



# Community Action Solutions

July - August 2003

## Many low-income residents benefit from CAA programs

Oklahoma's Community Action Agencies (CAAs) constructed or rehabilitated 655 housing units during the past year -- making them one of the largest providers of affordable housing in the state.

The Oklahoma Association of Community Action Agencies' Annual Report and Directory reveals that the poverty-fighting agencies constructed 125 new single family houses, 416 multifamily units, and rehabilitated another 114 houses. In addition, they weatherized 1,216 houses to reduce energy costs for low-income families.

Claremore-based Community Action Resource & Development (CARD) reported 57 single family housing units had been constructed in its four-county service area. Deep Fork Community Action, headquartered in Okmulgee, built 32 houses. Little Dixie in far southeastern Oklahoma said 22 houses were constructed.

Nearly 1,400 clients attended homebuyer education classes.

Agencies reported they helped 3,632 families pay their utility bills and 1,341 with rent payments.

CARD provided utility payment assistance to 1,049 clients. Central Oklahoma Community Action Agency (COCAA) in Shawnee indicated that it helped 712 clients pay their utility bills.

Nearly 10,800 clients got food from agency food pantries.

Transitional housing or stays in emergency shelters were provided to 1,589 clients. Great Plains Improve-

ment Foundation in Lawton provided temporary housing for 1,039 clients during the year.

Assistance was provided to 548 domestic abuse victims. KI BOIS provided assistance to 479 of those domestic abuse victims.

Assistance in obtaining medical services or prescriptions was provided to 1,526 clients. Muskogee County Community Action Foundation assisted 501 clients with medical needs. COCAA provided help to 452.

The survey of the 19 member agencies found 570,550 meals were

served to senior citizens at 56 nutrition sites located throughout the state. Another 351,275 meals were delivered to the homes of senior citizens.

With 20 congregate meals sites, Deep Fork served 220,000 meals and delivered another 180,000 meals to senior citizens in their homes.

KI BOIS Community Action Foundation, headquartered in Stigler, ran the largest transit system with 105 vehicles piling up 2,875,012 million miles.

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### Community Action Agencies can conserve energy used by computer monitors

Oklahoma's Community Action Agencies can help save energy and money by enabling power management on their computer monitors. To start saving money and the environment, simply download a computer program from the Energy Star website.

Energy Star is a government-backed program that offers information on ways to protect the environment by using energy more efficiently.

This free software automatically puts monitors to rest when not in use - saving a significant amount of energy and money. What's more, monitor power management will not affect the computer or network performance.

You "wake" the machine by pushing the mouse or pressing a key.

With over 55 million office computers in the U.S., the Environmental Protection Agency estimates that over 11 billion kilowatt hours (kWh) could be saved through monitor power management. This amounts to \$935 million per year at 8.5 cents/kWh. It amounts to carbon dioxide reductions equivalent to preventing the emissions from 1.5 million cars or planting 2.5 million acres of trees.

Access the software EZ Wizard at:

[http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=power\\_mgt.pr\\_pm\\_wizard](http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=power_mgt.pr_pm_wizard)



# Housing and Energy Conference set for Aug. 19-21

## Housing Dream Catcher: Making Your Dreams Come True

The 11th annual Oklahoma Housing and Energy Conference is scheduled for Aug. 19-21 at the Biltmore Hotel, I-40 & Meridian, in Oklahoma City.

The theme for the conference is “Housing Dream Catcher: Making Your Dreams Come True.”

A special three-day track on Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation Management begins Monday at 1 p.m. and continues through Wednesday. The Opening

Session is scheduled for Tuesday morning. Training sessions are planned for Tuesday and Wednesday. A closing breakfast is set for Thursday.

The conference is sponsored by the Oklahoma Weatherization and Housing Advisory Council.

For conference registration information, call 405-524-4124. For hotel reservation information, call the Biltmore Hotel at 405-947-7681.

### Housing and Energy Conference Training Sessions Schedule

<b>Monday August 18</b> 1:00 - 4:30 p.m.	Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation Management				
<b>Tuesday August 19</b>		<b>Weatherization</b>	<b>Non-Traditional Issues</b>	<b>Financial</b>	<b>Homebuyer Funding and Counseling</b>
<b>10:30 a.m. - 12:00 noon</b>	Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation Management Continued	NEAT Training	Working with the State Historic Preservation Office: The Section 106 Process	Weatherization Management	Wealth Strippers and Predators
<b>1:00 - 2:30 p.m.</b>	Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation Management Continued	NEAT Training Continued	Mold & Mildew	Weatherization Management Continued	Housing Counselor Online
<b>3:00 - 4:30 p.m.</b>	Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation Management Continued	NEAT Training Continued	Homebuyer Program	Affordable Housing Tax Credits	Beyond Train the Trainer: Credit Counseling
<b>Wednesday August 20</b>					
<b>8:30 - 10:00 a.m.</b>	Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation Management Continued	Weatherization Roundtable	HOME Roundtable	Community Development Block Grant	MetaFund: Facilitating Development & Financing
<b>10:30 a.m. - 12:00 noon</b>	Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation Management Continued	Weatherization Standards Manual	Mercy Housing	HOME	Foreclosure Forbearance
<b>1:00 - 2:30 p.m.</b>	Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation Management Continued	Lead-Safe Work Practices	Low-Income Housing Tax Credits 101 - The Basic Rules & Numbers	Self-Help	Partnerships for Housing Persons with Disabilities
<b>3:00 - 4:30 p.m.</b>	Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation Management Continued	Lead-Safe Work Practices Continued	Non-Profit Sponsor & For-Profit Developer Partnership Issues	Community Services Block Grant	Consumer Protection Documents

# CAA programs benefit many low-income families

*Continued from page 1*

The transit system provided 497,703 passenger trips.

Frederick-based Community Action Development Corporation reported its 77 vehicles provided 212,400 passenger trips with total miles driven reaching 1,728,940.

Statewide, 438 vehicles provided 1,552,85 million passenger trips and were driven 8,804,546 million miles.

The survey found 252 children from birth to age three were enrolled in Early Head Start programs. United Community Action Program in Pawnee had 120 children in the program.

Children enrolled in Head Start totaled 9,794 with 2,000 of those in the Community Action Agency of Oklahoma City and Oklahoma/

Canadian Counties program.

The Foster Grandparent program served 896 youth. Cookson Hills Community Action Foundation in Tahlequah and Delta Community Action Foundation in Purcell served the greatest number of young people.

Participants in the Retired and Senior Volunteers Program were 4,665. COCAA, Little Dixie, KI BOIS, Big Five, INCA Community Services, and Opportunities, Inc. all offer this program.

Three hundred sixty-eight clients received business development advice. Little Dixie alone provided help to 158 people.

Tax return preparation assistance was provided to 985 clients. Oklahoma City helped 413. Big Five

Community Services in Durant providing assistance to 340 and Northeast Oklahoma Community Action Agency in Jay aided another 144.

Oklahoma City provided alcohol and drug abuse counseling services to 381 clients with Community Development Support Association in Enid serving 170, Opportunities helping 138, and United serving 45 clients.

Ninety-one people earned their general education degree with help from Community Action Agencies.

Great Plains has its new website online at:  
[www.gpif-caa.org](http://www.gpif-caa.org)

## Opportunities, Inc. holds open house at new headquarters



*The new office is located on a major highway running through Watonga that provides easy access for clients.*



*A large back lot provides room for expansion.*



*Dividers are used to create convenient work areas.*



*Executive Director Georgia Forthum (second from left) chats with visitors during the open house.*

# Transit drivers test skills in roadeo

Fourteen drivers from the INCA Community Services transit system gathered on a church parking lot in Madill recently to test their skills and knowledge at the first annual JAMM Mini-Roadeo.

JAMM Transit gets its name from the four counties it serves: Johnston, Atoka, Marshall and Murray.

LaQuita Thornley, INCA Transit Director, sees the event as an opportunity for the drivers to compete, improve their skills and have some fun.



*Melinda Kelsey, a driver from Atoka, adjusts the restraints for Kelli Leanne Easley who volunteered to be a wheelchair bound passenger during the JAMM Transit Roadeo in Madill.*

There are four parts to the roadeo and drivers are scored in each category. Drivers first take a written test. They must then conduct a pre-trip inspection of their vehicle. Then they must demonstrate proficiency in loading and securing a passenger in a wheelchair. Finally, they must navigate around a course created with cones designed to replicate maneuvers they must make daily.

The written test covers a wide range of topics. Some questions are technical while others require common sense.

Melinda Kelsey, a driver from Atoka County, commented that one question brought a lot of chuckles from other drivers.

“The most important reason for doing a vehicle inspection is: a) LaQuita will get you if you don’t; b) ODOT or DHS will get you if you don’t; c) JoAnn will get you if you don’t; d) Safety for yourself and other road users.” The answer, of course, is D.

During the pre-trip inspection portion of the competition, drivers must find five problems with the vehicle without having a checklist.

During this competition, the first aid kit, blood borne kit, dip stick, oil cap and seat belt cutter were all missing.

Drivers are graded on 15 items in four categories during the wheelchair loading and securement event. The categories are sensitivity and awareness, loading onto the platform, raising the lift and wheelchair and passenger securement.

The six station driving course proved to be the most challenging part of the roadeo for the drivers. Cones are positioned to force drivers to perform a series of maneuver, with limited tolerance.

“It’s not easy,” commented Lynnetta Johnson who served as an on-board judge.

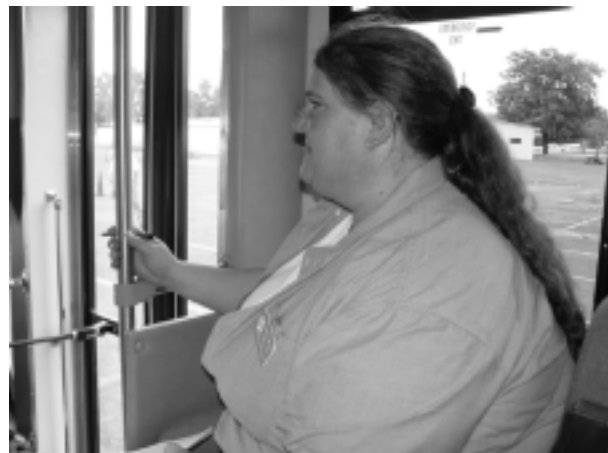
Drivers must first weave between a series of cones. They must then make a right turn between the cones before backing into narrow lanes relying only on their mirrors and driving skills. Points are deducted if the driver must back up to avoid hitting a cone or if a cone is hit.

The drivers next try to pull their van close to a “curb” at the passenger pickup station. Points are deducted if the van is too far away from the cone marking the curb or if the van hits the cone.

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*Madill police officer Danny Westbrook and INCA driver Mary Kenedy measure the distance from the van to the cone at the emergency stop station. Drivers had to accelerate to 20 miles per hour before making the emergency stop.*



*Lynnetta Johnson judged the drivers as they maneuvered around the cones.*

# JAMM Mini-Roadeo

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After a left turn through a corridor of cones, the drivers must accelerate their vans to 20 miles per hour before coming to an emergency stop.

As a group of drivers wait their turn to compete, they talk about their experiences.

Mary Garrison from Murray County said she's been driving for

three years.

"Her ladies love her," chimed in Velda Hill, another Murray County driver. "They love her because she loves them."

Hill, a retired public school teacher, said, "This is a public service and I enjoy it."

Thornley said that JAMM Transit

has grown from just nine vans in 1999 to 21 vans serving a four county area.

"We've really grown a lot," she said.

JAMM Transit provides rides for seniors to nutrition sites, job search transportation for clients receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, non-emergency medical

transportation, rides to jobs plus on-demand services.

Overall winners in this competition were Dianna Pittman and Mary Kenedy who are both from Marshall County.

Finishing first and second in the driving competition were George Hill and Paula Adams who are both drivers in Murray County.

Melinda Kelsey from Atoka County earned the top score in the pre-trip inspection competition with Wendal Boggs from Marshall County taking second place.

Anna Belle Nanney from Atoka County got the top score on the written quiz. Tied for second were Mary Garrison from Murray County, Sabrina Mitchell from Johnston County and Jeannie Griffith from Atoka County.

Velda Hill from Murray County finished first in the wheelchair operation competition with Lynnetta Johnson of Marshall County taking second place.



*Waiting for their turn to drive the course are, from left, Mary Garrison and Velda Hill, both drivers in Murray County, and Jeannie Griffith from Atoka County.*



*County Commissioner and INCA Board Member David Brown cooked lunch for the participants.*



*Dana Trent, housing coordinator in Atoka County, served as a cheerleader for the roadeo*



*Velda Hill from Murray County is all smiles after completing her run on the course.*

# News from Oklahoma's Community Action Agencies

Southwest Oklahoma Community Action Group's Communities of Promise recognized National Youth Service Day in April with projects throughout the month including a free sports clinic, reservoir cleanup, and yard cleanup for the elderly.

According to a report in the agency's newsletter, *SW Action News*, the sports clinic was conducted by high school students. The cleanup

projects utilized youth and adult volunteers.

Following the reservoir cleanup, a celebration was held honoring the youth volunteers who gave of their time throughout the year.

Teresa Williams, RSVP Director, is heading up the effort with help from Promise Fellow Arlene Burgess.

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The year was 1968 when KI BOIS Community Action Foundation joined the war on poverty. Over 30 years have passed and the battle continues, but a new battle has begun among the agency's staff.

*KI BOIS News*, the agency's newsletter, reports employees are organizing a team to participate in the 2003 Relay for Life of Haskell County, an annual fund-raiser for the American Cancer Society.

Funds from pledges raised by Relay for Life participants will allow the American Cancer Society to expand services to patients and their families, to offer more educational programs to reduce people's risk to contracting cancer, and expand cancer research.

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*Community Action Resource & Development's* newsletter reports 130 homes in Nowata, Mayes, Rogers, Washington, Wagoner and Tulsa Counties have been weatherized.

Last year's applicants expressed much gratitude for the important work completed on their homes and appreciated the cheerful attitude of the staff.

Repair or replacement of windows, doors and other damaged areas of the home created spaces that are easier to heat and cool. Adding insulation, whenever possible, allowed for a dramatic improvement in the energy efficiency of the homes weatherized.

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Central Oklahoma Community Action Agency was presented with an award and a \$1,000 check at the

Partners Conference for Oklahoma Families for its efforts in the One Stop program in Cushing.

According to the agency's newsletter, *Notes & Quotes*, the One Stop office was established to provide a single entry point for residents of the Cushing area to access services from partner agencies.

Joining COCAA in the effort were Habitat for Humanity, Department of Human Services, Payne County Youth Services, Head Start, Oklahoma Employment Security Commission, Experience Works, Salvation Army and Edwin Fair.

The One Stop is funded through local donations and retail sales of the Silver Lining Resale Store.

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Deep Fork Community Action Foundation has registered with the U.S. Social Security Administration to become a designated "payee" for clients receiving Social Security payments or SSI benefits, according to a report in the *Community Developer* published by the Oklahoma Department of Commerce.

Many elderly or disabled people receive SS or SSI benefits and are unable to manage their financial matters in a responsible manner. When that happens, these recipients are allowed to designate some person or organization as their "payee." The designated payee helps the recipient create a workable budget, receives the monthly benefit, issues checks to all creditors on behalf of the recipient, and provides them with a living allowance for food, essential items, and when possible given the amount of benefit received, disposable income.

Deep Fork entered in this activity because it was working with social service clients who were living in substandard housing, had inadequate diets, or were found to be tied to loans charging high interest rates.

## How to Reach OKACAA Staff

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## Deep Fork celebrates Homeownership Month with open house

Deep Fork Community Action Foundation observed National Homeownership Month in June with an open house at one of its recently completed Self-Help Housing units in Morris.

“It’s been a great program,” declared Jeff Schuman, Executive Director. “I think we’ve built about 400 houses.”

Launched 18 years ago in McIntosh County, the program has continued to grow and is now expanding into Hughes and Okfuskee Counties with Ian Horncastle serving as Program Director. Horncastle said he hopes to have eight or nine houses under construction by the end of the year.

The Rural Development office of the U.S. Department of Agriculture funds Deep Fork’s Self-Help Housing Program. Jerry W. Efur, Single-Family Housing Program Director, was on hand for the open house along with a number of dignitaries including Amy Berg from 2<sup>nd</sup> District Congressman Brad Carson’s office and Michelle Hale from Governor Brad Henry’s Tulsa office.

Prospective low-income homeowners must contribute “sweat equity” to cover their down payment costs. Typically, the homeowners will help with painting, insulating, attaching hardware and clean-up. A family normally contributes 300 – 450 hours to helping build their home.

Schuman said most homes built through the program are three bedroom, one and one-half bath, ranch style homes with brick exterior.

The completed homes cost around \$76,000 but with low-interest rates tied to the buyer’s



*Jerry Efur, Single Family Housing Program Director, U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development, (r) joined Deep Fork Executive Director Jeff Schuman (l) and Paul Collett, Self-help Housing Program Director for Okmulgee and Creek Counties, at the open house.*



*Deep Fork Executive Director Jeff Schuman chats with Amy Berg, Field Representative for U.S. Rep. Brad Carson, at the open house.*

income, the monthly payments range. can run in the \$400 - \$500

“It’s a very effective rural housing program,” Schuman said.



## OKACAA board members meet in Hugo

*Little Dixie Community Action Agency hosted an Oklahoma Association of Community Action Agencies Board of Directors meeting in Hugo. Among the directors participating were, from left, Carroll Huggins, KI BOIS Community Action; Georgene Zachary, Community Action Resource & Development; and Johnny Bryant, United Community Action. (Photo provided by KI BOIS Community Action Foundation)*

## Oklahoma Association of Community Action Agencies

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## 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.**

Claremore (918) 341-5000  
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

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

Muskogee (918) 683-7637  
Serving: Muskogee County

### **Northeast Oklahoma Community Action Agency**

Jay (918) 253-4683  
Serving: Craig, Delaware and Ottawa Counties

### **Opportunities, Inc.**

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

### **Southwest Oklahoma Community Action Group**

Altus (580) 482-5040  
Serving: Greer, Harmon and Jackson Counties

### **United Community 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