

New Record for Achieving Family Self-Sufficiency

SHERMAN, June 30, 2014 – Dr. Susan Thomas, Executive Director of Texoma Council of Governments (TCOG) recognized Leisa Bennett, a client of the Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program, as the new record holder for completing the program. Ms. Bennett met all requirements and completed the program in a short seven months.

The TCOG FSS program offers clients hope. Hope for a brighter, successful future where they are self-reliant and independent of government assistance. Ms. Bennett entered into the FSS contract of participation and identified goals she planned to pursue that would take her to self-sufficiency. Those goals included: pursuing employment, furthering her education and being a responsible role model to her children.

Dr. Thomas said, “The FSS Program is an effective but extremely challenging program that takes a tremendous amount of grit and determination to complete.” Thomas described the program as one that redirects, changes, and occasionally even saves lives, but rarely does that happen in seven months. Thomas noted that throughout the program, Bennett exhibited a tenacious desire to change her circumstances and live a life free of government subsidies. “I think oftentimes individuals who benefit from government assistant programs are stereotyped across the board as lazy and undeserving, unwilling to do what it takes to make a better way for themselves and their families. Our Self-Sufficiency clients are debunking that myth, and Ms. Bennett has become the leader of that pack.”

After she identified her goals, TCOG provided Ms. Bennett specific supportive services including employment and educational referrals. A few months into the program, she landed a position at the VA Medical Center in Bonham, TX. On January 31st, 2014 after a mere 7 months in the program, Ms. Bennett completed all her goals and graduated from the Program.

Through her success, Ms. Bennett has become inspiration to other FSS clients. She is an example of how hope and determination can propel you when trying to improve your life, and as the recipient of the FSS 2014 Parent of the Year, Ms. Bennett has proven herself to be a responsible role model to her children. “I am really excited about graduating, and I still hope to remain involved with the FSS Program in some way,” Ms. Bennett said.

The FSS program currently has 88 participants. There have been 78 successful graduates since the inception of the program in 1994.

The Texoma Council of Governments is a voluntary association of the local governments in Cooke, Fannin, and Grayson Counties. Established in 1968, the Texoma Council of Governments promotes economy and efficiency in the coordinated planning and development of the tri-county region through its community and economic development activities. Either directly, or through contractors, the Council provides housing, utility assistance, and weatherization services for low-income citizens in the region and assists the elderly through a variety of Area Agency on Aging programs. The Council also facilitates the delivery of grant funding for homeland security and criminal justice.

###

For Additional Information Contact:

Rayleen Bingham
(903) 813-3521
rbingham@texoma.cog.tx.us

For Statements or Interviews Contact:

Susan B. Thomas, PhD
(903) 813-3514
sthomas@texoma.cog.tx.us

