

Frost to Speak to Lift Community Action Program Participants on June 11, 2025

Sharla J. Frost to provide inspirational speech to Lift Community Action students

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Contact:

LIFT Community Action Agency
209 North Fourth Street
Hugo, OK 74743

Phone: (580) 326-9490

Website: www.liftca.org/youthbuild

Nationally Known Speaker Sharla J. Frost to Inspire Hugo Youth at LIFT Community Action YouthBuild Program
Motivational Presentation Scheduled for June 11, 2025, Highlighting Pathways to Success for At-Risk Young Adults

LIFT Community Action Agency is proud to announce that inspirational speaker and local author Sharla J. Frost will deliver a motivational presentation to participants in the Hugo LIFT Community Action YouthBuild program on Wednesday, June 11, 2025. This special event will focus on empowering young adults aged 16-24 who are working to transform their lives through education, career training, and community leadership development.

The presentation will take place at LIFT



Sharla J. Frost, author



Sharla J. Frost Speaker on stage

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Sharla J. Frost

Community Action Agency's facilities and will address themes of resilience, personal growth, and achieving success despite challenges. Frost's message will resonate particularly well with YouthBuild participants, who are demonstrating remarkable determination by pursuing their high school equivalency credentials while simultaneously gaining valuable construction and life skills.

This will be Frost's second presentation to the current class of participants. "The students impressed me with their professionalism and commitment," Frost said. "Many

people do not take advantage of second chances when life throws them a curveball. These participants are young, but show incredible maturity in working to put themselves on a better path. I'm humbled to be able to share time with them."

Transforming Lives Through Comprehensive Programming

LIFT Community Action Agency's YouthBuild program provides approximately 600 hours of combined education instruction, occupational skills training, and leadership development activities, with an additional twelve months of follow-up services. This federally-funded initiative represents a \$1.2 million investment in southeastern Oklahoma's youth, creating pathways to economic self-sufficiency for participants who previously faced significant barriers to success.

YouthBuild is a community-based pre-apprenticeship program that provides job training and educational services for opportunity youth ages 16-24 who left school without a secondary diploma. The Hugo program exemplifies the national YouthBuild model's success, combining academic achievement with hands-on vocational training and meaningful community service.

Building More Than Houses – Building Futures

The genius of the YouthBuild model lies in its dual purpose approach. While participants develop construction skills by providing community service through the required construction or rehabilitation of affordable housing for low-income or homeless families in their own neighborhoods, they simultaneously work toward their high school diploma or equivalency through Penn Foster High School classroom instruction.

This innovative structure means that every nail hammered and every wall built serves a greater purpose. Young adults gain marketable skills in the construction trades while directly addressing their community's housing needs. Community service projects focus on community improvements in low-income areas as well as other sites throughout the City, working to benefit low-income residents and communities while improving the quality and energy efficiency of

community and other non-profit public facilities.

Measurable Impact and Success Stories

The national YouthBuild network demonstrates remarkable success rates that speak to the program's effectiveness. 79% of YouthBuild enrollees in the U.S. obtained a high school diploma or equivalency, or other credentials, while participants also earn job skills and credentials in construction, as well as other high-demand industries like healthcare, retail, and information technology.

LIFT's local program has already produced inspiring success stories. One graduate, Christian, exemplified the program's potential by completing the YouthBuild program and immediately transitioning into a Shop Foreman position through a Work Experience program, demonstrating the direct career pathways the initiative creates.

Comprehensive Support System

What sets YouthBuild apart from traditional education or job training programs is its holistic approach to participant success. The students are part of a mini-community of adults and youth committed to each other's success and to improving the conditions in their neighborhoods. Personal counseling and training in life skills and financial management are provided, ensuring participants develop not just technical skills but the life competencies necessary for long-term success.

The Hugo program leverages strategic partnerships with local organizations including First United Bank of Hugo, Southern Workforce Board, Goodland Academy, the City of Hugo, Project Gain, and Youth Services of Hugo. These collaborations ensure participants receive comprehensive support including federal financial aid assistance, career assessments, interview skills training, resume building, and direct connections to postsecondary education opportunities.

Through partnerships with Southeastern Oklahoma State University Educational Opportunity Center, Oklahoma State University Extension Office, and Kiamichi Technology Centers' Hugo Campus, YouthBuild participants gain access to college and trade school pathways, creating clear progression routes for continued education and career advancement.

Economic and Community Benefits

YouthBuild's impact extends far beyond individual participant success. The program also benefits the larger community because it provides increased access to affordable housing. Every project completed by YouthBuild participants directly addresses critical housing needs in southeastern Oklahoma while providing participants with real-world experience in construction trades.

It is a community development program, in which community organizations obtain the resources to tackle several key community issues at once, strengthening their capacity to build and manage housing for their residents, educate and inspire their youth, create leadership for the future, and generally take responsibility for their neighborhoods.

The economic multiplier effect is significant. Participants who successfully complete the program enter the workforce with industry-recognized credentials, increasing their earning potential and reducing their reliance on social services. The construction skills they develop directly support local economic development, while the affordable housing they help create addresses a critical community need.

Developing Tomorrow's Leaders

Leadership development represents a cornerstone of the YouthBuild philosophy. Leadership is taught explicitly in YouthBuild programs, based on the philosophy that young people are not a burden but rather a resource to be tapped. Participants learn that they can be part of the solution to community challenges rather than victims of circumstance.

YouthBuild champions opportunity youth as they realize their goals and aspirations, transform into the leaders of today and tomorrow, and provide valuable community service on a global scale – all while paying it forward to the next generation. This leadership focus ensures that program graduates become positive influences in their communities, creating a ripple effect of positive change.

A National Model of Excellence

The Hugo program operates as part of a proven national network. Over 320 YouthBuild programs operate in nine countries, demonstrating the model's scalability and effectiveness across diverse communities. With love and respect, YouthBuild partners with opportunity youth to build the skillsets and mindsets that lead to lifelong learning, livelihood, and leadership.

YouthBuild emphasizes positivity, encouragement, and welcoming each participant with love. This approach recognizes that many participants have experienced trauma and setbacks, requiring not just job training but healing and empowerment to reach their full potential.

Looking Forward

Jami Meredith, Program Director for LIFT's YouthBuild initiative, emphasizes the program's transformative potential: "Every young person who walks through our doors has unique talents and capabilities. Our job is to help them recognize those strengths while providing the practical skills and credentials they need to build successful careers and become community leaders."

The upcoming presentation by Sharla J. Frost aligns perfectly with YouthBuild's mission of

inspiring and empowering young adults. Her message of resilience and achievement will reinforce the program's core belief that every participant has the potential to overcome obstacles and create positive change in their lives and communities.

About LIFT Community Action Agency

LIFT Community Action Agency, formerly known as Little Dixie Community Action Agency, is a private, nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization serving southeastern Oklahoma since 1968. LIFT's mission is "To improve the lives of low-income individuals and families through service and collaboration leading to self-sufficiency." The organization's name, which stands for "Lifting Individuals for Tomorrow," reflects its commitment to empowering community members toward upward mobility and economic independence.

LIFT offers comprehensive services including Head Start and early childhood programs, housing assistance, transportation services, job training programs, senior services, and community development initiatives. The YouthBuild program represents one of LIFT's flagship workforce development efforts, directly addressing the needs of opportunity youth in the region.

About YouthBuild

YouthBuild champions today's opportunity youth who aspire to improve their lives and communities by building the skills and resources to reach their full potential. Founded in the 1970s, YouthBuild has grown into an international movement serving thousands of young adults annually through comprehensive programming that combines education, job training, leadership development, and community service.

The program specifically targets young people who face the greatest barriers to success, providing them with the tools, support, and opportunities necessary to achieve economic self-sufficiency while contributing positively to their communities.

For more information about LIFT Community Action Agency's YouthBuild program, including eligibility requirements and application procedures, contact LIFT Community Action Agency at (580) 326-9490 or visit www.liftca.org/youthbuild.

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Sharla J Frost

Sharla J. Frost, Attorney at Law

+1 713-882-9053

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