more accepted. There's been a real trend in young people doing volunteer work."

Finley said Tulsa has never been short on volunteers.

"Tulsa has always been a volunteer rich community. I don't know why that is," she said.

Dessauer said these programs and others within the Community Service Council share its focus on prevention.

"Things we are doing and working on aren't just by happenstance," he said. "All these things, there is a connection strategically."

Dessauer receives a lot of help.



Mary Finley



CORY YOUNG / Tulsa World

**Volunteer Amber Kraft of the Bixby High School Key Club helps make bows at the Wrap Shop Dec. 13 at Tulsa Promenade.**

"I have been very fortunate to work with some of the best volunteers. I've also worked with some of the most talented professionals," he said. "That has helped keep me going."

Dessauer said he has seen many things happen and change during his time at the council.

"I think we are much better equipped. We have been on the forefront of many issues. A lot of the things that have been born out of my time here have been cutting-edge thinking," he said. "That goes back to the proactive spirit in Tulsa — not to wait on problems, but to get going on them."

Sara Plummer 712-7913

sara.plummer@tulsaworld.com

*'We have been on the forefront of many issues. A lot of the things that have been born out of my time here have been cutting-edge thinking.'*

PHIL DESSAUER

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE COMMUNITY SERVICE COUNCIL

## Dec. 20-26

A WEEK'S WORTH OF LOCAL EVENTS. Unless otherwise stated, all events are free.

### EXHIBITS

**The Holiday Show** Joseph Gierek fine Art, 1512 E. 15th St., will host an exhibition of new works by gallery artists and recent acquisitions now through Dec. 30. Gallery Hours are from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday. For more information, call 592-5432.

### MISCELLANEOUS

**My First Story Time** Owasso Library, 103 W. Broadway, will offer story time from 9:30 to 9:45 a.m. Wednesday for newborns to 2-year-olds. To learn more, call 591-4566.

### MUSIC

**Third Thursday Recital** University United Methodist Church, 2915 E. Fifth St., will present tenor Kim

Childs in recital at 12:15 p.m. Thursday. The concert is free and open to the public. Lunch will be available following the recital. For more details, call 592-3633.

### SUPPORT GROUPS

**Divorce Recovery Meeting** Garnett Church of Christ divorce support group will meet at 7 p.m. Wednesday at 12000 E. 31st St. For more information, call 299-3250 or 663-3000.

**ARMY of Help** Father's House Church, 7727 E. 41st St., will offer Addiction Recovery Ministry at 7 p.m. Tuesday for those with compulsive behavior of all kinds. To learn more, call 664-5420.

### RELIGION

**Christmas Eve Services** First United Methodist Church, 13800 E. 106th St. North, Owasso, will

hold services at 7, 9, and 11 p.m. Sunday. For more details, call 272-5731.

**Holy Communion** Bethany Lutheran Church, 5324 E. 46th St., will hold a candlelight Holy Communion service at 7:30 p.m. Sunday and a Christmas morning Holy Communion service at 10 a.m. For more information, call 627-4218.

### LOOKING AHEAD

**Caregiver Support** LIFE Central Adult Day Service Let's Talk, Let's Listen, Caregiver Support will be offered from 3 to 4:30 p.m. Dec. 28 at LIFE Senior Services, 5950 E. 31st St. For more information, call 664-9000, ext. 244.

**Masquerade New Year** The Phoenix Singles Fellowship will host a New Year's event at 8 p.m. Dec. 31 at Christ United Methodist Church, 3515 S. Harvard Ave. Tickets are \$15 in advance and \$20 at the door.

To learn more, call 747-8601.

**Docent Coffee** Anyone wanting to learn more about the Tulsa Zoo docents is welcome to attend an informal coffee at 10 a.m. Jan. 6 at the Tulsa Zoo, 5701 E. 36th St. North. Training classes will begin in late January. For more information, call 669-6271.

**Music and Drama** Tulsa Bible Church, 5838 S. Sheridan Road, will present The Liberated Wailing Wall, at 10 a.m. Jan. 7. For more details, call 499-1513.

**Awards and Installation Banquet** The Collinsville Chamber of Commerce annual awards and installation banquet will be held at 7 p.m. Jan. 20 at the Collinsville High School, 2400 W. Broadway. Tickets are \$25 each or \$200 table of six. For more information, call 371-4703.

**Calendar items should be submitted by 5 p.m. Thursday for the following Wednesday's publication.**

TULSA WORLD  
Eastside  
Community World

Editor  
Delbert Schafer  
(918) 712-7913  
Assistant Editor  
Nora K. Froeschle  
Copy Editor/Reporter  
Rhonda Clark

Reporters  
Cory Young, Sara Plummer  
Maishah English  
Editorial Assistant  
Sharon Sayre  
Advertising  
Courtney Noonkester (918) 699-8851

Office hours  
9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday-Friday  
3320 E. 32nd St.  
Tulsa OK 74135  
(918) 712-7913 phone  
(918) 712-9560 fax

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Call 587-NEWS  
On the Web  
[www.tulsaworld.com](http://www.tulsaworld.com)  
To e-mail any Community World staffer,  
type first name.last name  
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