

BROKEN ARROW

CHAMBER of COMMERCE

CHAMBER MEMBER NEWS

VOLUNTEERS OF AMERICA - 125 YEARS OF SERVICE

By: Susan Kenny, Director of Mission Advancement

Craig, an Air Force veteran, came to Tulsa to care for his ailing mother. After she passed away, he found himself homeless and living out of his 2005 Chevy Malibu during the heat of the summer. Referred to Volunteers of America – Oklahoma (VOAOK) by the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission, we helped him with many issues. We provided food, vehicle repairs, financial assistance and money management skills. Most importantly, we provided referrals and support services to help Craig with health issues exacerbated by being homeless. As part of the VOAOK veteran led, Veteran Employment Services team, we were able to secure employment with Amazon, in the local distribution center warehouse. Stories like Craig’s are part of every day at VOAOK.



This year, Volunteers of America, celebrates its 125th year of service to others. Founded in 1896, by social reformers, Maud and Ballington Booth, with a mission “to go where ever we are needed and do whatever comes to hand” is at its core the same mission we have today. The mission of Volunteers of America Oklahoma is to respond to Oklahomans in need and to create opportunities for people to experience the joy of serving others.

Despite our name, we are not an all-volunteer organization. At the turn of the century, the word volunteer meant to serve others as a vocation, thus early members of VOA called themselves, volunteers. VOAOK has been serving vulnerable Oklahomans for 28 years. At its simplest, health begins at home. Our role is to be a catalyst of support and resources helping each person achieve stable housing and equitable, life-fulfilling services to enhance independence and wellness.

VOAOK provides services across 31 counties in Oklahoma and 2 counties in Kansas, for over 9,700 people. VOAOK Homeless Services, assists more than 1,100 people, including veterans, by providing stable housing, employment services, money management services and wrap-around supportive services provided internally and via referrals to a large matrix of community partners. Through a new, unique housing program for veterans started last October, we were able to place the first group in this program into stable housing just before the winter storm.

VOAOK Aging Services provides safe, quality, affordable housing and supportive services to assist seniors and the elderly in meeting basic living needs ensuring their ability to age in place with dignity and respect, serving 359 seniors in 7 communities. Specific to Muskogee, the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) offers seniors the opportunity to support area organizations and non-profits in need through volunteerism. Serving more than 7,000 annually, during Covid, volunteers delivered meals, knitted blankets, hats, and mittens, and made comfort calls to those isolated by the impacts of Covid.

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VOAOK Disability Services provides residential support to 99 individuals with intellectual and development disabilities. 214 Direct Support Professionals provide 24/7 residential care 365 days a year focus on maintaining independence and community integration.

Having a safe and affordable place to call home is an essential pathway for wellness, dignity, and economic opportunity. VOAOK is a critical community partner bringing a rich history of service and the support of a national organization to achieve housing, health, stability and purpose for the many people we serve. To learn more about VOAOK and how to be a community partner, please go to www.voak.org, or contact Susan Kenny, Director of Mission Advancement, 918-307-3021, skenny@voak.org.



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