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IN THE KNOW NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2026
EDITION
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SPENCER MEDIA GROUP
PEOPLE'S CHOICE
PRESENTED BY
Go Gutters & Go Foam It!

**PROUD TO BE A
2026 SILVER
WINNER!**

NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION

Thank you to everyone who voted for **UDMO**. This honor belongs to our staff, partners, volunteers, and the communities we serve!

HELPING PEOPLE. CHANGING LIVES.

UDMO offers Early Childhood Education, Family Support & Home Visitation, Housing Assistance, Utility Assistance, Home Weatherization, Health & Nutrition programs and more. Visit udmo.com to learn more.

UDMO
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Sometimes It Takes a Village!

Here is Allison, Shelly, Joan, Deb, Tyler & Becky. They are working on the AE's (Automatically Eligible) applications for FY27. They did a mass mailing from Central office, they mailed out 2,359 letters! Once Outreach starts receiving them back they will be entering them into the LEWIS System for the FY2027 LIHEAP season.





From the Desk of Executive Director

Julie Edwards

September 2026

🌟 Agency Highlights

UDMO Wins Silver in People's Choice

This year there were over 890 nominees across 167 categories which resulted in an impressive 127,000 votes. There were 56 business in the services category within in the non-profit category UDMO won silver while Shayla Bee Fund took the gold.

UDMO's has focused on providing a positive work environment and high-quality service in recent years. In fact, these qualities have been part of the agency's strategic plan. Leaders feel this award is a reflection of that work.

The Spencer Media Group People's Choice is an annual vote-based contest that highlights and honors the best local businesses, services, organizations, and attractions in Northwest Iowa. Winners are awarded Gold and Silver placements and are featured in a special publication and online via the SMG People's Choice.

🏛️ Advocacy

Head Start

We will be encouraging employees, parents, governing body members and the public to support our Head Start program in the upcoming weeks.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has released a proposed rule that would significantly weaken the Head Start Program Performance Standards—the foundation of the program's high-quality early learning, health, family engagement, and comprehensive services. UDMO will be submitting public comments and continuing to advocate with our federal legislators in support of preserving these essential standards. We will be asking for your support in the upcoming months.

📌 Families Needed

Head Start & MIECHV Enrollment

Enrollment is currently open for all UDMO Head Start locations and Webster County's MIECHV program. If you know families who may be eligible, please encourage them to visit www.udmo.com for enrollment information.

Events

September UDMO All Staff In-Service

UDMO employees will be gathering at The Shores in Emmetsburg on September 17th for a day of training and learning. Highlights of the day are: cross training on UDMO programs their achievements in the past year, an agency-wide photo and Languages of Appreciation in the Workplace. The 5 Languages of Appreciation is a framework designed to help organizations improve employee retention and morale by replacing one-size-fits-all recognition with personalized encouragement in the work place which is identified in UDMO's Strategic Plan. UDMO Board Members are invited to attend!

October

Come see the newly renovated Emmet Office. Ribbon Cutting will be October 14 with an Open House the following week on October 21. Both events are at 11:30 am.

From the Desk of Executive Director

Julie Edwards
September 2026

New Leadership

Please join us in welcoming Lindsey Simental, who began as UDMO's Housing Coordinator on August 18.

Upcoming Board Meetings

Finance Committee: Tuesday, September 15, 1:00 p.m.

Board of Directors: Tuesday, September 22, 5:00 p.m.



Human Resources MONTHLY NEWS

Key Updates:

Tiffany Harris, HR Director

- Insurance Renewal Meetings will be underway within the next couple weeks, so be on the lookout for correspondence regarding coverage and premiums.
- Hydro Hustle challenge is underway with 113 employees enrolled and at least 100 of them are well on their way to successfully complete the challenge!
- 2026 Wellbeing Program comes to end on September 30, 2026. Make sure you have earned 100 points throughout the year to be entered into a drawing to receive 8 hours of vacation time.



Kyle Dietrich
Weatherization Director

Number of Families Served in

January 2026: 4

Number of Families Served in FY

2026: 73

Goal for 2026: 110 Homes

Continued...

During the month of August, the Weatherization Program completed a total of four homes. Although this was below our normal monthly production goal, there were several factors that contributed to the reduced number of completions. Staff vacations, along with our QCI/HEP inspectors attending a full week of required Continuing Education Unit (CEU) training in Arizona, resulted in limited availability for inspections and final project completions throughout the month. While production was lower than anticipated for August, staff continue to remain focused on moving projects forward and assisting as many eligible households as possible. We anticipate that production will begin to increase as staff return from scheduled time off and our inspection availability returns to normal.

There are also several significant program changes taking place as we move into the fall. Beginning September 23rd, we will be implementing changes to the NEAT Audit process. These changes are intended to improve the accuracy and consistency of how energy-saving measures are evaluated and documented within the Weatherization Program. Staff are preparing for these changes and working to ensure that we understand the updated requirements so that we can implement them effectively.

In addition, October 1st will mark the implementation of the new Iowa Weatherization Program standards. There are numerous changes included in the updated standards, and these changes will affect several areas of our day-to-day operations. Staff will need to become familiar with the updated requirements and incorporate them into our auditing, documentation, installation, inspection, and quality-control processes. Although any major program change requires an adjustment period, we are working to be prepared and ensure that our program remains compliant while continuing to provide quality services to our clients.

Another major update is the completion of the Change Order Flat Rate pilot program. UDMO was selected to participate in this pilot along with two other Weatherization agencies. The purpose of the pilot was to test the new change-order process, identify any areas that needed clarification or improvement, and provide the State with feedback before the process is implemented more broadly.

We are pleased to report that the pilot program went very well. UDMO and the other participating agencies were able to work through the process, identify areas for improvement, and provide valuable feedback to the State. The State has now received the feedback from all three agencies and will be reviewing and incorporating that information into the final process.

The information and updated procedures will soon be shared with the other Weatherization agencies that work with independent contractors rather than crew-based operations. Our participation in the pilot provided UDMO with an opportunity to help test the process in a real-world setting and provide feedback based on our experiences. We appreciate the opportunity to participate and believe the information gathered during the pilot will help make the process more consistent and efficient moving forward.

Overall, August was a slower production month, but there has been significant activity behind the scenes as we prepare for several important program changes. With the implementation of the revised NEAT Audit, the new State Weatherization Standards, and the updated Change Order process, the upcoming months will bring several adjustments to our program operations.

Our Weatherization team will continue working together to stay informed, maintain compliance with State and program requirements, and ensure that we continue providing quality Weatherization services to the households we serve. As these changes are implemented, we will continue to monitor the process closely and make adjustments as necessary to ensure a smooth transition.

Program

INFO



Ashley Cooklin, FaDSS Coordinator

We continue to work on building our capacity back up. If you know of any families that could benefit from our services please reach out as many counties no longer have a waiting list. I just need their name, number, and preferably address.

Our Core Program Components included structured home visits, assessments that support healthy self-exploration, science-informed goal pursuit designed to build core skills, a framework and process for career development, and connecting families to stabilizing supports and opportunities in the community.



OUTREACH

Heather Lundberg Administrative Coordinator

Coats for Kids Apps are still available
Christmas Applications will be ready Oct. 1st

O'Brien County will have an opening as Elaine George is leaving UDMO, last day will be Dec 3rd.

Thank you, Elaine, for the time you were here, we wish you the best in your future endeavors.



Shelly Charapata, Energy Director

Report available next month.

Head Start Preschool & Early Head Start Submitted by Julie Edwards



Enrollment:

A while ago, UDMO Head Start dissolved the partnership with the Laurens school district through a Change in Scope grant requesting an enrollment reduction of 35 children. At that time, we filled our program to this number. Since then, we have been waiting. Due to this waiting period UDMO Head Start was placed in the Full Enrollment Initiative.

August 2026 – We received an Information Memorandum which offered options based on the grant we had submitted. The UDMO Head Start team made a decision to withdraw the Change in Scope grant and strive for full enrollment.

October 2026 - As part of this designation UDMO's Head Start Leadership Team will participate in FEI Training and Technical Assistance to assist us in progressing towards our original enrollment number.

Early Head Start – Currently, 183 children. Target is 183

Head Start Preschool – Currently 254 children. Target is 289

Disabilities: Total Served: 26 children Target: 47 children

Early Head Start students served on IFSP's: 7

Head Start Preschool students served on IEP's: 19

TEACH:

Coaching: Head Start has coaches for classrooms and home base home visiting.

- Education Coaches

- o Christy Mart - Estherville/Emmetsburg - 6 years

- o Heather Stout - Storm Lake - 3 years

- o Nicolle Hickerson - Spencer 3 1/2 years

- o Deb Carr - Hartley, Milford, Sheldon Sibley - 2 years

- Home Base Coaches

- o Janine Huss - Spencer 5 years

- o Maria Villabos - Estherville - 4 years

- o Rosa Marquez - Storm Lake - 6 months

- Congrats to Alicia Koppman for completing her BA in education while enrolled in the TEACH program!

Head Start Team Back to School:

August In-Service: Head Start's Leadership Team kicked off the 2026 school year with a "Back to School" theme. The librarian from Sibley came to share how to make storytelling fun, engaging and educational. Staff was provided individualized training based on their responsibilities. Played Head Start Kahoot in order to learn all about our Head Start program.



Continued...

Awards Given at Inservice

Best Classroom Attendance

Emmet EHS 1 (Courtney Christians & Kananie Stout)

Hartley Head Start (Jessica Swenson)

Sheldon Head Start (Megan Noyes)

Sibley Head Start (Kalli Devary)

Spencer HS3 (Danielle Julius)

Emmet HS1 (Kerry Bennet)

Most Policy Council Reps

Spencer Head Start



Most In-kind

Amy Morris

Janae Coe

Dawn Hill

Emmet EHS1 (Courtney Christians & Kananie Stout)

Emmet EHS2 (Heather Schacherer)

Milford Head Start (Alyssa Stofferan)

Best Parent Participation

Sibley Head Start (Kalli Devary)

Emmetsburg Head Start (Tracy Fischer)

Emmet EHS1 (Courtney Christians & Kananie Stout)

Spencer EHS2 (Linda Madsen)

Maria Barajas-Mitchell

Mariel Myers

Janae Coe

Best Home Base Attendance

Janine Huss

Amy Morris

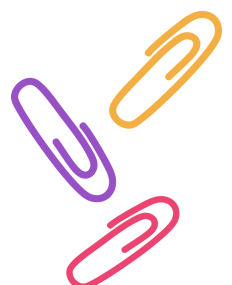
Maria Barajas-Mitchell

Highest Recruiting Numbers

Maria Romero

Jenna Sandgren

Christy Raveling





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

The work we do today helps shape what comes next!

As the 2026 Federal Fiscal Year comes to an end on September 30, UDMO is gathering data for program reporting. That may sound like paperwork, but it is so much more than that.

Every number represents a **person**. Every service represents **help provided**. Every outcome shows **progress**. And every success story helps show **why this work matters**.

The information gathered throughout the year helps **tell the story of the people UDMO assists**, the challenges they face, the support they receive, the progress they make, and the difference our programs can make in their lives. You, the people working directly with individuals and families are the ones who see those changes happen, and those details are what help bring the numbers to life.

As we head into grant writing season, new opportunities from community foundations and other funders are just around the corner. The chart below is updated each month to give us a **current snapshot of grant activity**. New applications are added, awards and denials are recorded, and older information is removed when it is no longer relevant.

Thank you for all you do to make these grant awards possible. The services you provide, the outcomes you document, and the stories you share help us show the **real impact of UDMO's work**. Together, those pieces help tell a stronger story about the people we assist and the difference we are making in our communities.

Thank you for helping make the numbers talk and, more importantly, for being there for the people behind them.

UDMO Funding Requests Update:

Recent Foundation/Organizational/Trust Grants Submitted & Status: August 2026	County	Program	Submitted/ Pending	Amount Awarded	Not Funded
Dickinson County Endowment Fund	DI	1 st Five-Newborn Kits		\$2,500	
United Way	BV, CL, OB	Client Services		TBD	
Sheldon United - 2026 - TBD Spring 2027	OB	Client Services - Sheldon	X		
Dickinson County Good Neighbor Fund	DI	Client Services	X		
Belmond Area Community Trust	WR	Client Services - Belmond	X		
Emmetsburg Unifund	PA	Client Services	X		
Still Pending from Summer/Fall 2025 to be Awarded Spring 2026					
Belmond Area Community Trust	WR	Client Services Belmond	X		

Program Grants Submitted & Status: August 2026	County	Program	Submitted/ Pending	Amount Awarded	Not Funded
Head Start 1303 - Resubmitted as One Time Supplemental Funding	EM	Roosevelt HVAC	X		
Community Services Block Grant (CSBG)	All	Outreach & Program Support		TBD	

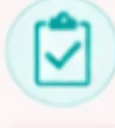


Lindsey Simental
Housing Coordinator

- We have welcomed a new Housing Case Manager Ash Hanson.
- Tori, Lindsey & Tiffany attended the Housing Iowa conference hosted by Iowa Finance Authority
- Our TBRA grant goes live 10/1. Individuals that qualify for this grant will not have to call the crisis line to be assisted. Please reach out to the housing team.

1st Five Spotlight • September 2026

Helping Iowa Families Spot Needs Early

1 SCREEN EARLY. SUPPORT EARLY. • Screen at 9, 18 & 30 months • Check for autism at 18 & 24 months • Identify needs. Connect families sooner. 	2 FY 2026 ACHIEVEMENT  Both CSAs met the FY 2026 Iowa HHS performance measure Ensure providers screen children during well-checks.	3 HOW 1ST FIVE HELPS  Help providers Build screening into visits  Coordinate referrals  Connect families to resources  Support developmental & social-emotional needs
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MEREDITH MICKELSON
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 **TERESA BALL**
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Osceola & Palo Alto Counties

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

JESSIE HANSEN

AUGUST 2026

KIDS-MIECHV

We recently held a **Parent Group Night** focused on healthy meal planning and family budgeting. Three families attended, and we hope to see attendance grow as word gets out. Our next **Parent Group Night** will be September 29th and will focus on Fire Safety, presented by the Fire Department. We are also hoping to have a fire truck there for families to see!

On August 19th, the State conducted a visit to review our program. We also attended a **BACK TO SCHOOL** event, where we connected with many families and enjoyed seeing so many children excited and ready for another great school year.



ECI-HOME VISITATION

We continue to meet monthly to stay connected, share updates, and review important program information. We are also working on creating developmental kits for our home visitors to use with families in their homes. These kits will include activities and resources to help support children's learning and development during home visits.

CARES

We recently took part in two **Back-to-School** Open Houses in **Harris-Lake Park** and **Spirit Lake**. We had the opportunity to meet many families and share helpful resources and tips for getting children back into their school routines. It was wonderful to see how excited the children were to start a new school year!

We continue to support our families by connecting them with the resources they need. We are also happy to see new referrals continuing to come in and look forward to helping more families in our communities.

