



Community Action Solutions

July-August 2007

Prescription Assistance Program Is Successful

A wife came to the Southwest Oklahoma Community Action Group office seeking assistance for her husband who had suffered a stroke. Unable to work, the family had no income to purchase needed medications that totaled nearly \$7,600 annually. Southwest's Rx for Oklahoma staff went to work and helped the family get six of the eight medications free and the two others for only \$20 each for 90-day supplies.

That is typical of stories reported by Community Action Agencies that are helping uninsured and underinsured Oklahomans access prescription assistance programs provided by pharmaceutical manufacturing companies.

The Rx for Oklahoma Prescription Drug Program has processed over 18,000 prescription assistance applications resulting in an estimated savings of \$6.4 million since July 2006, according to the Oklahoma Department



of Commerce (ODOC). Over 4,000 clients have been assisted with the application process by the twenty-one statewide Rx for Oklahoma processing centers.

The Oklahoma Rx Discount Card has had similar success. The Rx Discount Card offers discounts ranging from 10-55% at the pharmacy counter. As of April 2007, over 400 eligible Oklahomans were enrolled and using the discounts at the pharmacy counters across the state.

From the Community Action Agency of Oklahoma City and Oklahoma/Canadian Counties came this story:

A young man contacted the office seeking assistance with Crohn's - a chronic inflammatory disease of the intestines. The completed application was approved and he has received the medication. Monthly savings are \$1,816.

Recently, billboards across Oklahoma have provided increased awareness of the service. Since May 2007, the public service information on the blue billboards has been accessed by over 250 toll-free callers seeking prescrip-

tion assistance information.

The Community Action Agency of Oklahoma City mailed brochures to physicians, service organizations, churches, attorneys, chambers of commerce and insurance agents. The agency also participated in a Hispanic Health Fair.

CALL 1-877-RX4-OKLA

Northeast Oklahoma Community Action Agency received this comment:

If it weren't for this program I would not have "life." I cannot live without my prescriptions. This has improved the quality of my life 100%.

ODOC contracts with Community Action Agencies in five regions to administer the Rx for Oklahoma program. Those agencies provide services out of their offices and subcontract with other agencies throughout the state.

The agencies use specialized computer software to match up clients with the appropriate pharmaceutical assistance program.

Funding is provided by an appropriation from the state legislature.



The Community Action video can be viewed on the OKACAA web site (www.okacaa.org).

Mark Your Calendar

OKACAA's Annual Conference is scheduled for September 20-21 at the Biltmore Hotel in Oklahoma City.

DEQ Coordinates with OKACAA to Help Residents Save Money and Protect the Environment

The Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality is helping some Oklahomans save money by reducing energy costs while also providing environmental benefits.

As part of an Environmental Protection Agency Region 6 grant award, DEQ purchased 10,516 compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs) and through a collaborative effort with the Oklahoma Association of Community Action Agencies (OKACAA) is distributing the bulbs to some Oklahomans.

The CFLs will be given away to citizens in Canadian, Cleveland, Grady, Lincoln, Logan, McClain and Oklahoma counties through the four Community Action Agencies that serve those areas while supplies last.

A CFL is a type of light bulb designed to replace an incandescent bulb. CFLs have a longer lifespan compared to an incandescent bulb. In addition to increasing energy efficiency, installation of these bulbs also reduces greenhouse gas emissions. For example, the installation and use of these 10,516 bulbs will prevent the emission of more than three thousand tons of carbon dioxide over the life of the bulbs.

The Community Action Agency of Oklahoma City and Oklahoma/Canadian Counties will distribute CFLs through their Home Repair and Weatherization Program, and in their District Centers when clients come in for emergency assistance they will receive the bulbs. Each family can receive up to five bulbs. The Washita Valley Community Action Council and the Delta Community Action Foundation distributed CFLs to clients at the Head Start Program orientation in August. Additionally, the Central Oklahoma Community Action

Agency will install CFLs through the Weatherization Program and distribute bulbs to clients who come in to local county offices for assistance.



OKACAA, a statewide association, includes private, nonprofit Community Action Agencies and 216 individual members. The agencies are locally managed with volunteer boards of directors that work to address both family and community needs.

For more information on the CFL giveaway in your area, please contact the following:

- Ann Ricketts (405) 232-0199, extension 2300, for Community Action Agency of Oklahoma City/Oklahoma and Canadian Counties
- Washita Valley Community Action Council Weatherization Program (405) 224-5831 for Grady County
- Suzan Carroll (405) 756-1100, Delta Community Action Foundation, for McClain County.
- Central Oklahoma Community Action Agency (405) 275-6060 for Cleveland, Lincoln, and Logan Counties.

Donation Made to Energy Conservation Assistance Fund

Quail Ridge Assisted Living Center in Oklahoma City recently made a \$1,000 donation to the Energy Conservation Assistance Fund.

The center's owner made the donation on behalf of the Oklahoma Head Start State Collaboration Office and the Department of Commerce. The retirement home owner wished to spotlight the plight of the homeless and contribute to finding solutions.

After learning that the Head Start office promotes coordination of services and support for homeless children, the owner made the contribution, according to Kay C. Floyd, Collaboration Office Director. The owner has financially supported other local efforts to address homeless issues.

The fund helps keep people in their homes by reducing energy costs

through weatherization. Executive Director Michael Jones presented the check during the OKACAA Board of Directors meeting in June.

National Community Action Conference Begins

The Community Action Partnership will host its 2007 Annual Convention in San Diego on August 28-31.

The event will bring together about 1100 anti-poverty practitioners from across the country to focus on melding outcomes from the National Symposium on Poverty and Economic Security held earlier this year in order to draft a new, national anti-poverty plan.

Sheila Clark Earns CCAP Designation

Sheila Clark, Head Start Director at Southwest Oklahoma Community Action Group, has been awarded the Certified Community Action Professional (CCAP) designation by the Community Action Partnership.

A national professional executive development strategy, the CCAP program recognizes exceptional Community Action leaders who are helping low-income people change their lives.

In order to become a CCAP, candidates must demonstrate a grasp of the history and mission of Community Action and innovative approaches for fighting poverty by completing a

comprehensive candidate data form, developing an executive skills portfolio, and passing a written exam

Clark has worked in Southwest's Head Start program for 20 years. She served as a teacher's aide, teacher, education coordinator, assistant director and three years ago was named director.

She is the fifth Southwest staffer to receive the designation. Others include Executive Director Neil Montgomery, Administrative Resources Director Ingrid Gifford, Southwest Enterprises Director Debby Tunning and Housing/Weatherization Director Linda Tarpley.



Sheila Clark, CCAP

Irene Roberts Receives National Volunteer Award

Irene Roberts of Antlers is the 2007 recipient of the Jayne Thomas Grassroots Volunteer Recognition Award. The award is the highest volunteer honor given by the Community Action Partnership. The award will be presented Aug. 30 at the Partnership's national convention in San Diego.

She is a partner with Little Dixie's Communities Empowering Youth program and is active in the Pushmataha County Literacy Council.



Little Dixie Community Action Agency Executive Director Randall Erwin congratulates Irene Roberts who has been awarded the Jayne Thomas Grassroots Volunteer Recognition Award by the Community Action Partnership.

She volunteers time for three Little Dixie Community Action Agency programs: As a mentor with Passport to the Future mentoring program (which works with children who have incarcerated parents), a child advocate for Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), and in the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP). It is almost impossible to tally the hours she has volunteered just for Little Dixie Community Action Agency programs. Her official start date as an RSVP volunteer is November of 2005, but her efforts in other areas go much farther back.

Irene was a teacher for 24 years in Antlers Public Schools and still substitutes and volunteers in the Jump Rope for Heart program. She volunteers at Kiamichi Technology Center, teaches CPR and GED classes and is active in prison ministry.

She is the founder and coordinator of New Beginnings of Southeast Oklahoma, which is a support group for women re-entering society after incarceration, women who are struggling with addiction or those recovering from domestic violence.

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When Disaster Strikes, Janell Wood Aids Public Officials

Opportunities, Inc. Staffer Educates Residents on How to Plan for a Disaster

Janell Wood knows her phone may ring at any hour of the day or night. As the Blaine County Emergency Management Director at Opportunities, Inc., she serves as the liaison between local government jurisdictions and the Oklahoma Department of Emergency Management when disaster strikes.

When a torrential downpour floods Watonga or an ice storm paralyzes the community, overwhelmed municipal and county leaders look to her to help mobilize state resources. She is the point of contact for the state.

If the federal government should declare the county a disaster area, she will also work with Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) officials to make sure residents get assistance.

There's a lot of paperwork when working with FEMA, according to Wood. She helps get the paperwork going.

Part of her duties is to help spread the word about the need to prepare for a disaster before it occurs. She speaks to community groups about being personally prepared in their home. Armed with a booklet and a list of web sites, she stresses the importance of preparing a disaster supply kit.

Since utilities may be disrupted in an emergency, preparing a disaster supply kit in advance can save precious time in the event a family must evacuate their home or go without utilities for an extended period.

She plans to take her emergency planning program to the RSVP volunteers this fall. Senior citizens may face special challenges related to mobility, the need to have portable oxygen and providing for their pets during a disaster, Wood explained.

She also helps the local emergency planning committee which includes business owners, law enforcement officers, emergency medical technicians and firefighters. That committee is charged with gathering information on hazardous waste sites and updating the county emergency operations plan.

The need for this program became apparent during an ice storm about five years ago, Georgia Forthum, Executive Director, said.



Janell Wood reviews the Family Preparedness Guide that she distributes when making presentations to community groups.

Oklahoma Housing Finance Agency Honors Little Dixie and United with Apex Awards

Little Dixie Community Action Agency and United Community Action Program received Apex Awards from the Oklahoma Housing Finance Agency for contributions made in affordable housing from January to December 2006.

Little Dixie received an Apex Award in the category of Home Ownership for completing 1,500 Self-Help Homes. By requiring families to contribute 65 percent of the labor, the program provides low-income families an opportunity to own their own home with minimum out-of-pocket expense and to gain immediate equity in their property.

Little Dixie received its second award in the category of Management of Affordable Housing for its management of Terry Hill Apartments in Hugo. When Little Dixie bought the property, less than half of the 60 apartments were occupied, many of the tenants were known drug users, and the buildings and appliances were in major disrepair. As a result of the Little Dixie's management and rehabilitation efforts, the complex now maintains a waiting list for its apartments that once again provide families with a desirable and affordable place to live.

Little Dixie received its third award in the category of Elderly Housing for obtaining grants to develop three U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Section 202 Supportive Housing projects that provide the supportive housing needed to allow senior citizens to live independently. The three projects, Belmont Place in Hugo, Clayton Place in Clayton and Kiamichi Place in Antlers, will create a total of 45 affordable housing units in rural Oklahoma.

United developed Pawnee Townhomes for families in Pawnee County. The property features 10 two-bedroom and 10 three-bedroom units disbursed in five buildings. Pawnee Townhomes is United's first low-income housing tax credit development in which it is the managing general partner.

Seniors to Juniors INCA Opens New Head Start Center

The building housing INCA Community Services' newest Head Start center has shifted from serving Tishomingo's senior citizens to its youngest citizens.



Valerie Smither, who will teach the 3-year-olds, is ready to fuel up the youngsters' trikes in the play area at the center.

Over the past year, the former senior center has been gutted and renovated into a modern Head Start center. It will serve 17 three-year-old and 20 four-year-old children.

The center has computers loaded with learning programs. A reading area features a selection of books. Small toys will help the children develop manipulative skills. There is a dramatic play area where children develop social skills. The playground features a padded surface to help prevent injuries.

Many of the students at the new center are transferring from a recently closed center located in an industrial park.

Also making the move to the new center are Edith Lewis and Lynda Sliger who prepare a nutritious breakfast, lunch and snack each school day to make sure the children are not hungry and ready to learn.

When they're not cooking, the two help the teachers. They prepare classroom materials, play games with the children and help with the graduation ceremony.

Jamie Vestal, a former Head Start student, brought her son, Kash, to the open house on July 17. Her mother,

Sharon Garrison, is a former Head Start teacher and currently the Nutrition Purchasing Manager for INCA.

Vestal remembers learning the ABC's, numbers and how to write her name while a Head Start student.

Garrison, a 33-year veteran at INCA, was Vestal's Head Start teacher.



State Rep. Paul Roan looks over a selection of books from the reading area with INCA Head Start Director Mary Spence.



Edith Lewis and Lynda Sliger make sure children have nutritious meals so they are ready to learn.



Jamie Vestal, a former Head Start student, stopped by with her son, Kash, to check out the new center and visit with her mother, Sharon Garrison, who is the Nutrition Purchasing Manager at INCA.

Big Five Community Action Hosts Poverty Simulations



Participants review descriptions of the family roles they will play.



If you fail to purchase food, you wear a sign.



Finding affordable child care is a challenge for simulation participants.



Employees report for work during the simulation.



A pawn shop was a source of quick cash for a family trying to pay bills.

The Oklahoma Association of Community Action Agencies (OKACAA) facilitated a pair of Poverty Simulations for Big Five Community Services during the agency's in-service training in Ardmore.

During the simulations, agency staffers role-played the lives of low-income families. The task of each family was to provide for food, shelter and other basic necessities during four 15-minute "weeks."

Families represented during a simulations included a single man living with the girlfriend and her child, a family applying for TANF, an elderly person receiving Supplemental Social Security, grandparents raising their grandchildren and a family whose breadwinner had become recently unemployed.

During the simulations, the families interacted with a dozen community resources including a utility company, bank, child care facility, pawn shop and a Community Action Agency.

The goal was to help sensitize participants to the challenges faced by a half million Oklahomans living in poverty. They lived the day-to-day reality of poverty through these interactive workshops.

Frustration mounted for participants as they tried to navigate through the weeks while dealing with lack of money, need to access transportation and creditors.

The Oklahoma Department of Commerce provided funding to enable OKACAA's certified facilitators to conduct six simulations.

Family Literacy Strategies Discussed During Workshop

Head Start teachers from three central Oklahoma Community Action Agencies learned techniques to promote family literacy during an interactive workshop held August 3 in Wayne.

Kimberly Stice, Director of Curriculum and Training for the National Head Start Family Literacy Center at Sonoma State University, suggested parent involvement strategies to the approximately 60 registrants.

Delta Community Action Foundation hosted the workshop as part of its annual in-service training. The Community Action Agency of Oklahoma City and Oklahoma/Canadian Counties and Washita Valley Community Action Council also sent teachers.

The day-long workshop opened with a challenge for participants to use a variety of art materials to describe a family activity from their youth.

Learning goes on in the context of the family, Stice explained. She pointed out that families teach the first and most important lessons.

Head Start is designed to support parents who play key roles in their children's education through active involvement in the process.

Breaking up into small groups, the teachers discussed ways their programs could support family literacy.

One group suggested sending a backpack filled with a stuffed bear and a spiral notebook home with the children over the weekend.

The parents could write down a story about what the child did with the bear and then come to class the next week to help tell the story with their child.

Stice said research indicates when families and teachers work on the same thing at the same time, then learning is optimized.

Daily activities can provide opportunities for parents to encourage literacy development. For example, during bath time small sponges shaped like letters of the alphabet can be used as a teaching tool.

Parents need to read and talk to their children. The more you talk to them, the better they will be able to master language when they begin to talk, Stice said.



Instructor Kim Stice chats with Patty Talamantes and Pam Kerlic during the Family Literacy workshop.



Damon Turner uses art materials to describe a family activity.



Sharon Daniel and Kathy Alberson review ideas developed by a workgroup.



About 60 Head Start teachers from three Community Action Agencies attended the workshop.

Oklahoma to Host Region VI Community Action Conference

The Community Action Association of Region VI Annual Conference is scheduled for October 17-19 at the Sheraton in downtown Oklahoma City.

Conference information is available on the association web site at www.caaregionvi.org.

Oklahoma Lt. Governor Jari Askins will welcome conference attendees.

The general session will focus on Disaster Preparedness.

Concurrent workshops are planned for financial, human resources, housing and other staff members.

David Bradley, Executive Director of the National Community Action Foundation, will provide a Legislative Update.

States in Region VI include Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Texas and Oklahoma.



David Bradley



Lt. Governor Jari Askins

**For more details, go to:
www.caaregionvi.org**

“Community Action: Meeting the Needs - Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow”			
Wednesday, October 17		DRAFT	
Region VI Board of Directors Meeting Opening General Session Presiding Officer: Almetra Franklin, President Welcome: Lt. Governor Jari Askins General Session - “Disaster Preparedness”			
Thursday, October 18		Concurrent Workshops	
Financial Management “Internal Controls & Financial Management Standards” “Procurement Policies & Procedures” “Cost Principles” “Common Accounting Problems”	Human Resources “Fair Labor Standards Act” “Family Medical Leave Act” “Management & Governance Issues” “Special Topics in Human Resources for CAAs”	Housing “Home Investment Partnership Program” “Managing Your Own Construction Crew” “USDA Migrant Farm Worker Program” “HUD’s Section 811 Supportive Housing Program”	Other “Grant Writing” “Fatherhood Initiative”
CAP-PAC Dinner Theater Murder Mystery - “Redemption is Murder”			
Friday, October 19			
Closing Breakfast Keynote Speaker: David Bradley, Executive Director, National Community Action Foundation “Legislative Update”			