

## In This Issue...

[Summer conference features "Invisible People" activist](#)

[Latin American seniors create community through meals](#)

["Communication planning" webinar recap](#)

[MCA leader named to national energy board](#)

[Did you know?](#)

## Quick Links

[MCA Website](#)

[Contact Us](#)

[Legislative Priorities](#)

[Member Services](#)

## Follow MCA on Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn

We'd like you to become a follower of MCA. Keep up with news coverage and action alerts. Click on the links below to follow MCA today.



## MCA's Mission

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

## Announcements

Consulting firm to provide OMB Circular and Cost Allocation Training

Wipfli, an accounting and business consulting firm, will present Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular Training at Mid Michigan Community Action Agency in Farwell. Sessions are free but all travel and meals will be the CAAs' expense. Training sessions will be offered twice, with each session running two days. Seating is limited to 50 people per session. To register, [click here](#).

## Upcoming Events

For a full list of events, visit [MCA's calendar](#).

MCA 2017 Summer Conference July 11-13

Crystal Mountain Resort, Thompsonville.

Committee Meetings July 13

Directors Council meeting 9-11 a.m.

Board of Directors meeting 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

## MCA leader named to national energy board



Chere Coleman, MCA program and policy director, has been elected to the board of the National Energy

and Utility Affordability Coalition (NEUAC). She will assist the coalition's efforts to raise awareness of the energy needs of low-income households and foster private-public partnerships with NEUAC.

## Did you know?

Those affected by hunger are not necessarily the stereotypical destitute or homeless. Many are the "working poor" who have jobs but don't earn enough to pay for food and other necessities such as child care, medications and housing. Technology and transportation barriers and confusion about eligibility can hinder participation in food assistance programs.

## 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

John Stephenson  
President  
Northwest Michigan CAA

Louis Piszker  
Vice President  
Wayne Metro CAA

Jill Sutton  
Secretary Treasurer  
Mid Michigan CAA

Toby Berry  
At-Large Officer  
Community Action Agency

Arthur Fenrick  
Lower Peninsula Rural Officer  
Southwestern Michigan CAA

Kerri Duff  
Upper Peninsula Officer  
Gogebic Ontonagon CAA

Rhonda Powell  
Urban Officer  
Macomb Community Action

Matt Purcell  
Directors Council Chair  
GCCARD

Eric Schertzing  
CAA Governing Board Officer  
Capital Area Comm. Services

## Summer conference features international activist Horvath

The founder of Invisible People, an advocacy organization that gives voice to the homeless, is just one of the speakers at Michigan Community Action's 2017 Summer Conference, July 11-13 at Crystal Mountain Resort in Thompsonville.



Conference attendees will see the popular winter destination in full summer bloom.

International activist Mark Horvath founded Invisible People to change the story of homelessness. Using digital storytelling, he speaks for those who live on the streets, under bridges, in tents and elsewhere. Horvath will be joined by David Bradley, National Community Action Foundation CEO; Earl Poleski, Michigan State Housing Development Authority executive director and several other expert presenters.

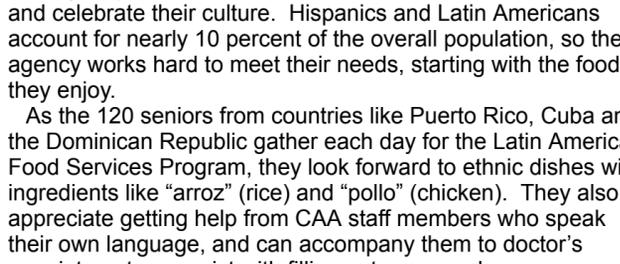
Other topics at the conference include legislative updates and best practices. The event offers workshops for frontline staff, managers, directors and board members. With discussions on model programs, organizational standards and agency entrepreneurship, the conference is a great investment in learning and networking.

The Directors' Dinner will take place Monday, July 10 at 6 p.m. at Kinloch Lodge's Thistle Pub & Grill. The Directors Council, comprised of the executive directors of Michigan's 29 Community Action Agencies, will be held Thursday, July 13. Board members are encouraged to attend the Directors Council meeting before the board meeting. [Click here](#) for more information and to register.

## Latin American seniors create community through meals

More than just feeding people, Community Action in Kent County helps Latin American seniors acclimate, solve problems and celebrate their culture. Hispanics and Latin Americans account for nearly 10 percent of the overall population, so the agency works hard to meet their needs, starting with the food they enjoy.

As the 120 seniors from countries like Puerto Rico, Cuba and the Dominican Republic gather each day for the Latin American Food Services Program, they look forward to ethnic dishes with ingredients like "arroz" (rice) and "pollo" (chicken). They also appreciate getting help from CAA staff members who speak their own language, and can accompany them to doctor's appointments or assist with filling out paperwork.



ACSET's Latin American meals program attracts seniors of all ethnicities.

When one man didn't come in for a meal as usual, a staff member personally went to his home to check on him. The action may have saved his life, as he was found unresponsive. Staff made sure he received prompt medical attention. Another man who had lost his original citizenship papers got his benefits back after caseworkers stepped in to help. One participant who was unnecessarily placed in an adult foster home was able to transition to an independent living situation with the staff's intervention.

"Strong community ties help make Kent County a great place for families," says Sen. Tonya Schuitmaker (R-Lawton). "ACSET's work with our senior citizens demonstrates that we are all happier and healthier when we come together."

Seniors of any ethnicity are welcome to participate in the program. Many do so because they like the food better than traditional American-style meals and they enjoy mealtime activities like crocheting, playing dominoes and winning "la loteria" ("the lottery").



"We've had some people for 20, 25 years," says Susan Cervantes, Area Community Services Employment & Training Council (ACSET) Community Action Agency assistant director. "It's a very family-oriented atmosphere."

ACSET is looking into expanding its services as a senior center to offer more activities and receive more funding for the program. Cervantes says the joy participants express is a measure of success.

"They come in, they smile and they get their coffee and biscuit," she says, adding that if they were to go to another senior center where the primary language isn't Spanish and the focus isn't on their culture, they might not feel as welcome. "Here, they fit in."



Seniors can have fun while receiving assistance that promotes independent living.

"We've had some people for 20, 25 years," says Susan Cervantes, Area Community Services Employment & Training Council (ACSET) Community Action Agency assistant director. "It's a very family-oriented atmosphere."

ACSET is looking into expanding its services as a senior center to offer more activities and receive more funding for the program. Cervantes says the joy participants express is a measure of success.

"They come in, they smile and they get their coffee and biscuit," she says, adding that if they were to go to another senior center where the primary language isn't Spanish and the focus isn't on their culture, they might not feel as welcome. "Here, they fit in."

## "Communication planning" webinar recap

Establishing a comprehensive communication plan will help Community Action Agencies (CAAs) generate positive public relations and weather unexpected challenges, said Barbara Lezotte of Lezotte Miller Public Relations Inc. during Michigan Community Action's "Communication Planning" webinar June 14.

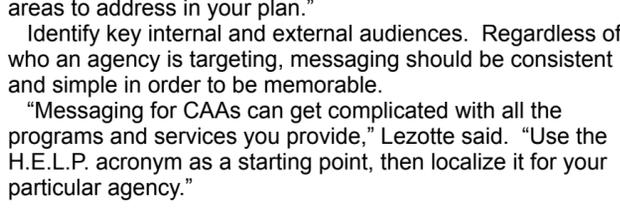
Breaking the plan into six components – assessment/research, goal setting, target audience identification, message development and delivery, budget and evaluation – makes the task easier.

CAAs should begin by gaining an understanding of their communication strengths and weaknesses. From there, leaders can identify potential opportunities and challenges and set communication goals.

"A solid communication plan needs to align with existing long-term organizational plans," Lezotte explained. "During the assessment process leaders may uncover more questions than answers. Your findings will help zero in on goals and other areas to address in your plan."

Identify key internal and external audiences. Regardless of who an agency is targeting, messaging should be consistent and simple in order to be memorable.

"Messaging for CAAs can get complicated with all the resources you provide," Lezotte said. "Use the H.E.L.P. acronym as a starting point, then localize it for your particular agency."



The H.E.L.P.'s acronym is an easy summary of Community Action services.

Agencies can use multiple communication channels to promote their key messages. Internal publications and social media, for example, can augment media coverage.

"Finally, agencies should evaluate the success of their communication efforts and adjust messaging accordingly," Lezotte noted. "Good communication plans should be flexible to adapt to new challenges."