Executive Director, Rebecca “Becky” Reynolds receives Mitchell Sheffield Award for Leadership from the Oklahoma Association of Community Action Agencies

During the Oklahoma Association of Community Action Agency’s 2021 Virtual Spring Conference, LDCAA’s Executive Director, Rebecca “Becky” Reynolds was presented with the “Mitchell Sheffield Presidential Award for Leadership.” This award was given in recognition of her service to the Oklahoma Association of Community Action Agencies as Board President. Reynolds served in this role from 2018-2020. Reynolds stated: “Serving as the President on OKACAA’s Board has been one of the most rewarding roles I have held. This past year, much of our work across the network occurred virtually which was new and challenging for many of us. But, we figured out new ways to conduct business, not only among the Association but across our individual agencies as well. And in doing so, we ensured that the much-needed services provided by our agencies continued across our State. We just completed our first ever virtual Spring Conference and I feel it was very successful. I want to thank all of my fellow colleagues, Board Members and OKACAA staff for your support and guidance. Thank you for this very special award and for having the faith and trust in me to serve as your President over the past two years. I would also like to extend my Congratulations to our new OKACAA President and Executive Director of Deep Fork Community Action Agency, Christie Baldridge” who I know will do an outstanding job. Thank you again.”

Reynolds selected as President of Board of Directors for the Community Action Association of Region VI

Rebecca ‘Becky” Reynolds recently completed two years of service as the Vice President of the Board of Directors of the Community Action Association of Region VI. She was selected as the Vice-President in October of 2018 and served in this capacity for two years during which time she worked closely with Board and organizational leadership to expand her leadership capacity. Recently, in February of 2021, Reynolds accepted the role as President of the Board of Directors for Region VI. Region VI encompasses a five-State area which includes: Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas. As President, over the next two years, Becky will work closely with State Associations in each of these States focused on the work of Community Action. This will also involve planning the Annual Region VI Conference and participation/leadership over Board Meetings and other matters of concern. Individuals selected as officers must meet the professional standard of excellence by demonstrating active participation in Region VI CAA; be willing to accept a leadership role for the future of the organization; and be dedicated to fulfilling their responsibilities. Reynolds stated: “I am excited and honored for this opportunity to serve as the President for Region VI. I am looking forward to working with each State Association across the Region.”
Becky Reynolds, Executive Director of Little Dixie Community Action Agency, announced Monday, January 4, 2021, the selection of Macy Jo Self to fill the position of Associate Director with the primary responsibility for housing and housing-related programs. In this new role, Self will provide leadership and guidance over several programs including Multi-family Apartments, Self-Help Housing, Housing Counseling, Weatherization, YouthBuild, Business and Residential Lending Programs, Emergency Services, Utility Assistance and many other supportive services.

Self began her career with LDCAA in 2017 and has served the agency in various roles including Planner/Public Relations Specialist and Administrative Assistant to the Executive Director. In each role, she has gained extensive knowledge about the agency, its programs and services, the tri-county service area, the Board and other leadership, and most importantly, the customers served by agency programs. Reynolds stated: “Macy has a proven track record of commitment, dedication and passion for the work of Community Action. I know she is up to the task and will give 110% to the job every single day. I am excited to make this announcement and congratulate Macy on this much-deserved promotion.”

Macy holds a Bachelor’s Degree from Southeastern Oklahoma State University. She is a member of the Rotary Club and serves on various boards including the Rodeo Association and Kiamichi Opportunities, Inc. Macy stated: “I am very excited and thankful to have been selected for the position and I am ready to get started. I’ve worked with the housing staff on several projects over the past three years and I feel that will help me tremendously with the transition to this new role.” Macy, her husband Cody, and their “fur” baby (Beau) live in Hugo, Oklahoma within Choctaw County.
THE LDCAA EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH FOR JANUARY 2021 IS MONIQUE KNIGHT. SHE IS A TEACHER – HEAD START PROGRAM.

CONGRATULATIONS MONIQUE KNIGHT!

THE LDCAA EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH FOR FEBRUARY 2021 IS NATASHA ERICKSON. SHE IS THE CASE MANAGER FOR YOUTHBUILD IN HUGO.

CONGRATULATIONS NATASHA ERICKSON!

THE LDCAA EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH FOR MARCH 2021 IS TERESA PHELPS. SHE IS A TEACHER ASSISTANT – HEAD START PROGRAM.

CONGRATULATIONS TERESA PHELPS!
The Weatherization Program’s goal is to reduce the energy cost for low income families. In the first quarter of 2021, we provided Weatherization services to 8 families in our service area and an additional 3 through our partnership with Inca Community Services, Inc.

Our crew members are very conscientious of the work they do. This is reflected by the responses received from the surveys of the households that received weatherization:

"Loved the way the young men worked so hard"  
"Very, very professional and courteous"  
"I am happy about how the process was professionally done and the workers were very kind"
Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Impact

Early Literacy Corners

We have strategically placed early literacy corners within our tri county area. These are located at natural gathering places for families with children 0-5 years of age. They include a bookshelf stocked with board books, age-appropriate toys, toddler chair and a rug. The early literacy corners have been implemented to increase exposure to early literacy in the communities we serve and to also educate parents further on the importance of reading to your children every day. Since January, we have implemented five more early literacy corners within Pushmataha and Choctaw County at local faith-based locations.

Early Reading Bags

We have partnered with our local libraries to provide Early Reading Bags to the community. The bag includes a board book, educational flyer for parents, and an early childhood activity book. This initiative is to help parents and caregivers have early childhood materials available in their home to help prepare their child to be kindergarten ready.

contact us today!

580-326-3351
Head Start, Early Head Start and Early Head Start-Child Care

HEAD START/EARLY HEAD START/EARLY HEAD START-CC FOCUS AREA #1 REVIEW

The Head Start Act requires periodic federal review of all Head Start programs. The Head Start/Early Head Start/Early Head Start-CC grants are reviewed in a 3 part series, including Focus Area #1, Focus Area #2, and CLASS observations. Focus Area #1 was scheduled for the week of March 29th through April 2nd. A letter of notification was sent to the program 45 days in advance of the review occurring. During this 45 days the management team spent countless hours preparing for the review to be successful. This included gathering a massive amount of documentation to prepare for 2 hour interviews with each component specialist and the federal review team lead. During the interview sessions, which were conducted via conference calls, the management teams were able to discuss policies and procedures that are in effect. The results of the Focus Area #1 review will be announced and then the Focus Area #2 process will move into the scheduling process. The Focus Area #2 process will include document reviews, observations, and more interviews.

GARDEN STUDY AT CLAYTON HEADSTART

CLAYTON HEAD START’S GARDEN STUDY INCLUDED THE STUDENT’S PLANTING VEGETABLES, INCLUDING PLANTING, KALE, RADISHES, BEETS AND BASIL.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

LITTLE DIXIE HEAD START/EARLY HEAD START/EARLY HEAD START-CC FEBRUARY 2021 IN-SERVICE

On February 18th, 2021, Head Start presented their annual February In Service training. Typically, these trainings are done in person, but due to the COVID 19 pandemic, our required professional development trainings have to be modified by going virtual. Trainings from our component area specialists were prerecorded and saved on a flash drive for each classroom. The flash drives were to be delivered to our centers, but due to the winter storm, management did not have the opportunity to get these delivered by the training date safely. A teacher round table training, recruitment training, and recruitment packets were emailed to all staff on training day to ensure that training was still completed while working from home during inclement weather.

SNOW FUN!

BATTIEST STUDENT PARTICIPATES IN A SNOW PAINTING ACTIVITY AT HOME DURING A VIRTUAL LEARNING DAY!

The projects described were supported by Grant Numbers 06CHDO0743 and 06HP00032 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.
Head Start, Early Head Start and Early Head Start-Child Care

NOW ACCEPTING PRE-SCHOOL APPLICATIONS

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www.littledixie.org

The projects described were supported by grant numbers 06CHO00713 and 06HP00352 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.
Healthy Start is excited to announce our two newest team members, Jayleigh Pettyjohn and David Jobe (pictured above).

Jayleigh will be a care coordinator in the Hugo office. She will be serving clients in the Hugo, Soper and Boswell areas.

David has filled the position as the Fatherhood coordinator for Healthy Start. He will be serving dads in Choctaw, McCurtain, Pushmataha, and Atoka counties. David will primarily be housed in the Hugo Healthy Start office. David is dad to 4 children, so he understands the importance of the role a father plays in the lives of their kids.

We are very eager to add these two to the Healthy Start family and cannot wait to see what amazing things they accomplish.
Tri County Opioid Response Project

The Rural Communities Opioid Response Implementation grant, funded in September 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.

Tri-County Opioid Project has hired two additional staff members. Jessica Kirby Watts was hired as the Data Coordinator. She brings over 20 years of service in the Mental Health Field, Data Management, Client Advocacy and Office Manager experience to the Table.

Brooke Gamol is our 1st Community Recovery Response Specialist. Brooke joined the team mid-February and brings the three E’s to our team Energy, Excitement, and Empathy. Brooke will be trained as a Peer Recovery Support Specialist (PRSS). Brooke will be a great asset to the team and we look forward to her being able to work in the community.

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 (HIV), 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 jail, Drug Courts, and District Attorney’s Office with the discharge process to link individuals to appropriate community resources. Community Recovery and Response Specialists (CRPS) will encourage and recruit individuals in the assistance 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.

Garvin Fire Department

Boswell Fire Department

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 non-government sources (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.
PINE TREE APARTMENTS

Pine Tree Apartments a Triplex located at 191774 N. 4204 RD, Antlers, Ok was completed in December 2020 by a HOME Grant funded through the Oklahoma Housing Finance Agency.

All 3 apartments are rented as of January 15, 2021.

Each apartment has 2 bedroom and features energy efficient appliances.

FIRST TIME HOME BUYERS!

Greg Mitchell Loan Date 01/22/2021 CLOSED
Gary Teague JR. Loan Date 02/26/2021 CLOSED

*Received 4 New Home Loan Applications
*Serviced 5 existing home loans

SOUTHEAST OKLAHOMA COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION LOANS!

Sipsters Coffee Loan Date 01/08/2021

Little Dixie is eager to continue to partner with SOCDC to provide area small businesses with start up or expansion loans. SOCDC is working towards securing additional capital funds to begin mortgage lending. Contact the SOCDC Loan Officer, Jamie Stevenson, at 580 326 5165 today for more information.
HOUSING COUNSELING

Little Dixie's Housing Counseling Program provides Housing and Financial Counseling to residents in an eight county service area in Southeastern Oklahoma with a goal of helping improve the lives of low income individuals and families leading to self sufficiency. This is a very valuable service for our clients.

One example from this first quarter concerns a family that applied for a Residential Home Loan but were going to be rejected due to an incredibly high Debt to Income Ratio. After being counseled on the value of a possible student loan consolidation, they acted on the information we provided. The result was a monthly debt obligation reduction of over $2100.00. This now positions them to meet the eligibility requirements and enables them to start the process of becoming first time homeowners and realizing the American Dream!

RX FOR OKLAHOMA

Rx for Oklahoma is a prescription drug program funded by the Oklahoma Department of Commerce and administered through contractors. LDCAA provides this service to residents in the tri county area by helping them obtain their prescriptions at a reduced or no out of pocket expense. The program is available to those Oklahomans who meet the income guidelines or have no prescription insurance.

One of our clients had this to say:

"While I had prescription drug insurance it would not pay for the expensive Migraine medicine that was going to cost me about $600 for a one month supply, so I went through the Rx Program through Little Dixie CAA and was able to get my medicine at no charge to me."

EMERGENCY FOOD AND SHELTER PROGRAM

The Emergency Food and Shelter Program is a federal program administered by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and CSBG CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security) funding administered through the Oklahoma Department of Commerce. This funding is available for low income families in Choctaw, McCurtain and Pushmataha Counties. This quarter 109 families were served with utility/propane, rental/mortgage and/or food assistance.

VOLUNTEER INCOME TAX ASSISTANCE

Through the Oklahoma Department of Commerce and Oklahoma Association of Community Action Agencies LDCAA utilizes qualified employees (trained by the IRS) to serve as tax preparers. Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program (VITA) employees provide free income tax preparation service to residents in the tri county area. This quarter LDCAA assisted with Tax Assistance for 216 clients collectively they received refunds exceeding $360,000.00
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!

CONGRATULATIONS AMY THURMAN!

CONGRATULATIONS PRESTON CHASE!

CONGRATULATIONS HILTON FAMILY!

CONGRATULATIONS O’DELL FAMILY!

CONGRATULATIONS SOSA FAMILY!

CONGRATULATIONS ERIKA VANFOSSEN

CONGRATULATIONS WOOD FAMILY!

CONTACT US TODAY!

Atoka, Bryan & Marshall Counties
580.920.2479

Carter & Love Counties
580.226.3030

Choctaw, McCurtain & Pushmataha Counties
580.286.6472
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.

A complete listing of available training guides can be found on our website at https://littledixie.org/tma/.

Current Interest Rate
Effective March 1, 2021, the current interest rate for Single Family Housing Direct Home Loans is 2.50% for low and very low income borrowers.

FY 2021 Area Loan Limits
The Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 area loan limits (based on the guidance in Handbook-1-3550, Chapter 5, Paragraph 5.6 A) were effective February 1, 2021. This information can be found at the following link: https://www.rd.usda.gov/files/RD-SFHAreaLoanLimitMap.pdf
Region II Self-Help Housing

FY 2021 Allocation and Funding Guidance

FY 2021 allocation and funding guidance for USDA Rural Development Single Family Housing Direct Loan and Grant Programs was made available through an unnumbered letter issued by the Acting Administrator, Chad Parker on March 11, 2021.

FY 2021 funds were set aside for the 502 Direct Loan Program and the 504 Grant and Loan Programs as shown below.

For Section 502 Direct Loans a total of $1,000,000,000 is available of which a side aside was made for:
- Underserved Counties and Colonias $ 50,000,000
  - REAP $135,500
  - Self-Help $90,252,708
  - Persistent Poverty County $100,000,000

For Section 504 Grants a total of $27,996,756 is available of which a set aside was made for:
- Underserved Counties and Colonias $ 1,399,838
- REAP $19,281
- Persistent Poverty County $2,799,676

For Section 504 Loans a total of $30,000,000 is available of which a set aside was made for:
- Underserved Counties and Colonias $1,500,000
- REAP $15,000
- Persistent Poverty County $3,000,000

Information about USDA Rural Development Single-Family Housing Programs

USDA Rural Development Fact Sheets
USDA Rural Development Housing Repair Loans and Grants Pilot February 2021
USDA Rural Development Repair Loans and Grants
USDA Rural Development 502 Direct
USDA Rural Development Mutual Self Help Housing Technical Assistance Grants
USDA Rural Development Single Family Housing Information

Eviction and Foreclosure Moratorium has been Extended

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Single Family Housing Direct Loan Program (SFHDL) extends the foreclosure and eviction moratorium for SFHDL borrowers through June 30, 2021. Click here for guidance.
Region II Self-Help Housing

Shannon Chase has been selected to serve as the Branch Chief for the Direct Loan Origination Branch. Shannon has worked for Rural Development’s (RD) national office since 2015 in both the DLOB and Guaranteed Rural Housing (GRH). Before joining the national office, Ms. Chase spent about 16 years with Iowa Rural Development, serving in the field and state offices in both the Rural Housing and Business-Cooperative Programs.

Justin Maxson has been named Deputy Under Secretary for Rural Development. He served as CEO of the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation, an organization that works toward poverty alleviation and economic justice in southern states. Before that he spent 13 years as the president of the Mountain Associate for Community Economic Development. Mr. Maxon holds a master’s degree in anthropology and development from Boston University and a bachelor’s degree in anthropology from the University of Kentucky.

Ralls County Man Enjoys Benefits of Self-Help Housing

Jordan O’Brien is among the many who have benefitted from homeownership and housing renovation efforts of the North East Community Action Corporation, which covers 12 Missouri counties. The 30-year-old Ralls County man was part of the Self-Help Housing Home Rehabilitation Program. Twenty-six homes in four counties were upgraded through a $159,000 USDA Rural Development grant NECAC was awarded.

The agency later received an additional $85,700 USDA grant to expand the program for work at 56 homes in four additional counties. Jordan has autism but doesn’t let it get in his way. He works in a general store at Mark Twain Lake and says the Self-Help program has helped him keep his family ties strong. He lives with his mother and other relatives. “I do what I can to help out around this house, and if I’m going to be the man of the house, I’ve got to do what I’ve got to do,” he said.

Photo: Jordan O’Brien drills a screw into place on the new ramp outside his home near Center, Mo. O’Brien participated in the USDA Rural Development Self-Help Housing Program administered by the North East Community Action Corporation (NECAC)

Also pictured, from left, are NECAC Ralls County Board Member Lowell Jackson, NECAC Deputy Director for Housing Development Programs Carla Potts, NECAC Self Help Housing Supervisor Mark Blackwell and NECAC Ralls County Board Member John Lake.
Over the last 25 years, the Housing Assistance Council has received and invested over $120 million through SHOP to build 9,896 self-help homes. We lend this money to local organizations that work with families to build self-help homes across rural America. If the organization meets its targets, our loans are up to 90% forgivable, which allows the organization to provide additional homebuyer subsidies or create additional self-help units. As the only national SHOP grantee with a specific focus on rural homes, we’re proud of the difference our SHOP investments make in rural America.

NWRHA’s self-help program has helped over 150 families, across 12 counties, in the pursuit of homeownership. Families contribute an average of 650 hours of labor building their home. This not only keeps costs down, it provides participants with instant equity in their home and the skills to maintain it. One of the biggest challenges NWRHA faces is finding affordable, buildable lots. With rapidly rising property values, the price of a lot suitable for self-help construction in northwest Arkansas has soared to over $20,000. SHOP loans provide NWRHA with the capital to purchase land sooner, which keeps prices down.

To understand the impact of NWRHA’s self-help program, you could take a drive across rural Arkansas to see the dozens of homes self-help families have built. Or, you could ask Ana Castro-Beard, NWRHA’s Self-Help Specialist. She tells the story of a single father and his kids, who did not have stable housing until they came to NWRHA. After they moved into the home they built, Ana received a postcard from the family: it was a picture of their first Christmas in their new home. Homes are more than just shelter from the elements. They’re where kids are raised, holidays are celebrated, and dinners are shared. They’re the backbone of financial stability and a gateway to economic opportunity.

In his speech before the House of Representatives supporting the bill that funded SHOP, former New York Congressman Rick Lazio promised that the new program would “boost homeownership levels...where we need it desperately.” Twenty-five years later, that dream is a reality. Thanks to the dedicated service of organizations like Northwest Regional Housing Authority, thousands of families—urban and rural—now have a safe, stable place to call home. Their home.

To read the full story click on NWRHA. (Article courtesy of Housing Assistance Council)
Region II Self-Help Housing

Accessing SHARES

Please follow the following steps in order to begin the process of accessing SHARES.

Create an Account

To begin the process of accessing the SHARES reporting system, you will need to create an eAuthentication account with Level 2 access. This process begins by clicking https://identitymanager.eems.usda.gov/registration/selfRegistrationForm.aspx?level=2. (You can read more about Level 2 access by clicking here and scrolling down to “What Is Level 2 Access?”). Note: Please take special care to remember the answers to your security questions exactly as you entered them.

Verify Your Identity

Once you have registered for your Level 2 eAuthentication account, you will need to complete the identity verification process. This can either be done online, or by presenting your government issued photo ID in person at a USDA Service Center. You will receive additional instructions for verifying your identity after you have registered for your Level 2 eAuthentication account. You can find the nearest USDA Service Center by visiting https://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app?type=Ira and clicking on your state.

Contact Me (Jason Stillwell T&MA Contractor at jstillwell@idcaa.org or (580) 326-5165)

Once you have verified your identity with USDA, send me your username and full name including your middle initial; (I DO NOT need your password); so that I can contact your state RD office to begin the process of having your SHARES role assigned.

Group Coordinator Responsibilities

The Group Coordinator’s job duties and responsibilities are crucial to the success of the self help program. The Group Coordinator is responsible for locating and screening interested participants, packaging their 502 loan applications, preparing families for the construction phase and homeownership, and may help track their progress during construction. If one of these duties is not fulfilled, the entire program can be in jeopardy. Not all self help grantee agencies use the title Group Coordinator. Other titles include Group Worker, Loan Packager, Family Support Specialist, Family Recruiter or others. The roles of this position may vary but they are all required for a successful self help program. (continued on next page)
Region II Self-Help Housing

This guide will help the Group Coordinator in the areas of recruitment, communication, forming a group of participants, group management, motivation, and understanding the 502 program. Although some grantees separate the loan packaging responsibilities into an autonomous position, the Group Coordinator often wears many hats and we recommend reading three additional guidebooks:

- **502 Loan Processing Guide** - is crucial to the success of qualifying and processing applicants.
- **Pre-Construction Meetings Guide** - will help guide the Group Coordinator prepare for and facilitate the participant training process.
- **Rural Development SHARES User Manual** (developed by Rural Development) - will instruct the Group Coordinator on the task of entering information into the SHARES database. This manual can be found in the SHARES website, https://shares.sc.egov.usda.gov or by contacting your T&MA provider.

Listed below are some typical job responsibilities and qualifications that detail the varied duties of a Group Coordinator:

- Responsible for outreach and recruiting low-income families who are interested in the mutual self-help method of constructing each other’s homes. This process involves marketing, community meetings, interviewing applicants, and prescreening for program eligibility.
- Counsels applicants on eligibility for participation and suggests steps they can take if they need to remedy a financial situation.
- Prepares 502 rural housing loan applications for submission to Rural Development, including loan-closing procedures. Typical duties include verifying employment, income, credit, and debt along with completing a preliminary screening for eligibility. Once an applicant appears to qualify for the program a full loan application and package will be developed and submitted to Rural Development.
- Organizes groups of participants for the purpose of home construction.
- Holds preconstruction meetings with participants to explain the program and subjects related to homeownership such as budgets, loan payments, taxes, insurance, maintenance, and upkeep of the property. Assists participants in selecting house plans and building lots.
- Acts as the primary liaison between the self-help organization and Rural Development for matters pertaining to loan processing.
- May be responsible for helping participants during the construction phase to (1) encourage maximum family participation, (2) resolve individual participant and group related problems, and (3) provide information on labor saving and record keeping devices.
- Maintains records as required, which may include SHARES reporting and tracking participant labor hours.

In some areas, the Group Coordinator assists Rural Development with documentation for conversion from construction financing to a permanent loan.

For more information regarding the responsibilities of the group coordinator click the following link to access the Group Coordinator Handbook.
Retired Senior Volunteer Program

Seven AmeriCorps Senior RSVP Volunteers spent over 30 hours donating their time on February 1st & March 1st at COVID Vaccination Clinics held in Antlers Oklahoma. The volunteers assisted in sanitizing, greeting, and observation period monitoring for over 500 people receiving vaccinations.

Retired and Senior Volunteer Program Director Karla Luginbill was nominated by her Portfolio Manager, Andrew Lowe, to represent the great work being done in AmeriCorps Seniors’ South Central Region during a recent regional videoconference in honor of AmeriCorps Week. The AmeriCorps Week Regional Celebration served as a platform to recognize the program’s partnership in national and community service. Luginbill was able to share success stories and highlight the RSVP program’s impact in southeast Oklahoma. Karla Luginbill has been with Little Dixie CAA since 1998, and has been the Director of the RSVP Program since 2013.

Each year during AmeriCorps Week, the commitment of AmeriCorps members and alumni is recognized by highlighting their extraordinary efforts made across the nation every day. AmeriCorps Week (March 7 - 13, 2021) is a time to salute members and alumni for their service, thank community partners, and communicate program impact on communities and on the lives of those who serve.

The South Central Office of Regional Operations held a Regional Celebration via Zoom videoconference for programs on March 11, 2021. According to Karissa Cuffy, Portfolio Manager for the South Central Region, this was a time to showcase Little Dixie RSVP among AmeriCorps leaders in the five state region. The celebration allowed AmeriCorps personnel the opportunity to learn more about the regional structure, celebrate the impact of programs, and connect with others across the region.

Little Dixie RSVP was one of three programs being showcased. Each program had a 10-minute segment to share impact and benefit stories of RSVP/AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers serving in their communities, successful practices and advice, and tips and tricks acquired as part of their national service journey.

Congratulations Karla!
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.

**become a volunteer today!**

**LITTLE DIXIE CASA STRIVES TO ENSURE THAT EVERY CHILD WHO NEEDS A CASA VOLUNTEER WILL HAVE ONE. WITH YOUR HELP, WE CAN ACHIEVE THAT GOAL. CALL MARISSA JORDAN AT 580-298-2921**

**VIRTUAL!**

**COFFEE WITH CASA HAPPENED OVER ZOOM ON FEBRUARY 26TH & MARCH 26TH.**

**MARCIA SMITH, CASA VOLUNTEER, ACCEPTS A DONATION OF 20 HANDMADE PILLOW CASES FROM DONNA HAMIL WITH IDABEL OHCE. THESE WILL BE DISTRIBUTED TO FOSTER CHILDREN IN OUR SERVICE AREA.**

**ON MARCH 25TH, LAUREN WREN & CONNIE JONES-HALL WERE SWORN IN AS OUR NEWEST CASA VOLUNTEERS BY JUDGE BILL BAZE.**

THIS PROJECT IS SUPPORTED BY VOGA GRANT #SUBGRANT NO. IS 2020-VOCA-LITTLE DIXIE CAA-191 AWARDED BY THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE THROUGH THE OKLAHOMA DISTRICT ATTORNEY’S COUNCIL.
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 you’re 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.

“A mentor is someone who allows you to see the hope inside yourself.’
Oprah Winfrey

SAINT PATRICK’S DAY EVENT ON MARCH 17, THE MENTEES ATE PIZZA, CUPCAKES, DRANK PUNCH AND ENJOYED GAMES.

THE MENTORING PROGRAM ENJOYED A NICE DAY IN PARIS ON FEBRUARY 2, 2021.

BRANDON BILLY AND AJ HENSLEE MET WITH DANIELL LANEYER WHO RAN FOR THE US HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES IN 2020 AT THE SAINT PATRICK’S DAY MENTORING EVENT. SHE WAS VERY IMPRESSED WITH THE MENTORING PROGRAM AND IS GOING TO SIGN UP TO BE A MENTOR.
Safe Place Healing Hearts and Victim Services

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.

Little Dixie Victim Advocacy Program provides help and services to victims of ANY crime!

**January is National Stalking Awareness Month and Three of Our Communities Signed Proclamations.**

**The Signing of the Stalking Awareness Proclamation in Hugo with City Manager, Leah Savage, Tonya Finley and Mayor, Richard Higginbottom.**

**The Signing of the Stalking Awareness Proclamation in Idabel with Mayor Craig Young and Tonya Finley.**

**The Signing of the Stalking Awareness Proclamation in Antlers with DeeDee Atwood, Mayor, Michael Riser, and Tonya Finley.**

**Jodie Allen and Tonya Finley, with Little Dixie CAA, Terrie Lake and Diana Miller, with Choctaw Nation, and Lindsey Campbell with Legal Aid Give a Presentation at the Rotary Club of Idabel Describing the Different Victim Services They Provide and How They Partner with Each Other to Better Serve Victims.**

**DeeDee Atwood, Manager, with the Victim Advocacy Services Computer was Purchased for SFWP Partner, Sake Nurse, Penny Rogers, to Better Serve Sexual Assault Victims. Having the Needed Equipment Allows for Better Evidence Collection and Helps Improve the Rate of Prosecution.**

**DeeDee Atwood and Tonya Finley Presenting to the Antlers Rotary Club About Their Victim Programs.**

**Serving Pushmataha, Choctaw and McCurtain Counties.**

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YouthBuild

Choctaw County YouthBuild has been busy this quarter. Nine dedicated students have completed the required online portion to receive their Home Builders Institute (HBI) Pre-apprenticeship Certificate in Residential Construction. Aside from the online requirements, students have also put in numerous hours of hands-on training on Little Dixie’s Self-Help Housing Program’s homes.

Last month, the staff accompanied 10 students on an outing to McKinney, Texas. Students and staff alike enjoyed a day in the woods at the Heard Natural Science Museum and Sanctuary. Participants enjoyed numerous team building exercises ranging from balancing activities to climbing up a 50’ wall on the Ropes Course, all while learning to trust team members to help steady them, or even be their “safety net” if they were to fall.

Last but not least, we want to congratulate Courtney Ashley and Shylene Davis (pictured below) for completing their G.E.D. testing and receiving their Oklahoma High School Equivalency Diploma. While we’re proud of everything our students have accomplished thus far, obtaining a G.E.D. is quite possibly the greatest achievement these students have gained in life to date. A high school diploma or G.E.D. is the first step to future education and/or employment opportunities.

CONGRATULATIONS

Shylene

Courtney

Little Dixie Digest

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF LITTLE DIXIE COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY, INC. HELPING PEOPLE, CHANGING LIVES.

209 N 14TH STREET
HUGO, OK 74743
(580) 326-3331
https://littledixie.org

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