



Little Dixie Digest

Price, Brisbois are teachers of the year



Head Start Teacher of the Year Sheila Price of Battiest, with Director Dawn McDaniel.



Early Head Start Teacher of the Year Wanda Brisbois, Hugo EHS, with Director Dawn McDaniel.



Head Start Cook of the Year Rita Calvin, center, with her assistant Ethel Coleman and Nutrition Specialist Nancy Seebeck.

See Page 2 for more Head Start award winners!



Head Start Specialist Marsha Zulkey, left, presents the Aide of the Year award to Dana Patterson of Valiant.

Our new Swink class, InService and more on Page 3



Nancy Seebeck, left, with Early Head Start Cook of the Year Lisa Engler of Idabel.

NeighborWorks Week event held in Idabel

Little Dixie marked National NeighborWorks Week in June with a series of events in Idabel. On June 7, door-hangers were handed out warning residents of a new home loan scam. On June 10, Little Dixie joined Idabel Minority Action Committee and the City of Idabel to help clean a drainage ditch along Martin Luther King Drive.

National NeighborWorks Week was celebrated June 5-12. It is held annually by more than 250 NeighborWorks members throughout the United States to bring much-needed information and assistance to impoverished

neighborhoods. June is also National Homeownership Month.

The black and yellow door hangers warn residents of a "loan modification scam ALERT." NeighborWorks America has provided the informational door-hangers to Little Dixie for local distribution. The educational resources encourage responsible homeownership.

"This is one of the best times to buy a home with low interest rates, affordability for low- to middle-income families has never been better," said Brenda Needham, LDCAA Executive Director.



Little Dixie employees and Idabel Minority Action Committee volunteers pose at the National NeighborWorks Week project site in Idabel. The City of Idabel also sent a heavy equipment crew to help clear debris.

Head Start Annual Service Awards - May 28, 2010

Sailing into summer aboard the USS Little Dixie...



Horizon Award winner Amanda Storey with Dale Fisher.



Broken Bow 3 staff, with Pat Ray, won the first Community Awareness Award.



Ashley Ellison was presented the Emerging Leadership Award by Pam Waugh.



Boswell Head Start was honored for Best Overall Recruitment Efforts and Most Improved Center, by Jennifer Goodman.



Rattan I Head Start won Best Support of Nutrition Activities. Presenter at left is Nancy Seebeck.



Battiest Head Start staff was honored for Best Individualization of Student Instruction and Most Attractive & Clean Center.



Tina Foster (right) won the award for best EHS interaction with students, presented by Leslie Noel.



Conchita McCarrell of Idabel won Best Support of Literacy Activities, presented by Leslie Noel.



Jennifer Morphis received an award for Best Support of Families, presented by Pat Ray (left).



Bonnie Sims presents the best Overall Special Needs Aide to Sherry Box.



Tammie Fewell of Antlers receives the "Going Above and Beyond" Award from Bonnie Sims.



Haworth Head Start receives the award for Best Fatherhood Involvement and Best Child Attendance from Pat Ray (left).



Head Start cruises toward a successful 2010-2011 school year

Children’s recording artist “Mr. Al” and national curriculum specialists from Frog Street Press visited the staff of Little Dixie Head Start and Early Head Start in July.

The four-day training sessions were part of Little Dixie’s annual preparations for the upcoming school year. More than 100 classroom instructors, aides and cooks gathered at Kiamichi Technology Center in Hugo for the training.

“We strive to bring experts in the field of early education to train our staff at Little Dixie Head Start and Early Head Start,” said Program Director Dawn McDaniel.

“Mr. Al” Rasso is a seasoned entertainer and expert in early education who hails from south Florida. His songs are engaging and interactive. He performed on Friday, July 23 for Little Dixie staff members.

Marlene Williams and Christy Door from Frog Street Press provided a guided tour of the curriculum chosen by Little Dixie Head Start officials and provided by the Early Reading First “Project HOPE” program.



Singer “Mr. Al” visits with Head Start employees in July.



Marlene Williams presents Frog Street curriculum materials to instructors.



Renowned speaker Ken Kington poses with Alison Carper, granddaughter of Head Start employee Sandy Carper. Kington motivated Head Start employees at a May training event.



Members of the Head Start Policy Council for 2009-2010 were awarded certificates for their volunteer efforts.



Pat Ray, left, presents the Best Parent Involvement award to Oak Hill Head Start staff.



Attendance Award winners from Little Dixie Head Start staff members.



Antlers Early Head Start won the award for Best EHS Child Attendance. Presenter was Jennifer Goodman, right.



Nancy Seebeck, left, presented the Best All Around Nutrition Management Award to Antlers I Head Start.



Lynette O'Dell presents the Best Team Effort Award to Hugo IV Head Start.



Ada Jackson presents the Best Supportive Health Practices award to Hugo EHS.

Little Dixie T&MA Contractor Department

Self-Help presents keys to Bryan County family

Just in time for their 49th wedding anniversary, Merle & Nancy Taylor earned a gift a lifetime in the making: The keys to homeownership.

Little Dixie Self-Help officials and representatives from USDA Rural Development attended this special event.

"This right here is the American dream," USDA Rural Development State Director Ryan McMullen told the media. The presentation was made in their new, 1,400-square-foot home in the Bent Tree Addition between Durant and Calera.

Little Dixie Executive Director Brenda Needham said the event was

a perfect fit for National HomeOwnership Month, held every June. LDCAA has now built 90 homes in Bryan County and more than 1,800 across southern Oklahoma since 1974.

USDA Rural Development invests \$700 million a year in Oklahoma, mainly via grant programs and project loans. They were called a "key partner" in Little Dixie's Self-Help Program by Associate Director Becky Reynolds. Others include NeighborWorks America, OHFA and the Federal Home Loan Bank of Topeka.

Kelly's Sod Farm donated four pallets of sod for the Taylor's new yard.



Little Dixie Self-Help and USDA Rural Development officials joined Merle & Nancy Taylor for their Self-Help Home key presentation in June.

'Sweat equity' helps 19 Louisiana families

By Jonathan Menard
St. Charles Herald Guide

Since 2007, 19 families in St. Charles Parish have taken advantage of a Family Resources of New Orleans program that allows them to build their own homes and qualify for a subsidized loan that leaves them paying only \$400 to \$500 a month.

The program, called the Rural Development Mutual Self-Help Housing Program, gives eligible families the opportunity to work together, usually in groups of four, to build their own homes. To be eligible for the program, the families must have a credit score of at least 640 and can have an income level as low as \$11,000.

The market value for the homes is close to \$150,000, though it usually costs the families around \$118,000. Of that total, \$90,000 to \$95,000 is construction costs with the remainder going towards purchase of the land.

Family Resources helped the families cut the ribbons on eight new homes in July in Boutte Estates.

Quiana Brown, a single mother with two daughters, was one of the new homeowners.

"I don't think I could have ever bought a new home without this program," she said. "I never thought I would be a homeowner." Brown said that Family Resources of New Orleans helped her rebuild her credit so that she would be able to qualify for a 1 percent interest loan though the USDA that helped her with construction and lot costs. "Once I got the loan, I got to go to the store and pick out tiles and flooring. That was the fun part," Brown said.

The families work alongside the contractors and are required to contribute 35 hours of labor each week to the construction of their and their neighbor's homes. This process, called "sweat equity," allows the families to save on building supplies and negotiate better construction rates with subcontractors.

Brown's entire family contributed, including her two daughters, who each helped paint their rooms.

Paula Pete, the executive director of Family Resources of New Orleans, said that the goal of the program is to allow residents to remain in St. Charles.

"There is a huge shortage of affordable housing... This program is rebuilding neighborhoods."



Photo Courtesy St. Charles Herald Guide

The Brown family recently moved into a new home which they helped build. From left to right, Teriane, Quiana and Briana stand outside their drive on Boutte Estates Drive.

Save the date: HAC National Rural Housing Conference

Make plans to join rural housing experts from around the country in Washington, D.C., Dec. 1-3, 2010 for "A Place to Live: Rural Housing in a Changing Landscape." Details will be posted at <http://www.ruralhome.org>.



Little Dixie T&MA Contractor Department

Turning hope into homes...

Nancy Hanson honored by League of Women Voters

Information from the West Texas County Courier

Nancy Hanson, executive director of Lower Valley Housing Corporation (LVHC) in Fabens, Texas, was recently honored for 20 years of work in affordable housing.

Hanson received the Bravo Award from the League of Women Voters recently, for her “extraordinary contributions” to improve the quality of life in her West Texas community. More than 1,100 families in 17 rural communities in West Texas have been helped by the LVHC.

“We like what we do,” Hanson told the West Texas County Courier. “We give people a hand up, not a handout. It is hard on the families, but it brings out the best in people.”

LVHC was formed in 1986 by residents of Fabens. The group administers a Mutual Self-Help housing program that “literally opens doors

to new and affordable homes for those families of limited income,” according to the Courier. Little Dixie’s Technical & Management Assistance program has been there every step of the way to help LVHC.

The Lower Valley Housing Corporation serves El Paso County, Texas. The families helped by LVHC have an “excellent” record in meeting obligations to pay for the homes.

Hanson told the Courier that the corporation has between 800 and 900 mortgages—all with low income families—and only six of those participants have defaulted.

Congratulations to Nancy on this outstanding achievement. She has truly made a difference in the lives of South Texas families who are new homeowners thanks to her efforts, and their Self-Help efforts as well.



Photo courtesy League of Women Voters

Nancy Hanson of Lower Valley Housing Corporation received the Bravo Award from the League of Women Voters for her 20 years of work in helping families achieve their homeownership dreams.

WACD: Helping build homeownership in Arkansas

By Charles Goodin
The Nashville News

NASHVILLE, Ark. - Dr. William A. Ward famously said, “A house is made of walls and beams; a home is built with love and dreams,” and he was right. For many people, owning their home is as much a part of the American dream as baseball, apple pie and a weekend trip to the lake.

In the past, that dream was out of reach for those with modest means. But for residents of southwest Arkansas, home ownership has become a very real possibility thanks to West Arkansas Community Development, Inc.

“We provide homes to good, reliable families who have a modest income,” said WACD President John Stinnett. “Every home has been a blessing - for us and the family.”

WACD is a Self-Help Housing program offered to individuals and families in Hempstead, Howard, Pike and Sevier counties who qualify based on a combination of income

guidelines and credit score.

If they meet application pre-requisites, families then invest in their future home with “sweat equity” by helping contractors during the construction of the property, which usually lasts three to four months.

The projects are financed with USDA Rural development loans that require no down payment and receive a subsidy for interest on the loan amount. Taxes and insurance are both included in the monthly payment, which typically ranges between \$350 and \$500 a month.

The houses are sold with no mark-up because administration costs are paid with a separate grant. “100 percent of the money borrowed goes only to the house,” said Stinnett.

Since 2004, WACD has built 65 homes in the area and, according to Stinnett, plans are underway to build 21-25 more between now and 2012. He estimates they contribute more than \$1 million to the local economy through

contractors and supplies.

A life-long construction worker, Stinnett prides himself on using his skills to benefit the less fortunate. “We’ve taken people from the worst possible conditions,” he said.

Just ask the Bearden family, who heard about the WACD program after trying to purchase a home through traditional means. Construction on their house began in February of this year and they moved in on April 24, the same day it was completed.

“They helped us every step of the way,” said Donna Bearden, whose eyes light up when she’s asked about her experience with the program. “They are great people.”

“We wouldn’t change a thing,” added husband Scotty. “We love it.”

West Arkansas Community Development, Inc., was established in 2004. It is based in Nashville, Ark. For more information, call (870) 403-7689.

Little Dixie Transit contributes to Choctaw Nation training

DURANT – Two of southeast Oklahoma’s most powerful change agents are joining forces more and more often. A school bus training and safety exercise between Little Dixie Transit and Choctaw Nation Head Start is the latest evidence of this trend.

Little Dixie Transit Trainer Jim Earnest and drivers Donna Hudson of Antlers, Billy Byrd of Idabel and Jimmie Vandiver of Broken Bow trained 79 Choctaw Nation employees on the Americans with Disabilities Act procedures for passengers of publicly used vans and buses.

“This goes a long way, as far as our cooperation with the Choctaw Nation,” Ear-

nest said. “Education is empowerment. A lot of people have never done or seen this procedure before. We got a positive reaction from everyone. They want to know the correct procedure to secure their riders.”

Earnest said the drivers, who volunteered for the day-long event at the Choctaw Nation’s Transportation Headquarters in Durant, each had to prepare for the training sessions by reviewing their own knowledge and making sure it meshed with the equipment available to Choctaw Nation drivers.

Specifically, Little Dixie trainers showed each group how to load and

secure a wheelchair onto a lift gate, and how to secure the chair once inside the bus using hooks, straps and other rigging. Each participant was required to perform this procedure, witnessed by the Little Dixie trainers and Choctaw Nation observers.

“They’ve been a barrel of fun,” Donna Hudson said. “I had one bunch that asked to do it again because they wanted to make sure and get it right.”



Little Dixie Transit sent four employees to Durant to assist Choctaw Nation Head Start with ADA training. Transit Trainer Jim Earnest is shown with volunteer drivers Donna Hudson, Jimmie Vandiver and Billy Byrd.

A first for YouthBuild: Three classes at once!

For the first time in Little Dixie YouthBuild history, three separate classes will be operating simultaneously. An induction ceremony for the latest class was held July 30 in Hugo.

The February 2010 crew members are close to graduation. They include Paige Burton, Wesley Hill, Salina James and Glenn Sedore.

“I can see how we’ve matured here,” said Salina James. “If it was not for YouthBuild, I’d still just be sitting at home.”

The May 2010 crew brought an aquarium and display case they built using newly gained carpentry skills. These members include Stephanie Brewer, Matthew Churchwell, Rashad Milton, Kevin Parish, Brandon Robertson and Sharena Ward.

The new August 2010



YouthBuild members show their geography project and award certificates at the YouthBuild Induction

crew includes Jessica Burt, Annika Dillard, Toby Robinson, E.J. Stacy, Michael Van Zandt, and Amber Westbrook.

Partners in YouthBuild efforts include Vickie Greer of Little Dixie Housing, who presented Financial Fitness classes; Frank Hinton from Little

Dixie State Parks; Choctaw Memorial Library, Choctaw Nation and Hugo Public Schools.

YouthBuild staff includes: Director Steve Tucker, Construction Supervisor Johnny Trantham, Education Specialist Kathryn Covington, instructors Debbie Greenwood and Corey Cleaves.

RSVP honors 10th anniversary of Sawyer Nutrition Center



Little Dixie RSVP Director Barbara Moffitt presents a 10th anniversary plaque to Sawyer Nutrition Center volunteers. The occasion was celebrated in July with a barbecue picnic for the community, provided by Rusty Goodman. Volunteers include Gladys Sharp, Linda Oakes, Jane Burris, Ernest Oakes, Sandy Pharis, Maisie Orr, Pat Young, and Minnie Weatherford.

CASA receives national certification

The Little Dixie CASA program has just been awarded certification by the National Court Appointed Special Advocate Association. This certification recognizes that Little Dixie CASA is in compliance with National CASA's high standards for quality child advocacy.

According to Michael Piraino, CEO of the National CASA Association, "The National CASA quality assurance process is very rigorous, and reflects our commitment to ensure every child we serve has the most powerful volunteer advocate working on their behalf. This certification says Little Dixie CASA has demonstrated to us a strong capacity to provide excellent services to the abused and neglected children within their community."

Little Dixie CASA was started in October 1998 in Antlers. It has grown to serve all three counties under the leadership of Director Karla Luginbill. In 2009, a total of 25 volunteers served 1,100 hours advocating for 49 children in abuse cases in the three county service area.



Executive Director Brenda Needham and CASA Director Karla Luginbill hold the program's national certification award. They are pictured with CASA staff members Jerri Mitchell, Jessica Robertson and Dawn Standridge.



CASA story time

Kaleb Standridge, 10, reads to Choctaw Nation Head Start students with his mom, Dawn Standridge, as part of Child Abuse Awareness Month in April. The event was part of CASA's child abuse awareness activities.

Transitions...



Jessica Robertson

Mrs. Robertson is the new Advocate Coordinator for CASA in Choctaw County. She was previously a membership executive with Girl Scouts of America. She lives in Rattan with husband Eric and two daughters.



Shaun Long

Mr. Long is the new office manager at the Little Dixie office in Antlers. He assists Pushmataha Development Initiative and Little Dixie Economic Development Services by promoting small businesses, tourism and new industry in the Antlers area.

Vickie Beck is new Self-Help Program Secretary in Idabel

Hello! My name is Vickie Beck, I'm married to Jackie, we have lived in the Wright City/Ringold area for the past 30 years.

We have two children, Christie Yoder and Kyle Beck, and three wonderful grandchildren, Rayln, Kenley and Tyler.

I enjoy fishing camping and spending time with my family.



Vickie Beck

Texas students Share blessings at Self-Help home

Summit Christian Academy students travel to some far-flung places to fulfill the missionary requirements of their schooling. Lucky for some local homeowners, they keep finding their way to Bryan County.

Sixteen students and five adult instructors descended upon Achille this spring to help Margaret Pendleton build her first home. The group of high school sophomores came from an Austin, Texas private school, as part of a partnership with Little Dixie's Self-Help Housing Program.

"It's wonderful, absolutely unreal," said Mrs. Pendleton, a grandmother who has been living in a Durant apartment with several friends dubbed the "Golden Girls." "I didn't dream I would ever have my own home. It's been well worth the wait."

The group spent some time working with children at New Life Family Church in Boswell. Before they worked on Mrs. Pendleton's home, they were painting another house.

Ginger Lambert, Impact Education Director for SCA, said the group had a little time to visit some historic sites near their lodging spot at Hugo Lake State Park.

"It always feels good to bless others," said Marina Gallop, 16, of Cedar Park, Texas. "I know I'm affecting someone's life."



Summit Christian Academy students and advisors from Cedar Park, Texas, volunteered to work at a Little Dixie Self-Help home in Achille. One student hard at work is shown at left.

LITTLE DIXIE COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY

Helping People. Changing Lives.

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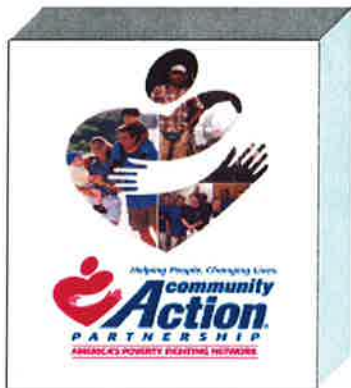
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Mentor of the Month



Billy Jack Wilkerson, a mentor with Passport to the Future mentoring program, receives the mentor of the Month Award from **Angie Smith** in Antlers. Isaiah Robinson is Wilkerson's mentee, and he arranged a birthday party for the boy. It was the first party Isaiah had ever experienced for his birthday.

Raising A Reader



Watson and Wright City pre-kindergarten classes received their Raising A Reader book bags recently. Smart Start Tri-County Director **Dennis Willeford** said they are the last Pre-K classrooms in the Little Dixie service area to receive the take-home reading kits. This brings an end to a five-year literacy effort made possible by Smart Start Oklahoma, Little Dixie and numerous community partners. Little Dixie salutes Dennis and our community partners for making this effort come to life.

Upcoming holidays for Little Dixie employees...

Monday, Oct. 11... Columbus Day
Thursday, Nov. 11... Veterans Day
Nov. 25 & 26 (Thurs.-Fri.)... Thanksgiving



Weatherization Education

Terry Boylan, Little Dixie Weatherization Educator, as guest speaker at the July meeting of the Pushmataha County Turning Point Coalition. Information was handed out to people from a wide variety of community service providers about the energy saving program.

Employees of the Month!



Lechra Fleeks (above left) was employee of the month for May. She works at Hugo Early Head Start. **Vickie Greer** (above right) was employee of the month for June. She is financial education specialist at Little Dixie Housing in Hugo.

Employee service awards given



Randall Crumley (Head Start Family Advocate) receives his five year service award from Little Dixie Board Chairman **Herb Matlock** and Executive Director **Brenda Needham**. Other recent awardees:

- Brent Martin** (Transit)
- Terry Wren** (Housing)
- John Morton** (Mentoring)
- Carla Herd** (Head Start)
- Donna Trapp** (Head Start)
- Jennifer Goodman** (Head Start)