



In the Know, UDMO

JANUARY 2026



IN THIS ISSUE

- INTRODUCTION 1
- EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR 2 & 3 & 4
- HUMAN RESOURCES 4
- IN THE NEWS 5
- HOUSING 6
- WEATHERIZATION & LIHEAP 7
- COMPLIANCE & REPORTING 8
- 1ST/FIVE 9
- MIECHV & KIDS & CARES 10
- HEAD START 11
- FADSS & OUTREACH 12

Exciting News!

The Wild Rose Casino & Hotel in Emmetsburg, has chosen UDMO to be displayed on their Everi ticket redemption kiosks. UDMO will be one of four organizations casino customers can choose to donate their spare change from a gaming ticket to. This service is free of charge for our organization and UDMO collects 100% of the proceeds donated. This service provided over \$20,000 in donations last year. Other charities currently supported by these kiosks at Wild Rose Emmetsburg are:

The Shayla Bee Fund

Humane Society of Northwest Iowa

Veterans of Foreign Wars Foundation

These funds will be used to support UDMO's outreach programs across our service area!



Everi Cares Giving Module™

Non-Profit Application Information



Here is a great shot of the volunteers helping to get the Emmet Outreach office up and running. This is a nice space and Tayler has it organized and looking great!



The new door has been installed at the Pocahontas Outreach office.



Julie Edwards

Legislation & Advocacy

Federal Update

The federal government has reopened, and both the House and Senate have resumed work on the budget. As of mid-January, updates remain limited; however, progress continues at the appropriations level.

The House and Senate Energy and Water Subcommittee appropriators have reached agreement on the final FY2026 Energy and Water Appropriations Bill, with the following outcomes:

- Weatherization Assistance Program: \$329 million
- Weatherization Readiness Fund: \$30 million
- DOE Technical Training & Assistance (TTA): \$10 million (level-funded with FY2025)

We anticipate that several appropriations bills, including Energy and Water, will be completed in early January. The next step will be House and Senate floor action, and all indications remain positive for passage.

We continue to project that the final FY2026 Labor-HHS Appropriations bill—which includes CSBG, LIHEAP, Head Start, and other key programs—will be completed shortly before the January 30 Continuing Resolution (CR) deadline.

Head Start Advocacy

Head Start Director Sarina, along with Development Director Shakira, will travel to Washington, D.C. during the last week of January to advocate for our programs. They have scheduled in-person meetings with Senator Ernst, Senator Grassley, and Representative Feenstra, all of whom have historically been strong supporters of Head Start.

Iowa Community Action Association (ICAA)

The Iowa Community Action Association will host its annual Day on the Hill in Des Moines on January 27. This advocacy event provides an opportunity to engage directly with local legislators on issues impacting community action agencies across the state.

FaDSS Advocacy Day

An advocacy event at the State Capitol in Des Moines with local legislators. The event will highlight the program's impact on family stability, economic independence, and workforce entry, sharing success stories to support continued funding and legislative backing.



CONTINUED:

🌟 Agency Highlights & Program Updates

County Supervisor Visits & Annual Report Distribution

Distribution of UDMO's Annual Report to county supervisors is underway. This year's release was slightly delayed due to the implementation of two new data systems. While the format differs from prior years and year-to-year comparisons are more challenging, these systems now allow us to capture unduplicated household counts, a significant improvement in data quality. Completed distributions: Buena Vista, Clay, Dickinson, Emmet, Hamilton, Humboldt, Osceola, Palo Alto, Pocahontas, and Wright Counties.

Remaining counties: O'Brien and Webster.

Fiscal & HR Update – UKG Activation

Fiscal and HR staff successfully completed the first payroll processed through UKG. While there were a few expected challenges, overall implementation issues were minimal. Ashley, Tiffany, and Tyler continue to meet weekly with UKG representatives as we expand system functionality and optimize use.

Fort Dodge Facility Search

Due to continued program growth and increased staffing needs, UDMO is actively seeking a larger facility in Fort Dodge to better support employees serving Webster County and surrounding areas.

Estherville Outreach Relocation

Estherville Outreach has officially relocated to the back (west side) of the Roosevelt Building. Sincere thanks go to Outreach volunteers and Central Office staff who assisted with hauling and organizing over multiple days.

We also extend special appreciation to Estherville Head Start staff for their outstanding support and hospitality. Their willingness to assist Outreach staff, contractors, and client's day after day exemplifies teamwork at its best. While we are still settling into the new space, this transition would not have been possible without such collaboration.

THANK YOU!

Facilities Health & Safety Walk-Throughs

Our insurance partner, Gallagher, conducted health and safety walk-throughs at the Spencer Head Start and Outreach facilities in December. These proactive assessments identified potential hazards, and follow-up actions are underway to ensure we continue to provide the safest possible workplaces.

Restore Hope Grant

While we did not receive Restore Hope Grant funding, UDMO remains actively engaged in the Webster County rollout. We anticipate additional funding opportunities in the future and will continue to position the agency for success.



CONTINUED:

 **Upcoming Meetings & Key Dates**

- Finance Committee Meeting: Tuesday, January 20 at 1:00 PM
- Board of Directors Meeting: Tuesday, January 28 at 5:00 PM
- Strategic Planning Dates: Board members are encouraged to attend.
- February 4 in Graettinger from 9am – Noon
- February 11 in Graettinger from 9am to 3pm
- February 28 in Graettinger from 9am to 3pm



HR MONTHLY NEWS-TIFFANY HARRIS

JANUARY 2026

KEY UPDATES

THE UKG SYSTEM IS NOW FULLY LIVE. APPRECIATION IS EXTENDED TO ASHLEY DEMOSS FOR LEADING IMPLEMENTATION AND ADDRESSING MINOR ISSUES DURING THE FIRST PAY PERIOD.

HR IS MONITORING THE TRANSITION CLOSELY AND SUPPORTING STAFF AS NEEDED. EMPLOYEES HAVE BEEN ADVISED TO CAREFULLY REVIEW INITIAL PAYSTUBS TO ENSURE ACCURACY OF BENEFIT DEDUCTIONS AND TAX WITHHOLDINGS.

STAFFING & RECRUITMENT

OPEN POSITIONS:

ASSISTANT TEACHER – SPENCER

HOUSING CASE MANAGER – FORT DODGE

HOME VISITOR – WESTERN COUNTIES

OUTREACH SPECIALIST – SPENCER

WORKFORCE SNAPSHOT (FY25: 10/1/24–9/30/25)

TOTAL EMPLOYEES: 185

LONGEST TENURED EMPLOYEE: HIRED JUNE 25, 1990

EMPLOYEES HIRED PRIOR TO 2000: 9



IN THE NEWS

Area youth groups help provide food relief

BY SANDRA JENSON
SJENSON@NWSTOWA.COM

Two projects by Osceola County church youth groups will help provide meals for those in the community struggling with food insecurity.

More than a dozen members of the religious education program in grades 7-11 at St. Andrew Catholic Church in Sibley attended the Called Youth Conference on Saturday, Nov. 2, in Granville.

As part of a service project organized for the event, the students collected green beans, corn and stuffing mix to bring to the conference.

The donated items were combined with contributions from eight other churches to assemble 300 meal bags with ingredients for Thanksgiving dinner side dishes.

Sixty of those bags made their way to the Upper Des Moines Opportunity of Osceola County office in Sibley.



Members of the religious education program at St. Andrew Catholic Church in Sibley display food bags assembled during the Called Youth Conference on Nov. 2 in Granville. Participants from eight area churches filled about 300 bags, with 60 of them going to Upper Des Moines Opportunity of Osceola County in Sibley. Photo submitted

Food collection Nov. 19

Another food drive event will take place Wednesday, Nov. 19. The Osceola County Ministerial Association will again hold its

annual food find that evening.

Paper grocery sacks with a letter explaining the event were distributed throughout the community on Wednesday, Nov. 5.

Directions in the letter ask that residents fill the bag with non-perishable food items that will be donated to Upper Des Moines Opportunity.

Simply leave the bag outside an entrance door with an exterior light turned on. Volunteers will pick up the bags that evening after 6:30 p.m.

Residents who did not receive a bag or missed having items picked up can drop them off on Nov. 20 at Celebrate Church, 418 Ninth St. in Sibley, or call pastor Josh Tangerman at 712-461-2610 to arrange a time to have the bag picked up.

Outreach specialist Pam Braun of UDMO said all items are welcome as everyone's tastes vary, but certain items deplete more quickly.

"We could really use instant potatoes, sugar, ketchup, cereal, syrup, pancake mix, mandarin oranges, French-style green beans, creamed corn, canned chicken or other canned meats, flavored rice and Chef Boyardee products," Braun said.

Osceola County Ministerial Association members shared their appreciation for the community support that contributed to the

Here is a photo of Julie-Executive Director, and Shakira-Director of Program Development, Compliance & Reporting presenting an update on services provided through UDMO to the Osceola County Board of Supervisors. Julie goes to Supervisor meetings annually in our core 12 counties to present this information.

Upper Des Moines Opportunity spends \$476,563 to assist Hamilton County residents in 2025

By KOLLEEN TAYLOR

During the monthly meeting of the Hamilton County Supervisors, Julie Edwards, Executive Director of Upper Des Moines Opportunity – UDMO – gave an update on the services provided to Hamilton County residents during 2025.

Their mission, according to Edwards is "to address the effects of poverty on individuals and families and build stronger communities." Their programs range from food and housing to weatherization and childcare, just to name a few ways their assistance is used.

UDMO serves 22 counties in Iowa. In addition to Hamilton county, they serve Lyon, Sioux, Osceola, O'Brien, Dickinson, Clay, Buena Vista, Sac, Emmet, Palo Alto, Pocahontas, Calhoun, Kossuth, Humboldt, Webster, Winnebago, Hancock, Wright, Worth, Cerro Gordo and Hardin.

During 2025, she reported assistance to 506 households in Hamilton County from their programs. Assistance with energy needs was used by 303 households, while addressing housing downpayments or deposits were just two

households, and weatherization news were 12 households.

Direct assistance to these households totaled \$476,563 in 2025

The demographics of the age groups that the assistance programs helped in Hamilton County in 2025 were as follows:

36% are children aged 0-17

42% are age 18 to 59

22% of individuals are over the age of 60 or retired.

In addition, 25 individuals are Veterans or active military.

35% of the individuals are employed

25% report a disabling condition

46% are a single person household

14% are led by a single female parent

42% of the households assisted own their own home

25% of households have a total annual income at or below poverty level

36% of households also have SNAP

During her presentation, Edwards requested a continued partnership with Hamilton County and an investment of \$18,000 for 2026.

SUBMITTED BY JAMIE FLUGSTAD, HAMILTON OUTREACH SPECIALIST



Housing Report December 2025 – Tanya Petersen, Housing Director

87 households received rental assistance in the month of December.

★ Special Recognitions ★

We want to extend our heartfelt thanks to the Holiday Inn Express for thinking of local agencies and giving back to the community through the donation of beds. This generous gift has made a meaningful difference in the lives of those we serve.

We would also like to give a special shout-out to the incredible men at the Men's Beacon of Hope Shelter who stepped up to deliver these donated beds to our clients. Your time, effort, and dedication truly reflect the spirit of compassion and service.

Because of your kindness and teamwork, several individuals now have a safe and comfortable place to sleep at night. We are deeply grateful for your support and for the positive impact you continue to make in our community. **THANK YOU!!!!!!**

Client Success Stories by Staff

This month we helped house many clients who were experiencing homelessness and literally living on the streets, including one mother and her children who were living in a hotel room. With colder weather, we had an increasing need to find warm homes. It was especially incredible working with landlords who jumped in and provided paper products and cards to our clients when they heard their stories as well. Pastor Dani at the SALT Center has been a great resource this last month for finding clients who do not have a phone and letting them know which days we will be there. It is so heartwarming to know we have curated a “village” of supporters who go above and beyond to meet our clients’ individual needs.

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. Call backs are being made usually within 1-3 business day



Kyle Dietrich-Weatherization Director

Number of Families Served in December 2025: 10

Number of Families Served in FY 2025: 120

Goal for 2025: 110 Homes

Weatherization Update:

The Weatherization Department had another strong month in December, completing an additional 10 homes. We are proud to close out the year having exceeded our annual goal of 110 homes by completing a total of 120 homes in FY 2025. This accomplishment reflects the hard work and dedication of our Weatherization team, as well as the quality and commitment of the contractors we partner with to support this outstanding program.

Throughout the year, our program successfully navigated significant changes, including funding adjustments and major updates to program policies and procedures. These included implementing updated program standards, transitioning our NEAT program, and moving from a bid-based system to a flat-rate process, along with the internal changes required to support that transition.

We also experienced another major change with the new requirement to be certified and licensed by the State of Iowa for asbestos sampling. We are currently in the process of obtaining this certification and anticipate having it completed by the end of January, which will allow us to conduct asbestos sampling directly in our clients' homes.



- LIHEAP (Low Income Household Energy Assistance Program) starts Oct. 1st for a household with an elderly (60 years of age or older) and/or a disabled household member. Everyone else can apply Nov. 1st thru April 30th.
 - Anyone that applies for Liheap and are eligible, cannot be disconnected from their electric or natural gas from Nov. 1 – April 1. This is known as the Moratorium on winter disconnections.
- LIHEAP APPLICATIONS: For December, Outreach took and processed 537 Liheap applications. This report from State includes online and denied applications in it.
 - YTD TOTALS: From 10-01-2025 to 12-31-2025 – Total applications 3,462.
 - LAST YEAR AT THIS TIME: 3,174 applications were completed.
 - ECIP/CRISIS: We have stopped all ECIP/Crisis as of Oct. 27th. To date we have not started this back up. We are anticipating that we will have to request an amendment next month to move ECIP funds into Regular Assistance funds to help pay Liheap applications.



**Shakira Meyer –
Director of Program Development, Compliance & Reporting**

Many County Community Foundations run grant cycles from October through March, making recent months especially busy. During this time, we've attended grant meetings, collaborated to identify program and facility needs, gathered supporting data, secured bids, and submitted grant requests. We've also prepared reports for counties and cities and met with County Boards of Supervisors to provide updates on UDMO services in their communities.

UDMO continues to pursue funding for food pantries, Outreach client services, Head Start equipment, and ADA accessibility improvements. Thank you to the program directors and staff who collaborate in this work and help ensure timely, complete grant submissions.

UDMO Funding Requests Update:

Recent Foundation/Organizational/Trust Grants Submitted & Status: January 2026	County	Program	Submitted/Pending	Amount Awarded	Not Funded
Homeland Security – EM FEMA Grant	CL	Repairs – Award Pending	X		
Fort Dodge United Way	WE	Water Assistance		\$10,000	
Valero Benefit for Children (Invite Only)	WE	Food Assistance		\$5,000	
United Way (Each County to Receive \$10,000 in 2 payments of \$5,000 each)	BV, CL, OB	Client Services		\$15,000	
Morrison Trust	HA	Client Services		\$4,000	
Enhance Hamilton Foundation	HA	Combo CO2 Detectors	X		
Humboldt County Community Foundation	HU	Coats for Kids	X		
Palo Alto Gaming Development Corporation	PA	HS-Mini Grant Classroom Materials	X		
Palo Alto Gaming Development Corporation	PA	PA Outreach – Entrance Upgrades	X		
Clay County Community Foundation	CL	HS-Outdoor Play Equipment	X		
Still Pending from Summer/Fall 2025 – Award Spring 2026					
Sheldon United	OB	Client Services – Sheldon	X		
Dickinson County Good Neighbor Fund	DI	Client Services	X		
Belmond Area Community Trust	WR	Client Services Belmond	X		

Program Grants Submitted and Status: January 2026	County	Program	Submitted/Pending	Funded	Not Funded
Head Start 1303	Emmet	Roosevelt HVAC	X		
Head Start/Early Head Start – Continuation	BV, CL, DI, EM, OB, OS, PA	Annual Submission	X		
Restore Hope	WE	Home Visitation			X
Shared Visions – Iowa Department of Education	BV, CL, EM	Comprehensive quality Preschool program	X		

1st FIVE

A Year of Intentional Care: Honoring Providers Who Made It Possible

As we begin 2026, we're focusing on intention, growth, and collaboration!

Values that guide our mission to support early intervention and family resource connections.

Thank you to the providers whose screenings and 1st Five referrals make this work possible.

PRIMARY CARE TEAMS WHO CONSISTENTLY SCREENED & REFERRED TO 1ST FIVE IN 2025

(Alphabetically By County and Provider)

Clay:

- Dr. Amanda Young, DO
- Dr. Amy Jochims, MD
- Briana Wetrich, PA-C
- Dr. Bruce Feldman, MD
- Dr. Christian Kladstrup, DO
- Dr. David Keith, DO
- Dr. Lucas DeJong, MD
- Morgan Spielman, ARNP
- Dr. Nathaniel Meyer, MD
- Sarah Walker Loring, ARNP
- Dr. Teresa Studer, MD
- Dr. Travis Witt, MD
- Dr. William Benson, DO
- Dr. Yelena Thomas, DO

Dickinson:

- Jamie Hicks, ARNP
- Jessica Kelley, ARNP

Emmet:

- Angela Yates-Wycoff, DNP
- Denver Splinter, ARNP
- Dr. Lorraine Tangen, MD
- Dr. Madhan Prabhakaran, MD
- Tamra Huff, APRN

Hamilton:

- Dr. Alice Meng, MD
- Fawn Roberts, ARNP
- Giselle Allred, ARNP
- Kari Patten, PA-C

Hardin:

- Sophie Calonkey, PA-C
- Tiffany Gramblin, ARNP

Humboldt:

- Brittney Peters, ARNP
- Christine Vitzthum, ARNP
- Keri Benjamin, ARNP

Palo Alto:

- Amanda Kuchenreuther, ARNP
- Dr. Daunyale Sporaa, DO

Pocahontas:

- Dr. Jennifer Boevers, DO
- Kylie Maurer, PA-C
- Morgan Hohbach, ARNP

O'Brien:

- Dr. Amy Wingert, MD
- Courtney Stiens, PA-C
- Kendra Bos, PA-C
- Samantha Walters, FNP
- Bridget Doedon, FNP-C
- Leah Maier, ARNP

Osceola:

- Dr. Garrett Sterk, DO
- Nathan Peters, ARNP
- Taylor Bradshaw, CNP

Webster:

- Alex Adams, ARNP
- Ashley Ulsh, ARNP
- Elizabeth Peterson, PA-C
- Dr. Jennifer Jenson, MD
- Jennifer Zigrang, ARNP
- Jessica Doolittle, ARNP
- Dr. Joseph Larson, DO
- Kim Pearson, ARNP
- Lisa Chase, ARNP
- Molly Schilling, ARNP
- Sandi Symens, ARNP
- Shannon Fecher, ARNP
- Tayler Rasch, ARNP

Wright:

- Dr. Alice Meng, DO
- Dr. Andrea McLoughlin, MD
- Dr. Caleb Aswegen, MD
- Charity Hayes, ARNP
- Dan Touney, ARNP
- Dr. Dustin Smith, MD
- Katie Schleusner, ARNP
- Naarah Hauenstein, PA-C

NEWSLETTER

January 2026-Jessie Hansen Early Childhood Services Director



MIECHV PROGRAM

- Help me welcome **Amanda Meyer** to the MIECHV Team! She is the third and final staff rounding out our home visiting team. She started January 6th!
- We have started providing home visits as of January 9th! This is a major milestone for our projects.
- We are accepting referrals in Webster County for families interested in services!



KIDS PROGRAM

- The next steps moving forward with our Parents As Teachers Affiliation are:
 - Working on a policy and procedure manual for the entire home visiting workforce
 - Model Implementation training under Parents As Teachers
 - On-going monthly meetings with each public health entity
 - Data System tracking
 - Contracts under Early Childhood Iowa-**Be on the look out for these to come to the UDMO Board for signature soon!**



CARES PROGRAM

- We met with Iowa Primary Care Association this last month to discuss resource navigation and the differences between programming. We were able to discuss that we provide concrete resources for families in addition to connecting them to services.



Enrollment:

Early Head Start with 183 children and Head Start Preschool with 234 children.

Disabilities:

Early Head Start students served on IFSP's: 20

Head Start Preschool students served on IEP's: 11

Total served: 31 Target: 47

TEACH – CDA, 2 year or 4-year Degree:

CDA certification completion: 1

Associates degree in progress: 3

Bachelor degree in progress: 1

Coaching:

Teachers – 4 and Home Base Teachers – 5



It Takes a Community:

- **Grant Strategy in Motion:** UDMO staff will be traveling to Washington, D.C strengthening our advocacy, visibility, and positioning for future funding opportunities that directly support children and families.
- **Shared Visions in Progress:** Our team is actively developing and submitting Shared Visions Preschool grant applications, continuing our commitment to expanding high-quality early learning opportunities for families across our communities.
- **Professional Growth & National Leadership:** Our Home Visitors recently participated in Motivational Interviewing training with Sarah Ennis at Central Office, and three of our coaches will represent our program at the National Training Institute (NTI) this April, ensuring our practices remain aligned with national excellence standards.

FAMILY SERVICES DIRECTOR

DEC
2025

