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MCA's Mission

To serve member agencies and strengthen their capacity to alleviate the causes and circumstances of poverty.

Upcoming Events

"Families of Color in the Quest to Build Wealth" Webinar Jan. 18

The webinar Families of Color in the Quest to Build Wealth - A Special Report from CFED, will be held by Community Action Partnership on Jan. 18 from 2-3:30. The webinar is free, but [registration is required](#).

2017 NCAF legislative conference in March

NCAF's Annual Legislative Conference will be held March 14-17 and will host congressional speakers and other national leaders who will discuss national issues. The conference is an opportunity for Community Action leaders to meet with their congressional delegation, as well as other members of congressional leadership and national Community Action champions.

The preconference will be held March 14. Look for more information and instructions on registration for the conference soon.

Save the Date: May 9 Day at the Capitol opportunity to meet legislators

While the road to Lansing may be long for some agency leaders, their visit to the Capitol on May 9 will be welcomed by legislators.

"Your senators and representatives will be in the halls of the Capitol building looking for people from their districts," says Robb Kennedy, Michigan Community Action's lobbyist. "They appreciate when constituents come to Lansing and they want to have the chance to talk to you."

To help connect with legislators, CAA staff members are encouraged to bring signage or wear agency shirts that identify their agency. In addition, Kennedy and his team will arrange meetings with legislators, especially with those who are on key committees.

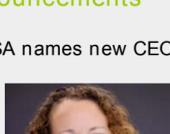
"With LiHEAP weatherization funding expiring in September, legislators need to hear from CAA leaders why it needs to be renewed," says MCA Executive Director Kate White. "It is important to have a representative from the local CAA there to talk with them."

The Community Action awards ceremony will be held at 10 a.m. at the Capitol Rotunda, and the lunch for award winners and legislators will follow.

To submit an award nomination form, visit MCA's website. Informational packets and talking points will be available soon for attendees.

Announcements

OLHSA names new CEO



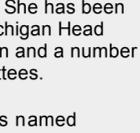
Harding

Susan Harding has been named the new CEO of Oakland Livingston Human Services Agency (OLHSA). An employee at OLHSA for 20 years, she was director of Early Childhood programs and is one of the first State CAA Network certified ROMA trainers. She has been active in the Michigan Head Start Association and a number of MCA Committees.

Agency leaders named



Huyser



Plevak

Two leaders who served as interim executives are now in permanent roles. Paula Huyser has been named program manager to lead Ottawa County Community Action Agency. Andrea Plevak has been named director of the Office of Community & Economic Development at Washtenaw County OCED. Both leaders bring many years of Community Action and anti-poverty experience to their positions.

Did you know?

Low-income households spend 17 to more than 50 percent of their income on utilities, quite a bit more than the 4 percent spent by the average U.S. household.

Catalyst welcomes input, story ideas

Is there a story or issue you'd like to see covered in Catalyst? Let us know what's happening in your agency or region. Success stories? Recent events? People news?

We welcome your input and feedback. Please send your comments and ideas [here](#).

MCA Officers/Board Members 2015-2017

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Northwest Michigan CAA

Louis Piszker
Vice President
Wayne Metro CAA

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GCCARD

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CAA Governing Board Officer
Capital Area Comm. Services

NMCAA collaboration with Habitat helps change lives



Community Action Agencies help clients obtain affordable housing

To move his family of seven out of their old mobile home, a Traverse City man needed affordable housing, but also some new financial management tools. Thanks to a collaboration between Northwest Michigan Community Action Agency (NMCAA) and Habitat for Humanity (HfH), his family recently made a move that could change the course of their lives.

The Traverse City parent is just one example of people who try to provide a stable home for their families but struggle with financial challenges. The NMCAA and HfH collaboration began in 2000 when NMCAA began offering financial management services and homeownership programming.

[Karen Emerson](#), NMCAA financial management services manager, says financial capability education is one of the keys to homeownership. Working together, the two organizations created a strong support system that is helping a number of families who previously lived in substandard housing.

"The partnership is really a win-win," Emerson says, pointing out that families can access many Community Action services while they work on improving their housing with Habitat. "A family may need help with home repairs, or they have a child who needs early childhood education through [Head Start](#), or an older family member needs [Meals on Wheels](#)."

NMCAA works with more than a dozen families in the area as they attend homebuyer and financial capability workshops. In the past decade, more than 150 families have participated in NMCAA's workshops.

Families working toward home ownership can obtain an [Individual Development Account \(IDA\)](#) through NMCAA, an opportunity to earn a matching grant when savings reach \$1,000. Applicants can use the matching dollars as financial assistance for down payments on home purchases, college or vocational education expenses or for starting a business. From 2014 to 2016, 35 Habitat partner families successfully began IDAs.

"Homeownership is an essential part of the American dream," says Sen. Wayne Schmidt, R-Traverse City. "Owning a good, affordable home helps parents raise their families in a safe and positive environment, and thanks to the help of NMCAA and Habitat for Humanity, more families in our community are able to achieve their dreams. It is collaborations like this that help make northern Michigan a great place to live, work and raise a family."

Through more than a decade of collaboration between NMCAA and Habitat, the program has remained strong despite occasional changes in funding and staff, and has continued to build its services to communities. Emerson says the collaboration has been key to NMCAA's community service growth and encourages Community Action Agencies seeking partnerships to reach out to their local Habitat for Humanity.

"We are trying to teach people new skills, helping them achieve self-sufficiency through milestones of achievement. It's great to say, 'Look at what we're able to provide. This is Community Action at work.'"

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Criteria for food assistance changes, but jobs available



Unemployed Michigan residents can find work in the skilled trades industry

As work requirements for able-bodied Michigan adults to receive food assistance were reinstated in certain counties Jan. 1, MCA encourages job seekers to consider applying for one of the thousands of construction jobs that are currently unfilled in the state.

MCA has partnered with the Skilled to Build Foundation to help pair jobs with potential workers. The partnership helps fulfill the reinstated work requirements in Oakland, Ottawa, Kent and Washtenaw counties.

The foundation estimates that approximately 5,000 jobs are available today in 17 construction trades. Local Community Action Agencies (CAAs) stand ready to help people apply for and succeed in the jobs.

For example, recently a residential contractor in Ingham County was searching for siding installers and a builder in Novi wanted general laborers for its construction sites. A nonprofit agency in Oakland County was seeking a driver and mover to pick up donated items from households in the area.

"The construction industry wants people who are willing to learn and are able to be reliable employees," explains Kate White, MCA executive director. "It's an opportunity for women and men to go to work right away. There are opportunities to work in interior finishing (painting, wallpapering, etc.) and office work, along with more traditional construction jobs. CAAs may be able to assist with transportation and filling out job applications in order to connect income-eligible job seekers with employers. If someone gets hired, CAAs can sometimes provide work boots, tools and other essentials to help people succeed."

"We hear from builders on a daily basis they can't keep up with demand due to a lack of available labor," says Dawn Crandall, executive director of the Skilled to Build Michigan Foundation. "In just the 17 trades we are focused on, we could hire more than 5,000 employees today in the industry."

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services work requirements affect adults without dependents. Applicants can visit the [Skilled to Build website](#) for a list of openings and to submit an application to connect with employers in their area.

To find a local Community Action Agency, visit www.micommunityaction.org.

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MCA 2017 Legislative Priorities

CSBG, energy efficiency measures part of MCA legislative priorities

Community Services Block Grant (CSBG)

MCA supports reauthorization of the CSBG Act and increased funding to meet growing requirements for data collection and reporting.

Early Childhood Education and Childcare

MCA supports:

- Increasing funding for early childhood services to implement continually evolving quality standards.

- Restoring income eligibility for GSRP to 300 percent of poverty.

- Continued funding of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Grant Program in Michigan to provide expanded academic enrichment opportunities for children attending low-performing schools.

- Expanding access to child care services for low-income families.

Energy Efficiency

MCA supports:

- Preserving and promoting energy efficiency and home weatherization measures to lower the energy burden for low-income families and to increase conservation.

- Expanding energy efficiency programs for utilities that choose not to operate low income energy programs on their own.

Financial Independence

MCA supports:

- Expansion of financial literacy programs.

- Returning the state Earned Income Tax Credit to 20 percent of the federal EITC.

- Expanding funding for and access to Individual Development Accounts.

- Funding for tax preparation services for low-income residents.

- Protecting consumers against predatory lending tactics.

Food and Nutrition Services

MCA supports:

- Securing more Commodity Supplemental Food Program slots for CAAs, as allocated by the Michigan Department of Education.

- Expanding The Emergency Food Assistance Program's administrative funding to include costs of distributing "bonus" items.

Full Participation in the Community and Economy

MCA supports:

- Expanded wireless and broadband access in underserved communities.

- Increased services to assist citizens seeking identification documents (state ID, driver's licenses, birth certificates, etc.).

Housing Services

MCA supports enhancing policies that can help prevent homelessness and provide homebuyer education and mortgage counseling. Furthermore, it supports state housing policies that foster the development of thriving communities for children, parents and seniors.

Senior Programs

MCA supports the efforts of the Silver Key Coalition, which seeks to increase state funding for in-home services that provide assistance in managing and/or performing activities including personal care, homemaking, chores, home-delivered meals, minor home repairs and other needed services.

Veterans Services

MCA supports the expansion of available veterans programs such as Supportive Services for Veteran Families.

For more information on MCA's 2017 legislative priorities and the services CAAs offer, visit [MCA's website](#).