

CAA of OK/Canadian Co., Inc.

CAA Insight

Jul - Sep 2023



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Board of Directors

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A Word from the Executive Director

Summer and Fall of 2023 have been packed with activity! We have seen the transition of Head Start to new leadership under Curtiss Mays, and Community Services to the leadership of Allyson Stewart. Soon we will see the opening of our newest food pantry location, at our Southwest Community Services and the opening



of a new Head Start location in Midwest City, to be called the Carolyn E. Shaw Early Education & Family Resource Center. While transition and change can be difficult, we know that in our line of business, if we refuse to change, then we might get left behind. It is important that we continue to innovate and find new ways to serve our community.

In the coming months we will continue to see growth and change in the agency. Our Weatherization department will continue to grow with new staff and training to reach our new goals with the BIL funding. Head Start is beginning our first Department of Labor Apprenticeship program for Teacher Assistants. And we will bring in our first ever interns in early 2024 through a partnership with OU and funding from ODOC. We are looking forward to new opportunities and growth at the agency. Thank you for all that you do to help our mission succeed!

Allyson Stewart



Board Member Spotlight



Vera Ford's involvement with CAA started at an early age in the late 60's as a Head Start teacher in a small community; she has always supported and believed in the mission of Community Action. Prior to becoming a Board Member, she was a member of the NE Community Coalition, a Community Action Committee. She has been a Board Member for eight years. Her motivation for being a Board Member is to assist in helping to eliminate poverty in the community, and assist in encouraging people to be self-sufficient. As times have changed, so has the Board evolved in keeping up with the changing times. She notes there has been more accountability and Board training.

Ms. Ford is the founder and Executive Director of Lend-A-Hand Parent-Child Center for the Prevention of Child Abuse, a child abuse prevention program founded in 1990 providing advocacy, case management, and home-based mental health services. In addition, she currently serves in a number of capacities including: Vice-Chairperson of the Harrison-Walnut Neighborhood Association, one of the First African American Neighborhood Associations; IMPACT Coalition Founder and Vice-Chair, made up of African American mental health providers; member of the Central Oklahoma Community Forum, consisting of a coalition of labor, faith-based, and community organizations fighting for social justice in Central Oklahoma; N.E. Coalition member; and So8th Street committee member. Her philosophy is "So much is given, much is required". She believes in giving back to the community.

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Ms. Ford Continued

Ms. Ford's family includes her children and grandchildren who are also involved in various endeavors for change. Her leisure activities include reading, water aerobics, and cruising. Ms. Ford comes from a family and small community where community service was instilled, and she knows the rewards and benefits of community involvement.



Helen Palmer has been on the CAA Board for one year this fall. She was invited to the Board through her employer, Neighborhood Alliance of Central Oklahoma, where she is currently a community organizer.

Ms. Palmer is a member of the LOYAL Class XVIII, a participant of the Generation Impact Accelerator, and is very active in the economic development on the east side. Additionally, she has been employed with many staple organizations in Oklahoma City such as Science Museum Oklahoma, the OKC Dodgers, and the OKC Thunder. Alongside her work at Neighborhood Alliance, Ms. Palmer is the founder and operator of Helen's Virtual Desk, LLC.

When asked about her family, Ms. Palmer stated she is her father's oldest, and only, daughter, and her mother's only child. She has two younger siblings, and a plethora of cousins. Ms. Palmer is her grandmother's namesake. She is also the fur-mom to a 10-year-old dog named Mister. In her free time, Ms. Palmer enjoys relaxing, watching a good movie, or listening to music with loved ones. She also enjoys spending time in nature, singing, dancing, traveling, eating, and going to concerts, museums, and sporting events.

Housing/Maintenance Division

Emergency Home Repair has been focused mainly on central heat and replacements of roofs on client homes. Some hot water tanks and electrical repairs have been completed as well. The push for roofs



and heat and air come at a substantially higher cost this year, due to Energy Star units being required by the funding source to help preserve the nation's energy supply and provide lower costs to our clients. The average cost for a unit has risen to \$8,000 - \$14,000, depending on home size. Roof costs are also rising at an expedited rate once again. The new cost requires a roof



with decking boards over 6 inches wide to be decked over with OSB board for more structural value. Roof replacement costs have risen to \$5,000 - \$10,000 depending on the decking and actual steepness of the roof. The trades do not have the manpower as was once common. Completion for the period are 16 heat and air installations, 16 emergency plumbing repairs, 12 total roof replacements, and 5 homes brought up to electrical codes with 125-amp panels, GFCI plugs, hardwired smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, and at least one ground plug per room.

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The weatherization program has been participating in extensive training over the past several months. Training has been at the State Office, in-house, online, and in the field. Peer-to-Peer training has also been implemented which has brought to light how each agency does assessments and works on homes in somewhat different manners.

The Agency has started completion of jobs using WAPBIL monies. Energy Auditor training has been extended to a three-week course this year. The department is still trying to hire new employees to cover the new 5-County coverage area.



Maintenance has accomplished some major goals during the period – painting inside and outside buildings, installing new heat and air units, and two new playground structures. Rain had kept staff busy mowing. Woodchip and other necessary playground maintenance is currently being performed. The lot utilized for the Agency’s 31 vehicle fleet received new blacktop.



Over the summer, the Northwest District Center collaborated with the Upsilon Iota Chapter of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, local barbers, and students from The Hair Café Cosmetology & Barber College. They hosted a remarkable event at the McKinley Gym where they distributed essential school supplies and provided complimentary haircuts to children from their community. The event was designed as a come-and-go occasion, and they were delighted to have welcomed over 120 community members.



We are immensely grateful to the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity and the local barbers for generously contributing their time and resources to this meaningful cause.

Facing an eviction notice, Mr. Stephens, a single dad of two teenagers, had recently lost his job of 3½ years. He called 211 and they referred him to the City-County District Center. After explaining his situation, an appointment was made to get an application started.

Mr. Stephens was successful in finding another job. His first paycheck was going to be later in the month, rendering him unable to meet the deadline he faced for June's \$950 rent payment. Mr. Stephens provided all the necessary documentation required. The Agency paid his rent, enabling Mr. Stephens and his children to remain in their home.



“I'm a single mom with two kids while working full-time. I wanted to share a heartwarming story with you about my experience with the Northwest District office.

Last year, I was struggling to make ends meet, especially with back to school expenses piling up. I reached out to them for help. My income just couldn't keep up with the rising costs of supplies, groceries, and household bills.

Then, something amazing happened. Toneesha, commented on a post in the Edmond Mom's Group offering to assist someone else. I messaged her right away, even though it was the weekend and getting late. She responded promptly and asked if we could chat via Facebook Messenger.

The moment we connected, Toneesha was incredibly compassionate. She provided me with all the necessary documents to kickstart the assistance process and even shared her office contact information for me to call first thing on Monday.

Since then, I've been promoted to a supervisor position at work, and I no longer have to constantly worry about making ends meet. Honestly, I had no idea about the Community Action Agency until I saw Toneesha's comment on that post, where I often see her offering to help other moms in the group.

So, a huge shoutout to Toneesha and everyone at the agency. Your selfless work truly makes a world of difference in people's lives, and I'm living proof of that. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for all you do!”

—D



Ryan and Erica Smith's rental home started at around \$800 a month. After the 5 years they had been living there, the rent was raised to over \$1,000. The couple decided to look into buying a home instead and found the Home Buyer Programs helpful throughout the process.



Ryan says he was mostly calm going through the program, but Erica was stressed about figuring out how to afford the Down Payment. The DPA Program was helpful for the couple. They say overall the program was good and easy with many people helping them, like Myrical and Alejandra who made the process smoother.

The couple's biggest challenge during the program was the paperwork and their own uncertainty. When thinking about giving up on purchasing the home, Myrical and Alejandra helped break down the math and encourage the couple. They attribute their success in sticking with the program to the encouragement. Their advice is to not be afraid of talking or asking questions.



The home buying process is overwhelming but has been worth it for the Smiths. Their house includes a yard with

enough space to set up a trampoline for their children. Ryan and Erica Smith closed on their new family home early 2023.

“All the presenters were excellent; everything that we needed was provided. I appreciate that this program is available, it will change my life for the better.” – Silvia, who has already started the DPA process.



CAA, in partnership with the Alliance for Workplace Education and all of its many partners, offers free financial education to non-profits, businesses, and other organizations.

The Jesus House is a faith motivated non-profit organization serving men and women in Oklahoma City who are addicted, homeless, and underprivileged.

Richard Baker presented, “It’s Your Money” there in August. He is a Licensed Financial Representative with Primerica serving the Oklahoma City Area.

“The [Small Business] classes were informative and I loved seeing how the new information got the wheels turning in all of our minds to apply to our businesses.

I especially loved the C.P.A. that came to share his experiences! He relayed the information in such a visual way to help establish your business financially.

Thank you so much Ms. Anita for getting us through these classes with your bright personality! Thank you!!!”

Best, Vonique



The program year for 2023-2024 has begun! Classes have started across the Agency. This is a very exciting time for our program as we welcome back old friends and meet new families and children! Our Head Start staff work hard to make the first of the learning year exciting for families by making their sites colorful, clean, and comfortable for our families. Many of our sites have Open Houses or other first of the year activities that help welcome our families into the sites.

As the children come into our sites and classrooms, they are welcomed by caring and warm teachers with many activities and experiences awaiting them. There is story time, large group time with colorful and informational learning boards, and activities ranging from writing to technology to science and going outside! The teachers also begin to perform assessments and observations on their children so that they can determine where they are developmentally. The teachers learn the strengths and the skills of the children in their classrooms so that activities, books, and lesson plans are designed to meet the needs of their children.



Teachers and family advocates also work with families to see what we can do to help them get to their next level. Our staff get to know our families on a first name basis, as each person that walks into a site is a valued individual. These relationships are incredibly important as a strong partnership between Head Start staff and families will help our children excel in the classroom and beyond! We very much look forward to sharing our success stories as they happen throughout the year.



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 the opportunity to work; to live in decency, dignity, and worth; and to secure the opportunities needed to become fully self-sufficient.

Closed Dates

Sep - Dec

Sep 4th - Labor Day

Nov 10th -Veterans Day

Nov 23rd -Thanksgiving Day

Nov 24th -Day After
Thanksgiving

Dec 25th -Christmas Eve

Dec 26th -Christmas Day

"I have seen that in any great undertaking it is not enough for a man to depend simply upon himself."

-Isna-la-wica (Lone Man),
Teton Sioux

