



Community Action Solutions

January - February 2005

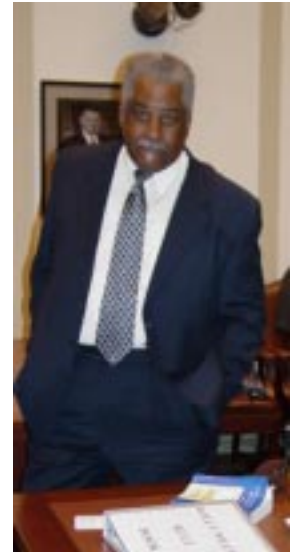
OKACAA hosts orientation for new legislators in House chamber



Brent Morey, executive director, Community Action Development Corporation (right), meets with Rep. Ryan McMullen in the House chamber.



Rep. Mike Shelton (right) chats with Jim Sconzo, executive director, Community Action Agency of Oklahoma City and Oklahoma/Canadian Counties.



Odell Gunter, executive director, Great Plains Improvement Foundation, attended the orientation session.



Cookson Hills Community Action Foundation staffers met with newly elected legislators from their service area. Pictured, from left, are Cleon Harrell, board chair; Bea Dougherty, Head Start director; Rep. Mike Brown; Helen James, executive director; and Rep. John Auffet.



Lawmakers and community action staff view a presentation on the different programs offered throughout the state.

COCOA Prescription Assistance Program aids low-income families

Hundreds of low-income and uninsured people have obtained free medications from manufacturers' assistance programs during the past year through Central Oklahoma Community Action Agency's (COCOA) Prescription Assistance Program.

Julie Lovegrove oversees the program from COCAA's Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) office in Norman.

Launched as a pilot program in mid-February of 2004, Lovegrove said 945 clients had been assisted by the end of January. Over 6,480 twelve-month prescriptions valued at \$6 million were processed.

"We get medications free or at greatly reduced costs," she said. Income for 42 percent of the clients falls below the federal poverty line.

Clients must complete an application that lists all of their prescriptions.

"We get the information from the doctor," Lovegrove said. "We fill out the forms for them."

RSVP volunteers transfer the information on the applications to a database. Lovegrove reviews the information before the software transfers it to the forms required by the various pharmaceutical manufacturers on a web site.

"I enjoy helping people," said Jack Vaughan, one of a dozen volunteers in the program. "There are lots of people in Oklahoma who need help," added Norma Taylor, a retired educator, who volunteers to complete the applications.

The clients must reapply at least annually to continue in the program. Medications are shipped directly to the client.

The doctors are happy because patients take their medications regularly since they no longer have to budget for them from their meager resources.

Lovegrove praised the Norman medical community for its support. The Norman Regional Hospital Foundation contributes \$1,500 quarterly to the program to make emergency purchases of prescriptions. Local pharmacies allow the program to carry a tab on medicines needed until clients receive their first delivery.

The pilot program grew out of legislation championed by then Sen. Brad Henry in 2002 that established the



Julie Lovegrove (center) along with RSVP volunteers Jack Vaughan and Norma Taylor work on the Prescription Assistance Program.

Oklahoma Pharmacy Connection Council.

Lovegrove worked in an indigent health clinic in Norman for seven years where part of her responsibilities were to access prescription programs. In 2004, she volunteered to help get the pilot program started and after six months joined the COCAA staff.

To help spread the word through the medical community, a conference

entitled "Unlocking the Medicine Cabinet," is planned for Apr. 15 at Norman Regional Hospital. Targeting non-profit clinics, physicians, community action agencies and other groups, the conference will feature sessions on accessing free and discount medications plus the new Medicare Part D prescription medical benefit that begins in 2006.

State legislators offer bills to expand prescription assistance program

Sen. Susan Paddack has introduced a bill (Committee Substitute for Senate Bill 690) that directs the Department of Human Services to encourage public and private nonprofit agencies to provide services that improve information about and access to prescription drug assistance programs available through pharmaceutical manufacturers and the federal government. The bill directs the Department of Commerce to make funds available to Community Action Agencies that have, or develop in the future, programs that provide prescription assistance.

Rep. Kris Steele has proposed legislation (Committee Substitute for House Bill 1853) that authorizes Community Action Agencies, Department of Human Services, and county health departments to establish a statewide program to assist medically indigent residents of Oklahoma with receiving prescriptions from drug manufacturers through assistance programs beginning Nov. 1, 2005.

The proposed legislation calls for the Department of Commerce to provide technical assistance to Community Action Agencies that wish to participate in the program.

Southwest Oklahoma Community Action leads tobacco use reduction coalition

Southwest Oklahoma Community Action Group is the lead agency for the Jackson County Community Health Action Team coalition that has been awarded a planning grant from the Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust.

The \$75,000 grant is to develop a comprehensive program to reduce use of tobacco in Jackson County in southwestern Oklahoma. The strategic plan will be the basis for additional funding in subsequent years.

Maureen Henderson, community programs director, said priority areas to be addressed in the strategic plan are eliminating exposure to secondhand smoke in the workplace; promoting tobacco cessation services; reducing tobacco industry influence; and

developing anti-tobacco initiatives that focus on youth.

Other members of the action team include health care providers, hospitals, the local health department, substance abuse prevention organizations, elected officials, businesses, schools, faith-based organizations, youth organizations, minority serving organizations, the city of Altus and Altus Air Force Base.

The Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust awarded nearly \$1.5 million in grants to 20 local coalitions to reduce tobacco use. The grants were funded entirely with investment earnings from the tobacco settlement endowment. Total funding for the five-year initiative is expected to top \$14 million.



Maureen Henderson

Big Five is a partner in Business Services Team

Big Five Community Services is a partner in a venture that recently received a grant from the Oklahoma Department of Commerce to develop a Business Services Team to aid businesses in Atoka, Bryan, Carter, Coal, Garvin, Johnston, Love, Murray and Pontotoc counties.

The Southern Business Services Team is comprised of local education, employment and economic development professionals who work together to provide comprehensive and streamlined solutions to businesses.

Other partners in this venture include the Ardmore Development Authority, Department of Commerce, Rural Enterprises, Inc., Pontotoc Technology Center, Solo Cup Company, Holcim, Inc., Hurley Health Center, Ada Jobs Foundation, East Central University, Southeastern OK Economic Development Network, Adult Basic Education, Call-A-Ride Public Transit, Chickasaw Nation Office of Employment Opportunities, Tri-County Indian Nations, Workforce Oklahoma

and local business representatives.

The Southern Business Services Team strives to assist new and existing businesses with workforce and economic development activities including:

- Recruiting, testing and screening of applicants
- Career and employment fairs
- State tax incentives and credits
- Financial assistance
- On-site business workshops/ presentations
- Customized basic and occupational skills training
- Incumbent worker training
- Human resource services, including assistance with EEO and ADA requirements
- Entrepreneurial services and business start up incubators
- Manufacturing services
- Veteran's services
- Services for minorities and persons with disabilities

Judy Cox, business & industry director at the Pontotoc Technology

Center and chair of the team, has recently designed and implemented a pilot program project designed to aid businesses and workers in the Ada area.

The "Job Readiness Certificate Program" prepares workers with the skills needed to obtain and maintain employment.

The Solo Cup Company of Ada, Chickasaw Nation and other local employers are currently referring job applicants and incumbent workers to this program.

Upcoming Meetings

March 8-11

National Community Action Foundation Conference, Washington, DC

March 28-30

OKCAA Legislative Conference Biltmore Hotel, Oklahoma City

Randall Erwin takes over as executive director at Little Dixie Community Action Agency



Former Little Dixie Executive Director Bob Yandell, Little Dixie Board President Pat Baggs, and new Executive Director Randall Erwin were all smiles following the board meeting on Jan. 18 in which the transition of authority took place.

“The ball is in your court,” Bob Yandell told Randall Erwin as he symbolically tossed Erwin a ball during the Jan. 18 Little Dixie board of directors meeting. Little Dixie Community Action Agency officially underwent a change in command as Yandell stepped down after working for Little Dixie for 36 years and serving as executive director for the past 12 years, and former state legislator Randall Erwin took over as the new executive director for Little Dixie.

Erwin worked as a teacher for three years, a school administrator for 13 years, and for the State Department of Education for four years. For the past 12 years, Erwin has served as the state representative for District 19. As state representative, Erwin was extremely well liked by his constituents and highly respected by his peers. Because of term limits, Erwin was not able to continue to serve southeast Oklahoma in that capacity. But he looks forward to serving the area in his new capacity as executive director of Little Dixie.

“I won’t be making any drastic changes,” said Erwin. “I want to continue to build upon all of the good things happening here and hopefully make them even better.”

Each of the Little Dixie board members expressed their appreciation to Yandell for a job well done. The common themes that ran through the board members’ comments were that Yandell has always been a stickler for doing things right, he has always had a desire to help people, and that he has had a tremendous, lasting impact on the tri-county area.

Despite all of the praise, Yandell stressed to Erwin that it was the active board of directors and the dedicated employees of Little Dixie who are responsible for all of the progress that has been made and he was just fortunate enough to be able to get the credit for it.

Erwin agreed that running an agency so large could not be a one-man show by any means. “I look forward to working with the board of directors and the staff to continue to promote positive growth in southeast Oklahoma,” said Erwin.



“The ball is in your court,” Bob Yandell (far left) told Randall Erwin (reaching to catch the ball at right) as Yandell stepped down as executive director of Little Dixie and Erwin took over.

How to Reach OKACAA Staff

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SBC Foundation awards \$23,580 grant to Little Dixie Community Action Agency for Head Start Technology Initiative

The SBC Foundation, the philanthropic arm of SBC Communications, has awarded a \$23,580 SBC Excelerator grant to Little Dixie Community Action Agency to enhance the technology needs of the Head Start program.

The grant will be used to buy eight new computer stations and child tracking software and to subscribe to high-speed internet services. These additions will allow Head Start employees to better communicate with one another and to access on-line resources such as the National Head Start Bureau. Little Dixie will use the tracking software to chart the educational

progress of its students, rather than maintaining paper records.

“This grant from SBC Foundation provides our Head Start staff a number of opportunities for increased efficiencies, better communications and access to new information,” said Bob Yandell, executive director. “The software, computers and internet access will not only save us time, but also make it easier and faster to access on-line information about new developments in Head Start.”

The Little Dixie Head Start program serves nearly 500 students, ages 3 and 4, in 27 classrooms across Choctaw, McCurtain and Pushmataha counties in

southeastern Oklahoma.

Chip Davidson, external affairs manager for SBC Oklahoma, said “the Little Dixie Head Start program is making a difference in our communities and in the lives of Oklahomans.”

SBC Excelerator is a major philanthropic initiative that connects the nation’s neediest residents -- including at-risk youth and underserved urban families -- to important community resources. The program allows nonprofits to use technology to expand the reach of services and heighten the impact those services have on people in the community.

Member Agencies of the Oklahoma Association of Community Action Agencies

Big Five Community Services
Durant (580) 924-5331
Serving: Bryan, Carter, Coal, Love and Pontotoc Counties

Central Oklahoma Community Action Agency
Shawnee (405) 275-6060
Serving: Cleveland, Lincoln, Logan, Payne, Pottawatomie and Seminole Counties

Community Action Agency of Oklahoma City and Oklahoma/Canadian Counties
Oklahoma City (405) 232-0199
Serving: Oklahoma and Canadian Counties

Community Action Development Corporation
Frederick (580) 335-5588
Serving: Beckham, Cotton, Jefferson, Kiowa, Roger Mills, Tillman and Washita Counties

Community Action Resource & Development, Inc.
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Serving: Mayes, Rogers, Nowata, Wagoner and Washington Counties

Community Development Support Association
Enid (580) 242-6131
Serving: Garfield and Grant Counties

Cookson Hills Community Action Foundation
Tahlequah (918) 456-0571
Serving: Adair, Cherokee and Sequoyah Counties

Deep Fork Community Action Foundation
Okmulgee (918) 756-2826
Serving: McIntosh, Hughes, Okfuskee and Okmulgee Counties

Delta Community Action Foundation
Purcell (405) 527-6537
Serving: Garvin, McClain and Stephens Counties

Great Plains Improvement Foundation
Lawton (580) 353-2364
Serving: Comanche County

INCA Community Services
Tishomingo (580) 371-2352
Serving: Atoka, Johnston, Marshall and Murray Counties

KI BOIS Community Action Foundation
Stigler (918) 967-3325
Serving: Haskell, Latimer, Leflore and Pittsburg Counties

Little Dixie Community Action Agency
Hugo (580) 326-3351
Serving: Choctaw, McCurtain and Pushmataha Counties

Northeast Oklahoma Community Action Agency
Jay (918) 253-4683
Serving: Craig, Delaware and Ottawa Counties

Southwest Oklahoma Community Action Group
Altus (580) 482-5040
Serving: Greer, Harmon and Jackson Counties

Opportunities, Inc.
Watonga (580) 623-7283
Serving: Alfalfa, Beaver, Blaine, Cimarron, Custer, Dewey, Ellis, Harper, Kingfisher, Major, Texas, Woods and Woodward Counties

UnitedCommunity Action Program
Pawnee (918) 762-3041
Serving: Creek, Kay, Noble, Osage and Pawnee Counties

Washita Valley Community Action Council
Chickasha (405) 224-5831
Serving: Grady and Caddo Counties

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