



A Community Services Block Grant Program News Forum

A Note from CSBG Team:

Winter is on its way out and the Spring is beginning to take its place and time. We would like to thank you all, especially frontline staff who continue to serve clients during the cold and sometimes snowy weather. We appreciate you having a plan to serve and seeing it through. Spring, of course, will bring its own challenges, so thank you in advance for your hard work and dedication. Stay safe; you are valuable and much appreciated!

Warmest Regards,
Your CSBG Team

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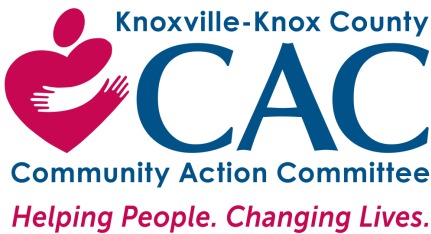
Agency Wins

Innovative programs, services, achievements, community awards, and accomplishments from agencies across the state

Urban Agriculture: Growing More than Produce!

Charlotte Rodina, AmeriCorps alumna, Master Gardener, and Director of Beardsley Farm Community Garden at Knoxville-Knox County Community Action Committee, is becoming accustomed to recognition. Beardsley Farm won several significant awards in recent years: In 2022, Beardsley Farm won the United Way of Greater Knoxville's Choice Award for Small Nonprofit Collaboration of the Year. Second Harvest Food Bank of East Tennessee awarded Beardsley Farm the 2023 Partner of the Year Award. Most recently in February 2024, Keep Knoxville Beautiful awarded Beardsley Farm its "Pillar of the Community" Orchid Beautification Award and Rodina, herself, was voted one of East Tennessee's top young professionals in the Knoxville News Sentinel's 40 Under 40 Class of 2023. This award recognizes leadership, innovation, professional accomplishments, and service to community.

Since becoming Director in 2019, Rodina and Beardsley Farm have initiated many impactful programs, such as the culturally relevant New Ground Garden program, which offers garden space, gardening support, seeds, plants, and other resources to Knoxville's emergent community of refugee families, largely Burundi, so that they may grow the food of their choice. The School Garden program creates healthier communities for under-resourced students through garden and cooking education, produce distribution, and by promoting time spent outdoors. A new Compost Project, in partnership with the City of Knoxville, will provide a free compost service for residents. Beardsley Farm staff and volunteers help to maintain the compost, and then the nutrient-rich byproduct is used on the crops at the farm.



Beardsley Farm Community Garden Director Charlotte Rodina standing in the garden.



Beardsley Farm Community Garden



Beardsley Farm has long been a notable presence in the green community in Knoxville. Founded in 1998, the four acres of urban gardens are a feature inside Malcom-Martin Park, two miles from downtown Knoxville, growing fruits, and vegetables for free distribution among multiple Knox County community groups. Beardsley staff and volunteers also work to impact the local environment by conducting monthly trash cleanups in the park, maintaining, and beautifying the park through diverse tree, vegetable, fruit, and flower plantings, amending and building healthy soil through cover crop planting, mulching, crop rotation, using plant debris for winter-time insect and wildlife habitat, and solar panel installation. CSBG funding has indirectly supported the programs that Beardsley Farm offers our community, in turn, allowing Beardsley Farm to directly support our CSBG clients. Supporting Seed and Plant Program, creation of other programs, and staffing.

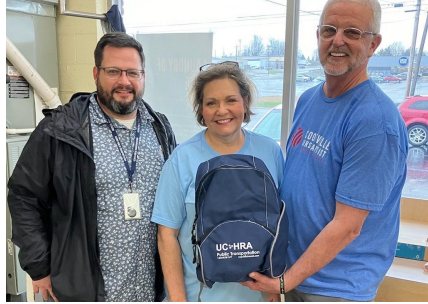
In her eight years at Beardsley, Rodina has brought about an extraordinary 740% increase in produce donations and navigated a 129% increase in her operating budget through grants and fundraising. During the last fiscal year, she managed 9,521 volunteer and AmeriCorps service hours from over 1,000 unique volunteers and four AmeriCorps team members. She also manages a full-time staff of four and one part-time employee.

"I am very proud of the resources that Beardsley Farm provides. I'm proud that I've made my way through challenges over the years while upholding my values, as well as the values of Beardsley Farm and CAC....But the biggest successes of mine are the relationships and partnerships I cultivate with the community and the follow through and hard work I apply to the projects I work on," was Rodina's response when asked about her favorite accomplishments.

Rodina makes Knoxville and CAC Beardsley Community Farm a more welcoming place for everyone; she dedicates herself to diversifying Beardsley Farm's impact and its community of recipients. She holds the strong belief that "everyone deserves access to produce and space to grow food." Rodina is also a Food Policy Council associate member, Trees Knoxville board member, animal lover and beekeeper.

UCHRA Partners with Laundry of Love

Laundry of Love, a First Baptist Church Cookeville ministry, partners with Upper Cumberland Human Resource Agency (UCHRA) to bring hope to the unsheltered. Ryan Henry, Judy and Bob Miller, and the dedicated volunteers of Laundry of Love are working together to distribute Bags of Hope to those in need. Laundry of Love provides free laundry services and a meal to more than 80 people each month while offering practical assistance and care to those experiencing homelessness or just needing a hand-up.



Volunteers Ryan Henry, Judy and Bob Miller.

Empower UC Fundraising Luncheon A Success

On Tuesday, Feb. 20, 2024, Empower Upper Cumberland Human Resource Agency (UCHRA) held its first fundraising event. During the inaugural fundraising luncheon, guests heard updates on the program's progress as well as a few impactful success stories about program participants. To date, the program has enrolled more than 540 families. Donations made to Empower UC help fill in the gaps that the program's grant funding streams cannot cover.

UC★HRA Upper Cumberland
Human Resource Agency



UCHRA Weatherization Manager Tommy Simcox honored as Community Services' Employee of the Year

Upper Cumberland Human Resource Agency (UCHRA) is proud to congratulate their Weatherization Manager Tommy Simcox. Simcox was recently honored by Representative Kelly Keisling for receiving the Community Services' Employee of the Year Award. Simcox was named UCHRA's 2023 Community Services' Employee of the Year last year.

UC★HRA Upper Cumberland
Human Resource Agency



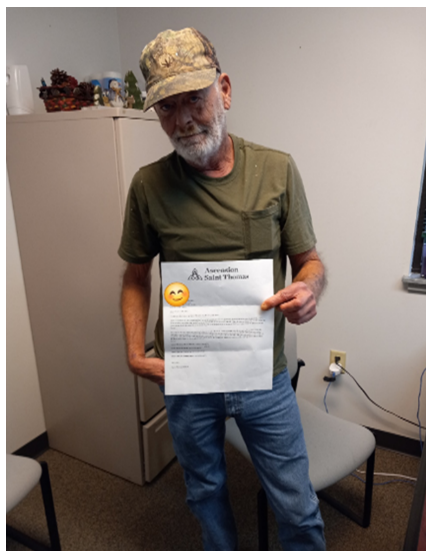
Weatherization Manager Tommy Simcox holding award.

Helping People.... Changing Lives in Benton County

Customer Success Story

Tommy Dunkle, a Northwest Tennessee Economic Development Council (NWTNEDC) client in Benton County, recently obtained health insurance thanks to the work of Northwest Benton Co. Service Center Service Manager Alice Douglas. During the past six months, Douglas assisted Dunkle in his search for health insurance. After many closed doors, St. Thomas Charitable Health Foundation accepted Dunkle for 100% coverage. He visited the Northwest Service Center to show staff his letter of approval, speak about his initial visits and how he will finally be able to address multiple health issues. CSBG funds support staffing and programing and empower NWTNEDC to serve clients and build their trust and appreciation. NWTNEDC appreciates the work of staff who go above and beyond to help clients like Tommy Dunkle.

Northwest Tennessee
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL



Northwest Tennessee Economic Development Council client Tommy Dunkle

Submit Your Agency's Win

The "Agency Wins" column spotlights innovative programs, services, achievements, community awards, and accomplishments from agencies across the state. If there's an activity or agency accomplishment you're proud of, we want to hear from you. Your story can inspire others.

[Submit Your Agency Win](#)

The Best Play Book

Effective program practices that help Tennesseans move forward.

Staying Prepared with Overdose Reversal Training

Upper Cumberland Human Resource Agency (UCHRA) services include helping community members with transportation and UCHRA is taking steps to ensure staff are prepared in case of an overdose. Later this spring, all UCHRA Public Transportation drivers will undergo training and become equipped with naloxone, the overdose reversal medication.



Upper Cumberland Human Resources Agency Training

Thanks to Justin Cantrell, UCHRA's Regional Overdose Prevention Specialist, UCHRA will receive enough free naloxone to ensure all drivers are armed with this life-saving medication. The local firefighting association has generously lent a 180-lb. training mannequin to UCHRA Public Transportation's team. The reality of lifting clients can be underestimated. This device will allow drivers to think clearly about and practice various techniques of evacuating a vehicle.

Although the training is new, UCHRA has a history of client satisfaction. Here are a few recent testimonies from UCHRA Transportation clients:

[My] mom and I had the most wonderful driver this morning. Donny Miller out of Crossville drove us to her appointment from Cookeville to Crossville. He was very professional, friendly and made sure she was comfortable and taken well care of. What a wonderful employee!" – March 16, 2024

"My wife and I wish to complement the UCHRA Public Transportation driver, Jim, who picked us up from the Nashville airport on the morning of 29 December 2023. He was professional, courteous and kind. We have been using UCHRA

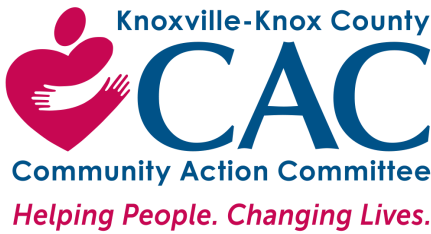
for about the past 10 years, and we have found your service highly reliable. Thank you for what you do.” –February 2, 2024

“I’ve been riding with UCHRA Public Transportation for three months now, and I just wanted to brag on Natalie Okorji. She has been super helpful any time I’ve spoken with her and has always met my needs one hundred percent. Thank you so much!” --March 1, 2024



Upper Cumberland Human Resources Agency Driver Donny Miller

A2B SOARS: Taking Holistic Approach to Achieve Seven Years of Success and SOAR!



Access to Benefits (A2B) is an in-house Knoxville-Knox County Community Action Committee (CAC) program that takes a holistic approach to assist disadvantaged community members who are experiencing homelessness, living with a mental illness, medical impairment, and/or co-occurring substance misuse disorder. The program increases access to Social Security Disability programs and coordinates with CAC housing case managers to address multiple needs of clients who are overcoming financial and other barriers to wellness. Since its inception in 2017, A2B generated \$2.5 million for its program participants and assisted over 200 people navigating the complex disability application process.

When appropriate, A2B expedites the application process by using the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration (SAMHSA) framework to connect qualifying applicants to Disability Determination Services (DDS) examiners trained in the SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR) process. A2B staff compile and report medical history, work history, and activities of daily living to DDS so that examiners receive a panoramic understanding of the applicant and their functional abilities to prove that they are unable to earn a living wage. To date, 80 percent of A2B SOAR applicants, were awarded disability benefits, compared to the national average of 65 percent. CSBG funds go to support salaries of both staff members of the Access to Benefits program.

“My favorite part of Access to Benefits is that it strives to meet the underlying mission of community action by alleviating poverty and helping people achieve economic stability,” says A2B Program Manager Jenna Yarber. Her work developed strong partner relationships with representative payees, disability examiners, and the local Social Security Administration. She is passionate about helping those experiencing homelessness, mental illness, and income insecurity to overcome their barriers.

If you have questions about A2B or its holistic approach, contact:

Jenna Yarber | Program Manager Access to Benefits

Jenna.Yarber@KnoxCac.Org | 865-546-3500

Tell Us Your Best Plays!

Best Plays are demonstrate the best practices for service delivery/administration or programing. If there is advice you'd like to share with others to help serve communities in our state, please share!

Share a Best Play

Agency Highlight

Metropolitan Action Commission



The CSBG Coordinators had an opportunity to spend time with Metro Action Commission staff during the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) 2024 Summer Summit that took place in February. Marvin Cox provided tours of their Metro Action Youth Café on Wheels. CSBG team members appreciated seeing firsthand evidence of the nutritious meals and socialization opportunities created through the work of the Metro Action Commission and thank each agency that participated and provided valuable information during the Summer Summit.

It's Not Too Late to Help Fight Hunger in Tennessee This Summer!

If you did not have the opportunity to attend the Summer Summit, but your organization is interested in becoming a SFSP sponsor or a feeding site under an existing sponsor, information on the program can be found on the [TDHS website](#).

Sponsor applications will be accepted until May 1, 2024 and questions can be emailed to the SFSP team at TNSFSP.DHS@tn.gov.

How Tennesseans Can Find Nutrition Resources

Children and teens in need and their families can text 'FOOD' or 'COMIDA' (Spanish) to 304-304 to find nutritious meal

service in their area.



Metro Action Youth Café on Wheels



Marvin Cox and the Metro Action Youth Café on Wheels



Inside Metro Action Youth Café on Wheels



TEXT 'FOOD'
TO 304-304

TO FIND FREE MEALS FOR
ALL KIDS AND TEENS





TEXT 'COMIDA'
AL 304-304

PARA ENCONTRAR COMIDAS GRATIS PARA
TODOS LOS NIÑOS Y ADOLESCENTES



Happenings in Tennessee

News from Our Federal Partners

CSBG Director, Lindsay Whitten attended NASCSP, our federal partner's 2024 Winter Training Conference in March. This provided valuable opportunities to speak with representatives from other states and gain information in a setting with beautiful scenery. We learned that the NASCSP 2024 Annual Training Conference will be in Memphis, TN on September 16-20, 2024!



Tennessee Pathfinder Disability Helps TN Residents with Disabilities



TENNESSEE
DISABILITY PATHFINDER

Tennessee Disability Pathfinder ("Pathfinder"), helps people with disabilities, their family members, educators, and other professionals find and access disability resources, support, and services across the state. Pathfinder has a directory of services that contains over 3,000 agency resources in Tennessee organized by county, including rural areas and marginalized communities. As an organization that is connected to thousands of agencies, Pathfinder is considered a centralized location (a hub) for resource information and can help community members navigate resources for specific needs and geographic areas. Resource information can be obtained in one of two ways: by searching the Pathfinder's *Directory of Services* website TNPathfinder.org or by calling 1-800-640-4636 to talk to experienced information and referral specialists.

Fatherhood Grant Announcement Coming Soon!

After the successful launch of the Amplifying Fatherhood Conference last year that brought together fathers and more than 300 community leaders in government, nonprofit, legislation and policy areas that serve families, we are excited to share that a Fatherhood Grant announcement will take place in the near future. We hope that you will share the news with others as we strive to empower fathers across the state.

Tennessee State Government Launches the Rural Toolbox

Found at TN.Gov/Rural.html, the [Rural Toolbox](https://TN.Gov/Rural.html) is a new online tool that offers:

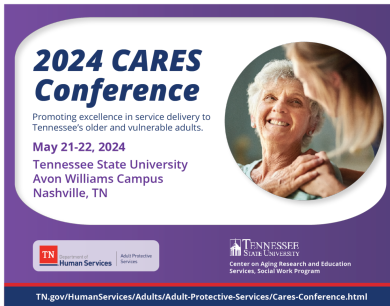


- **Grants Database** – The Rural Toolbox's grants database includes over 100 different funding opportunities that different state departments offer, accessible in one, single location. Users can search, filter by topic, applicant type and more.
- **Success Stories** - It's one thing to see a list of grants, but it's another to see how those grants are used. The Rural Toolbox includes a collection of over 120 stories that highlight creative program and service applications in rural communities. Communities can read about their neighbor's successes and envision how a similar project could happen in their own backyard.
- **Resources from Partners** - View other resources that are available to rural communities, including technical assistance, training, and additional funding, on the Partnership Opportunities page. Navigate the list of state agencies, federal government, private partners, and nonprofits to see groups that other Tennessee communities have successfully collaborated with.

Upcoming Events from TDHS

Tennessee Department of Human Services has a host of summer camps, Child Support question and answer sessions, employment events, resource fairs and other upcoming happenings. [Click Here to learn about upcoming events for Tennesseans and advocates.](#)





kidcentral tn Now Managed by TDHS



kidcentraltn.com is a one-stop shop for Tennessee families to connect with important information and resources provided by different state departments. In July 2023, ownership of kidcentraltn.com was transferred to TDHS from the Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth. TDHS is excited to announce that kidcentral tn is now managed by TDHS's new kidcentral tn Director, Brent Goodard.

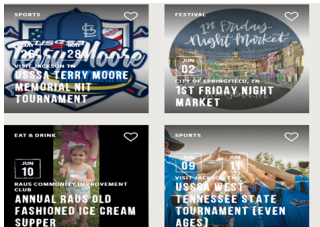
The website organizes content from across departments, making it easier for families to find exactly what they need. In addition to articles about valuable topics relating to health, education, development, and support, kidcentraltn.com features a comprehensive directory of state-operated and state-funded services for children and families. From the website, parents and caregivers can sign up to receive periodic newsletters with feature stories related to seasonal and current events/resources. We encourage everyone to explore kidcentral tn today to discover the wealth of resources available to Tennessee families.

Tennessee Emergency Management Trainings

[Click Here to view upcoming trainings.](#)

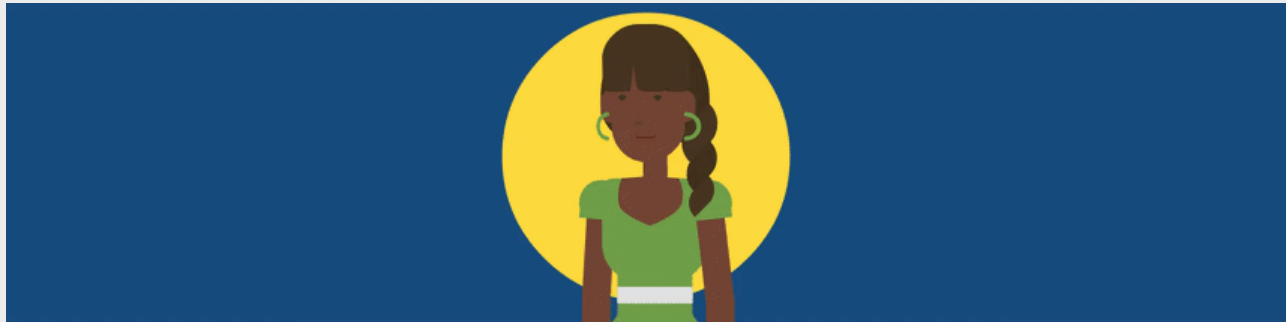


Events from Tennessee State Parks and Department of Tourist Development



Have an upcoming happening? Please share!

Share an UpcomingHappening



Ask the Community

Community Impact in Action is meant to not only provide answers from the TDHS CSBG Office but also act as a “crowd-sourcing” forum. This column is an opportunity for agencies to pose questions to both the CSBG team and other agencies. Agency staff members are encouraged to both ask questions and respond directly to questions from other agencies in the “Ask the Community” column.

Have a Questions for the Community?

Have a question for the TDHS CSBG team, want to know how other CSBG members are handling a problem, or are curious about a particular topic?

Submit a Question to the CSBG Network

About Community Impact in Action

Community Impact in Action is a quarterly e-newsletter that connects the Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) network in Tennessee. The newsletter is designed to amplify agency voices across the state and increase communication and peer sharing opportunities. The CSBG network can use this newsletter as a forum to share information with each other and the Tennessee Department of Human Services CSBG team.

Who can make a submission to Community Impact in Action?

Any agency representative can create and submit content for “Agency Wins, The Best Play Book, Ask the Community or Community Events” articles and we look forward to reading and sharing your submissions. However, we strongly recommend that agencies establish an internal approval process for submitting content to Community Impact in Action. TDHS reserves the right to edit content and a representative may contact content contributors for additional information.

When to Make Submissions

Community Impact in Action is published on a quarterly basis (January, April, July, October) and submissions for the next newsletter should be submitted no later than the 15th day of the last month in the quarter. This is especially true for upcoming event submissions. For example, an event scheduled to take place in April, May or June should be submitted no later than March 15th. However, in some cases, events may be shared on the TDHS online event calendar or social media calendar without being shared in the newsletter. These events should be submitted no later than four weeks prior to the event.

Have questions about *Community Impact in Action* or related topics? Email the Tennessee Department of Human Services CSBG Office at CSBG.DHS@tn.gov with the subject line "Community Impact in Action Newsletter."

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