Broken Bow, OK (September 25, 2018) – In just 10 days in August, 167,000 people cast 4.5 million votes in support of their favorite causes. As a result, 40 communities, in 19 states, including Little Dixie Community Action Agency’s Southeastern Oklahoma Improving Childhood Education Initiative, will be getting assistance from State Farm. State Farm is proud to announce the Top 40 vote-getting causes will each receive a $25,000 grant to improve their communities.

State Farm Neighborhood Assist is a crowd-sourced philanthropic program that empowers communities to identify issues in their neighborhoods. Non-profits affiliated with each of the top 40 causes receive grants to address them.

This initiative will strengthen and improve the educational environment at LDCAA’s Broken Bow Early Learning Center by incorporating innovative approaches to learning. The agency will utilize these funds to purchase developmentally-appropriate technology solutions to improve education achievement levels of children enrolled. Overall, this initiative will assist children in strengthening their foundation for school readiness and success.

“State Farm is here to help life go right in neighborhoods all across the country. We look forward to seeing the changes in these 40 communities because of these Neighborhood Assist grants,” said Allison Bertsche, Public Affairs Director at State Farm.

At least one submission was received from each of the 50 states. The State Farm Review Committee selected the top 200 finalists from 2,000 submissions. In the seven years of the program, more than 250 causes have received a total of $7 million to enact change in their communities.

For a complete list of this year’s top 40 causes, please visit: www.neighborhoodassist.com.
Universal Housing Signs New Grant Agreement

Universal Housing Development Corporation of Russellville, Arkansas, began their self-help housing program in 1976. Over the past 42 years they have assisted 1,301 families to achieve the American dream of homeownership.

The self-help program assists families to qualify for long-term, low-interest loans through U.S. Department of Agriculture - Rural Development or other lenders. Then Universal Housing teaches them the skills necessary to construct and maintain their homes. The grantee provides a Construction Supervisor to oversee the work performed during the construction of the homes.

By participating in the construction of the homes, families are able to move into the new home with an average equity of $29,800. The amount of equity realized will vary from home to home depending on the house plan selected, the tasks performed by the families, the region of the county the grantee is operating in and many other factors.

Pictured above, representatives from Universal Housing Development Corporation, Rural Development and Little Dixie CAA watch Kimberly Miller, Executive Director of Universal Housing, sign the new grant agreement.

USDA Changes to RD Handbook-1-3550

*Courtesy of NCALL Research, Inc.*

Self-Helper Fall 2018, Vol. 138

Reminder: USDA Rural Development has partially revised Handbook-1-3550.

This year, USDA’s Single Family Housing (SFH) Direct Division published an update to Handbook-1-3550, in two Procedural Notices (PN). The handbook changes aim to simplify and make more efficient the process of Single Family Direct Loans and Grants, as well as to clarify program requirements.

Partial revisions were made to some areas, including homeownership education training, packager’s certification, packaging fees, appraisals, RO’s letters, cover letter, credit score range, income verifications, house inspections, insurance (builder’s risk, hazard, flood) and timelines. Attachment 3- A was entirely revised; Attachments 3-G, 3-H and 3-J were partially revised and/or reorganized.


Section 502 Direct Packaging Website

*Courtesy of NCALL Research, Inc.*

Self-Helper Fall 2018, Vol. 138

The certified packaging process now has a dedicated website for packagers and intermediaries. The site includes upcoming certified packaging training sessions, trainings on program/packaging topics, resources (such as a link to the intermediary coverage map), and the Loan Packaging Express newsletter. Visit [https://www.rd.usda.gov/direct-loan-application-packagers](https://www.rd.usda.gov/direct-loan-application-packagers) to view the new site!
Updates to the Spotlight Website

The Spotlight website, www.selfhelphousingspotlight.org, is a national website that was created and is maintained by the T&MA Contractors for Self-Help Housing grantees. The Spotlight works to link all Self-Help grantees nationwide, highlight successes, and assist in connecting interested parties to programs in their area. The Spotlight website has recently undergone some important updates, as follows:

- The Spotlight now has a SSL (Secure Sockets Layer) certificate to encrypt transmitted data and make it secure, identified by “https:” at the beginning of the website address.
- By having a SSL certificate, the Spotlight should start to rank higher in search results, which will translate into increased numbers of visitors to the website. Currently, the website has at least 1,500 visitors per month—with 75% of traffic to the website attributed to Google searches—and is a great tool to help promote your program.
- The Spotlight now has an added Google Translate feature (located in the bottom right-hand corner of each page) and translates text between English and Spanish.
- Additional links have been added to the “In the News” page located under the “Media” tab, which include online stories about self-help housing that have been published across the nation. Please let us know if your organization is published in a news story online so it can be linked to the Spotlight.

Also, remember to send success stories to feature on the Spotlight website. The success story should be two or three paragraphs in length and can include a photo, if available. Success stories and any updates to your organization’s page should be submitted to pprice@ldcaa.org.

Inter-Lakes CAP Nearing Completion of Second Group of Homes

Four families in Volga, SD, are hoping to have the best Christmas ever. It will be their first Christmas in their brand new homes. These homes are split-level, when you enter the home you can go up the stairs to the main level or down the stairs to the lower level. The basements are not completely below ground level so that legal requirements for ingress/egress can be met and they are unfinished. However, plumbing is stubbed in so that a bathroom and bedrooms can be installed easily should the family grow and require additional rooms.

These homes are being built through the mutual self-help housing program administered by USDA Rural Development. Homeowners are required to provide 65% of the labor needed to build the homes and they are required to work together on each other’s homes.

Supervision of the work being done on the homes is being provided by Inter-Lakes Community Action Partnership, headquartered in Madison, SD. These homes will complete the seventh new construction grant operated by ICAP and they are already starting on the next grant. ICAP also operates a Repair and Rehab program, also funded through USDA Rural Development, to help keep the existing housing stock safe, comfortable and energy-efficient.
New Website Design Unveiled

Over the last year, agency staff have worked on a complete re-design of the website to coincide with a very important milestone—LDCAA’s 50th Anniversary. Generous funding support provided by NeighborWorks® America, the Sarkeys Foundation, and USDA Rural Development has helped to make this hard work and vision a reality. The result is a more accessible, appealing, and user-friendly website for customers, partners, board members and employees. The new website provides a secure online portal to accept donations, as well as allow employees to conduct business more efficiently. A significant impact will be the benefits the new website can convey to our customers, who will be able to submit applications and discover available resources—all at the click of a button. In addition, the new site has a Staff Portal which serves as the access point for all agency forms, policies, announcements, and other guidance. If you have not already done so, please visit the new website located at the following address: https://littledixie.org/.

Staff Attend Trainings, Receive Awards During Annual Conference

LDCAA staff attended the Oklahoma Association of Community Action Agencies (OKACAA) Annual Conference in September. This conference serves as an opportunity for Community Action Agencies across the state to come together in collaboration and discuss various topics that are relevant in the Community Action world. Staff were educated in a variety of topical areas, including: Uniform Guidance, Weatherization, Rx for Oklahoma, Curriculum Fidelity, Training for Boards, Mental Awareness and Preparation for Critical Incidents, Cyber Security, Fraud Watch, HOME Program Match and many others.

In addition, LDCAA employees were honored for their service during the OKACAA Awards Banquet on the last day of the conference. Staff recognized for their years of service to Community Action included the following:

10 YEARS
Tori Crawford
Tonya Finley
Edward Jackson
Amanda McGuire
Randall Pruitt
Ashley Read
Sandra Maynard
Tonja Tomlinson

15 YEARS
Jerri Mitchell
Kristy Priddy

20 YEARS
Karla Luginbill
Johnny Pennell
Amanda Perry
Ronald Reese

25 YEARS
Radonda Moffatt
Teresa Young

30 YEARS
Anita Bruce

Congratulations!
Retired and Senior Volunteer Program Director Karla Luginbill (left) stands with Executive Director Rebecca Reynolds after receiving her 20-Year Service Award during the OKACAA Awards Banquet.

Pictured with Board Chairman Brent Franks (left) and Executive Director Rebecca Reynolds (right), Raymond Gary State Park Manager Johnny Pennell is recognized for 20 years of service to the agency during the August Board of Directors Meeting.

Head Start Teacher Radonda Moffatt was recognized for 25 years of service to the agency during the August Board of Directors Meeting.

Self-Help Housing Construction Supervisor Keith Eggenberg was honored for five years of service to the agency in August 2018.

Self-Help Housing Group Worker Linda Martin reached her five-year milestone in July 2018.

Thanks for all you do! LDCAA is grateful for your hard work and dedication to those we serve.

New Members Welcomed to LDCAA Board of Directors

New member Cathrine Oliva was elected to the LDCAA Board of Directors by the Head Start/Early Head Start/EHS-Child Care Policy Council. As the Policy Council Liaison, she represents the Low-Income Sector.

New member Randy Springfield was appointed to the LDCAA Board of Directors by the Choctaw County Commissioners. As such, he represents the Public Sector.
Around the Agency

Employee of the Month Awardees

July

The LDCAA Employee of the Month for July 2018 was Nikki McAdams. Nikki is the Education Assistant Specialist for the Head Start, Early Head Start, and EHS-Child Care Programs.

August

The LDCAA Employee of the Month for August 2018 was Pam Price. Pam (above, center) is the Grant Specialist for the Technical and Management Assistance Program and is pictured with Board Chairman Brent Franks (left) and Executive Director Rebecca Reynolds.

September

The LDCAA Employee of the Month for September 2018 was Sandy Carper. Sandy is a Teacher with the Head Start Program. She teaches at the Forest Grove Head Start Center.

Congratulations to our monthly winners, who are chosen by their peers!

New Faces at the LDCAA Administration Office

In August, Dawn McDaniel (center) was named LDCAA’s Human Resources Director. She will be assisted in all HR-related matters by Human Resources/Benefits/Insurance Specialist Maria Herron (right) and HR Assistant Darlene Wood (left), who joined the department in September. The HR team will work to ensure staff are supported in and aware of all issues related to their compensation and benefits, as well as assist with recruiting and hiring, employee onboarding, and training requirements.

Myrl Redman became the agency’s newest Associate Director in August 2018. He will be providing oversight for our early childhood programs, Rural IMPACT, Housing and more.

The Accounting Department welcomed its newest Bookkeeper, Amy Wilson, in July 2018. She is proving to be an “asset” to the agency and we are happy to have her.

WF Grammar, LDCAA’s Risk Manager, will concentrate his efforts towards developing an effective program of risk management and mitigation. This programming will work to protect the agency, while limiting injury as well as potential and actual risk.
Tell us about of the housing programs LDCAA offers?

To improve conditions at the Broken Bow ELC for the staff, children and volunteers banded together in order and Kiamichi Landscaping and Irrigation. Despite the Oklahoma heat, expertise of various community partners including Heady Trucking organizing classrooms. Additionally, LDCAA was fortunate to have the twenty-seven volunteers representing various agency programs traveled to Broken Bow and spent the day laying mulch, planting and Kiamichi Landscaping and Irrigation. Despite the Oklahoma heat, expertise of various community partners including Heady Trucking organizing classrooms. Additionally, LDCAA was fortunate to have the twenty-seven volunteers representing various agency programs traveled to Broken Bow and spent the day laying mulch, planting.

Twenty-seven volunteers representing various agency programs traveled to Broken Bow and spent the day laying mulch, planting flowers and shrubbery, pulling weeds, raking leaves, cleaning playground equipment, laying gravel, hanging cabinets and organizing classrooms. Additionally, LDCAA was fortunate to have the expertise of various community partners including Heady Trucking and Kiamichi Landscaping and Irrigation. Despite the Oklahoma heat, the volunteers banded together in order to improve conditions at the Broken Bow ELC for the staff, children and families that are positively impacted by the center.

Tell us about the housing programs LDCAA offers?

We offer a variety of housing programs, including Self-Help Housing, Single Family New Construction, Weatherization, Purchase/Rehab/Resale, Speculative Housing, Housing Counseling, Homebuyer Education, Credit Counseling, Residential & Commercial Lending, Loan Packaging and others.

The Mutual Self Help Housing program has been in operation since 1974 and LDCAA has built nearly 2,000 homes through this program. Through this program, families are able to achieve the dream of homeownership through volunteering their time and skills toward actual construction phases of the home, referred to as sweat equity. This contribution, along with low fixed interest rates, make homeownership a possibility for families with low incomes.

What prenatal services do you offer?

Healthy Start provides moms-to-be with education and resources, serving pregnant women as well as children under age two years. Families are assisted with information, resources and education needed to promote the wellness of the mother and baby before, during and after pregnancy. Care coordinators work individually with families and experts are brought in and utilized to provide classes over topics to include SIDS, nutrition and more.

What programs in your community are people least aware of that they might find helpful?

Rx for Oklahoma and the loan programs are probably two that immediately come to mind.

What do people look to CAA for that are actually run by other entities?

People often contact CAAs for SNAP (supplemental nutrition assistance program); health care (as in funding to pay for doctor visits); Section 8 rental vouchers and “out of area” transportation.

What advice would you have to CAA’s in other areas to make the most of their programs?

Marketing is key to reaching people who represent the populations most likely to need your services. Most individuals and families have smart phones so it’s important for CAAs to utilize social media and to update your posts often; reach out to people in a timely manner; try to place employees in satellite offices via partnerships with schools, libraries, etc. so as to be able to make access to your programs and services easy for your customers. Not everyone is on board with social media so it’s important to utilize radio and newspapers. Make sure your staff are courteous and helpful and represent individuals with a passion for helping others because those individuals represent the typical CAA customer.

What are some of the services LDCAA implements?

• Prenatal, Children & Youth - Prenatal, Children and Youth: Little Dixie Community Action Agency offers a wide array of services for expectant mothers, infants, toddlers, children, youth and parents or primary caregivers. From education, nutrition, substance use prevention and mentoring to improving child safety and well-being, the provision of services for our most vulnerable populations has historically and continues to be a priority of the agency.

• Housing - We offer a wide variety of housing choices. Whether you are looking to build a new home, purchase an existing home or if you prefer to rent, we are here to help you with your housing needs.

• Financial & Lending - We offer financial resources for families to support both residential and commercial needs. We offer low-interest affordable loans with terms ranging from five to 30 years.

• Intermediary Program - Our Certified Loan Packers provide training and technical assistance as well as direct loan-packaging services for eligible entities working with the USDA/Rural Development Section 502 housing loan program.

• Technical & Management Assistance - Since 1980, Little Dixie has held a Technical & Management Assistance (T&M) contract with USDA Rural Development for the region II.

• Volunteer - Little Dixie has multiple opportunities for individuals to become involved as volunteers and give back to their community.

For more information of a full list of services and programs implemented by DCAA visit littledixie.org. To find your local Community Action Agency, visit okacaa.org/agencies.

Community Action Agencies Make a Difference

Interview with Executive Director of Little Dixie Community Action Agency

Around the Agency

"We are passionate about the work of community action and we believe in the shared mission of ‘Helping People. Changing Lives.’ Our work does make a difference – not just in Little Dixie, but through the more than 1,000 CAAs across the U.S. We all make a difference in the lives of the people we interact with on a daily basis."

- Becky Reynolds, Executive Director, Little Dixie Community Action Agency

Little Dixie Community Action Agency (LDCAA) is one of 19 community action agencies serving all 77 Oklahoma counties in Oklahoma. LDCAA has been assisting low income people since 1968. Anti-poverty programs implemented by Little Dixie have substantially decreased poverty in southeast Oklahoma. LDCAA serves three primary counties Choctaw, McCurtain and Pushmataha and provides assistance from programs to eight additional counties.

Commerce spoke with Becky Reynolds, Executive Director of LDCAA, to get a closer look at the functions and effectiveness of the action agency.

Tell us about LDCAA.

We are passionate about the work of community action and we believe in the shared mission of “Helping People. Changing Lives.” Our work does make a difference – not just in Little Dixie, but through the more than 1,000 CAAs across the U.S. We all make a difference in the lives of the people we interact with on a daily basis.

Which programs are the most utilized in your area? Do these programs have the funding and volunteer base needed to serve all the in need?

Head Start, housing and transit are the most popular. The transit program has suffered significant cuts over the last two or three years resulting in the loss of several routes once operated.

Tell us about National NeighborWorks Week, an event LDCAA recently participated in.

LDCAA participates in National NeighborWorks week every year. This year, we chose to revitalize and renovate the Broken Bow Early Learning Center in Broken Bow, Okla.

Tell us about of the housing programs LDCAA offers?

We offer a variety of housing programs, including Self-Help Housing, Single Family New Construction, Weatherization, Purchase/Rehab/Resale, Speculative Housing, Housing Counseling, Homebuyer Education, Credit Counseling, Residential & Commercial Lending, Loan Packaging and others.

The Mutual Self Help Housing program has been in operation since 1974 and LDCAA has built nearly 2,000 homes through this program. Through this program, families are able to achieve the dream of homeownership through volunteering their time and skills toward actual construction phases of the home, referred to as sweat equity.
CASA is the only volunteer organization that empowers everyday citizens as appointed members of the court to provide a voice for abused and neglected children. CASA volunteer advocates in Choctaw, McCurtain, and Pushmataha Counties typically handle just one case at a time, and commit to staying on that case until the child is placed in a safe, permanent home. While others may come and go, CASA volunteers provide a constant support that children need in order to thrive.

McCurtain County CASA Volunteers Emily Fuller and Karen Fuller are sworn in by Hon. Judge Michael D. DeBerry, District Judge of Judicial District 17.

New CASA Volunteers complete their final training.

CASA Advocate Coordinator Marissa Jordan and Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Penny Rodgers wait for a session to begin at the Crimes Against Children Conference.

Newly-trained CASA Volunteer Ashley Self (right) is sworn in by Hon. Judge Jana Wallace, Associate Judge of the District Court of Pushmataha County.

This project is supported by VOCA Subgrant No. 2017-VOCALittleDixie CAA-048 awarded by the U.S. Department of Justice through the Oklahoma District Attorneys Council.
The CASA Program's annual "Cutest Kids in Camo" event was held September 29, 2018 at the Deer Festival in Antlers, Oklahoma. Boys and girls ranging in age from birth through 10 years competed in four categories. Four CASA volunteers had the honor of serving as judges for the event, which was sponsored by Antlers Masonic Lodge #39. All proceeds from the fundraising event are used to support CASA Program operations.

And the winners are...

Liam Smith won 1st place in the 1-3 Years age category and also won Overall.

Jace Williams won 1st place in the 0-11 Months age category.

Mi’Niya Woodall won 1st place in the 4-6 Years age category.

Rylee Campbell won 2nd place in the 0-11 Months age category.

Sadie Rains won 2nd place in the 4-6 Years age category.

The "Cutest Kids in Camo" Judges Panel included (left to right): Karen Fuller, Sharon Johnson (back row), Emily Fuller, and Annette Lewis.

At left, Brittany Trotter won 1st place in the 7-10 Years age category.

Below right, Claire Fenley won 2nd place in the 1-3 Years age category. She also won Most Photogenic.

All winners of the 2018 "Cutest Kids in Camo" Contest pose for a group photo following the event.

This project is supported by VOCA Subgrant No. 2017-VOCALittleDixie CAA-048 awarded by the U.S. Department of Justice through the Oklahoma District Attorneys Council.
Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems
Impact Program

In July, ECCS welcomed the Help Me Grow National Center to our tri-county area. We held a community meeting in Hugo, and a state meeting in Oklahoma City, to discuss advancing developmental health, and the challenges we face when linking families to services and resources in our communities. Aietah Stephens, the State Director of Sooner Success, presented at the Community Team Meeting on how Sooner Success strives to promote a comprehensive, coordinated system of health, social and educational services for children and youth with special needs, along with addressing the barriers they face within our state. Tina Spence, with Oklahoma State Department of Education, presented at the State Team Meeting over trends they are seeing in developmental health for children three to eight years of age at the state level, and how they are addressing these concerns. Our keynote speaker, Kimberly Martini-Carvell, the Executive Director of the Help Me Grow National Center, presented on how implementation of the Help Me Grow System Model can help advance our efforts of addressing developmental concerns and helping each family access resources and programs available within our community and state. We were very excited to host both meetings and help move forward our efforts of implementation of the Help Me Grow System Model in Oklahoma.

ECCS has been involved in several community events in the last few months. We have participated in the Choctaw County Fair, Voice of Hope Fun Run, and the Pushmataha Coalition Glow Run. At each event, we were able to hand out our Early Childhood and Family Resource Bundles, along with age-appropriate books for the children.

ECCS also added on another child care center to implement the Ages and Stages Questionnaires Developmental Screenings. Lil Dawgs Child Care in Valliant, which is located within McCurtain County, has partnered with us to incorporate the screening process within their child care center. We are very excited to have them on board and look forward to working with them to improve the developmental health of the children they serve.

ECCS attended our Annual Learning Session in Washington, D.C. in July. We had the pleasure of bringing our community partner, Mehlenie Adamson, the Director of Project G.A.I.N. (pictured, bottom right), and also a parent partner, Heather Ellis, with Choctaw Nation Head Start (pictured, bottom left). Both bring a unique perspective and are instrumental in the success of our efforts at ECCS. During the Learning Session we had the opportunity to learn from other states and share the work we have been doing within our place-based communities. This was very exciting for our team and we absolutely loved being able to include our community and parent partners.
Head Start, Early Head Start, EHS-Child Care & Early Learning Centers

Little Dixie Early Head Start and Early Learning Center employees were able to attend the 2018 Oklahoma Early Childhood Program Kickoff Summit for 2018! During the summit, the staff were able to attend training on data improvement, thinking skills and also hear about updates in the world of Oklahoma early childhood.

First Place! Great Job!

Idabel Head Start, Early Head Start, and Early Learning Center once again won FIRST PLACE in Art and Education for their age division (pictured, at right) during the McCurtain County Free Fair held in September.

The projects described were supported by Grant Numbers 06CH7099 and 06HP0017 from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. Contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Administration for Children and Families or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
Battiest Head Start visited the Pickens Community Library for their 1st monthly trip. Rachelle Elliott, an AmeriCorps VISTA worker (pictured at left), read "Ten Apples on Top" and had the children color an apple coloring sheet. The children then chose a book to check out and bring back to the center for our ‘Helper of the Day’ reading time throughout the month.

Patricia Choate, library worker, is shown below checking out a book to Head Start student Merrick Lacy. Merrick is the son of Mickey Lacy, who is the Policy Council Representative for the Battiest Head Start Center. Ms. Price and Ms. Cindy are the staff for this center.

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Little Dixie Healthy Start has had a very busy summer working community events, and all the parades in our surrounding counties. We love our community and strive to be a positive impact in the lives of those we touch.

In 1991, the Health Resources and Services Administration of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services funded 15 urban and rural sites in communities with infant mortality rates that were 1.5 – 2.5 times the national average to begin the Healthy Start Initiative. The program began with a five-year demonstration phase to identify and develop community-based systems approaches to reducing infant mortality by 50% over the five-year period and to improve the health and well-being of women, infants, children and their families.

Currently, there are 100 federally-funded Healthy Start projects located in the United States, and five main types of Healthy Start grants: Perinatal Health, Border Health, Interconceptional Care, Perinatal Depression and Family Violence. There are currently four Healthy Start programs in Oklahoma.

By joining Healthy Start you will be introduced to your very own coordinator that will follow you through your pregnancy. They can assist with anything you need help with, whether it be insurance, finding a doctor, transportation assistance, social service assistance or just a support person to listen to you if you need to talk. You will receive many educational experiences to help prepare you for the birth of your new baby. We recognize the importance of fathers and encourage them to be an active part of the program. There will also be training opportunities offered for fathers only, as well as opportunities for one-on-one experiences as the community comes together to host father/child events.

Becoming a part of Healthy Start is easy. It is a free voluntary program and there is only one requirement: you must be pregnant. No applications to fill out and no income requirements. Come join our program today!

This project is supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) under HC49MC27826, Healthy Start Initiative-Eliminating Racial/Ethnic Disparities, $680,250. This information or content are those of the author and should not be construed as the official position or policy of, nor should any endorsements be inferred by HRSA or the U.S. Government.
September is recognized as Infant Mortality Awareness Month. Healthy Start staff were busy visiting with area businesses and organizations to promote the #babiesmatter campaign. Purple campaign ribbons with cards detailing infant mortality rates for 2017 within the tri-county area were handed out to help raise awareness of the prevalence of how many babies are lost too soon. As the cards were handed out, community members were asked to take a photo wearing the ribbon and post it on social media with the hashtag 'babiesmatter'. Community members from all three counties participated and helped raise awareness of this important issue. Healthy Start staff also helped work Choctaw, McCurtain, and Pushmataha County Fairs during September.

At left, Choctaw County Coalition members showing their support for the #babiesmatter campaign.

Pictured below, LDCAA employees from the Hugo Homeownership Office wear their ribbons in support of Infant Mortality Awareness Month.

Pictured above, Hugo Rotary Club members show their support for Infant Mortality Awareness Month and the #babiesmatter campaign.

Hugo Police Officer Donna Sims (above, right) presented Healthy Start Director Pam Waugh with a purple stained glass Infant Mortality Awareness ribbon that she made. The ribbon now hangs on the front door of the Healthy Start Office in Hugo as a constant reminder that babies matter.

The Pushmataha County Coalition (pictured above) wear their ribbons in support of Infant Mortality Awareness Month.

This project is supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) under HC49MC27826, Healthy Start Initiative-Eliminating Racial/Ethnic Disparities, $680,250. This information or content are those of the author and should not be construed as the official position or policy of, nor should any endorsements be inferred by HRSA or the U.S. Government.
Housing Programs

Partnership Between Little Dixie Community Action Agency, Wells Fargo Foundation and NeighborWorks® America Results in “Safe and Sound” Housing for Area Homeowners

In July of this year, NeighborWorks® America announced Little Dixie CAA was one of 10 organizations across the Nation selected to participate in the “Safe and Sound” Initiative. The Safe and Sound program, funded by Wells Fargo Foundation, provides grant funding to organizations working to strengthen rural communities and improve lives by rehabilitating or replacing sub-standard owner-occupied homes.

This opportunity was a great fit as Little Dixie has served to address housing needs in its service area of Choctaw, McCurtain and Pushmataha counties dating back to inception in 1968. A few housing programs operated by the agency include: Self Help Single Family New Construction, Owner-occupied rehabilitation, Weatherization, Apartment rentals, Senior Supportive Housing and more. “These services are critical in the communities we serve. Home maintenance is expensive and when a family doesn’t have the resources for repairs, before you know it, a small problem becomes overwhelming and families feel helpless as they watch their homes deteriorate around them”…stated LDCAA Executive Director, Rebecca Reynolds.

The Safe and Sound award of $45,500 provided resources adequate to complete moderate rehab on four homes in LDCAA’s service area. One family, whose home (pictured) was built in the 1940’s, had applied to the agency for Weatherization services a few days prior to the award announcement. The owners, a disabled couple living on a fixed income were doing all they could to maintain the 1,292 square foot home. But lack of resources combined with time and the elements had taken their toll, evident in the exterior and interior of the home. When LDCAA’s weatherization crew initially met with the family, they knew the homes’ needs well exceeded the weatherization program’s resources. Terry Wren, LDCAA’s weatherization auditor said: “The Safe

and Sound opportunity announcement came just in time, we were able to stack resources-weatherization and Wells Fargo funds-and combined, that allowed us to complete all the repairs…the family is living a much more comfortable life and their home has been preserved.”

Part of the rehab included replacement of windows with Low-E vinyl energy efficient units; replacement of both the old wall furnace and window air conditioning units; blown insulation in all exterior walls; replacement of both exterior doors; weather stripping/caulking and the home got a nice finished look with new exterior trim around all windows and doors.

According to the homeowners, the need for insulation and other repairs had resulted in their home being nearly impossible to heat and cool. To keep the home “comfortable” the heat and/or air needed to run continuously to compensate for the lack of insulation and other issues within the home. This was not an option as the family could not afford increased utility costs. Instead, they adjusted to the conditions. Now, following the improvements, their home is safer and more affordable. They are able to adjust the thermostat to settings that keep them comfortable and with the new energy efficient measures in place, they are already enjoying decreased utility costs. Much thanks to NeighborWorks® America and the Wells Fargo Foundation which made these activities possible.
LDCAA joined Public Service Company of Oklahoma, a unit of American Electric Power, to observe Home Energy Aid Month within Choctaw, McCurtain, and Pushmataha Counties. Karen Burton (at left), Housing Coordinator, and Harolynn Wofford, External Affairs Manager for PSO and LDCAA Board Member, held an awareness event on August 1st at the Post Office in Hugo. The event worked to promote awareness and support for Oklahomans facing the need for energy aid.

LDCAA Housing Coordinator Cindy Cockerham works the agency's information booth during Choctaw Electric Cooperative’s Annual Meeting in September.
The September 11th National Day of Service and Remembrance works to promote community service on 9/11 as an annual and forward-looking tribute to the victims, survivors, and those who rose up in service in response to the attacks on that fateful day. As a "Do Something Good" project for the National Day of Service and Remembrance, RSVP partnered with Antlers Elementary School to collect non-perishable items for the local food bank. Since the First Baptist Church Food Bank in Antlers provides food for needy families and is also an RSVP station in which volunteers provide service, this was a fitting project for 9/11.

RSVP food bank volunteers (left to right) Robert Boren, Sarah Boren, Dwight Satterfield (and LDCAA Board Member), Glenda House, Connally House, Brother Aaron Reed and Little Dixie RSVP Director Karla Luginbill sort the donations.

The food drive resulted in enough food to fill the back of a pickup truck (pictured at left). Like Senior Corps, this project worked to inspire a spirit of service and improve the quality of life for all generations.

Pictured above, RSVP volunteers, program staff, Antlers Elementary School Principal Kassy Watson and students pose with the truckload of donations. In all, students collected a total of 850 items for the First Baptist Church Food Bank in Antlers. Food bank representative Robert Boren stated that the items collected will help serve 140 additional families.
Safe Place Healing Hearts Program

The overall aim of the Safe Place Healing Hearts Program is to enhance the safety of rural victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. To accomplish this, the program works towards the goal of enhancing collaboration between and building the capacity of service providers in our communities to appropriately respond, improve the rate of prosecution, coordinate service delivery, and assist victims in cases of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking.

As a part of the technical assistance provided to partners, the Safe Place Healing Hearts Program has provided area law enforcement agencies with needed resources during the first year of the project (pictured below), including such items as: Evidence Kits, Alternate Light Source Kits, Sexual Assault Evidence Kits, cameras, and a dog collar for the Canine Unit. A camera and printer were also provided to the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner who performs SANE exams for adult victims. These resources will work to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of investigations and support evidence-based investigation of sexual assault and domestic violence crimes. Pictured below are the program’s law enforcement agency partners receiving resources for evidence-based investigation, which include the Antlers, Broken Bow, Hugo, and Idabel Police Departments, as well as the Choctaw, Pushmataha, and McCurtain County Sheriff’s Offices.

This project was supported by Grant No. 2017-WR-AX-0046 awarded by the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this publication/program/exhibition are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women.
Safe Place Healing Hearts Program & Victim Advocacy Services

The Victim Advocacy Services and Safe Place Healing Hearts Programs partner with the following agencies to assist with project development and implementation: the Coordinated Community Response Teams/Sexual Assault Response Teams (CCRTs/SARTs) in Choctaw, McCurtain, and Pushmataha Counties; Choctaw, McCurtain and Pushmataha County Sheriff’s Offices; County Health Departments and Hospitals; Kidz Kottage Child Advocacy Center; the Multidisciplinary Teams in Choctaw, McCurtain, and Pushmataha Counties; the Police Departments in Antlers, Broken Bow, Hugo, and Idabel; and SOS for Families. Through this coordinated community effort, all partners engage in discipline-specific and multidisciplinary training, collaboration, and information sharing to increase their capacity to work with child and adult victims.

With support from the Victim Advocacy Services Program and District Attorneys Council, the CCRTs for Choctaw, McCurtain, and Pushmataha Counties (pictured below) have been established to address and improve the community’s response to crime and the needs of victims. These individual task forces meet monthly and are comprised of project partners specific to the county they serve, including professionals and laypersons affiliated with organizations such as the District Attorney’s Office, law enforcement, local government, public schools, counseling centers, Department of Human Services, and other community programs.

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Self-Help Housing Program

One Step Closer to Becoming a Homeowner...

Pictured below (left to right) are Rural Development Specialist Zach Williams, Group Worker Sommer McMurtry, Ashlyn Bruce, Dianna Horner (new homeowner), Self-Help Housing Terri Harless, and Construction Supervisor Grady Ford at the final inspection on July 17, 2018.

The Jackson family loan closing on August 24, 2018.

Pictured above (left to right) are Construction Supervisor Grady Ford, Group Worker Sommer McMurtry, Jennifer Cross (new homeowner) and children, and Rural Development Specialist Zach Williams at the final inspection on July 17, 2018.

Pictured (left to right) are Suzy Burns (new homeowner), Issac Burns, Group Worker Sommer McMurtry, Robert Burns (new homeowner), Georgia Burns, Jocelyn Burns, Construction Supervisor Grady Ford, and Rural Development Specialist Zach Williams during the final inspection on August 31, 2018.

Pictured (left to right) are Rural Development Specialist Zach Williams, Bobby Woods, Jenna Loyd (new homeowner), Tyler Woods, Joplin Loyd, Jovi Loyd, Group Worker Sommer McMurtry, and Self-Help Housing Director Terri Harless during the final inspection on July 25, 2018.

The Yeager family loan closing on August 24, 2018.

Pictured at left, the Suddreth family loan closing on July 6, 2018.
Self-Help Housing Program

One Step Closer to Becoming a Homeowner...

Jesus and Kaila Gonzalez (pictured below) closed on their loan on September 4, 2018. They are pictured at left with their children at the groundbreaking. The family is building a LDH2 in Carter County.

Arbuckle Closing Agent Cindy Muse works to complete the loan closing for Amy Thurman (pictured above, right) on September 5, 2018. She will be building a LDH1 in Carter County.

The final inspection for a new LDH2 house in Carter County was held August 9, 2018. Pictured above (left to right) is Rural Development Specialist Zach Williams, Construction Supervisor Keith Eggenberg, Program Secretary Michelle Dorer, and new homeowner Christy Krohn.

New homeowner Monica Copeland (pictured at left) and son had their final house inspection on September 27, 2018. She built a LDH2 in Carter County.

Pictured (left to right) during the final house inspection on August 9, 2018 are Rural Development Specialist Zach Williams, Construction Supervisor Keith Eggenberg, Program Secretary Michelle Dorer, new homeowner Devyn Smith, new homeowner Taylor Morgan and their child. They built a LDH2 in Love County.

Madalyn Crook completes paperwork during her loan closing on September 14, 2018. She will be building a LDH5 in Carter County.
Youth First participants and program staff attend a healthy cooking class sponsored by the OSU Extension Office.

Youth First participants and their families enjoy a fun group trip to the local movie theater.

Youth First Coordinator AJ Henslee conducts group trainings with participants and their families using the evidence-based Strengthening Families Program.

From left, LDCAA Housing Coordinator Paula Dillishaw and Youth First Coordinator AJ Henslee with a batch of home-grown pumpkins she donated to the program. Youth First participants will decorate the pumpkins during an upcoming group event.

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