

CAA Insight

April - June 2023



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A Word from the Director



After over 52 years, Ms. Carolyn Shaw has announced her retirement as Head Start Program Director. Since her beginning as a Head Teacher at 123 Playhouse in 1970, to Center Director at Walnut Grove, then Head Start Specialist, Supervisor for the Child and Family Resource Program, and finally through her role as Director of the Head Start Program in Oklahoma County, Ms. Shaw has worked to build and maintain the highest quality program for the children and families in our area. She created the slogan of “Moving to the Next Level” to describe the work that we do. We are here to help our children and families move to their next level, whatever that might be for them.

She has built the culture in our program that everything we do is about the families we serve. We should always put ourselves in the shoes of our families and think of how we would want to be treated should we be in that situation. Beyond that, everything should be geared to be of the highest quality and we should have the highest expectations of ourselves in our work.

Now Ms. Shaw is moving on to her next level... retirement! We applaud her and appreciate all she has done for CAA and our families.

Curtiss Mays, who has been our Child Development Specialist for the past 12 years, and prior to that was in our classrooms, will be our new Head Start Program Director beginning May 1, 2023. We know that he will do his best to continue the wonderful work started by Ms. Shaw, and to grow and improve the program. But one thing will not and cannot change, and that is that our families will remain the heart and center of our program’s focus.

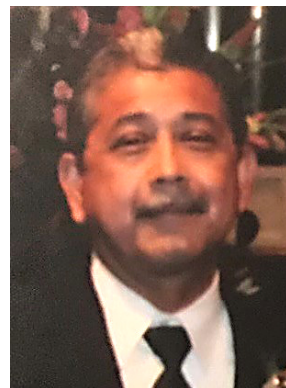


Thank you, Ms. Shaw, for all that you have done! Enjoy your well-earned retirement. Welcome Mr. Mays to your new role as leader of the Head Start Program for Oklahoma County!

Jessie Thompson
Executive Director

Board Member Spotlight

Leo Leija is a disabled veteran who has served as a member of the Community Action Agency Board for the southwest area since March of 2022. He has been married to his high school sweetheart for 50 years and has 3 children as well as numerous grandchildren. He has a strong Christian background and believes in helping others.



Mr. Leija served in the army, and upon completion of his tour transitioned into the Department of Defense as an Aircraft Engineer Mechanic at Kelly AFB in San Antonio, Texas. Due to base closures, he was transferred to Tinker AFB in 2000. He was an Industrial Engineering Technician when he retired after 38 and ½ years of service.

He has a strong desire to inform and help not only the residents in his neighborhood but whoever needs help. He is very active in his community. He currently serves as the Vice President for Taylor Park Neighborhood Association. He has coordinated and assisted all in his neighborhood, especially the elderly, by signing them up each year for the “OU Big Event” and “OU Little Event”. This is greatly appreciated by all because, due to their age, they are limited to what they can do and the OU students come do chores or tasks they are unable to do themselves.



Doralicia Sandoval has been a board member since September of 2022. She is the Director of Community Outreach and Education at Oklahoma City Community College, and has been with them since 2006. She became involved with the board as previous leaders from OCCC had served and set a precedent for active involvement.

Ms. Sandoval serves on other boards and committees, including Capitol Hill Lions Club, Calle Dos Cinco in Historic Capitol Hill, and Central Oklahoma Workforce Innovation Board. She enjoys participating in community events and outreach opportunities, as well as actively volunteers at and donates to local organizations and charities.

Ms. Sandoval shared a quote that resonated with her: “It does not matter how long you are spending on the earth, how much money you have gathered, or how much attention you have received. It is the amount of positive vibration you have radiated in life that matters.” – Amit Ray

Community Services Division

The Community Services Division has been busy. We ended 2022 helping our clients register for Christmas assistance. We assisted clients with The Sharing Tree sign up. This program allowed families to shop for Christmas gifts for children in their household ages 0 to 12 years old.

In January 2023, we started our Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program training. There were 12 Community Services Staff that were certified to assist taxpayers with filing their taxes. We started the program on February 1, 2023, and provided drop off, in person and appointment opportunities for taxpayers to receive this service. There was a slow start, but things have picked up and we are looking forward to the last day of tax prep for our program on April 13, 2023.



Rx for Oklahoma Staff are still attending the free clinics to assist clients with obtaining free or reduced cost maintenance medications. Judith and Mayra are doing a great job assisting the RX client. RX for Oklahoma is a statewide program. The state is divided into 5 regions and CAA of OKC serves as the primary office for region 5. Region 5 serves 11 counties in Oklahoma, and we partner with 3 other Community Action Agencies to provide service to all counties.



Our first ever Community Action Agency of Oklahoma City Food Pantry has been in operation for just over a year. This pantry is located at our SE District Center, located at 6309 S Camille, which also houses Valley Brook Head Start. We provided food to 383 families. We are planning on opening our second food pantry at our SW District Center located in the Will Rogers Head Start building at 1621 SW 15th Street. We hope this location

will be equally as busy as it is in an Oklahoma City Public Housing complex.

The El Reno office had a client whom they had been working with for several months who had lost their Social Security Disability income. This client initially came to us for assistance with food. After speaking with the Staff, it was determined that would be able to sign her up for a weekly food distribution and were also able to assist with her utilities. When the client was finally able to begin receiving Social Security Disability income again, she was so appreciative of the staff in El Reno that she decided to donate \$500 to the office. Nancy Walker, Area Director, and Christina Vass, Community Services Director, used this money to replace two printers and purchase 4 refurbished phones for the office. This has been a blessing for the staff in the office.



Economic Development/Special Projects Division



After 27 years of renting the home that L. Hill had been staying in, she decided it was finally time to own her own. She knew the journey ahead of her would be challenging, but she knew it was time for her to transform her life for the better. During the program, L. Hill experienced many challenges and even felt like she couldn't do it. She recounts feeling like she wasn't even going to be able to receive the funds after all the trouble she went through.

Of all the hardships she experienced, the biggest hurdle was locating her dream home. "All the homes that I had looked at within the guidelines weren't right. They [weren't] the right one, they were just homes." L. Hill stated.

She knew she hadn't encountered her perfect home and she continued to search for the one. After what seemed like forever, L. Hill finally located the perfect home, and it was successfully put together and recently redone.



After successfully completing the down payment and closing cost assistance program and settling into her wonderful new home, L. Hill is ecstatic and wouldn't change a thing. When asked what is one piece of advice that she'd give someone who wants to achieve the dream of owning their first home, her response was simple: "Don't give up! Because many times I started to give up, even going through the process of this program. I started to give up because they kept pushing back the closing date and I thought to myself, 'this is not real, this is not going to happen.' But I didn't give up."



After 27 years of renting and an extensive time full of contemplation and challenges, L. Hill closed on her home January 6th, 2023.



Head Start Division

We here at head start have started 2023 off with a bang! We have been making great progress across the board as a program and we would like to share what we have accomplished below!

Guiding the growth of our children is of paramount importance to our program. We use a diagnostic assessment called the LAP-D (Learning Accomplishment Profile Diagnostic) to ascertain where children are when they come in and chart their growth throughout their time in our program.



This data helps to guide what our staff does in the classroom. As we have now finished with our second of three yearly assessments, we can now say that our children have improved nearly fifteen points across all areas of the early learning outcome framework since August. This is a tremendous accomplishment, and it speaks to the diligence of the children and to the vigilance of our teaching staff and the families of our brilliant students. Well Done!





It is not only the children that learn at Head Start. Families at several sites had the opportunity to participate in one of our Winter Early Birds classes. Early Birds is a parent curriculum from Smart Start Central Oklahoma that is research based and works towards developing families confidence and capabilities in working with their children at home. Families are also provided with learning materials free of charge. The partnership has been a great success and we are looking forward to having Spring classes in April!

A big part of our program is looking for ways to reach out to the community and meet with families that we can provide services to and make them aware of what we do. Head Start representatives were at the OU Children's Hospital Resource Fair on March 15th. Over one hundred individuals came by our booth throughout the day. They received information on not only Head Start, but all the services that Community Action Agency provides for the Oklahoma City area. We are optimistic that this will bring more families to our program and that we look to be a regular participant in this event!



Housing/Maintenance Division

Emergency Home Repair continues performing repairs which qualify as health and safety emergencies for qualified applicants in the Oklahoma City targeted area.



Special Thanks to Everyone from
the Community Action Agency.
My family and I really appreciate all
the hard work that was done to our
house. We feel very blessed. Thank you
for the new furnace that was installed
in our house. feels very warm and
comfortable compared to how it was.
we sincerely appreciate all that you
do for the families in need.
May god bless you all.
Maria Gonzalez and family.

Weatherization is embarking on a new funding cycle utilizing BIL monies. These funds are part of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law in which the Department of Energy received sixty-two billion dollars to deliver a more equitable and clean energy future.

The Oklahoma Department of Commerce received \$42,330,030 for Weatherization. This equates to \$8,121,257 for weatherization in Oklahoma, Canadian, Cleveland, Pottawatomie, and Lincoln Counties through December 2026. Pottawatomie and Lincoln Counties are new counties to the agency.

Thank you all so much for my new roof. As a single parent, I appreciate all of the help I can get. God Bless You all!
Diana



Maintenance has accomplished numerous improvements to Head Start Centers and is currently working on preparing the latest Head Start Center in Midwest City.



Mission Statement

The mission of the Community Action Agency of Oklahoma City and Oklahoma/Canadian Counties, Inc., Is to promote the self-sufficiency of the socially, economically, and culturally disadvantaged citizens of Oklahoma and Canadian Counties and to eliminate the paradox of poverty among these citizens by opening to everyone to opportunity to work; to live in decency, dignity, and worth; and to secure the opportunities needed to become fully self-sufficient.

Closed Dates

Apr - Jun

April 7th - Employee
Appreciation Day

May 29th - Memorial Day

June 19th - Juneteenth

“Make a career of humanity. Commit yourself to the noble struggle for equal rights. You will make a better person of yourself, a greater nation of your country, and a finer world to live in.”

*-Martin Luther King Jr.
(1959)*

