

# Transforming Family Services in Rural Texas

Presented by Audra Rea and  
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# Introduction

## About us

Audra is currently the Director of Family Services at  
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## What is Community Action?

Created during the civil rights movement, Community Action Agencies were created as organizations connected to their communities to help wage war on poverty.





# Texas in Action



## Why is this important to you?

Your local community action agency is a great resource for your organization.

They do not all offer the same services, but examples include:

- Utility Assistance
- Housing and Rent Assistance
- Early Headstart
- Transportation
- Tax Preparation
- Health Insurance Navigators



[Click here for a list of Texas Community Action Agencies](#)



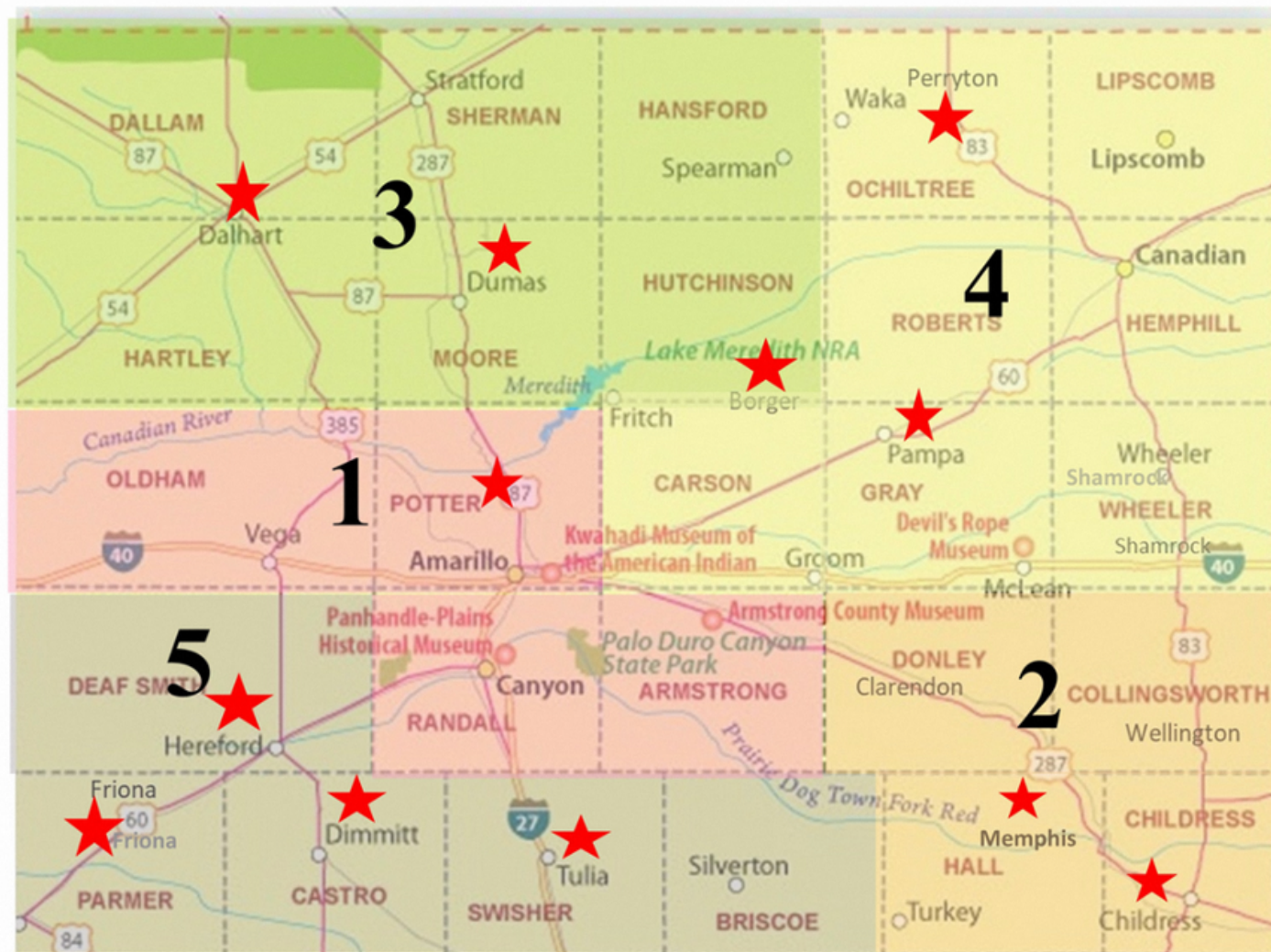


# Uniquely You

## A Different Approach

We believe that those we are serving should be instrumental in directing how those services are provided.

This includes a tri-partite board of directors and a low-income advisory board





# Process Mapping to Create Change

## One Stop Shop



Before: families were required to make an appointment for each program they were seeking help with.

Now: clients are able to speak to one person who has been cross-trained in all programs and educate them in other programs they may qualify for as well.

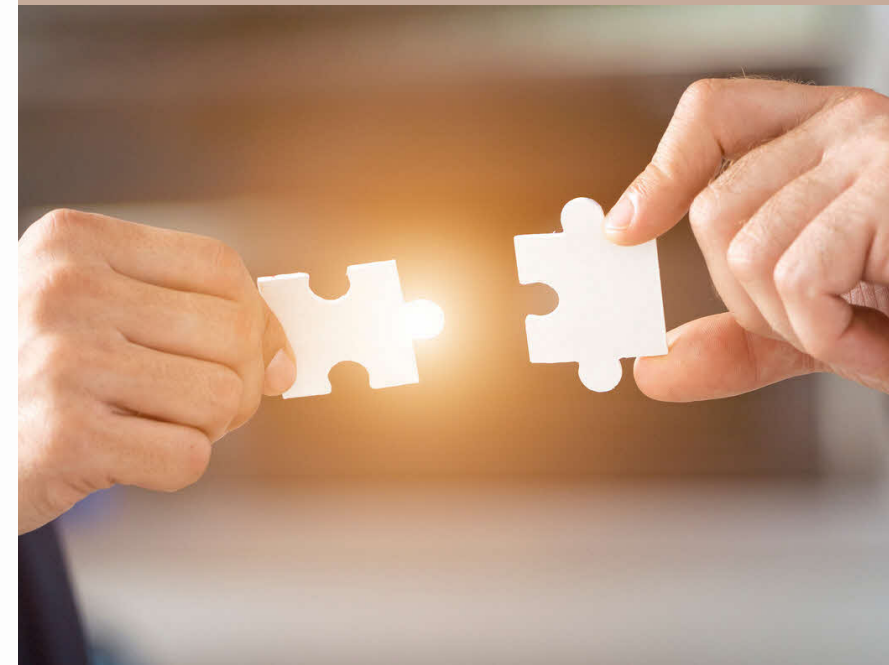
## Universal Intake



Before: Identifying documents, pay stubs and qualifying paperwork was required for each program and clients were bringing these multiple times a year.

Now: Through a cloud-based program, documents that do not change like social security cards, birth certificates etc. are stored on an ongoing basis.

## Connectors



Before: we served clients who came in our doors or called on the phone.

Now: by building relationships with community partners and referral systems we are able to also offer our clients a full-circle of local resources.

## What's your Plan?



Before: What's working? What's not working?

Now: Improved accessibility, enhanced collaboration, strengthened economic support, policy change,



# Hygiene Closets

## **A Different Approach**

*We only ask five questions to receive help:  
Age, Race, Gender, Number in Household, & do  
you have Health Coverage*

*Items are things that are not included with SNAP  
benefits.*

### **Items Distributed Include**

- Shampoo & Conditioner
- Body Wash
- Toothpaste/Toothbrush
- Deodorant
- Feminine Hygiene Products
- Shaving cream/Razor
- Flushable Wipes
- Baby Wipes
- Adult Briefs
- Laundry Soap
- Paper Towels
- Household Cleaners
- Dish Soap
- Bug Spray for

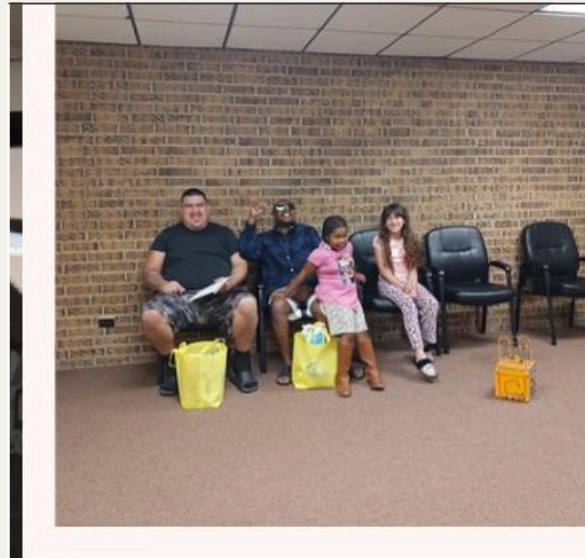




# Hygiene Closets



Low Barrier



Avenue to Share  
Program Information



Volunteer  
Opportunity



Reusable Bags



Immense Need



# Radical Listening

Why Build a Bridge?



## ***Connect Legislators***

Help elected officials hear from their constituents in an organized and concise manner.



## ***Tell the Full Story***

Numbers alone don't tell a full story of addressing specific concerns



## ***Give Voice***

Taking the concerns and voices from a community level to local legislators allows us to bridge the gap between low-income citizens and community influencers.



## ***Eliminate Obstacles***

No one knows better about the barriers and obstacles that exist than those with lived experience.



# How to Build a Bridge

- **Host your Community Partners and Families**

*Have a coffee, or have lunch donated.*

- **Ask Questions and Engage in Open Conversation**

*What is the biggest challenge facing families today?*

*What is the biggest challenge facing your family?*

*Are there gaps in services being offered?*

*What are your concerns about living in our area?*

- **Follow-up with Your Local Legislators and Community Influencers**

*Look for themes in the answers to your questions.*

*What were commonalities between responses?*

*Are there area specific concerns?*





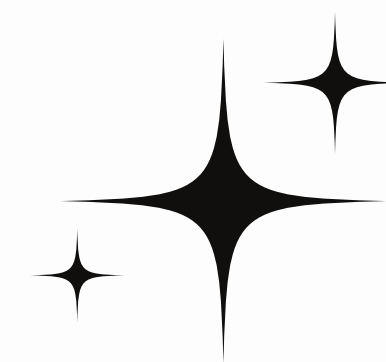


# Who had a Seat at the Table?

Our Low-Income Families  
Community Partners  
School Counselors  
Transitional Homes for Men and Women  
Our Coalition of Health  
Uniting Parents Program  
Health Providers  
Local College Advocates  
Salvation Army  
Landlords  
City Officials







# Passionate Voices

Responded to:

If I could change ONE THING in my neighborhood it would be?

If my elected officials worked to improve \_\_\_\_\_ I would be very happy.





# What we Learned

## Top Concerns in Our Area Included

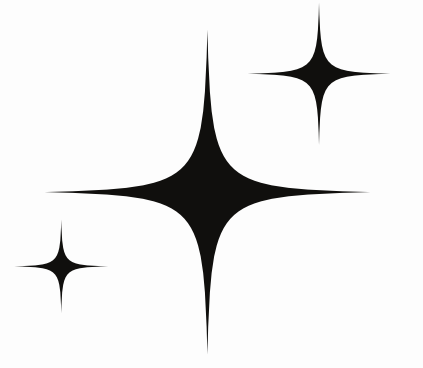
- Jobs and Employment Training / Re-Training
- Lack of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Support Services
- Lack of Affordable, Safe Housing
- Too Few Child Care Providers – Let Alone Quality Child Care Centers – in Entire Panhandle
- No Activities for Kids / Youth So They Find Less Positive Stuff to Do
- No Public Transportation Cripples Everything from Employment to Access to Medical Care and other Services
- There is a Division and Loss of a Sense of Community







“Do the best you can until you know better.  
Then when you know better, do better.”  
- Maya Angelou





# Legislative Update

Information from Bridge Builders was consolidated and shared with local legislators and community influencers at a separate event.

An interactive discussion was held on possible resolutions.

This group comprised County Judges, Commissioners, County Clerks, and Representatives from our Texas House and Senate Representatives.





# Positive Outcomes?

## ● Why has this mattered?

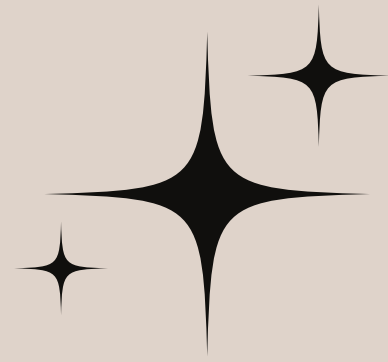
- *We were able to share what was on our radar and asked what was on their radar.*
- *PCS Career services were expanded.*
- *We met with police departments and shared at city council meetings.*
- *We asked local commissioners if they would donate dilapidated homes in their area so we could find grant money to make them livable.*
- *Mental health was a large concern, now we have collaboration with local counselors and a new facility is being built in Amarillo through a local Judges advocacy.*
- *Our grant writers are looking for funds specific to meet expressed needs.*





# Here's to the Bridge Builders

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“Here's to the bridge-builders, the hand-holders, the light-bringers, those extraordinary souls wrapped in ordinary lives who quietly weave threads of humanity into an inhumane world. They are the unsung heroes in a world at war with itself. They are the whisperers of hope that peace is possible. Look for them in this present darkness. Light your candle with their flame. And then go. Build bridges. Hold hands. Bring light to a dark and desperate world. Be the hero you are looking for. Peace is possible. It begins with us.”

— L.R. Knost

