

May 2011

ANNUAL REPORT



UCHRA VAN BUREN COUNTY  
HEAD START

## UCHRA Van Buren County Head Start Community Assessment 2011-2012

# Executive Summary

For over 18 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 5,548 people, of which 1,181 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 14.1% as of January 2011. With regard to the current economic

downturn, 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

The poverty rate for Van Buren county has increased over the last year. The unemployment rate has also remained high with no new jobs coming into the area. This places a worsening strain on families that are already in dire straits. Children that live in poverty are more likely to have difficulty in school, become delinquent, more likely to become teen parents and as adults, earn less and be unemployed more often. Since the last assessment, drug related cases within this community have taken a turn for the worse: there were 50 drug related cases in the court system of Van Buren Co. Sexual assaults have also increased, with some perpetrated against children. Cases of domestic violence have nearly doubled.

These statistics alone do not indicate a healthy environment. Van Buren Co. Head Start will continue to strive for improvement within the community through drug abuse education, job and education assistance, and in conjunction with Avalon in Crossville, continue to provide domestic violence education.



## Family Needs (cont.)

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Families in the community rely heavily on community programs such as food stamps and LIHEAP. With rumored cuts to programs, families will be suffering even more. During stressful times, drug and alcohol abuse increases, which in turn causes increases of domestic violence cases. High unemployment also takes a toll and there are no jobs becoming available in the community in the foreseeable future. Other counties are a long distance away, and minimum wage jobs do not pay enough to make up for the increased travel expenses. Gasoline increases are also making it very difficult for people to travel for work and school. 30.9% of families in Van Buren County live in poverty. Early childcare is desperately needed; there is no childcare for children aged 0-3 years old in Van Buren county.



## 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

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

association that is dedicated to improving the lives of children through quality education and developmental services. We also participate in Tennessee’s 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 that it has maintained three stars since the inception of the program.



## Technological Advances

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We have incorporated new technology for the UCHRA Van Buren County Head Start, in an effort to be more efficient and reduce man hours and costs. We implemented a calling system that will allow us to call (instantly or set to go in advance) parents, staff or Governing Bodies members with announcements or other pertinent information.

We have a web site for our staff, parents, Governing Bodies and all stakeholders 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 implemented a Facebook page where parents and all stakeholders 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. Check us out at :

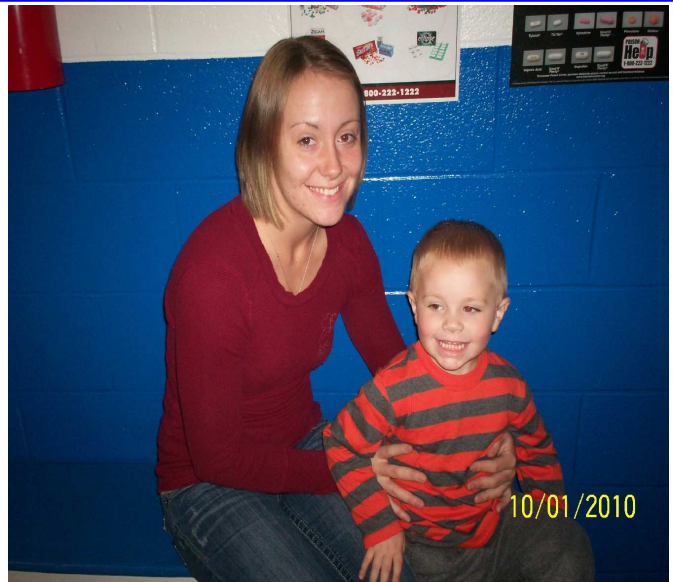
[www.facebook.com/vanburencountyheadstart](http://www.facebook.com/vanburencountyheadstart)



## Staff

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Our staff continues to strive for improvement. Everyone at UCHRA Van Buren County Head Start has requirements (100+ hours per year) for continuing education hours and pursues this through various trainings held locally through state, regional or national events. All teaching staff hold degrees, all staff are required to maintain a child development associates degree and are proactive in furthering their education. At UCHRA Van Buren Co. Head Start, we realize the value of education and how it influences lives. Through continuing education, we offer quality services 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. While 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. Head Start strives to instill good dental hygiene to promote healthy teeth. Medical services are arranged through the Health Department or the child's primary care phy-

sician. Children that are not on an insurance plan are assisted to obtain coverage. The local Lion's Club, working in conjunction with Vanderbilt in Nashville, tests the children's eyes every year and the results are used to obtain additional necessary services.

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

## Concerns of the Community and Head Start

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Methamphetamine production has increased across the Upper Cumberland area, with a 50% increase of court cases since the last community assessment. Youth drug and alcohol abuse as well as adult alcohol abuse continue to be a concern for the community. Citizens are also concerned about lack of affordable health insurance, affordable and accessible medical care, and employment for adults and teens. Van Buren Co. Head Start addresses these concerns through partnerships with local agencies and advocating for not only the program's families but for the community as a whole.

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## Concerns of the Community (cont.)

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UCHRA Van Buren Co. Head Start will be hosting a Rural Area Medical (RAM) clinic in 2012. RAM provides free medical, dental and eye exams/glasses for anyone that needs it. There is absolutely no restrictions and is available to all, whether they live in the immediate area or not. These services are available through a network of volunteer professionals, who furnish their own time and expense of travel to participate. Local businesses, organizations, churches and individuals also volunteer their time and resources. Events are held over a weekend. People can get extractions, fillings, cleanings, exams, basic medical care, eye exams and corrective lenses, all free of charge. For more information on RAM, visit their website at :

[www.ramusa.org](http://www.ramusa.org)



## Making a Difference

Every year, UCHRA Van Buren Co. Head Start hosts a Health and Education Awareness Fair. Attendees will find information from vendors in all areas of health. Much of the focus is on prevention and what people can do to improve their health or to stay healthy, from dental care to nutrition to mental health.

People will also find information on educational opportunities from local colleges, forms to apply for FAFSA (the Federal student aid program) which provides financial assistance to pursue higher education.

