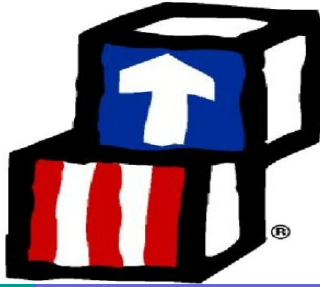


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ANNUAL REPORT



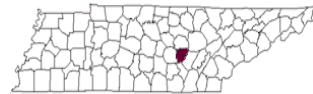
UCHRA VAN BUREN COUNTY HEAD START

UCHRA Van Buren County Head Start
Community Assessment 2008-2009

Executive Summary

For more than 15 years, the UCHRA Van Buren County Head Start has been operated by the Upper Cumberland Human Resource Agency (UCHRA) in Cookeville, Tennessee. UCHRA serves 14 counties in Middle Tennessee and provides an array of much needed services to these communities. The UCHRA Van Buren County Head Start is license to serve 40 children in Spencer, Tennessee.

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. In 2007, state averages for people living in poverty were 15.8% for adults and 22.5% for children 0-17. The Van Buren County poverty rate was 19.2% of all people living in poverty, 28.5% for children 0-17 years of age, far above state averages. There are few resources to help people.



With so many living in poverty, the need is apparent for the Head Start program and its many services. The percentages above and within this summary shows clearly the need for 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

Many of the families being served in this community are employed, but there is no licensed daycare other than the Head Start program and the PreK program in the local public school system. Between these two programs, there are only 85 slots for preschool aged children. There is no licensed daycare for children under three years of age in the community.

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 for summer or during inclement weather or holidays. Many children come from single parent homes which are limited for family or friends for daycare. Licensed daycare for children aged 0-3 desperately needs to be addressed in the community.



Family Needs (cont.)

Many of the families in this area are considered the “working poor” and rely upon other programs such as WIC (a federal Women, Infant, and Children supplemental food program), the food stamp program, and state health insurance programs to help make ends meet. We have the Federal government’s Commodities program and a few local food banks but the supplies are extremely limited. The UCHRA Van Buren Co. Head Start offers a food bank in-house to help anyone that needs it. We also maintain through generous donations a Lending House on site that has clothing and household items that is open to the community. We are very fortunate to have strong support from the community to assist us with donated items.

Utility bills this winter have skyrocketed. Our agency, UCHRA, was allotted extra funding this year to help with these costs. Unfortunately, these funds can only be used by a family once per year. There is also a local group, CAB, which helps funds are available.

There are very few jobs within the community, so people must drive to different areas to work or access higher education. The nearest communities are 16 to 30+ miles from Spencer. The cost of driving puts a further strain on budgets, and there is no public transportation to serve the community as a whole. Food costs continue to escalate and along with higher utility bills, is the cause of more hardship. Most Head Start children are on the state insurance program,



TennCare. For most parents, however, they either do not have access to health care or it does not include dental care. This is a problem within the whole community: access to health care and dental care. There is no dentist in Van Buren County and clinics which can help on a sliding scale are too far away for most citizens.

Concerns of the Community and Head Start

A Community Assessment was completed in March 2008 by UCHRA Van Buren Co. Head Start. The main concerns were designated in order of importance by community leaders and institutions:

1. Adult unemployment
2. Lack of affordable health insurance
3. Youth drug abuse
4. Adult drug abuse
5. Youth alcohol abuse
6. Adult alcohol abuse
7. Shortage of recreational programs
8. Shortage of affordable housing for families
9. Illiteracy
10. Underemployment

The unemployment rate for Van Buren County spiked to 11% in December, 2008. By comparison, the rate was 6.0% in December, 2007.



Making a Difference

At UCHRA Van Buren Co. Head Start, we believe what impacts the community also affects our children. For this reason, we help to address the needs of the entire community. Head Start hosted the second annual Job Fair in November 2008 to help address unemployment and re-education. We advocate for more affordable health care and are proud to be sponsoring the first RAM (Remote Area Medical) clinic in April 2009. RAM will donate, through a volunteer system, free dental and eye services for whoever needs it. We also do an annual Health Fair. We address drug and alcohol abuse by incorporating awareness through trainings, providing

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Making a Difference (cont)

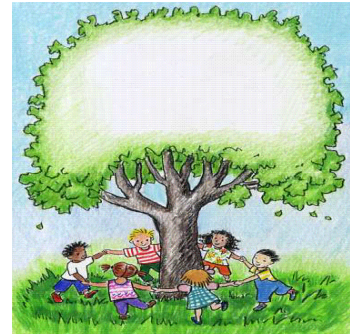
literature, and partnering with the State Drug Task Force. Head Start addresses the lack of recreational activities within the community by having activities through our program for the children and their families. Head Start advocates for more housing in the community and stays in contact with the local housing authority for vacancies if the need arises. We have 17 literacy programs that include the entire family. We partnership with the local Adult Education to get parents into that program in order to obtain their GED. We also include local state and community colleges and trade schools to further educate our parents in order to help them get better jobs.

In 2007, 52.6% of public school students were eligible for free or reduced lunches. At UCHRA Van Buren Co. Head Start, 100% of the students were eligible. This once again demonstrates the need for services in our area. For our program, we only serve foods that are low in sugar and salt, even at parent events. We conduct nutritional education for both students and their families. We also encourage exercise and give our children opportunities to play outside or in the gym during inclement weather. We have professionals that come to our center and hold health, nutrition and exercise classes on a regular basis. We have classes for smoking cessation and offer information on drug and alcohol abuse. Methamphetamine use is once again on the rise in the Upper Cumberland area and we have stepped up our awareness programs. We provide classes to our parents on domestic violence issues and even have a class for our children, “Hands Are Not For Hurting”. We also offer parenting classes through a licensed social worker who comes and conducts the classes on-site.

UCHRA Van Buren County Head Start is very fortunate to have the full backing of the community and it is evident in our program! Van Buren County and the surrounding communities are very generous with donations for our program and we appreciate their generosity. These donations allow for us to have more for our children which otherwise would not be possible.

Low income children and their families suffer more from the lagging economy and skyrocketing prices on goods, services, utility bills and the general cost of living. However, UCHRA Van Buren County Head Start feels that strategic intervention can and does have a positive effect on the lives of children and their families. We believe that when we get involved, we make a profound impact, fostering the development of the child, of the family, and of the communities in which we live. Using a network of community partners, volunteers and our dedicated and capable staff, we can identify and use our community strengths towards making a significant impact on the lives of our children and their families.

*“Hand in Hand, Together
We Can”*



Medical and Dental Services

Children get free medical and dental care through UCHRA Van Buren County Head Start. Although there is no dentist in Van Buren County, Head Start hosts a dental clinic that comes to the center twice a school term to address the needs of the children. Those that need more intensive care are assisted by Head Start to obtain those services. Head Start intensively advocates for good dental hygiene to promote healthy teeth and incorporates this into our program.

Medical services are obtained through the Health Department or through the child’s primary care doctor. We also work with the Lion’s club to test each child’s eyesight and provide glasses as needed. We insure that each and every child is kept up to date on their immunizations. Most of the children at our Head Start program are on the state funded insurance program, TennCare.



Staff

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 in house or at other locations. Half of our staff holds teaching degrees and most of the rest of our center's staff are proactive in furthering their education. At UCHRA Van Buren County Head Start, we all realize the value of education and how it has been an influence in our own lives. We want to offer the best we can for the children that are entrusted to our center!



Continuous Improvement

The UCHRA Van Buren County Head Start continuously strives for improvement. Our center has earned accreditation from the prestigious NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children), an association that is dedicated to improving the lives of children through high quality education and developmental services. We were recently re-evaluated by the STAR licensing program for quality of education and again received the highest marks, a three star rating. We are proud to say that we have maintained a three star rating since the inception of the program!



Technological Advances

Last year, we implemented a new computer software program, Galileo, to gather, store and track information on our students, their families and staff. This has worked very well for us. We are also implementing more math and science into our curriculum. One way we are incorporating this into the program is through our new children's computers we were awarded in a grant. The Little Tykes computers are an excellent resource for the children, who are learning math and science skills while playing games on these kid sized computers. We feel very fortunate to have these computers to add to our classrooms and they are an excellent teaching aid for the children who are learning while having fun!

