

Together,
We're making
our families
stronger.



Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
Arkansas Department of Workforce Services

TANF eNews

June 2014

An Electronic Newsletter from the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services

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ATTOP Puzzle 1

The crossword puzzle in this issue of our newsletter is created from the articles that provide transition information.

You will find clues within the articles for the puzzle solution. Mr. Harris has a special prize for the first three people to send the correct puzzle solution to ADWS.attopinfo@arkansas.gov.

Just use a list of numbers 1–12 and write your solution for each clue by the appropriate number, add your signature, and email it.

The solution will be published in the next newsletter, coming

Improving Our Communication: One Step at a Time

By Phil Harris, Assistant Director, DWS-TANF

When I first became Assistant Director of TANF, I invited you to submit questions to me about anything. I said that nothing is off limits. I will answer questions about leadership, TANF, my job as an AD, your job, work/life balance, traveling, cooking—whatever. I received scores of questions, and I responded to each.

Some of you wrote to say that TANF communication needs improvement, so we have been working on it. It's not where we want it yet, but we are improving steadily. Good communications are an essential ingredient of organizational success. We might be very good about communicating with suppliers and customers but often fail to give our internal communications the same degree of attention. Keeping team members informed about activities is an essential tool for motivation and retention. In the absence of information, speculation and rumor abound, and inefficiencies take root. We can and will improve TANF **communication**.

Soon we will make a significant change by transitioning Eligibility and related functions to DWS-TANF, and strong communication is critical to progress. Our success literally depends on learning to communicate well with each other in all directions. Communication must be two-way to work, and we all have a role in it. Change starts with each individual. Please join me in taking steps to learn this important skill.

Meet you at the TOP!

Work Participation Rates

We are pleased to announce that Arkansas successfully met both its **overall** and two-parent work participation rates for fiscal year (FY) 2011 under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. Applying the caseload reduction was crucial to help Arkansas meet these federally mandated performance guidelines.

Eight states and two territories failed one or both work participation rates in (FY) 2011, with six failing the overall rate, three failing both rates, and two failing the two-parent rate only. States that failed to meet either of their minimum work participation requirements are, by statute, subject to a potential penalty; however, they will have an opportunity to file a request for a reasonable cause exception from that penalty and/or submit a corrective compliance plan to correct the failure before any penalty is imposed.

Also, let us not forget that behind these numbers are the many Arkansas citizens that we have empowered to succeed in the workforce. *Congratulations to everyone on this huge success for Arkansas!*



Jobs for People. People for Jobs.

DWS
Department of
WORKFORCE Services



Hope Workforce Center: Good to Great

By Don Childers, Program Operations Manager

Based upon the cumulative results from the on-site Quality Assurance reviews and Work Participation Rates during the 2013 mid-year assessment period, the **ASK** (Assessments-Sanctions-Keying) Award has been awarded to the Hope Local Office.

The initial ASK awards were announced during the 2012 TANF Training Conference. These awards recognize the local office with exemplary performance in Assessments-Sanctions-Keying.

This is a prime example of a DWS local office following Director Artee Williams' Good-to-Great initiative.



left to right: Deputy Director Ron Snead, Director Artee Williams, Lori White; Sonya Hunter; Delois Muldrew; Angela Andres; Wanda Muldrow; Lola Smith, TANF Assistant Director Phil Harris and Area Operation Chief Skeet Morse

ATTOP Update: Meet You at the TOP!

The Arkansas TANF Transition and Optimization Project (**ATTOP**) is well underway. It is entering the phase to focus on the transition to move eligibility and other TANF functions from DHS to DWS. At this point, we develop the program structure we need to accept and manage the TANF functions that are new to DWS. At the same time, our development team continues to build out the system functionality to integrate new TANF components into our existing program.

Some of the initial activities of building program infrastructure are the following:

- Policy alignment is an important area for building a strong, integrated program.
 - Our policy unit is aligning existing policy for intake, eligibility determination, overpayments, EBT, and related activities with DWS policy.
 - This requires adjusting some of our current policies as well. For example, the QA unit must be able to provide quality assurance for the new functions coming to DWS-TANF.
 - Case management policy can be integrated with eligibility determination policy.
- Many of you have suggested that TANF needs an **outreach** unit, and we could arrange that along with the transition.
- New functions require new roles. We are currently identifying, defining, and considering the roles to add into transition staffing plans.

There is much work to do to prepare for this major transition, and we hope that all of you will want to be a part of the effort. We need your ideas, suggestions, and assistance. Our first big push is to gather information to determine:

- How well things are working now?
- How we can improve our processes?
- How we can create a better work environment for everyone and what would that look like?

The ATTOP email box (see right) is ready to receive your **feedback**—questions, comments, ideas, and suggestions—about anything related to ATTOP (and everything is related to ATTOP). Use this email box to communicate with project and DWS leadership teams. We look forward to hearing from you soon!

FEEDBACK

Send your feedback—questions, comments, ideas, and suggestions—related to ATTOP to ADWS.attopinfo@arkansas.gov

Thanks! We look forward to hearing from you!





Employer Partners

Employment is critical to self-sufficiency.

By Chris Fuerst, TANF Program Area Coordinator, NW Arkansas

Without our employer partners using our WEX and OJT programs, we could not fully serve our TANF clients and place them in paid employment—their first step to moving off government benefits and toward *self-sufficiency*.

In so many cases, our participants are ready to make the change. They have the right combination of enthusiasm and intelligence but lack specific job skills or perhaps, they have no work history,

or a tarnished history. This is where the employers who are willing to train the right person step in. The costs associated with training and lost production for newly hired employees are all too real for employers. But those willing to train someone, give them their very first job or give them a second chance, and partner with us through OJT find it cost-effective and worthwhile.

Here in Baxter County, we are very fortunate to partner with multiple *employers* who understand the vision and mission of the TANF program as well as the *benefits* that the TANF program brings to their organization and also to their community and state. They recognize that every employed individual helps them and contributes to the entire region on so many levels.

Two such employers here in Mountain Home are:

- Open Arms Learning Center, Owner Jill Williams
- Twin Lakes McDonald's, Owner Laura Newth

These employers have trained and hired some of our TANF participants through the OJT program, and those employees remain with them today as full-time employees. These participants have moved into their own residences and are flourishing. Both Laura and Jill state that these employees are great! When someone is ready to make a change, these two are willing to hire and train them. They find our participants reliable, conscientious, and dedicated employees. In addition to assisting our clients toward the goal of self-sufficiency, Laura and Jill speak very highly of our program. They recommend our program to fellow business associates, thus bringing new employers to us. This expands our employer base and enables us to offer more clients more career opportunities.

In addition, these employers let us know when they expect a job opening, and they are glad to interview anyone interested in *employment* with them. They also have said that when someone may be lacking job skills or facing other difficulties in finding employment, they are willing to train and mentor them. This is a huge bonus for these clients. Without people like Jill and Laura, many of our participants would not get such an opportunity for employment due to their lack of job skills and work history. We are most grateful to partner with such employers for a better future not only for our participants, but for their children and our state. Helping just one client often transforms many lives. To all of our employer partners across the state, we are most grateful that you see and understand the TANF mission, and you are willing to play an important role in our vision for the future of Arkansas.

These types of employers are all over our state. Let's make a concentrated effort to find more of them and build strong partnerships. The larger employer base each county maintains, the more the improvement in our ability to serve our clients at the highest level.

Leadership Corner



Taking our Teamwork from “Good to Great”

Why is teamwork so important? How do you go about improving it? Well, some effective teamwork activities and exercises can help you with that. But most importantly, it is important for all the team members to understand the importance of being together and working as 'one team.'

Andrew Carnegie once said, **"Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision. It is the ability to direct individual accomplishments toward organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results."**

In today's times, employees in every organization are expected to work in groups to complete various projects. Team members have to work together to achieve the targets that have been set. However, working in a team is easier said than done. Many factors contribute to the smooth and efficient working of a team. If a team is not showing the desired results, one has to find ways that would help in improving **teamwork**. As our workplace is where we spend most of our day, it helps to be open to the concept

of working together as a team. As we expand and grow, one can no more rely on an individual effort to succeed. People have to work together. This is the reason the ability to lead a team and work as a team is imperative for the growth of any organization. Teamwork is not only reflected in the team's wins, but also in individual growth.

Success Story

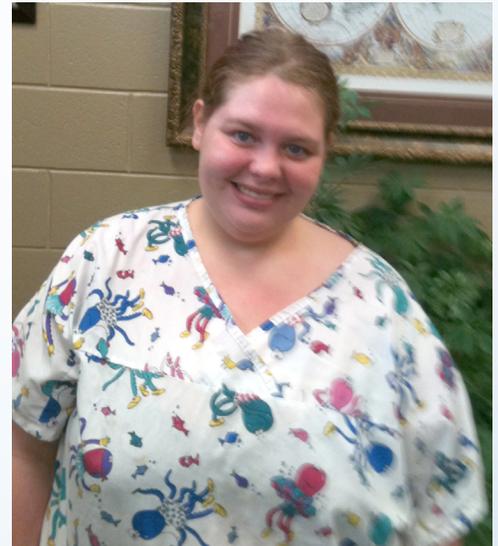
The following success story illustrates what a difference our people can make in the lives of our clients. We have many stories that confirm how important our work is. This one in particular touches on a variety of experiences of one client and also brings in the idea of how clients who work to **succeed** are enabled to do so. This story proves the importance of our TANF employer partners and case managers.

When Angelina White moved from Texas to Arkansas in 2011 with her two-year-old child, she lacked a lot of basic necessities, such as a home of her own and a way to get around. But people in Searcy quickly noticed that just because she didn't have a car didn't mean she lacked drive, and it didn't take her long to create her own niche with a little help from the TANF office in Searcy.

"She is a very independent young lady and has made the program work for her," TEA Workforce Specialist Linda Rockwell says. White's sister told her about TEA initially, and she first completed Job-Readiness Training through Career Pathways at ASU-Searcy. That program assisted her with obtaining her CNA training and certificate. Later she agreed to do a Work Experience (WEX) activity with the White County Aging Program, and within five weeks that had morphed into a paying position through the On-the-Job Training Program. She was soon hired as a permanent employee to prepare Meals-on-Wheels both in Searcy and at the senior center at nearby Russell. She was able to move out of her sister's house and get her own car.

One episode clearly demonstrated how valuable she had become to the Aging Program. She turned in her two weeks' notice to take a CNA job at a Searcy nursing home, but before the two weeks were up, her supervisor countered the offer. "She said, 'How about an hourly raise, an increase to 40 hours a week, and I'll throw in a company car so you don't have to use your gas going back and forth from Searcy to Russell,'" White recalls. "I wish you could have seen my face 'cause my mouth dropped. All I could say was, 'Wow!'"

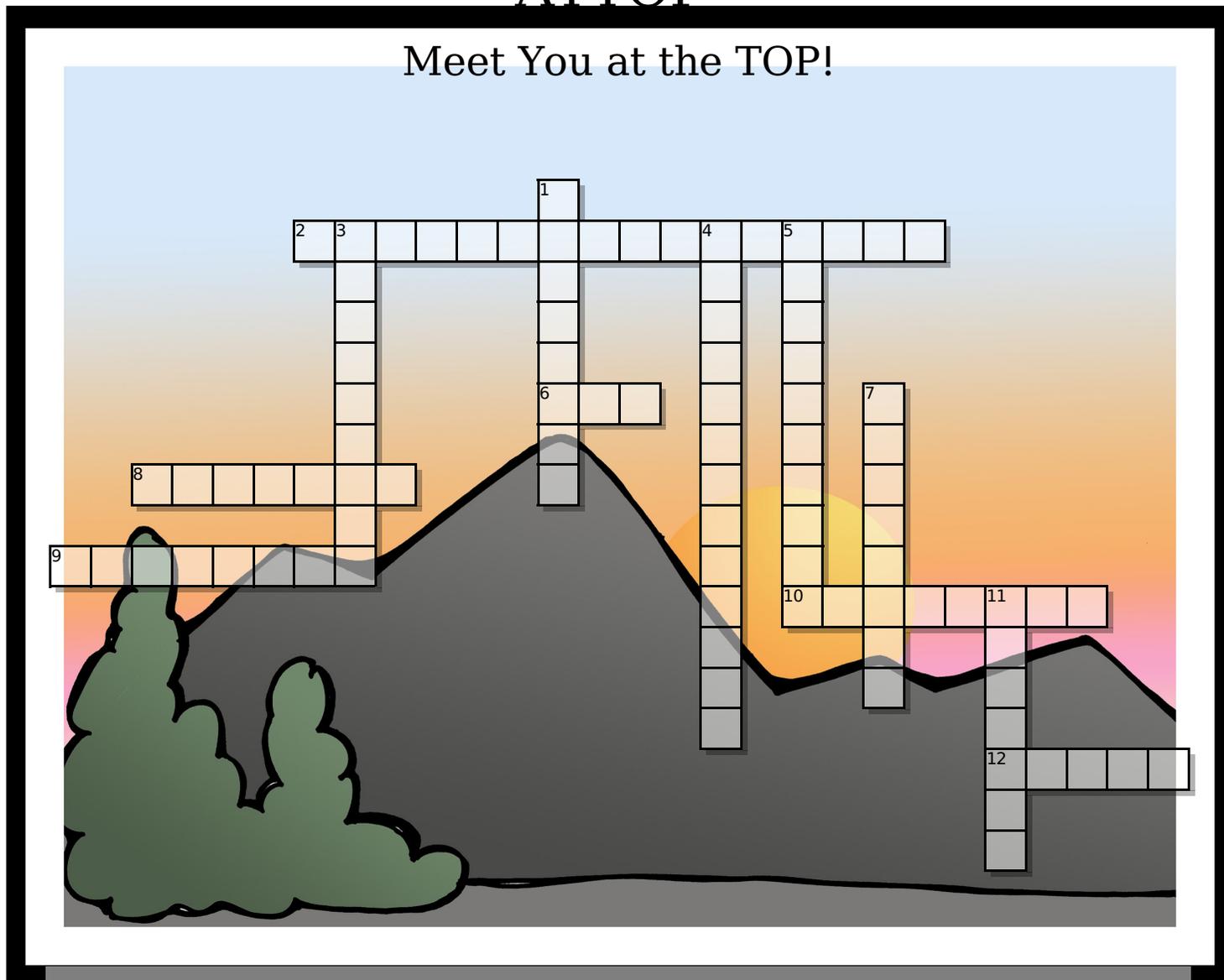
Angelina has come a long way in a short time. "I honestly do not believe I would have gotten a job as quickly if it weren't for the TEA program," she says. "I was able to get experience and prove myself."



Angelina White
Searcy Workforce Center
White County
TEA- Job Readiness-WEX-OJT

ATTOP

Meet You at the TOP!



ACROSS

- 2 Goal for TANF participants
- 6 Award presented to the Hope Workforce center
- 8 TANF services enable clients who work to _____ to do so
- 9 What TANF can bring to partner employers
- 10 How we need to work
- 12 TANF project to transition eligibility and update IT systems

DOWN

- 1 Potential new unit for TANF
- 3 Indispensable TANF partners
- 4 We are ready to improve internal _____
- 5 Necessary for self-sufficiency
- 7 What the ATTOP team needs from you
- 11 Type of Work Participation Rate