A BIG THANK YOU TO INTERNATIONAL PAPER FOUNDATION!

International Paper Foundation Awards $15,000 to Support Local Food Banks

LDCAA’s (RSVP) Retired Senior Volunteer Program secured a grant from the International Paper Foundation through their Signature Cause Giving Initiative. International Paper Foundation supports non-profit organizations in communities where their employees live and work. Through this opportunity, four area food banks will each receive $3,500 in food and food supplies and LDCAA’s RSVP program will use the additional $1,000 for carrying out the project activities. The food banks include:

• First Baptist Church in Antlers, OK
• Gracefully Yours in Broken Bow, OK
• Hand to Hand in Idabel, OK, and
• Sharing Hope in Hugo, OK

The RSVP Program Staff will work with the food banks to order food and supplies as needed. Additionally, each of the food banks serve as volunteer stations for RSVP volunteers. Rebecca Reynolds, LDCAA Executive Director stated “We have been partnering with International Paper Foundation for several years now, especially to address hunger in Southeast Oklahoma. This partnership is a great example of how we can meet needs within our local communities when we pool our resources and work together. We are grateful for IP and all they do.”

(Pictured above presenting a check is Lindsey Wright, International Paper Communications Manager and LDCAA Executive Director, Becky Reynolds)
A round the Agency

Employee of the Month Awardees

**JULY**

The Employee of the Month for July 2021 is Dionne Frankum. Dionne is the Director of the Tri-County Opioid Response Project.

**AUGUST**

The Employee of the Month for August 2021 is Brooke Gambol. Brooke is the Community Response and Recovery Specialist for our Tri-County Opioid Response Project.

**SEPTEMBER**

The Employee of the Month for September 2021 is LaRanda Vaughan. She is a Family Advocate for our Head Start Program.

**Service Award Recipients**

**5 YEARS**

- Peggy Parker, Teacher Assistant – Head Start Program

**10 YEARS**

- Susie Mashburn, Early Childhood Development and Curriculum Coach – Head Start/EHS/EHS-CC Programs
- Vicki Lester, Cook – Head Start Program
- Tamera Payne, Assistant Cook – Head Start Program
- Becky Russell, Teacher – Head Start Program

**25 YEARS**

- Lori Henry, Program Secretary – Head Start/EHS/EHS-CC Programs
- Elnora Mayes, Center Director – Early Head Start Program
Multiple Program staff helped in the Back to School Bash. Programs participating include Head Start, Early Head Start and Early Head Start Child Care, Drug Free Community, Tri County Opioid, AmeriCorps and many more. They distributed school supplies and helpful information to youth in the area.

Little Dixie Community Action Agency participated in the Choctaw county fair this September handing out information about each program such as Head Start, Healthy Start, Early Head Start, Early Head Start Child Care and multiple other programs. During the event we were awarded with the best decorated booth at the fair!
Hugo and Idabel Walmart Stores Provide $5,000 to Support Community-Based Programs

Little Dixie Community Action Agency, Inc. recently received two awards from Wal-Mart as part of their local community giving program. Hugo Wal-Mart funded a grant in the amount of $3,000 to support the YouthBuild Program and Idabel Wal-Mart funded a separate application in the amount of $2,000 to support the Healthy Start program. Both of these programs are operated by Little Dixie CAA. YouthBuild provides opportunities for young people to obtain their GED and gain skills in the Construction industry by working on homes and community projects. Healthy Start assists families with medical care, resources and education needed to promote the wellness of the mother and baby before, during and after pregnancy. Thank You Wal-Mart for your continued support!!!!

PICTURED ABOVE HUGO WAL-MART STORE MANAGER ERIC COLE ALONG WITH YOUTH BUILD STAFF JAMI REICH YOUTH BUILD DIRECTOR AND STACY DENNIS CONSTRUCTION TRAINER
Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Impact

The ECCS Impact project ended on July 31, 2021. We are excited to share that we have reached the overarching goal to improve the developmental health of children ages zero to three years of age by 25% by program end. The Ages & Stages 3 Questionnaire was used to measure five areas of developmental health in these children, and to create a baseline upon which a system of measurement could be based and built.

Overall, we received 3,163 screenings on 1,431 children. By the end of our program, we received repeat screenings on 425 children who originally scored in either two areas of the Monitoring Zone or one area Below Cutoff. Of these 425 children, 250 showed improvement to either the Monitoring Zone (from Below Cutoff) or Above Cutoff (from the Monitoring Zone or Below Cutoff). This resulted in an overall improvement rate of 58.8%, more than doubling our goal of 25%.

By the end of the project we implemented 31 Early Literacy Corners, ASQ screening in 14 local child care centers, launched our Help Me Grow Oklahoma centralized access point, disseminated over 5000 Early Childhood and Family Resource Bundles and approximately 1,360 Developmental Skill Building Kits were sent out to families.
BACA visits Fort Towson Head Start

An organization called BACA (Bikers Against Child Abuse) visited the Fort Towson Head Start center. The organization does finger prints of the students in an effort to promote child safety. The organization visits the center on their bikes and the kids love it! Previously they brought little gifts for the students, read to them, and went out on the playground to watch the kids play. They have the cards and they put the child's name on it and then do the prints, all the other information is filled in by the parent. This organization is all about the children and giving them a positive experience!

Head Start Loves Science

The Clayton 2 Head Start class performed a science experiment. The experiment conducted was a magic milk experiment! The class began by placing milk in a pan and add a few drops of food color into a pan. The next step is to dip a q-tip in dish soap and place it in the milk. When the liquid soap is introduced the soap reduces the surface tension and reacts with the fat in the milk which causes the fat particles to move and create swirls. This is a science experiment that discusses the comparison when another liquid is introduced to another substance. It also helps explain that different kinds of milk have different levels of fat in them.
Idabel Head Start Makes Jam at the Fair

Idabel Head Start made jam in their classroom for the fair. They were learning about balls in Creative Curriculum, so they combined the fair project with our Ball unit. The shape of the fruit was compared with the round “ball” shape. (The fruit balls did not bounce but they sure tasted good.) They had the girls mash the fruit using different jelly making tools. They measured and combined all the ingredients and after the jelly was finished, they got to enjoy the “fruits of their labor”, jam on toast for our snack. The girls agreed that jam making is hard work but sure tastes good.
Head Start, Early Head Start and Early Head Start-Child Care

Head Start Hosts Super Sign-Up Event

On August 6th, Head Start, Early Head Start and Early Head Start-Child Care partnered with Help Me Grow Oklahoma and held a Super Sign-Up Event. The event was held in-person and online, simultaneously, to allow every county the opportunity to participate. During the event, parents had the opportunity to apply for Head Start, Early Head Start and Early Head Start-Child Care. Upon completion of an application, parents received an Early Learning Bag filled with educational toys, books and activities, which allows parents to have age-appropriate materials in their home to positively engage with their children. Participants who attended the event online received their Early Learning Bag via postal mail, which meant they were conveniently delivered directly to the family’s door. At the end of the event, we had 18 applications submitted for Head Start, Early Head Start, or Early Head Start-Child Care. We also learned how we can improve for our next Super Sign-Up Event and make it even more informative and helpful for the families in our community.

Head Start Collaborates with Soper Public School

On August 10th, Little Dixie Head Start, Early Head Start and Early Head Start-Child Care had the opportunity to set up a booth at the Soper Public School Open House. This provided us direct access to families in that particular community and we were able to discuss the benefits of our program face-to-face. Parents asked questions and were extremely excited that paper versions of the applications were available. We provided an application and an activity pack to all early childhood families that visited our booth.
Head Start Celebrates County Fair Time

In September, Little Dixie Head Start, Early Head Start and Early Head Start Child Care participated in the McCurtain County Fair. At the event, families had the opportunity to stop by our booth and pick up an early childhood book, along with an application for Head Start, Early Head Start, and Early Head Start Child Care. Participating in the event allowed families to ask any questions they may have regarding our early childhood programs and further our reach into each community.
Head Start, Early Head Start and Early Head Start—Child Care

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WITHIN HEAD START

On July 19-22 Head Start presented annual pre-service training for our Head Start Staff at the Head Start Admin office event center. The theme was dandelions and the focus of the theme was perspective and positive thinking, “Some see a weed, some see a wish”. In addition to the annual required training topics, each specialist from the head start office presented a 30 minute training, giving current and new staff a general overview of policies and procedures of their individual component areas along with the annual required training topics. Head Start staff also had the pleasure of receiving a half-day in person presentation from Dr. William DeMeo, a psychologist and a dynamic and entertaining public speaker. Dr. DeMeo flew in from Cincinnati, Ohio to speak to our staff about three to five year old social/emotional development. He offered a very educational training that was also interactive, entertaining, and fun. Head Start staff also received training from Kindermusik, with an emphasis on how music can help children develop their social emotional skills, and from Lakeshore Learning, who also presented some great information about social emotional development.

On July 9th, Head Start Staff who chose to participate met at the Endangered Ark Foundation for a Wellness Camp day full of team building exercises and real life Asian elephant interactions.
Healthy Start will be joining The National Healthy Start Association in the Celebrate day 366 campaign to raise awareness for Infant Mortality Awareness month in September. Infant mortality is when a baby dies before his or her first birthday. The top leading causes for infant death in the U.S. are low birth weight, preterm birth, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, and birth defects. We have been providing training, posts, and live feeds on our Healthy Start Facebook page to support and inspire people to take a pledge to be part of the generation that ensures every baby has a chance. We are asking families with babies under one year of age to make sure their babies are sleeping in a safe environment. We are also asking pregnant moms to attend their prenatal visits, consider stopping smoking, and maintain healthy lifestyles to help prevent pre-term birth and low birth weight babies. For more information visit our Healthy Start Facebook page #littledixiehealthystart.

"This project is/was supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) under HCHA07826, Healthy Start Initiative-Eliminating Racial/ethnic Disparities, $1,144,121.00. This information or content are those of the author and should not be construed as the official position or policy of, nor should any endorsements be inferred by HRSA or the U.S. Government."
Tri County Opioid Response Project

In August Tri Corps staff Susan and Brooke provided Safe Place Healing Hearts staff with training to become certified in Mental Health First Aid.

Tri County Opioid Project partnered with Oklahoma Bureau of Narcotics, OSU extension office, local law enforcement, Pushmataha Family Medical clinic, and Idabel Nutrition Center to provide 3 “Take Back Prescription” Days in the tri county area. A total of 11.8lbs were collected.
Housing Services

SELF-HELP HOUSING CLOSINGS

PETTIGREW HOME

CROW HOME

FISHER HOME

WAGONER HOME

SCHIEBE HOME

CONGRATULATIONS
LDCAA Lending

Little Dixie C.A.A.’s Lending program serviced 17 residential and business loans, which started this quarter with a total dollar amount of $607,295.44. They cover Business Start up Loans, Established Business Refurbish Loans, First Time Homebuyer Loans, to refinancing current Home Ownership Loans.

SOCDC Supports two new businesses

Callie and Joe Childers of Antlers OK obtained a new loan to purchase a food that will bring new eating options to the area. Additionally SOCDC provided Jordan Pavlovic with a loan to complete her training, purchase her supplies etc. to start her new business. If you know anyone who is starting a new business, or WANTS to start a new business call Jamie w/SOCDC at (580) 326-5165

Intermediary loans

Uploaded 18 502 packages
Five 504 Home Repair Grant/Loan were packaged
Eight 502 loan applicants are in the process of packaging

Housing Counseling

13 individuals received eHome certificates
14 individuals received HECM certificates
43 individuals received pre-purchase counseling

Working to Achieve Homeownership

5 clients Certified currently in the following stages of the homebuying process:
- 1 recently signed contract
- 2 in process of shopping for a home
- 1 waiting on appraisal
- 1 received home inspection report, waiting on repairs
Weatherization

Congratulations to Johnny Driggers of the Housing Weatherization Program. Johnny was recently promoted from a Crew Leader position to an Energy Auditor. He has worked in the Weatherization Dept for the past 10 years.

Emergency assistance

5 families received assistance for utilities, food, rent, transportation and/or mortgage payments.

Rx of Oklahoma

RX for Oklahoma is a prescription drug program funded by the Oklahoma Department of Commerce and administered through contractors. Little Dixie Community Action Agency, Inc. provides this service to residents within Choctaw, Pushmataha and McCurtain counties by helping them to obtain their prescriptions at a reduced or no out-of-pocket expense. This program is available to any Oklahoma resident who meets the eligibility guidelines which focuses primarily on income or for those individuals who have no prescription insurance.

Customer feedback...

- “We were very satisfied with the professionalism and kindness shown to my wife and I by Little Dixie and their employee Mrs. Amanda Perry. Little Dixie has been very helpful down through the years with assisting us with various programs. We are highly appreciative to this Agency and very thankful for having people like Amanda Perry to assist in tending to the needs of the residents in this area”

- “I was very satisfied with Amanda’s help and the way she went above and beyond to help my family out”
Housing Services

NEW TO THE CREW!!

Sarah Owens – Assistant Housing Director

Little Dixie welcomes a new Assistant Housing Director, Sarah Owens. Sarah originates from Indianapolis, IN where she obtained her Master’s Degree in Social Work. She previously worked for Dove Recovery House as an Outreach Coordinator and Integrative Wellness as a Mental Health Therapist. Welcome Sarah!

Keily Abney - Housing Specialist

Little Dixie welcomes a new Housing Specialist, Keily Abney. Keily originates from Hugo and enjoys spending time with her family, friends and being a dog mom. Keily is currently working on obtaining her 502 Direct Packaging Certification and HUD Housing Counseling Certification. Welcome Sarah!

Lora Brown – Community Development Specialist

Little Dixie welcomes a new Community Development Specialist at our Idabel Home Ownership Center, Lora Brown. Lora comes to us from the McCurtain County Sherriff’s Department. She is currently working on obtaining her 502 Direct Packaging Certification and HUD Housing Counseling Certification. Welcome Lora!

Blyth Cowen – Weatherization

Little Dixie welcomes a new Retrofit Installer/Rehab Carpenter, Blyth Cowen. Blyth comes to us as a recent graduate of Moyers High School. He recently attended training at Oklahoma Association of Community Action Agencies where he obtained his certificate. Welcome Blyth!
Region II Self-Help Housing

The Spotlight website: https://www.selfhelphousingspotlight.org/ is a great tool to promote your self-help housing program. The website was created to highlight the success of the Self Help Housing Program. If you have a success story or pictures that you would like to share, please send the story along with photos and we'll include it on the website. Submit your stories to pprice@ldca.org.

Current Interest Rate  Effective September 1, 2021, the current interest for Single Family Housing Direct Home Loans is 2.5% for low and very low income borrowers.

SAVE THE DATE....National Rural Housing Conference 2021

HAC's National Rural Housing Conference is scheduled to take place virtually on November 30 - December 3, 2021. This year’s virtual format will have a full schedule of more than 30 workshops covering topics including best practices for rural housing and community development, resource development, organizational management, and creative placemaking. This conference offers an excellent opportunity to connect with federal agencies, national housing organizations, and on the ground practitioners from across rural America. Be on the lookout for the registration announcement for HAC's 2021 National Rural Housing Conference.

New Administrative Notice AN 4882 (1940-M)

USDA Rural Development Administrative Notice No. 4882, System for Award Management Registration and Screening Requirements for Suspension and Debarment was issued on July 27, 2021. This AN was issued to clarify the requirements for System for Award Management (SAM) screening. The AN addresses the new requirement for SAM.gov registration by participants of all programs, including loans and guarantees. The AN also clarifies who to screen for suspension and debarment in the SAM Exclusion database as per RD instruction Part 1940 Subpart M. AN 4882 is effective for all applications, for federal grant funds received on or after October 1, 2021.

The following is required for SAM registration per 2 CFR § 25.200(b):
- Be registered in SAM prior to submitting an application or plan.
- Maintain an active SAM registration with current information during which it has an active federal award (loan, grant, guarantee, subsidies, etc.) or an application or plan under consideration.
- Provide your Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) in each application or plan.

The Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) is to be replaced by the Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number for SAM. The DUNS will remain the official SAM number until April 2022. New registrants must continue to obtain a DUNS until April 2022.

A link to the full AN is included below:
System for Award Management Registration and Screening Requirements for Suspension and Debarment (RD AN No. 4882 (1940-M))
USDA Updates Guidance for Direct Loan Borrowers Impacted by COVID-19

SFH Direct Loan and Grant Programs
Monday, September 27

USDA Updates Guidance for Direct Loan Borrowers Impacted by COVID-19

PURPOSE
The purpose of this notice is to announce the removal of the September 30, 2021 deadline for COVID-19 impacted Direct Loan borrowers to request mortgage payment assistance. Direct Loan Borrowers may request assistance until the end of the National Emergency is declared.

Mortgage (Payment) Forbearance Guidance:
Borrowers who experience financial hardship due, directly or indirectly, to the COVID-19 emergency may request and be granted an initial forbearance until the end of the National Emergency is declared. The initial forbearance period may be up to 180 days and the borrower may request an extension of up to an additional 180 days.

Borrowers who received an initial CARES Act forbearance may be granted up to two additional three month payment forbearances. The borrower must request each extension individually.

Borrowers who received a COVID-19 forbearance under this guidance may have the interest waived that accrues on missed payments during the forbearance period. Loans may be reamortized at the conclusion of the forbearance. The term of the initial forbearance and any extension may be shortened at the borrower’s request.

For more information on USDA Rural Development’s actions to support customers directly impacted by COVID-19, visit https://www.rd.usda.gov/coronavirus.
For most people, Friday the 13th is a dreaded, unlucky day or the title of a horror movie franchise. For Brittany Robertson, a single mother of 3 children in Pope County, Arkansas, Friday the 13th of August 2021 is one of the luckiest and most blessed day of the year. On this date, she had the final walk through of her newly built Mutual Self-Help home on 27 Bennett Circle in London, Arkansas. This 4-bedroom, 2-bath house is not, however, the result of luck. Rather, it is the culmination of the hard work and determination of a working single mother to provide housing stability for herself and her children. And Ms. Robertson achieved this goal during a time in which the entire world was living a horror franchise that doesn’t seem to end – the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ms. Robertson’s homeownership path began in December 2019 with a meeting with UHDC’s Housing Counselor April Smith. She was a participant in UHDC’s Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program at the time and was interested in becoming a homeowner rather than remaining a renter. She underwent a credit check and credit counseling, along with Homebuyer Education. She was approved for $100,365 loan through USDA Rural Development to build her 4-bedroom, 2 bath 1,343 sq. ft. home in London and the loan closed November 14, 2020. Building began soon after in the middle of the global COVID-19 pandemic.

There are many who would consider beginning a building process during a global pandemic, with supply chains at a standstill and increased inflation, a stroke of bad luck. Ms. Robertson’s hard work and patience overcame “bad luck” i.e. the COVID–19 pandemic. Ms. Robertson’s story is proof not to believe everything you hear about Friday the 13th – it too can be a day of blessing and, for every horror movie franchise, there is a hero or heroine.

Inter-Lakes Community Action Partnership was awarded a renewal grant in the amount of $366,630 to build 14 homes in Brookings, Clark, Codington, Deuel, Grant, Hamlin, Kingsbury, Lake, Lincoln, McCook, Miner, Minnehaha, Moody and Turner Counties in South Dakota.

Universal Housing Development Corporation was awarded a renewal grant in the amount of $195,925 to Repair and/or Rehabilitate 32 homes in Pope, Conway, Johnson, Yell, Franklin and Logan counties in Arkansas.
HOUSING PROGRAM IN BROOKINGS HELPING FAMILIES BUILD HOMES, CREATING FRIENDSHIPS...

LOCAL NEWS
by: Carter Schmidt

BROOKINGS, S.D. (KELO) — A housing program in Brookings is helping low-income families get a loan and build their own homes.

Inter-Lakes Community Action Partnership’s mutual self-help housing program has been helping families in the Brookings area since 1996. It is part of a national housing program that has been around since the 1960s.

“The biggest benefit of the program is there is no money down and no out-of-pocket closing costs. A family would get ahold of us to apply. We help them with the prequal application. We help them with the full application. We also package the loans for USDA Rural Development,” ICAP housing programs director Dana Whitehouse said.

The program has helped build over 150 homes in the Brookings area. 10 have been under construction since last September.

“For their sweat equity, they’re required to do 30 hours of work per week per family, and that usually takes about six to seven months of them being on-site for that 30 hours of work per week,” Whitehouse said.

Haley Gehring and Lexy Brewster are building homes with the program. “It’s really nice to actually get to build our houses with our neighbors and get to know them, so we’ve all like become family basically,” Brewster said. “It’s been a fun process. It’s kind of nice to be able to learn how to do a lot of this stuff on our own. Any upgrades and stuff, we’re going to know how to do that,” Gehring said. Sherry Meersman says her daughter surprised her by signing her up for the program. She says she is not physically able to do a lot of the build, so her daughter has been doing a lot of it for her. “I am so thankful. I never thought when I sold my home in Shakopee, Minnesota, I never thought I would own a home ever again. I thought, oh my gosh, I’m going to be renting for the rest of my life. This is going to be my home and I’m so excited, and I just can’t wait, but I wouldn’t have been able to do without my daughter,” Meersman said.

It’s about more than just the physical home.

“Some of them get together and do things outside the build also, and they do develop those long-lasting relationships,” Whitehouse said.

If you are interested in the program and would like to find out more, you can visit their website.

Roger Walker Achieves the American Dream of Homeownership

Article and photos submitted by Northwest Regional Housing Authority in Harrison, Arkansas

Mr. Roger Walker recently completed his 1248 square feet Mutual Self Help home on September 17, 2021. Mr. Walker started construction in June 2020 and battled through the many upheavals that COVID brought the program.

Mr. Walker was our 2nd program recipient to have to receive a supplemental loan to complete his home. Mr. Walker contributed approximately 700 labor hours and had family and friends on board. Mr. Walker persevered through the pandemic and finally completed his home after more than a year of arduous labor.

Building his own home and leaving apartment life was a huge dream of Mr. Walker’s, and he has finally achieved the American dream of homeownership, through the Mutual Self Help Housing Program.
Region II Self-Help Housing

Northwest Regional Housing Authority helps make a DREAM become a reality!

Kyle Jones is a disabled individual living in Horseshoe Bend, AR in Izard County. Through Northwest Regional Housing Authority, Kyle Jones completed his home repairs through the USDA Rural Development Repair and Rehabilitation program. Kyle received funds through a Single Family Housing 504 Repair loan.

These funds were used to pour a concrete slab, install a wheelchair lift onto it, build an ADA ramp to the slab, install an ADA roll-in wheelchair shower, open the doorway and make repairs to his deck.

Proyecto Azteca self-help housing participant to Realize the American Dream of Homeownership!

Pictured at left: Rosa Hernandez standing in front of her 3-bedroom home she has been working on in Donna, Texas.

Rosa is a single parent of one child. Her mother was going to be living with her but recently passed away. Rosa and her daughter are currently living in a travel trailer. With all her challenges, Rosa continues to work and can’t wait until she can move in to a completed house.

Photo provided by Ann Cass, Executive Director, Proyecto Azteca
Safety is not expensive...it is PRICELESS.
"Author Unknown"

§1944.419 Final grantee evaluation.

Near the end of the grant period but prior to the last month, an evaluation of the grantee will be conducted by Rural Development. The State Director may use Rural Development employees or an organization under contract to Rural Development to provide the evaluation. The evaluation is to determine how successful the grantee was in meeting goals and objectives as defined in the agreement, application, this regulation, and any amendments. Failure to obtain at least an acceptable grant rating could jeopardize future grant awards. (Revised 12-12-19) PN 532.)

(a) This is a quantitative evaluation of the grantee to determine if it met its goals in:

(1) Assisting the projected number of families in obtaining adequate housing.
(2) Meeting the goal of assisting very low-income families.
(3) Meeting the family labor requirement in §1944.411(h) and Exhibit B-2 of this subpart. For rehabilitation use Exhibit K-2. (Revised 12-12-19) PN 532)
(4) Keeping costs within the guides set in §1944.407.
(5) Meeting other objectives in the Agreement. 

(b) The evaluation is a narrative addressed to the State Director with a copy to the National Office, Single Family Housing Processing Division. It will be in 3 parts, namely: findings, recommendations, and an overall rating. The rating will be either unacceptable, acceptable, or outstanding, as follows (see Exhibit O for a sample final evaluation letter). (Revised 12-12-19) PN 532.)

(1) Outstanding if the grantee met or exceeded all of the goals in paragraph (a) of this section.
(2) Acceptable if the grantee met or exceeded all of the goals as defined in paragraph (a) except two.
(3) Unacceptable if the grantee failed to obtain an acceptable rating.
Region II Self-Help Housing

**T&MA Contractor Tips and Tools continued...**

Little Dixie T&MA Contractor Notes...on self-help housing is a bulletin of observations and recommendations written and distributed by Little Dixie Community Action Agency, Inc. T&MA Contractors to assist Self-Help Grantees. The bulletin is updated monthly on the Little Dixie CAA website. https://littledixie.org/ma/

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

**Useful USDA Rural Development Information**

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

**T&MA Contractor Self-Help Training Guides Updates**

A complete listing of available USDA Rural Development training guides produced to train and assist grantee staff can be found on the Little Dixie CAA website at https://littledixie.org/ma/.

Recently updated was the Section 523 Technical Assistance Grant Application Handbook 2021, Feasibility Handbook, 502 Loans Guidebook with E-forms and Board of Directors Governance Guide.

**Section 523 Technical Assistance Grant Application Handbook**

This handbook provides detailed information to assist grantees in completing each item required on the Rural Development checklist. Forms and samples for each section of the application are included. This handbook also includes helpful tips for accomplishing each item. This handbook not only covers the items required for the application, but helpful tips on getting them accomplished. Your T&MA Contractor is also available to review each item and provide valuable insight in completing the required documents.
Region II Self-Help Housing

T&MA Contractor Tips and Tools continued...

Feasibility Handbook
This feasibility handbook is designed help walk an organization through the feasibility process and ask questions to enable organizations to make definitive decisions about the potential of operating a successful Self-Help Housing Program. Does my organization qualify? Do we have the capacity to carry out the program? Is this program right for our service area? For refunding grantees, the questions will help them to get back to basics and to refocus on the important program issues. General guidelines, best practices and information will assist in conducting the study, and questions will help lead organizations through an analysis of feasibility for a self-help program in your designated area.

Self-Help 502 Loan Guidebook — Updated!
The Self-Help 502 Loan Guidebook contains a new chapter on eForms that will help to train the Group Coordinator or appropriate staff person in packaging these loans. eForms allows applicants, loan application packagers, self-help grantees, and others to submit applications electronically directly to USDA-Rural Development.

Board of Directors Governance Guide
Boards of Directors play a critical role in the success of any non-profit organization through their governance function. With this in mind, the Board of Directors Handbook was designed for use by board members of any housing agency. It is an informational resource that may be used as a training tool and can provide new insights and a clearer understanding of nonprofit organizations, board meetings and operations, agency planning, administration of agency personnel, teamwork, orientation for new board members, federal accounting requirements, and agency activities. The principles of quality governance presented in this handbook, while designed primarily for nonprofit 501(c)3 organizations, are applicable to the variety of entities eligible to apply for and receive a TA Grant from Rural Development.

SHARES has a New User Guide
USDA Rural Development staff and T&MA Contractors have been working on making changes to SHARES. Click on the link for The SHARES User Guide. If you notice some things have changed, look different or have questions regarding SHARES, please contact Jason Stillwell at jstillwell@ldca.org or call (580) 326-5165 for SHARES technical assistance.
Retired Senior Volunteer Program

RSVP staff and volunteers have been busy!

The program applied for and received funding through the Aging and Disability Resource Consortium (ADRC) COVID-19 Project, part of the OHS Community Living, Aging, & Protective Services and Sooner SUCCESS. This funding was specifically for PPE which was distributed to RSVP stations as well as items were purchased to be provided to the clients served in the four food banks in our service area. Pictured below is program director, Karla Luginbill organizing the products for distribution as well as many of our stations receiving their supplies in person or by door drop. Additionally, items were given to RSVP stations and volunteers in honor of the 20th anniversary of 9/11 through PPE supplies to promote returning to regular service as volunteers feel ready to do so.
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: AJ. Henslee, Program Assistant ahenslee@littledixie.org or Doris Long, Program Director dlong@littledixie.org or call us at 580-298-2921.
Sandra Thompson, long time VOCA monitor for Little Dixie, made her last monitoring visit before retirement. There were zero compliance issues and the staff celebrated and appreciated Sandra with a lunch and a retirement cake.

Officer Lori Bray, Pushmataha County Sheriff’s Office accepts a purple shirt from Dee Dee Atwood on September 23rd for October’s Domestic Violence Awareness.

Officer Ron Miller accepts Safe Place Healing Hearts Program donation of 3 body cams to Choctaw Sheriff’s Office from Tonya Finley Victims Advocacy Specialist. These body cams will help in domestic violence and sexual assault investigations.

Officer Alicia Manning, McCurtain County Sheriff’s Office accepts a shirt from Jodie Allen on September 23rd for October’s Domestic Violence Awareness.

Sandra Thompson, long time VOCA monitor for Little Dixie, made her last monitoring visit before retirement. There were zero compliance issues and the staff celebrated and appreciated Sandra with a lunch and a retirement cake.

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"This quarter brought exciting events for YouthBuild.

In July, a group of participants were taken to the Hochatown Maze where they were able to use their teamwork and critical thinking skills to solve the puzzle of a life-sized maze. Staff members Jami Reich (Program Director) and Stacy Dennis (Construction Instructor) took a group of 5 individuals.

In August, we had our first ever graduation ceremony with great success to celebrate program participants who have completed their required components thus far. This was an important event, as these participants would have not otherwise had the opportunity to celebrate their accomplishments in such a manner. It was heartwarming to see how proud their families and friends were as we celebrated.

In September, a group of 6 participants were taken to Paris Junior College for a comprehensive tour. After seeing program offerings, they were very excited about the possibilities of attending after their completion of the YouthBuild program. Our participants continue to take part in community service activities such as painting tables, weed eating park trails and building various items for our local senior living homes, just to name a few."