

Calling green thumbs

The initial phase of the Oklahoma Centennial Botanical Garden is a study in overcoming hurdles.

Please go to A-13



LPGA TOURNAMENT: BATTLING THE ELEMENTS

Golfer can breathe easy now

► That could change once she's out on the course, but it won't be because of her allergies.

By **KIM ARCHER**
World Staff Writer

For someone who's allergic to the whole outdoors, Jill McGill sure picked a doozy of a career.

She's a professional golfer. That requires her to be out with the trees and the grass eight hours a day, six days a week, for eight months of the year.

"It is pretty ironic," said McGill, who is in Tulsa this week to compete in the annual LPGA SemGroup Championship at Cedar Ridge Country Club in Broken Arrow. The first round tees off Thursday. The tournament runs through Sunday.

Tulsa was ranked No. 19 this year among the 25-most-challenging cities for people with allergies to live in, the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America's annual survey shows. It ranked No. 1 last year.

The ranking is based on of three factors: pollen score, medicine use per patient and number of board certified allergists per patient. Tulsa's score dropped from 100 last year to 47.54 this year.

"I know Tulsa is a hotbed for allergies, but I have made a pre-emptive strike," said McGill, who lives in San Diego. That city was ranked No. 10 in the country for its allergies, only one rung higher than Oklahoma City.

Six months ago, she finally found a medication that works well for her, oral Xyzal.

Since her arrival in Tulsa, McGill said, she has felt great.

"I am so glad that I found something that makes it manageable," she said.

Previously, she tried many over-the-counter "D" products — those that include a decongestant.

"They would make me jump out of my skin," McGill said. "I thought I was going to pogo-stick down the fairway."

And they didn't always control the symptoms, such as watery eyes, itching and runny nose.

Once, McGill forgot to take her medication the night before a tournament, she said. Her sniffing throughout the next day threw off her rhythm, and even fellow professional golfers commented on how many times she sniffed before taking an errant tee shot.

"It's pretty embarrassing, and it makes it hard to concentrate," she said with a chuckle.

McGill doesn't expect the new medication to improve just her golf life but her whole life, she said.

"Since I was a kid, at 8 or 9 years old, I have had allergies to almost everything outdoors," she said. "People don't realize how the allergies themselves make you feel lethargic. A lot of people don't give



MIKE SIMONS / Tulsa World

Jill McGill hits a shot Wednesday from the ninth fairway at Cedar Ridge Country Club during the SemGroup Championship Pro-Am practice rounds. The LPGA player said she has struggled with allergies, but a recent switch in medication has changed her life.

credit to the fact that something is medically wrong."

McGill now sleeps better, which also should make life a lot sweeter.

"It's important to take charge of your allergies," she said. "I would urge anyone suffering with allergies to go to their doctor and get it under control."

A physician can find treatment

options that are right for each person, she said.

McGill has joined the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America's Challenge Your Course campaign — www.tulsaworld.com/allergy_challenge — aimed to get people to take charge of their allergies. The campaign is supported by UCB and sanofi-aventis, the makers of Xyzal.

The foundation says that about 40 million Americans suffer from indoor or outdoor allergies, which are caused by tree and grass pollens, pet dander, mold spores, dust mites and cockroaches, among other things.

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'I know Tulsa is a hotbed for allergies, but I have made a pre-emptive strike.'

LPGA GOLFER **JILL MCGILL**

ON BEING ALLERGIC YET PLAYING A SPORT THAT REQUIRES GOING OUTDOORS

Student leader believes in helping others

► And now he's an Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence Academic All-Stater.

By **NORA FROESCHLE**
World Staff Writer

MUSKOGEE — Wherever he goes, Muskogee High School senior Willie T. Reeves Jr. makes friends.

He also gets things done — lots of things.

The 2008 Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence Academic All-Stater already has achieved so much that his list of awards and accomplishments could provide ample material for the resumes of at least four or five other students, and he's just getting started.

He is president of his class, president of the Youth Council of the Muskogee chapter of the NAACP, president of the high school's speech and debate team, president of the African-American Heritage

Club, Co-Ambassador for International Students, youth superintendent at the Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church, and the list goes on and on.

Beyond the positions of leadership and numerous academic and other awards, Reeves is openly dedicated to helping others.

Fluent in Spanish, he tutors and assists students for whom English is a second language.

"I kind of live a life of service," he said. "I think a lot of people become too entangled in living their own lives; they forget what's outside their circle. I've always had this innate drive to go beyond what's expected, beyond what's required."

Even as Reeves walked outside his school on a recent day, the breadth of his circle was apparent.

"Hey, Willie, I heard you on the radio!" called a boy out the back window of a pickup.

"I have no idea why I'm on the radio," Reeves quietly confides as he waves to the boy.

SEE **STUDENT** A-13



MIKE SIMONS / Tulsa World

Willie T. Reeves Jr., a senior at Muskogee High School and an Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence Academic All-Stater, talks with Staci Carter on Saturday as he works at a voter registration booth at the Muskogee Civic Center.

Inmates attempt suicide at jail

► The cases are unrelated. One inmate remains on life support.

By **KEVIN CANFIELD**
World Staff Writer

One inmate has been released to a mental health facility and another is on life support at a hospital after suicide attempts in the Tulsa Jail.

The unrelated attempts occurred Monday and Tuesday, according to Tulsa County sheriff's Chief Deputy Tim Albin.

The male inmates tried "positional asphyxiation," in which they tied a piece of clothing or other material around their necks, sat or knelt, then leaned forward to cut off blood flow to the brain, he said.

A detention officer was able to intervene in Monday's suicide attempt before the inmate hurt himself, Albin said, but "the second individual — the officer found him, but he had been there for several minutes."

Albin said all inmates receive physicals and mental-health screenings upon entering the jail.

"In both of these particular situations, there was absolutely no indication there was anything going on with these two individuals," he said.

The jail does not plan to change its procedures as a result of the suicide attempts, Albin said.

"Generally, if there is a mental-health issue, we'll recognize them," he said. "And the detention officers are also trained to recognize mental-health issues and report them to the staff psychologist."

Any inmate who attempts suicide is immediately taken to the jail's medical unit and placed on suicide watch.

An inmate on such watch wears only slippers and a heavy smock that minimizes the risk that an article of clothing will be used in a suicide attempt.

"The (suicide watch) cells don't have anything in them except a bed, a stainless steel sink and a toilet," Albin said.

The suicide watch is not lifted until the jail psychologist evaluates the inmate and approves their release into general population.

Three suicides have occurred at the Tulsa Jail since the Tulsa County Sheriff's Office took over its operation in 2005, Albin said.

He described the number of attempts as "minuscule."

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GOLDEN ADVICE

Scouts urged to set goals

► Olympic gymnast Dominique Dawes delivers a message of inspiration in Tulsa.

By **SHANNON MUCHMORE**
World Staff Writer

Hardly any of the girls in the audience Wednesday afternoon could remember the 1996 Olympic Games, but they were old enough to understand the message one of its stars gave.

The old-fashioned method of setting goals and sticking to them is what makes dreams come true.

Gold medal gymnast Dominique Dawes spoke to area Girl Scouts and members of the organization's Outreach Program on Wednesday about her career and the lessons she has learned.

"You can do something amazing with your passion," Dawes said. "And its time to get out, at your

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