

aspect of education. We charted our path with health care. In my mind what we had was some destination points on a map when we decided to decentralize health care. We developed a plan, which was like a little map to get to those destination points and we are doing that same thing with education. We have some really good education programs and wonderful employees working in that area. But we are all over the map trying to do everything. What we are trying to do is consolidate our efforts and develop the same type of destination points to get there. So we will be spending a lot of time and money on education in the near future. We hope to have the growth and development in education that we had in health care.

The third and last major effort this year that I, and we as a government, will be spending our time on is the Arkansas Riverbed. As you know, the Arkansas Riverbed is owned jointly by the Chickasaw Nation, the Choctaw Nation, and the Cherokee Nation. This has been an asset for us since the Supreme Court decided in 1970 that we owned it. The problem is that in the early part of the century the Bureau of Indian Affairs made a decision that these tribes no longer owned the banks of the Arkansas Riverbed. Following that decision, the state and private sector developed the whole Kerr McClellan Navigation System on the Arkansas River. So we thought the three tribes, through the Arkansas Riverbed Authority, which I am the president of, would develop the riverbed as an economic development venture. We have been aggressively doing that since 1985, spending 1/3 of all of our time on the Arkansas Riverbed Authority, riverbed development, and issues. This past year we got a dose of reality when we began to think about removing the trespassers that are now living on Arkansas Riverbed land. There is not much land and most of it is under water. In order to evict the trespassers we would have to file over 1,000 separate lawsuits. Some of these are original enrollees of the Cherokee Nation. So we made a decision recently, myself and the tribal council, to try to settle this case and get other land elsewhere that we could better use for our future as part of our land acquisition program. So it is a major legislative effort to try to get compensation for all the land and all the resources that have been taken from us in the past by trading land for land that we now have. That will require a considerable amount of my time in the next year, but if we are successful it will provide a great deal of money that we can put back into education and other programs I talked about earlier.

Finally, I would like to talk to you a little about Sequoyah High School. This is where John Ketcher was educated, my father was educated, as well as my older sister. We contracted Sequoyah High School from the Bureau of Indian Affairs some years ago. Every year we try to add improvements and changes and make it more tribal in both administration and in nature. We have had a continual and rapid increase in the number of students at SHS. Just this year we have had an increase of 70 new students, and our ninth grade class is the largest we have had in over ten years. The school is doing well. Is it exactly like we want it to be! No, nothing is. You can look at any aspect of life or anyone of our programs and find things that we need to do better, you all know that. But we are headed in the right direction, and we are proud of Sequoyah High School. We are going to put a lot of emphasis on SHS. We are even thinking about converting it into a magnet school for Indian students. We are hoping to raise funds to build a non-denominational chapel at SHS. There is no chapel there now. We are doing it ourselves, you cannot use federal funds for this type of effort. We have a booth, and Mary Kay has some tapes that she has donated for this effort. She has also done a couple of benefits for us. I will tell you why this effort has become a priority for the Cherokee Nation. Because we discovered students