



Community Action Solutions

November - December 2006

Family Aided By Vehicles Program

When Juanita Sykes' 12-year-old car stranded her on the Northwest Expressway in Oklahoma City one evening last year, she wondered how she could take her daughter to school and get to classes at the University of Central Oklahoma where she was earning a degree in trade/industrial education. While a temporary repair and a network of friends could help for a short time, Sykes knew she needed more reliable transportation.

The Community Action Agency of Oklahoma City and Oklahoma/Canadian Counties came to her rescue through its Vehicles for Families program. She was able to purchase a 2001 Chrysler Voyager from the agency for \$750 earlier this year.

"It's one of the best things that ever happened to me," Sykes said.

After years of working in low-paying support positions in public schools, she has now earned her degree and is teaching Bilingual Customer Service classes at Metro Technology Center in Oklahoma City.

Her next goal is to purchase a house. She is currently saving money for a downpayment in an Individual Development Account administered by the agency.

The matched savings program helps working families with children save by matching their savings with \$2 for each dollar saved. Participants can graduate with a maximum of \$6,000 in their accounts to be used toward



Juanita Sykes goes over an assignment with Rocio Martinez and Margarita Trujillo in her classroom at Metro Technology Center. She has 27 students in a Bilingual Customer Service program.

the purchase of a first home, higher education or starting a business.

Sykes has also received free tax preparation assistance from the agency for the past two years.

She is a cheerleader for community action.

"The people who work for community action give more than 100 percent. It's great to know people out there that want to better their community."

Ann Ricketts, community services director, praised Sykes'

accomplishments.

"She's a real go-getter. She will continue to be a success."

Born and raised in Oklahoma, Sykes says she's proud to be an Okie. But she is also proud of the heritage that comes from the background of immigrants.

Sykes serve as president of the Oklahoma City Council of the League of United Latin American Citizens. She is also a member of the Coalition for Language Diversity.

KI BOIS Community Action Helps Rehabilitate House



“The best thing that ever happened to me,” according to Raymond Moore, 59, “was moving to Stigler.”

When Moore moved there in 1981, it was the middle of winter and he lived in a tent on Star Mountain northeast of Stigler.

He would cut wood with a hand saw, taking him two days to cut a rick that he would sell for \$10.

Moore eventually moved into a house, but working as a handy man 10 to 12 hours a day and bringing home around \$9,000 a year did not leave much money to do repairs.

With the roof leaking, sheetrock falling and mold, Moore knew he needed help.

Someone told him about a weatherization program at KI BOIS Community Action Housing.

“Housing Director John Jones and his staff came to my rescue,” said Moore.

According to Jones, “The house was beyond repair. So Mr. Moore received assistance through the KI BOIS Owner-Occupied Rehab Program.

The home was in such poor shape that when the volunteers knocked the porch down, half of the house collapsed.”

Another unique thing about this home is that it was built by volunteers from the community.

The KI BOIS Owner-Occupied Rehab Program furnished the materials and Moore’s church family, friends and neighbors supplied the labor.

“There are still people that will help others,” Moore said with tears in his eyes.

Photos and article provided by KI BOIS Community Action Foundation.

OKACAA 2006 Winter Conference



Ginger Bryant, KI BOIS Community Action Foundation; Kelly Thomas, Little Dixie Community Action Agency; Patti Stump, Northeast Oklahoma Community Action Agency; and Mary Spence, INCA Community Services, discuss a case study during the Progressive Discipline workshop conducted by Julia Teska from Quiet Cove Enterprises. The workshop focused on how managers could resolve disciplinary problems in a manner that conforms to merit rules and state law and is beneficial to the employee, supervisor and agency.



Twyla Gables discusses how Individual Development Accounts can be an important tool for developing family self-sufficiency. She coordinates the IDA program for the Community Action Agency of Oklahoma City and Oklahoma/Canadian Counties.



Robin Bowen and Mary Brown, both from Delta Community Action Foundation, chat between conference sessions.



Al Stewart, early learning and literacy content specialist, Booz Allen Hamilton, updates education coordinators on non-compliance issues.

One Man's Flight From Katrina Leads To The American Dream

Bruce Voirin's bumpy ride from the Gulf Coast to the Kiamichi Mountains is about to take a decidedly domestic turn.

Little Dixie Community Action Agency is helping Voirin rebuild his life by helping him build a home through its housing programs and partnerships. He is expected to get the keys to his new home in Broken Bow in early 2007.

Voirin has had many titles—Dad, foster parent, avionics expert, restaurateur – but he looks forward to trading in his recent status as “evacuee” for that of “homeowner.”

Voirin will soon experience a very welcome life changing experience. He is about to become a homeowner. Having secured a loan through U. S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development, Voirin is participating in the construction of his own home through Little Dixie Self-Help Housing. Also, Voirin was one of 44 families relocating to the Midwest from the storm ravaged Gulf region as part of the Federal Home Loan Bank (FHLB) Topeka's Katrina Evacuees Empowerment Program. He also received a gift from Security First National Bank to help the project.

On the first anniversary of the hurricane, Voirin was joined by officials from Little Dixie, FHLB Topeka and Security First National Bank to make his homeownership quest official.

Sixteen months ago, Voirin lived in Ocean Springs, Miss., and managed a Creole Restaurant on New Orleans' world famous Jackson Square.

He already had life-changing problems before the storm. An accident left him with a back injury, and he was set to have a second surgery in September 2005 in New Orleans. Hurricane Katrina changed all that, and so much more.

Voirin fled the coast with thousands of others, hoping to reach a relative in Broken Bow. He ended up at a shelter in Fort Worth. Eventually, he returned to Mississippi to find his home gone, its foundation all but absorbed by the sea. The storm surge had washed out a highway bridge adjacent to his home and



Bruce Voirin is pictured with the partnering banks and agencies who helped him build a new home in Broken Bow after his was destroyed in Hurricane Katrina. Pictured left to right (back row): Jeff Hairston of FHLBank Topeka, Wade Scott of Security First National Bank, Stefanie Butler of SFNB, Wendi Sumner from Little Dixie, Terri Harless from Little Dixie and Ron Walker from Little Dixie; front row (left to right): Sammi Coffman of Little Dixie, Bruce Voirin, Philip Burris of USDA Rural Development, Naomi McCollum of USDA Rural Development, Leann Langford of USDA Rural Development and Zack Williams.

so many others.

“I was back down there (in July 2006),” Voirin said. “There is nothing. The whole block, still water. The whole topography has changed. There are no landmarks.”

“I was down there digging through rubble, like everyone else that was alive. It is hard to articulate the horror. You come to question, what is home? Is home the house you lived in? Is it the things you have collected over a lifetime of experience and travel? Is it the photographs of your children? Is it your neighbors, your town, community, your job? All of that is gone.”

The hurricane forced Voirin to hole up in a 12-foot by 12-foot gardening shed on a relative's property near

Beavers Bend State Park. He outfitted the shed with a bathroom, toaster oven, microwave, TV set and computer. The temporary shelter was a real fixer-upper.

“It was here but it was pretty dilapidated,” he said. “I had to put new floor joists in, insulation, all new sheet rock, wall board, new flooring on the inside. Basically, what I've got is a bed and a reading chair, a computer and a television. You know, the basics.”

Little Dixie and its partners put their resources to work to get Voirin from the “basics” into a suitable home.

Michele Carter, AHP homeownership program supervisor, said, “In Mr. Voirin's particular case, FHLBank Topeka partnered with Little Dixie Community Action Agency and Security First National Bank by providing \$4,000 in down payment

Article and photo provided by Little Dixie Community Action Agency.

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assistance toward Voirin's new home, as well as providing him (the) \$500 Katrina Evacuees Empowerment Program grant. Voirin is on his way toward homeownership and rebuilding his future in Broken Bow."

Other partners helping Little Dixie to bring the American dream

of homeownership to reality: NeighborWorks America, Countrywide Financial Corporation, Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, BancFirst and Bank of America.

"It's going to give me a base to build again," he said of the new home. "What it means is that I'm going to have some foundation. I've got so much to be

thankful for and so much that I'm proud of still. I was very proud of being the one taking care of my neighbor, not my neighbor taking care of me. So it has been very humbling."

"There's a world outside of ourselves. There is hope in this world. Just do the right thing for the person next to you. Don't talk about it, just do it."

OERB Donation Helps CARD Improve Home's Energy Efficiency

Last winter, the Oklahoma Energy Resources Board (OERB) provided a \$1 million grant to assist low-income families statewide by helping to reduce their energy bills. The funds leverage federal and state funding to provide weatherization services, such as adding insulation, replacing inefficient appliances, and replacing leaky windows.

Using a portion of these OERB funds, one local community action agency, Community Action Resource & Development (CARD), recently provided weatherization assistance to Cletus Hill Jr. in Tulsa County.

The donation from the OERB has

allowed the existing weatherization program to be expanded and can now be used to assist more people like Hill.

Homes like Hill's are first analyzed for areas that could be targeted to increase energy efficiency. This energy audit of his home detected high energy usage because of cracked and worn out windows, a water heater closet with no door, poor attic insulation, worn out weatherstripping and leaky doors.

CARD provided additional attic insulation, replaced broken windows, installed a water heater door, sealed and caulked windows and weather-stripped the doors.

The improvements increased the energy efficiency of the home, added comfort and security and reduced utility bills by 60 percent. Those savings amount to a tax-free pay increase each month for Hill.

CARD provides weatherization assistance in Mayes, Nowata, Rogers, Tulsa, Wagoner and Washington counties. CARD expects to serve approximately 115 units this year.

Deadline Nears To Apply For Scholarship

January 12 is the deadline to submit an application for the 2007 Ted Allen/David Walker Scholarship.

The \$1000 scholarship will be awarded by the Oklahoma Weatherization & Housing Advisory Council during its 2007 Housing and Energy Conference.

Contact John Jones at KI BOIS Community Action Foundation at (918) 967-9050 for more information.

This article is reprinted from the November 2006 issue of Community Developer published by the Oklahoma Department of Commerce.

Contact Us

Oklahoma Association of
Community Action Agencies
2800 N.W. 36th St., Suite 221
Oklahoma City, OK 73112
(405) 949-1495
Fax: (405) 949-0955
Web: www.okacaa.org

Michael E. Jones
Executive Director
Michaeljones@okacaa.org

Patty Laub
Director of Operations
plaub@okacaa.org

Kay C. Floyd
Head Start State Collaboration
Office Director
kfloyd@okacaa.org

Tricia Auberle
Director of Homebuyer
Education Programs
HomebuyerEd@okacaa.org

Bob Brandenburg
Communication Director
BobBrandenburg@okacaa.org

Wanda Welters
Executive Assistant
wahnmod@okacaa.org

This newsletter was produced with funds from the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services.