



## UCHRA Van Buren County Head Start Community Assessment 2010-2011

# Executive Summary

For over 17 years, the Van Buren County Head Start has been operated by the Upper Cumberland Human Resource Agency (UCHRA) located in Cookeville, Tennessee. UCHRA operates in 14 Middle Tennessee counties and provides an array of much needed services to these communities. Currently, the UCHRA Van Buren County Head Start is licensed to serve 37 children.

Van Buren County is located at the tip of the Cumberland Plateau in Southeast Middle Tennessee. The rugged, mountainous terrain, which makes the area isolated, is home to 5,448 people, of which 1,139 are under the age of 18. The poverty rate continues to be a huge problem. The unemployment rate has skyrocketed in the last year and the official rate is now 15.5% as of December 2009. With regard to the current economic

downtum, the need for the Head Start program and its services is stronger than ever. The statistics stated above and within this summary directly reflects services needed in the community and is used in determining long range plans and objectives for these children by providing them with essential services needed to produce a better quality of life.



## Family Needs

For families with small children who are employed, there is no daycare other than the Head Start program and the Pre K program in the local public school system. Between these two programs, there are only 85 slots for preschool children. There is no licensed daycare for children under 3 years of age within the community at all.

There are no after school programs which makes it very difficult for working parents. Lack of childcare also puts a strain on working parents who have no daycare when the school term is out, when there is inclement weather and other times such as holidays when school is not in session. Many children come from single parent homes which are limited of family or friends for childcare. Licensed daycare for infants or toddlers from 0-3 years of age is non existent in the county and is another issue that needs to be addressed. We also need to address the issue of a five day program. Parents that work or go to school need childcare five days a week.



## Family Needs (cont.)

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To put it simply, our families and the community need jobs desperately. The unemployment rate for Van Buren County jumped to 15.5% in December 2009, with unofficial estimates going over 20%. With people out of work and winter utility bills coming in, Head Start families have been relying heavily on programs that our agency, UCHRA, provides. This winter we were fortunate to have rent/house payment emergency assistance, LIHEAP and the emergency food programs to help not only Head Start families but the community as well. Jobs remain first and foremost on our minds as funding is not always available for assistance programs.



## Continuous Improvement

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The UCHRA Van Buren Co. Head Start continuously strives for improvement. Our center has earned accreditation from the prestigious NAEYC (National Association of the Education of Young Children), an

association that is dedicated to improving the lives of children through quality education and developmental services. We also participate in the STAR licensing program. Through this program, Van Buren Co. Head Start receives a report card and is evaluated on the quality of services. Applicants can receive from one to three stars. UCHRA Van Buren Co. Head Start is proud to say that a three star rating has been maintained since the inception of the program.

*"UCHRA Van Buren Co. Head Start has maintained three stars since the inception of the program"*

## Technological Advances

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This year we have incorporated more new technology for the UCHRA Van Buren County Head Start. This year we implemented a calling system that will allow us to call (instantly or set to go in advance) parents, staff or Policy Council members with announcements or other pertinent information.

We now have a web site for our staff, parents, the Policy Council or Board of Directors to access information. They can see the latest Newsletter, check the menu, review documents, read the Community Assessment or find help from agencies listed in the Resource Guide. We invite you to check us out at:

[www.vanburenheadstart.com](http://www.vanburenheadstart.com)

We have implemented a Facebook page where parents and other family members can get up to the minute information concerning Head Start. This has been very popular with parents to access the most current news and announcements.



## Staff

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Our staff continues to strive for improvement. Everyone at UCHRA Van Buren County Head Start has requirements for continuing education hours and pursues this through various trainings held in house or at other locations. Half of our teaching staff hold degrees, and half of the rest of our center's staff are proactive in furthering their education. At UCHRA Van Buren Co. Head Start, we all realize the value of education and how it has been an influence with us, and therefore want to offer the best we can for the children that are entrusted to our center.



## Medical and Dental Services

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Children get free medical and dental services through UCHRA Van Buren County Head Start. Even though there is no dentist in Van Buren County, Head Start hosts a dental clinic that comes to our center twice every school year. Children needing more intensive treatment are assisted by Head Start to obtain services. Medical services are arranged through the Health Department or the child's primary care doctor. Head Start strives to

instill good dental hygiene to promote healthy teeth.

*"there is no dentist in Van Buren county..."*

## Concerns of the Community and Head Start

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Methamphetamine production has been making a comeback in the Upper Cumberland area. UCHRA Van Buren County Head Start will continue to strive to provide awareness and educate the community about the dangers of drugs. We partner with the Tennessee Methamphetamine Task Force in Chattanooga to provide information to our families and the community. The Task Force trailer, which is completely self contained, is a portable classroom in itself with videos, actual meth lab setups, and other information to promote drug abuse awareness.

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## Concerns of the Community (cont.)

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At UCHRA Van Buren Co. Head Start, we help to address the needs of the community as a whole. We believe that issues that impact the Community also impacts the lives of our children. For instance, Head Start advocates for more housing in the community. In the coming year, we hope to be able to resume our Job Fair which was put on hold this year due to the tremendous downturn of employment. We also advocate for health coverage, dental coverage and for further education for all. Every year, Head Start holds a Health and Education Awareness Fair that addresses all of these areas and is open to the community. We are also very pleased to announce that Head Start will be applying to host another RAM (Rural Area Medical) clinic in 2012. See details below about the 2009 RAM Clinic . Stay tuned for more information about this future event!

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## Making a Difference

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In April 2009, the UCHRA Van Buren County Head Start facilitated and hosted the first Rural Area Medical clinic in Van Buren County. RAM, an organization based in Knoxville, Tennessee, is a non profit network of volunteers who give their time to provide much needed medical services in not only the US but in South America. For this clinic, the Van Buren Co. High School generously donated the use of their facilities. Fall Creek Falls State Park donated the use of one of their lodges for visiting volunteers. Local businesses and churches also gave their time and donations of food and drinks. Many others gave their time and donations to make the RAM clinic possible. All services performed were absolutely free of charge. The clinic was a total success.

During the 2 day marathon of medical and dental services, much was accomplished by a dedicated network of professional volunteers. Doctors, nurses, eye practitioners, dentists and hygienists, many of them from out of state, worked in a fever pitch the weekend of the event. During the time allocated, a total of 712 services were rendered. People had general medical services performed. There were 271 eye tests who received glasses free of charge. There were 840 extractions, 167 fillings, and 45 cleanings. In all, a total of patients seen was 651. The value of these services amounted to \$134,200.00. The need for medical care is so great in our area, that if time would have permitted, many more could have been done.

Head Start helps the community all year long. The satellite office of the UCHRA, which offers a wide variety of services from food programs to help with utility bills, was recently relocated on the Head Start property. These services that UCHRA offers not only benefit Head Start families but are important to the well being of the entire community, especially when this area has been so hard hit by unemployment. Head Start offers an emergency food bank for those that need it. We also maintain a Lending House that has clothing and household items, free of charge to the community. We truly believe that the health of the family is directly related to the health of the community, and Head Start is dedicated to making a difference where ever we can.

