



### VITA VOLUNTEERS AID IN TAX PREP

For more than 15 years, Crystal Kirkham has served as United Community Action Program's coordinator for the **Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA)** program, a free tax prep service for the underserved. Volunteer Amy Williams, of Hominy, assisted Kirkham with VITA, this year at the sites J.C. Memorial Library, in Cleveland, the Cushing Senior Center, and by appointment at United CAP headquarters in Pawnee. Additionally, Lou Ann Hunt worked the VITA program with volunteer Connie Adair from UCAP's outreach at Operation Blessing in Perry. The program has filed more than 1,085 returns, since 2016.

VITA is an Internal Revenue Service (IRS) initiative helping low- to moderate-income individuals, persons with disabilities, the elderly, and limited English speakers file taxes each year.



**Above: Connie Adair, VITA Quality Control volunteer for Perry (left) and Lou Ann Hunt, Operation Blessing, Outreach Worker and VITA coordinator for Perry.**



**Above: Volunteer Amy Williams, of Hominy, (left) and Crystal Kirkham, of the VITA Program, are pictured at the JC Byers Memorial Library in Cleveland. The library has been a partner for 15 years.**

Recertification to provide service must be completed annually. All volunteers pass a code of conduct exam as well as an intake interview/quality review exam. IRS tax law certified volunteers are taught how to use the tax software and must pass a tax law exam for basic or advanced certification with a passing score of 80%.

The complication of applying tax codes as well as the concern of high priced services is diminished with VITA sites. Additionally, VITA raises taxpayer awareness, especially related to Earned Income Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit. These credits originated during the 1970s War on Poverty under the Tax Reduction Act of 1975 and have a long history of alleviating poverty within the US. Statistics researched by the non-profit Prosperity Now prove VITA to be a relevant necessity in poverty reduction. For more information about the UCAP VITA program, contact Kirkham at 918-762-3041, Ext. 116 and Hunt at 580-336-3313.



## FROM THE DESK OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

*Johnny Bryant, Executive Director*

This year Community Action is celebrating its 60<sup>th</sup> year, and I have been a part of it almost from the beginning. Throughout its history, Community Actions have been committed to making people's lives better by working with-in the community for more opportunities, whether it be in education, housing, public transportation, or family services. United Community Action Program (UCAP) today has 18 Head Start/Early Head Start childhood centers, with 2 new buildings on the way. My objective is for all of our early learning centers to have safe and great facilities. In our UCAP Housing program, we have 44 single family or other units to house over 100 people in neighboring communities, and we have partnered with developers for 370 units of senior and multi-family housing across UCAP's area and surrounding areas. We continue to apply for

additional home units through the Oklahoma Housing Foundation. This year, we are also excited to celebrate Cimarron Public Transit's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Cimarron Transit has a fleet of 64 vehicles that are ADA compliant for senior citizens, the disabled, and the general public. And UCAP's family service partnerships are available when people need extra support. When you think about Community Action, there is a lot to celebrate, and that's because people are our forefront, and helping them is our focus. We're just getting started and want to continue to be a part of making peoples' lives better.



***United Community Action Program, Inc. is one of 16 Oklahoma Community Action Agencies, established under the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 to fight America's War on Poverty.***



*Loyal and True—28 years ago, William Jefferson Clinton was the President of the United States, brick phones and VCRs were all the rage. UCAP Housing Program was introduced to a special lady.*

*In 1996, Mrs. Mary Anna Sentel signed her first housing contract with UCAP. This retired employee of Northern Oklahoma College has been a 'loyal and true tenant of UCAP, according to Gary Vance, Housing Director. Vance recently visited with Ms. Sentel during the installation of her new HVAC unit. (Photo left) "Mrs. Sentel is a perfect tenant and neighbor; UCAP wants to thank her for her loyalty to UCAP and the Tonkawa community. For additional information on UCAP Rentals, contact Vance at 918-762-3041 Ext. 136. (submission courtesy of Gary Vance)*

Maintaining partnerships is important to the success of UCAP programs. UCAP's VITA program partners with the Cushing Senior Center to provide a site for staff to offer income tax services. Pictured right, from left are Debbie Brown, Cushing Senior Center Director, and Crystal Kirkham, UCAP VITA coordinator.



## **Spotlight—Kim Rice, Head Start and Early Head Start Director**



Kim Rice, of Pawnee, orchestrates activities of the largest UCAP program, Head Start and Early Head Start. Currently in her 33rd year with the agency, Rice takes to heart the value of empowerment that children, parents, guardians and staff receive from being in an individualized education program through learning and connection with one another.

Although unexpected challenges routinely occur in the programs, Rice states, “It keeps us on our toes and moving toward improvement. I wish I had known in the beginning, as a Director, the best way to problem solve is to be proactive in thinking and planning and to get others involved in sharing their ideas and suggestions.”

Seeing the program outcomes and hearing individual success stories, solidifies Rice’s belief in the programs. Kim began her journey with UCAP in 1991, employed to initiate the agency’s Child Care Resource/Referral Program. Two years later, Rice was promoted to Head Start Family and Community Partnership Content Area Coordinator, Training and Technical Assistance/CDA Specialist, Area Supervisor and Program Planner. Juggling these critical duties for 17 years contributed to Rice’s promotion to Program Director in 2010.

During her tenure, Rice participated as the Secretary of the OK State Family Resource Coalition and has been Treasurer of the Oklahoma Head Start Directors’ Association since 2013. Rice shared, “A favorite definition I feel is very important and that I try to focus on and increase in my life is Connection: the energy that exists between people when they feel seen, heard, and valued: when they can give and receive without judgment and when they derive sustenance and strength from the relationship.”

Thank you Kim for your commitment to making a difference!

### **Have You Benefited From a UCAP Program?**

#### **Survey Open**

If you have recently been served under one of United CAP’s programs, please take the survey at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/TKFVG72>

Survey responses help staff gather insight and opinions to better assess the current programs as well as anticipate future needs for the communities, individuals and families in the agency service area. For more information, or need the survey in a different format, contact 918-762-3041 Ext. 116.

## FUTURE HEAD START/EARLY HEAD START SITE

### HOLIDAY CLOSINGS

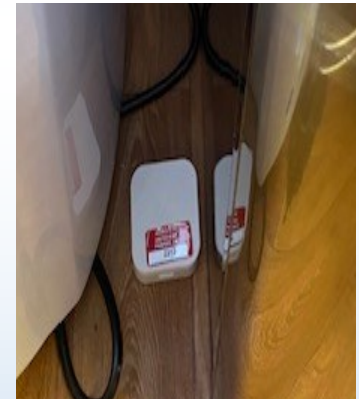
May 27 - Memorial Day  
 July 4 - Independence Day  
 September 2 - Labor Day  
 October 14 - Columbus Day  
 Nov. 11 - Veterans' Day  
 Nov. 28 & 29nd - Thanksgiving  
 Dec. 26 - Christmas  
 2025  
 Jan. 1 - New Year's  
 Jan. 20 - MLK Day



On March 8, crews began preparing the site (pictured above) of the new Head Start and Early Head Start facility, near East Brissy Street and North Little Avenue, in Cushing. The pad is smoothed out and ready for the foundation to be poured. The program plans to place a pre-manufactured building with room for possibly five classrooms to support 70 children from birth to 4 years of age. Pictured above from left: James Adams, UCAP Board Treasurer, Johnny Bryant, Executive Director, and Randy Heisler, Procurement Officer.

## New Leak And Freeze Detectors Installed

Philadelphia Insurance Company is providing Smart Leak and Freeze detectors for use at Head Start and Early Head Start sites. The devices are Wi-Fi enabled, sending a text to alert staff of an issue. The tiny but mighty detectors have already proven useful. Early warning can save money and damage to agency property.



## SWA Connect

Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) is an FCC benefit program that helps ensure that households can afford the broadband needed for work, school, healthcare and more. The benefit provides a discount of up to \$30 per month toward internet service for eligible households and up to \$75 per month for households on qualifying Tribal lands. Eligible households can also receive a one-time discount of up to \$100 to purchase a laptop, desktop computer, or tablet from participating providers if they contribute more than \$10 and less than \$50 toward the purchase price. The Affordable Connectivity Program is limited to one monthly service discount and one device discount per household. If you need to talk to someone about eligibility or an application status, call the ACP Support Center at (877) 384-2575.



## UCAP Board of Directors Receive Training Throughout Year

In March, the United CAP Board of Directors received training related to disabilities and mental health services, family community engagement and prenatal services.

Heather Tenniel, Mental Health & Disability Coordinator, reported that the UCAP Early Head Start and Head Start provide screenings and referrals for infants, toddlers and preschoolers. These services promote children's mental health as well as social and emotional well-being. Four mental health consultants work with UCAP to complete mental health observations, make referrals, create plans and help with staff needs. Efforts include identifying the children with developmental needs to ensure appropriate and timely services.

UCAP Family Engagement services create an opportunity to incorporate each families' ethnic, cultural and linguistic background into the program. Dahrenda Shaw, UCAP Family & Community Engagement Manager, shared that each site provides a Family Support Advocate for individualized assistance to families. Advocates use assessments to facilitate the identification of strengths, needs, as well as supports necessary for improved outcomes for families enrolled in the program.

The Expectant Family Program is designed to ensure enrolled families have ongoing health care, health insurance, dental, mental health and other services. Tabitha Barnes, UCAP Prenatal Coordinator, shared an overview of the program. "Before the Baby Arrives" curriculum, from Arizona State University, is used. After the birth of the child, UCAP staff visits the newborn and family for supportive postpartum education.

Participants receive information on safe sleep and feeding choices. Staff works with the family to be sure the baby has a doctor as well as provides supports to improve the well-being of the entire family.



Pictured left: In April, UCAP Board Members attended the Region VI, Community Action Conference in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Pictured from left are: Rhonda Wallace, Beverly Brownfield, Billie Ponca, Teresa Rutherford, Janet Thrasher (HR Manager), and Susan Case. The board is the governing body of the organization and meets on a bi-monthly basis.



Pictured above, from left: Presenters, Kim Rice, Head Start and Early Head Start Director, Dahrenda Shaw, Family and Community Engagement Manager and Heather Tenniel, Mental Health and Disabilities Services Coordinator.



**United Community Action Program  
Board of Directors**

**Executive Committee**

**Johnny Bryant, Executive Director**  
**Michelle Turner, Chief Financial Officer**  
**Harold Harris, Chair**  
**Susan Case, Vice Chair**  
**Teresa Bates Rutherford, Secretary**  
**James Adams, Treasurer**

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**Chris Burnett**  
**Bronson Grimes**  
**Margie Janzen**  
**Billie Ponca**  
**Jo Beth Spears**  
**Rhonda Wallace**  
**Mike Waters**

**Family and Community Services**

**Associated Charities**

212 E. Bridge Avenue, Blackwell, OK  
580-363-1290

Food bank and General Assistance,  
when funding available  
Days and hours of operation  
Tues. 3pm-5pm  
Wed. 9am-11:30am and 3pm-5pm

**Operation Blessings**

803 Market Street, Perry  
580-336-3313  
General assistance, food pantry and  
emergency needs.

Days and hours of operations-  
Mon. through Fri. 9am-4pm  
Clothing- 1st and 3rd Wed/Thurs of  
month from 9am to noon  
Donations can be made  
Mon.-Thurs. 9am to noon

**United Community Action Program, Inc.**  
**501 Sixth Street, Pawnee, OK 74058**  
**918-762-3041**

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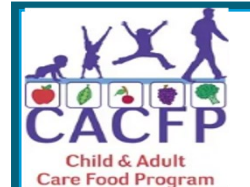
# CAREERS WITH UNITED CAP

All employment opportunities are posted on the website at [www.ucapinc.org](http://www.ucapinc.org). UCAP is an equal opportunity employer (EOE). Positions are open to the public as well as United CAP staff.

Applications can be completed on the website, at [www.ucapinc.org](http://www.ucapinc.org). Go to Career Openings, scroll through the list of openings. Click on the 'Apply Now' button located at the top of the web page to download the application.

UCAP is committed to a workplace that acts upon daily responsibility to treat all applicants and employees with dignity and respect, as well as equitably under the guidelines of the EEO Plan.

Call 918-762-3041, if you would like an application mailed to you. Applications can be returned to UCAP, 501 Sixth Street, Pawnee, OK 74058, Attention: HR



**MISSION: TO IMPROVE PEOPLE'S LIVES, EMBODY THE SPIRIT OF HOPE, AND IN PARTNERSHIP WITH COMMUNITIES, HELP LOW-INCOME PEOPLE LIFT THEMSELVES OUT OF POVERTY BY PROVIDING SERVICES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR INCREASED SELF-SUFFICIENCY AND GREATER PARTICIPATION IN THE COMMUNITY.**