



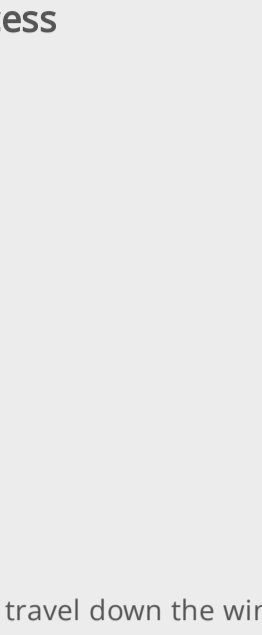
A Community Services Block Grant Program News Forum

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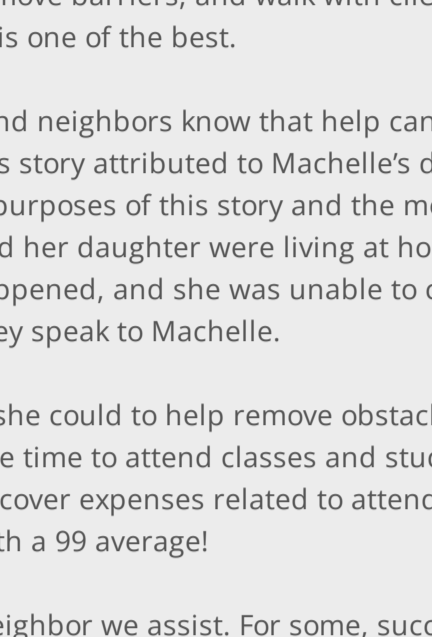
Primary Call To Action

## Agency Wins



### Upper East Tennessee Human Development Agency

#### Upper East Tennessee HDA Community Specialist is Key to Helping a Neighbor Achieve Success



If you travel down the winding roads of Hancock County, you will encounter the unchanged scenic beauty of the country landscape. Surrounding mountains isolate the area from the bustling world in an almost-welcome lack of commercialism. The region's residents enjoy deep roots and a rich heritage. The isolation of a remote location is a part of their lives; however, it comes with the price of limited opportunities.

Generational poverty is prevalent in Hancock County, which has the lowest median income in the state. Individuals and families who try to break this cycle often face many roadblocks. This is where Upper East Tennessee Human Development Agency (UETHDA) strives to help. Our Neighborhood Service Centers are staffed with trained community specialists who help find opportunities, remove barriers, and walk with clients on the road to self-sufficiency and Community Specialist Machellette Pettiecord is one of the best.

Machellette is connected to the community and neighbors know that help can be found at the Neighborhood Service Center on Main Street. On example success story attributed to Machellette's dedication involves a single mother with a young daughter. The mother (Jane for the purposes of this story and the mother's privacy) had a full-time job at a local Subway, but with limited resources she and her daughter were living at home with Jane's mother. Jane started nursing school 10 years earlier, but life happened, and she was unable to complete her degree. She wanted more for her family and Jane's mother suggested they speak to Machellette.

Machellette deployed every agency program she could to help remove obstacles this neighbor was facing. Jane's daughter enrolled in Head Start, giving Jane time to attend classes and study during the day. UETHDA assisted her with paying bills and provided stipends to cover expenses related to attending school, including book fees and gas. In the end, Jane graduated nursing school with a 99 average!

The definition of success varies for each neighbor we assist. For some, success means having basic human needs met; for others, success means obtaining the skills and resources to achieve self-sufficiency. For Jane, success meant obtaining a degree that empowered her to provide a better life for her and her child. With help from Machellette Pettiecord and UETHDA, she achieved it!

To learn more about UETHDA's Neighborhood Service Centers, you may contact Martha Dixon at [mdixon@uethda.org](mailto:mdixon@uethda.org) or (423) 384-8617.

## UC\*HRA Upper Cumberland Human Resource Agency

#### Upper Cumberland HRA Awarded Grant for Three-Year Pilot Program

Upper Cumberland Human Resource Agency (UCHRA) was awarded a \$25 million grant from the Tennessee Department of Human Services (TDHS) to implement a three-year "Empower Upper Cumberland" pilot program.

Led by UCHRA—the designated backbone organization—Empower Upper Cumberland will serve the most vulnerable populations of the 14-county Upper Cumberland region, which includes Cannon, Clay, Cumberland, DeKalb, Fentress, Jackson, Macon, Overton, Pickett, Putnam, Smith, Van Buren, Warren, and White. The initiative's core objective is to lift 1,600 children and their families out of generational poverty by 2025.

Empower Upper Cumberland will focus on serving families through interagency coordination, with the goal of improving the alignment of services and ensuring staff are effectively trained to administer the program. Universal onboarding will supply new members of the collaborative with information about available resources, the continuum of care, and the poverty alleviation system.

"Our team is exceedingly ready to tackle this project," said Megan Spurgeon, who serves as the Director of Empower Upper Cumberland and facilitated the project, along with her team of local staff, core partners, and consultants. "This \$25 million award will allow us to implement new strategies and plans to better serve families of the region that we have only been able to dream about. This is truly a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and we are committed to hiring a passionate team to fully bring these 1,600 children and 800 families out of poverty over the next several years."

In addition to focusing on bringing families out of poverty, the initiative will work to better connect employers, faith-based communities, and stakeholders. Empower Upper Cumberland has developed a dynamic relationship-based approach designed to lift families out of poverty, rather than just treat the symptoms, as is done in the current poverty management system.

Key partners in the Empower Upper Cumberland pilot include Highlands Economic Partnership, Upper Cumberland Labor and Workforce Development Board, Tennessee Tech University, Cookeville Regional Charitable Foundation, Upper Cumberland Development District, WCTE Central TN PBS, and members of the Upper Cumberland community.

For more information about this initiative, you can [visit the Empower Upper Cumberland website](#). You can also contact Megan Spurgeon via email at [MSpurgeon@Uchra.com](mailto:MSpurgeon@Uchra.com) or phone at (931) 267-3446.



#### South Central Human Resource Agency Community Support Specialist Curates Database to Connect Clients with Resources

A client arrived at our office after walking for hours and traveling miles from the abandoned vehicle he left on a remote piece of land where he lived quietly for months. He made the journey to South Central Human Resource Agency (SCHRA) looking for assistance for one thing: finding a place to live.

These types of encounters have become more commonplace in recent years. With clients experiencing a multitude of needs and living situations, providing assistance is rarely a one-size-fits-all process. SCHRA staff often find there are circumstances that fall in between or across the various programs and services the agency provides. Where does an office with the motto of "Helping People Help Themselves" begin in these situations?

This is where Sally Phillips comes in.

Sally has been a Community Support Specialist with various agencies since 2014, serving the last three years at SCHRA. During that time, she curated an exhaustive database of community resources across the agency's service area. The database's resources include listings that cover needs from medical care to groceries and clothing to assistance filling in the gaps that cannot be covered through traditional government assistance. Sally also maintains her own supply cabinets full of food, toiletries, and household goods donated from SCHRA staff, local churches, and charities.

"If someone calls me with a problem, my job is to try to find an answer—even if that means thinking outside the box, even if that means referring them to other programs or charities in their communities," Sally says. Her clients come from all different walks of life, often facing mental and physical challenges that add to the complicated nature of solving financial problems. She takes her job seriously and will not give up until she feels she has exhausted all avenues.

During the initial intake for this client, Sally ascertained that—in addition to housing—he had other immediate needs including clothes and groceries. Sally supplied him with an abundance of food from her supply cabinets. She also put out a request on social media for clothing for the client, which received an overwhelming response.

Sally contacted the local housing authority to get information about applying and proof of income; however, the client lacked the documentation needed to apply for housing, such as a valid ID and proof of income; however, Sally assisted in overcoming this obstacle by transporting the client to multiple locations to obtain the information he needed and helped him fill out the application. While waiting for approval for housing, Sally went to work contacting local organizations, coworkers, family, and friends to get furniture and other necessities the client would need in his new home. She utilized CSBG funds to pay for rental and utility deposits and assisted the client in applying for LIHEAP when he started receiving utility bills. Sally is currently working to connect the client with TN SHIP so he can enroll in Medicare to address his medical needs.

Providing client care is often challenging in the face of ever-changing client needs. SCHRA truly values employees like Sally Phillips who go above and beyond to find innovative solutions to multi-faceted problems.

To learn more about South Central HRA's Neighborhood Service Centers, you may contact Dee Dee Sneed at [DSneed@Schra.us](mailto:DSneed@Schra.us) or (931) 433-7182.

#### Submit Your Agency's Win

Has your agency broken new ground, increased services, achieved a milestone, or created an innovative experience? Our "Agency Wins" column spotlights innovative programs, services, achievements, community awards, and accomplishments from agencies across the state. If there's an activity or agency accomplishment you're proud of, we want to hear from you. Your story can inspire others.

Submit Your Agency Win

## Team Highlights

#### TDHS and TACA Partner to Recognize Tennessee CSBG Network During Community Action Month

On May 23, in honor of Community Action Month, the Tennessee Department of Human Services (TDHS) and the Tennessee Association for Community Action (TACA) hosted our first in-person event in more than two years—Community Action is Music to My Ears—with over fifty (50) attendees to celebrate the hard work and dedication of our Tennessee community action network.

The event followed a May 18, 2022 proclamation from Governor Lee and provided an arena for agency representatives to share success stories, personal and professional achievements, service recognition, networking, and Circle Center engagement activities. We would like to thank all of our CSBG agencies for your dedication to building strong Tennessee families. We look forward to seeing everyone at more in person events soon!



Pictured left to right: Janet Cook, Administrative Assistant, TDHS - CSBG Unit; Robert Davis, CSBG Program Director, Clarksville-Montgomery County CAA; Kreda Yockey, Executive Director, Tennessee Action Community Association (TACA); Carisa Moody, Head Start Director



Pictured left to right: Mike Smith, Executive Director, Southwest HRA; Avè Trotter, Former CSBG Program Director, TDHS - CSBG Unit; Leslie Chidini, Executive Director, Clarksville-Montgomery County CAA; Kreda Yockey, Executive Director, Tennessee Action Community Association (TACA); Tim Jaynes, Executive Director, Upper East HDA; Jason Stewart, Executive Director, Mid-Cumberland CAA



Pictured left to right: Janet Cook, Administrative Assistant, TDHS - CSBG Unit; Robert Davis, CSBG Program Director, Clarksville-Montgomery County CAA; Carol Childress, DHS Block Program Coordinator, TDHS - CSBG Unit; Marvin Cox, Program Director, Metro Action Commission

## Happenings in Tennessee

#### FY23 CSBG Community Action Plan and Application Packets Due August 15, 2022

In June, agencies received an email with FY23 CSBG Community Action Plan and Application (CSBG CAP) packet templates. Completed CSBG CAP packets, including the FY23 budget, are due by Monday, August 15, 2022. Please be sure to review the CSBG CAP instructions that were sent with the templates, as there is updated information on the CSBG CAP formatting and submission process.

The allocations used by your agency to complete the grant contract Attachment A Budget sheet are the amounts you will use to set your more detailed FY23 budget by CSBG domains. This information will be used to develop your FY23 invoice templates.

Remember, your CSBG CAP should provide a global view of the services and strategies your agency provides, and how CSBG funds (along with other funding) are used to support the work you do. If you have any questions about the CSBG CAP packets or submission process, please contact Carol Childress at [Carol.Childress@tn.gov](mailto:Carol.Childress@tn.gov).

Share an Upcoming Happening

Each quarter, Community Impact in Action celebrates agency programs and impact by sharing agency profiles. Featured agencies are contacted in advance and invited to share information to be used in the "Team Highlights" during the months leading up to their feature.

## Policy Updates You Should Know

#### CSBG Policy and Procedure Manual Update to be Finalized in August

As you know, TDHS CSBG is currently working on a comprehensive review of the CSBG Policy and Procedure Manual. Following an extensive review period, which included opportunities for feedback from the CSBG Task Force and all network agencies, the draft is undergoing the TDHS approval process. We appreciate the network's valuable contributions during the review process. TDHS CSBG intends to conduct a comprehensive review of the CSBG Policy and Procedure Manual every two years in order to ensure alignment with current state and federal guidance, as well as the needs of the communities served.

It is our goal for the final update to be distributed by August 15, 2022, along with an executive summary of the changes, so that agencies will have the opportunity to make any necessary program changes by the start of the FY23 program year. Updates to the CSBG Policy and Procedure Manual will have an effective date of October 1, 2022.



## Ask the Community

Community Impact in Action is meant to not only provide answers from the TDHS CSBG Office but also act as a "crowd-sourcing" forum. This column is an opportunity for agencies to pose questions to both the CSBG team and other agencies. Agency staff members are encouraged to both ask questions and respond directly to questions from other agencies in the "Ask the Community" column.

#### Have Questions for the Community?

Have a question for the TDHS CSBG team, want to know how other CSBG members are handling a problem, or are curious about a particular topic?

Submit a Question to the CSBG Network

## About Community Impact in Action

Community Impact in Action is a quarterly e-newsletter that connects the Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) network in Tennessee. The newsletter is designed to amplify agency voices across the state and increase communication and peer sharing opportunities. The CSBG network can use this newsletter as a forum to share information with each other and the Tennessee Department of Human Services CSBG team.

#### Who can make a submission to Community Impact in Action?

Any agency representative can create and submit content for "Agency Wins, The Best Play Book, Ask the Community or Community Events" articles. We look forward to reading and sharing your submissions. However, we strongly recommend that agencies establish an internal approval process for submitting content to Community Impact in Action. TDHS reserves the right to edit content and a representative may contact content contributors for additional information.

#### When to Make Submissions

Community Impact in Action is published on a quarterly basis (January, April, July, October) and submissions for the next newsletter should be submitted no later than the 15th day of the last month in the quarter. This is especially true for upcoming event submissions. For example, an event scheduled to take place in April, May or June should be submitted no later than March 15th. However, in some cases, events may be shared on the TDHS online event calendar or social media calendar without being shared in the newsletter. These events should be submitted no later than four weeks prior to the event.

#### Tell Us Your Best Plays!

We want to know what the best practices are for your agency's service delivery/administration or if there is advice you'd like to share with others as they work to serve communities in our state.

Share a Best Play

#### Contact

Have questions about Community Impact in Action or related topics? Email the Tennessee Department of Human Services CSBG Office at [CSBG.DHS@tn.gov](mailto:CSBG.DHS@tn.gov) with the subject line "Community Impact in Action Newsletter".

[Click Here to learn more about the Community Service Block Grant Program](#) or call 615-313-4892.



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