



# Community Action Solutions

July - August 2006

## CAAs provide access to medicines through RX for Oklahoma

Five Oklahoma Community Action Agencies are providing oversight of a program that helps uninsured and under-insured families obtain free or low-cost prescription medicines.

The Oklahoma Department of Commerce has contracted 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 to help provide the assistance throughout the state.

The five regional administrative offices serve as a clearinghouse for referrals and prepare reports for Commerce.

Persons seeking assistance call a toll-free telephone number that rings at the administrative office for the region. The callers is then referred to the processing center that serves the county in which they live.

Staff at those processing centers use special computer software to match up eligible persons with free or discounted prescriptions offered by pharmaceutical companies.

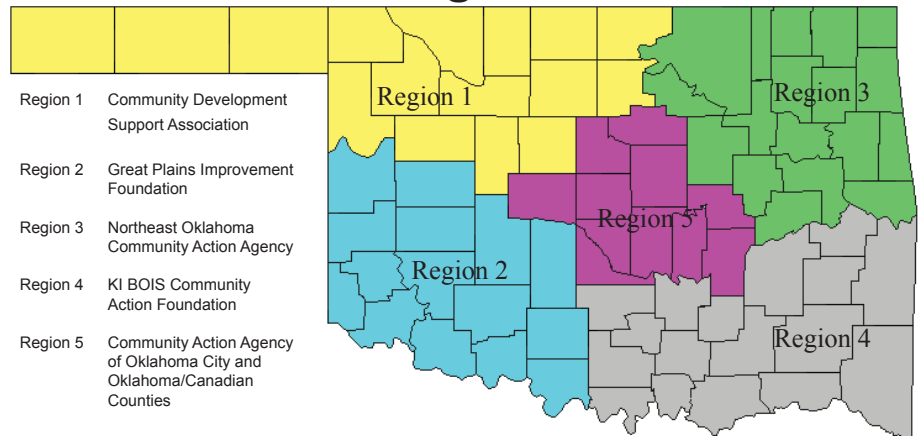
### Region 1

Cheri Ezzell, Region 1 area director at Community Development Support Association in Enid, works with two other agencies in the 16-county area. The toll free number is 1-800-723-9428.

United Community Action Program is providing services out of Ponca City and Perry. Opportunities, Inc. has a processing center in Guymon.

### Region 2

Carina Friedl, Region 2 area director at Great Plains Improvement Foundation in



Lawton, works with three other Community Action Agencies to provide services in 15 counties throughout southwestern Oklahoma. The toll free number is 1-866-400-0642.

Washita Valley Community Action Council has a processing center in Chickasha; Community Action Development Corporation provides services out of its Frederick center; and Southwest Oklahoma Community Action Group has a center in Altus.

### Region 3

At Northeast Oklahoma Community Action Agency in Jay, Twila Kuder, regional area director, oversees the program for the 18-county area of Region 3. The toll free number is 1-866-838-1502.

In Region 3, Community Action Resource and Development will staff processing centers in Tulsa and Nowata; Cookson Hills Community Action Foundation is operating a center in Tahlequah; Deep Fork Community Action Foundation has a center in Okmulgee; and United is providing services out of Pawnee.

### Region 4

Christy Fite, who operates out of KI BOIS Community Action Foundation's Wilburton office, is the area director for Region 4 with five processing centers in the 17-county area. The toll free number is 1-877-465-1598.

Little Dixie Community Action Agency is operating a processing center in Hugo; Big Five Community Services has a center in Durant; Delta Community Action Foundation is in Lindsay; and INCA Community Services is serving clients out of a processing center in Sulphur.

### Region 5

Community Action Agency of Oklahoma City and Oklahoma/Canadian Counties is the Region 5 administrative office. Angie Dotson, program coordinator, reports there are five additional processing centers in its 11-county service area. The toll free number is 1-888-794-7345.

Central Oklahoma Community Action Agency has processing centers in Shawnee, Norman and Stillwater. Deep Fork operates a center in Okemah and Delta has a center in Purcell.

## Little Dixie celebrates completion of 1500th Self Help Housing project

Little Dixie Community Action Agency celebrated 32 years of making homeownership a reality for southeast-

ern Oklahoma low-income families with a completion of its 1500th Self Help Housing project.



Randall Erwin, executive director, is joined by state and local officials as he presents a symbolic key to the Morris family -- the 1500th Self Help Housing recipient.

Surrounded by local and state dignitaries, Little Dixie Executive Director Randall Erwin presented keys to the new homeowners -- the Morris family -- during the observance on July 13.

The new home has about 1100 square feet of living space with three bedrooms, two baths, and a garage.

Bob Yandell, who was Little Dixie's housing director in 1974, launched the program with an \$82,900 grant to construct 48 houses during the first two years. Last year, 85 houses were constructed in a five county area.

The early homes cost about \$9,400 including the land. Mortgages on current projects average about \$72,000, Ron Walker, housing director, said.

Building groups of four to eight families work together to construct the homes -- earning "sweat equity" which is considered down payment.

In addition to providing families with decent, affordable homes, the program pours money into the community through purchase of construction materials. The new homes add revenue to the community through property taxes.



Ron Walker, housing director, is interviewed during the observance.

## Vonda Benson to receive national Community Action award

Little Dixie Community Action Agency was recently notified by the national Community Action Partnership that Vonda Benson has been selected to be the recipient of the 2006 Sargent Shriver Achievement Award. Benson will be presented with the award during the Community Action Partnership's Annual Convention Gala on September 7, 2006, at the Orlando World Center Resort in Orlando, Florida.

The Sargent Shriver Achievement Award was established by the Community Action Partnership in 1995 to recognize and honor achievements by individuals who, with the assistance of a Community Action Agency, have changed their lives and achieved independence. The Award is named for Sargent Shriver, the first director of the Office of Economic Opportunity.

Out of the hundreds of nominations submitted by Community Action Agencies across the nation, Vonda Benson's success story was selected by the Community Action Partnership as the best example of an individual who turned hope into reality.

Vonda Benson was born in 1965, the youngest of the eight children of Alpha Lee and Rosa Lee Benson of Bluff, Oklahoma. She had her first child at age 16. Vonda graduated from Soper High School in Soper, Oklahoma in 1983.

As a young, single mother with four children, Vonda struggled for several years on welfare. All four of her children went through Head Start; and Vonda became a classroom volunteer. In 1994, Vonda obtained her first job with Little Dixie Community Action Agency as a Head Start cook. Within a year she became a teacher's aide. Vonda obtained her CDA in 1998; and in 2002 Vonda became a Head Start teacher – a job she loves! Her greatest desire is to make a positive impact in her students' lives.

Vonda reached another of her goals in 2005 when she became a first time homeowner through Little Dixie Community Action Agency's Self-Help Housing Program. Vonda moved into her four-bedroom, two-bathroom brick home in February 2005.

Little Dixie Head Start assisted Vonda in paying for college courses; and Vonda obtained her Associates Degree in 2005. She will graduate with her Bachelor's Degree in Business and Early Childhood Education in January 2007.

"Vonda Benson is a shining example of what we wish every person could achieve with assistance from Community Action," said Little Dixie Community Action Agency Executive Director Randall Erwin. "Vonda is an outstanding teacher and a credit to our agency. She is a very deserving

recipient of the Sargent Shriver Achievement Award."



*Randall Erwin, executive director, Little Dixie Community Action Agency (l), and Jay Weatherford, associate director, are pictured with Vonda Benson who has been selected to receive the Sargent Shriver Award to be presented during the Community Action Partnership's annual conference in Orlando, Florida. (Photo provided by Little Dixie.)*

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## OWHAC scholarship awarded to Jennifer Gordon

The Oklahoma Weatherization & Housing Advisory Council (OWHAC) presented the \$1,000 Ted Allen/David Walker Scholarship to Jennifer Gordon during the 2006 Housing & Energy



*Jennifer Gordon's (c) name is inscribed on a plaque of scholarship recipients that is displayed in the HUD Oklahoma City Field Office. Gordon received the 2006 Ted Allen/David Walker Scholarship from OWHAC. Pictured with Gordon are Janet Walker and Bill Tolbert.*

Conference closing luncheon on August 17.

Gordon graduated from Ringling High School and is planning to attend Murray State College in Tishomingo where she will study nursing.

The scholarship is named for Ted Allen and David Walker who died in the Murrah Federal Building bombing. This was the 10th year that OWHAC has presented the scholarship.

Gordon is the daughter of Leah Williams who is a quality assurance specialist for Big Five Community Service's Developmental Disabilities Program and Jay Gordon.

Participating in presentation ceremony were Janet Walker, widow of David Walker, and Bill Tolbert, operations specialist, HUD Oklahoma City Field Office.

## OWHAC Housing & Energy Conference held August 15-17



*Robert Meador, Community Action Development Corp., reviewed Advanced Blower Door techniques.*



*Garcia Tarver, Oklahoma Department of Commerce, discussed Installation Standards.*



*State Rep. Guy Liebmann spoke at the opening breakfast.*



*Greg Smith, Community Development Support Association, (r) visited with State Rep. Danny Morgan following his closing luncheon speech.*



*Diane Nelson and Reggie Owings, Community Action Resource & Development, checked the conference schedule during a break.*



*A session on Housing Solutions for Rural Oklahoma drew a large crowd.*



*Johnny Trickett (l) and Kenneth Moore, both from KI BOIS Community Action Foundation, were among the nearly 140 people attending the conference.*

# Donations help to resupply CARD food pantry

Community Action Resource & Development's food pantry in Coweta has received donations in the last few months that have kept the shelves from being empty.

With no Community Food and Nutrition Program funds available this year, the donations have been even more important to the continuation of the food pantry.

A Coweta business, Curves, donated over 700 items of nonperishable food.

The Letter Carriers' food drive netted 1,400 pounds of nonperishable food. A food drive sponsored by the Community Food Bank of Eastern Oklahoma through a local business, Country Mart, collected over 300 items.

These donations along with regular donations from the local churches, schools, civic organizations, individuals and the Ministerial Alliance make possible this service to those in need.

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the U.S. Department of Health & Human  
Services.



*Jerry Drewery, youth pastor, Assembly of God, Tuttle, (l) helps Jonathan Cook, family advocate, Washita Valley Community Action Council, load backpacks and school supplies into his car. The church had been distributing school supplies and clothes to area families. The church donated remaining supplies to Washita Valley which serves Grady County where the church is located.*

## New video explains Weatherization Assistance Program

“The Savings and Comfort Solution for Your Home” is the newest video developed by Deep Fork Community Action Executive Director Jeff Schuman.

Previewed at the OWHAC Housing and Energy Conference, the video focuses on the Weatherization Assistance Program.

The 25-minute video, according to Schuman, is designed to explain the weatherization program to clients.

The video tells homeowners what to expect from weatherization and how to apply for the assistance.

Narrated by Schuman, the video notes the average family spends \$1,500 annually to heat and cool

their home. Simple changes can save up to \$500 annually.

The video also features segments by three Community Action housing directors offering practical guidance to homeowners on saving energy and utility dollars.

John Jones, KI BOIS Community Action Foundation, points out there are many no-costs or low-cost ways for homeowners to reduce their energy costs.

Greg Smith, Community Development Support Association, demonstrates how caulking around windows can reduce heating and cooling losses.

Mary Ann Overall, Northeast Oklahoma Community Action Agency,

shows how replacing an incandescent light bulb with a more energy-efficient compact fluorescent light bulb can save a homeowner up to \$30 annually.

A 15-minute version of the video was also developed for use by Community Action Agencies making presentations before civic groups.

The Oklahoma Department of Commerce funded preparation of the video. Copies have been provided to the state’s Community Action network in both a DVD and VHS format.

This is the eighth video Schuman has developed. His earlier videos dealt with homebuyer education and financial literacy topics.

## Executive Directors meet with Congressmen Cole & Boren



*Michael E. Jones, executive director, Oklahoma Association of Community Action Agencies, (l) led a group of executive directors to meet with U.S. Representative Tom Cole (4th District) on August 24. Others participating in the meeting were Brent Morey, Community Action Development Corporation; Karen Nichols, Delta Community Action Foundation; Sharlotte Key, Washita Valley Community Action Council; Johnny Bryant, United Community Action Program; and Odell Gunter and Virginia Spencer, Great Plains Improvement Foundation.*



*U.S. Representative Dan Boren (2nd District) met with several executive directors on July 5 during a congressional break. Meeting with Boren in his Muskogee office were R. Carroll Huggins, KI BOIS Community Action Foundation; Cleon Harrell, Cookson Hills Community Action Foundation; and Jeff Schuman, Deep Fork Community Action Foundation.*