



Upper East Tennessee  
Human Development Agency



## Impact Stories

### Happenstance in Hawkins County

Hancock County – Tom and Sue Santerre moved from upstate New York to Northeast Tennessee to begin their life of retirement. Tom discovered the area after making countless trips from New York to Florida over his career. “I always stopped in Kingsport or Johnson City because it was, you know, about halfway, and I fell in love with the area,” said Tom. Then in October of 2020, Sue received the news nobody wants to hear, she had stage 4 cancer. As anyone can imagine, the news was overwhelming for the Santerre family.

The doctors wanted to start chemotherapy quickly and Sue agreed. Unfortunately, their vehicle “was on its last leg.” Sue had to rely on neighbors, if available, to transport her to therapy and medical appointments. To help take the burden off her neighbors, she found transportation through their insurance, but it was unreliable. They would show up late or not at all on the days of her appointment, causing her to miss several of her treatments.

Just by chance, Tom happened to stumble upon a non-profit organization, Somebody Loves Me, looking for a pair of boots for himself. That is when Norma Tremblay, Director of Community Services at Upper East Tennessee Human Development Agency (UETHDA), met Tom. As they talked, Ms. Tremblay discovered that his wife had cancer and they had no reliable means of transportation to and from her medical appointments. She told Tom that UETHDA had a program to help assist individuals by removing the transportation barrier that would prevent a neighbor from sustaining their quality of life.

Tom reached out to the Neighborhood Service Center in Hawkins County and the process began. The



Tom and Sue Santerre pose beside their car.

program allotted him \$3000 towards an automobile. He looked at several car lots but the vehicles were too expensive. Then one day, while listening to the Swap Shop on the radio, he heard an advertisement for Quality Auto Sales in Rogersville, and that’s where he found his car. To his amazement, the car lot even let them have the car before being paid by UETHDA, allowing Sue to immediately attend her chemotherapy and medical appointments, which average around eight per month. Sue has now completed her fourth round of chemo and has gone from being wheelchair bound to completely ambulatory thanks to being able to make her appointments.

Ms. Tremblay said, “It pleases her heart to help people and that it takes everyone to help.” She also stated, “Alone we can do so little, but together we can do so much.”

The Santerres said they were thankful and grateful for the assistance that UETHDA provided in helping them. They are looking forward to their retirement.

## Partnerships Get It Done

Hancock County – In the fall of 2020, Hancock County was hit with heavy rain which resulted in flooding. Evelyn Seal, a lifelong resident of the area, had her only water source washed out. Her home was supplied water by a gravity fed natural spring, which might sound unusual to people who live in the city, but in her neck-of-the-woods, it is not unusual. Ms. Seal is in her 70s, currently battling eye cancer, and has her mentally challenged son living with her. She has faced adversity. This water problem however was a challenge she simply did not have the money nor resources to fix.



Ms. Seal lives in the house on the left at the base of the hillside.

Located in the heart of Sneedville, Tennessee is the Upper East Tennessee Human Development Agency's (UETHDA) Neighborhood Service Center, and more importantly, a community service specialist named Machelie Pettiecord, who knew how to help.

This sort of repair is not something UETHDA does, but we have relationships with other organizations who can help us help our neighbors in need. The first goal was to get Ms. Seal potable water, as quickly as possible. Machelie contacted the Jubilee Project, part of the Holston Conference of The United Methodist Church. They provided Ms. Seal a 500-gallon water tank for her immediate need. Next, Machelie contacted Run4Water to see if they could fix the spring. Run4Water is a nonprofit organization that raises awareness and provides solutions for the worldwide water crisis. "Greg Armstrong with Run4Water headed the project and took great care of Ms. Seal" said Machelie. "They make a big impact in Hancock County."

UETHDA's Neighborhood Service Centers often serve as a one call resource for people in need. "We really value the relationships we have with other organizations," said Norma Tremblay, Community Services Director. "When it comes down to it, we are all here to help people, and we can do that best when we work together



## A Personal Success Story

I did something today I thought I would never get to do. When I first started working for UETHDA I had to use the LIHEAP Program to pay my bills twice that year. I have, for the most part, only just survived payday to payday. All the vehicles I have ever owned have been hand-me-downs from my dad, that I drove until the wheels fell off, so that I could pay living expenses. That was until today.

I was so scared walking into the bank this morning. I figured they aren't going to loan me money. When they did and told me how much, I felt like a ton of stress was lifted off my shoulders. At 44 years old I finally bought my first new car. Now I know we serve people far worse off than I have ever been. But I have to thank Norma as well as everyone else for taking a chance on me.

I don't know why I am feeling the way I do right now. It could be a sense of accomplishment or pride. It could be a new found sense of self-worth. But whatever it is, it is largely due to the people with whom I work.

– Chip Iley  
Community Services Data Specialist

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Through specific programs, UETHDA assists individuals in overcoming poverty and grows them to become self-sufficient. We measure success in the positive changes that occur in people's lives because of what Community Action helped accomplish.

Our services are proudly provided to Carter, Greene, Hancock, Hawkins, Johnson, Sullivan, Unicoi and Washington Counties.