

In The Know, March 2025



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Notice:

Shut Down Weeks for all Outreach offices:

All offices will be closed the following dates. There is a phone number for families to reach Alisa during these weeks in the event of an emergency.

May 19-23

June 23-27

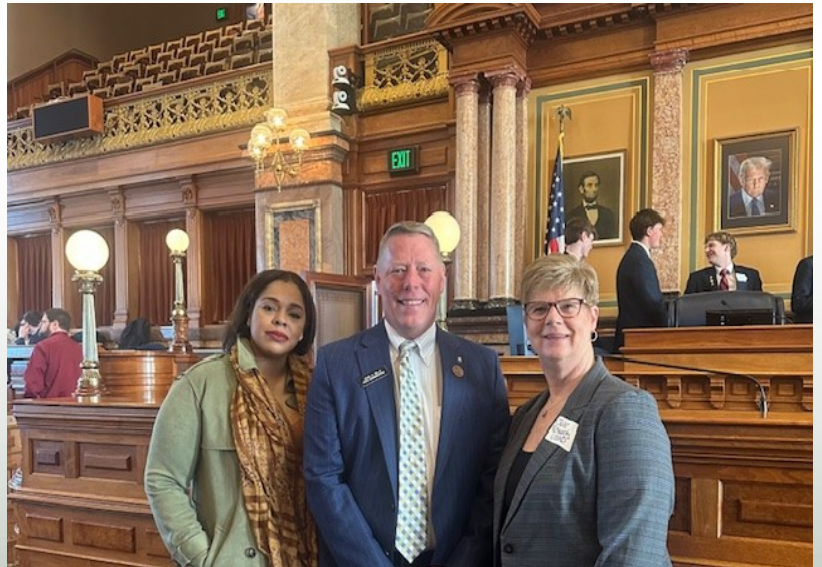
July 21-25

August 18-22



Some of the FaDSS staff at the Capitol!

Ronette Rosales-Brown, Ashley Cooklin, Kim Hickman pictured with Rep. John Wills of Dickinson County, Julie Edwards, and Rep. Ann Meyer of Webster County.



Sarina Smith Early Childhood Director, with Rep. John Wills of Dickinson County, & Julie Edwards Executive Director. Sarina and Julie attended a Legislative Breakfast at the Capitol.

Executive Director Report by Julie Edwards



Highlights:

Head Start Federal Review: Focus Area 1

- Head Start & UDMO admin completed a federal review the first week in March which encompassed interviews and data tours in the areas of: governance, leadership, program design, staffing, education, health, family services, and fiscal infrastructure to ensure compliance with Head Start regulations. The official report should arrive mid-April.

Legislation & Advocacy:

- **March 11 from 8 – 10am:** Iowa Community Action Agencies and Head Start Directors from across Iowa gathered for a Legislative Breakfast at the Iowa State Capital. Julie and Sarina met with Representative Wills, Jones, and Meyer to discuss the impacts of recent early childhood funding changes on working families, the economy and availability of full day child care/preschool opportunities due to recent and impending changes with Shared Visions, WRAP, and Statewide Voluntary Preschool. The following day, Julie was able to connect with Senator Evans, who is also the Education Subcommittee Chair. He was supportive of FaDSS, but highly interested in the impacts of WRAP, Shared Visions and Statewide Voluntary Preschool funding changes. Potential impacts on UDMO children and families were discussed. Additional information was submitted at the Senator's request.
- **March 12 2:30-4:30pm:** The FaDSS staff and Julie spoke to Representative Wills and Meyer along with Senator Evans. All were very supportive of the work our FaDSS program accomplishes.

Grant Updates:

- **Palo Alto Casino Grants:** UDMO was excited to accept to grants!
 - **Palo Alto County Outreach** – handicap accessible entrance
 - **Graettinger's Central Office** – update conference room audio video system
- **Roosevelt Energy Project:** CMBA architectural firm has completed an assessment of the building in Estherville and has provided options for heating, cooling, insulation and windows. Grant will be written and submitted for approval by Head Start's Regional Office.

Save the Dates:

- **Finance Committee on March 18 @ 1 pm.**
 - Monthly Financials
 - Contracts & Amendments
 - Roosevelt Energy Project – CMBA report
 - Spencer Outreach Update – Renovation & FEMA
- **UDMO Board of Directors on March 25 @ 5 pm.**

We have been Awarded!



FEBRUARY EMPLOYEE OF THE

MONTH

Mary Enderson
Substitute at Estherville



MARY ALWAYS SHOWS UP! ALL THE CHILDREN LOVE HER, HEAD START AND EARLY HEAD START. SHE IS INVOLVED IN EACH CLASSROOM



MARY IS ABLE TO HELP ABSOLUTELY ANYBODY. SHE COMES INTO THE CLASSROOMS DAYS SHES NOT EVEN SCHEDULED TO WORK. SHE IS VERY CRAFTY, SHE IS ALWAYS DONATING BOOKS/CRAFTS SUPPLIES TO THE CLASSROOM



WORDS CAN'T EVEN DESCRIBE MARY! IF MARY DOESN'T HAVE WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR; THATS UNUSUAL. SHE IS ABLE TO CREATE ANYTHING; A CRAFT, A FIRETRUCK OUT OF CARDBOARD ALL CHILDREN CAN FIT IN. HAVING A BAD DAY? MARY HAS CHOCOLATE! SHE HAS A CALM VOICE. SHE IS PATIENT WITH THE CHILDREN.





Congratulations
FEBRUARY
Employee of the Month
Jean Biggs
Accountant

Jean has put in place some much needed structure to fiscal items which the director just hadn't had time to dig into. She's also done a great job preparing monthly board reports. She has always been a sponge for knowledge and takes on any task that's required.



Jean loves learning about all our programs, how we help the people in our communities and connecting to staff outside of fiscal!

Jean worked her tail off over the past few months to get through our audit and keep fiscal on track when the fiscal director wasn't available. Just as importantly, she has a wonderful personality and brings a positive attitude to the office everyday!



MARCH SERVICE ANNIVERSARIES

1 YEAR OF SERVICE:

SARINA SMITH - ECP DIRECTOR @ CENTRAL

2 YEARS OF SERVICE:

AMBER VAZQUEZ - HOME BASED TEACHER @ JEFFERSON

3 YEARS OF SERVICE:

MARLENE AGUILAR - ASSISTANT TEACHER @ STORM LAKE

ASHLEY DEMOSS - HR MANAGER @ CENTRAL

4 YEARS OF SERVICE:

HANNA DAVIS - TEACHER @ STORM LAKE

ABIGAIL RODRIGUEZ - TEACHER @ STORM LAKE

MIRANDA WOLCOTT - HOME BASED TEACHER @ STORM
LAKE

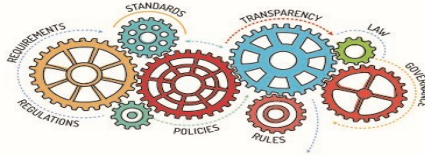
5 YEARS OF SERVICE:

TYLER HENDERSON - FISCAL DIRECTOR @ CENTRAL



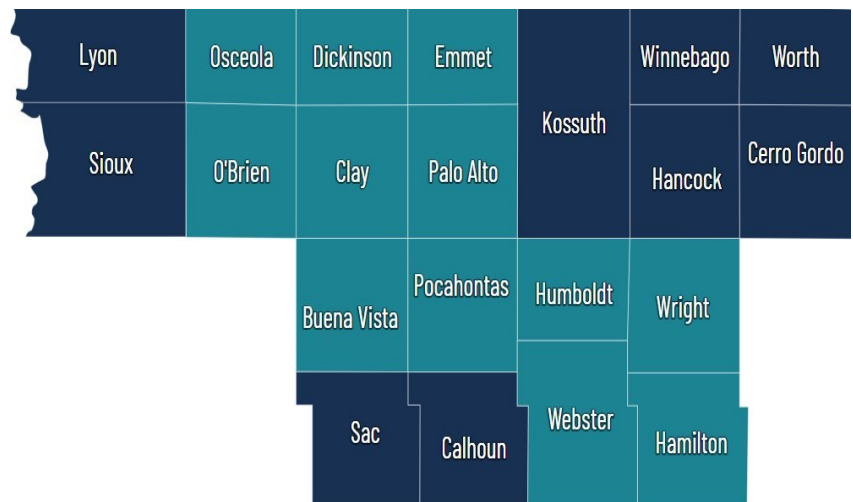
**THANK YOU FOR YOUR
DEDICATION TO UDMO**

Shakira Meyer – Director of Program Development, Compliance & Reporting



Upper Des Moines Opportunity, Inc. will be participating in the upcoming Iowa Community Action Agencies 2025 Stakeholder Community Needs Assessment Survey. This survey will be emailed out to all UDMO staff, along with governing board members, Head Start Policy Council members, other agency committee members, and community stakeholders. The data and information for this study will be collected by surveying our community partners and stakeholders. The results will be considered by UDMO for planning, developing, and prioritizing agency programs and services for the people that reside in our neighborhoods and communities.

To complete the survey, you can scan the QR Code, [click this link](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2025StakeholderSurvey), or copy and paste the link into your internet browser: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2025StakeholderSurvey>.



UDMO Funding Requests Update:

Recent Foundation/Organizational/Trust Grants Submitted & Status: March 2025	County	Program	Submitted/Pending	Awarded	Not Funded
Homeland Security – EM FEMA Grant	CL	Repairs – App in Process	X		
GroMoreGood Garden Grant	EM PA	Head Start Gardens	X		
Clay County Community Foundation	CL	HS Jefferson Kitchen		X	
Wright County Community Foundation	WR	Outreach-Client Services	X		
DNR Food Storage Grant	WE HA EM OS	Energy Star Rated Freezers or Refrigerators for sites	X		

Program Grants Submitted and Status: March 2025	County	Program	Submitted/Pending	Awarded	Not Funded
Family Development and Self-Sufficiency	All 12	FaDSS	X		
Iowa Child Abuse Prevention Program (ICAPP)	CL, DI, EM, KO, OB, OS, PA, WI	KIDS Program	X		

KIDS Program

What's Happening this Month-February



KIDS Program Activities and Events

Date: February 28th, 2025

Details: Emmetsburg Early Childhood Family Night with Salena Siefken ECNCI, Jessie Hansen KIDS/1st Five Program Director

Program-State Updates

Program: The KIDS Program has begun our participation in Credentialing through Lutheran Services of Iowa.

State: Early Childhood Iowa will be moving to 7 Districts in alignment with Behavioral Health.

*KIDS Program receives funding from Early Childhood Iowa North Central for Palo Alto County.

Proposed Funding:
ECI Directors 3.5FTE
Professional Development
Preschool and Wrap Child Care
Family Support (National Credential)

Next State ECI Board Meeting:
April 11th at 9AM

Grants

ICAPP: All signatures were obtained from both Early Childhood Iowa and local Prevention Councils. Submitted March 10th, 2025.

HOPES: Continuing to explore credentialing under Health Families America in order to apply for funding. Due April 11th, 2025.

Referrals/Staffing

Staff: We currently have two staff, one full time and one staff 32 hour per week staff.

Capacity: Our Program capacity is 27-33 families depending on needs. We are currently on track to be at the bottom end of our capacity by next month.

Other Questions?

Jessie Hansen, Program Director
+712-363-8466
www.iowakidsprogram.com



March 2025 1st Five

Healthy Mental Development in the 1st Five Years!

CSA-4 Meredith Mickelson, ph: (712) 298-6292, mmickelson@udmo.com
Serving Calhoun, Hamilton, Hardin, Humboldt, Pocahontas, Webster, & Wright Co.

Referring Clinics
1st Five Partnering Providers

Hamilton County:

- Van Diest Medical Center-Webster City
 - Giselle Allred, ARNP
- Iowa Specialty Clinic-Webster City
 - Fawn Roberts, ARNP
 - Kari Patten, PA-C

Pocahontas County:

- UnityPoint Family Medicine--Pocahontas
 - Dr. Jennifer Boevers, DO

Webster County:

- UnityPoint Clinic Pediatrics -Fort Dodge
 - Molly Schilling, ARNP



Provider Identified Reasons
for 1st Five Referral

- Dental Concerns
- Hearing Concerns
- Speech Delay
- Food Insecurities
- Social Stressors
- In-home Parent Support
- Health Insurance
- Financial Resources
- Parent Stress
- Housing Resources

6 new referrals
in February
2025

(Total of 74
referrals in FY25
7/1/24 - 2/28/25)



CSA-1 Teresa Ball, ph: (712) 298-6751, tball@udmo.com

Serving Clay, Dickinson, Emmet, O'Brien, Osceola, & Palo Alto Co.

February
Identified Referral Concerns

- Speech Delay
- Hearing Loss
- Problem Solving Delay
- Resource Needs
- Newborn/Family Support

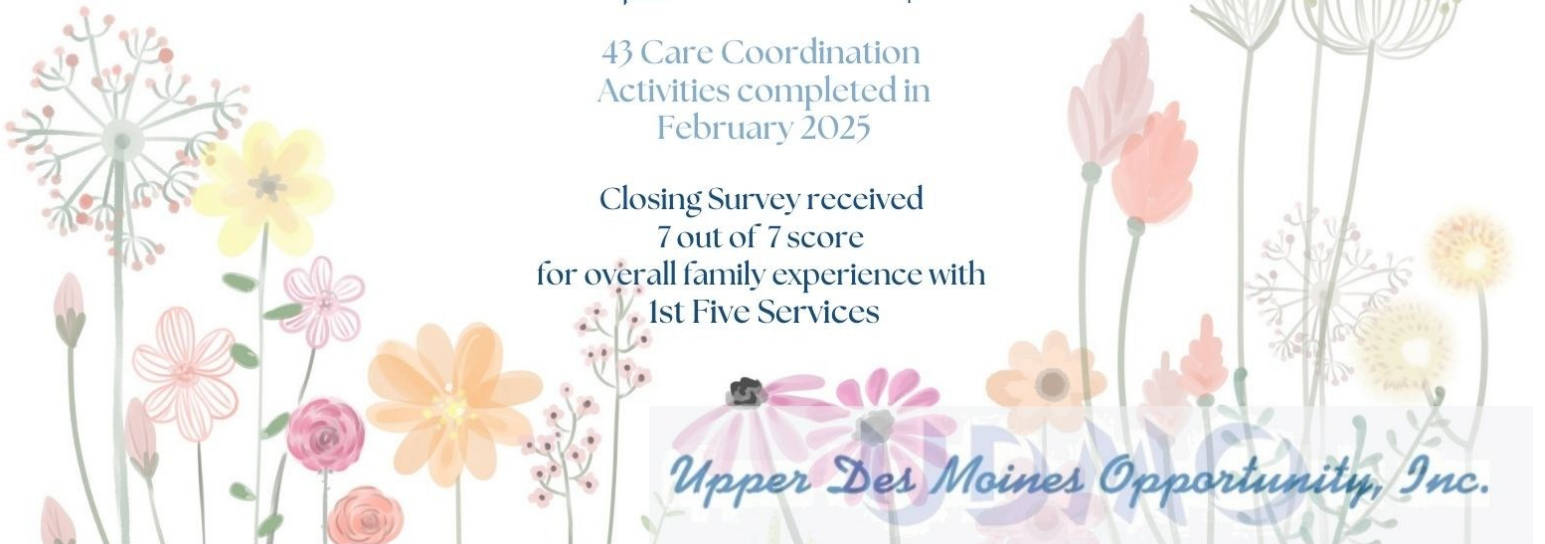
10
New Referrals
in February

54
Referrals in
FY 2025

- To Date in FY 2025**
1st FIVE CSA-1 assisted:
- 24 Primary Care Providers
 - In 14 Clinics
- With their patients Birth to 5

43 Care Coordination
Activities completed in
February 2025

Closing Survey received
7 out of 7 score
for overall family experience with
1st Five Services



0-5 Early Childhood Programs– Sarina Smith



Enrollment:

Fully enrolled in Early Head Start with 183 children and Head Start Preschool with 289 children.

Disabilities:

Early Head Start students served on IFSP's: 14

Head Start Preschool students served on IEP's: 23

Total served: 43 Target: 47

TEACH – CDA, 2 year or 4-year Degree:

CDA certification completion: **4**

Associates degree in progress: 1

Bachelor degree in progress: 1

Coaching:

Teachers – 5 and Home Base Teachers – 4

What's Happening:

- **Director Sarina Smith** continues visiting sites and classrooms, gaining valuable insights to enhance program support.
- **Executive Director Julie Edwards** and **Early Childhood Programs Director Sarina Smith** recently traveled to Des Moines for **Head Start advocacy**. We have requested additional testimonials from parents and Policy Council members to distribute to our representatives.
- **UDMO Head Start** has completed its **FA1 review**. Thank you to everyone who participated. We will share the results as soon as they are available. Our staff did an outstanding job showcasing our program and dedication to families.
- A **CACFP review** is scheduled to take place between **March and April**. Our cooks and their supervisors continue to provide children with **nutritious meals that meet CACFP standards**.
- The **Wrap Around Child Care program** will conclude on **June 30**. We are actively exploring options with the **Child Care Assistance (CCA) program** to continue supporting families in need.
- **Respiratory illnesses and stomach flu** have impacted staff and children's attendance, causing it to drop below **85%**. We encourage families to follow health precautions to help minimize the spread of illness.

Kyle Dietrich-Weatherization Director



"Weatherization Report for February 2025"

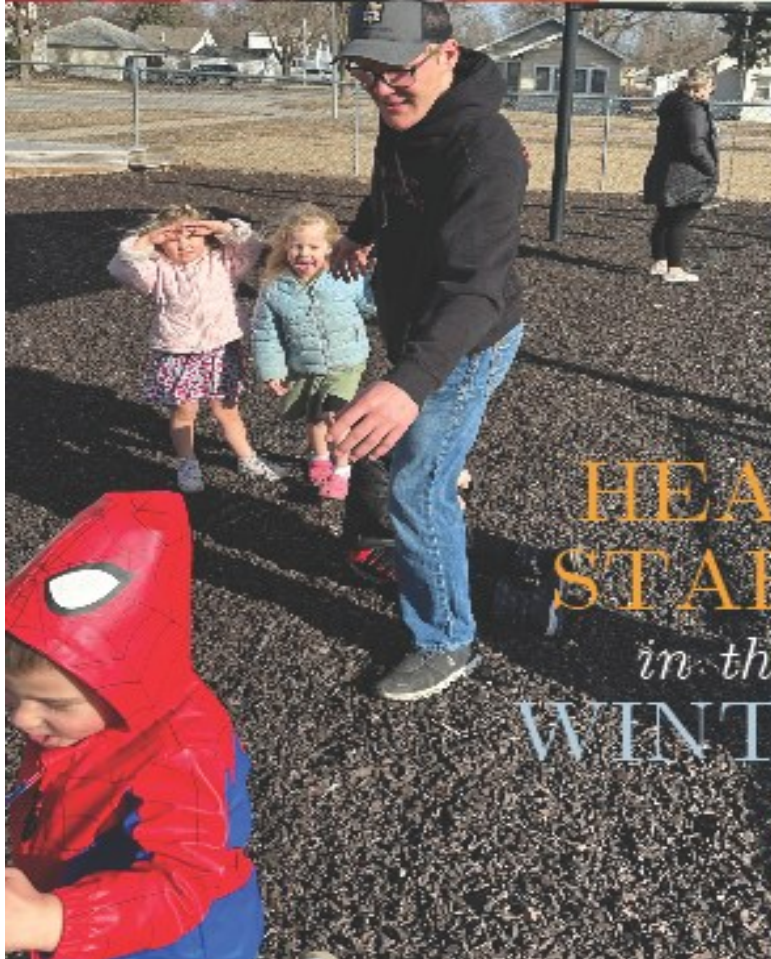
Number of Families Served in February 2025: 10

Number of Families Served in FY 2025: 20

Goal for 2025: 110 Homes

Weatherization Update:

The Weatherization Department in February completed another 10 homes staying right on track with our goal of 10 homes per month. We will be sending out new contracts to all of our contractors for the upcoming Weatherization Fiscal year 2025 starting April 1st. Also, at that time we will be getting an updated system for the Weatherization program in the new WAMS recording system. There will be training on this as soon as it is released hopefully this will be a smoother transition then it was with the LiHEAP system LEWIS. Also, hopefully we will get the last of our funding as well by the end of March so as we receive this funding we will keep all of you updated.



HEAD
START
in the
WINTER

Tiffany Harris – HR Director



HR MONTHLY NEWS

EMPLOYEE APPRECIATION DAY was Friday March 7th. The hard work and dedication our employees have not gone unnoticed. UDMO is grateful for each and every one of you. Enjoy your additional 2 hours of leave!

Spring Cleaning Challenge: April 7 – May 4

Registration: March 24 – April 13

Daily Task Challenge

Participation Incentive: UDMO T-Shirt

Professional Development Committee --- The PD committee is in the beginning stages of planning the All-Staff Day on September 18th, 2025. Please reach out to any committee member and share any ideas you'd like us to consider for the day. Committee Members: Julie Edwards, Sarina Smith, Teresa Ball, Rosa Marquez, Dawn Hoffman, Dawn Dahm, Alisa Schlieff, Christy Mart, Tanya Petersen and myself.

STAY Survey Feedback:

- ☯ The is the first job I felt happy to be doing. With my strong passion and the excitement, I feel working here. I love kids and I love my job :)
- ☯ I feel good about making fast connections with my families being able to be there for them when they need me and seeing how they feel comfortable enough to open up with me and talk about their needs or any personal issue they are going through.
- ☯ Making an impact with the children and making a connection with them. It feels good when they accomplish something, even if it's something small.

Your voice matters --- the leadership team continues to analyze the comments from the STAY survey! Stay tuned for potential changes in the works!

Work Comp Incident Report Recap:

In order to keeps our rates from rising, our goal is to provide a safe working environment to keep these incident reports to a minimum and avoid preventable work comp claims.

- ☯ January 2025: 1 incident report
- ☯ February 2025: 1 incident report
- ☯ Incident YTD Total: **2**
- ☯ Work Comp Claim YTD Total: **0**

Thank you to all for working so diligently to keep a safe working environment! When safety concerns do arise, be sure to share them with a member of the Safety & Wellness committee.

Housing Report- Tanya Petersen Housing Director



Households assisted:

<u>ESG</u>	<u>ERA</u>	<u>TBRA</u>	<u>RSA</u>
0	24	31	21

Recently the UDMO Housing Program was awarded:

\$82,000 in Emergency Solutions Grant

\$150,00 American Rescue Plan Grant

Staff/Client Success Stories

It Takes a Village

On Valentine's Day I received a call from another UDMO Program Director. He said there was an individual at a convenience store who was experiencing homelessness after fleeing domestic violence. He and his staff took her some emergency food items but she had nowhere to go and had already been outdoors in the cold for a few days. He told her to stay where she was because I was on my way.

While en route I remembered I had a landlord who had just notified me of a vacant rental in the same town. I called her and even though she had a date with her husband for Valentine's Day she graciously agreed to meet me later that same day to have the individual sign a lease if she was interested. I picked up the client and took her to the Outreach to complete the application for Tenant Based Rental Assistance. She was eligible and very interested in the available rental unit. We went to meet the landlord and the client was able to sign her lease and move in that same day.

She didn't have anything but the clothes on her back. It was bittersweet, although we were able to secure a rental, I felt bad leaving her in the apartment with absolutely nothing. Thankfully the landlord had a bed she could use but she had no blankets or pillows – none of the comforts we often take for granted. Either way the client was grateful just to be in out of the cold. On my way back to the office I called and spoke with a staff member who just happened to be cleaning out a closet and she was happy to donate a few items, she agreed to run home to get them for me. She donated many nice things including pillows, blankets, clothing, towels, along with some other household and personal items. I was able to take the items back to the client the same day. The client was so appreciative for all of our help.

The day left me feeling grateful to be a part of the wonderful work we do and also appreciative for the STELLAR staff and landlords I get to work with every day. The situation for the individual may not have turned out as well as it did if she had been overlooked by the UDMO Program Director and his staff who were at the convenience store that day. Without the superb landlord collaboration, we may not have been able to get the client housed right away. We really do have a great group of compassionate people at UDMO and together with our community partners we do amazing things!!!

Statewide Crisis Line Update: Clients in need of rental assistance should call the Statewide Crisis Line at 1-833-739-0065 to complete the intake process. Normal business hours are 7am – 8pm. Clients calling outside of these hours will need to leave a message and wait for a call back. Due to the colder weather and higher need there are some delays, call backs are being made within 3-5 business days.



FaDSS:

February 2025

Number of Families Served: for February 2025 families

Year to Date Families Served: July 1, 2024 to February 28, 2025: families

One of the best things about being a FaDSS specialist is the opportunity to support others and help them to celebrate their accomplishments, big and small. Sherry enrolled in FaDSS as she was being released from a local alcohol treatment center. She was eager to be back on her own with her three sons. She has the support of her mother but otherwise had very little help. She was determined not to fall back into the old patterns. She went through a certification program for phlebotomy and started working at the local hospital. She is planning now to return to college this month to be a lab tech. She has chosen to do this in 3 years instead of 2 because she realizes that the stress of working, going to school and being an independent mother of 3 young boys might threaten her sobriety. Watching Sherry grow and find her place has been amazing. Even after a recent bout of covid, she is able to reach out for the help she needs, brush herself off and continue forward. I am glad that FaDSS can be a part of the support system she has built up.



At this time **FaDSS has 1 open position.** We are hiring for the full time for Webster, Wright, Humboldt and Pocahontas Counties.

Outreach:



Outreach continue to do LIHEAP for all eligible families. Families can call the office for an appointment, schedule their own appointment on our website or complete the online application. Application deadline is April 30, 2025.



We have filled our Outreach Specialist position. Welcome **Elaine George** to our UDMO team!! Her first day was February 25, 2025!! Elaine we are so happy to have you as part of our team!



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All offices will be closed the following dates. There is a phone number for families to reach Alisa during these weeks in the event of an emergency.

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June 23-27

July 21-25

August 18-22

 **Upcoming Fundraisers**

March 27th: DJ Bingo Clay County (Sold Out)

March 28th: Food Drive Clay County