



Little Dixie Digest

1968 * 40 years of Helping People, Changing Lives * 2008

Employee of the Month



Gayla Vaughn, Little Dixie's December Employee of the Month, is shown with Board Chairman Lewis Collins and Executive Director Randall Erwin. Vaughn is a group worker for Self-Help Housing.

LDCAA YouthBuild set to challenge young adults

Little Dixie YouthBuild will begin fulfilling its mission this year to train 15 young adults in job skills while helping them obtain a GED diploma. Another 15 will participate in YouthBuild in 2009 under a new grant recently announced by the U.S. Department of Labor.

Butch Needham will oversee the local YouthBuild program, assisted by Youth Advocate/Counselor Katherine Covington and Construction Supervisor Gary Teague. Needham is past director of Youth Restitution for Little Dixie; Covington is a former Hugo Schools administrator; and Teague joins YouthBuild after working in the Weatherization Department at Little Dixie Housing.

"We know there are young adults out there who need job skills and need their GEDs," Needham said. "If they show skills

Please see **YOUTHBUILD, Page 2**



Little Dixie YouthBuild staff (left to right): Construction Supervisor Gary Teague, Youth Advocate/Counselor Katherine Covington, Program Director Butch Needham.

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Board member profile: Lewis Collins Chairman always ready to give agency a lift

Lewis Collins, chairman of the board of directors for Little Dixie CAA, recently lent his forklifting skills to unload the agency's new Neighborworks sign at the Administration Building. This was typical of his hands-on approach to uplift Little Dixie CAA. See our first Board Member Profile on Page 2.



Project COMMIT kicks off

Three Project COMMIT kickoff celebrations were held in Hugo, Antlers, and Idabel in late January and early February to get this unique program started in our area.

Project COMMIT stands for "Couples in Oklahoma Making Marriage Important Together." It is Little Dixie Head Start's part of the nationwide Healthy Marriage Initiative, which works toward improving the well-being of children through a focus on strengthening marriages. Participants in Project COMMIT will solidify their relationships through a variety of strategies.

Any family member of a Head Start eligible child (birth/prenatal to age five) can participate in classes. For more information about Project COMMIT, call Pam Waugh at (580) 326-7581.

Collins's philosophy: 'I want to be the best I can'

Having spent nearly 40 years in law enforcement, Lewis Collins is a perfect fit for Little Dixie Community Action Agency's mission of public service.

Now in his 11th year as Sheriff of Choctaw County, the Hugo native is a few months into his newest role as Chairman of Little Dixie's Board of Directors. He succeeded Charles Uhles following Uhles' death in June 2007. Collins is also a small business owner, as this area's sole seller of high-pressure cleaning equipment.

Whether it's his business, his role in law enforcement, or volunteer duties, Collins takes the same attitude into each endeavor: "If I'm going to be a sheriff, board member or salesman, I want to be the best I can."

This also is his hope for Little Dixie. "I want the agency to be the best it can be, more and more successful in helping to serve people," he said. "I wish



Lewis Collins

more people knew what the programs do for low income people. It's amazing what Little Dixie offers. When you are serving people, it is very rewarding. (Little Dixie) brings money into the economy and provides jobs."

Collins has high praise for the agency's leadership, and says the current board is an amazing group of people with which to work. Their task of policy making and the continuous education of board members not only helps the agency, he said, but brings new knowledge and expertise to other interests in the region.

"It's been an honor to serve on the board and realize what a great asset this agency is to the three county area," Collins said.

Collins is Second Vice President on the board of Oklahoma Sheriff's Association and is active on the local 911 emergency planning board. A Fort Towson graduate, Collins always knew he "needed to be in law enforcement," and joined the Texas Highway Patrol at age 20. He completed the Oklahoma Highway Patrol Academy and was assigned to Bryan County, then Hugo and the Indian Nation Turnpike for 21 years.

He retired in 1996 and ran for Choctaw County Sheriff, winning every election for the office since that time. He recently married the former Pat Johnson. He has one daughter and three stepchildren.

Next month: Herb Matlock.

Employee of the Month Guidelines

The Employee of the Month Committee has nomination forms available in hopes of encouraging more nominees for the monthly award to outstanding Little Dixie family members.

If you do not have forms in your office, call Zach Maxwell or Pam Covington at (580) 326-3351 and they will fax one to you.

Employees of the Month receive a T-shirt, gift certificate to local restaurant and are honored at the board meeting. They also will be eligible for Employee of the Year.

Submit nominations by the 15th of the month in order to be judged during that month. Submit nominations to Planning Director Pam Covington by mail (209 N. 4th St., Hugo, OK 74743), email (pcovington@littledixie.org) or fax (580-326-2305). Nominations are judged by the five-member committee. If the person you nominate is not selected, it is okay to nominate that person again the following month.

YouthBuild program set to start under new staff

Continued from Page 1

and interest in higher education, we'll ensure they can go to school."

After completion of the YouthBuild program, students who show a special skill or interest will be provided opportunities to follow up on them. YouthBuild participants will also receive job placement and support services after completing the program.

Needham said the program is still in need of participants. The first group began orientation on Feb. 12, but the program is designed so youth can enter at anytime (as long as there are vacancies).

Little Dixie is pretty lucky to have such a program. Several new applications to YouthBuild and re-applications of existing programs were turned away due to a lack of funding from Congress, according to YouthBuild founder and president Dorothy Stoneman.

"Our country faces a staggering dropout crisis with nearly half of all students in low-income communities not completing high school," said Stoneman. "Investing in young people who are seek-

ing a second chance to complete their high school diploma and learn employment skills in a field with worker shortages will save this country enormous sums that would otherwise be spent on welfare, health care, and incarceration. The unemployed youth in our communities are yearning for a chance to get their lives back on a positive track."

In YouthBuild programs, low-income youth ages 16-24 enroll full-time in a YouthBuild program for 6 to 24 months. They work toward their GEDs or high school diplomas for half of their time and spend the other half learning construction skills by building affordable housing for homeless and low-income people. YouthBuild creates a positive peer group that can compete with the lure of the streets and helps students become positive leaders in their own communities. Since 1994, more than 68,000 YouthBuild students have produced 16,000 units of low-income housing.

For more information, call Little Dixie YouthBuild at 326-5434, or visit www.youthbuild.org.

Need medicine? Don't forget RX for Oklahoma

Karen Burton, a specialist at Little Dixie Housing, is encouraging everyone to check into the RX for Oklahoma Prescription Assistance program.

What is RX for Oklahoma? RX for Oklahoma helps Oklahomans access prescription assistance programs provided by pharmaceutical manufacturing companies. Since the program began on Dec. 1, 2005, more than 15,000 clients have been helped across the state.

Who qualifies? Oklahoma residents, regardless of age, who are uninsured or underinsured are encouraged to apply. Medicare Part D and Medicaid beneficiaries with unique circumstances may qualify.

What drugs are available? The lists of drugs change regularly as companies add new drugs to assistance programs. Call RX for Oklahoma to find out if your medication is available.

What information does RX for Oklahoma need? Age, residential address, gross annual household income, complete list of medications you are taking, physician information, insurance coverage (if applicable).

Oklahoma RX Discount Card. Our staff can also assist you with applying for the Oklahoma RX Discount Card. You can use this card on thousands of medications. Those insured as well as uninsured qualify. (A minimal charge may be associated with this card.)



Keep those pamphlets coming!

A friendly reminder to all program directors: Please make sure to update your program brochures and handouts, and also make sure to keep them in stock at office lobbies and other public places for potential client usage.

The post office kiosk in the Hugo Administration Building is becoming a popular place for the public to find information on Little Dixie programs. To keep your program in the spotlight, simply drop some brochures in the mail or bring them by the office. Thanks!



Kelley Thain
CACFP Monitor

CACFP welcomes Kelley Thain

Kelley Thain of Antlers has joined the team at the Child and Adult Care Food Program as a monitor. She was most recently employed at the Department of Human Services.

Thain started Dec. 10 at Little Dixie CACFP. She will work with home day cares in the service area. She is married with two children.

Call (580) 326-5434 for information

Smart Start distributes grants to local day cares



Tri-County Smart Start's Dennis Willeford is shown delivering grants to (clockwise from top left) LaShonda Bills, Teresa Breshers, Felecia Herd and LuEllen McCleskey.



Six child care centers have received Reaching for the Stars Facilitation Project Grants as part of Tri-County Smart Start.

"The grant is part of a \$4,000 effort in Pushmataha, Choctaw and McCurtain Counties by Smart Start Okla. to provide local child care facilities with additional funding to improve their services," said Dennis Willeford, Smart Start Tri-County coordinator. "A big part of what we do at Smart Start is the development and accessibility of high quality early care and early learning environments for children. By supporting child care centers and homes with mentoring and mini-grants like this one we feel that an impact in our community will be felt in the future of our children."

Little Dixie Community Action Agency brought Smart Start Tri-County to this area in 2005 to help with its mission of "Helping People. Changing Lives." Smart Start Oklahoma is a grassroots initiative that supports families as they raise children who are safe, healthy, and eager to learn and ready to succeed in school.

The six Child Care Center/Homes receiving grants included Light-house Learning Daycare Center in Hugo (\$1,000), The Learning Tree Daycare in Idabel- \$750, Heaven's Lil Angels Family Daycare Home in Valliant-\$750, Thomas Daycare Home in Hugo-\$500, Teresa's Daycare in Antlers \$500 and M&M Daycare Center in Valliant-\$500.

LDCAA Self-Help Assistance, Resources & Education (SHARE)

Region 2 Technical and Management Assistance Contractor

Ground broken on 125-home development in Arkansas

By **DONNA HILTON**

Arkadelphia Siftings Herald

ARKADELPHIA, Ark. — Ground was officially broken in November for the construction of 125 single family houses in the Somerset subdivision of Arkadelphia, Ark.

Located adjacent to southwest Arkadelphia, the housing project will consist of homes that appraise for \$110,000 and more. Developed by South Arkansas Community Development (a Little Dixie SHARE client), Somerset will have an area designated for homes for persons 55 and older and will provide homes to persons of all income levels. Somerset will have a walking trail, two nature parks and one playground. More than half of the homes will be designated for families of median income levels or below, said U.S. Rep. Mike Ross, who was the keynote speaker for the ceremony Monday.

Somerset is an \$18 million project, Ross said. More than \$2 million of that went into planning the project. He said the new addition will be a tremendous asset to Arkadelphia and Clark County. "The Department of Commerce recently reported that new home construction has plummeted," Ross said. Many industries and businesses are cutting jobs as well. "At least 400 jobs have been lost in the last two weeks in this district." The subdivision could help attract new businesses and industries to Clark County, he said. "I have seen industries decline to locate here because of a lack of housing."

SACD recently received a grant of \$39,900 to provide counseling services for their clients, Ross said. "SACD is the only agency in Southwest Arkansas" to receive those funds. He commended the employees of SACD, especially executive director Teddy Gardner. "Not everybody has a Teddy Gardner. I hope you know what you have."

Since 1999, SACD has provided housing assistance to people of Southwest Arkansas, said Dr. Lewis Shepherd, master of ceremonies for the event, which took place at Park Hill Baptist Church. SACD has provided 105 homes so far, he said, with plans for 60 more already under way. Some funding for the project was received through low-interest loans from the Housing Assistance Council.

"It is an honor to be part of SACD's work to provide quality, affordable homes throughout southwest Arkansas," said Peggy Wright of Jonesboro, a member of the HAC's board. HAC has made loans totaling \$1.38 million, Wright said, including \$728,000 to help acquire the land for Somerset. Two additional loan applications are under consideration, she said.

Sherry Gosney, co-chairman of SACD, explained how some of SACD's housing programs work. "It's not a free ride," she said.

Gosney said that she and her family had worked through SACD's self-help housing program to use "sweat equity" to pay their portion of a down payment. "There's a lot of pride and dignity in that."



U.S. Rep. Mike Ross speaks at Park Hill Baptist Church prior to groundbreaking ceremonies for the planned Somerset subdivision, which will contain 125 single family houses southwest of Arkadelphia. Also pictured are, seated, left to right: Donna Kay Yeargan, state director of U.S. Sen. Blanche Lincoln's office; state Rep. Johnnie Roebuck; District Judge Randy Hill and Dr. Lewis Shepherd, chairman of South Arkansas Community Development, which developed Somerset. Photo by Donna Hilton

From USDA Rural Development...

The FY 2008 appropriation bill was enacted resulting in an increase of Section 523 Self-Help Grants funds of approximately \$5 million to \$38,727,000. However, demand for the funds remains high and based upon our projections will once again exceed the available resources. Therefore, in order to effectively manage our limited fund balance, the following policies and procedures have been implemented for FY 2008:

Existing performance grantees will be limited to a grant in an amount not to exceed 60 percent of their previous grant. If this amount is less than the grantee anticipated, this will be considered a partial funding of the grant and grantee should be so advised.

Subsequent grant requests will not be considered except in rare cases beyond the reasonable control of the grantee. Therefore, it is imperative that budgets and proposals be well developed and realistic.

Due to the continued high demand on the program, the decision has been made not to obligate any new or predevelopment grants this fiscal year. Any pending applications should be returned and applicants notified accordingly. This is not an appealable action.



Southern Oklahoma Development Association — Ardmore, Oklahoma

Assisted by Little Dixie SHARE — Region 2 Technical and Management Assistance Contractor

SODA spreads holiday cheer for new homeowners in S. Oklahoma

From SODA Press Release, 20 November 2007...

SULPHUR, Oklahoma — With Thanksgiving just a couple of days away, Southern Oklahoma Development Association’s Housing Team is preparing for the final inspection by USDA Rural Development and hope to give keys to the first three homeowners participating in the SODA Mutual Self-Help Housing Program. When USDA Rural Development passes the final inspection, Edith Roberts, Tanya Revels, and Christy Henry will be moving into new homes.

Over the last six months, all seven families in Group #1 have been working very hard during the evenings and weekends to assist with the construction of their new brick homes. Each family work group has contributed over 700 hours in order to complete all the homes as quickly as possible. Their work included assisting with the site development, framing, insulation, sheetrock/texture, painting, staining, cleanup, etc. The sweat equity allows them to save money on the cost of construction in order to obtain a quality built home that is affordable for their income level.

Here are some success stories from the Mutual Self-Help Housing Program...

* Edith is planning a big family Thanksgiving Day dinner at her new home. Due to deterioration of her old home, she has been living in a small travel trailer and has not had the opportunity to host a family gathering in many years. She has been searching for her favorite recipes and her six children and bunches of grand and great-grand children are anxious to visit her in her new home and

taste “Nanna’s good cookin”.

* Tanya and her four children are looking forward to their larger space in the four bedroom home and their big back yard. Her teenage boys have helped with the construction labor commitment on the new home by doing the exterior/interior painting and cleanup work. Tanya also recruited friends and family to assist with the building tasks.

* Christy’s two little girls will be moving into a place where they will each have their own rooms in a home that Mom has always prayed and dreamed of providing for her children. After waiting over two years, Christy’s church family and friends were very supportive to help her with her construction tasks so she could reach her goal of home ownership.

SODA anticipates the other four homeowners in Group #1 (Wendy Fagundes, Kerri Rousey, Pamela Stinson, and Aaron Saunders) will be moving into their new homes before Christmas. SODA also plans to begin construction on the first four homes in Group #2 within the next 30 days. For more information or to make application for a self-help home in Carter, Garvin, Love, Marshall, or Murray County, please contact SODA Housing at 580-622-6038.

Congratulations!

Seventh District Pavilion, Inc., of Crowley, La., received approval of its fourth grant in October 2007. SDP plans to construct 25 homes in Acadia, Calcasieu, Evangeline, Jeff Davis, Lafayette and St. Landry Parishes. These areas are located in southwest Louisiana, which was impacted by hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005 and are still in the recovery process.

SHARE Director Joan Edge appointed to NRHC board

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Joan Edge, director of Little Dixie CAA’s Self-Help Assistance, Resources and Education program, was appointed to National Rural Housing Coalition board in November.

About NRHC: In 1969, a group of concerned rural community activists, public officials, and non-profit developers formed the National Rural Housing Coalition (NRHC) to fight for better housing and community facilities for low-income rural people. Today, NRHC is still on the job in the nation’s capital promoting and defending the principle that rural people have the right, regardless of income, to a decent place to live or an affordable home, clean drinking water, and basic community services.

National Rural Housing Coalition works to focus policy makers on the needs of rural areas by direct advocacy and by coordinating a network of rural housing advocates around the nation. NRHC sponsors regular conferences at which specific policies and legislative proposals are developed. Over the years, NRHC has worked to de-

sign new programs and improve existing programs to better serve the rural poor; ensure adequate funding levels for rural housing programs; and promote a non-profit delivery system for rural housing and community development programs.

Financial Support: National Rural Housing Coalition is supported entirely by donations, contributions and subscriptions. Four funds have been established to which organizations with special interest can contribute. The Self-Help Housing Fund supports NRHC’s work to assure continuation of the self-help technical assistance program of RHS. The Farm Worker Housing Fund supports NRHC’s work to promote better housing for migrant and seasonal farm workers. The Rural Community Assistance Fund promotes reform of RHS’s rural water/sewer program. The HUD Task Force works on important issues related programs administrated by the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

On the web: www.nrhweb.org

Passport to the Future celebrates National Mentoring Month

February Birthdays

- 1 - Bobann Roller
Delphina Endsley
- 4 - Carolyn Hampton
Sheila Price
- 5 - Amy Scott
Mandy Smith
- 7 - Janell Hamil
Lenora Raymond
- 9 - Kyle White
- 10 - Jay Weatherford
Kelley Thain
- 11 - Valerie Robinson
- 12 - Deborah Ayers
Teresa Young
- 13 - Nancy Hembree
- 15 - Kelly Thomas
- 17 - Lawrence Bates
Joel Montgomery
- 18 - Leann Teal
Pamela Briley
- 19 - Virginia Copeland
- 21 - Kristi Hulsey
Carol Macon
- 22 - Lori Nichols
- 24 - Amanda Bryant
- 28 - Laura Dickson
- 29 - Kishla Messer

January was National Mentoring Month, and Little Dixie CAA's Passport to the Future mentoring program celebrated with several mayoral proclamations and mentor appreciation events.

Passport to the Future is expanding its role in southeast Oklahoma. In recent weeks, PTF has added staff members to increase recruitment and awareness of the mentoring program. Lynn Lacy is our new volunteer coordinator in McCurtain County. In the Hugo office, Lisa Martin joins Tonya Finley, and in Antlers the team of Doris Long (PTF Director) and John Morton continue to work together to make the mentoring program a success.

PTF continues to seek out new mentors, mentees and community partnerships. Anyone interested in this mentoring program may call (580) 298-2921 for more information.



Idabel Mayor Jerry Shinn issues a Mentoring Month proclamation.



Valliant officials show their Mentoring Month proclamation with Debbie Golden, Mayor Mike Zulkey, Lynn Lacy and Curtis Cowell.



PTF celebrated "Thank Your Mentor Day" on Jan. 24 by taking Little Dixie Transit to Chili's in Paris, Texas. Pictured attending the event were John Morton, Tonya Finley, Tim & Mandy Albrecht, Janet Queen and Jamie Ellis.



On Jan. 23, a mentor training event was held at Choctaw County Library, with 18 mentors in attendance.



Lynn Lacy shows a mentoring information board placed at Broken Bow Public Library.



Hugo Mayor Layton Cox and City Manager David Rawls issue a Mentoring Month proclamation with Tonya Finley.



Idabel Librarian Linda Potts and PTF Volunteer Coordinator Lynn Lacy show a mentoring information board at the Idabel Public Library.



Lisa Martin

PTF welcomes Lisa Martin to staff

Lisa Martin joined the staff of Little Dixie's Passport to the Future Mentoring program in January. She will be working in the Hugo office as volunteer coordinator, helping out with staff training, youth development, and community involvement. Martin lives in Idabel and is mom to eight-year-old Kasyn Blake and seven-month-old Falyn Khane. She attends Garvin Baptist Church.

Little Dixie welcomes the following new family members hired since Dec. 27.

- Lisa Alpuerto
- Kathryn Covington
- Clifton Bruu
- Lisa Martin
- Carol Buster

NOW THROUGH APRIL 15

Free at your local Little Dixie Office

WHAT: *FREE*-INCOME TAX PREPARATION
FREE-ELECTRONIC FILING
FREE-DIRECT DEPOSIT

WHEN: JAN. 14 to APRIL 15, 2008

WHO: ALL LITTLE DIXIE EMPLOYEES,
FAMILY & FRIENDS

WHERE: CALL FOR APPOINTMENT

Choctaw County

500 E. Rosewood in Hugo or call 326-5434

Pushmataha County

603 SW "B" St. in Antlers or call 298-2921

McCurtain County

1250 Lynn Lane in Idabel or call 286-9348

You will need to bring all W2 and 1099 forms, picture ID and Social Security cards for all family members, bank account information for direct deposit and child care receipts.

LITTLE DIXIE COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY

Helping People. Changing Lives.

RANDALL ERWIN
Executive Director

LEWIS COLLINS
Board Chairman

Board Members: Choctaw County

Leeoma Caldwell, Lewis Collins, Kevin Cory, Tracy Gilbert, Ray Noble, William Smith, Osker Ward, David Rawls.

Board Members: McCurtain County

Pat Baggs, Kenneth Hamilton, Betty Jacob, Keith Lowe, Herb Matlock, Jerry Shinn, Amanda Brewer, Arthur Stewart, Jr., Jane Wooten.

Board Members: Pushmataha County

Brent Franks, Joe Hill, Eddy McIntosh, Mark McIntosh, Bridget Paxton, Joel Taylor, Tony Winters.

Little Dixie Digest (printed monthly)

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Hugo, OK 74743

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Fax: 580-326-6655

E-mail: zmaxwell@littledixie.org

From the Desk of Randall Erwin...

Little Dixie Community Action Agency is just a few weeks away from celebrating our 40th anniversary of “Helping People and Changing Lives” in southeast Oklahoma. Our agency was chartered right around the first day of spring 1968.

The symbolism cannot be overlooked. On that first day of spring so many years ago, people in this area – just as in community action agencies across America – celebrated a renewal of hope as well as the season. Little Dixie’s staff is planning a variety of events to mark this occasion, and we invite our clients, business partners, board members and employees to participate.

One program at Little Dixie has gotten a jump start on the celebration. Project COMMIT, Little Dixie’s Healthy Marriage Initiative, has held three kickoff celebrations in Antlers, Idabel and Hugo.

We would like to thank everyone to who attended our Project COMMIT kickoff celebrations in all three communities. This is a wonderful program aimed at strengthening the bonds of families with young children.

Little Dixie staff also will be visiting area civic clubs to bring the message of “hope, help and change” as part of our ongoing efforts to focus attention on our agency’s role in south-



east Oklahoma communities. Our staff, under the guidance of Operations Director Clark LeForce, has put together a short and informative presentation highlighting Little Dixie’s impact on the local economy, housing sector, job market and service community.

Little Dixie is so much more than a name on the side of a bus. Few people are aware that we

offer prescription drug assistance through the RX for Oklahoma program, or that we can help families in times of great need through the Emergency Fund.

We continue to enhance our website, distribute flyers and attend local fairs to bring our services to those who need it most. If your civic club is interested in hearing the Little Dixie story, give us a call at (580) 326-3351 and we will gladly set it up.



DATEBOOK...

Upcoming holidays for Little Dixie employees:

Monday, Feb. 18 — George Washington’s Birthday (President’s Day)

Calendar of Events

16 February — 6:30 p.m. — Pushmataha Chamber of Commerce banquet — Antlers First Baptist Church.

19 February — 9 a.m. to noon — Choctaw Nation job fair for Choctaw & Pushmataha counties — Choctaw Nation Community Center, Antlers.

19 February — 11 a.m. — McCurtain County Coalition for Change meeting —

SOIC Building, Idabel.

19 February — 2 p.m. — Choctaw County Coalition meeting — Kiamichi Technology Center, Hugo.

19 February — 6:30 p.m. — Deer Capital Tourism Association meeting — Wildlife Heritage Center, Antlers.

20 February — 10 a.m. — Head Start Policy Council meeting — Horace Mann Head Start, K Street in Hugo.

20 February — 10 a.m. — District 19 Tourism & Economic Development Authority meeting — Wildlife Heritage Center, Antlers.

21 February — 6 p.m. — Boys & Girls Club

of Choctaw County annual banquet — Cedar Shed, Hugo.

23 February — 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. — Endangered Ark Foundation Winter Festival and open house — East Kirk Street, Hugo.

13 March — 10 a.m. — Pushmataha County Coalition meeting — Antlers Church of Christ.

Deadline for submissions to

March Little Dixie Digest:

Wednesday, March 5