



Little Dixie Digest

Sandy McGowen wins Fred Tucker Service Award Terri Harless also honored for 30 years of service in Community Action

Sandy McGowen of Broken Bow has received a statewide service award for her 27 years caring for McCurtain County youngsters.

McGowen, who is center director of Happy Days Day Care in Broken Bow, was named the recipient of the Fred Tucker Service Award by the Oklahoma Association of Community Action Agencies. She received her award at a banquet in the state capital on Sept. 17.

Several Little Dixie employees were also honored at the banquet for their longevity in community action. These included Marsha Zulkey of Valliant, Nancy Seebeck of Antlers, Vonda Benson of Grant and Terri Harless of Boswell.



At left, Sandy McGowen receives the Fred Tucker Service Award from OKACAA President Michael Jones. Above, 30-year service award winner Terri Harless is shown with Little Dixie's Board Chairman Herb Matlock and Executive Director Brenda Needham.

Smart Start hosts Child Watch Tour

Local leaders witnessed firsthand the benefits of early childhood education during an August tour of southeast Oklahoma child care and education facilities.

Dubbed the "Smart Start Tri-County Child Watch Tour," local employers and elected officials saw the inner workings of early education and enrichment programs in Hugo and Antlers. Those participating in the tour included State Senator Jerry Ellis, State Reps. Dennis Bailey and R.C. Pruet, as well as officials from International Paper, Choctaw and Pushmataha hospitals, Oklahoma Department of Health and Little Dixie Community Action Agency.

"I applaud our policy makers and elected officials for taking the time to go to these facilities and see how a quality program can improve the lives of children," said Dennis Willeford, Director of Smart Start Tri-County. "Our business leaders can see the value of these programs in shaping the future workforce."

The tour served to describe the economic impact of early childhood programs on the region. Early education and enrichment programs, including Head Start, Raising A Reader and the Smart Start effort, can fill the educational void left by disadvantaged families.

Employees of the Month August September



Little Dixie's Employees of the Month for August and September are shown with Board Chairman Herb Matlock and Executive Director Brenda Needham. August Employee of the Month was Clark LeForce (left), Little Dixie Director of Operations. September Employee of the Month is Josh Brazier (right), with the Communities Empowering Youth program. Both received certificates and an agency logo shirt. To nominate an employee for this monthly award, see the guidelines on Page 2 inside the Digest.

→ *Child Watch Tour photos on Page 3 Inside...*

Employee of the Month Guidelines

The Employee of the Month Committee has nomination forms available in hopes of encouraging more nominees for the monthly award to outstanding Little Dixie family members.

If you do not have forms in your office, call Zach Maxwell or Pam Covington at (580) 326-3351 and they will fax one to you.

Employees of the Month receive a T-shirt, gift certificate to local restaurant and are honored at the board meeting. They also will be eligible for Employee of the Year.

Submit nominations by the 15th of the month in order to be judged during that month. Submit nominations to Planning Director Pam Covington by mail (209 N. 4th St., Hugo, OK 74743), email (pcovington@littledixie.org) or fax (580-326-2305). Nominations are judged by the five-member committee. If the person you nominate is not selected, it is okay to nominate that person again the following month.

LED Sign guidelines

Little Dixie welcomes agency programs and the community at large to utilize the electronic message board at Fourth and Jackson streets in Hugo.

Eligible uses include LDCAA programs and current events, as well as non-profit events in the community. **Ineligible uses include birthdays and any for-profit business use.**

To receive a request form, email:

breynolds@littledixie.org

Little Dixie employees receive service awards



LDCAA service award winners pictured at the OKACAA banquet (left to right): Natalie Pierce, Brenda Needham, Becky Reynolds, Herb Matlock, Marsha Zulkey, Nancy Seebek, Vonda Benson, Terri Harless, and Sandy McGowen.

Photo by Johnny Moffitt

YouthBuild completes bridge at Hugo Lake trail



Little Dixie's YouthBuild crew has constructed a 20-foot bridge along the Bois D'Arc Trail at Hugo Lake State Park. Pictured here during the construction phase of the bridge: YouthBuild Construction Supervisor Johnny Trantham, YouthBuild members David Murray, Tyrone Alexander, Candice Logan, Jesse Shannon and Wayne Shannon. Photos at right show the progress made on the bridge.

Photos by Randall Pruitt



Housing bids farewell to Cavner, Ribera



Becky Reynolds and Ron Walker presented Bill Cavner a framed group photo of the Little Dixie Housing crew as a gift at his retirement reception recently.

Little Dixie Housing employees Bill Cavner and Kevin Ribera were treated to a going-away reception in early October as both set sail on their next adventures.

Cavner was a construction supervisor for the past five years. He is retiring and plans to visit Tennessee with his raccoon-hunting dogs.

Jerry Burton will be the new construction supervisor.

Ribera worked as a training specialist, and he will now be running his own business in the local housing industry. He is a veteran of the war in Iraq.



Kevin Ribera, left, and Bill Cavner enjoyed cake and refreshments at a reception to bid them farewell.



Local leaders attend Smart Start Child Watch Tour...



Gina Barnett boards a Little Dixie Transit van with other community leaders on the tour.



State legislators and local industry leaders visit a child care facility in Hugo. Dennis Willeford (second from right) served as tour guide.



Child Watch Tour participants observe a Little Dixie Head Start classroom in Hugo.



State Reps. Dennis Bailey and R.C. Pruett visit with Little Dixie Executive Director Brenda Needham.



State Rep. R.C. Pruett and Head Start Specialist Leslie Noel.



Patrick Brown, Smart Start Oklahoma, visits with Nancy Seebeck at a child care center in Antlers. At left, Head Start student Jillion shows her work, which she later presented to a Child Watch Tour participant.

Grants & Awards Roll Call

Little Dixie CAA received notification of the following grants and awards in August & September...

- E-Rate Funding for Head Start: \$46,265
- CSBG allocation from ODOC: \$58,806
- Year 3 NeighborWorks Expansion Grant: \$25,000
- Head Start Healthy Marriage Grant: \$299,186
- Housing Preservation Grant from USDA - \$36,000
- Community Facility Grant for Rattan Head Start from USDA - \$41,250
- Mentoring Children of Prisoners Grant from HHS - \$600,000
- Program for Investment in Microentrepreneurs Grant from SBA - \$75,000
- Rural Mini Grant from National CASA Association - \$2,000
- Community Economic Development Grant from HHS - \$400,000
- Weatherization Stimulus DOE from ODOC - \$800,373
- ARRA Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP) Funds for Pushmataha County - \$2,506

Little Dixie Head Start

Policy Council names veterans and new members



The 2008-2009 Little Dixie Head Start Policy Council outgoing members shown below are: Front row, left to right: Patty Head, Jamie Norris, Amanda Green, Jennifer Bennett; back row, left to right: Janet Grace, Steven Norris, Patty Butler, Tracy Gilbert, Herb Matlock, Tina Smith, Brandy Krohn. Some members were re-elected to serve in the 2009-2010 school year.

The 2009-2010 Little Dixie Head Start Policy Council incoming members shown above are: Front row, left to right: China Teague, Patricia Head, Jessica Withers, Jennifer Bennett, Amye Caldwell, Teresa Day, Lee Ann Lamza, Brandy Krohn; second row, left to right: Lisa Martin and Tracy Gilbert; third row, left to right: Jennifer Dryer, Megan Bradley, Patty Butler, Janet Grace, Tina Smith, Shanquaie McGee, Peggy Carden, Crystal Byers, Martina Hawkins; back row, left to right: Mindy Foster, Lori Little, Marcus McGrew, Justin Soderberg, Joey Renfro, Robert Schreider, Herb Matlock, Stefani Armstrong, Shawna Bridges.



Training sessions prep staff for successful year

Little Dixie Head Start classrooms across Southeast Oklahoma are seeing the results of a busy summer training schedule for classroom instructors and assistants.

Head Start staff members attended five days of intense “pre-service” training at locations in Idabel and Hugo. All of it prepared them for the current school year, and the skills, regulations and techniques they learned are serving to improve the educational environments for more than 400 pre-school students in Choctaw, McCurtain and Pushmataha counties.

There was a fun theme to each day, keeping the instructors, aides and support staff engaged for the very serious topics covered in training sessions. Little Dixie educators participated in Joke Day, Funny Hat Day, Happy Days (with a very slicked-back 60s

theme), Crazy Flip Flop Day and Creative T-shirt Day. Prizes were given to the most creative outfits on each day.

These theme days helped lighten the mood during the training sessions, which covered a wide variety of education and regulatory topics, including: Mental health and autism; Parental Involvement and confidentiality; Several sessions of curriculum training; OSHA, fire safety, dental hygiene and medication administration; Transportation and nutrition.

“These trainings offer Little Dixie Head Start employees a chance to brush up on procedures, learn new methods, and get together as a group to build team spirit,” said Little Dixie Head Start Director Dawn McDaniel. “We get together as

often as the calendar will allow, bringing our employees up to date on a variety of subjects. This helps create a fun, safe, modern and enriching classroom experience for our youngsters.”



Jennifer Goodman leads a training session for Little Dixie Head Start staff.

Photo by Dale Fisher



Project HOPE holds literacy team meeting in Hugo

More than 100 educators from across eastern Oklahoma took part in a “team building” session on Thursday, Sept. 24. The day-long meeting was part of Little Dixie’s Project HOPE – Helping Oklahoma Pre-schoolers Excel.

This literacy effort, and specifically the team building, is aimed at improving the linguistic, reading and writing skills of pre-schoolers throughout southeastern Oklahoma. Those in attendance included numerous school superintendents, administrators and educators.

“The enthusiastic response from educators for our team building exercise is a great sign for school-age children in this area,” said Ruthie Tate, Project HOPE director. “Through these meetings, we hope to improve literacy skills, engage parents, provide a rich language environment, and help

teachers deliver early literacy skills to their students.”

Oklahoma State Department of Education specialists came to Hugo to teach the educators about using tech-savvy SMART Boards to enhance oral language development in their classrooms. These specialists included Early Childhood Coordinator Mandy Gower, Claims Auditor and Smart Board expert Mandy Winton, and the state’s Director of Reading and Literacy, Cathleen Williams.

After these training sessions, Project HOPE staff members Connie Cody, Richard Baggs and Ruthie Tate conducted an Educational Leadership Committee meeting to present the literacy education strategic plan for the current school year. This included an introduction to a new assessment tool which will help educators plan individual and small group literacy activities for their students.



State Education Specialists Mandy Gower, Mandy Winton and Cathleen Williams speak to educators at the Project HOPE literacy team meeting in Hugo.



Nearly 100 educators gathered at Horace Mann Head Start in Hugo for the team meeting.

Head Start classrooms in McCurtain County enjoy visitors



Little Dixie Board Member Keith Lowe and son Zack Lowe visited Battiest Head Start to demonstrate fire safety and firefighting techniques. Keith is a member of Pickens Volunteer Fire Department.



LEFT: Stop, drop and roll!

TOP RIGHT: Handing out hats.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Tamping out flames.



Valliant 3 Little Dixie Head Start visited Mrs. Chapman's 8th grade Life Management class at Valliant School and helped in making Kool-Aid playdough. It was very exciting to see the different age groups working together. Most of the Head Start students could spell the color of the playdough: R E D.

Mrs. Brenda Chapman's class. Left to right (back row) Paige Chant, Alexa Short, Tabitha German, Cheyanne Bivings, Jordan Chapman, Branson Watkins, and Hollie Escher.

Ms. Cunningham's Valliant 3 Little Dixie Head Start: Front row: Jessie, Katelyn, Ace'Lee, Makel, Michael, Hayzn', John John, Hayden and Colton.

The second row: Jonavon, Aspen, Josey, Payton, Braxten, Timbreanna, Dominic and Shianne.



Biggest turnout yet for Antlers Deer Festival

Karla Luginbill, Little Dixie CASA's program director and President of the Deer Capital Tourism Association, reported the highest turnout yet at the 2009 Antlers Deer Festival and Outdoor Show.

The DCTA's premiere event was bigger than ever, with 70 vendors and upwards of 10,000 visitors.

Little Dixie had a strong show of support with four booths: Passport to the Future's photo booth, YouthBuild, Little Dixie Housing and Smart Start Tri-County's annual book giveaway.

A glance at some of the big winners in the 2009 Deer Festival:

- Rhonda Kupke won the DCTA cabin raffle.
- CASA Cutest Kids in Camo Contest winners: Randee Fennell, Cynthia Velasquez, Kayellee Hise, Zayda Penner, Michelle Powell, Macy Porter, Avery Floyd, McKinley Payne.
- Chili Cook-Off: Bug Tussle Belles.



Passport to the Future mentoring program with hula skirts on: John Morton, Angie Smith, Tonya Finley, Doris Long and John Rymel.



Little Dixie booth duty: Becky Reynolds, Rhonda Teague, YouthBuild, Randy Pruitt and Frankie Hinton from State Parks.



Deer Festival volunteers Shaun Long (Little Dixie CASA) and Tara Jackson (Little Dixie Business Center/PDI).



Jennifer Arnold's Little Dixie Head Start class from Antlers visited the festival.



Vonda Benson leads Horace Mann Head Start students through the vendor area of the festival.



Chainsaw carving at the Antlers Deer Festival.

(Tara Jackson photo)



Hundreds of books were given out at the Deer festival thanks to Smart Start Tri-County.



Little Dixie YouthBuild teacher assistant Corey Cleaves with two participants handing out Census 2010 information at the festival.



Jack Jackson and Karla Luginbill received appreciation awards for the hard work at



The chili cook-off was a big draw at this year's festival. (Tara Jackson photo)



Rifle raffle winner Damon Blagg is shown with Brenda Needham and Sheree Ensley, who sold him the winning ticket.



The Antlers Deer Festival crowd.

(Tara Jackson photo)



November Birthdays

- Carla Deupree
- Amber Baze
- Virginia Wafford
- April Joiner
- Hope Scott
- Matthew Johnson
- Debra Lawrenson
- Henry Slabaugh
- Kari Teague
- Doris Kizer
- Edward Jackson
- Etoy Lott
- Robert Tilton
- Gloria Strawn
- Francis Fuller
- Dennis Willeford
- Karen Donaldson
- Susan Collins
- Nora Kizer
- Brenda Foster

If we missed your birthday, or if you do not want your birthday/name to appear on this list, just let us know! Contact Zach Maxwell at (580) 326-3351 or email zmaxwell@littledixie.org



Angie Smith is a program assistant with Passport to the Future mentoring program. She lives in Antlers and most recently worked with Pushmataha County 4-H program.

Little Dixie Transit participates in car seat safety training program

Little Dixie Transit took part in a state effort to boost infant and car seat safety awareness recently in Hugo.

Jim Earnest, head of training for Little Dixie Transit, participated in car seat safety inspections in Hugo on Sept. 24. A total of 13 people from various agencies took part, including Little Dixie Transit, Choctaw Nation and local health departments.

The event was held at Hugo Agriplex and hosted by Oklahoma State Department of Health. Several local motorists came through the inspection line and received information about car seat safety and proper usage.



Oklahoma State Department of Health, Little Dixie Transit, Choctaw Nation and local Turning Point coalitions participated in car seat safety training and inspections recently in Hugo.



At left, Little Dixie Transit Training and Safety Specialist Jim Earnest helps participants inspect car seats.

Welcome to the Little Dixie family!



John Rymel is a program assistant for McCurtain County's Passport to the Future mentoring program. He lives in Valliant.



Dale Fisher is the new Licensing/Certification/Training Specialist at Little Dixie Head Start. He lives at Raymond Gary Lake "with his pet squirrel Rocky." He worked for DHS for 30 years in Tulsa, and was later director of child welfare in McCurtain County. Since retiring in 2000, he has written numerous grants and received teaching certifications as well.



Jordan Mack is a Healthy Marriage Advocate for Head Start. She is a graduate of ECU in Ada and lives in Soper with husband Clay.

LITTLE DIXIE COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY

Helping People. Changing Lives.

BRENDA NEEDHAM
Executive Director

HERB MATLOCK
Board Chairman

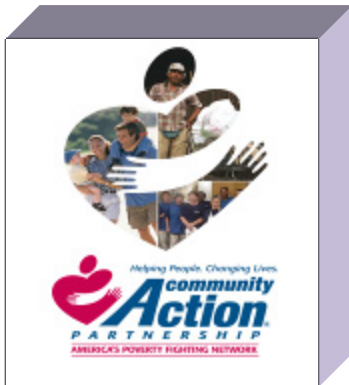
BRENT FRANKS
Vice Chairman

JERRY SHINN
Secretary/Treasurer

Board Members: Choctaw County
Leeoma Caldwell, Lewis Collins, Kevin Cory, Leona Edwards, Ray Noble, Charles Partin, David Rawls, William Smith, Susan Wall.

Board Members: McCurtain County
Clint Bray, John Dean, Kenneth Hamilton, Andrea Henkel, Keith Lowe, Herb Matlock, James Sharpe, Jerry Shinn, Arthur Stewart, Jr., Jessica Withers.

Board Members: Pushmataha County
Jerry Duncan, Brent Franks, Vickie Leathers, Eddy McIntosh, Mark McIntosh, Frank Rosenthal, Joel Taylor, Jana Wallace.



Little Dixie Digest
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Hugo, OK 74743
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KOI cuts ribbon on new work center



Kiamichi Opportunities, Inc., dedicated a new, larger work center in Hugo on Sept. 24. A reception was held with guest speaker Uwe Von Schamann, a noted athlete for OU.

KOI contracted with Little Dixie to write grants and oversee the construction of the building. It was made possible through a \$300,000 Community Economic Development grant from the federal Office of Community Services.



KOI Director William Smith cuts the ribbon with chamber officials (above), and accepts his chamber membership certificate (left).

The center is Choctaw County's only employment agency specifically for people with disabilities. The main industry is a laundry center, and KOI provides this service under contract from local state parks and other groups.

For more information about Kiamichi Opportunities, Inc., or their residential center, the Estus House, call (580) 326-7548.

Little Dixie Board welcomes new members

There are some new faces on the Board of Directors for Little Dixie.

Jerry Duncan is on the Board of Commissioners for Pushmataha County, representing the district covering the southeast part of the county.

James Sharpe is superintendent of Idabel Public Schools, so he will represent the school on the board as a McCurtain County member.

Jessica Withers of Garvin is the new Head Start Policy Council representative to the board. We will have James and Jessica's picture in a future Digest!



Jerry Duncan

Digest Datebook...

Upcoming Holidays for Little Dixie employees:

- Wednesday, Nov. 11 - Veteran's Day
- Nov. 26 & 27 - Thanksgiving
- Dec. 24 & 25 - Christmas
- Friday, Jan. 1, 2010 - New Year's Day

Calendar of Events:

- Nov. 5 at 10 a.m.: Pushmataha County Coalition meeting, Antlers Church of Christ.
- Nov. 6 at 1 p.m.: RSVP Banquet, Antlers First Baptist Church
- Nov. 7: Passport to the Future mentoring cleanup event in Idabel.

- Nov. 10 at 10:30 a.m.: Little Dixie Board meeting, 500 E. Rosewood, Hugo.
- Nov. 13 at 1 p.m.: RSVP Banquet, Idabel Bypass Church of Christ.
- Nov. 17 at 11 a.m.: McCurtain County Coalition meeting, MC Memorial Hospital.
- Nov. 17 at 2 p.m.: Choctaw County Coalition meeting at Kiamichi Technology Center.
- Nov. 19 at 6:30 p.m.: Hugo Area Chamber of Commerce Banquet
- Dec. 4 at 9 a.m.: Little Dixie annual meeting and in-service, Hugo Agriplex.**