



Stories of Hope

2017-2018

Douglas-Cherokee Economic Authority, Inc.



Kay Hale, Executive Director

Rene Tabor, Board Chair

Hope....

According to Mr. Webster, hope is the expectation of success.

Douglas-Cherokee Economic Authority, Inc.'s ultimate goal is to provide resources, tools, and opportunities that help low-income families and individuals of all ages become successful personally, financially and socially. In essence, Douglas-Cherokee provides hope.

Results are often measured in numbers. We showcase our results in our Annual Report. However, hope is not measured by numbers. This year, we wanted to focus more on the people DCEA has served or given hope. By giving hope, DCEA gives our clients the will and determination to achieve goals. Hope involves the will and the different ways to get there.

As our Annual Report shows, this has been a GOOD year for not only the agency, but the individuals and households we have served. Following are the stories of a few of these clients.

A good thing about hope.....it's easy to share.



Hopeless to Happiness

This is the story of a previous sad, depressed and lonely man. Mr. Ron was living in a cardboard refrigerator box he called home. Ron has a history of drug and alcohol abuse. Traumatized from the event of his wife having an affair, he became very depressed. Ron was admitted to a local mental health facility for attempting suicide. After being treated and released, Ron moved in to his sister's home.

His sister and other family members assisted Ron in looking for housing of his own. Ron applied for an apartment at Affordable Housing's Greenbriar Village in Rogersville. Within the next week, he was moving into his own apartment.

Ron states that when he first moved in he was very sad and had days he "just sat and cried." He talked very little to anyone but family, Eric Mayes, Maintenance Technician and Candice Mayes, Apartment Management Specialist. Ron said, "Eric and Candice made me feel welcome. I felt comfortable to talk to them." Ron shared how he loves music and his past role as a minister. He was encouraged to contact some former friends and started playing music for a gospel group.

In the past six months, Ron has participated in all planned events at the complex, socializes with other residents and even plays music. He is managing his household and prepares meals. He travels regularly with a gospel group and shares his story in churches and alcohol and drug rehabilitation centers. Ron stated, "The staff have helped me in so many ways. I can't thank them enough. They are my family."

Eric and Candice Mayes, Maintenance Technician and Apartment Management Specialist stated, "Ron is always smiling, pleasant and offers to help others."

"Ron is a bright ray of sunshine in my day. He never forgets to smile, share a joke or his gratitude," Linda Ward, Service Coordinator.



Linda Ward, Mr. Ron, Eric Mayes



Mr. Ron, Candice and Eric Mayes

After School Success

Rita Casteñon was part of the afterschool program at Hillcrest Elementary from 2005-2007. Rita was a very quiet and very timid young lady. The tutors and mentor worked with her every day to help her reach her academic goals. Rita was a student that struggled with many subjects due to her English barrier, but with her dedication and the help of program staff, Rita was able to be successful during her elementary years.

Like many students, Rita finished elementary school and continued working on her academic goals throughout the years. Now, Rita is a student at Walters State Community College (WSCC), where she is majoring in Laboratory Science. Rita is a young leader in her community, and she has become a leader at WSCC. She is part of the RHITA (Recruiting Hispanics to Achieve) program at WSCC which provides leadership development, bilingual outreach, mentoring and institutional collaboration for Hispanic students.

She also motivates students to come to the DCEA afterschool programs. Rita is a role model for many of the students DCEA serves in Hamblen County. Rita is a perfect example of why afterschool programs work.



A DCEA Mentor and Rita Casteñon



Rita and a group of afterschool students

A Day of Sundry Emotions

In October 2017, Mr. Solomon walked into the DCEA Neighborhood Service Center seeking direction. He had been in prison for 6 years. He explained his basic needs of housing, transportation, and employment. NSC staff explained the Partners for Success (PFS) services. He agreed to work with NSC staff to better his life situation.

In November, 2017 staff met with Karol at the NSC. Some of his main barriers were lack of state issued documents such as a driver's license and social security card to gain employment. His beginning assessment score was 13/50. NSC staff helped him set goals and provided resources to pursue.

In December 2017, Karol had obtained a driver's license and social security card. A family acquaintance provided part time work on a local farm. Mr. Solomon also accomplished a major goal: transportation. He earned enough money to buy a \$300 car. Along with his mechanical skills and determination, he was on the road to overcoming barriers to achieve not only self-sufficiency but self-worth!

Throughout the PFS services, Mr. Solomon's need of emergency food supply was met by providing a voucher to a local grocery store. Karol discussed with staff his need for permanent housing as his living arrangement was temporary. Karol was provided local housing contact information and an application with Rogersville Housing Authority. Staff also informed Karol of local places that were hiring and since he now had transportation, he had the means/tools to continue on his goal-achieving pathway.

Staff met with Karol in January 2018 and he informed them that with CSBG funds provided, he was able to become established in adequate housing. PFS funds were utilized with a voucher to R.H.A. as payment for his first month's rent.

In February 2018, staff met with Karol for his third PFS appointment. A very proud moment for Karol was to inform staff of his accomplishment of getting his own job at Clayton Homes. Karol discussed his plan to search for private rental options. He was counseled on budget and extra expenses involved with transitioning to private rental. He decided to pursue this goal due to him having a stable source of income. DCEA staff put him in contact with Appalachian Electric Co-op for setting up flex-pay utility account. Karol also discussed wanting to move forward with his goal of regaining custody of his son.

In March 2018, Karol met with staff and reviewed his accomplishments and discussed goals. He shared he had begun receiving incentive pay and will meet his 90 day probationary period next month and will have full health benefits as well as an increase in pay. He became established with Knoxville TVA Credit Union and received his first credit card! He expressed that he was taking it slow because he wanted to show his son a better way to live and he "wanted to do it right this time."

In April, Karol reported that he is getting to see his son on the weekends! He was proud for this opportunity

and was planning activities for them to do together. Staff discussed with Karol about the garden seed program as an added food supply for his son and himself. He agreed to participate in the program. Karol also discussed concerns with meeting energy costs.

In May, Karol reported that he was close to the end of his 90 day probationary period. He has spoken with an attorney about getting custody of his son. Staff explained to Karol the possibility of an extension of PFS services to allow extended time for him to become more established.

In June, Karol provided pictures of his garden. He reported that he and his son Andy were “taking care of it together.” He appeared in court for custody of his son and was set for a home review with DCS.

In July Karol reported that his son is now living with him full-time. As of October 2018, the court granted Andy the right to have his last name changed to Solomon. NSC staff asked Andy how he felt and he said “it feels pretty darn good.” Both Karol and Andy were over-joyed to have reached this goal.

Karol stated so many times during his PFS involvement “If I can do this, anyone can do this. Drug addiction is a cop out. When I accepted and made up my own mind that I WANTED to change my life to the good, I just did it!”



Karol Soloman



Karol and his son

Age Is Just A Number

Amy Pitts visited the Cocke County Educational Opportunity Center in February, 2011. Her and her husband were both self-employed with 1 son. Amy had recently been accepted to TN College of Applied Technology (TCAT) for the License Practical Nursing (LPN) Program and needed assistance in completing her Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). At forty-years-old, Amy realized it was best to set short-term goals, so she would not be discouraged along the way.

The first short-range goal achieved was finishing her LPN Degree in April, 2012. This achievement gave Amy the confidence to continue her education by enrolling in the Registered Nurse (RN) program at Walters State Community College (WSCC) in May of 2012.

In May 2014, after successfully completing the RN Program at WSCC, Amy decided to take on the next level. She began the Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) program at King University. After graduating with her BSN in December 2015, Amy enrolled at Carson-Newman University in the Masters of Science in Nursing program. After passing her State Boards, Amy is now a Family Nurse Practitioner at the Family Practice Center in Newport with Health Star. She started accepting patients in October.

Throughout her journey, Amy met with her Educational Specialist on a regular basis to discuss and update her goals as well as complete her FAFSA each year. Amy said, "I can't thank you (the EOC program) enough for all the years your helped and encouraged me."



A Success In Progress

Kara Coleman was a struggling single mother of two boys. She was unemployed and living with her mother. Kara wanted both boys to attend the extended duration site at Dandridge so she could seek employment.

After both boys started Head Start, I noticed there had been several mornings that Kara was late dropping them off. I pulled her to the side and asked how things were going and she explained that she had to move out of her mother's home and was living with a friend in Morristown. After talking about how that is a long drive for her each day, she said, "They need to be in school, so here we are!" I gave her some low income housing information. A few weeks later she reported that she and the boys were number six on the waiting list to get an apartment and she is staying with her grandmother until they get their own place.

One day, Kara came in to the site and said her son is acting up at home and she needs help. I sent in a referral for her to talk with Kristen Mahoney. She was so happy to get the individualized meeting that Head Start offered her through our mental health consultant. Because Head Start provided Kara support with her child's behavior, she feels more confident as a parent and is hopeful she will not have to seek further assistance once she moves.

Later in the year, Kara came in and decided she wanted to fill out an application to work for Head Start. She needed a job and Head Start needed help! Head Start was able to work with her schedule to suit the needs of her children. Since she was able to choose her hours at Head Start as a substitute, she was also able to take her children to doctor's appointments and follow up on screenings Head Start had required to make sure her children were healthy in every way.

At some point, Kara also mentioned to me that she wanted to go back to school. She came to the Head Start Parent Fair and I sent her to talk to a representative from Walters State and the Tennessee Reconnect program. She wanted to major in criminal justice but was afraid that Walters State didn't offer that program. The next morning, Kara came into the office with her eyes sparkling. She said she had checked with Walters State and they offer a criminal justice program. She said she was going to apply for college and Tennessee Reconnect is going to help pay for her schooling.

Kara is now working, saving money for her deposit on an apartment, and applying to further her education all because Head Start gave her the support, outreach tools, and confidence she needed to become successful in life. Head Start helps break the poverty cycle by educating parents and children and looking at the whole family and their needs. Head Start is empowering the families we serve and helping them become successful!



Working To Build a Strong Knit Community

Susan Powers is a 67-year old homebound senior in Jefferson County who has struggled with scheduling her doctor's appointments around the schedule of her part-time caregiver. Susan uses a cane for mobility and enjoys giving back to her community by knitting hats for the Christmas boxes that her church distributes every year. She sometimes struggles to make meals for herself, depending on how bad her legs and back are hurting and with the added challenge of having to use her cane to move around in her kitchen.

Susan contacted RSVP in September. She said, "I found out about RSVP at a commodities distribution and thought the program sounding interesting. I'm always looking for a new friend and thought this would be a great way to meet new people outside of my social circle." The following day, Susan signed up to receive transportation services with RSVP. However, she didn't want to only receive the benefits of the program, but wanted to also give. Susan signed up to serve as a Telecare volunteer with the program. The RSVP Program provides telephone reassurance and/or transportations assistance to homebound seniors.

Susan was also referred to DCEA Senior Nutrition's Meals on Wheels program. She now receives hot meals from the program throughout the week as well as a new friend in her delivery driver. She is also connecting with other homebound seniors in her community both as a TeleCare Volunteer and as a Transportation client. "RSVP is allowing me to get acquainted with new people in the area and Meals on Wheels is a great program too. They're doing a great job," Susan said when asked about the difference the programs have made for her.



Everyone Needs A Buddy

Research shows that social isolation can have a huge impact on an older person's overall health. Congregate nutrition programs, under the Older Americans Act (OAA), are one way to help fight the social isolation of older adults. Andrew (Buddy) Boue has been working to improve Douglas-Cherokee's Senior Nutrition Congregate Program over the last few months and has had great results.

Buddy started as a delivery driver for the Senior Nutrition Program in November 2012. Buddy is very friendly and loves meeting new people and bringing people together. A few months ago, he expressed his desire to do something else. He stated that delivering the meals to home bound residents wasn't what he wanted to do anymore and he would be resigning from the Senior Nutrition Program. Not wanting to let him go, Kate Luker, Program Director, suggested the idea of being a congregate site host to Buddy. In August, Buddy began hosting the College Park and Laurelwood congregate meals in Hamblen County and the congregate meal at the library in Jefferson City.

From day one, the participants have loved Buddy's company at the sites. The Site Supervisor for Hamblen County, Tonya Long, has been amazed at the difference Buddy has made. She said the participants remind each other which days Buddy will be hosting the meal. Congregate meal participants who had previously stopped attending have asked to come back since Buddy is hosting.

The number of participants at the Jefferson City Library have almost doubled since Buddy has started hosting. When Buddy first started hosting at the library, there were 5 or 6 clients who attended almost every day the site was open, now Buddy has 11 or 12 people who regularly attend.

When asked what they like about coming to the congregate sites to eat, the overwhelming response from the participants is they enjoy socializing with other people and Buddy is great to get everyone talking. The participants stated that Buddy was very helpful, trustworthy and friendly. Some of the participants have even invited their friends to come with them because they enjoy the time they spend with Buddy and the other participants.

Buddy attributes his success to being a delivery driver for six years. He says he learned a lot during that time and without that experience, he would not be as successful now. Buddy stated, "The biggest thing I have learned is that you can't lead the discussion or make the participants do anything. You just have to let them choose what they want to talk about and what they want to do. I just sit back and listen to them."



You Say Cheerleader, I Say Inspirational Leader

Douglas-Cherokee Talent Search's mission is to empower low-income, potential first generation youth who have academic potential, but who lack adequate information or school preparation, to enter and complete a postsecondary education and to become successful in life after school. Talent Search provides academic advising, life skills, career, college, financial literacy and financial aid information and cultural opportunities to our students.

TJ Minton is a 2017 graduate of Claiborne County High School and currently a sophomore at Tusculum University. TJ was Jenny Collins-King's, current Talent Search Program Director, first student she met as an adviser with Talent Search. He introduced himself to Jenny and declared they would be "best friends" and that he loved Talent Search. When talking about his decision to not only go to college but also go away from home, TJ said, "Talent Search has helped me explain to my parents the importance of college and what I wanted to get from it. Their support was important to me and without Talent Search, I don't think I could have made that choice to go away to college."

The summer leading up to his first year of college, TJ participated in Talent Search's summer program and experience what it was like living on a college campus. The experience helped prepare TJ for his first semester of college, but he still faced struggles. After meeting with Alicia, his TS Adviser, TJ was able to work through his issues and found his groove during his second semester.

TJ has said, "Talent Search helped me find the courage to cheer which eventually led to a scholarship at college. I now cheer, do work study and am a member of the theater group and Tusculum and will be in my first play this fall. Because of Talent Search, I have now decided to become an art teacher so that I can help other teenage kids decide to enrich their lives by going to college."



Fork In The Road

In March 2017, Marsha Hopkins was abruptly laid off from her job of 25 years. She had recently lost both of her parents whom she had been their main caregiver for several years. Marsha found herself lost, with no direction.

The job position she was laid off from was very detailed which left her without marketable skills for the current job market. Marsha was the sole provider for her household and didn't know where to turn for help. A friend mentioned the Smoky Mountain TN Reconnect program to Marsha.

Marsha contacted the program and was welcomed by Lisa Jacobs, her success advisor. Marsha said that Lisa has been incredible since the very beginning with keeping her updated on potential scholarships and sharing words of encouragement. Marsha has also spoken with Terri Conduff the TRC Program Director and Jamie Susong, EOC Education Specialist who Marsha says were also very helpful.

Currently, Marsha is enrolled in her second trimester at Tennessee College of Applied Technology in the Administrative Office Technology program. Marsha says, "I am incredibly thankful for Lisa, the TRC program, and the opportunity to become a better person."



First Gen Proud

In April of 2012, a very enthusiastic and optimistic high-school junior walked into the Upward Bound office at Cherokee High School. His grades were stellar, his attendance was stellar, as was his test scores. He didn't need tutoring or advice on high school classes, he needed help with the college process. His name was Taylor Trent and he knew he wanted something more, he just wasn't sure how to get there. He was a first generation student, meaning neither parent had obtained a degree. When describing himself on his UB application, Taylor said, "I am a driven student and I want to be prepared."

Taylor was accepted into the Upward Bound program the following year; the beginning of his senior year. During his intake interview, Taylor indicated he had an interest in physical therapy and would like to pursue a degree in that field at Carson-Newman or Auburn.

During his senior year of high school, Taylor lived alone most of the time. His entire life had been poverty, addiction, and despair. He worked part-time and relied on SNAP benefits for assistance with food. Although he was busy, Taylor attended every DCEA Eagle Day Saturday at Carson-Newman in which he learned about financial aid, financial literacy, study skills, reading skills, and a host of other non-cognitive skills. On Saturdays, he also participated in Upward Bound's senior seminar, which helped him look more in depth at college majors, careers, and the future in general.

His Upward Bound adviser, David Alvis, helped him apply to colleges and complete his FAFSA. He applied to both East Tennessee State University and the University of Tennessee at Knoxville. He was accepted into both colleges and chose the University of Tennessee in Knoxville with an engineering major.

In an article about Upward Bound, Taylor wrote:

In the backwoods of East Tennessee there is a small town named Rogersville. Not many things go through the minds of its inhabitants outside of hunting, fishing, and football. There is never a second thought about college. College is something that is deemed for “city folk” and “rich kids,” but for those kids who seek a greater purpose in life there is a program at a local high school called Upward Bound. Upward Bound is a program that helps clueless kids guide themselves through high school so that they are ready for college. Upward Bound is much more than a forty-dollar paycheck once a month, it is the opportunity to learn things they have never known. If not for Upward Bound, I would be lost.

Taylor graduated in May 2017 with a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering with a minor in Reliability & Maintainability. He is currently employed as a Project Development and Construction Engineer at SABIC, which is the 2nd largest chemical company in the world.



Hope: a feeling of expectation and desire for a certain thing to happen.

Success: the accomplishment of an aim or purpose.

What can I say about the stories in this booklet? They speak for themselves. DCEA is privileged to work with so many people and to witness first-hand how individuals and families grow in various different ways.

Most everyone “hopes for success”. However, many people have countless barriers and obstacles to overcome on their way to success. Often times, it does not seem to be within their grasp.

At Douglas-Cherokee Economic Authority, staff strive to support individuals and families in order for “success” to become a real possibility. Believing in the possibility of positive growth and achievement for oneself will help change this world. It will certainly change the life of that one individual who finds success and the many others they might also help. *One* person at a time!

There is nothing more fulfilling than seeing successes and positive improvements happening in those individuals who thought it couldn’t happen to them. People helping people. That is what Douglas-Cherokee is all about.

Thank you for your involvement at DCEA. We make a difference every day.

–Kay Hale, Executive Director



“Never underestimate the difference you can make in the lives of others.

Step forward, reach out and help.”

– Pablo



Changing Lives



534 East First North Street, Morristown, TN 37814

T: 423-587-4500 TF: 866-631-4120

W: www.douglascherokee.org



DCEA.TN



DCEA_TN