

# UDMO, IN THE KNOW

## APRIL 2026

# HELLO SPRING

IN THIS ISSUE

- Executive Director 2**
- Human Resources 3**
- LIHEAP 3**
- FaDSS 4**
- Housing 4**
- 1st/Five 5**
- Compliance/Reporting 6**
- Head Start 7&8**
- Outreach 9**
- Weatherization 9**
- Early Childhood Services 10**



Here is Jessie Hansen, Kelley Nelson, and Lisa Bethane. They represented UDMO at the ILCC Career Day that was held last week on the Emmetsburg Campus.



The new sign is up at Emmet Outreach, and it looks awesome!



Dee Graettinger accepts a Clay County Community Foundation grant supporting Clay County Head Start's Growing Together Through Outdoor Play initiative, funding new outdoor play equipment at Jefferson in Spencer.



Thanks to Spirit Lake High Noon Kiwanis and the Spirit Lake Key Club for their generous donation of money and peanut butter and jelly for their annual PB&J drive in support of Dickinson County UDMO!



Upper Des Moines Opportunity, Inc. \$10,975.00 for UDMO Outreach Entrance Project-Facility Safety and Accessibility Upgrade, Upper Des Moines Opportunity, Inc. \$3,736.00 for UDMO Headstart in Emmetsburg:



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
JULIE EDWARDS

**April 2026**

**Agency Highlights & Program Updates**

**New UDMO Board Member**

We are pleased to welcome Kathy Josephson of AgriTax Advisors in Pocahontas to the UDMO Board of Directors. Kathy will represent Sector 3: Buena Vista, Pocahontas, and Humboldt counties. Her professional background fulfills Head Start requirements for expertise in fiscal management and accounting.

**Head Start Receives Shared Visions Preschool Grant**

A total of 42 agencies applied for the Shared Visions Grant, and UDMO is proud to be among the 21 agencies selected to receive funding. UDMO has been awarded \$269,730 to support the delivery of high-quality early learning experiences for at-risk children ages three to five.

These services will be provided across three sites: Estherville, Spencer, and Storm Lake. This funding will help strengthen our commitment to preparing young children for school success and supporting families in our communities.

**Estherville Outreach**

Final stages of renovation are expected to be completed this month.

**Strategic Planning**

A draft of the strategic plan will be presented at the April Board Meeting. Planning efforts will continue on May 13 from 9:00 AM to 3:30 PM in the large conference room in Graettinger.

All board members are encouraged to attend—please notify Dawn if you plan to participate.

**Awaiting New Grant Announcements – May 8**

UDMO has submitted a number of grants please refer to Shakira's section. Two new grants are:

**Shared Visions Home Visitation**

Service Area: Clay, O'Brien, and Osceola counties

This program provides parent support and educational services to families with children from birth to age five who are considered at risk, with a strong emphasis on children ages birth to three.

**Thrive Iowa Grant Submission**

Service Area: Humboldt, Pocahontas, and Wright counties

Thrive Iowa is a community-led initiative focused on moving families from crisis to career using a collective impact model supported by Restore Hope. The program targets family stability across 13 Social Determinants of Health, emphasizing family preservation and prevention of child welfare crises.

**Upcoming Meetings & Key Dates**

**Finance Committee Meeting**

Tuesday, April 21 at 1:00 PM

**Board of Directors Meeting**

Tuesday, April 28 at 5:00 PM

**Strategic Planning Session**

May 13 in Graettinger

9:00 AM – 3:30 PM

**Board members are encouraged to attend**



## HR MONTHLY NEWS

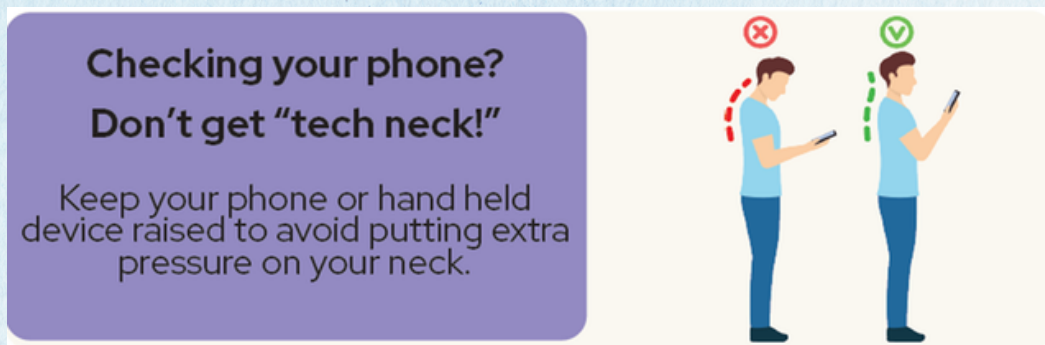
April 2026

### Key Updates:

- Iowa Workforce provided helpful information regarding the unemployment process during the Iowa Employment Conference. Unemployment | Iowa Workforce Development
- Savings Showdown Challenge: April 20 – May 17, 2026
- o Incentive: UDMO Thermal Mug
- Logo has been updated on UDMO apparel site <https://stores.inksoft.com/udmo/shop/home>

### Open Positions:

FaDSS Specialist – Remote (2 positions- 1 Webster area & 1 Clay area)



- 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 MARCH, OUTREACH TOOK AND PROCESSED 174 LIHEAP APPLICATIONS. THIS REPORT FROM STATE INCLUDES ONLINE APPLICATIONS IN IT.
- YTD TOTALS: FROM 10-01-2025 TO 3-31-2026 - TOTAL APPLICATIONS 4,274.
- LAST YEAR AT THIS TIME: 4,653 APPLICATIONS WERE PROCESSED.
- ONLINE LIHEAP APPLICATIONS: FOR MARCH, 22 APPLICATIONS WERE RECEIVED. YTD: 186.



ASHLEY COOKLIN  
FADSS COORDINATOR

**We are currently at 68 families, 0 in recruitment, and 29 on the waiting list. We have filled our Pocahontas vacancy and look forward to Tammy starting on the 14th. We currently have two other vacancies we are looking to fill in Clay and Webster.**



### **HOUSING REPORT MARCH 2026 – TANYA PETERSEN, HOUSING DIRECTOR**

113 HOUSEHOLDS RECEIVED RENTAL ASSISTANCE IN THE MONTH OF MARCH.

#### **SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT**

OUR UDMO YOUTH HOMELESSNESS DEMONSTRATION PROJECT (YHDP) LAUNCHED ON MARCH 1ST. THIS PROJECT IS DESIGNED TO ASSIST YOUTH AGES 18-24 SECURE STABLE HOUSING FOR UP TO 24 MONTHS AS LONG AS THEY REMAIN INCOME ELIGIBLE. TO APPLY PLEASE CONTACT THE CALL CENTER AT 833-739-0065.

WE ARE CURRENTLY PREPARING OUR APPLICATION FOR THE IOWA FINANCE AUTHORITY'S TENANT-BASED RENTAL ASSISTANCE (TBRA) PROGRAM. THIS OPPORTUNITY WOULD ALLOW US TO CONTINUE SUPPORTING INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES IN OUR REGION WITH SAFE AND STABLE HOUSING. WE APPRECIATE THE COMMUNITY'S ONGOING SUPPORT AS WE PURSUE THESE VERY IMPORTANT RESOURCES. APPLICATION DEADLINE IS MAY 1ST AND AWARDS WILL BE ANNOUNCED IN AUGUST.

#### **SUCCESS STORY**

SHE CAME TO ME AT 21, NEWLY PREGNANT AND UNSURE OF WHAT THINGS WERE GOING TO LOOK LIKE FOR HER. SHE HAD A LOT ON HER PLATE, BUT SHE STAYED FOCUSED AND DETERMINED TO BUILD SOMETHING BETTER FOR HERSELF AND HER BABY.

SINCE THEN, SHE'S DONE AN AMAZING JOB TURNING THINGS AROUND. SHE FOUND A RELIABLE, GOOD-PAYING JOB AND HAS BEEN CONSISTENTLY WORKING 40+ HOURS A WEEK. ALONG THE WAY, SHE WELCOMED A HAPPY, HEALTHY BABY BOY.

NOW, SHE'S MAKING ENOUGH TO FULLY SUPPORT BOTH HERSELF AND HER SON AND NO LONGER NEEDS ASSISTANCE FROM THE HOUSING PROGRAM. IT'S BEEN REALLY GREAT TO SEE HER GROWTH AND HOW HARD SHE'S WORKED TO GET WHERE SHE IS.

**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 DAYS.**

April 2026

**UDMO**  
Helping People. Changing Lives.



# Celebrating Excellence: 1st Five Receives National Best Practice Award

Above: 1st FIVE Statewide Coordinators and Iowa HHS Team

**For the second consecutive year, Iowa's 1st Five Healthy Mental Development Initiative has been recognized on a national stage, earning the Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs Innovation Hub Best Practice Award, the highest-scoring practice among 25 reviewed programs across the country.**

“On behalf of the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services and the Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs, congratulations to everyone involved in the 1st Five Healthy Mental Development Initiative.

This Best Practice Award honors your leadership, innovation, and unwavering focus on improving outcomes for children and families across our state. Together, we continue to build a stronger, healthier future for Iowa's youngest children.”

**Marcus Johnson-Miller**

Bureau Chief, Bureau of Family Health  
Division of Public Health

Iowa Department of Health and Human Services

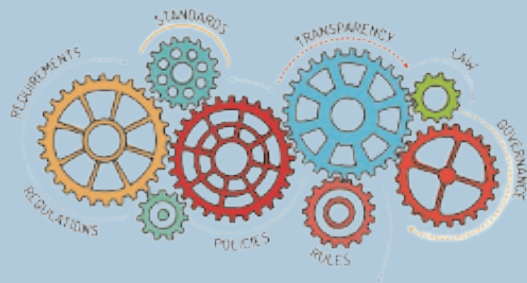


**1<sup>st</sup> Five Coordinators  
Meredith Mickelson**

[mmickelson@udmo.com](mailto:mmickelson@udmo.com)



**Teresa Ball**  
[tball@udmo.com](mailto:tball@udmo.com)



**SHAKIRA MEYER –  
DIRECTOR OF PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT, COMPLIANCE & REPORTING**

The second quarter of Fiscal Year 2026 (Jan 1–Mar 30) was a busy and impactful season for UDMO. We are grateful to have received several community foundation grants and sincerely appreciate the continued support for the work our UDMO team is doing across the communities we serve. UDMO has also submitted multiple major program grant applications and anticipates funding decisions in May for Shared Visions Home Visitation and Thrive Iowa Alliance Building and Family Resource Navigation.

We invite everyone to stay connected and see the impact in action by following UDMO on Facebook and Instagram for the latest stories and updates.

**Upcoming: May is Community Action Month!** Join us as we celebrate the Promise of Community Action: Community Action changes people’s lives, embodies the spirit of hope, improves communities, and makes America a better place to live. We care about the entire community, and we are dedicated to helping people help themselves and each other.

**UDMO Funding Requests Update:**

Recent Foundation/Organizational/Trust Grants Submitted & Status: April 2026	County	Program	Submitted/ Pending	Amount Awarded	Not Funded
Clay County Community Foundation	CL	CL HS-Outdoor Play Equipment		\$4,267	
Wright County Charitable Foundation	WR	WR Client Services		\$4,000	
Sheldon United 2025	OB	Client Services – Sheldon		\$1,000	
Taylor Family Farms	EM, OB, OS, PO, WR	Outreach Food Pantry	X		
Emmet County Community Foundation	EM	Outreach Driveway Approach	X		
Fort Dodge United Way	WE	Client Assistance – Water	X		
Sheldon United 2026 – TBD Spring 2027	OB	Client Services – Sheldon	X		
<b>Still Pending from Summer/Fall 2025 – Award Spring 2026</b>					
Dickinson County Good Neighbor Fund	DI	Client Services	X		
Belmond Area Community Trust	WR	Client Services Belmond	X		
Program Grants Submitted and Status: April 2026	County	Program	Submitted/ Pending	Funded	Not Funded
Head Start/Early Head Start – Continuation	BV, CL, DI, EM, OB, OS, PA	Annual Submission		HSP \$3,766,818 EHS \$3,065,752	
Shared Visions Preschool – Iowa Department of Education	BV, CL, EM	Comprehensive quality Preschool program		\$269,730	
Shared Visions Parent Support Program – Iowa Department of Education	CL, OB, OS	KIDS Home Visitation & Parent Support	X		
Thrive Iowa – Iowa Department of Health & Human Services	HU, PO, WR	Community Alliance Building & Family Resource Navigation	X		
Head Start 1303 - Resubmitted w/ updates	Emmet	Roosevelt Heating System	X		
Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA)	All	Housing	X		

## Head Start Director- Sarina Smith



### Enrollment:

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

### Disabilities:

Early Head Start students served on IFSP's: 13

Head Start Preschool students served on IEP's: 26

Total served: 39 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 CB1 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.

• Our coaching team attended the National Training Institute (NTI), where they engaged in advanced learning on the Pyramid Model, strengthening their ability to support social-emotional development and effectively address challenging behaviors through evidence-based, multi-tiered strategies that can be implemented across our classrooms and systems.





Emmet county head start 3 ambulance visit



## Heather Lundberg-Outreach Administrative Coordinator

### Outreach:

LIHEAP continues until April 30th for families who have not applied for FY26. Crisis funds are available for families facing disconnect.

Jason Peterson was interviewed and it aired on KTIV and KCCI regarding the necessity for food and the help UDMO received from the Boy Scouts Food Drive. [Click here to check it out!!](#)



Number of Families Served in March 2026: 7

Number of Families Served in FY 2026: 27

Goal for 2026: 110 Homes

### Weatherization Update:

During the month of March, we completed a total of seven (7) homes, which is three below our standard monthly goal of ten (10) homes. This temporary decrease in production was primarily due to scheduled vacations among both contractors and staff. With all personnel now returned, we anticipate a significant increase in production in April and expect to return to or exceed our monthly target.

There were no major programmatic changes during this reporting period.

Looking ahead, two staff members are scheduled to attend training in Arizona this August to obtain Continuing Education Units (CEUs) required for their Quality Control Inspector (QCI) and Home Energy Professional (HEP) certifications. These certifications are necessary to ensure continued compliance with state program requirements and standards.

In addition, we are actively addressing items identified in the most recent state field monitoring report, which is due May 22, 2026. Contractors have been working to correct the identified findings, and the majority of this work has already been completed. We anticipate submitting all required documentation to the state ahead of the deadline.

Concurrent with the field monitoring process, the state is also conducting an Administrative Inspection of program files, including client homes and contractor documentation. This review is due May 1, 2026. Our team has already begun compiling and uploading the necessary materials and expects to complete this process in advance of the deadline.

# EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES NEWSLETTER

**JESSIE HANSEN - MARCH 2026**

## MIECHV

**ENROLLMENT/CAPACITY:  
11/48**

**\*Parenting Groups will  
start on May 21<sup>st</sup> 2026**

**\*We continued to receive  
referrals during the  
month of March.**

**\*Continuous Quality  
Improvement: Centered  
around Parent Child  
Interactions and improving  
outcomes for families.**

**\*Completed Site Visit  
with HHS successfully.**



## CARES/EARLY CHILDHOOD IOWA HOME VISITING

**ENROLLMENT AND CAPACITY:  
PALO ALTO: 13/10  
WINNEBAGO: 10/12**

**\*Parenting Groups have  
started in Winnebago on a  
monthly basis. Other parenting  
activities are occurring for  
groups components.**

**\*RFP due in April for all areas.**

