DFC and YouCo! In Nation’s Capital

Little Dixie CAA’s Drug Free Communities Program Director Tonya Finley along with Project Coordinator, Tommie Lamb, Jackson Self, YouCo! President and Zack Skelton, YouCo! Vice President attended the CADCA’s 27th Annual National Leadership Forum & SAMHSA’s 13th Prevention Day, held Feb. 6-9, 2017 in National Harbor, Maryland.

They joined an estimated 3,000 change agents focused on “Engineering Healthy Communities” and had the option of attending more than 75 innovative and engaging sessions and numerous networking opportunities. “The CADCA Conference is our most important conference in terms of professional development and for informing our state representatives and our funders of all the drug free communities work that we do in our community. We were able to meet with Representative Mullins, Senator Inhofe, and Senator Lankford’s office and speak with them about the importance of our program to the community we serve,” said Director Tonya Finley.

The premier training event brought together:
- Training from top experts in the field
- Information, tools, trends and strategies to take your prevention work to the next level
- Access to members of Congress on Capitol Hill Day

“The man who moves a mountain begins by carrying away small stones.”

― Confucius, Confucius: The Analects
LVHC receives grant for self-help houses

Story Courtesy of West Texas County Courier

By Barbara Montoya
Special to the Courier

EL PASO COUNTY – Valley Housing Corporation (LVHC), an El Paso County Non-profit builder/developer established in 1988 in Fabens, TX has just received its 14th consecutive grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. This year’s grant is for $281,500. The money will be used for administrative funds to help very low-income people to become homeowners. To accomplish this, LVHC will teach prequalified applicants to build at least 65% of their own and each other’s homes in groups of 6 to 10 families. Self-help labor drives down the cost of each house, making the monthly payments affordable to families earning as little as $15,000 per year. When completed, these 3 bedroom 2 bath houses offer 1,100 square feet of heated and cooled living area.

The structure of these homes is monolithic slab, with brick and stucco exterior, a pitched roof with composition shingles and forced air heating and cooling. The homes are Energy Star Certified. They all carry a HB 2-10 Homebuyer Warranty and they’re all in nice neighborhoods – close to schools, shopping and churches. The appraised market value of these newly finished houses is $119,000. The price on these self-help homes is $69,000.00.

Financing is 100% and the average monthly payments are $525. The lenders on these self-help houses are WestStar Bank, USDA/RD and Texas Department of Housing & Community Affairs (TDHCA). Qualifying guidelines for self-help homes are U.S. citizenship, good verifiable credit, and willingness to perform at least 65% of the labor to build the houses.

More than 1,300 families live in these nice, affordable houses in safe, decent neighborhoods with all infrastructure: water, sewer, paved streets, proper drainage and street lights. The building sites for 2017 and 2018 self-help housing will be in the Horizon and Clint areas.

OWNER BUILT – The Lower Valley Housing Corporation (LVHC) helps people move into houses like the one above. LVHC trains the future home-owners how to help in the construction of the dwelling and arranges financing as well.
Proyecto Azteca Celebrates 25 Years

Proyecto Azteca, located in San Juan, TX, recently celebrated the 25th anniversary of their agency. Their service area is in the Colonias of the Rio Grande Valley and they are very proud to be able to help their clients achieve the American dream of homeownership. They have been using insulated concrete form construction to develop an entire neighborhood of energy efficient homes and plans to use this method of construction in the future which helps reduce energy costs to the new homeowners. Happy Anniversary!

The staff of Proyecto Azteca, their partners and guests enjoyed the celebration of the agency’s success.

Recently Refunded Self-Help Housing Programs

Lower Valley Housing Corporation, Fabens, TX, 24 homes

Universal Housing Development Corporation, Russellville, AR, 32 rehab equivalent units

Latimer County Housing Corporation, Stigler, OK, 18 homes
Home Owners Welcome Spring in their New Homes

Pictured is Beverly Coleman Group Worker, Deborah Sandoval Home Owner, Jerry Burton Construction Supervisor, Zack Williams Rural Development Specialist

Terri Harless Self-Help Housing Director, Sommer McMurtry Group Worker, Zack Williams Rural Development Specialist, Courtney Hamill Homeowner

Terri Harless Self-Help Housing Director, Sommer McMurtry Group Worker, Karlie White Homeowner, Zack Williams Rural Development Specialist, Grady Ford Construction Supervisor
Self-Help Housing Holds First Ever Blood Drive

The Self Help Housing program held a blood drive on January 20th in partnership with the Oklahoma Blood Institute. The event was hosted at the Self-Help Housing office in Durant, Oklahoma. The blood drive produced 16 blood draws an amazing amount for a first blood drive.

Vega Receives Key to New Home

January 31st, shown from left to right is Grady Ford Construction Supervisor, Sommer McMurtry Group Worker, Zack Williams Rural Development Specialist, Francisco Vega Homeowner, Terri Harless Housing Director
USDA’s Summer Foods Service

Across the nation many children receive free or reduced-price breakfast and lunch while school is in session through USDA’s School Breakfast and National School Lunch Programs. However, when schools let out for the summer, many of these children are likely to have limited to no access to breakfast and lunch. Together we can work to ensure that kids who rely on free and reduced priced food during the school year have access to food during the summer too.

USDA’s Summer Food Service Program serves free, healthy meals to eligible low-income children and teens during the summer months when they’re not in school.

USDA Rural Development Section 523 Grantees offices could provide great opportunities to host the Summer Food Service Program. With your participation in the program, your community can receive meals from local sponsoring organizations (such as Boys and Girls Clubs, local school districts, etc.). Sponsors prepare or order the food, deliver it to your community, and are reimbursed by USDA for the costs.

Rural Development invites you to join the Summer Food Service Program and provide free, healthy meals to children living in your community. Your responsibility in this effort is manageable: You are expected to provide a location for meals to be distributed (inside or out), provide oversight, and keep records. Details would be worked out with the champion sponsor organization in your town.

Learn more at www.summerfood.usda.gov, where you can find many resources, including information specifically for property managers. Find your local sponsoring organization by contacting your State Agency at www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Contacts/StateDirectory.htm.

LDCAA T&MA Continues Cooperative Success in 2017

T&MA partnered with three T&MA Contractors to participate in the Housing Assistance Council (HAC) Rural Housing Conference workshops held in Washington D.C. The purpose of the two and half day conference was to bring stakeholders from across the United States and its territories to network and learn best practices for operating successful Section 523 Mutual Self-Help Housing Programs.
Head Start Programs across Choctaw, McCurtain and Pushmataha counties celebrated one of children’s literature’ most famous authors Dr. Seuss. During the National Education Association’s Read Across America Day, volunteers are mobilized to help children enjoy reading. Children at the Idabel 1 Head Start Center were treated to a visit from the Mayor, Tina Foshee-Thomas. She read Green Eggs and Ham in celebration of Dr. Seuss’ birthday. Afterward the children got to cook and eat green eggs and ham. Thank you Mayor!

“I will not eat them in a house, I will not eat them with a mouse, I will not eat them in a box I will not eat them with a fox, I will not eat them here or there I will not eat them anywhere, I do not like green eggs and ham I do not like them Sam I am”

Dr. Seuss is a pen name: His real name is Theodor Seuss Geisel. “Green Eggs and Ham” uses only 50 different words. Seuss’s editor bet him after “The Cat in the Hat,” which used 225 words, that he couldn’t write a book using fewer.
The children at Battiest Head Start celebrated Dr. Seuss birthday on March the 2nd in style! Dr. Seuss is a hero in the world of early childhood with famous books that excite all children’s imagination. The most popular of these books include “The Cat in the Hat” and “Green Eggs and Ham.” The children at Battiest Head Start participated in creating their very own Dr. Seuss styled hats and enjoyed a field trip to the Pickens Community Library. The library experience included an impressive spread of Dr. Seuss books and making “Seussy” snacks to enjoy with a special theme tied to each book they read! Every opportunity to celebrate creativity and imagination in Head Start is an opportunity well worth the time.

Ft. Towson Head Start: The Joy of Gardening

In early childhood education, one of the most important aspects is to foster children’s growth and development. We always hope our children leave the program having been given the opportunity to grow and develop with the proper sustenance to bloom into a successful kindergartener. With this theme in mind the Fort Towson Head Start class decided to create a garden for their classroom. This garden supported lesson plans implemented utilizing our early childhood curriculum which is designed to nurture higher-order thinking skills. The class discussed what a seed is and how it grows into a vegetable that provides nourishment to their bodies. They also learned what maintenance goes into the garden upkeep and the tools you use to make sure the plants are abundant. This is a lesson we hope the children and families will explore this Spring and Summer in their own homes!
Little Dixie Head Start, Early Head Start, and Early Head Start Child Care are currently recruiting for the 2017-2018 school year. All of our staff have been out posting signs and flyers throughout the area. Little Dixie family advocates have been hanging up flyers and passing out applications and information on the programs offered. The family advocates have also been out to many of our local restaurants and have partnered with them to offer new children’s menus. This menu allows the children to interact in an activity while simultaneously informing the families about LDCAA Head Start services. In April, the family advocates will be attending the Dogwood Days Festival in Idabel, Oklahoma to recruit children in McCurtain County. Throughout the summer months various Head Start staff will be attending many festivals and parades in the tri-county area to recruit as many children as possible for all the programs Little Dixie has to offer. For more information please call Enrollment Specialist Deana Gonzales at 580-326-7581.

Little Dixie Early Head Start

Join a Pre-School where we make learning fun!
Now Accepting Applications
for 3 & 4 year old children in your community!
Little Dixie Head Start is a family where everyone is inspired, empowered, and educated to reach their full potential.

Little Dixie Head Start

Now Accepting Applications
for birth to 36 month children in your community!
Free Child Care!
Infants and toddlers are provided high quality care in a center base setting.
Both programs are family oriented and designed to enhance children’s approaches to learning, social and emotional development, language and literacy development, cognitive development, perceptual, motor, and physical development.

Enrollment Specialist
Deana Gonzales
Contact Information
Office 980-326-7581
Fax 980-326-7584
Email Aprograms@ldcaaa.org
Head Start Programs 2017 In-Service

February In-Service training started with fresh ideas relating to recruitment strategies by our ERSEA specialist. Recruitment for the 2017-2018 school year has already started with our Family Advocate staff placing flyers around local businesses in the three counties that we serve as well as placing signs around towns.

After completing recruitment training we were able to have a presenter from Handwriting without Tears that explained the relationship to materials that have been purchased for our Head Start classrooms. Handwriting Without Tears works on language and literacy with children as well as teaching children to recognize basic letters. This program works with children on correct writing order, letter size, being able to recognize letters, as well as what shapes can be used to create different letters. The practice of Handwriting without Tears is that children learn better when they are able to have hands on creative experiences in the classroom that follow along with the teacher rather than just being given instructions to complete a task. Using Handwriting Without Tears in the Head Start classroom helps children become ready to step into kindergarten classrooms with the tools needed to become successful learners for a lifetime.

EHS and EHS-CC staff care for children ages birth to three years. During these years a child’s development is at its peak for absorbing learning experiences. A presenter from Lakeshore Learning was able to come and present a session on how important music and art can be in the classroom, even for young learners. The program was also able to purchase materials to take back into the classroom to use in practice to support the training provided. Through carefully planned curricula music teachers can support growth in each developmental domain, social-emotional, physical, cognitive, language and literacy. The training provided will help staff in preparing the children in their classroom to step into Head Start classrooms with a solid foundation for learning as well as a love for learning.

Head Start Partner Training Provides Big Benefits

One of the many benefits of being in a partnership collaboration with the Early Head Start program is Child Care Partnership staff are able to receive high-quality training locally within their own community, rather than traveling long distances to receive training. These training opportunities are provided annually in February, May, July, and October as well as roundtables throughout the year. In typical daycare settings it can prove difficult to complete required training hours as well as find local training. The Head Start program strives to provide our partnership staff with training that is both relevant and customized to specific age groups.

Aside from classroom training, partnership staff also receive training on Head Start/Early Head Start standards and regulations. CPR/First Aid classes are available should the individual need certification or to renew an expiring certification. Educational opportunities are also wide open for partnership staff. Several individuals have been able to complete educational goals with the help of education assistance plans. Professional Development is also tracked to ensure partnership staff have obtained the necessary training hours in order to apply for renewal on a Professional Development Ladder or Oklahoma Director Credential. Not only are live training offered through in-service and roundtable discussions, staff also have access to online training through webinars. Webinars are a great way to receive training without having to leave the center for a full day.

Training is not the only thing provided to partnership staff but also a network of available resources. The partnership staff have access to a team of specialists in component areas including education, mental health and disabilities, professional development, recruitment, nutrition, health and safety, as well as engaging families and community in the program.
Students at the Boswell Head Start learned about the effects of sugary treats on their teeth. Mrs. Vicki Sutton shared a two day lesson on dental care with the students. February is “National Children’s Dental Health” month. This is a month that all Head Start, Early Head Start, and Early Head Start-CCP staff educate the children and families on the importance of early oral health care. In Mrs. Sutton’s lesson she demonstrated how various substances including apple juice, soda, water, and the popular kid’s beverage “Bug Juice” affected egg shells when left overnight. The children also viewed a presentation called “Wiggly Tooth” which captivated the students. This lesson supports the Head Start requirement to obtain an oral wellness visit when attending the program!

Handwriting Without Tears

In this day of technology, it is important to continue teaching handwriting skills. Children use eye-hand coordination, fine motor skills, and cognitive abilities to learn handwriting skills. The Handwriting Without Tears curriculum is designed for materials to be intuitive, engaging, and developmentally progressive. This approach uses direct experience and knowledge of how students learn best to develop unique teaching materials that are easy and fun. Lessons and activities also make it easy to integrate handwriting into other lessons, and support children working at all levels. By facilitating instruction that engages children so that they are active participants, students integrate singing, moving, and talking with each lesson.

At the February 16th In-Service, teachers participated in a Mat Man presentation by HWT representative, Tracy Sloper. This unique approach uses a song, manipulation of wooden pieces, and active participation to introduce shapes used in the formation of letters. Teachers were provided with a HWT kit to use in the classroom. Teachers are now implementing the Mat Man activity and reporting successful results.
Effective 3/1/2017 the Broken Bow Early Learning Center joins early learning centers in Hugo, Idabel, Antlers and Swink as a 3-Star Child Care Facility.

To qualify as an accredited 3-Star Child Care Facility program, the centers are required to meet the following program evaluation criteria.

- an equipment inventory (Part-Day only);
- survey parents and personnel annually;
- establish program goals based on the information gathered from the completed health and safety checklist, parent and personnel surveys, CCS approved assessment tool and develop a written plan for meeting these goals;
- require one master teacher for every 30 children;
- By applying and meeting Stars criteria, The ELC’s have made a commitment to improve the quality of care in their respective programs. Early Childhood research has identified 5 essential practices linked to best outcomes for children. Both minimum licensing requirements and star criteria embrace these five essential practices which are:
  - basic health and safety;
  - developmental needs of children;
  - caregivers relate positively to children;
  - caregivers are trained, experienced, and have little turnover;
- parent involvement and communication is encouraged.

The certificate and decal will be on display at each Early Learning Center in the next few months so that participating families will be aware of this special recognition. LDCAA Early Learning Center staff have worked so diligently to earn. Brochures explaining the Reaching for the Stars program will also be provided to share with families.

“Congratulations are in order for all Early Learning Center staff who work so hard to provide children with quality, thoughtful and educational child care. You are now part of a special group of child care providers who have made a commitment to improve the quality of care for children”, says Associate Director Dawn McDaniel.

Little Dixie Healthy Start now Partnering with Kinion Care

Doctors Kinion Whittington, Autumn Hensley, and Nurse Practitioner Casey Woolsey are located at 206 N. 16th Street in Hugo to provide Obstetrics, Gynecology, and family medicine services to patients in the Hugo area.

Care Coordinator Amanda Terrebonne will be in the office twice a week to help serve and recruit Healthy Start clients.
RSVP Celebrates Martin Luther King, Jr. Festivities

Little Dixie RSVP staff & volunteers attended and assisted with the Martin Luther King, Jr. parade & hot dog celebration in Hugo, Oklahoma on January 16, 2017. Twenty five participants received a water bottle from RSVP with a crowd of well over fifty.

“Faith is taking the first step even when you can't see the whole staircase.”

Martin Luther King Jr.
RSVP Recognizes Outstanding Volunteers

On Wednesday March 29, 2017, Little Dixie RSVP held its annual recognition event honoring Retired and Senior volunteers in McCurtain County. The luau themed event reminded the volunteers “You are a Lifesaver”. The program highlighted those who served more than 1,000 hours as “Volunteer Heroes”, they included: Byron Foster, Jane Dingess, and Roy Harper.

In 2016, 134 volunteers donated 33,541 hours in 19 stations throughout McCurtain County. The value of the volunteers service totals $721,142.25. In honor of the Corporation for National and Community Service Mayor and County Recognition Day for National Service, a mock check displaying the value of the volunteer hours was presented to Idabel Mayor Tina Foshee-Thomas by RSVP Director Karla Luginbill and McCurtain County volunteers.

Pictured are staff at Hand to Hand Food Bank one of the stations honored for their contributions to the community.
RSVP Recognizes Outstanding Volunteers

CONTINUED

VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR!

Sandy Lantroop (center) was honored as Retired Senior Volunteer of the Year for McCurtain County March 29th at the McCurtain County Annual Awards Banquet. Sandy donates her time at the Wright City Senior Nutrition Center.

“You may not have saved a lot of money in your life, but if you have saved a lot of heartaches for other folks, you are a pretty rich man.”
~Seth Parker

At left Gracefully Yours Food Bank recognized for its service to the community and its growth in providing volunteer services.

At right The “Pink Ladies” at McCurtain Memorial Hospital Auxiliary were awarded for their volunteerism and friendly service to all they greet!
RSVP Celebrates “Oldest Man in Oklahoma”
Happy Birthday Mr. Pence!

Little Dixie Retired Senior Volunteer Program volunteers celebrated Mr. Pence’ 105th birthday at Messer Senior Nutrition Center in Messer, Oklahoma. RSVP volunteers play a vital role in Mr. Pence receiving hot nutritious meals each month. The center averages 60-80 meals per month served on site and/or delivered. The Centenarians of Oklahoma representatives came from Tulsa to present Mr. Hershel Pence a certificate for turning 105. He is the oldest living man in Oklahoma.

RSVP volunteers play a vital role in Mr. Pence receiving hot nutritious meals each month.

The Centenarians of Oklahoma representatives presenting Mr. Hershel Pence a certificate for turning 105. He is the oldest living man in Oklahoma.

105 Years Ago in the Year 1912:

- Woodrow Wilson was elected president. He took office in January 1913.
- The Republic of China was founded.
- New Mexico admitted as 47th state, Arizona admitted as 48th state
- Plastic enters our lives with important applications such as an electrical insulator. The molding of plastic parts as insulation material is begun by General Electric in their newly formed Plastics Department.
- The Dixie Cup was developed by Lawrence Luellen and Hugh Moore. Its original name was the ‘Health Kup,’ changed to ‘Dixie Cup’ in 1919. The name came from a line of dolls made by the Dixie Doll Company.
Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Increasing Community Partnerships

On January 23rd 2017, ECCS traveled to Arlington, VA to attend our first Annual Meeting and Learning Session. We were very fortunate to be able to bring five community partners to the Learning Session as well. We were able to speak to ECCS grantees from the other 11 states and learn about what is to come over the next 4 years. The grant has been broken up into three cohorts. The focus of the first cohort is Developmental Health Promotion through screening, monitoring, and follow-up. We are currently working with our Community Team to implement strategies within the tri-county area, to improve the developmental health of children and their families.

On March 9th, ECCS held our first tri-county Community Team meeting. We used that time to update our team members about the ECCS grant and Cohort A. For our first test sample, we will partner with local child care centers from each county. ECCS will provide training and support, as they incorporate developmental screenings into their child care center. Each location will be provided a Developmental Screening Guide and a Meeting Milestones Learning Box, which will aid them as they perform, monitor, and follow up with each screening. The ASQ screening will cover five domains: Communication, Gross Motor, Fine Motor, Personal-Social and Problem Solving. The Community Team also strategized ways to enhance and coordinate services, with the focus centered on community engagement, parent participation and creating an early childhood database.

Since our Community Team Meeting, ECCS has partnered with five child care centers. Two in Choctaw County, one in McCurtain County, and two in Pushmataha County. Each center is now screening every child from birth to five years of age. This will allow them to have a tool, on hand, to help detect when early intervention is needed. We are extremely excited to have each child care center on board and look forward to adding more partnerships in the months to come.
Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence Honors Mentor Keiv Brummett

Sixty-five outstanding Oklahoma mentors were honored during the fifth annual Oklahoma Mentor Day, presented recently by the Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence and its David and Molly Boren Mentoring Initiative. As part of National Mentoring Month in January, the foundation honored outstanding Oklahoma mentors who were selected by their respective programs within the Boren Mentoring Initiative’s statewide network. The event took place at the University of Central Oklahoma in Edmond and featured an awards ceremony and a variety of hands on, educational activities presented by UCO faculty and students. Passport to the Future Mentor Keiv Brummett was among the honorees.

“The goal of Oklahoma Mentor Day is to recognize outstanding mentors from all types of youth mentoring organizations around the state and to provide fun, educational activities for the honorees and their mentees to share,” said Beverly Woodrome, director of the Boren Mentoring Initiative. “Mentor Day also draws attention to the value of mentoring and the impact that mentors make in their mentees’ lives.”

“Building Brighter Futures” was the theme of Oklahoma Mentor Day, which featured a keynote address by former foster child and best-selling author Alton Carter, a Stillwater youth minister. Joining Carter in presenting Outstanding Mentor Awards was Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence trustee Molly Boren, who, along with her husband, foundation founder and chairman David L. Boren, is a strong mentoring advocate.

Keiv Brummett Mentor of the Year was honored by the Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence on January 17th, Oklahoma Mentor Day, at the University of Central Oklahoma. Mentors received a certificate and were honored guests at a luncheon. Afterwards he and his mentee, Sammy Loftis, were treated to a hands on tour of the Forensic Science Institute.

“It is not the job of a mentor to “save” kids. Your job is to give them seeds of hope so that they can save themselves”
Alton Carter
Passport to the Future Mentoring Program mentors and mentees celebrate spring time with their own spring break celebration or "Spring Fling". Each participant made a craft item, enjoyed lunch, watched The Trolls movie and performed karaoke.
The Museum of the Red River played host to the Passport To The Future Mentoring Program January 29th. Twenty-two participants enjoyed a guided tour, made pottery and had a picnic lunch on museum grounds. The Museum of the Red River was established in 1975 by Quintus and Mary Herron. Since the mid-80s, the Museum has expanded multiple times. In 1999, it grew from 3,000 square feet to over 17,000 square feet to accommodate larger exhibits and a growing collection of art and archaeology. It also started to acquire representative material from Asia, Africa, the Pacific Islands, and other regions. In 2005, a new exhibit space for the reconstructed skeleton of Acrocanthosaurus atokensis was added. The Museum opened the Mary H. Herron Community Conference Center in 2009 in order to provide a space for collections-based programs and an area to showcase items from cultures outside the Americas. Today, the Museum is the largest exhibiting facility of its kind within a 150-mile radius. It operates as a partnership between the City of Idabel's Herron Foundation, Inc. and the Idabel Museum Society, Inc. (IMSI). It receives no government funding and relies on the support of individuals and organizations from around the world. It works with other art and cultural agencies to provide activities and events to the public.

Currently, the Museum has 30,000 objects from six different continents in addition to the reconstructed skeleton of Acrocanthosaurus atokensis. The Museum of the Red River provides a range of educational opportunities—tours, workshops and educational seminars—to complement its exhibits. It also offers ongoing children's programs and features a permanent educational space for children in the Sallie and Holland Web Learning Center. Additionally, the Museum houses a Research Library of 6,000 volumes that can be accessed on a limited basis. For more information about guided tours, field trips or other educational opportunities, call the Museum at (580) 286-3616.

museumoftheredriver.org

Mentors and mentees made a pottery item to commemorate the day's events.
Benjamin Franklin once said, “Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn.” This is a philosophy that was instilled in me by one man, a man who not only told me but showed me the ways to be a responsible and hard-working member of society. This man is known to many as Billy Jack Wilkerson, but I simply call him Bill. Bill not only cheered me when I succeeded but coached me when I faltered. Bill has been my lifelong mentor for the following reasons: He took me in as another child when he had his own; he molded me when I wrong, and he passionately cares about anyone that is part of his life.

On July 31, 1998, my mother moved my family from Fort Worth, Texas to a small town, I now know as Antlers, Oklahoma. I gave up everything I had, at a young age, to simply follow my mother’s dream. Shortly after arriving in Antlers, my mother loved enough to sign me up for Cub Scouts, a program I had left behind in Texas. With this avenue, came the introduction of Billy Jack to my life. He agreed to become our den leader, which meant he was now instilled into my life, whether I wanted it or not. It didn’t take long for me to look up to the man. He would be that ever present male voice that I did not have in my life. Bill and his family bonded with my family and we became an unbreakable bond. Bill mentored me in Cub Scouts in a way that I still find unbelievable. He took an interest in me and taught me how to tie knots, make a fire, and even how to handle a firearm. The important part of this is that he took a “city boy” and molded him into a “country boy” when he simply could’ve let me be just another one of the students.

Shortly after growing through Cub Scouts, Bill had the desire to mold me even more. He taught me the meaning, and the practicality of household chores, and the caring of animals. Through Cub Scouts and School, I had become best friends with his son, Chad, and would spend the majority of my time at his house. Bill had two rules for us kids at his house. First, we were to make sure the house was clean and the laundry was done, daily. Secondly, we were responsible for feeding the numerous animals that the Wilkerson family owned. It was after all that was completed, that we were allowed to play. On one day, in particular, Chad and I had stayed up all night playing games and proceeded to sleep all day. At about 4:00 PM, we woke up and realized that Bill would be home soon, and we simply had not done anything we were supposed to. Of course, to our misfortune, Bill would get home from work shortly thereafter and we were caught, red-handed. Bill had the opportunity at this point to get furious with us but instead, he called me into the kitchen and asked me, point-blank if we had done the chores he left for us. Before I could lie to him he stopped me and gave me one bit of advice. Bill told me, “Joseph, I allow you kids to stay home and play, with the expectation that you will do your part”. It was at this point, I realized that I was being molded, and not being punished. Bill took the time, to mold a young boy into a young man instead of crushing him and making him feel small. He could have simply kicked me out and told me not to come back, but instead, he realized I needed that one-on-one meeting. I learned what joy and satisfaction come from seeing your work pay off at year’s end and through this, Bill imparted to me a lesson that I can relate to a family, one day.

Bill Wilkerson has been the firm voice in the life of many individuals, but not many can say that he molded them from the age of nine. Bernard Kelvin Cline, once stated, “True Mentors, don’t make their mentees a clone of themselves”, and I firmly believe that Bill has been living proof of that. Bill did not turn me into the second coming of him but instead walked a very firm line that I watched and learned from. Bill Wilkerson is a man of humble comings and a man in which any individual in life would be honored to call a friend. An individual once asked me what the one lesson was that I learned from my greatest role model. I told them that Bill Wilkerson taught me what hard, clean, ethical work was. I watched Bill for seven years, leave for work at 7:30 AM and not return back into the house until after his chores were completed that night. He taught me how to care for animals and how that relates to family. He taught me how to keep a house and respect a woman. He taught me the meanings of life, the finer points of athletics, and the ultimate respect for God.
CASA HAPPENINGS

The Oklahoma CASA Association’s 2017 conference, *Voices for Children* was held March 17-18, 2017. The two-day conference featured knowledgeable speakers and provided new information to motivate and inspire while supporting and enhancing the work staff and volunteers provide children and families.

CASA Volunteers Dudley and Eloise McCarty

Kiwanis Club Hosts At Risk Youth Program Speakers

Marissa Jordan of CASA (center) recently spoke to the Kiwanis Club in Idabel regarding the continuing need for volunteers from the community to serve as advocates for children placed in foster care. At Risk Youth Program Assistant Kimberly Priddy, also offered information on Passport to the Future Mentoring Program sponsored through Little Dixie CAA. Volunteers are needed to work with children ages 6 to 17 in McCurtain, Choctaw, and Pushmataha Counties. Marissa and Kimberly are pictured with Kiwanis Secretary Barbara McClanahan.

Annette Lewis, Sharon Johnson, Marissa Jordan, Janet Smith, Samantha McClelland, Loyetta Davis, Doris Long, Jodie Allen.

On March 1st the Pushmataha Department of Human Services Child Welfare presented a training to 14 guests, staff and CASA volunteers, about utilizing their detailed case files to help write court reports to the Judge.
Volunteer recruitment is a necessary component of any CASA program. In today’s economy it is becoming increasingly difficult to compete for individuals who want to volunteer their time. The work that volunteers do for the Little Dixie CAA CASA program can sometimes be cumbersome, labor intensive and mentally draining. It can also be one of the most rewarding activities you will ever undertake. Currently, the Little Dixie CAA CASA program has raised two new billboards along highway 70 near Idabel Oklahoma and another in Hugo close to Wal-Mart. If you or someone you know would like to become a CASA volunteer please call 580.298.2921 and *Speak Up for an Abused Child.*
New CASA Volunteers

Annette Lewis being sworn in by Judge Baze for Choctaw County.

Jodie Allen being sworn in by Judge Baze for Choctaw County.

Judge Baze swearing in new volunteer Sharon Johnson and new staff member Advocate Coordinator Janet Smith.

CASA is in need of volunteers to support over 100 children in the foster care system. The Court Appointed Special Advocates program is a non-profit organization that serves children who have been removed from their homes due to abuse and neglect. By volunteering you can change the life of a child and be their voice in court. Specialized training will provide participants with everything they need to know to become an advocate. There is no previous experience necessary to become a CASA volunteer but volunteers must be at least 21 years old and able to pass a background check.

The Court Appointed Special Advocates program provides foster children with caring adults who can speak up for their best interests in the court system. Advocates develop a relationship with the child, get to know key players in his/her life and collect additional information for the judge to make a more informed decision about placement.
Valentines Day Cookies and Candy for Department of Human Services Staff and Tri-County Judges

Little Dixie CASA staff and volunteers show their appreciation by delivering cookie and candy plates to DHS staff and Judges in Choctaw, Pushmataha and McCurtain counties as a thank you for their continued support.

Foster Children Receive Bags

CASA staff loaded bags with t-shirts, toothbrushes, toothpaste, floss and coloring books from Dr. Twana Smith Dental Office of Antlers. The Antlers and Tuskahoma Masons also assisted in funds for the baskets.

Marissa Jordan folds t-shirts to include in the bags for foster Children

CASA staff and Mason volunteers
Navigator Program Special Enrollment Period

Open Enrollment ended on January 31, 2017. All individuals and families seeking to apply for health coverage with the below listed life events may require a Special Enrollment Period. Have you: had a child, adopted a child, or placed a child in foster care, gotten married or divorced, moved to a different state or city/town in Oklahoma, lost existing coverage, had changes in your income, became a U.S. citizen, been incarcerated, changed dependency status, death of a covered member in your household, turned 26 and aged off a parents plan, AmeriCorps member starting or ending your service, a tribal member can enroll and change their plans anytime.

Navigators are available throughout the year and are scheduling appointments for Special Enrollment Periods. Please come by our office or make an appointment to visit with a Navigator. 500 E. Rosewood, Hugo, OK 74743 or call 580-326-5434.

Rural Health Network Spotlight: Cypress Home Care

Since 2015 Cypress Home Care has been a member of the Rural Health Network of Oklahoma (RHNOK) a program of Little Dixie CAA and has been a valuable partner in several network projects including a food, gift and warm blanket drive for the elderly people of Choctaw County in 2015 and 2016.

Cypress Home Care provides several services to the community including skilled nursing, physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy and home health aide. Currently Cypress Home Care provides employment for 11 individuals. RHN is pleased to partner with businesses like Cypress Home Care to provide compassionate high quality care for the people of Southeast Oklahoma.

Cypress Home Care

OFFICE HOURS

Monday – Friday
8: 00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Closed for Lunch
12-noon – 1:00 pm
DON’T IGNORE DIABETES
FREE Classes for Seniors with Diabetes

How can I lower my blood sugar?

What is A1c?

What can I eat?

What is hyper and hypoglycemia?

Why are my feet numb?

What can I do about neuropathy?

Can I prevent complications?

Take charge of your life by learning how to control your diabetes

Register to attend these FREE sessions:

Nora Testerman - Educator: 580-372-0531
(Please leave Message & your number thanks.)
Crystal Moore - Dietitian, on Wednesdays 580-317-3390

Adults/seniors living with diabetes are taking advantage of these free classes to learn how to live better with diabetes. Sign up and get behind the wheel of your renewed lifestyle.

www.rhnofoklahoma.org
During the Holiday Season of 2016, Rural Health Network of Oklahoma (RHNOK) a program of Little Dixie CAA took in thousands of pounds of canned goods donated by the Campbell Soup Company for area senior citizens. RHNOK distributed the generous gift to over 52 Senior Citizens that were referred by RHN members during the holiday season. The LDCAA Transit Office allowed us to store the remaining canned goods at their facility and on January 18, 2017 the remaining food was given to the Washington Community Center and Food Bank.

Coach Lloyd Smith and team members from the Hugo High School football team assisted in loading and unloading more than 1 ½ tons of canned goods. Coach Smith and his team were courteous, helpful and enthusiastic taking a big job and completing it within a matter of minutes. Rural Health Network of Oklahoma would like to give a Great Big THANKS to Coach Smith and his hard working players.

Members of the Hugo High School football team: Cauy Owen, Javion Wineberry, Ethan Present, Ryan Baker, Grayson Cox, Jarrett Vantrees, Eric Owen, Seth Harlin, Nate Ellis, Spencer Dillishaw, Wayne Ellis, Bladen Morgan, Quinton Scroggins, Kevin Mendoza, Jovanni Aquilar, Dalton Davidson, Anthony Beller, Brandon Allen, Andrew Caraway, Christian Singleton, Mathew Bray, Corrlione Fleeks, Jackson Trantham, Jared Houchen, Joshua Singchantha, Enrique Granda
Choctaw County Drug Free Communities Attends CADCA Conference

(continued from page 1) Since 1992, CADCA has demonstrated that when all sectors of a community come together —social change happens. CADCA is the premier membership organization representing those working to make their communities safe, healthy and drug-free. Members can be found in every U.S. state and territory and working in 23 countries around the world. The mission of CADCA (Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America) is to strengthen the capacity of community coalitions to create and maintain safe, healthy and drug-free communities globally. This is accomplished by providing technical assistance and training, public policy advocacy, media strategies and marketing programs, training and special events.
Drug Free Communities Joins Community Partners in a Kick Butts Day Event

Thank you for joining Choctaw County’s TSET Healthy Living Program, Little Dixie Drug Free Communities and Little Dixie Healthy Start in a

KICK BUTTS DAY

Butt Drive

Kick Butts Day is a national day of activism that empowers youth to stand out, speak up and seize control against Big Tobacco, raise awareness about the problem of tobacco use and encourage youth to stay tobacco-free. For more information visit www.kickbuttsday.org

Please use this bag to collect cigarette butts in your community!
We will announce the winning school at our Kick Butts Day event on March 15, 2017 at Ansley Park from 11am-1:30pm.
Lunch and games will be provided. Please join us!
Thank you for your commitment to making Choctaw county a healthier place to live, work and play!
DFC Utilizes Oklahoma Prevention Needs Assessment for Choctaw County Strategic Plan

The Oklahoma Prevention Needs Assessment (OPNA) is a statewide survey administered by ODMHSAS to students in grades 6th, 8th, 10th and 12th during even-numbered Spring semesters. The survey measures risk behaviors such as violence and alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use that can result in injury and/or impede positive development among Oklahoma youth and also evaluates risk and protective factors, which are attitudes, behaviors, and opinions that research has shown to be highly correlated with these risk behaviors. Survey results are utilized in the planning of important prevention and intervention programs within schools and communities. Choctaw county results are evaluated by the Choctaw County Coalition for Change through the Drug Free Communities Program to guide the strategic plan for activities related to drug use prevention in the Choctaw county community. Results of the survey can be found at the following URL: [http://ok.gov/odmhsas/Prevention_/Prevention_Initiatives/Oklahoma_Prevention_Needs_Assessment_(OPNA)/index.html](http://ok.gov/odmhsas/Prevention_/Prevention_Initiatives/Oklahoma_Prevention_Needs_Assessment_(OPNA)/index.html)

Employees of the Quarter

A GREAT start to 2017!! Congratulations to LDCAA Weatherization's Johnny Driggers for being named Employee of the Month for January. Mr. Driggers was nominated by Terry Wren, who stated, "Johnny is very conscientious of the work that he and his crew do, and he wants to do a good job. He has good qualities that Little Dixie should be proud of." Pictured are Terry Wren, Johnny Driggers, and Ron Walker. Congratulations Johnny on a well-deserved honor.
Employees of the Quarter

Congratulations to Ms. Maria Herron Little Dixie Community Action Agency, Inc. February Employee of the Month! Maria works in Administration as the Human Resource/Benefit/Insurance Specialist for Little Dixie CAA. Maria was nominated by fellow co-worker-Elette Hamill. Among the many accolades, Ms. Hamill stated: "Maria always has a friendly, energetic, and grateful attitude that is contagious in the workplace. She is an inspiration to many!"

Pictured above LDCAA Chairperson Brent Franks, February Employee of the Month Maria Herron and Executive Director Rebecca Reynolds.

Pictured below LDCAA Chairperson Brent Franks, March Employee of the Month Karen Earnest and Associate Director Johnny Moffitt.

Congratulations to Karen Earnest for being named Little Dixie's March 2017 Employee of the Month. Karen was nominated by Clark LeForce. This past February, Karen completed her 17th year of employment with LDCAA. Mr. LeForce wrote in the nomination form, "What a wonderful, successful, kind, outstanding, hard working, cheerful LDCAA employee. Karen Earnest, thank you for all you have tirelessly done for the employees and families of LDCAA."
Service Awards of the Quarter

January Service Award Winners

Tammie Fewell-20 Years of Service (Head Start Program)

Sommer Springfield-10 Years of Service (Head Start Program)

Elette Hamill-10 Years of Service (LDCAA Administration)

Carolyn Whitley-15 Years of Service (Head Start Program)

Those honored for service but unable to attend: Pamela Dunigan-5 Years of Service (Head Start Program)

February Service Award Winners

Josh Braziel-10 Year Service Award (Rural Health Network)

Kathy Galvano-5 Year Service Award. (Head Start Program)

Those honored for service but unable to attend: Lisa McKinney 15 Years of Service (LDCAA Transit Program)

March Service Award Winners

Congratulations 10 Year Service Awards. Pictured are LDCAA Board Chair Brent Franks, Tracy Jackson, Cindy Mills, Ruby Gann and Associate Director Johnny Moffitt.
Welcome New Board Members

Little Dixie Community Action Agency welcomes Brad Burgett. Mr. Burgett will be representing his community on the Pushmataha County Commissioners seat.

Alice Courtney represents the Clayton Senior Citizens Nutrition Center in Pushmataha County. Alice was a member of the City Council from 2001-2006 and states that she enjoys serving her community.

Sharon Jernigan represents the Idabel Nutrition Center in McCurtain County. Sharon is a very active volunteer with Dogwood Days, Fall Fest, Oklahoma Silver Haired Legislature, Owa Chito, and the Idabel Nutrition Center.
LITTLE DIXIE COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY, INC.


REBECCA REYNOLDS Executive Director

BRENT FRANKS Board Chairman

DAVID HAWKINS Vice-Chairman

WILLIAM SMITH Secretary/Treasurer

Board Members: Choctaw County - Jimmy Brandon, Leeoma Caldwell, Kevin Cory, Clinton Crawley, Melissa Cress, Michael Melton, Leah Savage, William Smith, Harolynn Wofford.

Board Members: McCurtain County - Christie Carbajal, Trilla Frazier, Jim Freeny, Walt Frey, Jack Griffin, David Hawkins, Andrea Henkel, Sharon Jernigan, Sandra Meeks, Vicky Wade.

Board Members: Pushmataha County - Brad Burgett, Alice Courtney, Becky Franks, Brent Franks, Vickie Leathers, Charlie Rowland, Dwight Satterfield, David Smith.

Newsletter Inquiries Please Contact
Stephanie Jones:
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580-585-0565

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