

Enid's

# UNSUNG HEROES



## Terry Mote



In the past few decades, hundreds of Marshallese have relocated from the Pacific Islands to Enid, Oklahoma. "Right now, we have over 2,000 Marshallese living in Enid," says Terry Mote, who has played a major role in Enid's Marshallese community. Mote currently lives in Enid with his wife Lynn, 3 sons, Jibok, Jebet and Okie, and 2 daughters, Terilyn and Kinta. "I love Enid because it isn't too big of a city and it has what we need. You can find schools and jobs. It is a great community that isn't hard for us to establish a living in."

Mote moved to Enid in 2007 from the Marshall Islands. "When I first moved here I had to learn to adjust," says Mote. "On the island you would never worry about time and were always relaxed. Coming to Oklahoma, time is clicking." Even today Mote is still in the process of trying to adapt. "It still might take me a few more years but I feel like I am much better since when I first moved here," says Mote.

Mote spoke very little English when he moved to Enid. His first job was at the Enid Public Library and played an important role in his learning English. "On my breaks I would pick up books and read. Every word I didn't understand I would ask the patrons that came to the library to help me understand what the words meant," says Mote. He also attended English classes offered in Enid and still continues to attend classes on Tuesday evenings at Emmanuel. His English has improved so much that he is able to be a translator for other Marshallese at the Garfield County Courthouse and Garfield County Health Department.

Currently Mote serves as the President of the Iiakwe Iuk Club. The position of President is a two-year term and this is his second time holding the position. The club is made up of the President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer and board members at large. They also have four athletic coordinators that help organize sporting events such as basketball, volleyball, track and field, and softball.

One of the club's main responsibilities is planning the Marshallese May Day celebration that takes place each May. Officially celebrated on May 1, the holiday celebrates the day their country adopted the constitution of the Republic of the Marshall Islands as well as the country's independence. The Marshallese community just celebrated the 36th May Day this past Memorial Day weekend with a variety of cultural performances and sports competitions.

The Iiakwe Iuk Club's main goal is to promote their

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culture. "I think many people know we are here in Enid but not many people know about our culture," says Mote. "We want the community to know who we are and what we can do for the betterment of the community. By promoting our culture and our activities, we are hoping that Oklahoma will have a chance to learn who we are. Once they understand about us, they will also understand what our challenges are." Challenges include how to establish residency, Oklahoma ID assistance, US citizenship and enrollment in health benefits. "Hopefully in the future or sooner, we will have someone

from the City of Enid to work with our organization and help us with the challenges that we face."

Outside from his many duties as Iiakwe Iuk Club President and providing translation for the Marshallese community, Mote enjoys his position with the Garfield County Health Department and being involved with the Micronation Coalition Committee. For information on how to become involved with the Iiakwe Iuk Club or to find out more on upcoming events, call Mote at (580) 278-9452.



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