

Northeast Oklahoma Community Action Agency



2011 ANNUAL REPORT

Executive Director's Report — Widening the Reach

The most significant event of the year was the addition of two counties (Adair and Cherokee) to the agency's service area. The agency received funding in January 2011 for weatherization, homeless assistance, and program and agency support services from the Oklahoma Department of Commerce. Ultimately all of the agency's programs will be extended to these counties with the exception of Head Start. This expansion is already underway with rent and utility assistance being provided in both counties at the Department of Human Services' offices in Tahlequah and Stilwell. Prescription assistance has been expanded. Financial literacy, budgeting, and job assis-

tance programs are launching in these counties. The agency is also preparing to include these counties in the tax assistance program as well as housing programs. These additional funds will also enable the agency to expand its efforts to establish new programs, such as economic development, nutrition, and jobs programs that will benefit all five counties.

In 2011 the agency made a modest change to its expenditures with an increase of \$104,227.68 to its 2010 expenditures of \$6,819,869.00. While this 1.5% increase is

Continued inside...

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Serving Adair, Cherokee, Craig, Delaware, & Ottawa Counties

P.O. BOX 603 (856 E. Melton, Suite C)

Jay, OK 74346

www.neocaa.org 918-253-4683

HOME OWNERSHIP AND HOUSING SERVICES CENTER

HOME REHABILITATION

Low-income individuals sometimes may be able to pay bills and mortgage obligations but may not have the skills or disposable income to keep their homes in good repair. Over time, with unmet maintenance needs, homes become less safe and livable. The Housing Rehabilitation Program exists to provide these low-income homeowners with a safe, sanitary and comfortable home environment.

Each rehab program is regulated by income eligibility requirements. Each homeowner must submit an application with proof of income and a copy of their deed. The home must be in the owner's name, and be the primary residence for the family for more than one year. The application is prioritized based on a rating scale and scheduled based on priority and available funds. Funding varies and waiting lists are long.



New Duplexes under construction in Jay

In the past year, the Housing program has been working on 4 grants. Three grants are from the Oklahoma Housing and Finance Agency for 10 homes in the city limits of Jay, 20 Homes in the City limits of Vinita, and 20 homes in greater Delaware County. The second grant is a Housing Preservation Grant for 12 homes: 6 in the city limits of Kansas and 6 in the city limits of Jay. The OHFA grants are for full rehab on the homes, while the HPG Grant is partial rehab. Projects consisted of roof repair, roof replacement, windows, siding, doors, flooring replacement, heat and air repairs and replacements, electrical and plumbing updates and porch repairs.

The OHFA Jay Grant was completed in

July of 2011 and the Agency was only able to complete 8 of the 10 homes on this grant, due to the condition of the homes and the cost of construction on the units.

The OHFA Vinita grant was completed in July of 2010 and the agency completed 17 of the 20 homes due to the condition and cost of construction on the units.

The OHFA Delaware Grant was also completed in July of 2010 and the agency completed 20 homes.

The HPG grant covered partial rehab on 12 homes for very low income applicants. One home has been completed and the agency is working to get more applicants to fill the remaining slots.

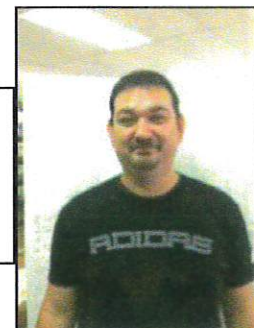
ACQUISITION REHAB

The Agency also had a Grant For Acquisition Rehab for 4 homes to be purchased. Those units have been purchased and rehabilitation completed. Since the homes were not sold in a reasonable time, the agency applied for and was granted the option of renting them. All are being rented at this time.

The Housing program also includes Continuum of Care Houses which the agency built for the Community Crisis Center in Miami and Grove, Grand Lake Mental Health in Miami and the Ark in North Miami. The agency provides maintenance of the homes for these entities which, in turn, serve mental health clients, clients with substance abuse issues and clients with domestic violence issues.

With the increased emphasis on rentals, one of the Blue Jacket houses has been converted to rental property and is now rented. Rental properties in Miami are located on scattered sites on A and I Streets. In addition, the agency is just beginning to develop a 24 unit rent-to-own project in Miami and two duplexes in the city of Jay.

*Congratulations
to new
Housing Manager,
Cameron Dozier*



NORTHEAST OKLAHOMA COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY 2011 ANNUAL REPORT

HOMEBUYER EDUCATION & DOWN PAYMENT ASSISTANCE

Monthly Home Buyer Education Classes continued throughout the 2010-2011 year. While classes have been smaller, staff has continued to present informative and educational classes. Each class features knowledgeable presenters who can help clients prepare for all the obstacles they may have when embarking on the purchase of their first-time home buying experience. Guest speakers have included lenders, realtors, credit counselors, home inspectors and insurance professionals. Rural Development as well as some of the tribes are now requiring their clients to attend the agency's classes. This affirms the agency's efforts to prepare clients for a smooth transition into the home-buying experience.

This past year 61 clients attended 9 classes, bringing the total number of attendees to over 900 since the inception of the program. The agency continues to educate the public about the program and has now added Cherokee and Adair Counties to the class rotation. The agency continues to look forward to assisting clients in becoming first-time homebuyers.

Rx FOR OKLAHOMA

A 36-year old single mother with grand mal seizures faces repeated hospitalizations without proper medication. Yet just one of those prescriptions costs \$24,000 per year. Her illness keeps her unemployed but she had not been able to qualify for disability. She's desperate.

A retiree with about \$1800 a month in total income is told she will need a cancer treatment medication that will cost nearly \$1700 a month. Medicare won't cover it. Where can she turn?

These stories are sadly familiar, but they are encouraging as well. Why? In both cases, the agency's Rx staff came to the rescue, and these clients now receive the medications they need at no cost. The Rx for Oklahoma Program assists individuals with chronic conditions and ongoing prescription needs to access prescription assistance programs. NEOCAA is the lead agency over 18 counties.

Rx for Oklahoma went through many changes during the past year. Funding cuts led United CAA to drop Osage, Pawnee, and Creek counties. Fortunately, fellow CAA CARD was able to pick up those counties and continue services. Then NEOCAA added Adair and Cherokee Counties, and KIBOIS CAA assumed Sequoyah County. Since then, all three counties have seen a large increase in new clients.

This year, the agency assisted 224 new clients. New claims totaled 2,658 with a total savings of \$759,060.00 for the year to clients. Rx staff also wishes to recognize Wx Education and Homebuyer staff for the assistance in handing out Rx brochures and note pads at the county fairs. This cooperation between programs is vital to spreading the word about the agency's services.



Welcome to new
Adair & Cherokee
County
Case Manager
Carm Ward

EMERGENCY SERVICES

For families with limited resources, a sudden car repair, a medical emergency, a job loss or a reduction in hours can spell disaster. The agency provides assistance with rent and utility payments to help families overcome such temporary emergencies. During the 2010-11 fiscal year, Emergency Assistance provided services totaling \$85,475.06 to 397 families. Of that, \$25,321.00 went toward rent and \$60,154.06 to utilities.

Emergency Services staff also coordinated the bell ringing for the Salvation Army during November and December. Several local businesses and citizens volunteered, locations were set up at the Walmart in Grove, the Walmart in Jay, and Reasors in Langley. Kettle funds are used throughout the year to supplement other grant funds. The proceeds from Reasors were designated to providing backpack meals for Ketchum schools. Thanks to the efforts of all of the volunteers, \$6,582.35 was raised.

The agency also partnered with the Delaware County Humane Society to provide vouchers for pet spay and neuter services. DCHS offers these services free of charge to those who qualify.

In January, Adair and Cherokee counties were added to the service area, and plans were made to begin services there as quickly as possible. Thanks to the Department of Human Services in both Tahlequah and Stilwell, who have provided office space, the agency is serving clients in those locations. The agency also hired Carmalita Ward to work in these counties. She is in Stilwell on Tuesdays and Tahlequah on Wednesday and Thursday each week. The agency added HPRP (Homeless Prevention and Rapid Rehousing) funds with the addition of these new counties and hopes to expand services to the homeless with this grant.

SPECIAL PROJECTS - ENTERPRISING DEVELOPMENTS

Taking Care of Business...

In a region beset by endemic poverty, poor health, and chronic un-and-under-employment, creating new well-paying jobs is a key to change. However, economic development in an area with limited infrastructure and few major industries is a challenge.

The Special Projects teams has developed a multi-pronged strategy to combat this challenge. **The Economic Development** team is focusing on a variety of micro-enterprise activities. These include working with the agency's wholly-owned subsidiary, **Supportive Financial Services** (SFS), an emerging Native CDFI (Community Development Financial Institution) to develop training for prospective small business owners, technical assistance for existing small businesses, and funding options, including small micro-enterprise loans through SFS and other

partner entities. Staff is also working to develop a virtual incubator for small business activities centered around community gardens and other healthy community initiatives. The first of these gardens is located in Grove as a pilot project in partnership with St. Andrews Episcopal Church and the Delaware County chapter of Bridges Out of Poverty.

As a part of these efforts, staff has continued to cultivate relationships with Cherokee Nation's Small Business Assistance Center, Citizens Potawatomi's CDFI, and Choctaw Nation, all of which have provided training or technical assistance to agency staff.

Staff has become certified in the *Indianpreneurship* curriculum, a strong entrepreneur training and small business planning course and expects to begin offering these classes shortly.

...Cultivating Community

In addition to micro-enterprise, the Special Projects Team works with individuals to improve their financial and physical well-being through several different programs.

The Financial Empowerment Department seeks to increase families' resources through five major strategies: free tax preparation, full-employment, financial education, development of additional income, and micro-finance.



**Cindy Templeman
Tax Program Manager**

Through **VITA, (the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program)**, staff and volunteers prepared returns for 1078 families and saw nearly \$1.6 million in federal and state refunds returned to

clients. The agency also received the distinction of being one of only 12 entities in the nation to receive a multi-year VITA grant from the IRS. As a result of this more stable funding, the agency was able to hire a Tax Program Manager to oversee that program full-time.

The Jobs Skills Program has seen remarkable results through its efforts. Self-sufficiency depends on an adequate source of income, and many workers in the region have been displaced or are underemployed.

Furthermore, many of these individuals do not have the skills, resources, or internet access to navigate the modern job search process.

Jobs Skills staff assist unemployed and underemployed individuals with job search functions, resume writing and interview skills, and links to career advancement training resources. The agency has also applied for a grant to expand the program to include job coaching and mentoring to ensure long-term employment for clients.

In addition, **financial counseling and workshops** provide clients with the knowledge and skills to navigate out of crisis and to better manage their resources. The agency's micro-loan company, **Supportive Financial Services**, will soon be making microloans to consumers to help them escape the payday loan trap. The **Economic Development** team is a resource for helping clients develop self-employment income.

By utilizing all of the resources of the Special Projects Department and by working closely with the Emergency Services Department and other agency programs, staff has been able to bring a more integrated approach to assisting clients toward self-sufficiency.

Healthy Communities Initiatives continue as well. Healthy Nutrition classes will begin in the fall as part of the Community Garden project. In addition, many community partners have donated medical and dental equipment to the Health Clinic project, and alternative funding strategies are being sought to open a clinic as soon as possible.

In Memory...

Helen Douglas

Helen began her career with the NEO Head Start Program on July 19, 1993 as a Family Service Worker. In this capacity Helen provided direct services to children and families in the areas of health, nutrition, safety, disabilities and mental health to ensure that a healthy, happy child is a child ready to learn. She was a dedicated follower of her Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and her actions and demeanor were constant examples of her faith during her daily walk in life. She worked in various centers over the past 18 years. She was the Family Service Worker for Picher Head Start, Commerce Head Start, Fairland Head Start, and Vinita Head Start and was currently working at the Miami Head Start Center. Helen was very dedicated and compassionate about her work with Head Start children and families. Helen touched the lives of many children, families and staff. Helen, will be missed immensely. We feel it was not only a privilege having Helen as our co-worker but also a blessing.



Helen Douglas

June 21, 1947 - August 27, 2011

(On left, pictured with fellow Miami Head Start Family Service Workers Melinda Dillingham and Jamie McNeely.)

Kathy Smith

Kathy began working for the NEO Head Start Program at the Miami Head Start on August 25, 1997 as a Teacher Aide. During Kathy's 13 years with the program she was a true advocate for the children.

Kathy was instrumental in providing the best educational opportunities possible to the children in her classroom. Kathy loved being in the classroom teaching her children. She attended many of the children's activities outside of the Head Start day. The children always said "We love Miss Kathy!" We will miss Kathy and her positive and compassionate approach to life.



Kathy Smith

September 16, 1963 - June 20, 2011

(In center, pictured with fellow Miami Head Start teacher Marcie Rush and the children she loved.)

Northeast OK Community Action Services

- ◆ **Affordable Housing** is a broad term used to describe decent, safe housing which is affordable for individuals who, generally, earn less than 80% of the Area Median Income. If you want to purchase a home, need rehabilitation on your existing home, or want to reduce your home's energy use, Northeast Oklahoma CAA is here to help.
- ◆ **Head Start/Early Head Start** provides your child with activities that help them grow mentally, socially, emotionally, and physically. Your child will leave Head Start better prepared for kindergarten, excited about learning, and ready to succeed. Family support services are available for participating families.
- ◆ **Homeownership Assistance.** Through homebuyer education and down payment assistance, Northeast Oklahoma Community Action Agency assists income eligible individuals achieve homeownership.
- ◆ **Housing Rehabilitation Assistance** provides income eligible homeowners an opportunity to bring their home up to local code to create a safe, sanitary and comfortable environment. Home improvement repair services are available in select communities.
- ◆ **Weatherization Assistance** installs energy saving measures that reduce energy bills on average \$350 a year. Save money and make your home more comfortable, healthier and safer!
- ◆ **Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA)** offers free tax help to people whose incomes are \$50,000 or less throughout Delaware, Ottawa, and Craig Counties.
- ◆ **Financial Empowerment** is the ability to budget, save, and invest to lay a foundation for a secure financial future. Our Center provides useful advice to help you plan your family's future. Learn budget and finance skills to weather a crisis or save to purchase a home.
- ◆ **Emergency Assistance** is available for temporary emergencies beyond your control, such as loss of a job, unexpected medical or prescription costs, or car repair, that can threaten your employment, housing, or safety.
- ◆ **RX for Oklahoma** helps you access prescription assistance programs provided by pharmaceutical manufacturing companies if you need ongoing medications and have no prescription insurance.
- ◆ **Jobs Skills Development** assists unemployed and underemployed individuals to find and succeed in new job opportunities. From job search assistance to resume writing and interview skills, the agency links clients to resources and employers throughout the three-county area.
- ◆ **Economic Development** is currently planning several projects which will spur job creation and assist small businesses and entrepreneurs on the path to success.
- ◆ **Housing Development/Rentals** provides affordable housing to low-income individuals and families. The agency owns and is building housing units throughout the service area.

Corporate Office 918-253-4683
Head Start Office 918-253-4291
856 E. Melton, Jay, OK

Adair County Outreach

DHS

Section Line Rd, Rt 1, Box 42, Stilwell, OK
918-696-0411

Cherokee County Outreach

DHS

1298 W. 4th, Tahlequah, OK
918-453-0962

Craig County Outreach

Community Crisis Center

418 E Illinois, Vinita, OK
918-256-7387

Delaware County Outreach

856 E. Melton, Suite C, Jay, OK
918-253-4683

Ottawa County Outreach

DHS Office

2114 Denver Harner Drive, Miami, OK
918-541-2400

Colcord Head Start

100 Spenser Street
918-326-4139

Commerce Head Start

124 Vine Street
918-675-5556

Grove Head Start

802A W. 7th
918-786-3119

Jay Head Start

1104 W. Washbourne
918-253-8285

**Jay Expansion Head Start &
Early Head Start**

1015 S. Main
918-253-5891

Kansas Head Start

275 W. Main
918-868-2386

Miami Head Start

1530 NW H Street
918-542-9642

Quapaw Head Start

301 McDonald Ave
918-674-2700

Vinita Head Start

302 S. 2nd
918-256-7296

NORTHEAST OKLAHOMA COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY 2011 ANNUAL REPORT



A home built, owned and managed by the agency.

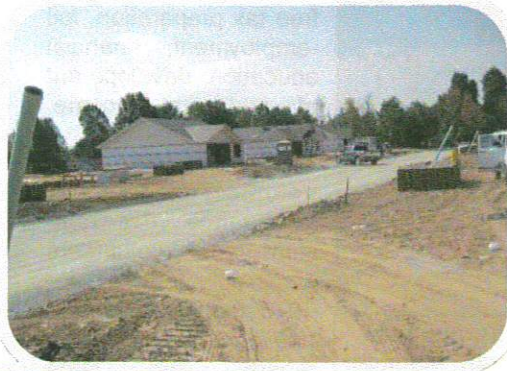


One of the agency's rental homes.



New low-income rental units in Jay

Building a Better Future for Families



What a change! 24 new units of Rent-to-Own housing under construction in Miami.



NORTHEAST OKLAHOMA COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY 2011 ANNUAL REPORT

HEAD START

This year was the program's Triennial Review from the Office of Head Start. This monitoring review is intended to determine whether our Head Start Program meets program performance standards, including those related to the areas of education, health, parental involvement, nutrition, social services, administration and financial management, and facilities used to conduct the program. Federal reviews are also intended to help Head Start programs identify areas for improvement and to identify areas of strength.



Making a difference in children's lives.

Eight professionals selected by the Office of Head Start conducted the review from March 20, 2011 through March 25, 2011. This year's team actually looked at two areas: (1) The existing Head Start Program and (2) The new Early Head Start Program and Head Start Expansion Program which were funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).

The agency is pleased to announce there were no findings in either area. This is very rare during a Triennial review and is a tribute to the hard work of staff, parents and community partners. Their commitment to ensuring excellence within the entire program was apparent to the entire monitoring team.

The team did note many strengths of the program that go beyond the expectations of the Office of Head Start. They are as follows:

The children's folders were outstanding.

The Head Start Management team was outstanding. Several members of the office team were asked to serve on future monitoring teams.

Having the third person in the classroom (TA II) was a noted strength of the agency's Head Start Program.

The Education Policy and Procedure Guide for the Education and Early Childhood Development component was a designated strength of the agency.

The fact that 60% of the agency's Head Start employees are a past parent, current parent or child that actually participated in Head Start was also considered a strength.

Something new for this Triennial Review was the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). This CLASS tool looks at 10 dimensions of teacher-student interactions and states those observed interactions on a seven point scale. Randomly selected teachers all performed admirably. The agency's program was the first Head Start Program in Oklahoma to have a CLASS trainer on staff. In addition, three additional staff members have trained as reliable CLASS observers.

Once again thanks go to staff, parents and community partners for assisting this Head Start Program in making it one of the most outstanding programs in the country.

Service Awards

Congratulations on your years of service!



Patti Stump
Assistant Head
Start Director
35 years

Kim Baldwin
Teacher
Miami Head
Start
20 years



HOME OWNERSHIP AND HOUSING SERVICES CENTER

WEATHERIZATION PROGRAM

"I just can't think you enough for all you've done!"

"Mere words cannot fully express my gratitude for the new roof..."

"This was the best gift I have ever received..."

No, the Weatherization crews aren't moonlighting as Santa. Those testimonials come from stacks of thank you cards and letters sent by clients who've received services through the program. Drafty windows and doors, poor or no insulation, old appliances that don't work efficiently or well—these all rob families of limited resources by raising energy costs and making homes uncomfortable or unhealthy.

The stimulus program has greatly increased both the number of clients receiving weatherization services and the extent of services provided. The initial contract with ODOC was to weatherize 238 homes. In January 2011, the Agency acquired two more counties, Adair and Cherokee, and added 72 homes to be weatherized for a total of 310 homes. This grant must be completed by March, 2012. During this fiscal year we have completed 143 homes. Some homes were completed in combination with separate contracts with PSO and Empire District Electric companies. The stimulus program has enabled the Weatherization department to provide training to the vast majority of the Weatherization staff.

Total expenditures for the 2010-2011 fiscal year are \$1,523,200.06 (includes material, labor and transportation).

The Agency is in the process of expanding the Weatherization program by doing a for profit venture in addition to the stimulus funding. The Agency has hired a temporary employee to

pursue and to explore additional for-profit clients such as utility companies, schools, public buildings and local vendors to provide sub-contractor services. Expanding the eligible service base should help the agency to retain its trained employees if funding is reduced.



Installing new windows

One of the new grants the agency has received from the stimulus program will involve replacing roofs with energy efficient "cool" roofs and installing solar heaters. Under this grant, the agency has received enough funding to do 30 roofs (in all five counties) and to install 10 solar heaters (in the three original counties). This grant must also be completed by March, 2012.

Weatherization Education one-on-one calls have continued this past year. The Weatherization Educator makes calls to clients whose weatherization projects have been completed. Staff is armed with a packet of energy information and a check list to deal with ongoing ways to conserve energy once the house has been weatherized. Staff discuss any ideas or concerns the client may still have about energy consumption and makes energy-saving suggestions.

Another way the agency makes contact with potential clients is through various fairs throughout the area each fall. At these and similar events, the agency has made contact with over 1000 people while handing out 500 hand fans and 150 applications. Staff will be attending various fairs through October and hopes to reach even more potential clients through this venue. The agency has also received a good response from residents of the two new counties as staff endeavors to get information out in Adair and Cherokee Counties about the Weatherization Program.



Removing lead-base paint from a client's home

EXPANDING THE VISION

modest, there was significant variation among the agency's programs. The Head Start/Early Head Start program experienced a decrease of \$247,877.68 primarily because the one-time funding associated with the space acquisition and repair along with purchase of equipment for the new Early Head Start/Head Start program in Jay was completed. Although this implementation funding was completed, funding has been provided to continue this important expansion of that program.

The largest increase for the agency's programs was in the housing and weatherization programs. The agency's weatherization program continued its extraordinary expansion in the original three counties (Craig, Delaware and Ottawa) as well as assuming responsibility to complete an additional 72 units in Adair and Cherokee Counties. Housing rehabilitation projects were completed in Jay, Vinita, Grove and Delaware County. The total increase of \$400,000 is especially significant because there was a decrease in the down payment assistance program due to financing issues in the economy. Housing services are expected to increase in FY2012 by \$1,036,467 because of the completion of two major housing development activities. The agency is a partner in a project to build 24 rent-to-own homes in Miami, with completion expected by the end of December 2011. The agency also expects to complete two duplexes in Jay by the end of September 2011.

Supportive Services spending for rent and utility assistance was down in 2011, principally because an Emergency Shelter Grant was lost for the year. This funding was restored in 2012, adding \$15,000 to these services as well as providing support to the Ark Shelter. The agency also received \$60,000 to provide homeless prevention services, principally in Adair and Cherokee counties.

Executive Director Jean Cooper looks over building plans for a new project.



Special Projects funding to support program expansion was reduced slightly in 2011 because of the loss of stimulus funds that were used to develop new programs. A dramatic expansion of services was experienced in this area in the job placement, job training, and financial literacy initiatives. While much of the funding for this area was lost with the end of stimulus funding, funds from the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) will be used to maintain and expand these efforts.

The total budget of the agency is expected to increase in spending in 2012 by \$838,000 over the spending in 2011. This is due to increases in housing, weatherization and agency support services. These expansions offset the reduction of funding largely the resulting from one-time funding for expansion experienced in 2011 in Head Start/Head Start. The opportunity to serve additional families in two new counties represents a significant challenge but holds the promise of providing badly needed services in two additional counties.

— Jean A. Cooper, Ed.D.
Executive Director

SERVICES with Cash Value	FAMILIES SERVED	VALUE OF SERVICE
Emergency Services for Families at risk of homelessness	342	\$85,475.06
Down Payment Assistance	12	\$47,703.00
Mortgage Value of Homes with DPA		\$713,000.00
Weatherization	154	\$1,523,200.06
Rehabilitation	38	\$464,937.32
RX for Oklahoma	224	\$759,060.00
Free Tax Preparation	1078	\$1,590,247.00
TOTAL	1848	\$5,183,622.44
SERVICES with no Cash Equivalent		
HEAD START / EARLY HEAD START		474 / 46
HOMEBUYER EDUCATION CLIENTS		58
TOTAL		578