DEC 11TH, 2020 - LITTLE DIXIE HELD ITS ANNUAL IN-SERVICE EVENT. AS YOU ALL MAY KNOW IT WAS A LITTLE DIFFERENT THIS YEAR!

THIS YEAR IT WAS HELD VIRTUALLY FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER! DUE TO COVID-19 NUMBERS AT AN ALL TIME HIGH AROUND THE WORLD, THE AGENCY FELT IT WOULD BE BEST FOR EVERYONE TO ATTEND VIRTUALLY THIS YEAR.

THIS EVENT IS HELD FOR FULL TIME EMPLOYEES, EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP, AND BOARD MEMBERS. THOSE IN ATTENDANCE WERE PROVIDED WITH HIGHLIGHTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF AGENCY PROGRAMS, SEXUAL HARASSMENT TRAINING AND SAFETY/RISK MANAGEMENT TRAINING.

THE VIRTUAL EVENT FEATURED JOHN DAVIS, MOTIVATIONAL SPEAKER & CORPORATE ACTION HERO.

JOHN DAVIS IS AN INTERNATIONALLY KNOWN SPEAKER, COMEDIAN, FIGHT DIRECTOR AND ACTION HERO. AS AN INTERNATIONAL ENTERTAINER, JOHN HAS TRAVELED EXTENSIVELY THROUGHOUT THE WORLD SPEAKING TO AUDIENCES OF ALL AGES AND BACKGROUNDS IN 28 COUNTRIES AND OVER FOUR THOUSAND LIVE PERFORMANCES. JOHN ENCOURAGES HIS AUDIENCES TO SET AND REACH THEIR HIGHEST POTENTIALS AND IS OFTEN INVITED BACK AS A PEAK PERFORMANCE COACH.

SINCE THE TRAGIC EVENTS OF SEPTEMBER 11, 2001 JOHN HAS DEDICATED A GREAT AMOUNT OF TIME BRINGING ENTERTAINMENT TO THE SOLDIERS OVERSEAS. ON SIX USO TOURS, JOHN HAS PERFORMED MORE THAN ONE HUNDRED SHOWS AND HAS TAKEN HIS COMEDY TO EVEN THE MOST REMOTE BASES IN BOTH IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN.

AS THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR OF FOUR REGIONAL THEME PARKS ACROSS THE NATION, JOHN DEVELOPED A REPUTATION FOR REVERSING NEGATIVE TRENDS. UNDER HIS LEADERSHIP, THE PARKS WITNESSED GROWTHS OF UP TO 60% IN A SINGLE YEAR’S TIME.

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Employee of the Year Tammie Fewell!!

Tammie Fewell was named Little Dixie Community Action Agency 2020 Employee of the Year! Tammie has been an employee of Little Dixie for 24 years. During this time, she has overcome a number of challenges and through it all has served as the mainstay for the Antlers Head Start Center. She is compassionate, respectful, and encourages others. She goes above and beyond the call of duty, never hesitating to jump in and assist with center needs. She is adept at managing her classroom and utilizes staff strengths to ensure achievement of goals among children served. Tammie represents the agency well. Her management and leadership skills contribute to the success of Head Start students and families.

Around the Agency

Employee of the Month Awardees

October

The LDCAA Employee of the Month for October 2020 is Macy Self. She is the administrative assistant at the admin office located in Hugo.

Congratulations Macy Self!

November

The LDCAA Employee of the Month award for November 2020 is Tammie Fewell. Tammie is a Head Start teacher at our Antlers Head Start.

Congratulations Tammie Fewell!

December

The LDCAA Employee of the Month for December 2020 is Lisa Corey. Lisa is a lead care giver at our Antlers Early Learning Center.

Congratulations Lisa Corey!

Employee of the Year Tammie Fewell!!
Around the Agency

SERVICE AWARD RECIPIENTS

5 YEARS

INELL SPENCER - EARLY HEAD START COOK
MELISSA WALLACE - HEAD START FAMILY ADVOCATE
DEANNA AMMONS - HEAD START TEACHER
TASHA CLARK - EARLY LEARNING CENTER LEAD CARE GIVER

10 YEARS

JASON STILLWELL - T&MA
KENNETH WALLACE - ADMIN

20 YEARS

SHEREE ENSLEY-ADMIN
CAROL RENEE MACON - HEAD START TEACHER

Congratulations!
Around the Agency

HOLIDAY FOOD BASKETS/TOY DRIVE

THANKSGIVING FOOD BASKETS!

FIRST UNITED BANK DONATED $500.00 FOR HOLIDAY BASKETS!

FIRST BANK DONATED $500.00 FOR HOLIDAY BASKETS

CHRISTMAS FOOD BASKETS!

INTERNATIONAL PAPER DONATED $2,000.00 FOR A CHRISTMAS TOY DRIVE!
Around the Agency

ADMINISTRATION OFFICE HAS DOOR DECORATING CONTEST!

THANKSGIVING DOORS!

WINNER!!
DAWN MCDANIEL

CHRISTMAS DOORS!
“According to data published on the Salvation Army website because of COVID-19, the need is greater this holiday season!

The Salvation Army expects to see a greater need for our services – more than any in recent history. Unemployment rates nationally are expected to be 10%-11%, and based on the increased service we’ve already provided this year due to COVID-19.

We need resources to serve up to 15%-20% more people with Christmas assistance. Because of COVID-19 we must start earlier. COVID-19 has not only created a bigger need for us to fill, it has also decreased the number of traditional red kettles you’re used to seeing on street corners and at store entrances each Christmas season.

We could see up to a 50% decrease in red kettle funds this year due to several factors, including:

• Consumers carrying less cash and fewer coins
• More online shopping, which means less foot traffic in shopping areas
• Unemployment rates
• Recent closures of retail stores

Our work this holiday season is going to be even more crucial to serve the most vulnerable in our community.

Locaa partners with The Salvation Army fulfilling the role of service units to meet the needs of families in Choctaw, McCurtain and Pushmataha counties. Service units are comprised of community volunteers who represent The Salvation Army in times of emergency and/or disaster needs. All money raised stays within the local service units.

Hugo collected $1,927.33 for 2020!  
Idabel collected $1,696.72 for 2020!
As a CASA volunteer, you will be able to work with confidence. All of our advocate volunteers are thoroughly trained in courtroom procedure, social services, the juvenile justice system, high conflict domestic relations cases, and the special needs of abused and neglected children. We welcome volunteers from all cultures, ethnic and educational backgrounds. We have a particular need for men, minorities and senior citizens. Become a CASA volunteer and be rewarded with powerful and fulfilling experiences.

3 new CASA volunteers were trained during this quarter. If someone is interested in becoming a volunteer we are offering online training right now.

An Appreciation Brunch for CASA and Mentoring volunteers was held on November 20th. The Honorable Judge Jana Wallace attended and gave a brief training about child abuse, the court, and DHS.

Vern Jackson presenting a $1,000 check from the Pushmataha County Historical Society for the Youth and Victim Programs. This funding will be used in the Mentoring and the CASA programs for services and activities for youth that are a part of these programs.

This project is supported by VOCA Grant #SUBGRANT NO. IS 209-VOCA-LITTLE DIXIE CAA-047 awarded by the U.S. Department of Justice through the Oklahoma District Attorney’s Council.
Due to the pandemic, we were not able to hold our annual Family Fun Day in person this year, so we decided to hold the event virtually. The goal of the Family Fun Day is to further reach parents in the community and encourage them to participate in developmental screenings and ensure their child is meeting important early childhood milestones, along with bringing awareness to important resources and programs available in our community and state. We held the event live on Facebook on November 13th and began at 9:00AM with a live introduction to our viewers, explaining that different types of posts would be added throughout the day. All parents/caregivers participated by liking, sharing, and commenting to each post. Throughout the event, we had songs, stories and activities for parents and children. We provided incentives for families who participated in the event and mailed them to the address they provided on the screening and survey. This allowed us to provide early childhood learning materials and family engagement activities and they were delivered right to the door of the families. A total of 117 people interacted during the event, A total of 65 developmental screenings were completed, along with 91 surveys. We were very excited at the participation and we felt the event was extremely successful.

EARLY CHILDHOOD READING BAGS

In an effort to promote the importance of early literacy exposure, the ECCS Impact team put together Early Childhood Reading Bags for the families in our place-based communities. Each Early Childhood Reading Bag included an early childhood activity book, board book, crayons, parent educational flyer and an Early Childhood and Family Resource Bundle. These Early Childhood Reading Bags were distributed out to parents/caregivers who attend our partnering childcare facilities, the Little Dixie Head/Early Head Start/Early Head Start-Child Care, and the Choctaw Nation Early Steps to Literacy Program. Approximately 1100 Early Childhood Activity Bags being disseminated in Choctaw, McCurtain and Pushmataha Counties. We strive each day to improve and find more helpful ways to reach the community during these challenging times.
The child's knees should bend at the edge of the seat when their backs and bottoms are against the vehicle seat back.

The vehicle lap belt fits snugly across the bony hips or upper thighs.

The shoulder belt fits across the bony shoulder and chest (not across the soft face or neck.)

Laws vary from state to state, with some states having higher standards than others. Safe Kids encourages all families to adopt the following safety guidelines for protecting their children. Here are the top five recommendations for keeping kids safe in cars.

1. For the best protection, keep kids in a rear-facing car seat until they are at least age two and have outgrown the height or weight limit on the label of the car seat. Keep them in the safer rear-facing position as long as possible, because kids who ride rear-facing have the best protection for their head, neck, and spine.

2. Children who have outgrown their rear-facing car seat move to a forward-facing seat with a harness. Keep them in the forward-facing car seat until they reach the weight or height limits on the label of the car seat. Remember to use the car seat's tether to secure the forward-facing car seat to the car.

3. After a child gets too big for the weight or height limits listed on the forward-facing car seat's label, move to a booster seat used with the vehicle lap and shoulder seat belt.

4. A child is ready for using the seat belt alone when they pass these three tests:
   - The child's knees should bend at the edge of the seat when their backs and bottoms are against the vehicle seat back.
   - The vehicle lap belt fits snugly across the bony hips or upper thighs (not soft stomach).
   - The shoulder belt fits across the bony shoulder and chest (not across the soft face or neck.)

5. All children under 13 years of age are safest riding in a back seat.

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**ALWAYS PRACTICE CAR SEAT SAFETY!**

When is a child restraint required?
- Under 2 years (or until outgrows the top height or weight recommendations) in rear-facing child restraint
- Under 4 years in child restraint
- 4-7 years and shorter than 57 inches in a child restraint or booster seat

When can a child start using a seat belt?
- 8 years or over or 57 inches or taller

Who is covered by the seat belt law?
- Riders 13 and over

Head Start, Early Head Start and Early Head Start-Child Care

KIDS AT BATTIES HEAD START CENTER HAVE FUN WITH FOOD!

BATTIEST FOOD EXPERIENCE

During November, the kids got creative and had a fun food experience using Oreos and pretzels to make Thanksgiving turkeys!

December Bread Study!

The kids Read “If you give a pig a pancake”. The children watched pancake ingredients being combined, then stirred and poured onto a griddle to cook. They ate them with their applesauce snack.

The kids Read “The Little Red Hen makes pizza” then a parent bought pizza from the local store for them to try.
SERIOUS PLAY

All children learn by using their senses: touch, smell, taste, sight, and hearing. Young children are naturally curious and learn by imitation. AmeriCorp members facilitate infants and toddlers in the Early Head Start classrooms in Antlers, Hugo, and Idabel. Members encourage children to play thus developing creativity, investigation, and exploration. Play helps children grow strong and healthy, it counteracts obesity issues facing many children today, it also reduces stress and helps children grow emotionally. As parents, grandparents, and friends we need to be the biggest supporters of children's learning through the process of play. Play and learning go hand-in-hand. Spending time stimulating their senses help children develop cognitively, linguistically, socially, emotionally, physically, and creatively. So, the next time you have a chance to “play” with your child take that opportunity and enjoy the time together.

For many school-age kids, their time outside of school will include solitary time spent plugged into video games and computers, so it is especially critical for preschoolers to have the opportunity to develop naturally in their play.

Julie Nicholson, an early childhood instructor at the Mills College School of Education in Oakland, Calif., notes, “We know from decades of research that young children's play is very beneficial for their development, so we have to look at such immensely important topics as the decrease in children's outdoor play, the loss of extended periods of unstructured time for children to engage in imaginative play, and the toys being marketed to children that are increasingly violent, sexualized, and closed-ended.”

Sensory play includes any activity that stimulates your young child's senses: touch, smell, taste, sight and hearing. Sensory activities and sensory tables facilitate exploration and naturally encourage children to use scientific processes while they play, create, investigate and explore. Spending time stimulating their senses helps children develop cognitively, linguistically, socially and emotionally, physically and creatively. Learn all about child development through sensory play. Find activities and crafts that encourage sensory play and discover how to make your own sensory table below.

All children learn by using their senses: touch, smell, taste, sight, and hearing. Young children are naturally curious. AmeriCorp members facilitate infants and toddlers in the Early Head Start classrooms in Antlers, Hugo, and Idabel. Members encourage children to play thus developing creativity, investigation, and exploration. Spending time stimulating their senses help children develop cognitively, linguistically, socially, emotionally, physically, and creatively.
Grant Award from Potts Family Foundation Supports Families Learning Together Project

Little Dixie Community Action Agency, Inc. was extremely fortunate to receive a 2020 Grant Award in the amount of $10,000 from the Potts Family Foundation to support the Families Learning Together Project. The grant funding has helped to support services provided by LDCAA’s Head Start, Early Head Start, and EHS-Child Care Partnership Programs, in addition to promoting resilience and working to mitigate adverse childhood experiences prevalent among the children served. The project has enhanced the literature, numeracy, and print richness of each child’s home environment, while bolstering parent-child bonding and protective factors. Grant funding from the Potts Family Foundation has provided the support for staff and the programs to accomplish the goals of the project, which are: to increase literacy/numeracy domain gains and educational achievement of the children served, to improve family literacy and well-being overall, and to increase child protective factors to promote resilience against adverse childhood experiences.

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, enrollment has been greatly impacted at many program locations. Child health and safety is the programs’ foremost concern. As of October 2020, nearly 400 children have been served through the provision of early childhood development/education (including literacy and numeracy instruction) at program centers during the school day. In addition, each family of an enrolled child receives “Raising a Reader” bags to take home during the week. The programs have had a great response to the project, with more families who report an increase in the number of hours spent reading with their children. The project has strengthened programmatic efforts with regards to enabling parents to become better caregivers and teachers to their children as well. Staff have also seen increases in early literacy and numeracy comprehension rates among the children served by LDCAA’s Head Start, Early Head Start, or EHS-Child Care Programs.
Agency Receives $10,000 Grant from the Dollar General Literacy Foundation to Support Family Literacy

The Dollar General Literacy Foundation recently awarded Little Dixie Community Action Agency a $10,000 grant to support family literacy. This local grant is part of more than $86.6 million in grants awarded to more than 50 schools, nonprofits and organizations across the communities Dollar General serves.

“We were thrilled to receive funding to support family literacy from the Dollar General Literacy Foundation,” said Rebecca Reynolds, Executive Director of Little Dixie CAA. “The Families Learning Together Project will have a two part aim, to increase the literacy and educational achievement of parents and their children—both individually and together—as well as to improve family well-being overall.”

The Families Learning Together Project will be instituted within the agency’s Head Start, Early Head Start, and Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership Programs to provide the following services/activities: weekly adult education instruction (consisting of adult basic education or GED/high school equivalency preparation); daily child development/education services (including literacy instruction) within a structured school environment; and parent and child together time, encouraged through the utilization of Raising A Reader, a “book cuddling” program designed to enhance family literacy. To be eligible for services through the Families Learning Together Project, adults and children must be from the same family, and the child must be enrolled in Little Dixie CAA’s Head Start, Early Head Start, or EHS Child Care Program. Funding from the Dollar General Literacy Foundation will be used to purchase book bags and age-appropriate books for the Raising A Reader Program, as well as any supplies associated with the provision of educational instruction and evaluation through the project.

“At these extraordinary times, the Dollar General Literacy Foundation remains steadfast in its commitment to support communities’ literacy and educational advancements through funds that will impact thousands of students across the country,” said Todd Vasos, Dollar General’s CEO and Dollar General Literacy Foundation board member. “We are proud to support the meaningful and impactful work that each of today’s recipients conduct and support their ongoing efforts to help individuals improve their lives through literacy and education.”

The Dollar General Literacy Foundation is proud to support initiatives that help others improve their lives through literacy and education. Since its inception in 1993, the Dollar General Literacy Foundation has awarded more than $602 million in grants to nonprofit organizations, helping more than 11 million individuals take their first steps toward literacy or continued education.

Little Dixie CAA’s mission is “To improve the lives of low-income individuals and families through service and collaboration leading to self-sufficiency.” The agency has operated a Head Start Program since 1968, serving 429 children (ages three and four years old) within 29 classrooms across Oklahoma’s Choctaw, McCurtain, and Pushmataha Counties. The program enhances pre-school children’s physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development, while enabling parents to be better caregivers and teachers to their children. Since 1990, the Early Head Start Program has served infants, toddlers, and families by providing early, continuous, intensive, comprehensive and high-quality educational, health, nutritional, social, and family support services. The Early Head Start Program currently operates 46 center-based slots across three center locations (Antlers, Hugo, and Idabel). The centers foster nurturance, brain stimulation, exploration, and creativity within safe, comfortable environments. Similarly, the EHS-Child Care Program is built on the cornerstones of the Early Head Start Program, and provides high-quality care/early childhood program services for 132 children under age three through partnering child care centers in the tri-county area. For more information about the Families Learning Together Project or Head Start/Early Head Start Programs, please call (580) 326-7581 or visit https://littledixie.org/headstart/.

About the Dollar General Literacy Foundation
The Dollar General Literacy Foundation is proud to support initiatives that help others improve their lives through literacy and education. Since 1993, the Foundation has awarded more than $86.6 million in grants to nonprofit organizations, helping more than 11 million individuals take their first steps toward literacy, a general education diploma or English proficiency. To learn more about the Dollar General Literacy Foundation, visit www.dgliteracy.org. About Dollar General Corporation Dollar General Corporation has been delivering value to shoppers for ore than 80 years. Dollar General helps shoppers Save time. Save money. Every day!® by offering products that are frequently used and replenished, such as food, snacks, health and beauty aids, cleaning supplies, basic apparel, housewares and seasonal items at everyday low prices in convenient neighborhood locations. Dollar General operated 16,368 stores in 45 states as of February 28, 2020. In addition to high quality private brands, Dollar General sells products from America’s most trusted manufacturers such as Clorox, Energizer, Procter & Gamble, Hanes, Coca-Cola, Mars, Unilever, Nestle, Kimberly Clark, Kelloggs, General Mills, and PepsiCo. Learn more about Dollar General at www.dollargeneral.com.
During the month of December, LDCAA Head Start debuted a Professional Development CDA program for members of the community. Qualifying applicants will have the opportunity to get their Child Development Associate credential with no cost to them. We are very excited to offer this opportunity to members of the community who are interested in a career in early childhood education and development.

**HUGO EARLY HEAD START**

The Children at Hugo EHS had a Pajama Day and decorated their “Ugly Christmas Sweater” Cookie with frosting and was able to eat it after the winner was declared. The children enjoyed this activity and were able to enhance their fine motor skills using their spoon to decorate and spread frosting before Christmas break.

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The projects described were supported by grant numbers 06CHD07143 and 06HP002312 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. This report has been prepared in order to comply with the Head Start Act.
Tri County Opioid Response Project

The Rural Communities Opioid Response —Implementation grant, funded in July 2020 through the Health Resources and Services Administration, serves Southeastern Oklahoma’s Choctaw, Pushmataha, and McCurtain Counties. The project specifically aims to address the systemic needs of the opioid epidemic. This Implementation Grant has established a ten member multi-sectoral consortium and numerous partnerships throughout the tri county with a wide range of expertise in areas of substance abuse prevention and treatment, health care, mental and behavioral health, law enforcement and community health. Our goal for the grant is to strengthen and expand Substance Use Disorder (SUD) and Opioid Use Disorder (OUD) prevention, treatment, and recovery service delivery and access within the unserved, high risk target counties to ultimately reduce associated morbidity and mortality in Southeastern Oklahoma.

Prevention:
The core prevention activities for the RCORP Implementation Grant will work to reduce stigma around opioid use and other drugs while raising awareness concerning prevention of SUD/OUD. Additionally, the project will increase access to naloxone within the rural services area as well as provide training on overdose prevention and naloxone administration. The project will partner with community programs and groups to develop drug take-back programs in the tri county area, while also increasing and supporting the use of school and community-based prevention programs to prevent misuse of opioids and other substances.

Treatment:
Core treatment activities will assist community partners with identifying what works or does not work for our communities. The core activities will include increased screening, as well as providing or referring to treatment patients with SUD/OUD who have infectious complications, including Human Immunodeficiency Virus, Viral Hepatitis, and Endocarditis, particularly among injecting users. The project will assist partners in becoming trained and/or qualified as Medication Assisted Treatment providers, increasing the number of providers who are able to identify and treat SUD/OUD, and provide professional development opportunities and recruitment incentives. The project will work to strengthen collaboration with law enforcement and first responders to enhance their capacity to respond and/or provide emergency treatment to those with SUD/OUD. The project will assist partners in identifying and optimizing reimbursement for treatment encounters through proper coding and billing training for providers and partners. Additionally, the project and its partners will help to enable individuals, families and caregivers to find, access, and navigate affordable treatments for SUD/OUD.

Recovery:
The project will link community consortium members and partners with those in recovery to provide support throughout the recovery process. Core recovery activities will include assisting local county/city jails, Drug Courts, and District Attorney’s Office with the discharge process to link individuals to appropriate community resources. Community Recovery and Response Specialists (CRRS) will encourage and recruit individuals in the recovery community to become involved as Peer Recovery Support Specialists (PRSS), and in turn, develop—with the assistance of consortium members and partners—a layered recovery support community network.

WHAT IS ADDICTION
Addiction is described as “a disease of the mind, body, and spirit.” That's because the condition involves a physical and psychological craving or compulsion to use mood altering substances, and because recovery from addiction involves physical, psychological and emotional healing.

Dionne Frankum-
Project Director of the
Tri-County Opioid Response Project

Phone: 580-326-3351
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or
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This project is supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of a financial assistance award totaling $1,000,000 with 100% funded by HRSA/HHS and 0% funded by nongovernment source(s). The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by HRSA/HHS, or the U.S. Government.
Drug Free Community Support Program

The Choctaw County Drug Free Communities Support Program has two goals:

- Establish and strengthen collaboration among communities, public and private non-profit agencies, as well as federal, state, local, and tribal governments to support the efforts of community coalitions working to prevent and reduce substance abuse among youth.
- Reduce substance abuse among youth and, over time, reduce substance abuse among adults by addressing the factors in a community that increase the risk of substance abuse and promoting the factors that minimize the risk of substance abuse.

Choctaw County Drug Free Communities Support Program works to support the efforts of the Choctaw County Coalition which primarily targets students in 6-12th grade and adults to reduce substance abuse among youth and strengthen community collaboration toward these efforts.

DFC kicked off drug free week with a proclamation signed by the mayor proclaiming the last week in October as drug free week.

In addition DFC now has our Youth Coalition Representative and is excited to begin virtual meetings with our Choctaw County Youth in the upcoming weeks.

Director: Janitra Bostic
Email: jbostic@littledixie.org
Phone: 580-406-5400

"This Little Dixie Drug Free Communities publication is supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as part of a financial assistance award totaling $25,000.00 with 100 percent funded by CDC/HHS. The contents are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by CDC/HHS, or the U.S. Government." Grant# H79SOP081758
Passport to the Future Mentoring Program

WHAT IS MENTORING?

Little Dixie Community Action Agency's Mentoring Program covers Pushmataha, Choctaw, and McCurtain Counties. The program's goal is to provide youth, ages 6-17, who have a need for a positive influence in their life, with a caring adult mentor who will provide the youth with emotional and academic support as well as exposure to a variety of experiences that they may not otherwise encounter.

Mentors are recruited from a variety of sources, including faith and community based organizations, the business community, or volunteers. Mentors are ordinary people performing extraordinary deeds.

BECOME A VOLUNTEER

Our program is looking for volunteers to be positive mentors and youth aged 6-17 to participate in the Passport to the Future Mentoring Project. The mentors will be matched with a child who has similar interests and who resides in their area. Our program covers Choctaw, Pushmataha, and McCurtain Counties. The mentor and mentee will work out a schedule together to meet for one hour per week or at least four hours per month. All mentors are thoroughly checked on their background, personality and character. We will host several activities for everyone to attend and participate. This is a free program that will make a difference in the life of the youth and their Mentor. If your interested in becoming a mentor or enrolling a child in the program please contact: A.J. Henslee, Program Assistant ahenslee@littledixie.org or Doris Long, Program Director dlong@littledixie.org or call us at 580-298-2921.

HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES

HALLOWEEN PORCH PARTY

Halloween goodie bags were delivered to the porches of each enrolled family.

RAYMOND GARY LAKE BOAT PARADE

Those attending hiked, played on the playground, had pizza, watched the parade, and visited with Santa.

"Mentors are really important because everyone needs to know that someone's got their back"

Susan Aglukark
Singer/Songwriter

A mentor empowers a person to see a possible future, and believe it can be obtained

Shawn Hitchcock
Local Residents Receive Assistance Via Wells Fargo/NeighborWorks® America Rental Resilience Fund

Little Dixie received a rental resilience grant award from NeighborWorks America. These grant funds were made available by the Wells Fargo Foundation to provide liquidity to organizations with rental portfolios by supporting renters experiencing financial challenges, meeting infrastructure and technology needs, and helping to bridge financial risks resulting from COVID-19. To date Little Dixie has provided rental assistance to individuals in our senior complexes totaling more than $5,000 in assistance. Continue to follow our Facebook page and future Newsletters for more “SUCCESS STORIES” that highlight how this initiative has positively impacted residents in our community during these unprecedented times.

Advancing Comprehensive Community Development and Racial Equity Supplemental Grant Award

Little Dixie received funding from NeighborWorks America in the amount of $35,000 to support CCD and COVID response efforts. Funding supported a range of strategies that deepen resident engagement, address racial disparities and respond to urgent community needs. Funds were used to purchase personal protective equipment/supplies (masks, gloves, hand sanitizer, disinfectants) and preparing 1,000 community care packages in communities of color. Additionally, Little Dixie provided reimbursement assistance to area food banks in the amount of $2,500 per organization.

Intermediary Loan Program

Little Dixie’s Intermediary Loan program serves all of Oklahoma along with six neighboring states. This past quarter it helped a family in our area reach her goal of homeownership. Prior to moving into her new home, she lived in a 35 foot travel trailer over a year. During this time, she did what any seasoned homeowner does “keeping up the home”. Never mind that it’s a travel trailer; it’s still home. She was always repairing the roof to stop leaks, and buying parts and all the while keeping it together.

Every time she climbed on top of the trailer she knew this would be temporary. She never let go of her dream of living in a spacious home with a yard that the kids could play in. All her hard work paid off when she received an email from Rural Development stating she had been approved for a home loan. All the time she spent working on her credit and saving money for earnest money, home inspections, insurance and closing cost had finally paid off. This past December Jodie spent her first Christmas surrounded with family and friends in her beautiful home.

Weathrerization Day

The Weatherization program is based on a home assessment to determine improvements which can be made to make the home more energy efficient. This may include air sealing, the repair or replacement of doors, windows, or heating systems and addressing health and safety issues within the home environment. Any improvements are based on a computer generated audit from the home assessment.

Weatherization saves households an average 30% on heating bills

40,000 homes weatherized every year with DOE funds
The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) launched the AskUSDA Contact Center program which will serve as the “one front door” for phone, chat, and web inquiries, transforming how the public interacts with USDA and providing an enhanced experience for the public. The launch of AskUSDA delivers a centralized contact center that offers customer service and consistent information for the public. AskUSDA is set up to handle common questions across programs that service a variety of audiences.

The public can contact AskUSDA by phone at (833) ONE-USDA with representatives available 9:00 am - 5:30 pm EST weekdays. The website (https://ask.usda.gov/) is available 24/7 and includes live chat agents available 10:00 am - 6:00 pm EST on weekdays. Inquiries can also be sent via email at any time to askusda@usda.gov.

AVOIDING DUPLICATION ERRORS IN SHARES

The SHARES database is the central hub where all self-help housing data for participating grantees is entered, stored, and viewed as reports.

Sometimes when viewing certain reports generated in SHARES, we see multiple occurrences of the same borrower – although the system contains only one instance of that borrower. Correcting this issue after the fact is a bit complicated (and we encourage you to ask for assistance from your T&MA provider); but preventing this error from happening in the first place is rather simple.

The source of the error lies in the entering and editing of lot information. The natural tendency is to enter or edit lot information for a particular borrower by doing so in the Borrower/Lot tab; however, the correct method is to enter/edit lot information from the Grantee/Lots tab. The only action that should take place on the Borrower/Lot tab is to click inside the Lot Number box and choose an available lot from the drop-down menu. Tab to the next field, and all fields on the page should populate. Remember to save your work and wait for blue confirmation text before continuing.

USDA IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY PROVIDER, EMPLOYER AND LENDER
Little Dixie Community Action Agency’s Self-Help Housing program had the distinct pleasure of serving the McGuire family with the construction of their beautiful home. Ms. McGuire came into our Durant, Oklahoma location with a dream of owning her own home one day. In collaboration with USDA, Rural Development and Little Dixie Community Action Agency’s Self-Help Housing program, Ms. McGuire was provided the resources and support she needed to make this dream a reality.

During the construction of her home, Ms. McGuire, along with a few friends and family, contributed labor to gain sweat equity. The construction of this beautiful home was a result of the dedication Ms. McGuire, USDA Rural Development and the Little Dixie Community Action Agency’s Self-Help Housing program displayed during the course of making Ms. McGuire’s dream come true!
SPOTLIGHT WEBSITE

The Spotlight website: https://www.selfhelphousingspotlight.org/ was created and is maintained by the T&MA Contractors to highlight the success of the Self-Help Housing Program. This is a great tool for you to help promote your program.

Send us a success story and photos and we'll include it on the website. Submit your stories to pprice@ldcaa.org.

Little Dixie T&MA Contractor Notes...on self-help housing is an occasional bulletin of observations and recommendations intended to assist Self-Help Grantees. Written and distributed by Little Dixie Community Action Agency, Inc. T&MA Contractors, 209 North 4th Street, Hugo, OK 74743.

If you would like to be added to the distribution list, please email: Kyle White, T&MA Contractor Program Director kwhite@ldcaa.org or Pam Price, T&MA Contractor Program Analyst pprice@ldcaa.org.

Notes...on self-help housing is updated monthly on the Little Dixie CAA website. For the current edition click on the following link: https://littledixie.org/tma/.

T&MA CONTRACTOR SELF-HELP TRAINING GUIDES

The T&MA Contractors have worked collectively to produce a variety of training materials for the purpose of assisting grantees and training grantee staff.

The two handbooks listed below were revised and added to the website in November.

Acquisition and Owner Occupied and Rehab Handbook
Self Help 502 Loan Guidebook

A complete listing of available training guides can be found on our website at https://littledixie.org/tma/.
FY20 USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT SINGLE FAMILY HOUSING PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- The Section 502 Direct program loan obligations totaled $1,001,414,954 (5,821 loans).
- The Section 504 Repair and Rehabilitation programs obligated $16,640,730 (2,739 loans).
- The Section 504 grant program obligated $31,541,672 (4,842 grants).
- USDA’s Section 523 Self Help Housing Grant program funded 53 grants and contracts totaling $32,783,534.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT INTEREST RATE!!

The Rural Development 502 Direct note rate for December is 2.50%.

EXTENSION OF FORECLOSURE AND EVICTION MORATORIUM

USDA Rural Development has extended the foreclosure and eviction moratorium for Single Family Housing direct loan borrowers through February 28, 2021.

This moratorium applies to the following:

- Initiation of foreclosures or completion of foreclosures in process, excluding vacant and abandoned properties
- Eviction of borrowers from properties bought with USDA direct home loan.
USDA/RD Issues Temporary Authorization Regarding Appraisals

Due to the demand for appraisals and the remoteness of some rural homes, the Acting Administrator for Rural Housing Service, Elizabeth Green, put out a temporary authorization on December 7, 2020 regarding appraisals. The new process is laid out in an unnumbered letter that is in effect until the end of this fiscal year, September 30, 2021.

The authorization allows USDA RD to accept appraisals obtained by self-help grantees, certified loan packagers and Agency-approved intermediaries PROVIDED:

Once a property has been identified, but prior to the submission of the Attachment 3A of HB 1 3550 Phase 2 cover letter property documentation, the authorized third party/grantee:

- Notifies the USDA Rural Development processing office of their intent to order the appraisal and the cost of the appraisal (though it will not be ordered at this time). Within three business days of receiving this notification, RD will issue the applicant a Loan Estimate (LE) tailored for this temporary authorization along with a custom Handbook Letter. This LE has an applicant signature line.
- RD will list the cost of the appraisal as provided by the third party (which may exceed the Agency’s prevailing appraisal fee).
- Orders the appraisal only after: Receiving notification from the RD processing office that the applicant has signed the LE and explaining to the applicant that they are ordering the appraisal on the applicant’s behalf and that the applicant will have to cover the fee, out-of-pocket, if the loan does not close.

The authorized party/grantee provides the RD processing office with a copy of the paid invoice for the appraisal along with a copy of the appraisal that:

- Meets the Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practice and Agency appraisal standards and it lists Rural Development as an “intended user.”

The appraisal is reviewed for acceptability by the Agency.

- RD staff must enter information on the usage of this temporary authorization into their system for tracking purposes.
- At a minimum, the first five appraisals obtained by a grantee will receive a pre-closing technical review.
- These appraisals that receive this level of review must be entered into RD’s Appraisal Hub to assist with the monitoring of performance and compliance.
- RD staff appraisers should complete their review within 3 business days. At the discretion of the appraisal staff, additional revisions or reviews may be required.
- When additional revisions are needed, they will be addressed by RD staff appraisers, in coordination with the loan specialist, and the grantee.

Once RD determines that the appraisal is acceptable, the RD processing office must ensure the applicant is promptly provided a copy of the appraisal, which must be at least three business days prior to closing.

The SFH Direct Loan Division and the Appraisal services Branch will coordinate and assess the performance of this temporary authorization on an ongoing basis.

Loan funds may be used to reimburse the payor of the appraisal fee at loan closing. The amount of reimbursement for the appraisal can exceed the Agency’s standard appraisal fee. The RD processing office will send the paid invoice for the appraisal and instructions for “paid outside of closing” reimbursement to the closing agent for proper disclosure and settlement.

For questions regarding this letter please contact: Jeremy.Anderson@usda.gov with appraisal related questions and Andria.Hively@usda.gov with TRID related questions.
Self-Help Housing

ASSISTING RESIDENTS WITH HOME-OWNERSHIP

Little Dixies Self-Help Housing Program serves income eligible individuals and families in Atoka, Bryan, Carter, Choctaw, Love, Marshall, McCurtain and Pushmataha Counties. Home ownership is achieved through the involvement of construction of their homes and other participant's homes, resulting in reduced costs. Contact our Self-Help Program today for more information!

Torres Family

LUIS TORRES FAMILY...PICTURED IS CONSTRUCTION SUPERVISOR MARK HARWOOD AND HOME OWNER LUIS TORRES

Shawnta Floyd

SELF-HELP HOUSING HOME OWNER SHAWNTA FLOYD.

Both Families moved in their new homes on 12/15/2020!!

congratulations to these families on achieving homeownership!

CONTACT US TODAY!

Atoka, Bryan & Marshall Counties
580.920.2479

Carter & Love Counties
580.226.3030

Choctaw, McCurtain & Pushmataha Counties
580.286.6472
Our communities found new and innovative ways to honor Veterans in 2020 amidst the pandemic. Some were greeted at local restaurants where they were able to enjoy a free meal provided by local businesses, others were still able to meet in person at their RSVP stations and enjoy a luncheon in their honor, and we even had the opportunity to see students write letters to soldiers and Veterans thanking them for their service.
Safe Place Healing Hearts

Safe Place Healing Hearts seeks to enhance the safety of rural victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking; and to enhance collaboration and build capacity of service providers 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.

Youth and Victim Programs partner with the Antlers Masons to provide food and Christmas gifts for abused and neglected children and children who are victims of crime, especially domestic violence. In this photo are car seats that were purchased for transporting children that receive services in these programs.

Investigator Chad Allen with the Hugo PD. He investigates domestic violence and sexual assaults and provides assistance and resources to victims and survivors and is an active partner with Little Dixie victim advocates.

Serving Pushmataha, Choctaw and McCurtain Counties

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YouthBuild

EMPOWERING YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN

The YouthBuild Program for Choctaw County provides educational instruction, occupational skills training, classroom and hands-on construction training for at risk youth ages 16-24 who have previously dropped out of high school, are adjudicated, are aging out of foster care, possess a disability, are homeless, or qualify as at risk participants.

On December 12th, 2020 The Choctaw County YouthBuild Chili team entered into The Christmas in Reno Annual Chili Cook off. Team members met up at 6:00 am to begin perfecting their recipe for Dodge Ram BigHorn Chili. As a reward for their effort the team took third place for their Chili and brought home 1st place for showmanship. A special thanks goes out to James Hodge Dodge in Paris, Texas for sponsoring our team in this year’s event!