



*A moment to focus on the good our team is doing every day*



## UCDD SUMMER STRATEGY SESSIONS UNDERWAY

We recognize successful economic development takes the right team of individuals working together to strategically plan for the future. UCDD coordinates Economic Development Strategy Sessions in each Upper Cumberland county annually to facilitate strategic planning conversations between all state and regional partners with local government officials and community leaders.

## *Out in the Field*

### UCDD'S AAAD CONTINUES PARTNERSHIPS WITH LOCAL RESTAURANTS



Earlier this year, in response to the Coronavirus outbreak, the federal government approved the Families First Coronavirus Response Act which authorized Area Agencies on Aging and Disability in Tennessee to contract with qualified local restaurants to produce and deliver meals to vulnerable older adults throughout the state. The intent was to support local business during a very difficult time while also providing meals to home-bound seniors in need.

UCDD's AAAD team faced many challenges as we contacted local "mom and pop" restaurants throughout our 14-county region, but perseverance paid off as we eventually contracted with 11 different meal providers. All of these providers deserve a great pat on the back as they truly seem to care about the people they are serving. One of our providers in Putnam County, Twin Lakes Catfish Farm, has gone above and beyond to help the older adults that they are serving.

Recently, they discovered that one of their meal clients was in need of groceries and, without a second thought, supplied this client with a box of needed food items. They are quick to step up and do what's needed, whenever it is needed. In fact, the owner states that "my crew enjoys cooking and delivering to [these clients]". All in all, the AAAD team feels a great sense of pride in being able to work together to help feed so many older adults, especially during this very trying pandemic!

## STAR SUCCESS STORY: APRIL RUFENER

The following information was submitted by a UCHRA program participant and has been edited for clarity.

My life before the STAR program and meeting Ciara (Pharris, Case Management Specialist I), was full of setbacks, failed attempts, depending on men, and feeling stuck. A year and a half ago I walked into Ciara's office, feeling broken, lost, ashamed, and with nowhere to turn. I had no job, no education, an apartment, and electricity I now was solely responsible for and two little men counting on me. However, I was determined to stop repeating my life every seven years. I needed help, direction, and accountability. Since joining the program, I've had to overcome being without a car, moving, getting two different jobs, going through a custody battle, and DCS; Getting my GED, becoming the executive housekeeper of Candlewood Suites, and learning a new way of life.

I have learned how to budget, make a resume, (learned) good interviewing skills, basic computer skills, knowledge about my credit, a lot of knowledge about resources, and confidence. The (STAR) program has helped me with gas cards, childcare assistance, lots and lots of resource referrals, budgeting, and making a resume. My case manager, Ciara, has given me confidence, kindness, a listening ear, hope, and direction with countless hours of help and resources. (She has) been a voice of reason and gave me direction. I simply do not have the words to express what she has truly done for me and the STAR program is great.

I have hope, a direction, a job, my GED, a safe home, a car, and knowledge of resources when I need them. My sons and I are so much happier and starting to feel safe and thrive. I am making plans to go to college, start working from home, and getting my credit together so I can buy a house. The Goodwill Solutions Center, SNAP, Helping Hands, LIHEAP, Smart Steps, and STAR have all and ARE helping me. I am truly grateful and blessed to have all the help from so many places and to have the kindness, support, patience and hard work Mrs. Pharris does. Thank you!

