

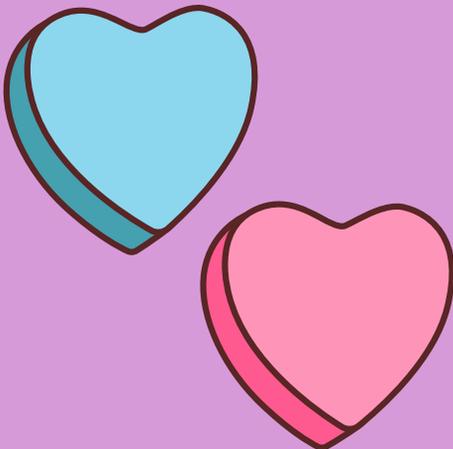
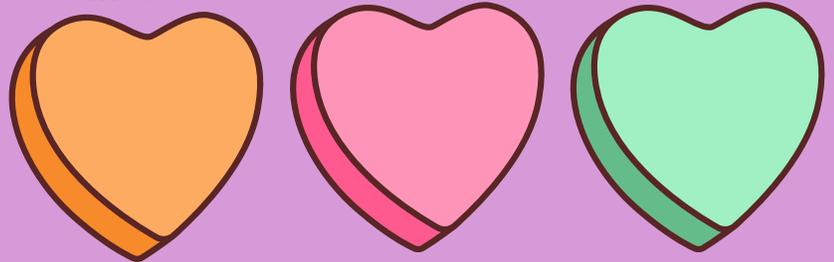
UDMO, In The Know newsletter FEBRUARY 2026

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First Congregational UCC in Webster City donated Meals in a Bag to the Hamilton County Food Pantry. Each bag was packed with food items needed to make a meal & a recipe for the meal was included on each bag.-Jamie Flugstad Hamilton Outreach Office



A BIG THANK YOU TO THE STUDENT COUNCIL KIDS WHO RAISED MONEY DURING THEIR CARNIVAL CELEBRATING CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK-JACQUELYN ORIGER PALO ALTO OUTREACH OFFICE



JULIE EDWARDS

FEBRUARY 2026

LEGISLATION & ADVOCACY

FEDERAL UPDATE

EARLIER DISCUSSIONS AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL RAISED CONCERNS ABOUT POTENTIAL FUNDING CUTS. WE ARE PLEASED TO REPORT THAT THE FINAL OUTCOMES WERE POSITIVE FOR UDMO, WITH MOST PROGRAMS RECEIVING INCREASES.

FY 2026 FINAL NEGOTIATED FUNDING LEVELS:

- **CSBG: \$775M (↑ \$5M)**
- **HEAD START: \$12.4B (↑ \$0.1M)**
- **WEATHERIZATION (WAP): \$329M (↑ \$3M) – A WELCOME AND SOMEWHAT UNEXPECTED INCREASE**
- **WAP READINESS FUND: \$30M (LEVEL FUNDING)**
- **LIHEAP: \$4.045B (↑ \$0.020B)**
- **SECTION 8: \$28.4B (↑ \$2.36B)**
- **HOME INVESTMENT PARTNERSHIP: \$1.25B (LEVEL FUNDING)**
- **CDBG: \$3.3B (LEVEL FUNDING)**

OVERALL, THIS IS ENCOURAGING NEWS FOR THE PROGRAMS THAT DIRECTLY SUPPORT THE INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES WE SERVE.

STATE UPDATE

IN-PERSON LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITIES HAVE TAKEN PLACE OVER THE PAST SEVERAL WEEKS. UDMO CONTINUES TO ACTIVELY PARTICIPATE IN DISCUSSIONS, SUBCOMMITTEES, AND LEGISLATIVE INPUT OPPORTUNITIES TO ADVOCATE FOR OUR COMMUNITIES.

★ AGENCY HIGHLIGHTS & PROGRAM UPDATES

UDMO STRATEGIC PLANNING

A DEDICATED GROUP OF UDMO LEADERS AND BOARD MEMBERS HAS BEEN WORKING TO IDENTIFY AND REFINE THE AGENCY’S STRATEGIC FOCUS. A DRAFT PLAN IS ANTICIPATED FOR REVIEW AT THE FEBRUARY 24, 2026 BOARD MEETING.

THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO CONTRIBUTED FEEDBACK AND INSIGHT DURING THIS PROCESS.

COUNTY SUPERVISOR VISITS & ANNUAL REPORT DISTRIBUTION

COUNTY VISITS TO REQUEST PARTNERSHIP CONTRIBUTION TO SUPPORT OUTREACH WERE COMPLETED AS OF FEBRUARY 10, 2026. AN EMERGING THEME FROM THESE CONVERSATIONS IS A REQUEST FOR MID-YEAR UPDATES. WE WILL EXPLORE HOW TO BEST PROVIDE THIS ADDITIONAL COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT.



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR-CONTINUED

IOWA HHS HOPE SUMMIT

UDMO WAS EXTENDED THREE INVITATIONS TO ATTEND THIS STATE-LEVEL MEETING. JULIE, ALISA, AND JESSIE WILL CONTINUE TO PURSUE INVOLVEMENT AND EXPLORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROGRAM EXPANSION AND COLLABORATION.

SHARED VISIONS HOME VISITATION PROGRAM

UDMO WILL REQUEST BOARD PERMISSION AT THE FEBRUARY MEETING TO PURSUE THE SHARED VISIONS HOME VISITATION GRANT OPPORTUNITY. THIS WOULD BE A NEW PROGRAM FOR UDMO, BUT IT ALIGNS WELL WITH OUR EXISTING HOME VISITATION SERVICES AND MISSION TO STRENGTHEN FAMILIES.

FORT DODGE FACILITY SEARCH

UDMO SUBMITTED OFFERS ON TWO POTENTIAL FACILITIES; HOWEVER, NEITHER OPPORTUNITY MOVED FORWARD. THE SEARCH CONTINUES AS WE WORK TO IDENTIFY A PROPERTY THAT ALIGNS WITH OUR OPERATIONAL AND STRATEGIC NEEDS.

17 UPCOMING MEETINGS & KEY DATES

- **FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING: TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 17 AT 1:00 PM**
- **BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING: TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 24 AT 5:00 PM**
- **STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSION:**
- **FEBRUARY 18 IN GRAETTINGER**
- **9:00 AM – 3:00 PM**
- **BOARD MEMBERS ARE ENCOURAGED TO ATTEND**



HR MONTHLY NEWS

FEBRUARY 2026

KEY UPDATES

○ UKG HAS MANY FEATURES AVAILABLE TO US. WE WILL UTILIZE THE SYSTEM TO IT'S FULL POTENTIAL AS WE ARE ABLE TO LEARN AND BE EFFICIENT WITH ALL FEATURES. IN THE MEANTIME, ANY FEEDBACK IS WELCOME ON FEATURES THAT WOULD BE HELPFUL.

STAFFING & RECRUITMENT

- **OPEN POSITIONS:**
- ASSISTANT TEACHER – STORM LAKE
- HOUSING CASE MANAGER – FORT DODGE
- OUTREACH SPECIALIST – SPENCER
- OUTREACH SPECIALIST – WEBSTER
- PROGRAM SPECIALIST - GRAETTINGER

Lifting

Maintain the natural curve of your back. *Don't hunch!*

Keep your feet shoulder-width apart.

Relax your shoulders.

Keep your elbows close.



Shelly Charapata- Energy Program Director



- 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 January, Outreach took and processed 393 Liheap applications. This report from State includes Online applications in it.
- YTD TOTALS: From 10-01-2025 to 1-31-2026 – Total applications 3,849.
- LAST YEAR AT THIS TIME: 3,590 applications were completed.
- ONLINE LIHEAP APPLICATIONS: For January, 48 online applications were received. YTD: 142

FAMILY SERVICES DIRECTOR

JANUARY 2026

FADSS

ENROLLED FAMILIES: 77

TARGET # OF FAMILIES PER MONTH: 76

FAMILIES IN RECRUITMENT: 8
FAMILIES ON WAITING LIST: 30

OUTREACH

HIRING: WEBSTER COUNTY PART TIME OUTREACH SPECIALIST
CLAY COUNTY FULL TIME OUTREACH SPECIALIST

FUNDRAISER: RAFFLE TICKETS ARE BEING SOLD FOR A SUMMER GRILLING MEAT BUNDLE. 1 TICKET \$10 OR 3 FOR \$25



The Heart of our Mission: Our 4- Part Model in Action

At the heart of 1st Five is a simple, collaborative model that helps children from birth up to age 5, get the right support at the right time. Each step reflects the shared commitment of providers, 1st Five's developmental support specialists, and community partners working together for Iowa's youngest children.

1. SCREEN

Providers use validated developmental, behavioral, and social-emotional screening tools during well-child visits to identify early concerns.

2. REFER

When a concern arises, providers refer families to 1st Five for additional support beyond the clinic.

3. CONNECT

Developmental Support Specialists (DSS) reach out to families, listen to their needs, and link them to early intervention services and community resources.

4. SUPPORT

Families receive follow-up, guidance, and ongoing connection to programs that strengthen development, health, and well-being. While providers are a part of a unique feedback loop of updates and progress.

This collaborative pathway ensures families feel supported, providers feel backed by a strong system, and children receive help early, when it matters most.

For more
information:





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

The Upper Des Moines Opportunity, Inc. Board of Directors received a 2025 Grant Funding Request Report at their January 27, 2026, meeting.

- UDMO applied for **54 Supplemental and Community Foundation grants** requesting **\$400,421.69** Through February 13, 2026,

- o UDMO has been **awarded 27** of the supplemental grants totaling \$233,126.23.

§ This funding supports UDMO Outreach Programming and other smaller special projects for 1st Five and Head Start.

- o 10 supplemental grants (\$64,211) pending award

- o 8 supplemental grants (\$71,593.33) wait-listed

- o 9 supplemental grants (\$22,932.96) were not funded

- UDMO submitted **grant renewals** for CSBG, FaDSS, 1st Five, KIDS, Housing & Head Start

- UDMO applied for **7 new program grants** for KIDS, CARES, MIECHV and the Housing Program, adding **3 new programs** to UDMO Programs and Services.

Funding requests vary from year to year amounts awarded are based on fund availability from granters.

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		
Enhance Hamilton Foundation	HA	Combo CO2 Detectors		\$ TBD	
Humboldt County Community Foundation	HU	Coats for Kids	X		
Palo Alto Gaming Development Corporation	PA	HS-Mini Grant Classroom Materials		\$ TBD	
Palo Alto Gaming Development Corporation	PA	PA Outreach – Entrance Upgrades		\$ TBD	
Clay County Community Foundation	CL	HS-Outdoor Play Equipment	X		
Wright County Charitable Foundation	WR	Client Services	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: February 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		
Shared Visions – Iowa Department of Education	BV, CL, EM	Comprehensive quality Preschool program	X		

Sarina Smith–Head Start Director



Enrollment: Early Head Start with 183 children and Head Start Preschool with 254 children.

Disabilities: Early Head Start students served on IFSP's: 12

Head Start Preschool students served on IEP's: 22

Total served: 34 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:

- Storm Lake: Shout out to CBI staff – During child studies staff explained how children are going to the calm down area without prompting. They are using strategies like breathing and blowing on a pinwheel to regulate their emotions. Wendy and Thais have done a fantastic job of teaching and supporting PBIS skills.
- Health Services: February is National Children's Dental Health Month. Dental packets were sent home with families. Ongoing planning efforts remain focused on compliance, operational efficiency, and sustained support for staff and services.
- Hartley: The teachers have been focusing on fine motor activities and core strength utilizing tummy time and intentional fine motor activities during small group. They have also worked hard to build a safe community by talking about emotions and utilizing. The Conscious Discipline act of wishing well.
- Milford: The teachers have been adding more literacy to each study with the word wall. They are teaching problem solving skills and reviewing them daily with the kids, right? Before center time. They have also focused on individualizing transitions to ensure each child is growing in skills where needed.
- Sheldon: The teachers have been focusing on math concepts and utilizing graphs and charts. They have worked closely with the AEA through the MTSS process, doing interventions with five children for cognitive development, on top of taking extra time each day to teach a new, younger student problem solving that kids miss when they start in the later year.
- Sibley: Teachers have really jumped into the studies. Working with their coach to get community involvement to ensure the kids get hands on experiences. They are doing planned buddy time to help children with lower social skills learn from pairs and using flannel board stories as a story time.
- **Spencer: Danielle and Linda received Model Classroom award! We are very proud of you both!**



Head Start-Continued





Kyle Dietrich–Weatherization Director

Number of Families Served in January 2026: 10

Number of Families Served in FY 2026: 10

Goal for 2026: 110 Homes

The Weatherization Department began the new year on a strong note, successfully completing our monthly goal of 10 homes in January. This accomplishment reflects the continued dedication and efficiency of our team.

I would also like to recognize several staff members for their outstanding efforts in meeting a newly implemented state requirement for asbestos certification. With limited notice and a short timeframe to comply, Ryan TenNapel, Tim Carlin, John Beyer, and Blayne Thelen promptly completed the required training and earned their certifications. They will now be licensed through the State of Iowa to conduct asbestos sampling.

This was a significant requirement that required immediate attention, and their responsiveness ensures we can continue serving clients whose homes contain hazardous materials without delay. Their initiative and commitment directly support our ability to assist more households safely and efficiently in the future.

In addition, we met with state representatives and several partner agencies to review the Flat Rate process implemented over the past year. The discussion focused on both strengths and areas for improvement. Overall, the feedback was positive. The state expressed appreciation for our input and shared data indicating that, despite the major procedural changes, contractors are continuing to operate profitably. We are also seeing an approximate 10% reduction in combined material and labor costs. This is an encouraging outcome and aligns well with the fiscal responsibility expectations of the U.S. Department of Energy.

As we move forward, we remain committed to maintaining strong production goals, delivering measurable results, and effectively assisting clients with their energy needs throughout the 17–county area we proudly serve.

**MIECHV, KIDS, CARES Programs
Reports available next month.**

**Housing Program
Report available next month.**