May 29, 2019 - 2019 marks the 55th year since the Community Action Network was established to help American families and communities overcome obstacles to escape poverty. Over 1,000 agencies across the country are working every day to create opportunities and transform the lives of their neighbors making communities stronger and helping families across the United States thrive.

Community Action Agencies serve 99% of all American counties with life-changing services to help families achieve financial stability. The need for Community Action has never been greater. Neither has our resolve. We’re challenged to create solutions that don’t just help people stay afloat but build lives of stability, dignity, and, whenever possible, prosperity. And we will rise to that challenge.

All agencies are locally controlled and represented by the private, public and low-income sectors of the community. “We are proud of our communities’ participation in the development and oversight of our programs,” said Executive Director, Reynolds. “Their engagement helps us to be more effective in our approach by determining what Choctaw, McCurtain and Pushmataha Counties need.”

To celebrate the continued success of Community Action and raise awareness throughout the tri-county area, Little Dixie Community Action Agency hosted a Community Action Day Celebration on Wednesday, May 29, 2019. This event highlighted Little Dixie’s programs and served as an opportunity for the public to meet program staff and obtain information about various programs. We also provided free food and drinks, games, activities and prizes for all ages!

#CommunityActionWorks

Each May, during Community Action Month, we reflect on the impact Little Dixie and our network has had on families. Last year alone, we served 4,138 individuals in Choctaw, McCurtain and Pushmataha Counties with immediately needed services such as shelter and food, and also long-term solutions like education and job placement.”

- Rebecca Reynolds
Employee of the Month Awardees

April 2019: Ruby Gann (center) is the Housing Counselor and has been with the agency since 2007. Also pictured: Board Chairman Brent Franks (left) and Executive Director Rebecca Reynolds.

May 2019: Sheree Ensley (center) is the Accounting Supervisor and has been with the agency since 2000. Also pictured: Board Chairman Brent Franks (left) and Executive Director Rebecca Reynolds.

June 2019: Carolyn Whitley (center) is a Mentor Coach for the HS/EHS/CC Program and has been with the agency since 2001. Also pictured: Board Chairman Brent Franks (left) and Executive Director Rebecca Reynolds.

Service Awards

Pictured below are the Service Award recipients for this quarter:

Amanda Terrebonne - 10 years
Pam Waugh - 20 years

National Homeownership Month

In honor of Homeownership Month, LDCAA Board Chairman, Brent Franks (Pictured Right) signed a proclamation signifying Little Dixie’s Participation in Homeownership Month. During the month of June, LDCAA strives to highlight the benefits that homeownership brings households across the tri-county area as well as educate potential clients on the immense value of homeownership.
NeighborWorks Week

Each June, Little Dixie Community Action Agency Inc. participates in National NeighborWorks Week. As a NeighborWorks America chartered member since 1997, LDCAA chooses to complete a community project within the tri-county service area. This project not only improves and strengthens the community; it celebrates the collective impact of the NeighborWorks network.

This year, LDCAA chose to revitalize the Hugo Lake State Park in Hugo, Oklahoma. Numerous volunteers representing various agency programs traveled to Hugo Lake State Park on June 4th and spent the day painting cabins, raking leaves, trimming trees and picking up debris.

Despite the Oklahoma weather, the volunteers banded together in order to improve conditions at the Hugo Lake State Park for the staff and tourists that are positively impacted by the park. Less than 250 non-profit organizations are members of the NeighborWorks network. Through this partnership, LDCAA is proud to drive change at the local level for individuals, families and communities.

Safety Campaign

W.F. Grammar, Risk Management Consultant for Little Dixie Community Action Agency, Inc., has been working diligently to increase workplace safety and promote behaviors to identify potential hazards. This quarter, W.F. has focused on workplace safety. Specifically focusing on updating fire and emergency escape plans, adding exterior lighting and increasing and updating security cameras. W.F. also plays a large role in Little Dixie’s Safety Committee. Recently, the Safety Committee implemented weekly safety meetings within each program. Programs are encouraged to take ten minutes a week to discuss relevant safety topics and allow staff the opportunity to discuss any potential hazards.
Court Appointed Special Advocates Program

Child Abuse Awareness Month
Child Abuse Awareness Month is celebrated annually in April and serves to recognize the importance of families and communities working together to prevent child abuse and neglect and promotes the social and environmental well-being of children and families. During this month, Court Appointed Special Advocates strive to increase awareness and provide education and support to families through resources and strategies to prevent child abuse and neglect. Little Dixie staff were encouraged to "go blue" each Thursday in April to support Child Abuse Awareness.

Foster Care Awareness Month
Foster Care Awareness Month was created in 1988 as a time to acknowledge foster parents, family members, volunteers, mentors, policy makers, child welfare professionals and other members of the communities who help children and youth in foster care find permanent homes and connections.

Oklahoma CASA Conference: Voices for Change
The Annual Oklahoma CASA Conference was held May 3rd - 4th in Norman, Oklahoma. This year's theme, "Voices for Change", promoted, motivated and inspired while supporting and enhancing the work occurring with children and families. Sessions included Oklahoma Successful Adulthood, Importance of Substance Exposure on Young Children, Behavioral Health Screening and Talk Saves Lives: Suicide Prevention. Pictured at right are Little Dixie staff members who attended the conference.

This project is supported by VOCA Subgrant No. 2018-VOCA-Little Dixie CAA-141 awarded by the U.S. Department of Justice through the Oklahoma District Attorneys Council.
Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Impact Program

Partnerships with Local Coalitions

Little Dixie ECCS Impact had the opportunity to work with our local coalitions and were able to hold two events in May and June. The Pushmataha County Coalition Family Festival was held on May 4th, and the McCurtain County Coalition Family Fun Day on June 28th. Since the Choctaw County Coalition Family Fun Day held last fall was so successful, we coordinated efforts to repeat that event in the other two counties we serve. Each event focused on promoting early childhood developmental health and educating parents and caregivers of the programs and resources available in the community. Since each event was a success, we are hoping that this will be a sustainable effort that we can repeat each year. These events are important because they present unique opportunities to reach a population we may not otherwise have access to.

Help Me Grow National Forum

In May, ECCS Impact had the opportunity to attend the 10th Annual Help Me Grow National Forum in Buffalo, New York. This gave ECCS the opportunity to learn from other affiliate states and discuss best practices and lessons learned during the implementation phase of the project. Implementing the Help Me Grow System model will allow our communities the opportunity to advance developmental health and link families to services and resources in the community and state.

Community Outreach

ECCS also participated in Community Action Day on May 29th. We provided board books to the early childhood population, Early Childhood and Family Resource Bundles for parents, and had a "Make your own book bag" activity for the children that attended the event to promote the importance of early literacy.

14 Early Learning Centers Implemented

360 Children Assessed Through Screenings

This project is supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) under Grant Number H25MC30343, Community-Based Integrated Service Systems (Local/State)/ECCS Impact for $426,600. This information or content and conclusions 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, HHS or the U.S. Government.
Recruitment Has Begun

Little Dixie Head Start, Early Head Start and Early Head Start Child-Care Programs are currently recruiting for the 2019-2020 school year. All of the Head Start, Early Head Start and Early Head Start Child-Care staff have been diligently posting signs and flyers over the tri-county area. The family advocates have also been hanging up flyers and passing out applications and information on what Little Dixie Head Start and Early Head Start Programs have to offer families. Throughout the spring many of the Head Start, Early Head Start and Early Head Start Child-Care staff will be attending festivals and parades in the various area communities to recruit as many children as possible for all the Little Dixie Programs.

For more information, please call Sara Moore, Enrollment Specialist, at (580) 326-7581. To complete an application, please go to https://littledixie.org/head-start-application

Infants and toddlers are provided high quality care in a center based 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.

FREE CHILD CARE FOR BIRTH – 36 MONTHS!

Broken Bow ELC Receives NAYCE Accreditation!

Congratulations on Retirement Marsha & Sandy!

The projects described were supported by Grant Numbers 06CH7099, 06CH010743, 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.
HS/EHS/EHS-CC In-Service

In the month of May Head Start, Early Head Start, and Early Head Start-CC employees attended their quarterly in-service training at Kiamichi Vo-tech in Hugo. This in-service is held every year to wrap up another busy and successful school year for Head Start while EHS and EHS-CC continue to provide year round services serving children age birth through 36 months. This year we had “Recycle Your Way to Steam” training. Susie Mashburn and Nikki McAdams were able to step in and present this for Lakeshore since our trainer was caught in the city with bad weather. We are always looking for new, exciting, and creative ways to implement science, technology, engineering, art, and mathematics for staff to ensure their comfort, and familiarity with the tool. To wrap up the end of the day this in-service was equipped for team building with an interactive training for our large number of staff in attendance that was enjoyed by everyone. Trainings during in-service typically take up much the day leaving very little time for staff from other centers to interact with one another or the management team. During this time staff was able to enjoy and connect with staff from other centers as well as with members of the management team. We appreciate the hard work and dedication that is put forth by each staff member and always welcome the opportunity to show our appreciation.

Analyzing Outcomes

Data from Teaching Strategies GOLD is collected to provide a final comparison on the overall growth of children in the Head Start Program. Progress is indicated in all areas for the students enrolled in Little Dixie Head Start. Information from this data is used to help teachers and administrative staff target areas of growth and concerns. It is also used in planning for teacher training during the year. Charts detailing the percentage of children who meet or exceeded goal in the beginning of the school year (Fall 2018) to the end of the school year (Spring 2019) are provided at right.

In the 2018-2019 school year...

- Of Head Start 4 year olds who initially scored below average progressed to meeting or exceeding in Social/Emotional Skills and Physical Skill. 85%
- Of Head Start 4 year olds who initially scored below average progressed to meeting or exceeding in Language Skills. 87%
- Of Head Start 4 year olds who initially scored below average progressed to meeting or exceeding in Cognitive Skills. 91%
- Of Head Start 4 year olds who initially scored below average progressed to meeting or exceeding in Literacy Skills. 82%
- Of Head Start 4 year olds who initially scored below average progressed to meeting or exceeding in Math Skills. 78%
Healthy Start Staff Members, Ashley Staggs, Jennifer Goodman and Mary Vannoy recently became Certified Child Passenger Safety Technicians (CPS Technicians). CPS Technicians use considerable knowledge and expertise at a variety of community-based activities. Staff members will use their new found knowledge to properly educate parents and caregivers on installation and general car seat safety. CPS Technicians are required to stay up-to-date on the latest technical information about child safety through seminars and continuing education credits. This certification is valid for two years and the requirements are listed at right.

"As Healthy Start Employees, we saw a decrease in CPS Technicians in our community, and the great asset it would be to our community to offer CPS Technicians. Mary Vannoy, Jennifer Goodman and myself were fortunate enough to be chosen by the Healthy Start Director to attend a three day training program. I am delighted to say that the three of us excelled in each area and are now Certified Child Passenger Safety Technicians."

- CPS Technician, Ashley Staggs

Community Outreach

Healthy Start Staff have been busy recruiting at the local parades in Choctaw, McCurtain, and Pushmataha Counties. During the parades staff members are handing out promotional items with Healthy Start information on them. Pictured at right are some of the staff who attended the parades.
2019 Home Performance Conference

In April, Little Dixie Weatherization Staff and Housing Director (pictured at right) attended the 2019 Home Performance Conference (HPC) held in Chicago, IL. HPC provided four full days of workshops, sessions, events and networking opportunities. 1,942 industry professionals from all fifty states, Washington D.C., Puerto Rico and three Canadian Providences were in attendance. Workshop topics included the newly formed Building Performance Association, Bridging the Standard Work Specifications Gap - From Paper to Field, Combustion Safety, Testing Protocols, “Is That a Good Audit?, What to Look For; In What Order” and Department of Energy Weatherization Assistance Program Updates.

Homebuyer Education

Little Dixie provided free Homebuyer Education Courses across our service area, in the month of June. Classes were held on Saturdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. with a free lunch provided. In recognition of Homeownership Month, participants received a free copy of "Realizing the American Dream" and were entered to win door prizes. Topics discussed included, but were not limited to: The Home Buying Process, How to Get Qualified, Financing Options, Preparing for Home Ownership, What is Escrow? and the Closing Process.

Community Outreach

Little Dixie Housing Outreach Coordinators attend various activities and events throughout the tri-county area to promote the vast housing opportunities offered to area residents. Providing outreach and educating the public on Little Dixie’s services is a crucial part to achieving our mission: "To improve the lives of low-income individuals and families through service and collaboration leading to self-sufficiency."
TIERRA DEL SOL HOUSING CORPORATION AND USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT CELEBRATE 2019 NATIONAL HOME OWNERSHIP MONTH

Tierra del Sol Housing Corporation has a long standing and strong partnership with USDA Rural Development as a provider of single family housing using two USDA programs to provide affordable housing opportunities to individuals and families with dependent children in rural areas of southern New Mexico.

National Homeownership Month is commemorated annually during the month of June. Tierra del Sol Housing and USDA Rural Development teamed up to recognize four families who are participating in the mutual self-help housing program administered by Tierra del Sol and funded by USDA Rural Housing Services under the Section 523 Mutual Self-Help Housing Program. Mortgage financing is also from USDA using Section 502 Direct Loans and USDA Guaranteed Loan Programs. Construction of the housing is in the city of Anthony, New Mexico and the town of Columbus, New Mexico.

The Tierra del Sol Housing Corporation Executive Director Rose Garcia and the Homeownership Center staff hosted the New Mexico State USDA Rural Development Director Art Garcia and Samantha Martinez, Housing Program Director who were joined by USDA National Office staff which included Roger Glendenning, Deputy Administrator for Single Family Housing; Cathy Glover, Assistant Deputy Administrator for Single Family Housing; Barry Ramsey, Director Single Family Housing Direct Loan Division; Director National Financial and Accounting Operations Center; Curtis Anderson, Chief of Staff Rural Utilities Service and Jennifer Wagner Bell, Examiner with the Office of Management and Budget. Representing Little Dixie Community Action Agency were Kyle White, Program Director, Barney Ingram, Self-Help Specialist and Owyne Gardner, Self-Help Specialist. Little Dixie is the self-housing housing Technical & Management Assistance Contractor with USDA Rural Development for Region II that includes Tierra del Sol Housing Corporation in New Mexico.

Jorge and Karina are a youthful couple with two children, a boy and a girl are clients of Tierra del Sol. The house they are building is a house plan with three bedrooms and two full baths and double car garage. The mortgage for the family will be $120,000 which is financed by the USDA Rural Housing Services with a direct 502 loan.

Jorge, who is building his family’s house in Anthony indicated his family is very happy to have the opportunity to become first time homeowners. Jorge was grateful for the guidance, assistance and the “how to training” he and the other self help families received from the Tierra del Sol construction supervisor. Jorge said the biggest challenge of the self-housing program was the weather. He added that his self-help group started construction of the houses in January at the height of the winter cold in the high desert of southern New Mexico and endured strong wind storms with winds speeds up to 45 mile per hour during the spring and rising temperatures upwards of 100 degrees in the late spring and early summer. Jorge worked with a group of five other families in the self-help program. He stated they “built homes and not just houses.”
USDA Recognizes Local Housing Executive Director Veronika Molina

USDA Rural Development State Director Arthur A. Garcia presented the New Mexico National Homeownership Month HERO Award to Veronika Molina, the executive director of the Southwestern Regional Housing and Community Development Corporation (SRHCDC) in Deming, New Mexico. Ms. Molina was nominated for the award by USDA Rural Development staff because of her tireless work to help make the “American Dream of Homeownership” come true to the residents in southern New Mexico.

In presenting the award Garcia said, “Ms. Molina’s tireless work to provide housing opportunities for numerous families over the years earned her the HERO award. Veronika Molina joins a select few people in New Mexico who have been honored for the work they’ve done to provide homeownership opportunities to the residents of New Mexico.” Much of Molina’s work has been in southern New Mexico where she has over the years helped applicants with applying for mortgage loans. She has been especially successful in helping people apply for and get home loans through USDA Rural Development’s 502 direct mortgage loan program.

USDA Final Rule - Income Banding, Net Family Assets, and Area Loan Limits

On August 31, 2018, a proposed rule was published in the Federal Register seeking comments on proposed changes to allow for a two-tier income limit structure (known as income banding) within the single family housing programs; to exclude assets such as voluntary retirements accounts, tax advantaged college, and health medical savings accounts from net family assets; and to revise the methodology used to determine the area loan limits to use a percentage(s), as determined by the Agency, of the applicable local HUD Section 203(b) limit.

After considering public comments on the proposed rule, a final rule was published in the Federal Register on June 21, 2019, that adopts the changes as proposed and that revises the definition of rural area to cite the statue and makes a technical correction to the suspension and debarment requirement. The changes will become effective on July 22, 2019, except for the revised area loan limit methodology which will become effective on August 5, 2019.
National Service Recognition Day Proclamation

National Service Recognition Day takes place the first Tuesday in April, and is led by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), the National League of Cities, the National Association of Counties, and Cities of Service. National Service Recognition Day launched in 2013, more than 800 mayors recognized the positive impact of Senior Corps volunteers in their communities. On April 3rd, 2018, more than 5,200 officials – representing more than 216 million Americans – participated in the sixth-annual National Service Recognition Day. Through recognition events, proclamations, social media, and more, leaders across the country showed their support for national service.

On April 2, 2019, Little Dixie’s RSVP Program recognized National Service Recognition Day as Antlers, Oklahoma Mayor, Madge Gentry, signed a proclamation declaring April 2, 2019 as National Service Recognition Day. (Pictured right) Across America, thousands of local leaders honor Senior Corps volunteers by participating in recognition events, issuing official proclamations, and taking to social media in a nationwide show of appreciation.

RSVP Receives Funding from International Paper

On April 24, 2018, Little Dixie Community Action Agency, Inc., received a Signature Cause Grant in the amount of $15,000 from the International Paper Foundation to support area food banks.

The International Paper Foundation supports non-profit organizations in communities where their employees live and work. The majority of donations and contributions support projects or programs which are focused on one or more of their Signature Causes which includes: education, hunger, health and wellness, and disaster relief. They also provide limited support for other critical needs.

The grant project titled, "Addressing Hunger in Southeast Oklahoma", will be used to aide in supplying food and supplies to four area food banks in LDCAA’s tri-county service area; Sharing Hope in Hugo; First Baptist Church Food Bank in Antlers; Gracefully Yours in Broken Bow; and Hand to Hand in Idabel. The Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) secured a signature cause grant from International Paper Foundation for this same cause in 2018, thereby ensuring increased resources for addressing food insecurity. These funds will reaffirm each food bank’s ability to sustain resources at the current level. Each of the food banks are also volunteer sites for several RSVP volunteers.

Thank you to our RSVP Volunteers who work to address the most pressing challenges facing our communities!
Safe Place Healing Hearts Program & Victim Advocacy Services

Sexual Assault Awareness Month
Sexual Assault Awareness Month is held annually in April. This campaign raises public awareness about sexual violence and educates communities on how to prevent sexual violence. The 2019 campaign, themed "I Ask", champions the message that asking for consent is healthy, normal and a necessary part of everyday interactions.

Denim Day
Denim Day is a campaign developed in honor of Sexual Assault Awareness Month. In 1992, an 18 year old girl was raped by her driving instructor. The driving instructor was convicted, but later appealed his conviction. The Italian Supreme Court overturned his conviction due to the victim wearing tight denim jeans. The court found that her jeans were so tight, she must have helped the assailant remove them. Therefore, resulting in consensual intercourse. This became known as the "Jeans Alibi" Each Wednesday in April, Little Dixie Staff were encouraged to wear denim to show support for the young Italian girl.

On average, there are 321,500 victims (age 12 or older) of rape and sexual assault each year in the United States.
- National Sexual Assault Hotline

Domestic Violence Certification
Little Dixie’s Safe Place Healing Hearts Program initiated the process for Domestic Violence Certification. Domestic Violence Certification is designed to assess a program’s responsibility to the client and delivery of acceptable services to the client. Responsibility to the client is demonstrated through the provision of suitable facilities, trained staff and needed services that are accessible, safe and confidential. An application as well as supporting documents were submitted to the Attorney General’s Office. Once the application and supporting documents were approved a site visit was conducted. Safe Place Healing Hearts is currently conditionally certified. A follow up visit will occur in one year to assess the program and determine the completed certification status.

Community Outreach
Safe Place Healing Hearts Program recently provided law enforcement agencies in the tri-county area with finger printing technology. This is just one example of Safe Place Healing Heart’s efforts to combat the technology challenges in our area to better serve victims.
Self-Help Housing Program

One Step Closer to Becoming a Homeowner...

Brooke Gatlin, Choctaw County Homeowner, pictured at left closing her Self-Help loan and breaking ground with her two children.

Pictured above is Kirstyn Larkey signing the loan closing documents and at the groundbreaking for her new Self-Help Home.

Pictured above is the Wood Family on closing day for their Self-Help Home.

Pictured (left to right) Sommer McMurtry, Group Worker, Grady Ford, Construction Supervisor, Elisabeth Suddreth, Homeowner, Renee Thompson RD Specialist, Terri Harless Self-Help Housing Director.

Community Outreach

Sommer McMurty, Group Worker, and Christen Caldwell, Housing Counselor, are pictured below attending the Durant High School Indian Taco Fundraiser.

Pictured above is Kirstyn Larkey signing the loan closing documents and at the groundbreaking for her new Self-Help Home.

Larkey Home

Gatlin Home

Suddreth Home

Wood Home
Youth First

Youth First participants and their families enjoying an Easter themed event.

YouthFirst participants enjoying an outing to the movie theater in Antlers, Oklahoma.

YouthFirst participants enjoying a day at the park promoting healthy lifestyles.

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