January - March 2018

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
REBECCA REYNOLDS

BOARD CHAIRMAN
BRENT FRANKS

BOARD MEMBERS

IN THIS ISSUE

2 Kick Butts Day
3 Head Start
7 Self Help Housing
9 Technical & Management Assistance
14 Victim & Youth Programs
Early Childhood
19 Comprehensive Systems Impact
Retired & Senior Volunteers
21 Employee of the Month

Little Dixie Participates in Kick Butts Day in Hugo

Head Start Highlights the Importance of Family Involvement

5 Little Dixie T&MA Grantees Re-Funded in First Quarter of 2018

Little Dixie Program Director Named Mentor of the Year

PHONE: 580-326-3351
FAX: 590-326-2305
MEDIA CONTACT: ALEONARD@LITTLEDIXIE.ORG
ADMINISTRATION OFFICE
209 N 4TH, HUGO, OK 74743
KICK BUTTS DAY IS A NATIONAL DAY OF ACTIVISM THAT EMPOWERS YOUTH TO STAND UP TO BIG TOBACCO, RAISE AWARENESS AND ENCOURAGE YOUTH TO STAY DRUG FREE.

Little Dixie programs including Healthy Start, Victim and Youth Programs and drug Free communities participated in the event on March 21st. Security First National Bank and Bikers Against Child Abuse also contributed their time and effort to make the event a success!
Pictured left, children work on problem solving! After reading Goldilocks and the Three Bears, Head Start students analyzed the structure versus weight of the three bears on the chair.

Pictured below left to right, Head Start student at Boswell 2 learns how to tie shoestrings; Head Start student works on an art project during class; the science center is a fun place to be at Head Start.
Little Dixie Head Start kicked off the Books Building Bridges initiative with local police departments and sheriff offices in centers across Choctaw, Pushmataha and McCurtain counties. Head Start programs nationwide partner with police departments in order to use books to build bridges of collaboration, understanding and support.

“Books Building Bridges” is a national reading initiative between Head Start programs and local police departments. Reading regularly to children is critical during formative years. The partnership between the local police departments and sheriff offices is intended to foster a love of reading and develop positive communication and trust between children, families and neighborhood law enforcement officers.

Pictured are local law enforcement officers with Boswell 1 and Swink Head Start students participating in the new initiative.
In a recent article by the National Center on Early Childhood Health and Wellness entitled, “Brush up on Oral Health” the relationship between water and good oral health was highlighted. More than 65 percent of a person’s body weight is water. Not having enough water in our bodies is a common reason for feeling tired throughout the day. About 7 out of 10 young children drink only beverages that have added sugar or sugar substitutes. This puts them at risk for tooth decay and other health problems.

**Water is vital for good oral health and overall health.** Drinking enough water every day helps move nutrients through the body, gets rid of waste, gives skin a healthy glow, keeps muscles moving and promotes a healthy weight.

**Water strengthens teeth.** Drinking water with fluoride is one of the easiest and best ways to prevent tooth decay. Water with fluoride makes it difficult for tooth decaying bacteria to create acid buildup. Fluoride also strengthens the outer layers of the teeth, making them more resistant to acid attacks. If the local, county or state department advises to not drink water from the tap, make sure the new water source contains fluoride.

**Water keeps the mouth clean.** Drinking water washes away the bacteria that causes tooth decay as well as food left in the mouth after eating. Water also dilutes acids made by tooth decaying bacteria. Even though drinking water helps keep the mouth clean, it is still important to brush the teeth with fluoride twice a day.

**Water fights dry mouth.** Water helps create saliva, which is the mouth’s first defense against tooth decay. Saliva contains calcium and other minerals that work into the teeth’s outer layers in order to keep them strong. It also keeps food moist so it can be swallowed easily and clears away food left in the mouth after eating.

**Water is sugar-free.** Drinking it doesn’t allow the bacteria that causes tooth decay to make acid. Drinking water instead of beverages with natural or added sugar lowers the risk for developing tooth decay.

Teeth brushing is a part of Head Start, Early Head Start and Early Head Start—Child Care’s daily routine. Every child will experience at least one session of teeth brushing every day while at the centers. This is celebrated amongst children and teachers with songs and praise. Drinking water is offered and on hand daily for all children to order to support and create healthy habits.
Families are an integral part of the Head Start program. Head Start’s philosophy is to help the child and their family become successful. It is also emphasized that families have a true investment in School Readiness. The process begins at enrollment when the family is welcomed into the Head Start center. This is when teachers and families discuss their expectations for the upcoming school year. The meeting is a chance for the families to feel welcomed and needed in their child’s education. Goals, which are the foundation for a child’s lesson plans are also set during the meeting. During the course of the school year, the families are kept up to date on their child’s progress. If a child completes a goal, the parent and teacher develop a new goal to work on. These updates occur during parent-teacher conferences and home visits.

The ideology behind parent-teacher conferences and home visits are very impactful. It is believed if a child sees their family coming into the classroom environment, their success within school will be reinforced. The home visit is a chance for teaching staff to go into a child’s home environment. The feeling a child gets when welcoming a teacher into their home is clearly visible during each visit.

The family unit is always welcomed into the classroom to experience the education their child receives. Each month days are set aside to have activities for families to participate in with their child. These days are a time when families do art projects, storytelling and read books just to name a few.

Below are pictures of families joining in the fun at Head Start centers.
Self-Help Housing

Bottom left: Self-Help Housing Group Worker Sommer McMurtry educates Head Start parents during bi-monthly meeting in Durant, OK on March 15, 2018. She also took applications and information to the second bi-monthly meeting in March.

Bottom right: Self-Help Housing coordinated a Blood Drive in Durant, OK on January 26, 2018. Pictured is a Self-Help Housing Homeowner’s family member, Bobby Woods.

Boswell 1 Head Start celebrated Dr. Suess’ Birthday with the Cat and the Hat reading “Green Eggs and Ham”. The Cat was portrayed by Boswell Principal Mr. Grimes.
Self-Help Housing


Pictured top right: USDA Rural Development Area Specialist Zack Williams, Group Worker Sommer McMurtry, Homeowner Marinda Copeland accompanied by her dad, sister and 3 children and Construction Supervisor Grady Ford.

Pictured bottom left: Group Worker Sommer McMurtry and Homeowner Tabatha Eads

Pictured bottom right: Group Worker Sommer McMurtry, Homeowner Terri Pratt and Joey Robinson
USDA Rural Development recently presented the Northwest Regional Housing Authority (NWRHA) with a check for $345,484. The grant is for the 504 Housing Rehabilitation Program for the next two years. Vickey Stratton, single family housing director welcomed all the partners to the special event.

“We serve 12 counties and this two-year grant will allow us to help others,” Stratton said. “This is the second two-year cycle and we are currently finishing up the numbers and projects from the first grant and we were able to help 46 home owners providing a savings of $290,000 for them. We already have 15 on the list for this new grant. So we are off to a great start.”

USDA Rural Development area director Johnny James said, “As they close out the first grant and receive this second grant, I want to say what an excellent job they have done finishing projects on time and working with our office to make this possible.

“We are also very grateful for the working relationships between all of these partners to make helping people in the communities we serve possible: he said. “We also appreciate the congressional support and their staff and couldn’t do this without them.

James introduced new state USDA director David Branscum.

Mayor Dan Sherrell said, “On behalf of our city and the community we are proud of the accomplishments of the Housing Authority. They help those who need help and they have done a fantastic job the past two years with this program. Their staff is very helpful and we appreciate what they do for our area.”

David Rowland, construction coordinator for the projects asked Wanda Shield if she was pleased with their work.

“I’m very pleased,” she old the group. “So far they have torn our my old carpet and make my bathroom handicapped accessible. They installed new efficient sinks and toilets and I’ve already seen a savings on my water bill. They have also replaced my door knobs so they are easier for me to open with my arthritic hands.”
Representatives from Cong. Steve Womack, Cong. Rick Crawford, Sen. Tom Cotton and Sen. John Boozman’s offices were present to offer their congratulations. They commented that it was great to see such an efficient use of government money and glad the grant could be funded again and not wasted.

It is crucial to help families in the 12 counties we serve and we just can’t move fast enough with such limited funds. The needs are great,” Stratton said.

The program is designed to offer rehab assistance to low income homeowners over the age of 62 who are not able to get a repair loan. Loans can be used to repair, improve or modernize homes or remove health and safety hazards.

The maximum loan is $20,000 and the maximum grant is $7,500.

Neil Gibson, NWRHA executive director, said, “It’s great to be able to assist low income families with housing updates. But the Housing Authority does not exist without these other partnerships and the Rural Development program. We knew the need was there, but didn’t realize how great the need was. We appreciate the city’s help, Ozark Opportunities and all of our partnerships. We couldn’t do it without this network of partnerships.”

For more information about the rehabilitation program, Self-help Housing, or the counseling programs, contact NWRHA at (870) 743-6779. Visit the website at nwregionalhousing.org or in person at 317 Industrial Park in Harrison.

Three Families Move Into New Homes in Columbus, NM

Tierra de sol improves quality of life in Columbus, NM

COLUMBUS, N.M.—Tierra del Sol Housing Corporation hosted an open house to welcome three families into new homes in the village. The homes feature modern appliances, tile floors and fenced yards. But the stars of the day were the three families who are in the process of moving into them as first-time homeowners.

Tierra del Sol is a region housing community development corporation that plans to build a total of 21 homes in Columbus. According to its mission statement, its goal is “to improve the quality of life and economic conditions of low income persons residing in distressed and under-served communities by providing affordable housing and community development through construction activities, lending, training and employment opportunities.

Program participants are required to provide 1,200 volunteer hours of labor to build their homes and to help other participants with theirs. On average, volunteer hours account for 65 percent of the labor cost of each house, and the remaining work such as plumbing and electrical installations is done by local, licensed contractors.

Story continued on next page...
The new Cabral-Dominguez home on Buena Vista Street in Columbus, New Mexico
(Photo: Kara Naber –Headlight Photo)

The result is a sturdy, safe, secure and attractive home that had previously seemed out of reach for people like Velia Borunda, who put in an application with Tierra del Sol after the death of her husband.

“When he was still alive, we were thinking that we had to do something to have something of our own. We were thinking (about buying) some land and an old trailer then fix it up, like most people do here,” Borunda said, “but then this opportunity came up.”

The program funded through USDA Rural Development, offered partially-subsidized, 30-year mortgages to qualified low-income applicants. The program is designed not only to get people into a home but to keep them in it by offering manageable payments and a safety net for emergencies. With a default rate of about 2 percent, it seems to be working.

“The payments are low enough that they compare to a rental,” said Borunda. (The program) is meant to help us get our home and keep our home. Your payments are adjusted to your income. If someone gets sick or laid off, we can contact them and say ‘I’m not going to be able to make my payment,’ and they can help us.”

The three houses—at 203, 209 and 215 Buena Vista Street, a few blocks north of the town center, are well insulated and are equipped with Energy Star-rated appliances. They are all-electric, since natural gas is absent in Columbus. Solar panels, scheduled to be installed next week, are expected to provide between 30– to 40– percent savings on owners’ electric bills.

On Saturday, the new homeowners opened their homes to friends, family and the public to help them celebrate.

Despite a gusty, west wind, burgers hit the barbecue grill while children played in a colorful jump house and well-wishers admired the new houses and congratulated the owners.

Blowing dust did nothing to dampen the joy of the day. Anna Dominguez, standing in her sparkling new kitchen, seemed to still be in a state of disbelief when she said, “It’s something that we thought wasn’t going to happen. Thank God it came true.”
NECAC’s Self-Help Housing Rehabilitation Program funds the materials and supervision for renovation projects in qualifying homes, but it’s the homeowners themselves who perform the work.

The whirring of saws filled the basement at 1012 Union St. Thursday morning as John Stealey began work to remove his basement floor. He worked methodically, section by section, to take out the decades old floor with plans to replace it.

This might seem like a typical remodel project, but Stealey and his wife Elia are actually the first people to benefit from a program that supports home renovations through the North East Communication Action Corporation.

NECAC’s Self-Help Housing Rehabilitation Program funds the materials and supervision for renovation projects in qualifying homes, but it’s the homeowners themselves who perform the work.

“Anything you can do for your own home is great,” said Carla Potts, NECAC Deputy Director for Housing Development Programs, said. “You can have that pride in ownership.”

NECAC is using $159,000 USDA Rural Development grant to finance renovation work at 26 owner-occupied homes in Marion, Pike and Ralls counties. Income-qualifying participants are working with a NECAC construction supervisor, who provides one-on-one instruction on the skills they need to do the projects.

Guiding Stealey as he began to remove the basement floor was Brian Reed, NECAC’s self-help supervisor.

Potts said the projects differ from home to home and the homes chosen were already on a list to benefit from NECAC’s weatherization programs. The Stealey’s are working on the basement floor. The next home will have insulation blown in. Door and window replacements are on tap at another house.

This isn’t the first time NECAC has done a self-help program. Under the original program, participants worked as a team to build each other’s homes. Forty-eight houses were constructed over about 10 years starting in 1999 in Shleby, Monroe, Randolph and Montgomery counties.

Potts stressed the importance of homeowners doing all their own work.

“It’s your home. It’s your investment,” she said. “They will always have that.”

More information about Self-Help Rehabilitation is available by calling the NECAC Housing Development Department at 573-324-6622.
HAC’s loan funds provide low interest rate loans to support single and multifamily affordable housing projects for low-income rural residents throughout the U.S. and territories. Capital is available for all types of affordable and mixed-income housing projects, including preservation, farmworker, senior and veteran housing. HAC loan funds can be used for pre-development, site acquisition, site development, and construction/rehabilitation. Contact HAC’s loan fund staff at hacloanfund@ruralhome.org, 202-842-8600

Please note: HAC is not able to offer loans to individuals or families. Borrowers must be nonprofit or for-profit organizations or government entities (including tribes).

T&MA Congratulates USDA Rural Development Re-Funded Housing Programs in 2018:

- **Proyecto Azteca** in San Juan, Texas received their ninth grant. They plan to complete 15 homes.
- **Crawford-Sebastian CDC** in Ft. Smith, Arkansas was funded to complete 16 homes. This is their sixth grant.
- **North East Community Action Corporation** in Bowling Green, Missouri was funded to accomplish 26 Equivalent Units of rehab.
- **Northwest Regional Housing Authority** in Harrison, Arkansas was funded for 58 equivalent units of rehab.
- **Zuni Housing Authority** in Zuni, New Mexico was funded for 12 new homes.
CASA TRAINING

On January 19, 2018 Sheryl Marseilles, Executive Director of Oklahoma CASA, visited the Little Dixie CASA program to provide training for child welfare workers in McCurtain, Choctaw and Pushmataha counties. During the training at the Hugo Library, Marseilles explained the CASA Volunteer’s role and how they can help social workers. Since CASA is an officer of the court, they can often get access to information DHS is not allowed to obtain. The CASA’s court order is so powerful that it supersedes the HIPPA law. The training was arranged by DHS District Director Lynn McCarn.

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES

On January 26, 2018 Youth First held a Strengthening Families program with a tour of the Antlers Depot, the rail car and the Tornado of 1945 Memorial. The families then went to the Antlers Homeownership Center for pizza and board games. Pictured above are Little Dixie Employees A.J. Henslee and Rita Plummer as well as program participants.
On January 20, 2018, volunteers from Mentoring, CASA and Youth First were invited to a Mexican feast at the Hugo Lake Hospital House. Volunteers enjoyed the great weather and view, food, fellowship and door prizes.

Volunteers are super heroes!
Victim & Youth Programs

LITTLE DIXIE COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY, INC
PJS & BOOKS

In March, Little Dixie CASA received a generous donation from the organization, Pajamas and Book Donations. Foster care CASA children in McCurtain, Choctaw and Pushmataha counties were able to get new pajamas and books.

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES

Pictured below left: Youth First held a Strengthening Families program on March 2, 2018. Participants, Volunteers and Youth First Staff watched a movie at the McCurtain Cinema in Idabel.

Pictured below right: Youth First and Passport to the Future participants watched a movie at Cinema One in Antlers.
During Spring Break on March 15, Passport to the Future and Youth First Strengthening Families program held a family activity. Participants spent the day enjoying the warm weather in Antlers, fishing and grilling hamburgers and hotdogs. (pictured right and left)

Pictured left, Rita Plummer and A.J. Henslee assist Passport to the Future and Youth first participants in making Valentine decorations. PPTF and Youth First partnered with Christian Outreach Ministries for the project.

Pictured left, on March 20, Youth First held their Strengthening Families program training in Idabel. The families enjoyed a Mexican food lunch, played board games and conducted a science experiment, growing crystals, which they were able to take home.
AUTISM AWARENESS TRAINING

Little Dixie’s ECCS Program partnered with Dr. Bonnie McBride, Center for Disease Control Act Early Ambassador, and her team of the University of Oklahoma Health Science Center, Oklahoma Early Access Autism Project, to host a training for the tri-county area. Liz Moore and Jeanne Buchanan provided the free training over Autism Spectrum Disorder: Early Warning Signs at the Kiamichi Technology Center in Hugo.

During the training, participants learned about the importance of early identification, parent-engaged developmental monitoring and screening, early warning signs and effective supports for children with autism. There were a total of 46 people in attendance and ECCS is currently coordinating with Head and Healthy Start for the Early Access Team to facilitate a training over the screening of autism.

HELP ME GROW

Advancing Developmental Health Promotion, Early Identification and Linkage to Services

ECCS has contracted with the Help Me Grow National Center for a one-year technical assistance contract. This contract will cover the implementation phase and will make Oklahoma the 29th affiliate state. Help Me Grow is an integrated statewide system model designed to address the need for early identification of children at risk for developmental and/or behavioral problems and then link them to community-based developmental and behavioral services and supports. ECCS has built a Leadership Team with state officials and is tasked with customizing the roadmap to implementation to best fit the need of Oklahoma. ECCS held their first Help Me Grow Leadership Team in February and are excited about the progress they’ve made.
Karla Luginbill of Antlers was named the 2018 Passport to the Future Program’s Mentor of the Year. Luginbill is the Director of the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program at Little Dixie Community Action Agency. She has been matched with her mentee, Bailey for two years. Bailey is now a freshman at Tulsa Community College. Little Dixie staff member Rita Plummer said, “Karla has given so much to this mentee and welcomed and treated her as family.”

About the program: Little Dixie’s Passport to the Future mentoring program provides community based mentoring to youth ages 6 to 17 in Choctaw, Pushmataha and McCurtain Counties.

Pictured below, Little Dixie RSVP County Coordinator Jerri Mitchell presents potential RSVP Volunteer Natasha Schneider with a t-shirt. Mitchell attended the Martin Luther King Jr. parade in Idabel to help celebrate and remember the late MLK Jr. She also distributed RSVP information to those in attendance.
January - Ali McDaniel
Rural Impact

February - Ed Jackson
Transit

March - Grady Ford
Self-Help Housing