Ozark Opportunities, Inc. (OOI) is a private, non-profit Community Action Agency established in 1969. Our mission is “to partner with organizations, families, and individuals to provide services and empowerment opportunities for those with limited means to improve their quality of life.”

Our six-county service area includes Baxter, Boone, Marion, Newton, Searcy and Van Buren counties, encompassing nearly 4,000 rural and rugged square miles. Many families travel in excess of 50 miles to access services.

OOI is governed by a tripartite eighteen (18) member Board of Directors representing public, private, and low-income sectors. Each county in our service area is represented by three (3) Board members, one from each sector.

OOI offers several opportunities to low-income individuals and families. All services are centered around two Strategic Commitments:

- **Family Stabilization** is an overarching approach to working with individuals and families to get them stabilized or out-of-crisis. This is the crucial first step to getting people of limited means to a safe and stable situation to allow them to focus on the future instead of the crisis of the moment.

- **Family Development and Empowerment** is a two-fold approach. As individuals and families develop skills necessary to become self-sufficient, their self-confidence increases and they become empowered to take active roles in their lives; making decisions that directly affect their families and the community at large.

**16,904 individuals received services** provided by OOI in 2018. This included assistance in the following areas: employment, work supports, education (adult & child), family development, family stabilization and emergency assistance.
Agency Overview

Ozark Opportunities, Inc. provides 105 employment opportunities and approximately $675,000 in employee benefits that included medical, dental, retirement accounts and Air Evac family coverage.

OOI was also responsible for contributing almost six million dollars in economic activity in our local communities- supporting local business while helping our communities most vulnerable citizens; our children, elderly, disabled, and impoverished.

**Governance:**

Ozark Opportunities, Inc. is fortunate to have a dedicated 18 member Board of Directors led by Chair Paulette Hill that not only provides governance and oversight but is also is very involved and supportive of taking on new initiatives and expanding current services.

The Head Start/Early Head Start Policy Council for Ozark Opportunities, Inc. are heavily involved in the direction of the Head Start program, and make it their mission to promote both Parent and Community involvement.

To the left: Mountain Home Early Head Start children have drawing time.
Staff

Employee Facts:
As of March 1, 2018, OOI had 83 employees, not including temporary and substitute staff. These 83 individuals are our Administrative Staff, Child Development and Community Services Staff who do the daily work of the agency. Collectively they have 603 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE with Ozark Opportunities, Inc. Of these 83 employees, 17 have been with the agency for less than a year!

Every one of our employees is valued, important, and integral to the success of our Mission.

Our staff are educated and well-trained, and we have many opportunities, for staff to improve their skills; including several “in-service” trainings in each department per year. Many staff have college degrees; 5 have Associates degrees, 2 have Associates in Early Childhood Education, 7 with a Bachelors degree, 20 have a Bachelors in Early Childhood Education, 2 have a Masters, and 11 staff have Teaching Licenses (and 1 with a Pre-K Special Education endorsement.)

Our staff also hold a variety of credentials, certifications and licenses; and several have multiple certifications: 19 have a Pre-K Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential, 14 an Infant/Toddler Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential, 4 are Strengths-based Family Workers, 4 are Pre-K CLASS Observers, 3 hold Family Development Credentials, 3 are “Getting Ahead in a Just-Gettin’-By World” Facilitators, 2 are Nationally Certified ROMA Trainers, 2 are First Aid/CPR/AED Instructors, 2 are Toddler CLASS Observers, 1 is an Infant/Toddler CLASS Observer, 1 is a Nationally Certified ROMA Implementer, 1 is a Registered Nurse, 18 are ServSafe Certified, 1 is a CDA Professional Development Specialist, 18 hold Teaching Strategies GOLD™ Interrater Reliability Credentials, 1 is an ERSEA Credentialed Professional, and 1 is a Professional in Human Resources and SHRM-CP. Continued professional growth and development of our staff is a high priority for Ozark Opportunities, Inc., as it takes a highly skilled workforce to do the work we do.

To the left: OOI Staff at a Team-Building Experience at Twelve Oaks that brought all areas of the agency together to work together to figure out “who-dunnit”?! 😊
Customers

All the individuals and families we assist are considered ‘vulnerable’ because they are low-income. Those that are elderly, children, or disabled are among the most vulnerable of those we help. **42% of working age adults who received direct assistance were disabled.**

Education is considered a critical step in the process of breaking out of the cycle of poverty. OOI supports individuals and their families in obtaining this goal through SUCCESS and Head Start/Early Head Start programs and activities.

**Treasa Harris** was awarded as a nominee for the 2018 Arkansas Community Action Agency Association’s Annual Conference for her accomplishments as she received a Certification of Nomination of the Diamond Empowerment Award.

From left: Richard “Toby” Atkinson (OOI Chief Executive Officer), Treasa Harris, & Cathy Brownell (OOI Family Development Specialist).
Our service area encompasses Baxter, Boone, Marion, Newton, Searcy and Van Buren counties. For the FY 2018 program year we assisted 16,904 individuals. The pie chart to the right depicts the percentage of that 16,904 by the county in which they lived.

According to the United States Census Bureau, population estimates, July 1, 2017 (V2017), there are 20,535 individuals living in poverty within our six-county service area. The pie chart to the left provides the breakdown by county; the percentage of the 20,535 that live in each county.
Child Development & Empowerment

Education: OOI Early Childhood Programs include Arkansas Better Chance (ABC) Pre-K– 50 slots in Boone and Baxter Co.), Head Start Pre-K (261 slots) and Early Head Start (infant & toddlers– 48 slots in Harrison, Mountain Home and Clinton) gives children (and families) the opportunity to learn, prepare, and build school readiness skills for their educational futures. In 2018, Ozark Opportunities, Inc. focused on staff training and updating facilities throughout all programs and counties. Our Early Head Start staff completed 1,000 hours of professional development with 5 staff receiving either their Infant and Toddler Child or Pre-K Development Associate’s Credential (CDA). The Child Development Program as a whole completed 3,787 total hours of training. There is no other provider in our six–county service area with as highly qualified and trained staff as we have. In addition to staff development, our agency has focused funds directly into classroom supplies, building updates, and playground improvements.
Outside Reading Time at Shirley Head Start, with reading by the school librarian

North Arkansas Electric Co-Op Magic Show!

Family and Community Engagement: 986 Adults participated in Head Start & Early Head Start-associated activities; 510 of them being Parents or Former Parents. This is more than the number of enrolled children!

Dr. Darryl showing Clinton EHS students how to properly brush teeth!

Painting with grandma!
**Supporting Families:** Head Start staff work diligently with families to provide encouragement, and support in providing resources and referrals for family needs throughout each school year. As a result of the dedicated support that staff provide, 70% of the families served received at least one service (or more) throughout the school year.

![Services Provided to Families by Type](image)

Left: **Candace Weaver, Center Supervisor at Clinton Early Head Start** won the **OOI Child Development Ambassador Award** for her contributions to the families, children and her staff at her center—Go CANDACE!!!
Disability Services: Head Start ensures all children entering into the Program (both Early Head Start & Head Start) to receive Disability screenings and services necessary. As a result of those screenings, 12.5% of Early Head Start and 15% of Head Start children qualified for an IEP (Individual Education Plan) or IFSP (Individualized Family Service Plan—which applies to the infants & toddlers). Services are provided to them at the centers, and the majority of children received Speech or Developmental services.
**Volunteers:** Our Child Development Program had more than **4,575 hours** of time Volunteered to our classrooms so far during the 2017/18 school year! **2,050 hours** of time that Professionals and Community members donated while **2,525 hours** were donated by Head Start parents and families.

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Left: A police officer talking with the kids about being safe citizens!

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Right: Mt. Home receives a visit from a REAL Army man!

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**Boone County Imagination Library**— OOI staff serve on the Board of BCIL; the program is currently serving more than **1,600 children** in Boone County. It currently costs approximately $2,500 month to provide these free books to families. If you are interested in donating, please contact Ryan Clayborn at 870-741-9406.
**Male Engagement:** Head Start is passionate about the impact that Father/Male involvement has in the lives of children, and takes that commitment seriously. Fathers and other positive male role models (grandfathers, uncles, step-fathers, community members, etc.) are welcomed and encouraged to participate in activities involving the children. We had 194 fathers engaged in their child’s Head Start experience. They participated in things such as Parent Meetings, Make A Difference (MAD) Meetings, Home Tasks and Volunteering in the classroom.

Left: A Father/Son building experiment!

Right: A volunteer from Van Buren County Library leads Reading Time at Shirley Head Start
Family Development & Empowerment Opportunities

Often, stabilization programs are seen as a “hand out.” What many do not realize, is that when someone applies for assistance there is a high degree of interaction between the individual seeking assistance and our staff. This interaction leads to referrals and a more holistic approach to helping those in need by addressing multiple challenges instead of just the immediate emergency.

Once emergency needs are met, extensive family development can be the focus of our families in their journey to break the cycle of poverty and become self-reliant. The mission of SUCCESS is to assist participants to Succeed at Understanding and Conquering Challenges to Establish Stability and Self-reliance. SUCCESS is a program that helps individuals & families restore their sense of self-respect and hope to help them to reclaim their dreams of a better life through educational classes and goal setting. SUCCESS also promotes a healthy interdependence with the rest of the community; family, friends, neighbors, coworkers, social, educational, spiritual, and medical providers. This in turn promotes an increased feeling of self-worth.

Courage Awards: Recipients are recognized for initiating and making overwhelming change for themselves and their families. Pictured: Richard “Toby” Atkinson- CEO, Margaret Callahan (standing in for Dana Coulter), Treasa Harris, Maxine O’Brien, & Cathy Brownell (OOI Family Dev. Specialist).
212 individuals were involved with family development activities.
- 134 achieved self-reliance goals - several achieved multiple goals.
- 43 were still progressing.
- 35 exited without reporting outcomes.

**Employment:** 60 individuals who were unemployed obtained a job, 52% had maintained that employment for over 90 days while 32% were approaching the 90 day mark when the program year ended. Of the 40 who were already employed, 83% obtained an increase in income.

**Education:** 217 individuals were enrolled in educational goals. Of those 63% obtained pre-employment skills training, and 11% completed college. 14% were still progressing on their educational goals.

**Work Supports:** 88 individuals obtained work support goals. 5% obtained reliable transportation, 5% obtained health care services, 71% obtained safe and affordable housing and 9 clients were able to avoid eviction due to emergency services provided by the agency.

**SUCCESS Graduates. Back row from left:** Jennifer Scott, Misty Binam, Takara Morris, Margaret Callahan, Melissa Hernandez, Eva Reece, Cathy Brownell (OOI Family Development Specialist) **Middle Row:** Carla Zavala, Maxine O’Brien, Treasa Harris, Shirlynn Rains **Front:** Toby Atkinson (OOI Chief Executive Officer) (Not Pictured Dana Coulter)
Healthy Families Arkansas - Ozark Mountains

Parents want to give their kids the best start possible in life; but sometimes, the challenges of parenting can be overwhelming. For many, having a support system can reduce the stress and give parents the opportunity to develop nurturing relationships with their children.

Healthy Families Arkansas – Ozark Mountains (HFA-OM) is a free, voluntary home visiting program designed for parents facing challenges such as single parenthood; low income; childhood history of abuse and other adverse childhood experiences; and current or previous issues related to substance abuse, mental health issues, and/or domestic violence.

HFA-OM is a program new to Ozark Opportunities, Inc. but one that has been in existence since 2007. It was previously a community program under Ozark Health in Clinton. HFA-OM is accredited through Healthy Families America™ and contracts with the Arkansas Home Visiting Network to provide evidence-based home visiting services to families in Searcy and Van Buren counties. HFA-OM serves up to 30 families at a time. These families are enrolled during pregnancy or before the child is 3 months old and can choose to remain in the program until the child turns 3 years old.

Through home visits, families receive individualized education on health and safety, child development, pregnancy, and parenting topics. The program also holds group meetings, provides connections to local resources, helps families set and work toward goals, and completes child development, domestic violence, and caregiver depression screenings. Once a month, participants can receive incentive items like diapers, wipes, toys, books, or clothes to help ease financial stress.

Healthy Families Arkansas- Ozark Mountains aims to:

- Reduce child maltreatment
- Improve parent-child interactions and children’s social-emotional well-being
- Increase school readiness
- Promote child physical health and development
- Promote positive parenting
- Promote family self-sufficiency
- Increase access to primary care medical services and community services
- Decrease child injuries and emergency department use
In 2018, site services were delivered to:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Home Visits Completed</th>
<th>507</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>families</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>first-time parents</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fathers involved in home visits</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>target children</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>additional children</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>family’s first home visit</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Family Characteristics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Caregivers:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22% are not a high school/GED graduate</td>
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<tr>
<td>42% are younger than 22 years old</td>
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<tr>
<td>44% were abused or neglected as a child</td>
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<tr>
<td>4% are developmentally delayed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98% are Medicaid eligible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100% are living below 250% poverty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11% are homeless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4% have no medical insurance</td>
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<tr>
<td>33% have a history of substance abuse</td>
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<tr>
<td>38% have experienced symptoms of depression</td>
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<tr>
<td>4% have been involved with child welfare</td>
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<tr>
<td>62% are single parents</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target Children:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>41 target children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 were low birthweight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 was born premature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 have a developmental delay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 receive Early Intervention services</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**HFA Services**

At initial screening, percent of enrolled families scored:

- 2% lower risk
- 27% moderate risk
- 71% higher risk

This site initiates services:

- *prenatally* and from *birth to 3 months*
- experiencing at least *1 risk factor*
- *regardless* of parenting experience

Services are offered up to *age 3*
Initiative Awardees. Recipients are recognized for making great strides towards self-reliance while only enrolled in SUCCESS for a short time. Back row from left row: Paige Rogers, Kim McCoy, Kaylee Ivie, Arrianne Grunewald, Mindi Glidden, Melissa Rowland, Cathy Brownell (OOI Family Development Specialist) Front row from left: Rebecca Hanlin (OOI Community Services Manager), Kelli Zurcher, and Michele Prince.

The **Vehicle Repair Loan Program** is a Revolving Loan instituted by *Ozark Opportunities, Inc.*’s Board of Directors in which families can apply for up to $500 to assist with vehicle repairs.

- In 2018, $\text{1,430.84}$ was loaned to **4 Families**.
- Loans must be paid back within **1 Year**.
- Families must fall within **200% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines**.
- A **family budget** is created with each family in order to determine eligibility.

The **Emergency and Stability Program** assisted **30 Families** that were in a **crisis state**. Funds were used to assist families with **Water Deposits, Rental Assistance, Security Deposits, Eye Exams, and Eyewear, Dental Exams, and Natural Gas Deposits**. A total of $\text{8,858.74}$ was disbursed in order to assist these families.
Family Stabilization, Development & Empowerment

Stabilization Services & Programs

In 2018, the (Low Income) Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) provided assistance to many families in need:

- **Winter Non-Emergency**: 2,525 families in the amount of $320,554
- **Winter Crisis**: 479 families in the amount of $119,850.85
- **Summer Non-Emergency**: 2,324 families in the amount of $271,804
- **Summer Crisis**: 365 families in the amount of $60,267.82
- **Total LIHEAP Funds Spent in 2017 = $772,476.67**
**Home Energy Assistance Funds** are distributed to utility companies that have a current Supplier Agreement with *Ozark Opportunities, Inc.* and to clients.

**HOPE Revolving Loan Fund**

The HOPE Revolving Loan Fund (HOPE) allowed *Ozark Opportunities, Inc.* to assist **15 Families** obtain safe and affordable housing. The HOPE Revolving Loan Fund provides **interest-free loans up to $1,000** (one thousand dollars) to assist homeless families in paying **security deposits, utility deposits and first month rent**. Applicants must have a job and have adequate income to allow payback of the loan without risking the family’s new-found security. Repayment is expected in one year with low monthly payments scheduled to reach that goal.
Locations

Arkansas Better Chance (ABC)  Head Start & Early Head Start  Outreach
** Baxter County **

Cotter Head Start  
Phone/Fax: 870-435-5040

Mountain Home Head Start  
Phone: 870-425-2123 or 870-425-9111

Mountain Home ABC  
Phone: 870-424-5515

Mountain Home Early Head Start  
Phone: 870-424-0260

Norfork Head Start & ABC  
Phone: 870-499-5611

Outreach Office  
Phone: 870-425-5118

** Boone County **

Harrison Head Start  
Phone: 870-741-9406 ext. 222

Harrison ABC  
Phone: 870-754-3057

Harrison Early Head Start  
Phone: 870-391-2228

Valley Springs Head Start  
Phone: 870-429-5524

Community Services Building  
Outreach: 870-741-2089  
SUCCESS: 870-715-5067  
Department Management: 870-715-8485  
Fax: 870-741-2089

** Marion County **

Bruno-Pyatt Head Start  
Phone: 870-427-5661

Yellville-Summit Head Start  
Phone: 870-321-7437

Outreach Office  
Phone/Fax: (870) 449-6250 or (870) 425-5118

** Newton County **

Jasper Head Start  
Phone/Fax: 870-446-5818

Western Grove Head Start  
Phone/Fax: 870-429-8242

Outreach Office  
Phone/Fax: (870) 446-2222 or (870) 741-2089

** Searcy County **

St. Joe Head Start  
Phone/Fax: 870-439-2210

Outreach Office  
Phone/Fax: (870) 448-2414 or (501) 745-2437

** Van Buren County **

Clinton Early Head Start  
Phone: 501-745-6905

Shirley Head Start  
Phone/Fax: 501-723-4301

Outreach Office  
Phone/ Fax: (501) 745-2437