



# Community Action Solutions

January - February 2004



*Derrick L. Span*

## National Community Action Partnership president to speak at March conference

Derrick Span, national president of the Community Action Partnership, will speak at the Oklahoma Association of Community Action Agencies' Legislative Conference scheduled for Mar. 29-31.

The conference will feature exhibits on the 4th floor rotunda in the Capitol Building in Oklahoma City highlighting Community Action programs.

A luncheon is also planned for

legislators and staff. In addition, there will be training tracks for Community Action staffers.

Before joining the Community Action Partnership in June, 2002, Span served as executive director of the Center for Community Building in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

Span provides leadership and guidance for the Partnership's network of 1,000 Community Action Agencies.

## Carbon monoxide detector installed by Central Oklahoma Community Action Agency weatherization crew is a life saver

Community Action weatherization crews know they are helping clients save money on their utility bills. Now, a carbon monoxide detector installed in a 74-year-old Cushing woman's home by a Central Oklahoma Community Action weatherization crew saved her life.

The crew had just completed caulking, replacing some window glass and doors to help make Opal Talent's home more liveable and easier to heat. They also installed a carbon monoxide detector.

"I've lived 74 years without one and (the) day after they installed it -- it started going off and telling me to get out of the house," Talent wrote in a letter to the agency.

An exhaust pipe in the attic had come apart and was forcing fumes back into the house.

"I would not have woke up this

morning had it not been for the detector. Thank you, God sent you to me," she wrote.

Gov. Brad Henry said the incident illustrates how Oklahoma's community action agencies, along with many



*COCAA weatherization crew member Junior Cummins points out the carbon monoxide detector to Opal Talent.*

other private nonprofit groups, are improving lives and producing everyday miracles.

"Community action agencies help through economic development initiatives, emergency services, housing assistance, and adult and child education programs. Oklahoma's numerous nonprofit groups provide every conceivable service to our state's most vulnerable -- from homeless shelters to literacy programs, utility and rental assistance to coats and clothing," Gov. Henry noted in his *Our Oklahoma* report.

The Weatherization Assistance Program's mission is to reduce energy costs for low-income families, particularly for the elderly, people with disabilities, and children, by improving energy efficiency of their homes while ensuring their health and safety.

## OKACAA Winter Conference features training and fun



*Kathryn Taylor, secretary of the Oklahoma Department of Commerce, was the featured speaker during the general session.*



*Nadine Tinker, Nelda Cobb and LaQuita Thornley, all from INCA Community Services, review handout material from the ROMA roundtable.*



*John Jones, housing director, KI BOIS Community Action Foundation (left) and Odell Gunter, executive director, Great Plains Improvement Foundation, chat between sessions at the conference.*



*Jeff Schuman, executive director of Deep Fork Community Action, handed out cash to attendees who could answer a question.*



More than 200 people registered for the OKACAA Winter Conference. The conference featured training sessions for housing, human resources, social services and Head Start staff members. There was also a full-day management training session on creative problem solving skills.

# Community Action Agencies to aid taxpayers with filings

Six Community Action Agencies are participating in a pilot program to help low-income families take advantage of the Earned Income Tax Credit and the Child Tax Credit when filing their tax returns.

Big Five Community Services, Central Oklahoma Community Action Agency, Cookson Hills Community Action Foundation, KI BOIS Community Action Foundation, Northeast Oklahoma Community Action Agency and Southwest Oklahoma Community Action Group received funds to purchase laptop computers and printers.

The computers with Internal Revenue Service-provided software will be taken to Head Start centers to

complete tax returns. The returns will then be filed electronically. The tax preparation and filing services will be provided without charge.

Jean Cooper, executive director, Northeast Oklahoma Community Action Agency, said her agency has been doing tax returns for two years and last year helped Head Start families get back an average of over \$3,000 each.

Cooper credited Leon McCowan, regional administrator, and Carlton Reid, program manager, Region VI, Administration for Children and Families, with securing Head Start Collaboration dollars to fund the program. Additional Community Services Block Grant funds were

provided by the Oklahoma Department of Commerce with assistance from Vaughn Clark, deputy director of Community Development.



*Vaughn Clark, deputy director for Community Development at the Oklahoma Department of Commerce, signs a memorandum of understanding for the tax preparation pilot program, as Bill Shields, executive director, Central Oklahoma Community Action Agency (l), and Michael Jones, executive director, Oklahoma Association of Community Action Agencies, look on.*

## What is the Earned Income Credit?

The EIC is a special tax benefit for working people who earn low or moderate incomes.

Workers who qualify for the EIC and file a federal tax return can get back some or all of the federal

income tax that was taken out of their pay during the year.

Even workers whose earnings are too small to owe income tax can get the EIC.



*Diana Behm, special projects director, Northeast Oklahoma Community Action Agency, provides training on income tax return preparation at the OKACAA Winter Conference.*



*Representing groups involved in the tax preparation pilot program are, from left, Michael Jones, executive director, Oklahoma Association of Community Action Agencies; Karen O'Neill, territory manager, Internal Revenue Service; Vaughn Clark, deputy director for Community Development, Oklahoma Department of Commerce; Jean Cooper, executive director, Northeast Oklahoma Community Action Agency; and Neil Montgomery, executive director, Southwest Oklahoma Community Action Group.*

## Little Dixie recognizes housing partners

Fannie Mae presented Little Dixie Community Action with a check for \$25,000 during a housing celebration at the Neighborworks Homeownership Center in Hugo.

During the event, Little Dixie presented plaques of appreciation to its partners who assist in making homeownership a reality for low-income citizens in southeastern Oklahoma.

The partners recognized included Fannie Mae, BancFirst, Neighborhood Reinvestment, Oklahoma Housing Finance Agency, Rural Local Initiative Support Corporation, Housing Assistance Council, USDA Rural Development, Oklahoma Department of Commerce and the Oklahoma Homebuyer Education Association.

Several other state officials, as well as local elected officials, were present at the event.

State Rep. Randall Erwin recognized the fact that since 1974 over 1,300 families have received new homes through Little Dixie's self-help housing program. Erwin referred to Little Dixie as the "biggest catalyst for economic development in southeast Oklahoma."

In 2003, Little Dixie's housing department assisted 75 individuals and families with loans totaling more than \$4.2 million.

"Providing affordable housing for our low-income citizens is one of our primary ways of helping our citizens become self-sufficient," said Little Dixie Executive Director Bob Yandell. "Little Dixie's housing production reached an all-time high in 2003. With the continued support of our partners, we will see even more progress to come."

Especially high praise was given to Little Dixie's primary national partner, Fannie Mae. According to Little Dixie Associate Director Becky Byrd, Fannie Mae "has been there every time we have needed them" to sponsor events such as Group Work Camp, the National Self Help Housing

Conference, to host meetings, or provide training.

"We were able to give a \$25,000 grant to Little Dixie, which is one of only 10 organizations nationwide to receive this type of Fannie Mae grant," said Rex Smitherman, director of Fannie Mae's Oklahoma

Partnership Office.

Little Dixie operates the Little Dixie Neighborworks Homeownership Center which is a one-stop center for low-income families seeking help in becoming homeowners.



Rex Smitherman, director of Fannie Mae's Oklahoma Partnership Office, presents a \$25,000 check to Bob Yandell, executive director, and Pat Baggs, chairperson, Little Dixie Board of Directors, as Charles Uhles, Little Dixie Board member (second from left) and State Rep. Randall Erwin look on.

### Change a Light, Change the World

Changing the world starts with simple actions. When you replace a light bulb or fixture in your home with one that has earned the ENERGY STAR®, you contribute to a cleaner environment while saving yourself energy, money and time buying and changing lights in your home.

If you changed out the 5 fixtures you use most at home (or the light bulbs in them) to ENERGY STAR qualified lighting, you would save more than \$60 every year in energy costs. If every American household did

this, together we'd keep more than one trillion pounds of greenhouse gases out of our air. That's a \$6 billion energy savings for Americans and an energy savings equivalent to the annual output of more than 21 power plants, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.

ENERGY STAR qualified lighting uses two thirds less energy and lasts 6 to 10 times longer than traditional lighting. When you save energy, you not only save money on your utility bills, but you also help to protect our environment.

# OKACAA promotes Energy Star® at home & garden show

Hundreds of Oklahomans learned about ways to save energy, money and the environment at the Oklahoma City Home and Garden Show in mid-January.

The Oklahoma Association of Community Action Agencies (OKACAA) sponsored an exhibit booth as part of a Department of Energy-funded initiative to promote the federal Energy Star program.

The Energy Star program was created by the U.S. Department of Energy and Environmental Protection Agency. The Energy Star label helps consumers identify products that are very energy efficient.

Staffing the exhibit booth during the three-day event were Michael E. Jones, executive director; Patty Laub, director of operations; Bob Brandenburg, communications director; and Tricia Auberle, homebuyer education coordinator. Also lending a hand were Byron and Wanda DeBruler of DeBruler, Inc.

The exhibit booth featured a prize wheel where visitors could spin for a chance to win an energy-efficient compact fluorescent lightbulb (CFL). Nearly 500 bulbs were given away during the event.

A display contrasted the energy usage, heat output and longevity of a CFL and an incandescent lightbulb.

Other features of the booth included brochures on topics ranging from appliances to home sealing to consumer electronics. Information on the Oklahoma Energy Assistance Fund was also distributed at the show.

Brightly colored bags containing more information on the Energy Star program were distributed to the visitors that stopped by the booth.

The Oklahoma Department of Commerce administers the grant.

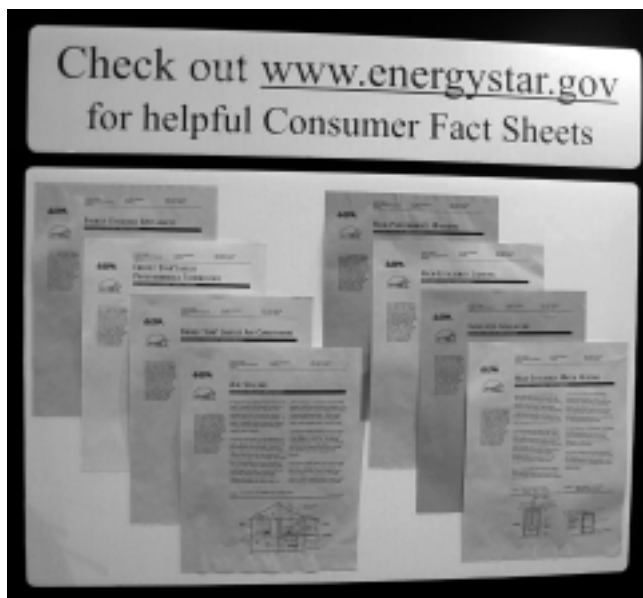
OKACAA also had a booth at the Tulsa House Beautiful Show in October.



*OKACAA Communications Director Bob Brandenburg and Homebuyer Education Coordinator Tricia Auberle explain the benefits of switching to Energy Star labeled products while staffing an exhibit booth at the Oklahoma City Home and Garden Show in mid-January.*



*Visitors to the Energy Star booth at the Oklahoma City Home & Garden Show learned about the benefits of using compact fluorescent lightbulbs. Meters illustrated the difference in the amount of electricity used while thermometers showed the difference in the heat generated by the compact fluorescent and the incandescent bulbs.*



## INCA opens facility in Tishomingo

INCA Community Services has built a 3,000 square foot building near its headquarters office in Tishomingo.

Dedicated to retiring INCA Executive Director Bill Buck, the building will be used primarily for Head Start-related meetings.

The multipurpose building will also be available for city council

meetings and other community groups on a rental basis.

Buck said the building features one large meeting room that can be divided into three rooms with dividers. It also has a small kitchen.

The conference room in the old building is being converted into office space to relieve overcrowding.



## Community Action Partnership to sponsor 'No Room for Poverty' national rally Sept. 4

The national Community Action Partnership, along with its 1,000-member network of Community Action Agencies, is holding the "No Room for Poverty" National Rally September 4, 2004 on the Ellipse in Washington, DC. This bipartisan effort will seek to unify our nation around the need to end poverty and to call for a White House Conference on American Poverty.

The Community Action Partnership is calling for a White House Conference on American Poverty because only the White House has the influence to bring together the caliber of experienced theorists, practitioners, and policymakers needed to address this issue.

"A White House Conference on American Poverty is an excellent opportunity for our leaders to develop strategies and solutions for ending poverty," said Derrick Span, national president of the Community Action Partnership. "We must be able to show the positive effects of social programs and preserve their funding."

Beyond the White House Conference on American Poverty, the Community Action Partnership will also call for a renewed American interest and commitment in the elimination of poverty and the cultivation of a new generation of leaders committed to community service and volunteerism. "We want the idea of ending poverty to resonate with Americans long after the White House Conference on American Poverty is convened," said Span.

The "No Room for Poverty" National Rally is being held as a part of the Community Action Partnership's 2004 Annual Convention and will mark the 40th anniversary of Community Action.

## Community Action staffers on Partners Conference program

Community Action Agency staffers will be making presentations at the Partners Conference for Oklahoma Families scheduled for Feb. 19-20 in Oklahoma City.

“Community Action Agencies and the Services They Provide” will be the focus of one session.

Speakers include Peggy Ford, Community Action Resource & Development; Tricia Auberle, Oklahoma Association of Community Action Agencies; John Jones, KI BOIS Community Action Foundation; and Ronda Brothers, United

Community Action Program.

“Affordable Housing Issues in Oklahoma” is the topic for a second presentation.

Speakers will include Jean Cooper,

Northeast Oklahoma Community Action Agency; Linda Tarpley, Southwest Oklahoma Community Action Group; and Darrell Beavers, Oklahoma Housing Finance Agency.

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## New law can increase Head Start children’s access to dental services

*By Kay C. Floyd*

*Head Start*

*State Collaboration Office Director*

Two bills became law at the end of the 2003 Oklahoma Legislative Session. HB 1443 and HB 1445 provide for improved access to oral health care for Oklahomans and create the opportunity for dental hygienists and dental assistants to play a new role in improving oral health in our state.

Oral health affects overall health, and tooth decay is the most common chronic childhood disease in America and accounts for 1.5 million days of missed school every year. Belinda Rogers, chair of the Oklahoma Oral Health Coalition has said that for children in low and moderate-income families, the number of school days missed because of dental problems is disproportionately higher than among other children.

The two new laws together allow for both dental hygienists and dental assistants to work outside the dental office in treatment facilities under the supervision of a dentist. The definition of treatment facilities includes “public or private schools, patient of record’s private residence, accredited dental college, accredited dental hygiene program, or such other places as are authorized by the rules of the Board of Dentistry.” This definition would include a Head Start center under the category of “public or private schools.”

The laws allow dental hygienists to

go to treatment facilities under the general supervision of a dentist, and it allows dental assistants under direct supervision to accompany a dentist to a treatment facility. The laws further provide an exception to general supervision of dental hygienists that allows a dentist to provide written authorization for the hygienist to perform procedures to a person on an initial visit in a treatment facility without the dentist having first examined the patient. The dental hygienist could not perform a second set of procedures without the authorizing dentist examining and accepting the patient for dental care.

This is good news for Head Start programs. The Oklahoma Health Care Authority has stated that an initial dental exam provided by a dental hygienist who has been authorized as described above does meet the EPSDT requirement for the child’s first dental exam. This should assist programs in meeting the 45-day deadline for those examinations. The child will still need to be referred to a dentist for follow-up; the dental hygienist may not perform any more work on that child until authorized by the dentist who agrees to accept the child for care.

Head Start programs are encouraged to work with local dentists to explore ways to develop working relationships with the dentists, dental hygienists/and or dental assistants within the guidelines of these new laws.

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*This was financed with funds from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. For copies of articles in an alternate format, call 405-524-4124.*

## 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**  
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### **Community Action Development Corporation**

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### **Community Development Support Association**

Enid (580) 242-6131  
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Counties

### **Cookson Hills Community Action Foundation**

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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  
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Stephens Counties

### **Great Plains Improvement Foundation**

Lawton (580) 353-2364  
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### **INCA Community Services**

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

### **KI BOIS Community Action Foundation**

Stigler (918) 967-3325  
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### **Little Dixie Community Action Agency**

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### **Muskogee County Community Action Foundation**

Muskogee (918) 683-7637  
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### **Northeast Oklahoma Community Action Agency**

Jay (918) 253-4683  
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Watonga (580) 623-7283  
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Altus (580) 482-5040  
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