



# Community Action Solutions

January-February 2007

## Tax Preparation Locations on OKACAA Website

Community Action free tax return preparation sites in 60 communities are listed on the Oklahoma Association of Community Action Agencies' web site at [www.okacaa.org](http://www.okacaa.org).

The web site lists days, times and locations where returns will be prepared.

Households with incomes up to \$39,000 are eligible for this free service. The tax preparation program is part of the Oklahoma Asset Development Project that is

being coordinated by the association.

Seventeen participating member agencies have joined forces with the Internal Revenue Service and the Oklahoma Department of Commerce



to help eligible families file their returns, increase their financial literacy and begin developing assets.

The tax return preparation sites are staffed by trained agency members and volunteers from colleges and community service organizations.

Last year the agencies prepared more than 9,600 returns that resulted in over \$11 million in refunds for Oklahoma residents.

## Legislative Conference Offers Training and Networking Opportunities

OKACAA's 2007 Legislative Conference will provide training plus an opportunity for local agency staffers to meet with their state legislators.

Scheduled for March 26-28, the conference will be held at the Marriott Hotel in Oklahoma City. A dinner with legislators is planned for March 27 at the History Center.

For registration information, check the OKACAA web site at [www.okacaa.org](http://www.okacaa.org) or call 405-949-1495.

The conference offers management training along with sessions for Head Start, housing and other staff members.

J. Michael Hall from Strong Fathers-Strong Families will speak on "Finding the Strength in Struggling Families" during an opening general session.

A session on "Sexual Harassment & Discrimination in the Workplace" will be presented by Julia Teska from Quiet Cove Enterprises.

"Combatting Negativity: Mine & Yours" will be discussed by JaeLane Dailey from the Developmental Disabilities Services Division of the Oklahoma Department of Human Services.

"Intermediate EXCEL Training" will be provided by Oklahoma Technical Institute staff.

Oklahoma Housing Finance Agency's Judi Wright will discuss "Deter-

mining Rent Structure" for agency housing staff members.

Garcia Tarver from the Oklahoma Department of Commerce (ODOC) will provide a "Weatherization Overview: Base Load Procedures" and a "Weatherization Update."

Three training tracks are planned for Head Start staffers.

"New Disability Manager Training" will be provided by Evan Henderson from Booz Alexander Hamilton (BAH), training consultants for Region VI.

A "Mental Health Manager Cluster Meeting & Mental Health Round Table" will be facilitated by Myrna Calvert who is also from BAH.

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## Legislative Conference

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Barbara Oberg from BAH will lead a session for Early Head Start staff entitled “A Community of Learners.” She will also conduct a second session on “Supporting Families in Time of Stress.”

Hall will conduct a session entitled “Getting Dads Through the Door - Realistic and Relevant Father Involvement.”

A session on “Using Internal Controls in Head Start as Related to PRISM 2007” will be presented by Chris Kime from BAH.

Joe Okapal with BAH will review a “Facility & Safety Checklist.”

ODOC’s Rhonda Harding-Hill will conduct a session for agencies participating in the “RX for Oklahoma” program and Rebekah Zahn will provide “Basic CAPilot Training” and then facilitate a roundtable.

Conference registrant will also have an opportunity to go to the Capitol to meet with their local legislators.

The Legislative Conference is one of four conferences sponsored by OKA-CAA annually.

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## Head Start Fact Sheet Provides Details About State Program

Over 19,650 children are enrolled in Early Head Start and Head Start programs in Oklahoma, according to a recently released fact sheet.

The fact sheet data on Region VI and American Indian grantees was pulled from Program Information Reports submitted by the agencies to the Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services.

The fact sheet can be viewed on the Oklahoma Association of Community Action Agencies’ web site at [www.okacaa.org](http://www.okacaa.org).

Click on the fact sheet link on the home page.

Four-year-olds made up nearly 50 percent of the actual enrollment with three-year-olds at over 41 percent.

For Fiscal Year 2006, the 21 Region VI grantees received over \$80 million in federal funds to operate the Head Start and Early Head Start programs plus nearly \$3 million in state funds.

The 15 American Indian grantees received over \$20 million in federal funds to operate their Head Start and Early Head Start programs.

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Nationwide, total actual enrollment was 1,091,452. Total actual enrollment of children in Oklahoma was 19,651.

Eighty-five percent of the children enrolled in Oklahoma completed all of their medical screenings. Of those, over 2,900 were diagnosed as needing treatment and 90 percent of those received or were receiving needed medical treatment.

# January Ice Storm Creates Challenges and Opportunities

A massive ice storm that roared through Oklahoma in January paralyzed parts of the state for days leaving Community Action Agencies scrambling to service their clients.

With help from Feed the Children, Tahlequah headquartered **Cookson Hills Community Action Foundation** fed about 350 people, according to Cleon Harrell, executive director.

Many were area farm workers, who were off work, and senior citizens.

The truckload of food was boxed up and a 2 to 3 day supply was given to the families.

In addition, food was provided to the county commissioners in McIntosh, Muskogee and Wagoner Counties to distribute through their emergency management programs.

Harrell said it also provided an opportunity to familiarize families with other programs including Head Start and the tax return preparation assistance.

In Okmulgee, **Deep Fork Community Action Foundation** Executive Director Jeff Schuman had purchased military MREs (meals ready to eat) to distribute in his four county offices.

Forty cases went to an emergency center in Eufaula which was hard hit by the storm. Other cases went to 12 senior centers.

Schuman reported a senior citizen complex in Wagoner County that houses a nutrition site had to be evacuated when a huge water pipe burst.

When residents were able to return to their apartments, they had lost their refrigerated food. Wal-Mart donated funds to help replace the food and Deep Fork provided weekend transportation on its buses to get people back and forth for shopping.

When the storm crippled mobility in the primarily rural area served by **KI BOIS Community Action Founda-**



**tion**, based in Stigler, the agency shifted from service delivery into a survival mode, according to Larry Hall, director of operations.

KATS, the agency's transit system, managed to get dialysis patients to appointments even though the roads were treacherous.

The agency opened its offices with some employees bringing their children to work because schools and child care facilities were closed.

The agency distributed emergency food vouchers to help families that lost their perishable foods when power failed.

Some areas were without power for up to 10 days.

The agency rushed generators and kerosene heaters to group homes it operates for persons with developmental disabilities.

**Northeast Oklahoma Community Action Agency**, headquartered in Jay, was without water, power and phone service for about a week.

Ice caused tree limbs to splinter and crash across roads, homes and power lines throughout the agency's three

county service area stranding people in their homes, according to Mary Ann Overall, services director.

When phone service was restored the agency received many calls looking for funds to remove trees.

The agency contacted families with children enrolled in the Head Start program to assess the impact of the ice storm.

A majority of those responding reported the storm would cause a financial burden on their family. Some reported not having current insurance coverage for damages.

**Community Action Resource & Development's** weatherization program is behind schedule because of the weather conditions.

Based in Claremore, the agency was not affected as much as other eastern Oklahoma agencies.

The Head Start center in Prior lost \$1,450 worth of food when the power went off. Roofs at its facilities in Coweta, Bartlesville and Wagoner started leaking because of heavy snow.